

# CHANGING LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN WARTIME: FROM POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION TO DECOLONIAL PROCESSES

UDK 81'246.2'26:316.75:355.01(477)

DOI: 10.18523/lcmp2522-9281.2025.11.50-66

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## LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AND LANGUAGE PLANNING IN WARTIME UKRAINE: CHANGES, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### *Abstract*

**Background.** War as a specific social context has a powerful influence on the linguistic consciousness and linguistic behavior of Ukrainians, affecting their cognitive activity and the resources of nominative means of the Ukrainian language. Over the period of nearly three decades since Ukrainian independence, considerable attention was paid in discussions on language policy to finding compromise solutions for granting Russian some official status. After February 24, 2022, the issue of giving the Russian language any status disappeared from the public agenda. The war has not only strengthened Ukrainian as a marker of the country's national identity, but it also deeply influenced Ukrainians' perceptions of the "us vs. them" opposition, and many Ukrainians who had previously communicated mainly in Russian switched to Ukrainian in an attempt to emphasize their Ukrainian national identity.

**Contribution to the research field.** *The Ukrainian language, as a symbolic marker of the nation, is associated not only with the national ethnographic heritage, but also with a certain type of political culture that distinguishes Ukraine from Russia. This finding has important implications for predicting the effects of the current language policy and for developing a language ideology that reflects not only perceptions of the current state of the language but also what it should be or what it should become in the future.*

**Purpose.** *The aim of this paper is twofold: (1) to explore how beliefs about language mediate the relationship between language use and social organization in the circumstances of Russian military aggression against Ukraine, and (2) to provide an assessment of the current state and future prospects of language planning in Ukraine, particularly regarding ideological interaction among the major agents of language policy.*

**Methods.** *The article applies the participant-observation method, the critical discourse analysis method, the content analysis method, and language policy documentation analysis.*

**Results.** *In postcolonial societies, language ideologies are constantly constructed and re-constructed in discursive interactions at the micro and macro levels. The role of language ideology as a regulator of language behavior is particularly significant at the grassroots level, where the influence of official norms and regulations does not reach or is very weak. This allows language ideologies to perform social work.*

**Discussion.** *Ideological consensus and practical cooperation among the state authorities, the mass media, the academic community, and the representatives of civil society have greatly contributed to the replacement of the assimilationist ideology of Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism with the “one nation, one language” ideology. The Ukrainian language is increasingly becoming a supra-ethnic as a means of communication not only for the Ukrainian ethnic group but also for a wide range of citizens of different nationalities.*

**Keywords:** language ideology, monolingualism, bilingualism, language planning, linguistic diversity, linguistic decolonization.

## 1. Introduction

Language ideologies are in most cases components of broader ideological projects (Philips, 2015, p. 558). Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, language policy in Ukraine has been determined by the confrontation of two antagonistic language ideologies. One of them advocated the spread of Ukrainian into public spheres from which it was ousted or denied access during the times of Russian

imperial domination. The opposite ideology pursued the preservation of the consequences of Russification. It was presented to the public in the guise of following the European liberal values that promote individual freedom and human rights.

Since the start of the full-scale military Russian aggression against Ukraine, the number of Ukrainian citizens shifting from Russian to Ukrainian in their daily interactions has been steadily growing. Symbolically, they distance themselves from the ideology of the so-called Russian World. The war has not only strengthened Ukrainian as the definitive marker of the country's national identity, but it has also deeply influenced "Ukrainians' perceptions about themselves and the 'other', urging many to redefine and reassess the markers of their belongingness" (Bocale, 2002, p. 67).

War as a specific social context had a powerful influence on the linguistic consciousness and linguistic behavior of Ukrainians, affecting their cognitive activity and the resources of nominative means of the Ukrainian language (Yavorska, 2024, p. 225). The Russian language itself fell into the category of objects characterized as "foreign" (Britsyn, 2024, c. 180). A characteristic feature of wartime texts is the consistent implementation of the "us vs. them" opposition, which affects not only the lexicon of the language, but also its grammar and spelling (Taranenko, 2024 a, pp. 102–113).

## 2. Theoretical Background

Language ideologies underline how people perceive a language, its varieties, and their social value (Abtahian & McDonough Quinn, 2017, p. 139). In mass consciousness, language ideologies can exist both as tacit assumptions about language and its use and as explicit formulations—"conversations about language,"—which reveal these assumptions and are subsequently reproduced in the form of quotations, precedential statements, allusions, and memes. An important feature of language ideologies is their "vagueness" and "everydayness." They are perceived as given and thus do not require critical reflection (Yavorskaia, 2011, p. 354).

Language ideologies are fragmented rather than monolithic. They represent the interests of social groups not directly, but by interacting with a complex set of ideas and stereotypes that have developed in the past. The variability of the different parameters of linguistic ideologies reflects their social function: social roles are variable and multiple, formed at the intersection of class, gender, age, religion, worldview, and other social variables (Piller, 2015,

p. 921; Blackledge, 2000, p. 26; Mallikarjun, 2018, p. 272). Sociolinguists and political scientists draw attention to the congruence of the ideologies of the nation-state and the state language (McCrea, 2015, p. 11). For example, the unity of France is inseparable from the unity of the French language; in the words of one researcher, “the French language is not *a*<sup>1</sup> core element but *the* core element of modern French identity” (McCrea, 2015, p. 9).

One of the important aspects of language ideology is where it begins and in what direction it develops. Top-down language ideology (Vukotić, 2019, pp. 11–14) which is an essential part of the state-sponsored language policy, originates from the authorities and is usually set by normative acts regulating the application of a language (or languages) and language norms, as well as by the practical activities of the authorities to change or preserve the language situation in the country. The general public may react differently to government directives, accepting, rejecting, or modifying them depending on a wide range of sociocultural factors. Bottom-up language ideology is formed at the grassroots informal level, in particular through the activities of civil society institutions, the scientific community, educators, community activists, the media, and others (Blackledge, 2000, p. 40). Top-down and bottom-up approaches to the formation of language ideologies can alternate or combine in the same country at the same time or at different times.

When a language is under threat, essentialist ideology becomes more relevant—in order to belong to community X, you must speak language X (Abtashian & McDonough Quinn, 2017, p. 139). Proponents of essentialist ideology associate language with a specific community and equate the loss of language with the loss of culture. Language ideologies reflect not only perceptions of the current state of a language but also what it should be or what it should become in the future (Philips, 2015, p. 557).

Language ideology is a diffuse, rather than monolithic, phenomenon. It can be defined as a complex of ideologemes about language, connected by internal gravity (Azhniuk, 2024, p. 13). By “language ideologeme” we mean the smallest unit of language ideology capable of performing certain socially relevant functions. The specific weight of each ideologeme varies. The most influential ideologemes form the conceptual core of language ideology. Less important peripheral ideologemes may lose their significance over time and disappear, or, conversely, increase their significance and shift from the periphery of the

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<sup>1</sup> Italics are in the original text of the article.

concept to its core. The growing influence of certain ideologemes in one language domain can lead to the emergence of local varieties of language ideology, adapted to the specifics of the region or micro-region. A linguistic-ideological consensus can form within a macro-region, as is the case, for example, with the ideologemes “linguistic diversity” and “gender reform of language,” which cover a fairly wide range of languages.

The role of language ideology as a regulator of language behavior is particularly significant at the grassroots level, where the influence of official norms and regulations does not reach, or is very weak. The implicit, vaguely articulated nature of language ideology at the level of everyday “popular culture” makes it more influential (Farr & Song, 2011, p. 654). At this level, language ideology begins to play the role of a “policy with the manager left out” (Albury, 2020, p. 359).

### 3. Results and discussion

One of the major ideological developments in the collective conscience of Ukrainians under the influence of the Russian-Ukrainian war was the discovery that language is not merely a communicative tool, but an existential value. The idea once propounded mostly by the patriotic intellectuals, gained recognition in both the general public and the powers-that-be. It became a determining factor of the ideological mainstream in Ukraine. Ukrainian political elites despite the efforts of the “Russian World,” dismissed the idea of a bilingual Ukraine and refused to follow the Belarus linguistic scenario <sup>2</sup>. The “One nation, one language” principle became the dominant ideologeme. According to Scott Richards, one of the Swiss-based investors who visited Ukraine in April 2022, “Ukrainian has become a symbol of heritage, survival, strength and resistance” (Armitage, 2022). The war deeply influenced “Ukrainians’ perceptions about themselves and the ‘other’, urging many to redefine and reassess the markers of their belongingness” (Bocale, 2022, p. 6).

Language ideology is being engineered in the public discourse. It is important to emphasize that ideology is more shaped by the stories and examples

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<sup>2</sup> According to G. Hentschel and M. Brüggemann, “The formal equality of the two official languages — Belarusian and Russian — does not correspond to reality, as the state language policy does not provide substantial support for the “weaker” Belarusian language, especially in education. The language balance has remained the same as it was in the Soviet Union; Belarusian can be considered a language that is in danger of disappearing” (Khentshel & Briuhhemann, 2016, p. 73).

than by the articles of law. The main storyteller today is the media whose impact on language ideology can hardly be overestimated. Alongside the media, important agents of shaping language ideology are politicians and government officials, university and school teachers, language activists. In Ukraine, there appears to be an ideological consensus among all of these agents concerning the major issues of language policy.

Until recently, the direction from which language ideology was orchestrated and shaped was more bottom-up than top-down. NGOs and language activists, together with academics and journalists, played the leading role in language legislation and language policy. Importantly, they made a decisive contribution to the drafting and promotion of the current language law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language.” It should be noted that the draft law (Article 1, paragraph 7) contained a provision according to which attempts to introduce official multilingualism in Ukraine were classified as actions contrary to the Constitution of Ukraine and “provoking linguistic division in the country, interethnic confrontation, and hostility.” (Azhniuk, 2019, p. 558) Although this provision was not included in the text of the law adopted by the Verkhovna Rada, Article 50 (paragraphs 5.2 and 12.5) retained a related provision stating that a person who has participated in attempts to introduce official multilingualism cannot be a candidate for the position of Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language.

A decade ago, in discussions on language policy, considerable attention was paid to finding compromise solutions that did not exclude granting Russian a certain official status — if not at the national level, then at least at the regional level. Volodymyr Kulyk, in his article “On the Unity of the Nation and the Status of the Russian Language,” published in *Krytyka* in March 2014 (Kulyk, 2014), notes that on social media, particularly Facebook, the question being discussed is how to “combine granting the Russian language a status acceptable to its speakers with creating conditions for the proper use of Ukrainian as the language of Ukrainian-speaking citizens and the language that symbolizes the unity of a multilingual nation.” (Kulyk, 2014) He did not rule out that in certain territories the languages of national minorities could have official status, and cited the opinion of one discussant that granting Russian the status of a second state language could, supposedly, remove the language issue from the agenda — which, the discussant argued, would be essential for preserving independence.

After February 24, 2022, the issue of giving the Russian language any status has virtually disappeared from the public agenda. Against the background of Kremlin's demands that Russian be granted official status in Ukraine, such ideas might be perceived as supporting the Russian World's narratives and as aiding the enemy. The war enforced the ideologeme that "equates Ukraine with the Ukrainian language: only those who possess Ukrainian are considered to truly embody and belong to the nation." (Bocale, 2022, p. 68)

For a long time, the statements of one of Ukraine's high-ranking officials, Oleksii Danilov (Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, 2019–2024), served as a kind of public tuning fork in the field of language policy. In June 2023, the media informed about his sharp reaction to the behavior of Maxim Buzhansky, a member of parliament from the ruling party, who refused to switch to Ukrainian on the air during a telethon on May 31, 2023:

"The remnants of the so-called 'Russian world,' who believe that they have the right to speak Russian on Ukrainian television, have no place not only on television but also in politics and in Ukraine. All the pro-Russian scum who have raped and betrayed the country for 30 years must and will be eradicated and thrown out everywhere like toxic Moscow trash." (Romanenko).

In October 2022, he stated on a political talk show that the Russian language should disappear from Ukraine because it is an element of Russian propaganda:

"Look: we don't need anything from them — let them leave us alone; let them go back to their swamps and croak in their Russian language." (Labiak).

On March 25, 2021, anticipating the Russia's full-scale aggression, Oleksii Danilov warned in an interview with Radio NV:

"There is a very dangerous situation related to language. I have said many times that Russia has chosen a doctrine whereby it no longer protects Russians but Russian speakers. This is a very dangerous situation for any country. And we say that if Ukraine starts speaking Russian, then expect Putin to defend those citizens without asking them whether they need that protection or not." (*Danilov: Yakshcho Ukraina pochynaie rozmovliaty rosiiskoiu, chekaite Putina*).

The public resonance of these statements and their impact on public consciousness is all the more significant given that Oleksii Danilov comes from the Luhansk region and has considerable experience working in the region's governing bodies. In particular, he was the mayor of Luhansk from 1994 to 1997 and head of the Luhansk Regional State Administration in 2005.

The conceptual summary of these and other similar statements was formulated by Taras Kremin, the Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language in 2020–2025: the period of “gentle Ukrainization” has come to an end, and the time has come for “offensive Ukrainization,” with strict control over compliance with the language law in all spheres of public life throughout Ukraine, without exception (Shurmakevych; Khoroshchak & Krechetova). From some media headlines (e.g., “The bilingual regime threatens national security” (Hrabchenko)), one might get the impression that Taras Kremin is an advocate of unconditional monolingualism. Yet, judging by his own statements, it is not bilingualism itself, but rather the use of Russian instead of Ukrainian in the work of local authorities that he objects to. According to the Commissioner, as a result of cooperation with all branches of government, the level of political support for his work “is incredibly high today.” (ibid)

The results of a survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology show that public readiness for dynamic derussification is high: 81 % of Ukrainians want Russian to be removed from official communication throughout the country (Melnyk). At the level of subjective forecasting of personal language behavior, the desired language behavior in the future is complete Ukrainianization: the indicators range from 76 % in the east to 94 % in the west (see Belei & Rovniak, p. 30). The reactions of the respondents’ interlocutors to their transition to Ukrainian are most often positive, although there are percentage fluctuations by region: in the West (73 %), in Kyiv (64 %), in the center (62 %), in the north (58 %), in the south — 49 %, and in the east — 47 % (ibid).

In February–March 2025, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted a study that showed a further increase in the percentage of Ukrainians who believe that Russian should not be taught in schools: from 52 % in 2023 to 58 % in 2025 (in 2019, this figure was 19 %). Among those who support the study of Russian in schools, when asked about the reasons for their answer, 38 % chose the option that it is a foreign language worth knowing for practical reasons (international communication, etc.), 14 % believe that “it is necessary to know the language of the enemy,” and only 5 % hold the opinion that “language should be outside of politics and that the Russian language is not to blame for the war” (Horon).

The information in the media about the disregard for the language rights of Ukrainians living in Russia also had a noticeable impact on public attitudes toward the use of Russian in education. At the UN Forum on Minorities in



December 2019, Yurii Kononenko, Director of the Department of General Secondary and Preschool Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, stated that in Russia where ethnic Ukrainians make up nearly two million (according to official data), there is not a single Ukrainian school (Bedryk). According to reports by the international organization Human Rights Watch, Russian authorities are engaged in eradicating the Ukrainian language in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia, spreading anti-Ukrainian propaganda and introducing Russian as the language of instruction in schools (*Rosiia vykoriniuie ukrainsku movu na okupovanykh terytoriakh - Human Rights Watch*). In 2025, the Russian authorities removed the Ukrainian language from the curricula of all educational institutions, although in the 2023–2024 academic year, Ukrainian was still taught as a subject in educational institutions in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions, as well as in Bashkortostan. Russian officials explain the removal of the Ukrainian language from the curriculum as due to changes in the geopolitical situation (Ponomarenko).

The media turned out to be very instrumental in promoting new models of communication with the Russian-speaking partners. If a reporter is aware that his interlocutor understands Ukrainian, he keeps speaking Ukrainian, while the other person may speak Russian if his Ukrainian language proficiency is not sufficient for spontaneous conversation. This is a vivid example of how ideology translates into practice: until recently, Ukrainian reporters usually switched to Russian with their Russophone guests.

Sociological polls show an ever-growing number of Ukrainian citizens shifting from Russian to Ukrainian in their daily intercourse. A survey conducted between November 29 and December 14, 2024, by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in cooperation with the Razumkov Center sociological service showed that 78 % of respondents consider Ukrainian their native language (in 2006, this figure was 68 %), 6 % consider Russian their native language (31 % in 2006), while 13 % of respondents named both Ukrainian and Russian as their native languages (31 % in 2006). Outside the home (e.g., at work or school), 72 % of respondents communicate mainly in Ukrainian (46 % in 2015), while 8 % communicate mainly in Russian (24 % in 2015). The proportion of those who are fluent in Ukrainian is higher among younger respondents (from 65 % among those aged 60 and over to 76 % among young people under 30). The increase in the use of Ukrainian, as well

as the degree of proficiency in the language, especially in the age group under 30, leads to an increase in the prestige of Ukrainian. When asked which language is more prestigious to speak among friends and colleagues at work or school, 75.5 % of respondents named Ukrainian, 6 % named Russian, and 16 % answered “it doesn’t matter” (Mosorko; *Ukraina yedyna: natsionalna nalezhnist, identychnist, mova ta derzhavni atrybuty — vseukrainske opytuvannia*). All of the above indicators show that the proportions of language use are rapidly changing in favor of Ukrainian, and the transition from bilingualism to monolingualism has become a stable trend.

Another important development in the area of language ideology is that today Ukrainian is being perceived not merely as part of ethnic heritage, but as an attribute of national allegiance. It has become the national language of the Ukrainian people in the constitutional meaning of the word *people*, namely, “citizens of Ukraine of all nationalities.” Over the past two years, not only have the statistical indicators of national affiliation changed, but also the criteria for national self-identification (Kulyk, 2024). While in 2017, 68 % of respondents stated that nationality is something inherited from parents or one of the parents, in 2022, only 48 % believed this to be the case. The number of those who indicated that they chose their nationality based on their affiliation with the country (from 24 % to 36 %) or their attitude towards it (from 3 % to 7 %) went up. Ukrainian citizens increasingly perceive themselves as Ukrainians regardless of their ethnic origin and transfer this civic identity to the category of nationality, which has long been conceptualized as a purely ethnic category.

Language ideology influences not only linguistic behavior, but also the meaning of individual words and phrases. For instance, the Soviet cliché *language of interethnic communication* to refer to the Russian language has been replaced by the expression *language of the aggressor*. The noun *українець* meaning ‘Ukrainian,’ until recently, was mostly used to denote ethnic affiliation. Today, the contexts in which this word is used indicate that it refers primarily to belonging to the Ukrainian political nation. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi usually begins his addresses to the nation with the words “Ukrainians!” (*Українці!*) or “Ukrainian men and women” (*Українці і українки!*). It is clear that he is addressing not only ethnic Ukrainians but every citizen of the country (also see Taranenko, 2024b, pp. 36–37).

Over the past 10 years, the system of sociolinguistic coordinates and the challenges facing language policy in Ukraine have undergone significant

changes. In the pre-war period, Ukrainian politicians focused on finding compromise solutions in language policy within the post-Soviet paradigm. In 2014, the noted Ukrainian political scientist Volodymyr Kulyk expressed the opinion that “the main challenge for the state’s language policy is how not to alienate Russian-speaking citizens from Ukrainian identity and at the same time create conditions for better knowledge and wider use of the Ukrainian language” (Kulyk, 2014). Around the same time, German researchers Gerd Hentschel and Mark Brüggemann suggested that a regionally limited increase in the status of the Russian language in the east and south of the country could be a compromise that residents of other regions could agree to. In their opinion, this would be a sign of “Ukrainian self-awareness and would characterize Ukraine as a sovereign and democratically oriented country” (Khentshel & Briuhemann, 2016, p. 74).

The manipulation of the West-oriented ideological clichés, in particular the one of “linguistic diversity,” which underlies the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereinafter Charter), had a significant impact on public consciousness both inside the country and outside it (Azhniuk, 2022, p. 16). According to the prominent Ukrainian diplomat and political scientist Volodymyr Vasylenko, the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the law on ratification of the Charter was part of a carefully planned special operation against the Ukrainian language, a means of “officializing the Russian language by granting it regional status and weakening the position of the Ukrainian language” (Vasylenko, 2013, p. 23). As a result, one of the main effects of the charter from the outset was to protect the traditional dominant position of the Russian language against the Ukrainian state language (Mozer, 2024, p. 190).

Part of this special operation was the creation and registration in Ukraine in 2009 of the so-called public organization “Human Rights Public Movement ‘Russian-speaking Ukraine’” (*Русскоязычная Украина*), headed by V. Kolesnichenko, who soon became the co-author (together with Y. Kivalov) of the notorious anti-Ukrainian law “On the Principles of State Language Policy” (2012). In 2013, both V. Kolesnichenko and Y. Kivalov received the Pushkin Medal, a Russian state award “for their great contribution to the preservation and popularization of the Russian language and culture abroad” (*Kivalov otrymav medal Pushkina y obitsiav Putinu status derzhavnoi rosiiskii v Ukraini*). During the award ceremony, Y. Kivalov promised V. Putin to make Russian the second official language in Ukraine (ibid.). On December 26,

2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine submitted a draft law to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine entitled “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine in Connection with the Update of the Official Translation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,” excluding Russian from the list of languages to be protected by the Charter in Ukraine.

After the end of martial law in Ukraine, discussions may resume about restoring at least some of the privileges that the Russian language enjoyed in the past, primarily in education, media, culture, and the entertainment industry. An objective prerequisite for such debate is the existence in Ukraine of a large and still influential community of Russian speakers, including those whom the media refer to as Russian-speaking Ukrainian patriots. They cherish the Russian language as the language of their parents and the language of the culture in which their values and worldview were formed.

One of the most prominent representatives of this community is the well-known Ukrainian journalist Dmytro Gordon. In an interview with Ukraine 24 TV channel journalist Roman Golovanov, published under the headline “Gordon on the attack on the Russian language in Ukraine” on July 27, 2021 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BUxzfGc\\_Ic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BUxzfGc_Ic)), he stated that “the attack on the Russian language is being carried out by Ukraine’s enemies” and that, in his opinion, there are more Russian-speaking people than Ukrainian-speaking people in Ukraine. In an interview on June 13, 2024, D. Gordon emphasized: “The language my parents taught me from childhood is Russian.” He nostalgically recalled that during his childhood, Kyiv was a 90 percent Russian-speaking city and that “this cannot be ignored and must not be forgotten” (Bondarenko; Ivanova). In his opinion, even now, during the war, Kyiv mostly speaks Russian. His statements that any language is “first and foremost a means of communication and obtaining information” and that “in a free country, everyone should speak the language they want” (Bondarenko) are strikingly reminiscent of the rhetoric and arguments used by those who advocate for the preservation of the effects of Russification.

Somewhat more radical views, even more in line with the ideology of the “Russian world,” were expressed in an interview with the publication GORDON on April 4, 2017, by poet and editor of the magazine on contemporary culture *Sho*, Alexander Kabanov. He believes that the Russian language is as deeply rooted in Ukraine as Ukrainian, that “these languages were born here and grew together,” and that the so-called Ukrainian-Russian language is “an integral part of Ukrainian culture” (*Poet Kabanov: Nashe krovne pravo – ne*

*viddavaty svoho. Yak mozhna viddaty Rosii ukrainsku rosiisku movu? Krym viddaly, tak teper shche y movu viddamo?*). For comparison, in a recent interview Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov stated that Moscow allegedly intended to protect Russian people “who had lived in the above-mentioned territories for hundreds of years” (Balachuk).

From today’s perspective, the chances of success for any pro-Russian initiatives are slim. Putin’s insistence on the official status of the Russian language, once declared during the talks with US President Donald Trump in Alaska on August 16, 2025 (Tyshchenko), automatically labels anyone who dares to support official or semi-official bilingualism a “traitor.” Yet, circumstances might change over time.

#### 4. Conclusions

Over three decades after Ukraine gained independence, the language situation in the country remained distorted: the proportion of Ukrainian speakers was significantly lower than the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians in the country. Russian dominated in eastern and southern Ukraine, as well as in many socially important areas: business, media, popular culture, recreation, etc. According to the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language,” adopted in 2019, the position of Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language and the National Commission for State Language Standards was created, with tasks to implement state language policy. Their successful work in cooperation with other state authorities, the mass media, the academic community, and representatives of civil society, has greatly contributed to the replacement of the assimilationist ideology of Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism with the monolingual “one nation, one language” ideology.

The Ukrainian language, as a symbolic marker of the nation, is associated not only with the national ethnographic heritage, but also with a certain type of political culture and, broadly speaking, with a civilizational phenomenon that distinguishes Ukraine from Russia. Due to the fact that Ukraine’s political narrative is formulated and published in Ukrainian, the language itself is perceived not only as the verbal shell of this narrative, but as its integral part. Those who switch from Russian to Ukrainian, consciously or subconsciously, make a civilizational choice in favor of social relations that have developed in the national political space of Ukraine, which is defined by the Ukrainian language. The Ukrainian language is increasingly becoming supra-ethnic as a

means of communication not only for the Ukrainian ethnic group, but also for a wide range of citizens of different nationalities.

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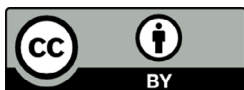
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*Submitted: 25.07.2025*

*Accepted: 11.09.2025*



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