

## R E V I E W S

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*MIGRACJE BIAŁORUSINÓW DO POLSKI: PERSPEKTYWA  
DYSKURSU PUBLICZNEGO (MIGRATION  
OF BELARUSIANS TO POLAND: PUBLIC DISCOURSE  
PERSPECTIVE)* BY TATIANA KANASZ, WARSAW,  
WYDAWNICTWO AKADEMII PEDAGOGIKI SPECJALNEJ  
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VIKTAR AUCHARENKA

INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

The 2020 protests in Belarus and the mass emigration that ensued, in addition to the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, have prompted researchers to pay attention to the rapidly expanding demographic of Belarusian migrants in Poland. Before this, the primary focus had been on the larger group of Ukrainian immigrants. Research on the most recent wave of Belarusian immigrants has highlighted a significant gap in media discourse analysis. Sociologist Tatiana Kanasz has attempted to address this in her book, *Migracje Białorusinów do Polski: Perspektywa dyskursu publicznego* (2023). The book aims to provide a sociological analysis of the “contemporary immigration of Belarusians to Poland, examining public discourse and its evolving nature” (Kanasz 2023, 7).

This 132-page Polish-language work primarily analyses how Belarusian immigrants are portrayed in Polish and Belarusian print and online publications. It compares these portrayals with those that dominated the press in previous years, identifies the main trends and explains these trends in the context of sociopolitics. The book comprises an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and an appendix containing the analysed titles.

Three theoretical sections precede the two main sections, which analyse publications from Polish and Belarusian mass media. The first section provides an overview of migration concepts and the latest trends in migration research. The author begins by defining migration and reviewing how it is understood in academic and public discourse. She further identifies significant sociological categories related to it.

Kanasz also discusses the critical role played by the state and the political situation in the migration process and how its outcomes are perceived. She elaborates on major trends such as the current increase in female migrants. The author additionally examines factors that may affect how migrants are perceived in the host society.

In her analysis, Tatiana Kanasz focuses on the concept of stereotypes, categorising them and dwelling on *explicit stereotypes*, which are particularly important for sociological research. She notes that, although stereotypes play a role in shaping the image of migrants, this image is also influenced by other factors inherent in social reality (Kanasz 2023, 16). Particular attention is given to analysing the numerous and diverse studies of migration in Poland since 1989. The author notes that analyses of public discourse barely cover Belarusian migrants. Nevertheless, there is a tradition of analysing discourse concerning this topic. This enables the author to build on this trend by demonstrating how the discourse has changed in recent years (Kanasz 2023, 22).

The second section focuses on the methodology and tools used in public discourse research. The author focuses on approaches that reveal the ideological and value-based nature of media texts and the way in which language shapes perceptions of migrants. In outlining the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study, she relies on the constructivist paradigm, which views reality as a social construct, and on the concept of *mediatisation*, which emphasises the media's growing influence on social processes. Kanasz provides a concise yet comprehensive summary of the principles and benefits of purposive and cyclical sampling, offering an in-depth analysis of the subject. The author expounds at length on the fundamental principles and advantages of critical discourse analysis, framework analysis and categorical analysis. The researcher emphasises the importance of analysing the content of Polish and Belarusian media within established, general categories. Kanasz categorises the Polish press as either liberal or conservative based on the values they promote.

In the third chapter, Kanasz provides an overview of the historical and contemporary international context of Belarusian migration to Poland, alongside statistical data on migrant profiles from 1990 to 2023. The Office for Foreigners and the General Statistical Office are the primary sources of these data. Research reports are also essential to this section as they show the problems Belarusian migrants face in Poland (Kanasz 2023, 49). This provides a framework for the author to demonstrate which issues are reflected in the media and which are ignored.

In the following two chapters, the author looks at how migrants are portrayed in the Polish and Belarusian media, using some of the most common stories as examples. This analysis demonstrates an incongruence between discursive representations and actuality. An emphasis on political migration characterises the observed deviation, while statistical data highlight a considerable number of economic migrants.

Furthermore, the cultural dimension of migration is overlooked. A favourable stereotype is formed about labour migrants, who are usually highly qualified and employed either in the high-tech sector or positions below their qualifications.

It is vital to emphasise certain methodological limitations of the study that seemed crucial. Firstly, the issue of the book's title must be addressed. The book's analysis focuses on the press discourse, sociological studies and official statistics, which are only part of the broader public discourse that "includes all messages available to the public" (Czyżewski et al. 2010, 21). At the very least, the book should either have included current social media discussions on the topic or indicated in the title that the study focuses primarily on press discourse. More precisely, the book is devoted mainly to studying media discourse during the 2020–2023 period (with the review of earlier research merely serving as background). Therefore, reflecting this time frame in the title would be reasonable.

It is also noteworthy that the analysis of statistical data is uncritical. The author's figures may not include undocumented migrants or individuals whose passports have expired. Another example that illustrates this is the discrepancy between the number of visas issued under the Poland Business Harbour programme and the number of professionals actually entering Poland. The Polish government recently highlighted this misalignment in an investigation.<sup>1</sup> It was discovered that some individuals had obtained this type of visa multiple times yet showed no intention of departing. Instead, they used the visas as a precautionary measure should Belarus become involved in the military conflict with Ukraine.

In the methodological section, the author compellingly illustrates the benefits of the chosen approaches – critical discourse analysis, framework analysis and categorical analysis. However, there is no justification for selecting these particular options when others are available. Interactive sociolinguistics and discursive psychology could at least be identified as alternatives (Stubbe et al. 2013). For example, including discursive psychology would help to answer the question of how the media reinforces schematic thinking and influences readers' perception of reality and identity by choosing the conventional path of stereotypical portrayals and sensationalised messages. This then translates into real social action. In the context of the deepening migration crisis, it is imperative to recognise the potential of seemingly trivial descriptions or everyday language to serve as a foundation for constructing reality and the subsequent transformation into political action (Weatherall 2007, 31–48).

1 Kacprzak, Izabela. 2023. "80 tysięcy specjalistów IT ze Wschodu dostało polskie wizy i zniknęło" [80,000 IT specialists from the East received Polish visas – and disappeared]. *Rzeczpospolita*, November 3. Accessed 7 August 2025. <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art39357501-80-tysiecy-specjalistow-it-ze-wschodu-dostalo-polskie-wizy-i-zniknelo/>

Consequently, in the absence of a comparison with other discourse analysis approaches, the author's choice appears arbitrary and lacks persuasive justification.

The selection of source publications is also a subject that merits discussion. Recognising the importance of the internet environment and the individual commentaries of internet users (Kanasz 2023, 27), the author restricts her analysis to articles published in the online versions of mainstream newspapers. With regard to the Polish media, the ranking of the Institute of Media Monitoring (as of March 2023) is cited as a basis for selection. However, from my perspective, the impartiality of the ranking from this institution should be justified. The Institute of Media Monitoring, *inter alia*, commercialises analysis and, consequently, offers this service on a commission basis.

Furthermore, the author selects publications from the ranking, but not exclusively the most popular ones. Conversely, she omits radio and television products, except those posted by the Onet.pl media outlet.<sup>2</sup> The choice of publications is justified by the high number of citations and the thematic saturation of the sample.

Conversely, within the Belarusian diaspora media landscape, she selected a mere two outlets: Belsat.eu<sup>3</sup> and Zerkalo.io.<sup>4</sup> The selection also raises concerns due to its limited scope; in my view, at least three media outlets widely followed by migrants should have been also included – Nasha Niva,<sup>5</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarus<sup>6</sup> and Euroradio<sup>7</sup> – alongside several others. It must be acknowledged that the popularity of these publications is not known to the author of this review, thus rendering any recommendation of them or other similar titles a highly subjective act. At the same time, my position as a member of the group discussed by the author enables me to assert that my choice is more aligned with reality.

It is also noteworthy that the author's decision to utilise the attribute "migrant" in reference to these media outlets has the potential to be misleading with respect to both the primary subject matter and the intended audience. Kanasz's observations are accurate in noting the restriction of access to the Belsat.eu and Zerkalo.io media outlets within Belarusian territory and the international location of the editorial offices. However, the content of the articles clearly indicates the domestic orientation of these media outlets. Compared to articles on Belarus *per se*, the number of articles on migration and migrants in these media is noticeably lower.

2 Onet. n.d. Accessed 7 August 2025. <https://www.onet.pl/>

3 Belsat TV. n.d. Accessed 7 August 2025. <https://belsat.eu/>

4 Zerkalo. n.d. Accessed 7 August 2025. <https://www.zerkalo.io/>

5 Nasha Niva. n.d. Accessed 17 July 2025. <https://nashaniva.com/>

6 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarus. n.d. Accessed 17 July 2025. <https://www.svaboda.org/>

7 Euroradio. n.d. Accessed 17 July 2025. <https://euroradio.fm/ru/>

In the study of the migrant representation in the media, Kanasz underlines the importance of the ideological and sociopolitical orientation of the publication authors. The researcher categorises the media according to their political orientations, inferred from the values they convey, dividing them into two main groups: conservative and liberal. However, she does not apply this classification to Belarusian media outlets. This division of the Polish media according to the political spectrum appears to be *a priori*, without providing arguments as to why she chose the terms “liberal” and “conservative” or according to what criteria they are singled out. It is also regrettable that the researcher does not provide a detailed explanation of the origins of her stereotypical generalisation that “Polish journalists’ interest in Belarusian topics in 2020 can be linked to the pro-freedom mentality of Poles” (Kanasz 2023, 104). This assertion is notable given her observation of the divergent perspectives of conservative and liberal media on this subject.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the author clearly defines all key terms, supports her findings with quotations from the analysed publications, provides a detailed account of the methodology and research process, and offers a comparative analysis of the discourses in Polish and Belarusian media. The study could have been strengthened by a more precise title, clearer articulation of the methodology, more critical examination of the statistical data and the categorisation of values. Nevertheless, it appears to be a socially relevant endeavour to demonstrate the potential consequences of how migrants are portrayed by media, especially when the researcher deems these consequences plausible.

These observations do not alter the fact that Tatiana Kanasz’s book merits the attention of scholars studying Belarusian issues, as it seeks to capture how migrants are currently portrayed in selected Belarusian and Polish media and the transformations occurring in these representations. The author’s argument regarding the advantages of the chosen methodological approach merits particular attention. This argument elucidates the value of the study for anthropologists. Discourse analysis facilitates a novel perspective on the text, clarifying the author’s perception, elucidating their motives and unveiling latent meanings. This approach infuses the text with emotional engagement and underscores its significance in the broader context of social reality. For several decades, anthropologists have also embraced the advances of this methodology in their research, demonstrating that media articles, for example, are not merely a record of facts, but a reflection of the cultural context and the intentions of their creators. Comprehending the image of a Belarusian migrant as depicted in the mass media will facilitate anthropological research on the subject of Belarusian migration.

The book’s primary value, it is argued, lies in its juxtaposition of the challenges encountered by Belarusians in Poland, particularly with regard to the regularisation of their stay and access to the labour market, and the manner in which these issues

are portrayed in various media. The author's argument for the necessity of creating a more diverse image of Belarusian migrants necessitates the continuation of research in this area, including from an anthropological perspective.

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## AUTHOR'S CONTACT:

Viktar Aucharenka

Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw

E-Mail: [v.aucharenka@student.uw.edu.pl](mailto:v.aucharenka@student.uw.edu.pl)

ORCID: 0009-0001-2131-1321

