

The Distinguished Speaker Series

Focus on Ukraine 19/10/2022

Open Centre for Languages and Cultures, The Open University

Edited transcript

INTRODUCTION

Dr Mirjam Hauck

Director of the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures, The Open University

Welcome everybody, to our Distinguished Speaker series, which is part of the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures at The Open University. My name is Mirjam Hauck. I am the Associate Head of School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, responsible for internationalisation and EDI: equality, diversity and inclusion. I'm also the Director of the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures. I would like to hand over to our Dean, Professor Fary Cachelin.

Prof. Fary Cachelin

Executive Dean for the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, and Language Studies

Thank you very much for inviting me today and for giving me this opportunity to kick off this special Public Lecture Series. So welcome and thank you for joining us on this special lecture on Ukraine as part of the Distinguished Speaker series from The Open University's Open Centre for Languages and Cultures, as Mirjam just told us.

We're really honoured today to welcome Dr Olga Onuch, who is Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor in Politics at the University of Manchester. She's going to talk with us about the '*Data for Ukraine*' project.

Dr Onuch's research on protest politics in Ukraine has resulted in her consulting policymakers in Canada, Ukraine, the UK and US and working with experts at other universities. She's using real-time data from social media platforms, including Twitter, to flag atrocities and current events in Ukraine hours before the media become aware of it. It's really fascinating and very important and timely work. So, we're really feeling special to have her here with us today.

From what I understand of using machine-learning algorithms, the system is able to map and identify credible tweets and information and this has been analysed by a team of specialists before being passed on to those who need it. The work can really help in two ways: in the moment, by helping aid agencies direct resources to people fleeing the fighting, and in the long-term by permanently documenting atrocities for eventual justice.

So again, we're absolutely delighted to have her here with us today. Our own Mirjam Hauck will give us a more thorough proper introduction to the work in a few minutes. After the

talk, we'll be introducing our brand new short course from the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures. This course has been written by Olga Volosova and Caroline Rowan-Olive. It's a free short course in Ukrainian language and culture for anybody who stands with Ukraine. So, whether hosting Ukrainian refugees, or supporting in the community, for professionals providing support services, or those who simply wish to learn more about Ukrainian language, culture, and people, this is the course for you. It's been designed and written with community in mind, which is great. So, thank you again for joining us and enjoy the events.

Mirjam Hauck

Thank you so much. Thank you. And with this, I hand over to you Olga.

PRESENTATION 1: DATA FOR UKRAINE

Dr Olga Onuch

Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor in Politics, the University of Manchester

Thank you so much and thank you for the introduction. And really thank you very much for having me as part of this lecture series. I do hope that what I have to tell you about the *Data for Ukraine* project will be of interest to all of you, but specifically in reference to how important language-based and field-based knowledge is in such emergency situations as the Russian all-out invasion of Ukraine that began on February 24.

So, I'm Olga Onuch, and normally I study individual-level political behaviour, be it why people choose to vote, what motivates and mobilises ordinary citizens to protest, but also what motivates and mobilises ordinary citizens to flee a country and migrate abroad. A lot of my work has been on political identities, civic duty, and especially these motivations at the micro level. But of course, then, I am Ukrainian - whenever I say that I slightly get upset, so forgive me - but of course, then come moments in one's life, you might be running large projects, you might even have surveys on the ground, you might be collecting focus group data, interview data, and suddenly, your world, the world of your colleagues who are working with you, be it in Kyiv, or in Odessa, or in Kharkiv, or in Lviv suddenly stops. And I'm sure many of you, especially those of you who attend a lecture that is devoted to Ukraine might have had that same feeling on February 24, 2020, to the anxiety, we all felt the immediate sense of devastation and tragedy was overwhelming. And even when I think back to that day today, I am overwhelmed by how helpless I felt in that situation, debating whether or not to wake up my friends and family members, or whether to give them a few more moments, if they were not yet awoken by bombs dropping on their towns and villages, before they came to realise that some of the most horrific things they would ever live through are coming true. This feeling of helplessness is something that many researchers have also felt, people that were perhaps not even Ukrainian, but just that studied the country and its culture and history and politics over years, but also many others across the field. And of course, the case of Ukraine is not unique in this sense, we have conflicts, horrible, horrific conflicts ongoing in different parts of the world. But of course, when it personally affects you, there is this extra level of experience. And then suddenly, we all started seeing those very same images, these images that took you aback. You could not help but just think oh, my goodness, the chutzpah of this farmer who started taking a

tractor off a road, off a field. We started seeing ordinary citizens, elderly villagers, trying to stop tanks from passing in their villages with their bare hands. And of course, even in those very immediate days and early weeks, we see Ukrainians rise against the occupation, in places like Kherson that this (unfortunately slightly still pixelated) picture here shows, individuals were protesting knowing that this is an invading army that is dropping bombs and shelling them.

So as a Ukrainian as a scholar of Ukraine, it was very clear that we had to do something, I couldn't continue my survey research, at least not in those immediate days and weeks. And we continue to do the things that we do often as scholars: we advise politicians, we advise international institutions, we advise NGOs working on matters of displacement and refugees. We obviously present our research to date to make sure that people have a very good understanding of the immediate political history of the country. But we also look to support our colleagues in Ukraine. And then we report. We report what we know from on the ground, we report what we know from our own research, we are present in the media, we do our best. But I still felt that that wasn't good enough and, luckily, others thought the same. In those moments, these very critical moments we face, such as an all-out invasion by Russia of Ukraine, I was left unsettled by some folks focusing on, perhaps lamenting, the state of Ukrainian studies to date, what we had not done yet. And I really thought that this was not the time to think about what we have not done yet, what or where we have failed in terms of studying Ukraine, its culture, its language, its politics, its history. I thought it was very important to prove that those of us who do study Ukraine, who know its language, culture, and history, what we as researchers with diverse skill sets can do in order to help this, understand this, very complex war context. And again, as I said, I was lucky enough that other people felt the same way.

Enter Eric Wibbles, previously at Duke University now at Penn, who had this massive data science lab that he was working on already for years, and Ernesto Calvo, who is based at the University of Maryland, and he also had a data science lab specifically looking at disinformation networks, but also other things in social media, and Graeme Robertson, a professor at UNC Chapel Hill, who had a team of area-focused specialists, and a few Ukrainian specialists, but no Ukrainians on his team. They reached out to me knowing that we are running this large project at the University of Manchester called *Mobilise*, and that I have a team of Ukrainian scholars, students, PhDs, and postdocs that could not do some of the other research we were supposed to be doing during those months. Most immediately, they understood that you not only need country specialists, you need people who are not only fluent, but also are native speakers of the language, in order to be able to do something in reaction to the crisis, and also that you need Ukrainians, right? You need individuals who will have this deep and nuanced knowledge of the things that are occurring. As a result, we also reached out to Tymofil Brik at the Kyiv School of Economics and together we started working on this idea of an early alarm system.

That is what *Data for Ukraine* is; it is an early alarm system that collects data from Twitter - and I'm going to get into the details and the weeds of that in a second - and channels it into four different categories: human rights abuses; reports of civilian resistance, reports of displacement of individuals; and reports of humanitarian needs and support, and then maps it across the country in order to know where these major events of either human rights abuses or civilian resistance or humanitarian needs are occurring. And in order to do this, it required a team of data scientists, social scientists with quantitative skills, but also, as I said,

language and field-based knowledge from on-the-ground experiences. So, we did it, and I'll explain to you in a moment how we did it. But *Data for Ukraine* was set up rather swiftly and we had several difficult questions to answer before we were able to do this.

The first question we struggled with - well, a series of challenges we struggled with - first of all, it's a war context. We are coming to grips with this context. We are witnessing some of the events as they unfold. Not only this, the war is changing very quickly. These events humanitarian needs, human rights abuses, civilian resistance, mass displacement of individuals are happening across a very wide geographical area. And how to best capture that geographical location of such major events occurring was a key question. We know that at the time that news coverage was extensive. Anyone who turned on their television sets, in those early weeks knew that they were getting a lot of Ukraine coverage. Even in Ukraine, obviously, this was occurring, but even in Ukraine it was quite delayed. So, we noted that there were things that were happening that we were being notified of via our own networks on social media that we were seeing come into the media sphere with a little bit of a delay. Similarly, international, and a variety of international organisations, different NGOs, as well as governments that were reacting to these events as they unfolded, (whether they were human rights abuses, or mass displacement or humanitarian need), they were also receiving that information with some delay. We also thought about reading all the news coverage and classifying it. But again, that would be very slow and time-consuming. And we wanted to know precisely where things were happening and as they were happening, and we really wanted also to make sure that we documented potential war crimes for further investigations. So not only did we want governments and international organisations and researchers to be able to identify what was happening and where it was happening in Ukraine, with greater speed than notification to the media would provide, we also wanted to make sure that we created an archive that could be used by quantitative social scientists, but also by a variety of other researchers who do digital ethnography, as well as those investigating war crimes formally in the future. So, the first question is, of course, how do you get real-time data on a range of outcomes, especially the four outcomes that we were interested in? Well, we use the Twitter API, and we stream tweets in real time using the Python Library `Tweepy`. (For those who are data science aware, this is something that you know, for everyone else, we're just presenting it for your information.)

What we did initially is we searched for some very vague words in English, Ukrainian and Russian, that are likely to be included in a relevant tweet that we are seeking to collect in our dataset. So, in English, we first looked for the vague word Russia, and in Ukrainian we looked for words such as Війна (war) Російська (Russian), and Окупант (occupier). And in Russia, we started with Русский (Russian). Each tweet, and its metadata - I'm sure you've heard about the information that accompanies each tweet that we don't necessarily see, but the IT companies digitally stored them as a JSON object - and what was happening in those immediate first days is the team started collecting approximately 5 million tweets daily.

By about May, April of last year, sorry, of this year, May, April 2022, the team was collecting 2 million tweets a day. Currently, it's slightly less, but we're still in the realm of up to millions of tweets a day. So, we have more than 200 million tweets in the database. How do you go through that sort of data? How do you make sense of that? How do you present that sort of data in a clear fashion? So, first things first, you have to figure out of these millions of tweets that you are collecting a day, what data is the relevant data that you require to

identify major events such as humanitarian rights abuses occurring? And what is the data that is not useful for your data collection effort? Thinking again in two mindsets: immediately identifying where these things are occurring, and when and where they are occurring, and also thinking that the quality of the archive that we compile needs to be accessible for future researchers or organisations and institutions looking into such things as war crimes. It needs to be something that can be worked with. So, what Ernesto Calvo organised, he organised us again into country specialist teams, trying to figure out which are the Twitter - we call them Twitter handles but obviously, these are individuals on Twitter that are providing the most important information on Ukraine in our perspective. And indeed, in order to identify a core of 400 Twitter accounts or handles, and the individuals that accompany them, you need to have field-based and language-based knowledge. This is where our team from the University of Manchester came in: Alina, Nychyk, Anna Glew,, Kateryna Merina. Emma Mateo, all who had either fluent or native language, knowledge in Ukrainian and Russian.

We quickly identified these 400 core Twitter accounts. What happens, and who are these people, who are these Twitter accounts that we were looking at? We tried to identify key national politicians, key regional and local politicians, and a surprisingly large number had Twitter accounts already in the very early days, which we were not expecting, to be perfectly honest. Key activists and NGO practitioners, policy folks that we know were substantively embedded in a variety of informational networks, and in a few cases, we also identified some journalists that we know are doing investigative work on the ground or have particular ties to either the combat zones or to the army and are in-the-know.

So, once we identified these 400 Twitter handles, we started to follow the whole network, and from these core 400 Twitter accounts, we identify then 3 732 Twitter accounts. And once we have this larger network that is connected to our core, that the core that we know, is offering us information of a high quality, we then look at the language in which this network is communicating. And we identify within community classification of the different languages that people are tweeting in, essentially. So, as you can see, 18% of the tweets in our larger network were in English, but 61% were tweeting regularly in Ukrainian. So, a broad majority were tweeting regularly in Ukrainian, and in some cases only Ukrainian. About 16% - almost equal to that of the English tweets - was in Russian, and then 5% were tweeting in other languages within our network. What we did then, once we identified both the languages that this network was tweeting in, and its different community classification, we identified eight different communities out of the 3 732 Twitter handles, communities that were grouped in a very particular way around the sorts of information that they were sharing with each other.

Okay, so here is just a visual demonstration of two different communities. On the left-hand side, you have Community One. And as you can see from this table here, Community One predominantly tweets in English: 60.7% of the tweets that Community One, the black bars, tweets in was English. Community Two has a very different profile. Community Two is split very much three ways between English, Russian and Ukrainian. Okay. Here we do not show you Community, Five, and Four, and Three and others, but you can see that they have a very different language profile.

Then, once people like myself looked at the data with Ernesto - again, you needed to have not only the language skills, but also the local knowledge of who are the individuals that make up these communities - we started just to verify whether the eight communities we

identified that seem to appear as separate distinct informational communities are in fact ones that make sense in the real world. We don't disclose the information of who makes up the communities at this point, but we did verify these communities one by one, checking the list of who's included to make sure whether or not those smaller community networks made sense. And I can tell you that I was really, really impressed by - I didn't actually know this element of the data science work that Anessa did before - how very clearly, these communities made up real-world networks.

One community was more strongly associated with the Zelensky government, his party, and key actors associated with the party and government. Another community was very clearly associated with a variety of Western diplomats, and journalists who speak to Western sources or work with Western media. And that was very different. And another community was that of very clearly opposition politicians and their networks. Yet another community was more clearly part of the South-Eastern political sphere in Ukraine. And yet another community was very clearly a civil society, Ukrainian community. So, once we saw these communities unfold, on paper and on our screens, we became really actually pleased that we were able to very quickly identify these key communities. We did some adjusting; in some cases, accounts were not tweeting at all, they just existed, and therefore they didn't make sense to keep them in, or we identified a new individual that we thought was of a particular high quality that we should include in our data.

So, we have these communities, we know that we have the sources of information that are of high quality, we know that the composition of the communities now makes sense to the real-life reality on the ground, and we know that they are speaking - at least tweeting - in different languages at different rates. So, then we have to now classify - can you imagine thinking by hand to classify millions and millions of tweets would be certainly impossible. Luckily, my colleagues can create code that helps us do this in a systematic way. Out of the 50 million, sorry, out of the 5 million daily tweets we collect, we had to create these four event categories. And how does one do this? How does one take a heading such as 'human rights abuses' and distil it into a series of key words or key terms that we are confident will catch these sorts of events, as horrific as they are, occurring in real time? So, what we did is we identified 1 892 key words, across English, Ukrainian and Russian. This literally meant identifying a variety of words that would capture all sorts of human rights abuses, a variety of words or key terms sometimes (as you can see from the table at the bottom) a series of words that would capture an evacuation, that would capture a displacement that would capture a war crime.

Also - and this is something of particular import for linguists and those who study culture - you have to replicate the living language of how people would actually - and I get a little bit upset and I have shivers on my body right now - because you have to identify the living language of how ordinary people would type, tweet about, for instance, a kidnapping, right? How they would report on the bombing of civilian infrastructure, how they would report on the bombing of a school. And you have to make sure that you're capturing that real-life lexicon, which I have to tell you was incredibly difficult, incredibly difficult, and in some moments - and I'll explain to you in a in a second, one specific such moment - it gets very dark, because although social science, although conflict studies can offer us a variety of words, to use and identify a war crime occurring, a human rights abuse occurring - certainly I have a lot of knowledge of civilian resistance and the language we might use - sitting there with your team of Ukrainian students coming up with the sorts of horrific things that you

know will need to be counted is highly traumatising. It's highly traumatising. But you understand there's an importance to identifying these words. And never in my life, have I been so acutely aware of the importance of language and words in my work, because one slight change of a word that seems appropriate that seems even grammatically correct, might not be catching and producing the quality data that we want, right? So here is just an example of the sorts of things, all these sorts of things: 'bombing of civilians', 'bombing a population', 'bombing of a hospital', 'bombing of a school', 'shelling, of civilians', 'shelling a population', so on and so on, all these varieties, just to capture attacks on civilian infrastructure, right? Attacks on civilian infrastructure, or the bombing and destruction of civilian infrastructure is the way it becomes grouped later when it's reported on. It's the way it becomes grouped in a report, a formal report, a legal report, but you need to be able to identify all these varieties of that one group of an event.

And lastly, we also thought a great deal about, how do you determine where in Ukraine events are happening? And there's a variety of things you can do when it comes to social media. Some people are instantly - and perhaps you do this when you look at Twitter yourselves if you do look at Twitter, or if you look at Telegram or Instagram or Facebook - you sometimes might look at the geolocation of the account, right? Where that account is supposed to be, where it was set up. Sometimes that is available to you, sometimes that is in the metadata. Oftentimes it isn't. But there are multiple reasons why we didn't want to use that.

One, we thought that it's highly unreliable data to be perfectly frank, because you can set up an account living in London, turn off your location tracing, and then move to a different locality, and so on, so forth. You can also set up accounts using VPNs, and all sorts of other things. And of course, it's a way to trace that, but certainly, it's an unreliable type of data. Also, heaven forbid, it was a reliable form of data and there is an individual that is tweeting from a locality that is experiencing a horrific war crime, or they're reporting on their civilian resistance, the posters that they put up in the middle of the night. Heaven forbid that geolocation is correct and we are actually identifying the individual where they are exactly. So, we said certainly we don't want to do that, but we obviously had to use some kind of a geospatial mapping and location in order to be able to alert people to where events are occurring. So, what we decided to do is we decided to take not the lowest, the local geographical unit, which is called 'gromada level'. You could get down to a block or two of where these tweets are coming from, right? Again, for security reasons, for ethical reasons, we certainly did not want to do that. In a lot of these cases, we decided to avoid that. What we did is we mapped all these millions of tweets onto 30 000 town and city names, again using different varieties of a name. So, let's take Manchester for an example. In English, we don't have these varieties of how we refer to Manchester, but in Slavic languages - and those of you studying Slavic languages, currently, you will understand that - there will be varieties of the towns' names, right? So, we had to identify all these varieties of towns' names as well. We went through multiple rounds of verification that included actually looking at samples, random samples, of the tweets we're collecting for each type of category. And by hand, reading through each tweet, clicking through the link, seeing if it is appropriate and capturing the things we want to capture. Again, this is a living language; we kept having to, time and time again, check whether or not *Data for Ukraine* is reflecting real-life living language. And this is again where I want to just take a pause and talk about the trauma of this sort of research. When I first started receiving information through a

variety of means about what we know, about Bucha - this is before it was in the media - through friends and colleagues in the know, it, it was somewhere in the middle of the night, and I understood that we're going to have to adjust our key terms. Now, knowing that in Bucha, there were accounts of horrific violent rapes. other violent acts, I did not allow my research team to be involved in the coming up with new key terms. Because we also have a duty to protect our colleagues, and certainly students and postdocs that work with us. We have a duty of care to them. But in order to make sure that this project does continue to have high-quality data, we needed to do this identification. And when you realise that you have to add a word like 'decapitate', 'beheaded', and the different varieties of that violent act and the language of violence, it's incredibly difficult to do. But it works so it's worth it. And here very quickly, in the last few minutes, I'll just show you how it works.

What we have on the website - which I'll direct you to in a second - is we have two types of visual representations of the data. One is the graph. And on the left-hand side, this is for human rights abuses back in approximately May June - is that correct? Oh, April, actually, sorry, at the bottom, it's April - and each of the massive spikes, that is a change, that is the change in frequency of reports on the event. So, on the days where we see this massive spike, we know that there is potentially a major human rights abuse event or episode occurring. As you can see, April and May very much look like this, you have multiple very high spikes, because there was a lot of information coming in from the ground about the varieties of human rights abuses.

The second type of visual image that we produce, on a three-hourly basis, is the geographic location map. The larger the circle in the locality on the map, the higher the magnitude of the event. So those larger circles mean that there are major events occurring here in this case when it comes to human rights abuses, or reports of major events. So, although I won't have time to go through it click-by-click, if you want to do this yourself, please go to dataforukraine.com. Very simple to remember. When you're there, click on the live interactive map. Once you go to the live interactive map, you can actually uncheck and check different boxes. You can look at human rights abuses and civil resistance separately, and you can zoom in and zoom out on the localities to look at where these events are occurring. You can change the time scope as well, and you can have a pretty good idea very quickly in the analysis and findings.

We are quite certain now that we can identify major events occurring in our three categories, approximately three to five hours prior to them being reported in major media, including in Ukraine. We know that the length of the tweets and the language they use are very different. So, the content in English and Russian is very different. The content in English is highly useful. It does alert us to official things happening oftentimes in the West, but it is not useful for identifying events. Unsurprisingly, the best quality source of breaking news about on-the-ground events occurring is Ukrainian. We also know that the types of links that are shared in the tweets are very different by language. Most importantly, the highest rate of disinformation is occurring in the Russian language tweets. So, the highest rate of links to disinformation type websites is taking place in the Russian links in the Russian language tweets we collect. This obviously has a major implication for studying wartime disinformation.

And we also now know, looking at our data over the June to September, we know that there are two types of peaks when it comes to human rights abuses occurring. One is a sort of peak right after the occupation, as we saw in the case of Bucha. But now we are more

confident also that our data is catching the period when the Russian army is actually losing ground. We have an uptick in human rights abuse reports in the two weeks prior to the Russian army losing ground and locality. This means two things, we can identify the Russian army losing ground, but also that the Russian army is upping the level of human rights abuse as it loses, which should send shivers throughout everyone. Well, it's just despicable and horrific when you realise that. And obviously we wouldn't report it if we weren't starting to get quite clear.

But civilian resistance continues - and this is where I'm going to end off. It continues every single day. So, although you can go to our website and be alerted to humanitarian needs, or human rights abuses, and all these things are absolutely devastating, click on the civilian resistance option, you will at least see one or two dots in occupied territories of civilian resistance.

And here are just some examples of the sorts of things we can catch in the tweets: people writing messages on walls; signing statements that their locality is standing with the Ukrainian army; making posters telling the Russian army to go back to Rostov or to face the Ukrainian army 10 kilometres away; and just painting the Ukrainian flag across their towns and villages in the middle of the night. This is literally what one group in Kherson does regularly.

So just to leave you with my final slide. What we catch in the *Data for Ukraine* project about civilian resistance is not only that it's happening and it's happening daily - and you can identify that dot yourself - but it also connects to what people are telling us in surveys. We estimate that about 80% of the Ukrainian civilian population are engaged in the war effort in some way, whether they be in occupied territories, or whether they are in Ukrainian territory controlled by the Ukrainian army.

Thank you very much.

Mirjam

Thank you. Thank you from all here for this incredibly impactful and insightful presentation.

PRESENTATION 2: *SHORT COURSE IN UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE*

Dr Caroline Rowan-Olive

School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, The Open University

Welcome to our course, which I'm really delighted to have this opportunity to introduce to you. It was written by Olga Volosova and myself. We are also very grateful to our critical reader, Marta Jenkala, who is also from UCL; she was a critical reader and has helped us enormously.

So, the first thing I want to say in an introduction is it's divided into five units. They're called 'weeks', but you can take as much or as little time as you need. There are activities for practice, but no test or exam. And I emphasise this because for many people, the idea of taking a course, involves considerable commitment, and to be honest, some fear, and it's generally a decision not to be taken lightly. But our course isn't like that: sign up, investigate, give it a try! And however much or as little of it you cover, you'll know more than you did before.

Also at this point, I'd like to say what the course is not. And the reason for this is based on a conversation I had with my brother, who told people hosting Ukrainians in his village about the course and they replied, 'oh, we use Google Translate'. I'd just like to say this is not a substitute for Google Translate, you will still need to use Google Translate for meaningful interactions on a day-to-day basis. What this course is, is a way of saying, 'welcome, we're glad you're here. We're interested in you as people so we're learning your language and finding out more about your culture'. And if say you're a host, and you greet your guests in the morning with 'dobroho ranku/Доброго ранку [good morning] - apologies to Oga and everybody else for my pronunciation - if you give them a greeting in their own language, that might just make their day a bit easier. Ukrainians are always delighted when you speak their language. Because Ukraine is not somewhere where everybody speaks English. Increasingly, young people do, but many older people don't. That said, I can't emphasise enough that you really will find Ukrainian language and culture fascinating. I've learned so much since I started work on this course back in April and it has been a truly enriching experience.

So, those are some of the main things I wanted to say about the course. But here we've got a list of the kinds of people that we thought might be interested in it, and you can see it's a really broad range. And we've designed it to cover the widest range of possible learners. So, at one extreme, if you're mainly interested in culture, you can focus on the culture boxes if you like. They're written in English, and they cover things like festivals, cuisine, music, history, geography, Eurovision, and other bits and pieces, nuggets, chunks of knowledge.

At the other extreme if you're really studying the language seriously, or if like me, you fall in love with it once you start learning it, then you can learn everything in the course. It's got grammar, explanations and activities and a very, very thorough grounding in the Ukrainian alphabet, which you can learn very thoroughly or if you don't want to learn the alphabet you don't have to. Everything is also available in transliterated form. So, it's kind of a pick-and-mix: if you're really hungry, eat everything, if not be selective. You can always come back for more later.

Here we've got some examples on this slide. So, if you're a host - and we think hosts are probably the most important, or the initially most important target learners we had - then you'll learn the topics and the topics we chose, really with a view to the hosts, were 'greetings' 'homes', 'families', 'food', and 'healthcare'. Plus, you'd learn 'education' if your guests include young people. A doctor or nurse would focus on healthcare, and there is extra vocabulary for healthcare professionals in the relevant unit. If you're a volunteer, say in a food bank, then you'd find the food unit useful. Also, particularly greetings, wherever you're volunteering greetings are always useful. Teachers would focus on greetings and education and the section on differences between the Ukrainian and the UK education system would also be helpful and learn to say, 'laskovo prosymo/ласково просимо' [welcome] - and, again, apologies for the pronunciation.

The division of labour in writing the course is that Olga is a native speaker who speaks good Ukrainian, obviously perfect Ukrainian and I, the learner who's trying to catch up, I'm a bit like a supply teacher that just tries to keep one lesson ahead of the class. In the course, I play the role of Mary, who is the host learning Ukrainian, but really, for the good Ukrainian, the proper Ukrainian, you have to listen Olga's bits.

So, coming back to teachers, making posters might be a good idea. Then finally, the people who are really in love with the language, devoted language learners, you can really learn it quite thoroughly in those five weeks. Not the whole language, but you can learn the alphabet, and the grammar that is associated with it.

Another key point about this course are the forums. Unlike most online language courses, there are two course forums: one for communication between learners, and one with the course learning and community advisers.

The 'language forum' has an activity for each unit of the course and a thread for each unit of the course. The activity is usually some cultural research, but there are also language activities. If there's something you don't understand that was covered in the unit, then you can ask on the forum, and the learning adviser will explain it further. So, this is somewhere where really the learning adviser will really engage with the posts, so it's a valuable extension of the format of the course interaction.

The 'knowledge exchange forum' is what it says on the tin, an exchange of knowledge about supporting Ukrainian displaced people in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Collectively, everyone on the course, will have a lot of knowledge to share. And as the Community Adviser on the course, I shall also share what I know and find someone who does know what I don't.

I think these forums - particularly, possibly, the knowledge exchange forum - will be a real hub of information for people supporting Ukrainians.

Here we have a list of the topics from the course which I've mentioned. You can see they're very everyday domestic kinds of topics, I wanted to say a bit about the pedagogy first, the idea of teaching language and context which is important to all of us. So, we have Mary and her Ukrainian friends, who will engage in dialogues, and then Olga will explain the dialogues in English - we want everything to be as clear as possible. There are lots of interactive online activities, and there are about 200 audio recordings, some of them very short, some of them quite long. We've made five video screencasts for you to watch. And we have this functionality where you can record yourself and compare what you say with pre-recorded

model answers. We have grammar, it's light touch, context-embedded, but still thorough. And again, the teaching of the Ukrainian alphabet is thorough if you want it, and with plenty of opportunities for practice.

So, then there's 'culture' and it's just such a huge topic. I can't possibly cover it all, but I wondered if you want to come in here Olga? The first two photos on the left, here are your pictures so could you tell us a bit about them?

Dr Olga Volosova

School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

Yes, thank you, Carolne. So, we have decided to include as many pictures in this course as possible to make it more attractive to learners, of course. So, since we were talking about food in our course, because it's one of the most important topics which you need to know about when you're hosting someone, so of course, we were talking about Ukrainian food, about our national dish borscht - it's on the left on the screen - and this dish was recently included into UNESCO heritage list as a Ukrainian dish.

Of course, we were talking about two main festivals of the year, most loved in all Christian countries, Christmas and Easter. Here you can see Easter egg pictures which I drew myself; we make them using empty egg shells. And you can see here, this year's Eurovision winners, a group called Kalush Orchestra. Caroline made a short story about this group. Also in our course Caroline included hope stories. We were talking about something that brings hope in this time which is quite dark for Ukrainians, so there are some stories about, for example, the *Dnipro Kids* charity, which brought Ukrainian orphans to Scotland so that they can stay here in this time. And, of course, there are some other pictures. I myself, as a Ukrainian, was and am touched by the support of the British people and by the number of Ukrainian flags in London streets. You can see here on the right, a picture of a house that was taken during the Platinum Jubilee. Along with the British bunting you can see two Ukrainian flags. So yesterday one flag was still there. And here you can see Downing Street, it's decorated in Ukrainian colours and with sunflowers, which were one of the symbols in Ukraine, on Ukraine's Independence Day on the 24th of August. On the left, you can see a picture which I took during the *Vyshyvanka* march in London. There is such an event as a *Vyshyvanka Day*; it's the day when Ukrainians celebrate Ukrainian traditional clothes, and you will find a story about it in our course. And apart from the Ukrainians this year, this march was joined by people of other communities, by Jews, Arabs, people of different ethnic backgrounds, who came to support Ukraine. And, of course, this year it had this political shade as well, but you can see people are holding posters saying, 'stop genocide in Ukraine'.

And here you can see pictures from Scotland, taken at a football match, here you have Caroline's picture, which she took in a small village in Derbyshire because we want to show that not only big cities like London, but also small communities are supporting Ukraine. And you can see another picture taken in Cambridge; it was from a story about Ukrainian *Vyshyvanka*, and here you can see house painted in blue and yellow, the colours of Ukrainian flag. This is a picture taken by a British host who has a Ukrainian refugee living with her now and they made let's say symbolic Ukrainian embroidered shirts using ordinary bedlinen. So, this is what you can see in our course apart from grammar, apart from its main content.

Caroline Rowan Olive

Thanks so much Olga! Now all you need is the link to the course to sign up. Give it a try.

Mirjam Hauck

Now I'd like to give the final word back to Olga Onuch.

Olga Onuch

Well, first of all, Caroline and Olga, congratulations. And I think, if I couldn't have stressed it more in my presentation, learning languages and knowing languages is extremely important. And yes, it's true, Ukrainians love to hear a hello breathe and 'dobroho dnya/доброго дня' [good afternoon] and 'dobryy vechir/обрий вечір' [good evening], and it would be lovely to hear more of that in Manchester and Newcastle or in London, wherever you might be. Thank you.

Mirjam Hauck

Okay. Thanks to all of you. It's been a very intensive, as I said earlier, impactful hour. I think we all now need to step away and digest everything you've shared with us, the three of you. And we wish you Olga in particular, all the strength you need, you and your team and your colleagues to carry on this incredibly important work you are doing. Thank you for sharing. Thank you.

And with this, I close this *Distinguished Speakers* talk. We look forward to seeing some more or all of you again in November and we'll send out information between now.

Bye. Thank you.

[End of transcript]

Next Distinguished Speaker Talk coming up - Monday 21st November

We are delighted to be welcoming Dr Heriberto Cuayáhuatl, Senior Lecturer in Computer Science from the University of Lincoln, who will be exploring themes within artificial intelligence and the viability of robots interviewing and triaging patients within healthcare contexts.

Despite advancements in AI, particularly the capabilities of robots to engage in verbal and non-verbal communication with humans, are they a future reality in healthcare or still just an illusion?

Andrew Gargett will then be giving a short introduction to the short course, AI Matters.

Please register to attend here: [Distinguished Speaker Series: Robots Interviewing Patients Tickets, Mon 21 Nov 2022 at 13:00 | Eventbrite](#)