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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF SCHOOLCHILDREN IN MULTILINGUAL KYIV: RESULTS OF A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

Abstract

Background. *This paper examines the dynamics of language attitudes and informal language practices among primary schoolchildren in Kyiv – a city marked by complex post-Soviet bilingualism and emerging postcolonial ideologies. In Ukraine's transforming sociolinguistic landscape, children's language preferences and usage reflect how linguistic legitimacy and symbolic hierarchies are being reconfigured under the pressures of war, migration, and state-driven language policy.*

Contribution to the research field. *The study contributes to the development of postcolonial sociolinguistics by foregrounding children's voices as indicators of symbolic realignment in societies undergoing decolonial transitions. It demonstrates how bilingual children in Eastern Europe engage with shifting linguistic hierarchies, offering new insights into the interplay between language policy, affective positioning, and intergenerational agency.*

Purpose. *The research aims to investigate how children aged 6 to 10 in Kyiv perceive and use Ukrainian, Russian, and English in informal, educational, and media-related domains, and how sociopolitical changes influence their language attitudes and aspirations.*

Methods. *The study is based on an anonymous sociolinguistic survey conducted in February 2025 with 104 children from various Kyiv primary schools. The questionnaire explored domains such as family language use, peer communication, language learning motivation, language preferences, media exposure, and self-assessed linguistic competence. A descriptive and interpretive approach was applied within a child – family – society analytical framework rooted in postcolonial sociolinguistics and family language policy theory.*

Results. *The findings reveal a bilingual environment in which Ukrainian is gaining functional and symbolic dominance, while Russian is increasingly restricted to private and emotional domains. Over half of the respondents come from mixed-language families, and 62.4 % report changed attitudes toward Russian due to the war. Ukrainian is primarily viewed as a tool for education and integration, while English emerges as the most preferred language for future development. Russian shows a decline in perceived value and literacy investment.*

Discussion. *The results indicate a generational reordering of language legitimacy in Kyiv's child population, where Ukrainian consolidates institutional prestige, Russian undergoes symbolic marginalization, and English rises as a marker of global aspiration. These patterns reflect deeper sociopolitical transformations in postcolonial Ukraine and point to the importance of including children's perspectives in shaping inclusive, future-oriented language policies.*

Keywords: language attitudes, child bilingualism, Ukrainian language, Russian language, language policy, symbolic legitimacy, postcolonial sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

Children's language attitudes are among the earliest indicators of how political, social, and cultural transformations are internalized at the individual level. In multilingual societies – and particularly in post-imperial and postcolonial contexts – children's linguistic preferences and everyday practices reflect inherited ideologies as well as emerging patterns of resistance, adaptation, or symbolic realignment. Despite the recognized role of language attitudes in shaping long-term language behavior (Garrett, 2010; Baker, 1992), children's perspectives – especially in societies undergoing geopolitical rupture – remain underrepresented in sociolinguistic research.

Ukraine provides a particularly dynamic context in which to explore these issues. Since independence in 1991, and especially after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, the country has experienced rapid shifts in language policy, symbolic power, and collective linguistic imaginaries. Ukrainian has been re-

inforced as the sole state language across education, media, and government institutions, while Russian – once the dominant code in many urban spaces – has become increasingly politicized, delegitimized, and emotionally marked. These shifts are not limited to state discourse; they permeate family interactions, school routines, and digital environments that shape children's early language socialization.

Kyiv, as Ukraine's capital and a node of both institutional authority and cultural diversity, presents a condensed sociolinguistic environment where these tensions are particularly visible. In this city, Ukrainian, Russian, and English coexist with different degrees of symbolic prestige, emotional resonance, and institutional value. Ukrainian dominates formal and educational domains; Russian persists in private and familial spaces, yet is increasingly questioned; English occupies a growing aspirational role linked to global mobility, digital culture, and imagined futures. While the majority of children in this study were born in Kyiv, 42.7 % relocated from other regions of Ukraine – some after temporary displacement abroad – adding further diversity to their linguistic trajectories. However, these migration histories are referenced here only as contextual background, not as primary analytical focus.

The study specifically targets children aged 6 to 10, a developmental stage when linguistic awareness, value attribution, and educational alignment begin to consolidate. This age group allows us to investigate how symbolic hierarchies are internalized at the moment of transition between early childhood socialization and formal schooling, while also offering a window into how recent language policy and ideological change are absorbed by new generations.

The research is situated within the framework of **postcolonial sociolinguistics** – a critical, interdisciplinary field that analyzes how historical configurations of power and linguistic hegemony shape contemporary language practices, symbolic authority, and identity formation (Bourdieu, 1991; Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2005). This approach does not presuppose a classical colonial relationship. Instead, it draws on the concept of **symbolic domination** to examine how linguistic legitimacy is unevenly distributed and emotionally reconfigured in societies emerging from long-term political, cultural, and linguistic subordination. Although the applicability of postcolonial paradigms to Eastern Europe remains contested (Pavlenko, 2011), this study adopts a symbolic-postcolonial lens to trace how language ideologies and hierarchies are experienced by children within Ukraine's ongoing process of de-Sovietization, nation-building, and cultural realignment.

The central research question guiding this article is: *How do Kyiv children aged 6 to 10 position Ukrainian, Russian, and English in terms of emotional, functional, and symbolic value in a context of accelerated language shift and postcolonial transition?* In answering this question, the study examines how children articulate and navigate competing linguistic values through their informal practices, self-perceptions, and language learning motivations.

By foregrounding children's voices – many of whom inhabit multilingual households, war-influenced environments, and institutional Ukrainization – the article contributes to an emerging body of research that positions young speakers as active agents in symbolic realignment. It also underscores the need for child-centered approaches to language policy and planning in multilingual postcolonial societies where language is not only a medium of communication but a site of emotional, ideological, and political contestation.

2. Theoretical Background

Understanding children's language attitudes is critical for tracing the micro-level reproduction of language ideologies and symbolic hierarchies. While sociolinguistic research has extensively examined language attitudes and identity formation in adult populations, relatively few studies focus on how children conceptualize language in their everyday environments – despite substantial evidence that early attitudes influence long-term linguistic trajectories (Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2010; De Houwer, 2009).

In multilingual and post-imperial contexts, such as Ukraine, children's language attitudes are not only shaped by cognitive and communicative development but are deeply intertwined with broader ideological formations transmitted via family structures, peer networks, school institutions, and media discourse. These attitudes operate alongside and within more enduring **language ideologies** – sets of socially embedded beliefs about language, power, and identity that reflect and reproduce systemic inequalities (Woolard, 1998; Irvine & Gal, 2000). In this study, we distinguish **language attitudes** as observable evaluative stances by individuals and **language ideologies** as the underlying frameworks that shape and constrain those attitudes.

Ukraine's sociolinguistic landscape, particularly since the 2014 Revolution of Dignity and the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, provides a compelling context for this analysis. Ukrainian is increasingly promoted as the exclusive language of public life, while Russian – long dominant in many urban environments – has become a site of ideological contestation and affective tension.

These transformations, rooted in both policy and discourse, manifest in daily language practices, educational expectations, and shifting emotional alignments.

This study draws on the emerging field of **postcolonial sociolinguistics**, which critically examines how historical power relations and linguistic subordination continue to shape language practices, perceptions, and symbolic hierarchies in the postcolonial or post-imperial present (Blommaert, 2010; Bourdieu, 1991; Canagarajah, 2005). While most foundational work in postcolonial studies focuses on the Global South, a growing body of literature calls for applying postcolonial analysis to the specific dynamics of Eastern Europe (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Flubacher & Milani, 2024). We recognize that this approach remains contested in the Ukrainian context (Pavlenko, 2011), and thus we adopt a **symbolic-postcolonial lens** that does not presuppose a classical colonial binary but instead emphasizes processes of **symbolic domination**, **linguistic marginalization**, and **affective repositioning** that occur in historically subordinated language ecologies.

Central to this framework are three interconnected concepts:

– **Linguistic legitimacy** – the perceived appropriateness or authority of a language in a given domain, shaped by historical asymmetries, state discourse, and intergenerational norms (Bourdieu, 1991);
– **Symbolic power** – the ability of certain languages to dominate social space through perceived neutrality or normalcy, without coercion (Bourdieu, 1991);
– **Indexicality** – the process through which language use points to or "indexes" social meanings, group identities, and ideological positions (Silverstein, 2003; Blommaert, 2010).

These concepts allow us to analyze not just what languages children prefer or use, but how their choices **index larger structures of value** – for instance, aligning Ukrainian with school success, distancing from Russian as a politicized language, or aspiring toward English as a symbol of global identity and mobility.

To structure the empirical analysis, this study applies an interpretive triad – child, family, society – which integrates multiple levels of socialization and ideological transmission. While other models (e.g., micro – meso – macro) are commonly used in educational linguistics (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016), this triad was chosen for its ability to reflect the dynamic interplay between individual agency, intimate interaction, and institutional structure in the Ukrainian postcolonial context. The framework builds on **Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory** (1979), which emphasizes nested environments of child de-

velopment, and on **Spolsky's model of family language policy** (2004), which highlights how home ideologies and parental strategies shape language learning and use.

This combined framework has previously been applied to Ukrainian migrant families in Poland (Shevchuk-Kliuzheva, 2023, 2024; Levchuk, 2020), revealing how emotional adaptation, identity negotiation, and symbolic value attribution interact in multilingual spaces. In the current study, the triad of child – family –society is operationalized not merely as a metaphor but as an analytical structure through which to interpret the lived complexity of children's language attitudes.

The focus here is on how children aged 6 to 10 in Kyiv perceive and position Ukrainian, Russian, and English in informal domains such as family communication, peer interaction, digital environments, and learning motivation. These positionings are understood as both **affective and ideological acts** – acts that reflect and reproduce symbolic hierarchies shaped by postcolonial transition and geopolitical rupture. For instance, what children say about wanting to improve their English or feeling ambivalent toward Russian is not only a reflection of family discourse but also an index of their emotional alignment with or distancing from dominant language ideologies. While languages such as Polish, German, or French may play a role in some children's migration histories or educational experience, this article focuses on Ukrainian, Russian, and English as the dominant symbolic vectors in Kyiv's current language ecology. The empirical analysis aims to trace how these languages are differentially valued, indexed, and emotionally negotiated by children navigating institutional Ukrainization, family bilingualism, and post-traumatic realities of war.

3. Data

The empirical foundation of this study is a sociolinguistic survey conducted in Kyiv in February 2025 among primary schoolchildren aged 6 to 10. The survey was part of a broader postdoctoral research project investigating how children in post-invasion Ukraine form language attitudes in response to shifts in language policy, family practices, and sociopolitical dynamics. Kyiv was selected as the focal research site due to its status as a capital city where return migration, institutional Ukrainization, and multilingualism intersect most visibly. The city represents a complex symbolic space, where language ideologies are contested, reformulated, and transmitted to new generations.

The sample included **104 children** (43.7 % boys and 56.3 % girls) drawn from five public primary schools located across different districts of Kyiv. These were state-run urban schools operating under the jurisdiction of the Kyiv city administration, and the language of instruction in all participating schools was Ukrainian. The schools maintain long-standing institutional cooperation with Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University and are regularly involved in joint research, pedagogical innovation, and teacher training initiatives. The selection was based on accessibility and existing frameworks of ethical and educational collaboration. Although the sample is not intended to be statistically representative of the entire Kyiv child population, it constitutes a theory-driven case study designed to explore patterns of symbolic positioning and affective language alignment in a postcolonial urban setting.

The age distribution of participants was as follows: 6 years (5.9 %), 7 years (7.9 %), 8 years (19.8 %), 9 years (23.8 %), and 10 years (42.6 %). The focus on the 6–10 age group corresponds to a crucial stage in language socialization, during which children begin to internalize institutional norms, reflect on linguistic values, and experience formal schooling as a key site of ideological transmission.

While the majority of participants were born in Kyiv (57.3 %), a substantial portion (42.7 %) consisted of internally displaced children (IDPs) who had relocated to the capital with their families due to war-related displacement. These children primarily originated from major urban centers in eastern and southern Ukraine, including Kharkiv, Odesa, and Dnipro, and were enrolled in local schools as part of their families' resettlement process. Their presence reflects broader demographic and sociolinguistic changes shaping the linguistic environment of Kyiv during the war.

The survey instrument was developed by the lead author (Shevchuk-Kliuzheva) within the framework of her postdoctoral research on language development in multilingual Ukrainian contexts. It was informed by prior studies of family language policy and child language socialization in migration settings (Shevchuk-Kliuzheva, 2023, 2024). The questionnaire was piloted in one of the participating schools and reviewed by specialists in child development to ensure age-appropriate design. Ethical approval was obtained, and all responses were collected anonymously, with informed parental consent and voluntary participation, in accordance with international standards for research involving minors.

The questionnaire included multiple-choice and Likert-scale items, open-ended prompts, and self-assessment tasks designed to explore both explicit

language attitudes and indexical associations related to language use. The design reflects the study's child – family – society analytical triad and aligns with the postcolonial sociolinguistic framework outlined earlier. Specifically, the instrument operationalized the following four thematic domains:

1. *Family language policy and bilingual upbringing* – exploring which languages are used within the household, how linguistic roles are distributed between parents and children, and how these patterns may reflect intergenerational tension, accommodation, or symbolic resistance. This domain draws on Spolsky's model and captures the family as a key site of ideological transmission.
2. *Motivations for learning Ukrainian* – assessing whether children associate Ukrainian primarily with school achievement, identity, or patriotic values. This reflects dimensions of linguistic legitimacy and institutional symbolic power.
3. *Attitudes toward Russian in the context of war* – examining how geopolitical trauma influences emotional responses to Russian, including avoidance, discomfort, or contextual use. These attitudes serve as indexical signs of ideological distancing or persistence of affective ties.
4. *Preferred languages for further development* – identifying which languages children aspire to improve (with particular attention to English), and how those aspirations reflect symbolic value, imagined futures, and global identity alignment. This aligns with the concept of symbolic orientation and global indexicality.

While the full questionnaire addressed other areas (e.g., digital media usage, peer interaction), this article focuses on these four domains as most directly connected to the study's central theoretical constructs – **symbolic legitimacy**, **language ideologies**, and **postcolonial identity positioning**.

The following section presents the results of the survey and interprets them thematically through the lens of the child – family – society framework, showing how children's linguistic preferences and practices function as ideologically informed and emotionally situated acts in a context of national and linguistic transformation.

4. Results

This section presents empirical findings from the sociolinguistic survey conducted in Kyiv among children aged 6 to 10. The results are grouped into four thematic areas, aligned with the theoretical triad of child – family – society and serve as a basis for further discussion. All schools included in the study

were Ukrainian-language public schools located across five districts of Kyiv. The sample included both local children and internally displaced children (IDPs), particularly from Kharkiv, Odesa, and Dnipro, reflecting the demographic shifts caused by the war.

Family Language Policy and Everyday Bilingualism

Children were asked to identify which languages their parents used when speaking to them and to each other. The following typology of family language policy was established based on their responses:

Family Language Model	Percentage (%)
Monolingual Ukrainian	32.0
Monolingual Russian	11.7
Flexible Bilingualism	52.4
Other Configurations	3.9

The category "flexible bilingualism" describes households where Ukrainian and Russian coexist, with usage determined by topic, interlocutor, or situation. For instance, children noted: *"We speak Ukrainian most of the time, but Dad always switches to Russian when he's angry"* or *"Dad speaks Ukrainian, Mom speaks Russian, and I switch depending on who I talk to."* In some cases, children described the language between parents: *"They speak Russian to each other but Ukrainian to me."*

The "other configurations" (3.9%) include mixed-language families involving foreign languages (e.g., English or Polish) and recent IDP families adjusting their linguistic routines post-displacement.

Motivations for Learning Ukrainian

Children were asked: "Why do you want to learn Ukrainian better?" with the option to select multiple answers and add their own. The responses are summarized below:

Motivation Type	Percentage (%)
To succeed in school	40.7
To communicate with others in society	29.2
To learn about Ukrainian culture	29.2
Because I am Ukrainian (identity-based)	0.5
To defend / strengthen Ukraine (patriotic)	0.5

Sample responses included: *"To get good grades," "So others understand me."* Children were allowed to list multiple motivations, and in some cases, younger children responded in concrete terms: *"Because the teacher says it's important."*

Attitudes Toward Russian in the Context of War

To assess whether their emotional stance toward Russian had changed, children responded to the question: "Has your attitude toward the Russian language changed since the war began?"

Response Type	Percentage (%)
Yes, because of the war	62.4
Yes, because of family views	7.9
Yes, because of the environment	7.9
No change	21.8

The emotional tone of children's answers varied. Some stated: *"We still speak Russian at home, but it's uncomfortable outside," "I feel weird when I hear Russian.*

Among those whose attitude had not changed (21.8%), many came from bilingual or Russian-speaking families, including IDP children. Notably, only 3.7% said they no longer use Russian, and 0.3% claimed they did not know it at all.

Preferred Languages for Further Development

Children were asked: "Which languages would you like to learn or improve?" They could select more than one. The distribution of responses is shown below:

Language	Percentage (%)
English	55.1
Ukrainian	26.0
Polish	13.6
French	11.3
German	10.7
Russian	3.0

English was most frequently chosen, especially by older children, who associated it with games, cartoons, and travel. Some explained: *"I want to un-*

derstand YouTubers" or *"Because English is cool."* Ukrainian was seen by some as a school requirement (*"I want to write better"*) and by others as a personal goal (*"I want to know my country's language"*). Polish, French, and German were associated with family history or migration (*"We lived in Warsaw," "My aunt lives in France"*). Russian, while still used, was rarely selected, often accompanied by remarks like *"I already know enough"* or *"I don't need more."*

These results offer a complex but coherent picture of how young children in Kyiv navigate linguistic hierarchies, emotional associations, and aspirational choices – setting the stage for further analysis in the discussion section.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the evolving sociolinguistic landscape among young children in Kyiv. While grounded in the specific context of Ukraine's post-2022 transformations, the observed trends offer broader insights into how language ideologies, identity, and educational aspirations are negotiated in early childhood. This discussion connects the empirical results to relevant theoretical frameworks, highlighting how children in multilingual, postcolonial societies internalize or resist linguistic hierarchies.

Children's home environments reflect three dominant models of language use: **monolingual Ukrainian**, **monolingual Russian**, and **flexible bilingualism**. While flexible bilingualism is numerically dominant, it is not ideologically neutral. In many families, it stems from historically inherited accommodations, rather than deliberate multilingual education strategies. The reduction of monolingual Russian households (to 11.7%) and the normalization of Ukrainian in domestic interactions illustrate what scholars such as Blommaert (2006) and Bourdieu (1991) would frame as symbolic realignment – a gradual adjustment of linguistic repertoires to match shifting legitimacy frameworks.

Yet, the persistence of bilingual patterns shows that affective ties often delay ideological shifts. Children appear to develop early sensitivity to these tensions. For instance, *"We speak both, but I use more Ukrainian now"* – these kinds of responses reveal that children are not passive recipients of family norms; they notice and react to symbolic cues related to authority, emotional closeness, and generational differences.

The motivational structure observed in this study confirms that most children view Ukrainian primarily through an instrumental lens: as a tool for academic success, effective communication, and societal integration. Very few

associated language learning with patriotic or identity-based reasons. This is not surprising given the respondents' age (6-10 years old), as metalinguistic awareness and ideological framing are still in early stages of development. Moreover, the survey relied on multiple-choice responses with optional elaboration, further reinforcing pragmatic answer patterns.

From a policy perspective, this suggests that the success of Ukrainization efforts among children relies not on emotional or symbolic appeals, but on the language's functional visibility in education and daily life. Ukrainian is perceived as necessary rather than sacred. This pragmatic alignment may still contribute to long-term language consolidation, as children learn to associate Ukrainian with opportunity and belonging, even if not yet with identity.

A key contribution of the study is its nuanced portrayal of children's changing attitudes toward Russian. While only a small number explicitly reject the language, many now limit its use to private or family settings. Emotional ambivalence is emerging: children reported feeling *"weird speaking Russian at school"* or noted that *"Russian reminds me of the war."* At the same time, Russian remains embedded in family routines, entertainment, and peer conversations. This situational distancing mirrors what Blommaert (2005) and Silverstein (2003) describe as ideological indexicality: the layering of new social meanings onto familiar codes. Russian is not erased, but reclassified – less appropriate in public, more marked in formal settings, and increasingly decoupled from normative language use.

Interestingly, some children with stable use of Russian reported no attitude shift, especially among those from displaced families or originally Russian-speaking households. This highlights the importance of considering variation across social backgrounds and avoiding assumptions of uniform ideological repositioning.

When asked which languages they would like to improve, most children selected English – followed by Ukrainian, Polish, French, and German. Only a small fraction chose Russian. This suggests a new language hierarchy: English as global aspiration, Ukrainian as national requirement, and Russian as residual heritage. These trends resonate with the notion of **aspirational multilingualism** (Piller, 2015) and reflect how language preferences are shaped by exposure to digital media, education systems, and imagined futures. Importantly, the fact that some children also chose Polish or German may reflect personal migration experiences, family connections abroad, or early exposure to foreign language programs in schools. These micro-level variations under-

line the individualized nature of multilingual development in contexts shaped by displacement and mobility.

Given the young age of the respondents, the study prioritized age-appropriate, primarily closed-ended questions, supplemented by child-friendly phrasing and optional comments. While this approach supported reliable data collection, it also constrained the depth of metalinguistic insights. Future research may benefit from combining surveys with interviews or observational techniques to explore how children talk about language when not prompted by pre-defined categories.

Moreover, since the sample was drawn from Ukrainian-language public schools in Kyiv, results should be interpreted with contextual sensitivity. The findings reflect the experiences of urban, school-enrolled children in a capital city under strong institutional Ukrainization influence – and may not generalize to other regions or to younger preschoolers.

Together, the results and discussion point to a **profound transformation** in the linguistic socialization of Ukrainian children. Ukrainian is gaining ground as the language of education and participation; English has taken the role of aspirational second language; Russian is being reframed – not rejected, but reassigned to more private spheres. Children are not only recipients of policy but co-constructors of linguistic hierarchies through their preferences, emotions, and peer practices. Their voices offer a window into the ongoing postcolonial recalibration of Ukraine's language ecology – where identity, utility, and symbolic capital are being reimagined from the ground up.

6. Conclusions

This study explored the language attitudes, everyday linguistic practices, and symbolic valuations among primary schoolchildren in Kyiv, focusing on how Ukrainian, Russian, and other languages are perceived and prioritized in a rapidly transforming postcolonial sociolinguistic environment. Guided by a child – family – society interpretive triad and drawing on original survey data from 104 children aged 6-10, the research reveals how young speakers navigate linguistic hierarchies shaped by policy, affect, and aspiration.

The findings demonstrate that **family language policy in Kyiv remains predominantly bilingual**, with flexible use of Ukrainian and Russian still common in domestic domains. Ukrainian, however, increasingly dominates institutional and educational contexts, solidifying its role as the language of

formal participation and advancement. Russian, once regionally dominant, is undergoing **declining symbolic aspiration** – retained in intimate and familial spheres but no longer widely viewed as a language for future development. English, by contrast, emerges as the aspirational language of global mobility, cultural capital, and digital access.

Children's motivations for learning Ukrainian are primarily instrumental, reflecting its institutional role in schooling and public life. Identity-based motivations are relatively rare, which may be age-related and shaped by school discourse that frames language through functionality rather than heritage. English is consistently prioritized for improvement, especially among older children, and is perceived as both useful and prestigious. Russian is rarely chosen as a language for improvement, confirming its symbolic repositioning rather than outright rejection.

These patterns point to a **generational reordering of linguistic legitimacy** in Ukraine's post-invasion context. Children are not passive recipients of language policy; they actively interpret, adapt to, and reshape symbolic boundaries. Their responses reflect a transitional sociolinguistic moment, marked by war, migration, educational change, and evolving media environments. Language ideologies are not simply adopted but are negotiated in context – through schooling, peer interaction, digital media, and emotional experiences.

Importantly, the study demonstrates the value of **child-centered empirical approaches** in sociolinguistics. Anonymous surveys with carefully adapted questions allow access to children's perspectives without adult mediation. Future research should expand beyond Kyiv, incorporating diverse regions (e.g., rural, borderland, or de-occupied areas) and using mixed methods such as narrative interviews, language diaries, or visual elicitation to explore how language attitudes evolve over time.

This study contributes to postcolonial sociolinguistics by offering a grounded account of symbolic language reordering as experienced by children. It shows that ideological realignment does not necessarily require the abandonment of any particular language, but often unfolds through affective renegotiation, context-sensitive use, and changing aspirations. Ultimately, any future-oriented language policy in Ukraine must recognize that children's linguistic trajectories are not shaped solely by formal instruction, but by emotional, cognitive, and social experiences. Understanding these processes – and integrating children's voices into language planning – will be essential for building an inclusive and resilient linguistic future.

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