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Natalia Kobchenko

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial linguistics focuses on researching the language experience and language situations of countries of the Global South that gained independence from colonial rule in the 20th century. In particular, numerous studies address the language policy and language planning, language ideologies, creolizing of indigenous languages, multilingualism, language resilience and resistance, language victimization and language opportunism, the formation of linguistic theories, and standardization of native languages in former colonies. However, a large number of these processes can be observed on the European continent as well, although they have certain peculiarities. Viewing these phenomena through the lens of 'subordinated–dominator,' or in other words 'colonized–colonizer', will give us a chance to comprehend a deeper social interaction and language processes in some Eastern European countries, and in Ukraine, in particular, and to reveal the origins of current language issues. In the case of Ukraine, it has greater importance due to Russia's full-scale invasion, as it facilitates the understanding of the anticolonial nature of this war and decolonial processes of wartime. Thus, on the one hand, postcolonial linguistics could be a useful basis to analyze languages, language practices, and language policy in countries that were not colonies in a traditional sense. On the other hand, postcolonial approaches need to enhance their methodological basis, collect and carefully consider empirical data that were not part of linguists' focus before. This special issue aims to make a partial contribution toward filling these gaps.

Part One, "**Prospects and Challenges of Analyzing Ukrainian Language Issues through the Postcolonial Lens**" presents studies that apply a postcolonial methodological framework to the analysis of language issues in Ukraine. Monika Wingender engages in reflections on the rationale and efficacy of applying postcolonial theory concepts to the study of language processes in Ukraine and their correlation with concepts such as decommunization and derussification. The article argues that the field of language ideologies occupies a particularly important place in postcolonial linguistics. Using two case

studies, the author outlines the advantages and disadvantages of applying a postcolonial approach to the analysis of language processes in Ukraine, concluding that it should be combined with other sociolinguistic approaches. Additionally, the conclusions highlight a potential contribution of research on the Ukrainian language situation to the postcolonial theory. Svitlana Romanyuk and Filip Miezwa offer a perspective on Ukraine's language policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union through the lens of colonial relations, characterizing it as a gradual liberation from the dominance of imperial structures. The authors show how the 2019 language laws have become a tool of cultural decolonization and a means of protecting and maintaining cultural identity and the sovereignty of state institutions.

Part Two, "**Changing Language Ideologies and Language Attitudes in Wartime: From Postcolonial Condition to Decolonial Processes**" covers papers employing concepts of postcolonial theory to case studies based on analyses of language ideologies, language attitudes, and language behavior of Ukrainians after their liberation from political dependence within the Soviet Union. Bohdan Azhniuk traces changes in the relationship between dominant language ideologies – '*bilingual Ukraine*' and '*One nation, one language*' – against the background of socio-political events. By analyzing social surveys and observing the linguistic behavior of officials and influencers, the author illustrates how both grassroots and top-down language ideologies reflect the shift from an ethnic to a political conception of the nation and the rising prestige of the Ukrainian language. Natalia Kobchenko, examining textual and visual representations of the letter "ї" before and after Russia's full-scale invasion, traces changes in the language ideologies of Ukrainians and reflects on how these shifts reveal two simultaneous processes: the transition from a postcolonial condition to a decolonial situation and the ongoing anti-colonial struggle. Olha Shevchuk-Kliuzheva and Pavel Levchuk, through a survey of 6–10-year-old Kyiv schoolchildren regarding their attitudes toward and use of Ukrainian, Russian, and English, show the ways in which children's linguistic preferences and practices reflect ideological influences and emotional positioning in times of national and linguistic transformation. The authors conclude that rather than being passive recipients of language policy, children actively interpret, negotiate, and transform symbolic boundaries. These three studies focus on different aspects of the language ideologies of Ukrainians during wartime. They analyze attitudes toward language represented by various manifestations and across different age groups. Nevertheless, their find-

ings point to the same overall trend: on one hand, Ukrainians' attitude towards the Ukrainian language as a national treasure is gradually being replaced with a pragmatic attitude, seeing it as an effective tool for social interaction; on the other hand, both among the general public and the authorities, there is a growing recognition of the role of language as a factor in the consolidation of the political nation.

Part Three, "**Shaping of Imperial Discourse and Counter-Discourse: From History to the Current Situation**" consists of studies that describe the construction and spread of so-called internal and external official discourses at different stages of the development of Russia as an imperial formation. In addition, one of them presents the peculiarities of the construction of Ukrainian official counter-discourse in the context of an anti-colonial war. Thomas Daiber analyses textual reworking in the Old Church Slavonic translation of the original Greek written record Vita Constantini-Cyrilli. The author demonstrates that the additions to this translation introduce new material reflecting the scribe's intention to accentuate the contrast between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, produced during a period when Russia opposed the impact of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Nataliia Yasakova's paper deals with analyzing the causes and consequences of the absence in the 11-volume Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language of nouns denoting persons, associated with the experience of resistance to Moscow authorities and the idea of creating a Ukrainian state. The author demonstrates how the explanatory dictionary of the Ukrainian language, published during the Soviet era, became an instrument for enforcing state control and a form of colonial practice implemented by the colonized themselves. Iryna Odrekhivska's study examines the Soviet practice of indirectly translating Ukrainian literature into English via Russian, presenting it as a manifestation of colonial hierarchies and linguistic imperialism. The transliteration of literary work titles, authors' and characters' names, as well as toponyms served as mechanisms for appropriating Ukrainian culture, consolidating its perception on the international stage as inseparable from Russian culture. The continued use of these translations in Western academia reinforces this perceptual framework, which, as the author argues, can only be challenged if translators, publishers, and scholars embrace the principle of linguistic responsibility. Liudmyla Pidkuimuka's study analyzes how Ukrainian public figures develop strategic narratives to counter the doctrine of the "Russian world" during Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. The author demonstrates the ways in which political leaders employ strategic communi-

cation tools in wartime to create counter-narratives that confront Russia's propaganda.

This special issue is one of the first comprehensive works in linguistics that examines language and metalinguistic practices in Ukraine through a postcolonial methodological lens. The editor of the issue hopes that the studies presented will stimulate further discussion on adapting postcolonial and decolonial theoretical frameworks to the Ukrainian linguistic context, as well as serve as a reference for researching language and metalinguistic practices in countries that have experienced political dependence but were not colonies in the classical sense of the term.

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF ANALYZING UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE ISSUES THROUGH THE POSTCOLONIAL LENS

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REFLECTIONS ON POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTICS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN UKRAINE

Abstract

Background. *Debates about postcolonialism and related terms, concepts and ideologies such as decommunization and de-Russification shape current societal, political and academic discourses in Ukraine.*

Contribution to the research field. *With a focus on academic discourses, this article deals with postcolonial linguistics with regard to the language situation in Ukraine. Postcolonial linguistics is understood as an umbrella term for "language in postcolonial contexts" and "postcolonial approaches to the study of language" (Levisen & Sippola, 2019, p. 1) as well as (post)colonialistic practices in multilingual language situations. Against the background of this broad understanding of postcolonial linguistics, this paper focuses on language situation and language policy in connection with language ideologies.*

Purpose. *The aim of this article is first to reflect on concepts of postcolonial linguistics and then to discuss the extent to which the language situation in*

Ukraine can be analyzed as a postcolonial language situation. The article also aims to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the postcolonial lens for analyzing the language situation in Ukraine and what the case of Ukraine contributes to postcolonial linguistics. To this end, Ukraine's language situation is analyzed in more detail on the basis of two case studies. Herein the article deals with the Soviet language policy and with decommunization as well as de-Russification in Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Methods. *The methodical approach and the material basis are literature-based.*

Results. *The article reveals numerous aspects of the language situation from a postcolonialistic perspective and also demonstrates that the postcolonial lens should only be one approach to analysis among others, as developments in language policy and language ideology are multifaceted.*

Keywords: postcolonial linguistics, language ideologies, language policy, language situation, Ukraine, Soviet Union.

1. Introduction

Current societal, political, and academic discourses in Ukraine are characterized by intense debates about 'postcolonialism'. Key terms, concepts and ideologies of these debates are decommunization, decolonization, and de-Russification, which are inextricable linked to linguistic processes and practices (Kobchenko, 2023). A visible example is dealing with toponymy in the various phases of decommunization. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, tendencies of decommunization can be observed in different forms and varying approaches (Azniuk, 2024; Demska & Levchuk, 2020; Kravchenko & Petriv, 2022). The 2015 decommunization laws in Ukraine are a visible sign of the intensification of the decommunization. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, decommunization and de-Russification have intensified enormously. Since decommunization and de-Russification are often used in societal discourses in connection with decolonization, the link between the analysis of the language situation in Ukraine and postcolonial linguistics is obvious.

2. Theoretical background: Postcolonial linguistics as an umbrella term

Postcolonial linguistics or postcolonial language studies (Warnke, 2017) are closely linked to attitudes and expectations, as I. Warnke points out: "'Ko-

lonialismus' und 'Postkolonialismus' sind mithin mit Geschichte, Einstellungen und daraus abgeleiteten Erwartungen aufgeladene Begriffe, die deshalb nicht zuletzt nur in spezifisch regulierten Sprachspielen verwendbar sind. Wenn sich Linguistik mit Kolonialismus oder postkolonialer Theorie befasst, betritt sie folglich ein Feld vorgeprägter Einstellungen und Erwartungen." [1] (Warnke, 2017, p. 97). Attitudes and expectations are all the more important when it comes to spaces that are not part of classic European overseas colonialism, as in the case of Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Soviet Union. Accordingly, attitudes and expectations also shape societal debates when the question of whether a post-Soviet state such as Ukraine is a postcolonial state is discussed in principle (Szeptycki, 2011), see the next section in connection with Ukraine's language situation).

We understand postcolonial linguistics as an umbrella term for various research strands. According to Levisen & Sippola (2019, p. 1 – the editors of the *Journal of Postcolonial Linguistics*), we define postcolonial linguistics as the analysis of "language in postcolonial contexts" and "postcolonial approaches to the study of language". Since the latter also includes "to engage critically with the way in which we do linguistics" (Levisen & Sippola, 2019, p. 1), the difference in relation to the spatial spectrum of postcolonial linguistics becomes clear here again. This is because questions that typically fall within the field of investigation of postcolonial studies, such as the global North and global South, do not play a role in relation to the question of postcolonialism in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe, as part of "Northern linguistics", has had a decisive influence on it – just think of the Prague School and Soviet linguistics as one example among many. This makes it clear once again that postcolonial linguistics, with its focus on classical overseas colonialism, pursues different questions than linguistics, which is dedicated to the question of the extent to which, for example, post-Soviet states should be treated as postcolonial language situations. [2] Accordingly, in this article the understanding of postcolonial linguistics is extended to include another re-

[1] "'Colonialism' and 'postcolonialism' are thus linked to history, attitudes and the expectations derived from them, which is why they can only be used in specifically regulated language games. When linguistics deals with colonialism or postcolonial theory, it therefore enters a field of predetermined attitudes and expectations."

[2] In contrast to linguistics, literary and cultural studies have a long tradition in postcolonial studies. The connection with post-Soviet postcolonial studies is also discussed here, see Albrecht 2019.

search strand in addition to the two mentioned above. It is about (post)colonialistic practices in multilingual [3] language situations, which include, for example, language bans, hierarchization of languages in multilingual states or assimilation policies. Against the background of this broad understanding of postcolonial linguistics, this article analyzes the language situation in Ukraine.

I. Warnke (2017, pp. 98–99) discusses the disciplinary history of postcolonial linguistics and highlights the early relevant works of L. J. Calvet (1974) and J. Errington (2001, 2009). Warnke points out that postcolonial language studies have only emerged in recent years "als forschungsorientierte Teildisziplin der Sprachwissenschaft" [4] (Warnke, 2017, p. 98) and that "in interdisciplinary postcolonial discourse, linguistics occupies at best a marginal position" (Warnke, 2019, p. 44). Thus, Warnke (2017, pp. 98–99) points out that key works of postcolonial studies include many disciplines, but often do not include linguistics and that linguistics itself has shown a lack of interest in (post)colonial realities. In addition to these tendencies of discipline-specific developments mentioned by Warnke, it should be added that linguistic disciplines have nevertheless long been engaged with (post)coloniality or (post) colonial perspectives on language situations in many other subdisciplines of linguistics, such as: sociolinguistics (language policy, multilingualism, attitudes, identities), contact linguistics (mixed languages, pidgin and creole languages), conflict linguistics (ethno-linguistic conflicts), discourse linguistics, and others (cf. also the interdisciplinary introduction to language and colonialism by Stolz et al., 2016 and to language and (post)colonialism by Kellermeier-Rehbein et al., 2018).

In addition, the research field of language ideologies should be specifically emphasized here, because "Postcolonial linguistics is about language ideologies that have shaped the field itself." (Warnke, 2019, p. 45). The fact that language ideologies are the subject of several of the above-mentioned subdis-

[3] According to Haarmann's concept (1999, pp. 845–846), multilingualism is a multifaceted term: it can refer to the number of languages, the use of languages or language proficiency. In this article, we understand multilingual and multilingualism in the sense of the multitude of languages or as language diversity including the state language and the languages of the minorities. Accordingly, we understand multilingual as a generic term encompassing bilingual, plurilingual, and multilingual situations and we make "no distinction between bilingualism and multilingualism as separate concepts" (Romaine, 2019, p. 257).

[4] "as a research-oriented sub-discipline of linguistics"

ciplines of linguistics and cannot be assigned to just one also speaks in favor of emphasizing this field of research. This article takes a look at postcolonial linguistics and the language situation in Ukraine, focusing in particular on language ideologies in connection with language policy and the language situation. [5] The study is based on Kroskrity's definition of language ideologies "as beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states" (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 192).

The fact that "in interdisciplinary postcolonial discourse, linguistics occupies at best a marginal position" (Warnke, 2019, p. 44) is one thing; the other is that Eastern Europe is generally not dealt with in basic works on postcolonial linguistics, as these tend to focus on language situations that belong to the classic colonial spaces, as already mentioned above. [6] With regard to Eastern Europe and linguistics, this raises the fundamental question of a postcolonial approach, which we will critically examine in relation to the language situation in Ukraine in the following. In line with the broad understanding of postcolonial linguistics outlined above, we consider Ukraine's language situation from several perspectives: from languages in postcolonial contexts and Ukraine's language situation from a postcolonial research perspective as well as postcolonialistic practices in Ukraine's language situation.

Thus, the aim of this article is to reflect on concepts of postcolonial linguistics and to discuss the extent to which the language situation in Ukraine can be analyzed as a postcolonial language situation. The article also aims to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the postcolonial lens for analyzing the language situation in Ukraine. Against the background of a broad conception of postcolonial linguistics (section 2), the article examines in section 3 the question of the extent to which the language situation in Ukraine can be analyzed as a postcolonial language situation and which postcolonial practices can be identified. It goes on to examine this with regard to Soviet language policy (4.1) and in relation to decommunization and de-Russification in to-

[5] The analyses on language ideologies were conducted as part of a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) from 2022 to 2025 and carried out by Monika Wingender and Liudmyla Pidkuimukha at Justus Liebig University Giessen (title of the project: "Comparison of language ideologies in the Soviet Union and the present-day Russian Federation – continuity, ruptures, reorientations", project number 492769567).

[6] Cf. in contrast the development of post-Soviet post-colonial studies in literary and cultural studies, see footnote 2.

day's Ukraine during the war (4.2). After this sociolinguistic analysis, the article discusses in the conclusions (5.) what advantages and disadvantages the postcolonial lens has for the analysis of the language situation in Ukraine and what insights the case of Ukraine provides for postcolonial linguistics. The focus of the article is on the language situation and language policy in connection with language ideologies. The methodological approach and the material basis are literature-based.

3. Postcolonial perspectives on the language situation in Ukraine

In considering the two components of the term 'postcolonial linguistics', we begin with 'postcolonial' before turning to the linguistic aspects. In his 2011 article, A. Szeptycki poses the question "Ukraine as a Postcolonial State?" and concludes at the end of his analysis: "Although not a typical postcolonial state, Ukraine does exhibit many of its features. Dependency on the former metropole can be seen most strongly in the social sphere, culture and the economy, but it is also visible in internal politics and in the country's external affairs." (Szeptycki, 2011, p. 28). Szeptycki published his article in 2011, and the international relations have changed since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, both politically and economically. The discussion and answer to the question of the meaning of '(post)colonial' are often conducted from the perspective of political science, history and economics, which is obvious given the characteristics of colonialism (from a linguistic point of view, see Kobchenko, 2023, pp. 14-16; furthermore Fedorova & Protassova, 2024, p. 1; from a cultural studies perspective Schmid, 2023). A. Pavlenko names various positions in the discussion about the "applicability of the term ′postcolonial′ to the post-Soviet situation" (Pavlenko, 2008a, p. 303). Accordingly, Masenko (2004), for example, affirms the applicability of the term, Laitin (1998) points to differences between the republics such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan, while others "argue that as a whole the Soviet Union was neither fully colonial nor federal, rather it was a multiethnic state that contained elements of several systems" (Pavlenko, 2008a, p. 303). Snyder recently described the war in Ukraine as a colonial war (Snyder, 2022). With regard to current decolonization debates in Ukraine, it is obvious that these are to be understood as a counter-movement to Russia's imperial propaganda: "As Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin, and his supporters openly employ imperialistic or colonial narratives to deny Ukraine and Ukrainians their (historical, linguistic, or cultural) autonomy and to justify war, rape, abduction, and genocide, a de-

colonial counter-movement both in real life and in social media discourse is to be expected." (Rabus, 2025, p. 1). In accordance with the linguistic focus of this study, we concentrate below on the second component of postcolonial linguistics, on linguistic perspectives, and address the question of the postcolonial language situation.

I return to the introduction to the *Journal of postcolonial linguistics* (Levisen & Sippola, 2019), which correctly points out that there is a broad spectrum of understanding with regard to 'postcolonial'. While 'postcolonial' in postcolonial studies is about the "colonial matrix of power" (Warnke, 2017), Levisen & Sippola (2019, p. 2) point to further concepts, including the temporal concept of Anchimbe (2018): "I have used the term postcolonial as an era, time-defining concept." (Anchimbe, 2018, p. xiii). And in more detail on p. 60: "However, I will like to clarify how the term 'postcolonial' (i.e. as in postcolonial pragmatics) is used in this work. As stated in the preface, the use of the word 'postcolonial' here is independent of how it is used in postcolonial theory propagated in the work of theorists like Bhabha (1994), Spivak (1988) and by the foundational authors on decolonization such as Fanon (1952) and Said (1979). For the analysis of this book, 'postcolonial' denotes a period marked by changes in political order in hitherto colonized communities."

This article takes up the keyword of the temporal concept and connects it with the hierarchical concept of power relations. It raises the question of the meaning of the prefix -post in postcolonial (also in post-communist, post-socialist, post-Soviet). In the case of Eastern Europe, this includes the period following the collapse of the multilingual empires (Tsarist Russia, Soviet Union). This article therefore looks at the multilingual empires, their collapse and the transformations in the subsequent phases as a temporal framework for corresponding language situations.

Against the background of the previous explanations, this article deals with the language situation in Ukraine under the broader concept of colonialistic perspectives. By 'colonialistic' we mean, as just mentioned, a temporal and hierarchical concept as well as a "ideologische Haltung, die aber nicht an die historische Periode des faktischen Kolonialismus gebunden sein muss, sondern auch vor- und nachgelagert sein kann" [7] (Dewein et al., 2012, p. 243). This

[7] "ideological attitude, which, however, need not be tied to the historical period of de facto colonialism, but can also precede and follow it."

article highlights the following main features of language situations from a postcolonialistic perspective:

- Asymmetries, socially asymmetrical power constellations (Dewein et al., 2012, p. 243), asymmetrical language relations and corresponding language policies
- Power, ideologies of superiority (Levisen & Sippola, 2019, p. 4), exercise of power through language ideologies and language policy
- language empire (Phillipson, 1997) with corresponding ideologies, including the relationship between empire and periphery, hierarchization of languages.

Corresponding characteristics are also emphasized in relation to other language related disciplines, such as translation history: "[…] translation history possesses a decolonial potential as it serves as a lens through which to examine power dynamics, cultural hegemony, and colonial legacies inherent in linguistic exchanges. By interrogating translation practices, uncovering silenced voices, and challenging dominant narratives, translation history can contribute to the decolonization of knowledge and the promotion of diverse perspectives and epistemologies." (Odrekhivska, 2024, p. 6).

Concerning Ukraine, we find corresponding examples with regard to the above-mentioned characteristics in the following developments in the language situation and in the debates surrounding it:

- polarized interpretations of historical events and developments in the history of East Slavic languages
- Language bans in Tsarist Russia
- Stalin's language policy of Russification
- Assimilation policy in the multilingual USSR
- After the break-up of the Soviet Union counter-movements, such as decommunization, de-Russification

This small list of examples must suffice here for reasons of space. Some of these points will be taken up and discussed in the case studies in the following sections.

As an interim conclusion after the previous reflections, it should be noted that this article looks at the language situation in Ukraine through a postcolonialistic lens in the following case studies. This is intended to take account of current debates and provide clarity on current debates on colonialism and their relationship to the language situation. In principle, however, the approach using postcolonial linguistics should remain one of the possible approaches to

researching the multifaceted language situation in Ukraine and should not be or become the only way of reading it. The article returns to these questions under conclusions.

4. Case Studies

In relation to the case studies, three conceptual foundations are important. First, in line with the focus of this article, we analyze the case studies in terms of language ideologies in relation to language policy and language situation. Since language ideologies have already been defined in section 2, the term language policy will be briefly addressed here. This comprises six areas (Marten, 2016, pp. 24–29): planning of language corpus, status, prestige, acquisition, use, and discourse. Due to the limited space in this article, we will limit ourselves to planning of status and prestige and only include the other areas in selected contexts.

Secondly, a further conceptual basis for analyzing the case studies concerns the asymmetry of the language situations in multilingual Eastern Europe. Asymmetry and hierarchization of languages are associated with language conflicts. In relation to this, the conceptual basis for the following case studies is the multifactorial model of language conflicts developed by M. Wingender, which comprises four types: languages in conflict, language(s) as objects in conflicts, conflicts about language(s), language(s) of conflict (Wingender, 2021, pp. 28–30). The following analysis in the case studies focuses on the type 'conflicts about language(s)'. This is because this type of language conflict is associated with fields of linguistics that are also the focus of this article: language ideologies, language policy, language of politics. This is about "e.g., ethnolinguistic conflicts, conflicts of interest between speech communities, status and acquisition questions, functional spheres of language use, majority-minority-debates, renaming of places, streets or cities and replacing of language signs" (Wingender, 2021, p. 30). It is obvious that these aspects are relevant for the postcolonialistic perspective on the language situation.

Thirdly, we include the concept of 'language empire' in our investigation. The volume by Stolz 2015 refers to this term by Phillipson: as this volume comprises several articles on Eastern Europe, we quote from it: "The central concept for language empires (as well as their political or economic counterparts) is, of course, power, as stated in Phillipson's definition (1997, p. 238, cited in Hamel, 2006b, p. 2254) of linguistic imperialism as "[...] the imposi-

tion of power relations mediated by language dichotomies that create a hierarchization of languages."" (Stolz, 2015, p. vii)

4.1. Soviet language policy and Russification

Language policy in the Soviet Union was not homogeneous and was characterized by different, sometimes abruptly changing phases. We focus on three language policy phases with their respective strategies.

The first phase, the 1920s, is regarded as the golden age of language policy (Glück, 1984, p. 535). The main strategy in this phase was "classic language planning" (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012, p. 21), because the multilingual Soviet Union was characterized by great language diversity. The approximately 130 languages were characterized by genetic diversity as well as very different numbers of speakers and, above all, very different degrees of standardization (Glück, 1984). This posed problems for the language policy and the language ideology of the Soviet Union. Officially, the multilingual state propagated the equality of languages, however these were hardly in a position to function equally due to their different degrees of standardization. Ukrainian was one of the languages of the Soviet Union that benefited from the policy of "korenizatsiia" (nativization or indigenization) during this phase. For under the tsarist regime Ukrainian was subject to strong Russification, so that it had low prestige at the beginning of the 20thcentury (Grenoble, 2003, p. 83; see also the overview of the history of Russian in Ukraine by Moser, 2022, and Danylenko & Naienko, 2019). As noted in Kiss & Wingender (2025), in Tsarist Russia, the closer the regions were to the center of the empire (as in the case of Ukraine), the more restrictive the nationality policy was, whereas regions further away were less affected (Glück, 1984, p. 525). In the phase of Ukrainization as part of korenizatsiia, this changed significantly due to intense corpus and status planning (Kiss & Wingender, 2025, p. 727; Kulyk, 2014, p. 209; see the overview on Ukrainization in Shevelov, 1989, chapter 5). Overall, Soviet language policy in this phase was characterized by the discrepancy between the ideology of the equality of languages and language diversity, including different quantitative and qualitative conditions for the functioning of the languages.

The language policy changed abruptly under Stalin, especially since the mid-1930s. This phase can be characterized as a clear Russification. The policy of korenizatsiia ended (Grenoble, 2003, p. 54) and instead the status and spread of Russian was intensively promoted, e.g. by the *Decree on the com-*

pulsory teaching of Russian in 1938, which was an open contradiction to the official ideology of equality of languages in the USSR.

This cemented the hierarchization of languages in the USSR, despite the official ideology of linguistic equality. Thus, the languages were grouped in a five-category system. In this system, the status of the language was linked to the administrative status of the territory. Russian became the Union-wide language of inter-national communication ("jazyk mežnacional'nogo obščenija"), Ukrainian fell into the category "Literary and national languages, titular languages of the Union Republics", other categories included the languages of the autonomous republics and national districts as well as non-written languages (Glück, 1984, pp. 547–548). On the one hand, there were pragmatic reasons for selecting one language as the main means of communication in a multinational state; on the other hand, asymmetrical language relations were promoted and, by emphasizing Russian, an ideology of superiority was effectively pursued. To characterize the effects of this phase of language policy, we return to the concept of the 'language empire': "The spread of dominant languages (as native and/or foreign languages) is only one side of the coin, the other is language shift that leads to attrition, endangerment and obsolescence of marginalized languages." (Stolz, 2015, p. vii).

Traits of such developments can be revealed in the language policy of the Soviet Union, especially in its next phase after Stalin's death. This phase from the 1950s onwards is characterized by growing assimilation. "The Khrushchev era (1953–1964) introduced the vision of a new Soviet people, united not only politically, but also through the use of one language. Khrushchev emphatically declared Russian to be "the second national language." On the one hand an open policy of bilingualism was promoted, but on the other the very need for national languages, i.e. any language other than Russian, was questioned. Whereas under Lenin all languages were guaranteed equal rights, under Khrushchev the issue of the "relative" importance of languages was introduced into Soviet polemics." (Grenoble, 2003, p. 57).

The model of mass bilingualism pursued during this phase (national-Russian bilingualism, nacional'no-russkoe dvujazyčie (Haarmann, 1999, pp. 848–851)) again reveals the discrepancy of such asymmetrical relationships. On the one hand, a bilingualism model was seen as necessary for communication in a state with 130 languages; on the other hand, this model promoted hierarchical relationships between the languages. Since Russian was always a component of the respective bilingualism combination, this further intensified the spread

of Russian and the restriction of the national languages. Thus, there was no need for the Russian population in Ukraine or Belarus, for example, to learn the titular language of the respective Union republic. The result was the growing assimilation and language shift. The hierarchization of languages was also associated with different levels of prestige. The high prestige of Russian contrasted with the lower prestige of languages such as Ukrainian and Belarusian, which were regarded as provincial (Pavlenko, 2008a, p. 301). The declining prestige was in turn one of the reasons for the declining proficiency in the national languages.

The result at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union was the widespread use of Russian among the speakers of the national languages, while only a small proportion of the Russian population had proficiency in the respective titular language of their republic (Haarmann, 1999, p. 848; Grenoble, 2003, pp. 195–196 calls this "unidirectional bilingualism") and the titular population also had a low level of proficiency in their titular language (Pavlenko, 2008a, p. 283). However, it should be emphasized that the reasons for this development cannot be seen solely in the language policy of the Soviet Union, as other societal and economic developments such as industrialization and urbanization also contributed to the spread of Russian (cf. the discussion of these factors in Grenoble, 2003, chapter 8). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this language situation led to language conflicts – to varying degrees in the different post-Soviet states (Pavlenko, 2008b). In the course of the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the successor states [8] declared their respective titular language to be the official state language in order to strengthen the link between language and national identity. Russian was assigned a very different status in the 14 successor states of the USSR outside Russia (Pavlenko, 2008b). Due to Russification and the low proficiency in the titular language, this led to both changing language policy phases and intense societal disputes over the role of languages in the years that followed. V. Kulyk speaks of a "large-scale discrepancy between ethnic identification and language use" (Kulyk, 2014, p. 202). Conflicts about languages still characterize most post-Soviet states today. V. Kulyk sees these conflicts to a particularly high degree in Ukraine: "Although the discrepancy

[8] The Transcaucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia did not enact any new language laws, as they had already regulated the use of language in their republics in their constitutions in 1978 (Grenoble, 2003, p. 205).

was to be found in many other parts of the former USSR, in Ukraine its scale was larger than in most of the other union republics that became independent in 1991 (and comparable to patterns found in the lower-level autonomous units within the Russian Federation), primarily because of the more aggressive linguistic Russification of the late Soviet decades. Remarkably, this discrepancy persists in post-Soviet Ukraine, even though its policies with regard to ethnicity and language differ significantly from those of the Soviet regime. The continuation of this phenomenon in a radically different political and cultural context warrants its classification as a legacy of the communist decades [...]" (Kulyk, 2014, p. 202).

This described discrepancy and changing language policy phases persisted in Ukraine. There has been a dramatic change in Ukraine's language situation since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which will be discussed in the next case study.

4.2. Decommunization and de-Russification in today's Ukraine

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's language policy has aimed to eliminate the discrepancy between language use and ethnic identification described above in various phases and with varying strategies. For reasons of space, we will skip these complex processes by referring to the analysis of language policy phases by J. Besters-Dilger (2011). Instead, the following case study begins with the language ideological developments since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion. The previous case study ended with Kulyk's quotation on "more aggressive linguistic Russification of the late Soviet decades" (Kulyk, 2014, p. 202). Now the focus is on de-Russification in Ukraine's language situation as resistance to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In this short case study, only selected aspects [9] of the dramatically changing language situation can be discussed (for detailed and comprehensive analyses, see Azhniuk (2024), Kiss & Wingender (2025), and Shumytska & Krouglov (2025) as examples). Accordingly, three developments are selected below: Language laws with regard to decommunization and de-Russification, language shift from Russian to Ukrainian, and the end of the debate on pluricentricity in the Russian language in Ukraine.

[9] Due to space limitations, this article does not, for example, address the comprehensive topic of the role of Surzhyk in the Soviet Union and Ukraine, cf. recent literature such as Hentschel & Palinska (2022), Kostiučenko (2023), Masenko (2019).

We start with language laws with regard to decommunization and de-Russification. In Wingender's language conflict model (2021), these concern the language conflict type "conflicts about language(s)". In a brief retrospective, it is worth recalling the heated debates triggered by the language law of 2012 *About the principles of the state language policy*. This was based on the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, which wrongly included Russian as one of Ukraine's minority languages. Russian thus does not fulfill the definition of a regional or minority language as defined in the Charter (for detailed analysis, see Moser, 2013). Due to this law Russian benefited in particular, in contrast to the genuine minority languages in Ukraine. This law was first repealed at the Euromaidan in 2014. However, it had to remain in force until 2018 (for reasons, see Besters-Dilger, 2023, p. 4).

With regard to de-Russification and Ukrainization, the *Law of Ukraine on Education* (2017) should be mentioned, which introduced an essential Ukrainization in the school system. The increase of Ukrainian-language instruction sparked debates regarding the use of minority languages. "However, the language article of the educational law was heavily criticized at the diplomatic level by officials of the Russian Federation, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Poland and Moldova. In addition, the Venice Commission published a critical opinion, recommending that the Ukrainian government provide high-standard education in both state and minority languages" (Kiss & Wingender, 2025, p. 732). [10]

The State Language Law 2019 *On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language* is aimed at broader Ukrainization in various domains. It concerned the promotion of Ukrainian in numerous areas of society. It was passed in the final days of Poroshenko's presidency and came into force after Zelenskyy's election. Ukrainization was furthermore promoted by additional measures (Kiss & Wingender, 2025, p. 733).

In addition to the intense promotion of Ukrainian, the language policy with regard to English in Ukraine also needs to be addressed. On the one hand, it aims to promote the role and use of English in Ukraine. In 2023, President Zelenskyy introduced the law *On the use of the English language in Ukraine* into parliament, "marking a significant event in language planning during the

[10] Due to space limitations, the measures in dealing with minority languages in Ukraine cannot be listed here. An overview is provided in the volume *Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine* (Kiss & Wingender, 2025).

war. The bill specified compulsory English learning at pre-school, school, and university levels, state examinations in English, and defined eight categories of civil servants who must be proficient in English." (Krouglov, 2025, p. 243). This law sparked intense debate (see Krouglov, 2025, p. 247). On the other hand, this language policy in Ukraine is also a replacement of Russian as the language of international communication, as it was in the Soviet Union. At the time of the Soviet Union, Russian also became one of the world languages. [11] In addition to the need to promote English proficiency in Ukraine and pragmatic aspects, attitudes that go beyond this are also evident: a commitment to the language of the West and NATO as well as a rejection of the language of the aggressor. "When the Ukrainian government proposed the Bill, their aim was to disentangle Ukraine from the Russian language and culture, and to reduce and limit the use of Russian in international communication. The goal was that when Ukrainians meet people from other countries of the former Soviet Union, their first possible language would be English, which does not have any past colonial associations and is widely viewed as the language of future and progress." (Krouglov, 2025, p. 248). The last aspect mentioned in the quote refers to attitudes and is essential when we ask whether this new asymmetrical situation between Ukrainian and the imperial and global language English could repeat mechanisms of Soviet language policy and Russification. The current anglicization is of a different nature, as it is focused on international communication and not toward restricting the functions of the state language Ukrainian, which is instead being promoted very intensely. Another significant difference is that English is not learned as a native language in Ukraine, as is the case with Russian, so that from the perspective of the state language, there is no danger of replacing a lack of knowledge of Ukrainian with English.

The changes in Ukraine's language situation, that Russia's full-scale invasion since 2022 has triggered in the area of the language shift to Ukrainian, are also very striking and significant for the relationship between Ukrainian and Russian and Ukrainization. "What Ukraine has not achieved by means of its language policy in 30 years, Russia has provoked by attacking its neighbor. This full-scale war is promoting a change in language." (Kulyk, 2022, p. 237). These changes are linked to both language use and language prestige (Pidkui-

[11] "A symbolic indicator of this was the acknowledgment of Russian as an official language by the United Nations." (Haarmann, 1992, p. 125).

mukha, 2024; Renchka, 2023; Tsar, 2024). The new developments are most evident in the area of language prestige: Ukrainian became the language of resistance as a result of the war, while Russian became the language of the aggressor (Kulyk, 2022). Comprehensive linguistic strategies are being developed in relation to "resistance" and "aggressor", as A. Rabus reveals on the basis of social media. He shows "that the analysis of linguistic behavior on social media helps to shed light on how Ukrainians cope with Russia's war of aggression and how they use social media as a tool for decolonial resistance.' (Rabus, 2025, p. 1).

As far as language shift is concerned, the different forms of Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism mean that it is not so easy for everyone to switch from Russian to Ukrainian immediately. This raises the question of whether these developments in terms of the prestige and symbolic role of languages also reflect corresponding changes in language use. It can be stated that the numerous surveys conducted in recent years point in one direction: Ukrainization, which is being pushed by language policy, is now increasingly reflected in changes in language use due to Russia's brutal war of aggression (cf. the surveys in Kulyk, 2022 and Kulyk, 2024).

The decreasing role of Russian is also reflected in the end of the debate about pluricentricity in Russian and about a national variety of Russian in Ukraine. With regard to pluricentricity, according to Wingender's model of language conflict types, the type "conflicts about language(s)" overlaps with the type "language(s) as object in conflicts". In addition to language-political conflicts, this also involves questions of standardization. What is the background to this debate? The detailed explanation in Wingender (accepted) is briefly summarized here: The question arises, why no comparable pluricentrism has developed in the Russian language in the different language situations of the post-Soviet states as in other "world's 'big' languages of international communication (for instance, English, French or Spanish)" (Kamusella, 2018, p. 153). From a standardological perspective, one reason for this can be seen in the standard language type of Russian, as it is monocentric, associated with the great prestige of the 'literaturnyj jazyk' and a strong tradition in language culture. In the debate as to whether Russian in Ukraine can be regarded as a national variety of Russian, we follow Moser's assessment: "Keines der Merkmale begründet jedoch zwingend die Existenz einer einheitlichen ukrainischen Variante der russischen Sprache, umso weniger die Notwendigkeit ihrer

Standardisierung […]" [12] (Moser, 2022, p. 418). Since Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014, the media debate has intensified with regard to the development of a national variety of Russian in Ukraine. One of the triggers was T. Snyder's proposal to create an Institute of Russian Language and Culture in Ukraine, arguing: "If you officially had your own Ukrainian version of the Russian language that would be a very powerful argument against the Russian propaganda" (Snyder, 2019). The intense debate of Russian in Ukraine ended abruptly due to Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 and the strong stigmatization of Russian in Ukraine.

5. Results and conclusions

Both case studies reveal that, from a postcolonialistic perspective, multifaceted practices in language ideology and language policy can be recognized. The case studies also show that the reading should not only be postcolonialistic. With regard to Soviet language policy, for example, it has been revealed that several reasons and factors must be taken into account. On the one hand, Russification is the result of the language ideology of Russian as the second mother tongue and the model of mass bilingualism that developed unidirectionally. On the other hand, there are other factors that led to the growing spread of Russian, such as urbanization and industrialization. Russification also plays a role in those factors, but in the context of many others, such as economic, political, and demographic factors. The developments in language policy were more complex and multilayered than a purely post-colonial lens would indicate.

In summary, this leads to a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of analyzing Ukraine's language situation through a postcolonial lens. Does this provide new insights into sociolinguistic analysis, or does it narrow the perspective?

One of the advantages of the postcolonial lens is that it makes developments in Ukrainian language policy more tangible, such as the decommunization laws as a countermovement to the colonial practices of the Soviet Union, language laws to promote Ukrainian due to the former restriction of Ukrainian and language bans in Tsarist Russia. The postcolonial lens thus better explains why which directions are taken in language ideology and language policy. It

[12] "None of the features, however, necessarily establishes the existence of a uniform Ukrainian variant of Russian, all the less the need for its standardization [...]".

also helps to reveal discrepancies and areas of tension based on the concepts of asymmetry, power and language empire. The postcolonial lens thus connects linguistics more intensely with current societal and political debates. It brings linguistics more strongly into societal debates.

One of the disadvantages is that the term 'postcolonial' with its conceptual framing reduces sociolinguistic analysis to a set of keywords. It also steers the view in one direction, which means that other reasons and factors are not seen equally in relation to certain developments. In the current debate, the term 'postcolonial' narrows the discussion to the relationship between Ukrainian and Russian – to the Ukrainian state language and its historically asymmetrical language situation with Russian. The overall picture also includes the minority languages of Ukraine. The complex picture of Ukraine's language diversity can be analyzed more comprehensively with the help of multifactorial language situation models, e.g. from multilingualism research, which also reveal asymmetries and hierarchies between the languages.

A consistent continuation of the use of the term 'postcolonial' raises further questions in relation to the language situation in Ukraine: The current language policy with regard to the promotion of English in Ukraine (Krouglov, 2025) once again incorporates an imperial or this time even global language, English, into the language ideology. For international communication, it is essential that the current leading world language is given appropriate consideration in school education. However, a language law on the use of the English language in Ukraine in the acute war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine has further implications. "This unprecedented legislation, for a country that is neither part of the British Commonwealth nor a former British colony, grants English a unique status in a nation at war with Russia." (Krouglov, 2025, p. 244). And how will the new combination of the Ukrainian state language with "*the* hegemonic world language" (Hamel, 2006, p. 2247) develop? What differences arise from the fact that Russian and Ukrainian are East Slavic languages and English and Ukrainian belong to different language groups of the Indo-European languages? From the perspective of postcolonial linguistics, it must be emphasized: The dealing with imperial languages remains a difficult and very complex task for the societies concerned. And how should the asymmetry of the language situation in Ukraine itself be assessed, i.e. the relationship between the Ukrainian state language and the (peripheral) minority languages? What are the further effects on language diversity, which is particularly endangered by forced migration and flight in

times of war? Not least in view of these questions, it is essential that the application of the postcolonial linguistics approach to the language situation in Ukraine continues to be combined with other sociolinguistic approaches to the analysis of multilingual language situations in order to uncover multifaceted developments.

Following this examination of postcolonial perspectives on Ukraine, we will conclude by asking what insights the case of Ukraine provides for postcolonial linguistics. In this context, it is important to emphasize the complex nature of colonial influences, as Ukraine has been shaped by influences from various empires (Polish, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Russian). These multilayered colonial references reveal different mechanisms and correlations between political, cultural, and linguistic factors in the development of the language situation. Furthermore, many of the questions raised above can also be asked here. The analysis of the language situation in Ukraine, with its complex history and long historical development of the relationship between Russian and Ukrainian, contributes comprehensive insights into asymmetries and power relations in relation to this complex bilingual situation. The new model of asymmetrical relationships promoted in current language policy—that between the imperial-global language English and Ukrainian—provides equally comprehensive insights into asymmetries. Moreover, research findings on the development of the discrepancy between language policy and language reality since the collapse of the Soviet Union are significant. Analyzing the role of language in the context of political turning points is a very important research topic and concerns not only Ukraine, but all post-Soviet states. Furthermore, the current research contributions on language in war are particularly relevant. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine reveals extensive and dramatic developments in language use, corpus, status, prestige, and acquisition. Linguistics can observe and analyze in detail how dealing with the imperial and Soviet heritage is debated in the society.

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RETHINKING LANGUAGE SOVEREIGNTY: UKRAINE’S POSTCOLONIAL CHALLENGE

Abstract

Background. *Ukraine’s post-Soviet language policy has often been interpreted through geopolitical or normative lenses. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the enduring impact of colonial and imperial structures on language hierarchies and societal attitudes. The Russian language, while often framed as a pragmatic tool or cultural bridge, retains a symbolic dominance rooted in historical asymmetries of power.*

Contribution to the research field. *The present study raises the possibility that Ukraine’s current language policy cannot be fully understood without a postcolonial framework that interrogates both external pressures and internalized linguistic hierarchies. This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise that language sovereignty is inseparable from broader struggles for epistemic and cultural decolonization.*

Purpose. *The article aims to critically reassess Ukraine’s newest language policy reforms in light of its postcolonial condition, exploring how questions of language sovereignty intersect with identity, memory, and resistance.*

Methods. *This study applies a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, drawing on critical discourse analysis of legal texts and public debates, as well as theoretical perspectives from postcolonial studies and sociolinguistics, especially in the context of language policy.*

Results. *The findings show that the legal and symbolic prioritization of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine functions not only as a tool of nation-building but also as an act of symbolic decolonization. These measures primarily challenge the enduring effects of Russification.*

Discussion. *These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of postcoloniality in Ukraine, particularly in contexts where the colonial relationship was ideologically denied. The Ukrainian case suggests that efforts to reclaim language sovereignty may entail complex negotiations between past oppression, present pluralism and future aspirations.*

Keywords: linguistics, Ukrainian language, language policy, minorities, postcolonializm, neocolonization, decolonization.

1. Introduction

Postcolonial studies today are widely recognized as essential for analyzing, understanding, and properly interpreting the specific characteristics and trajectories of colonial policies, which vary significantly across countries and continents. Ukraine is no exception, and postcolonial studies – both within Ukraine and in Ukrainian studies abroad – bear their own distinctive features. These are shaped by a long history of multilingual and multicultural coexistence under the forced unity of the Soviet Union, the colonial policies of the Russian Empire that preceded it, and, after the USSR's collapse, the mismanagement of state-building in independent Ukraine. Political dependency and institutional instability, which hindered the development of a strong national identity and effective state structures, became hallmarks of Ukrainian governance during the thirty years of independence.

Another turning point came in 2022, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. According to researchers, the war in Ukraine has triggered profound processes, with decolonization at their center. However, the decolonization of Russian politics, Russian imperialism, and Russian culture is not – once again – an abstract gesture detached from a broader context, but is becoming, before our very eyes, part of a broader shift aimed at restoring epistemic justice (Szerszeń, 2023, p. 4).

In the introduction, we will also define the terminological framework, which, according to S. Biedarieva, should be clarified, as "notions of the postcolonial and decolonial are not interchangeable in terms of the war and history between Ukraine and Russia; rather they reflect two different stages of libera-

tion from entanglement. While the former denotes the situation immediately following the colonial experience and anti-colonial struggle, taking on all the implications of colonialism with the intention of reinterpreting them, the latter speaks about the final process of dismantling the colonial narrative" (Biedarieva, 2022, p. 2). The researcher simultaneously explains the difficulties associated with the use of this terminology, as "in Ukraine's particular decolonial case, Russia is no longer present as a political or cultural agent of impact. Among Ukrainians, there is more than a general lack of interest in Russia and its territory; indeed, there is a conscious collective position of distancing to avoid entanglement. We are yet to invent a new framework for interpreting and describing the decolonial state in which we find ourselves, for it goes beyond any existing postcolonial or decolonial paradigm" (Biedarieva, 2022, p. 14). Ukrainian linguist N. Yasakova writes that "in the construction of national identity among colonized peoples, it is characteristic to establish their differences from the colonizers" (Yasakova, 2024, p. 35). At the same time, she notes the difficulties associated with self-understanding in a newly liberated world, since, in her words, "for a nation that has existed under colonial conditions, developing conceptions of its own past and forming and preserving historical memory is an extremely complex task" (Yasakova, 2024, p. 32).

The situation analyzed by S. Biedarieva and N. Yasakova, is similar to that in academia, which is likewise grappling with the challenge of moving away from long-established dependence on Russocentric scholarship. Both Ukrainian and international scholars have emphasized the need to liberate Ukrainian studies – including its linguistic dimension – from the lingering influence of Soviet and, subsequently, Russian ideological paradigms. In the context of education, this requires a re-evaluation of traditional approaches. Ukrainian studies should no longer remain subordinated to colonial paradigms based on Russian academic models. For decades, research agendas, curricula, and even terminology were shaped under Russian scholarly influence. Foreign terms entered Ukrainian via Russian, transliteration was mediated by Russian orthography, and Russian scientific achievements were often prioritized at the expense of broader global perspectives. These practices are remnants of colonial dependency and must be overcome. Ukrainian studies must undergo a process of decolonization – detaching from the singular "correct" model and instead aligning with wider European and global academic traditions.

In *Decolonizing Academic Curricula: Integrating Ukrainian Studies through a Thematic Approach* (Grebeniuk et al., 2025), the authors propose a

comprehensive theoretical framework along with practical tools for renewing Ukrainian studies in the context of war. They emphasize the need to rethink Ukrainian culture, literature, and language through a decolonial lens. It provides teaching materials, guidelines, and questions essential to transforming the field. A curated literature overview helps educators and students explore Ukrainian realities and sociocultural dynamics with critical awareness. With all of this in mind, we now turn to works that help us explore and answer key questions about Ukraine's language policy – ranging from general overviews to in-depth analyses of the present situation during wartime and within the broader context of the decolonization of knowledge.

2. Theoretical Literature Review

The language policy of Ukraine since gaining independence in 1991 has been marked by inconsistency and frequent shifts, largely dictated by the changing political climate, ideological orientations of successive presidents, and parliamentary majorities (Romaniuk, 2016, p. 21; 2015, pp. 208–222). M. Moser's analysis of language politics under President Yanukovych illustrates how legal instruments, international frameworks, and political actors were mobilized to advance Russian language rights at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty. His work, alongside others, maps the struggle between competing language ideologies in post-Soviet space (Moser, 2013). These fluctuations have significantly impacted the legislative landscape surrounding language use and have reflected broader debates about national identity, cultural sovereignty, and geopolitical alignment. This complex and at times contradictory evolution underscores the need for thorough analysis and evaluation of language policy within the broader framework of post-Soviet transformation. Central to this analysis is the comparative study of the 2012 and 2019 language laws and their consequences for Ukrainian society, especially regarding the symbolic and functional roles of Ukrainian and Russian.

One of the key voices in this discourse, B. Azhniuk, has repeatedly addressed the role of language in Ukrainian nation-building and cultural consolidation. He argues that despite the constitutional primacy of Ukrainian, passed legislation, particularly the 2012 law, effectively privileged Russian and led to linguistic segregation, weakening the integrative function of the state language. B. Azhniuk highlights the necessity of a balanced yet assertive language policy, one that secures the rights of minority languages while reinforcing the unifying function of Ukrainian (Azhniuk, 2017–18; 2019). In a 2021

monograph, B. Azhniuk further elaborates on the critical importance of language policy in shaping societal ideals and securing cultural continuity (Azhniuk, 2021). He highlights the role of legislation and state institutions in either preserving or transforming language practices, and stresses the need to maintain the qualitative richness of the Ukrainian language – its stylistic variety, purity, and standardization – as essential for intergenerational transmission. He also critiques the inconsistent application of international documents such as the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, noting the risks of political manipulation when these frameworks are implemented without contextual sensitivity.

A broader set of studies builds on these concerns, with particular attention to the challenges of Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism and language mixing. These works note the persistence of Russian in private and public life, including media and education, and analyze how this coexistence shapes Ukrainian identity. Despite a growing majority identifying Ukrainian as their native language (as revealed in the 2001 census), widespread bilingualism – often realized in the hybrid form of *surzhyk* – complicates notions of linguistic loyalty and national belonging (Besters-Dilger, 2007).

Scholars such as V. Kulyk have contributed comparative analyses of language policy in other multilingual states, assessing how models from Europe and beyond might inform Ukraine's approach (Kulyk, 2014). He observes that the legal marginalization of Russian contrasts with its continued social presence, generating tensions between formal policy and lived practice. This dissonance not only fuels public controversy but also informs elite discourses on identity and nationhood.

The work of L. Bilaniuk brings an ethnographic perspective to these dynamics, particularly in the context of the Orange Revolution and its aftermath (Bilaniuk, 2005). Her research exposes the ideological underpinnings of linguistic categorization and explores how political upheaval reconfigures social perceptions of language. Similarly, L. Masenko investigates the colonial legacy embedded in Ukraine's linguistic situation, arguing that the dominance of Russian in many spheres of communication reflects the long-term effects of imperial and Soviet policies (Masenko, 2004, 2020). She emphasizes the need to evaluate not just speaker numbers, but also the functional reach of each language in public and private domains.

In fact, an important contribution to the postcolonial language debate was already made in 2000 by the political scientist S. Stewart with her publication

Sprachenpolitik als Sicherheitsproblem in der Ukraine, in which she points to the explicit dependence on the Russian language but also emphasizes the importance and, above all, the controversy of the "language question" (Stewart, 2000, p. 32).

Of course, issues of language policy, planning, and decolonization have also been addressed in other works, which are not examined here in detail due to the scope of this article. These include studies by sociolinguists such as H. Matsyuk, S. Sokolova, O. Danilevska, I. Renchka, N. Trach, H. Shumytska, H. Yavorska, among others, who in recent years have analyzed the challenges of the Ukrainian language situation, the trajectories of its development, and the necessary legislative reforms. It is also pertinent to acknowledge the sustained contributions of N. Kobchenko (e.g., 2023) and N. Yasakova (e.g., 2023) in the field of postcolonial studies, particularly their investigations into processes of identity formation and strategies for overcoming the enduring effects of totalitarian influence on scholarly discourse.

The broader theoretical literature emphasizes that Ukraine's language policy since independence has been shaped by political shifts, competing ideologies, and the enduring influence of Russian, resulting in fluctuating legislative frameworks and ongoing societal tensions between Ukrainian and Russian. Scholars consistently highlight the need for balanced and assertive policies that strengthen Ukrainian as a unifying state language, while also protecting minority rights, addressing bilingualism, and acknowledging the functional and symbolic roles of language in national identity and cultural continuity.

3. Data

In our article, the data show that Ukraine's language policy has evolved from the 1989 law, which recognized Ukrainian while preserving Russian privileges, to the 2019 law mandating the use of Ukrainian in administration, education, media, public services, and cultural events through staged implementation (2019–2024). The 2012 law granted Russian regional status in oblasts where over 10% of the population spoke Russian, but it was blocked following the Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas.

The data also include complementary legislation: the 2021 law on Indigenous Peoples and the 2023 law on National Minorities, which protect education, media, and public information in minority languages in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Language Ombudsman, established in 2019, monitors compliance, enforces penalties,

conducts inspections, and promotes the use of Ukrainian. Quotas and transitional measures include 75–90 % Ukrainian in broadcasting, 60–100 % instruction in schools by Grade 12, and Ukrainian-language editions of newspapers and websites.

These data illustrate Ukraine's systematic decolonial strategy, consolidating Ukrainian as the state language while ensuring protections for minority communities. A more detailed analysis concerning these and broader issues will be presented in the next section of the article.

4. Ukrainian Language Policy in the Post-Soviet Period – Brief Overview

As early as 1989, shortly before the Soviet Union's collapse, Ukraine enacted its first language law, *On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR* (Zakon, 1989), which elevated Ukrainian's status while preserving a privileged role for Russian. Following independence on 24 August 1991, Ukrainian became the sole state language – except in Crimea, where Ukrainian, Russian and Crimean Tatar shared official status – but the 1989 law remained unamended alongside the 1996 Constitution (Konstytutsiia, 1996). There, Article 10 upheld Ukrainian's primacy yet continued to grant Russian a special position, a reality confirmed by the 2001 census, which recorded nearly 30 percent of the population as native Russian speakers, especially in the south and east. In everyday life, Russian remained even more widespread, since "mother tongue" in Ukraine often denotes ethnic identity rather than actual language use.

In practice, Russian functioned as a post-colonial legacy: legally protected and institutionally entrenched, while increasingly juxtaposed against a resurgent Ukrainian, whose status was unstable and even threatened. Debates over a new language law began in 2010, reflecting a growing awareness that the inherited Soviet system would require deliberate decolonial measures. This early phase lays the groundwork for understanding why subsequent legislation adopted a staggered implementation, both to allow institutions time to adapt and to signal a gradual shift away from Russian-centric norms.

5. Ukrainian Language Policy in 2012 – An Attempt at Neocolonization

In 2012, the new language law *On the Principles of State Language Policy* (Zakon, 2012), also known as the Kolesnychenko-Kivalov Law, was passed,

sparking a wave of criticism. One can undoubtedly speak of a case of official and internal neocolonization. Even the Venice Commission criticized the law for undermining minority-rights protections under the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (Khartiia, 1992), which Ukraine had ratified in 2005. Under its provisions, any language spoken by at least 10 percent of a region's population could be granted regional or minority status. Crucially, however, the Ukrainian text of the Charter had been translated from Russian rather than English, introducing a mistranslation of the term "minority" that skewed its application (Mierzwa, 2024, pp. 158–159).

These neocolonial measures significantly altered language practices: in around six oblasts, Russian functioned de facto as a second official language, extending into education, media, public services and administration.

Only the Maidan protests of late 2013, followed by Crimea's annexation in March 2014 and the outbreak of war in Donbas, triggered a renewed push for decolonization. Transitional president Oleksandr Turchynov formally blocked any further application of the 2012 law and called for drafting replacement legislation. As early as 2008, M. Riabchuk had argued that the language question can only be solved in a liberal society, not in a Soviet one, and the choice of which language to speak must belong to the citizen, not to officials or service providers (Riabchuk, 2008).

In the years that followed, a series of interim laws paved the way for a fully decolonial statute. In January 2016, the law *On Television and Radio Broadcasting* (Zakon, 2016) introduced quotas requiring at least 75 percent of public-service and 60 percent of private broadcasting to be in Ukrainian. In September 2017, the law *On Education* (Zakon, 2017) was enacted with a transitional timetable running to 2023 (later extended to 2024): by Grade 5, at least 20 percent of instruction must be delivered in Ukrainian; by Grade 12, this increases to a minimum of 60 percent, while schools may still offer one ECRML-protected minority language, English, or another EU language. Finally, in February 2018, the Constitutional Court declared the language law from 2012 unconstitutional, clearing the path for a new law.

In April 2019, Ukraine adopted the newest language law, which is widely regarded as the first fully decolonial language law. It immediately drew criticism from Russia, as well as Hungary and Romania, but represented a decisive break with the neocolonial legacy of its predecessor.

6. Ukrainian Language Policy in 2019 – An Attempt at Decolonization

While the 2012 law exemplified neocolonial tendencies, the new law *On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language* (Zakon, 2019) represents Ukraine's shift into a decolonial phase of language policy. Rather than a single sweeping decree, its provisions were introduced in four stages to allow institutions to adjust and to signal a deliberate break with Soviet-Russian linguistic norms.

The first stage took effect on 16 July 2019, when all state bodies and local administrations became required to conduct their written and oral communications exclusively in Ukrainian. This entrenched Ukrainian as the obligatory language of official documentation, legal proceedings, and public services.

In September 2020, the next stage extended the mandate to state secondary schools, which were now obliged to teach exclusively in Ukrainian.

Beginning in January 2021, all service providers and labels on goods and services had to be available in Ukrainian (the use of another language remained possible only by mutual agreement). By July 2021, Ukrainian became compulsory for state-funded cultural, artistic, and entertainment events, covering announcements, posters, tickets (with the exception of sports), museum and exhibition signage, cinema (Ukrainian dubbing or, at most, 10 percent foreign-language showings with Ukrainian subtitles), tourist and excursion services, and at least 50 percent of book titles.

From January 2022, nationwide newspapers and magazines were required to offer Ukrainian-language editions (excluding publications in EU languages and Crimean Tatar); and by July 2022, company websites and user interfaces had to switch to Ukrainian, with fines for repeat violations coming into force.

Finally, in July 2024, the regional press had to publish Ukrainian-language versions, and broadcast quotas rose – national television and radio from 75 percent to 90 percent, local from 60 percent to 80 percent – while the External Independent Evaluation for school leavers will be conducted solely in Ukrainian (except for foreign-language exams) from January 2030.

Together, these staged measures function as a decolonial strategy, gradually displacing the institutional dominance of Russian and aiming to restore epistemic justice by reaffirming Ukrainian's central role. The law also imposes fines on individuals and organizations that fail to comply, underlining its enforceable character. Although criticized by various parties, such as Russia and

Hungary, supporters argue that the law is a necessary corrective to the post-Soviet legacy and a cornerstone of Ukraine's European integration (RFE/RL, 2019).

7. Additional Steps in the Attempt at Decolonization: The Position of the Language Ombudsman

With the adoption of the 2019 language law, Ukraine established the Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language, commonly referred to as the Language Ombudsman (Zakon, 2019). This independent office was created to ensure the protection and promotion of the Ukrainian state language across all spheres of public life. Enshrined in the law, the Ombudsman's mandate includes monitoring compliance with the legislation, safeguarding the linguistic rights of citizens in the public sphere, and addressing violations in areas such as public administration, education, healthcare, culture, media, and services. Individuals who experience infringements of their right to use Ukrainian in the public domain may file complaints, which the Ombudsman is authorized to investigate and, where appropriate, address through administrative mechanisms or refer to competent authorities.

Beyond its supervisory role, the Language Ombudsman conducts comprehensive public-awareness campaigns aimed at promoting the everyday use of Ukrainian and informing citizens about their linguistic rights. These efforts target both urban and rural populations and seek to explain not only the legal requirements but also the broader rationale for using Ukrainian as a cornerstone of national identity and social cohesion. The Ombudsman also facilitates dialogue with state institutions, civil society organizations, minority-language communities, and private-sector actors to identify challenges in implementing the law and to formulate practical solutions.

Additionally, the office initiates sociolinguistic research and cooperates with public authorities to support the development and refinement of language policy. In this regard, the office functions not only as a regulatory authority but also as a mediator and policy advisor, helping bridge the gap between legal mandates and real-life language practices. For example, he publicly exposes violations of the language law (Shurmakevych, 2024). The Commissioner is appointed and dismissed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and serves a five-year term. Although operating within the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Office enjoys institutional independence, enabling impartial execution of its duties. The Commissioner is empowered to conduct inspec-

tions, request documentation from public and private entities, issue mandatory instructions to address violations, and initiate administrative proceedings. However, the office does not possess judicial authority and often collaborates with other competent bodies to enforce language legislation.

Despite objections from some minority groups, who fear that rigorous enforcement might marginalize non-Ukrainian speakers, the Language Ombudsman remains a cornerstone of Ukraine's decolonial language strategy. By actively dismantling the symbolic and institutional dominance of Russian, the Ombudsman reinforces Ukrainian's status as the sole state language and advances the broader project of post-Soviet "epistemic justice." This role is especially significant given the historical entanglement of language with power and identity in Ukraine.

8. Ukraine's Language Policy on Minorities

Alongside the 2019 language law and the continuing application of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, Ukraine has enacted two additional statutes focused on minority affairs.

In 2021, the law *On the Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine* (Zakon, 2021) established special legal status and protections for three indigenous groups – Crimean Tatars, Karaites, and Krymchaks – creating consultative bodies and safeguarding their rights to culture, education, and language.

Then, in 2023, the law *On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine* (Zakon, 2023) extended protections to all other recognized minority communities, guaranteeing rights to schooling, media, and public information in their native languages. Due to the realities of the ongoing war and occupation, neither statute currently applies to the Russian-speaking population.

Much like the 2019 language law, these minority-rights laws drew sharp criticism from Hungary, who argued that their ethnic communities in Ukraine would face undue restrictions, and even threatened to block Ukraine's EU accession. The Venice Commission echoed some of these concerns in its opinion, leading Ukrainian legislators to amend clauses on educational quotas and local administrative use of minority languages. A compromise text was adopted in late 2023 that preserved core protections for minority groups while addressing partner-state objections (Hall, 2023).

In 2024, lawmakers proposed an amendment to the educational law requiring students to use Ukrainian not only during lessons but also during breaks (Mamchenko, 2024). Following strong protests from Hungarian and Roma-

nian minority representatives, a softened amendment was drafted in 2025 to allow optional use of minority languages in non-instructional settings. This ongoing negotiation between majority-language consolidation and minority-language accommodation continues to shape Ukraine's decolonial trajectory.

So today, Ukraine's language policy is shaped by not just the 2019 law but also by its commitments under the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* and two separate minority-rights laws. N. Trach (2015) rightly pointed out that in post-Soviet area, the laws are more declarations than real mechanisms of social interactions (Trach, 2015, p. 219). This new constellation of legal instruments – three major laws plus the Charter – creates a highly complex framework that both advances Ukrainian as the state language and embeds protections for minority groups. Managing these overlapping provisions, alongside ongoing wartime realities, presents a significant administrative and political challenge. Yet the very breadth of this legal architecture also testifies to the depth of Ukraine's commitment to linguistic decolonization: in times of crisis and war, the country continues to refine and expand its safeguards, underscoring that language remains central to its national and European aspirations.

9. Results and Discussion

On both professional and societal levels, the recognition of language as a key identity marker intensified in Ukraine after 2022. Numerous educational initiatives emerged – language courses for internally displaced persons, refugees, and foreigners in cities such as Lviv, Ternopil, Lutsk and others. Language choice became a conscious act of civic expression: in social media, users began posting more frequently in Ukrainian, often adding statements such as "From now on, I will write only in Ukrainian." This kind of linguistic self-identification has become a defining characteristic of wartime life since February 24, 2022.

It is important to note that, in the face of the threat of renewed colonial subjugation, the imperative for clear self-identification among Ukrainians has intensified. This is exemplified by the increasing centrality of language in public life, which has, in turn, elevated the role of the Language Ombudsman. The establishment of this institution constitutes a significant structural response to the growing need for oversight and enforcement of national language legislation. A symbolic linguistic division has taken shape: Russian is increasingly employed in reference to "the enemy," particularly Russian nationals, whereas

Ukrainian functions as a marker of in-group identity, showing solidarity, closeness, and national cohesion. This dichotomy establishes a pronounced linguistic boundary between "us" and "them." In this context, the articulation of linguistic and national identity becomes crucial not only for individual self-definition but also for maintaining the coherence and sovereignty of state institutions.

The broader sociopolitical context, particularly the full-scale war initiated by Russia in 2022, has intensified the urgency of language-related debates. Scholars increasingly recognize the centrality of language in wartime discourse, hate speech, and national resilience. The weaponization of language in both domestic and international communication underscores its role not only as a cultural asset but also as a tool of propaganda, resistance, and identity defence. Language conflicts have become not merely symbolic, but existential. In this light, academic attention has turned to political and parliamentary discourse, exploring how language is employed in legislative debates, policy framing, and media narratives.

Theoretical and empirical investigations also extend to multilingual settings beyond Ukraine, with comparative studies examining language conflict, policy, and coexistence in countries such as Belarus and Russia. These works offer valuable methodological insights for linguistic conflict research and contribute to the development of a more inclusive and context-sensitive model for language governance in Ukraine (cf. Müller & Wingender, 2001).

Furthermore, recent interdisciplinary collections have situated the Ukrainian case within broader postcolonial and geopolitical frameworks. These studies highlight the need for a decolonized understanding of Ukrainian language, literature, and culture – not as derivatives of Russian counterparts, but as entities with their own ways shaped by diverse European and global influences. Scholars have begun to reframe Ukrainian cultural production, from folklore and visual arts to children's literature and film, as repositories of national memory and identity, rather than as appendages to a Russian-centric canon.

We have previously emphasized the importance of integrating contemporary Ukrainian realities into the curricula of Ukrainian studies abroad. This involves not only teaching the language practically but also introducing students to critical discourses on language policy, minority language rights, and the sociopolitical status of Ukrainian (Romaniuk, 2023, 2025). We also note a growing body of research responding to the challenges facing Ukrainian studies. Scholars have called for the decolonization of a field that has long operated within the framework of Russian – dominated Slavic studies, shaped by Soviet

approaches to language, culture, and history across the post-Soviet space. Today, there is an active rethinking of how Ukraine is represented in international academic settings – how it is written about, taught, and interpreted.

Drawing on our own experience in academic and didactic work within Ukrainian studies abroad, we advocate for a revision of how Ukrainian is taught as a foreign language. This includes not only the linguistic component but also the ideological dimension: understanding Ukrainian as a marker of identity, its contested status, and its historical and political implications. Students must understand the historical and modern complexity of the "language question" in Ukraine, and place it within the broader context of colonial and postcolonial policy – from the Russian Empire to today's Russian Federation (Romaniuk, 2025), they must be equipped to contextualize Ukraine's language situation along a historical timeline and interpret it through the prism of colonial and decolonial shifts.

In the field of language policy, Ukraine's decolonial efforts have led to a complex but increasingly coherent legal framework. Since 2019, several key laws have been adopted that reposition the Ukrainian language as a marker of sovereignty, including the comprehensive law on the state language and additional legislation on indigenous and minority communities. These efforts reflect a clear institutional will to dismantle postcolonial linguistic hierarchies. At the same time, the multiplicity of legal instruments underscores the challenges of ensuring consistent implementation. These challenges are further illustrated by the recent change in the office of the Language Ombudsman, held by Taras Kremin from 2020 to 2025 and, since July 15, 2025, by Olena Ivanovska, appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. This ambivalence reflects a broader postcolonial reality: while structural decolonization is advancing, its practical consolidation remains fragile and contested.

10. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is essential to strengthen the efforts of educational institutions both in Ukraine and abroad to dismantle persistent stereotypes and to build a modern educational process grounded in truthful, undistorted information. For too long, Ukraine has been portrayed exclusively through the lens of its Soviet past – as merely a former Soviet republic – resulting in a skewed understanding shaped by Soviet and, later, Russian ideological influence.

Correcting this narrative will foster a clearer recognition of the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian language, dispelling myths that portray it as merely a

variant of Russian or as artificially separated from it. It will also clarify the uniqueness of Ukrainian literature, which does not evolve under the influence of Russian canons and traditions but instead follows its own path – rooted in the diverse experiences of its authors and drawing inspiration from both European and global cultural contexts. When viewed through a decolonized lens, Ukrainian culture will be acknowledged as one that preserves and transmits memory and knowledge about the Ukrainian people.

This process of cultural and language rethinking is mirrored in Ukraine's recent language policy reforms, which can be seen as part of a broader postcolonial shift. The legislation adopted since 2019 does not simply promote Ukrainian as the state language – it actively challenges the lingering effects of imperial linguistic hierarchies. By gradually reducing the dominance of Russian in public institutions, media, and education, Ukraine is asserting not only full sovereignty but also epistemic agency. In this sense, the new language law becomes a real tool of decolonization: it reorients the linguistic landscape toward a self-defined cultural identity and creates legal mechanisms to protect that identity against external pressures. These developments underscore that the Ukrainian language is not a relic of resistance but a living medium of cultural self-determination.

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

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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 20th 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* [1] 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 (Abtahian & 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

[1] 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 [2]. 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

[2] 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, Oleksiy 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 terytoriiakh - 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 & Briuhhemann, 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), 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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FAVORITE LETTER: SHIFTS IN LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AS REFLECTIONS OF OVERCOMING POSTCOLONIAL AMBIVALENCE IN WARTIME

Abstract

Background. *Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, besides all traumatic consequences for Ukrainian society, has led to fundamental shifts in self-awareness and self-identification of Ukrainians, and these shifts have been reflected in language ideologies. In addition to explicit changes regarding the switching of a significant percentage of Russophone Ukrainians to the Ukrainian language, there have also been profound changes concerning rethinking the role of language in constructing identity and preserving statehood.*

Contribution to the research field. *This study serves as a case analysis examining the development of language ideologies within a postcolonial society through their expression in various textual and visual representations of a single symbol—the letter "i", which has emerged as a symbol of the Ukrainian language and a marker of its distinctiveness. The importance and originality of this study lie in the fact that it helps us to understand the cultural and psychological shifts in society during the period of a unique historical experience: from the formal liberation from colonial dependence to the time of armed resistance to recolonization.*

Purpose. *This study aims to analyze language ideologies of Ukrainians represented by the letter "i" from 1991 to the present day and find out how they reflect different modes of thinking regarding colonial experience, its realization and overcoming.*

Methods. *The research methodology is based on the theoretical framework of such interdisciplinary fields as postcolonial studies, language ideology, and critical discourse analysis. Taking into account the diversity of empirical mate-*

rial, in addition, certain insights of graphic linguistics, studies of linguistic landscape, and geosemiotics have been added to the research tools.

Results. *Until February 24, 2022, the language ideologies of Ukrainian society represented by the letter "ї" reflected a state of postcolonial ambivalence. The language ideologies of uniqueness, attitude towards the language as a national treasure, and sacralization conveyed an anticolonial mode of thinking, as they were aimed at denying Soviet narratives about inferiority, provincialism, and the unprestigious status of the Ukrainian language. Meanwhile, the ideology of femininity expressed the colonial way of thinking directly as it embodied a view of oneself from the colonizer's perspective. The language ideologies of weakness and endangerment as a legacy of being under the control of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were triggered by the strong position of the Russian language in the public space.*

After February 24, 2022, the language ideologies of femininity, weakness, and endangerment represented by the letter "ї" have been displaced by ideologies of masculinity, strength, and resistance, broadcasting anticolonial thinking. At the same time, certain tendencies testify to the decolonization of thinking as well: 1) the attitude towards language as a national treasure (a feature of postcolonial societies) has changed to a pragmatic attitude (as a means of communication); 2) the ideology of uniqueness has not been based on the opposition to the Russian language but instead realized in a global context, which evidences a departure from the cognitive dichotomy "colonizer – colonized"; 3) the role of the Ukrainian language in constructing identity and maintaining sovereignty has transited from symbolic to practical.

Discussion. *In Ukraine, the process of overcoming colonialism and coloniality unfolds in a non-linear way. After formal liberation from political dependence in 1991, the period of postcolonial ambivalence, which is inherent in the coexistence of anticolonial and colonial modes of thinking, occurred. After Russia's full-scale invasion, the process of decolonization was activated, which coincides with anticolonial resistance that is reflected in thinking as well, in particular in the transformation of linguistic ideologies.*

Keywords: language ideology, Ukrainian language, the letter "ї", colonial thinking, anticolonial thinking, postcolonial ambivalence, decolonization.

1. Introduction

Until recently, scholars had to prove the appropriateness of approaching postcolonial methodology to studying the Successor States of the USSR (Moore, 2001), in particular Ukraine (Riabczuk, 2013). Russia's full-scale in-

vasion of Ukraine resolved many questions, as it has revealed the imperial essence of the aggressor state. As Timothy Snyder argues, «it is a colonial war in the sense that Russia meant to conquer, dominate displace, exploit. And it's an imperial war in the sense that in choosing to fight this war, Russian elites were self-consciously defining themselves as an empire as opposed to a normal state» (LRT English, 2023).

The full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war caused decisive changes in the ecosystem, economic, social, and cultural spheres, as well changes of significant importance regarding self-awareness and self-identification of Ukrainians, which have manifested themselves in the language ideologies. In addition to the explicit changes regarding language choices of everyday communication and the attitude towards the status of the Russian language in Ukraine (as can be seen from the survey – The sixth national poll, 2022), there are also deep implicit shifts, connected with the reflections on the status of the Ukrainian language and its role in conducting Ukrainian identity.

This study aims to retrospectively examine the language ideologies of Ukrainian society through the lens of postcolonial and decolonial theories and determine how they reflect different modes of thinking regarding colonial experience, its realization and overcoming. This is a sort of case study that explores the evolution of language ideologies in postcolonial society on the basis of their representations by various textual and visual manifestations of the only sign – the letter «ї», which has become the symbol of the Ukrainian language and the marker of its uniqueness. Since there is no such letter in other Slavic alphabets, it has become a character of originality of the Ukrainian language. Its presence in the spelling of the emblematic words such as *Україна* 'Ukraine' and *Київ* 'Kyiv' enhances this symbolism.

Certain aspects of shifts in the language situation and language system caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine have already been analyzed, in particular in some volumes such as "Mova i viina: dynamika movnoi systemy i movna polityka" ("Language and War: Dynamics of the Language System and Language Politics") (Azhniuk, 2024), "Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine: National Minorities, Language Biographies, and Linguistic Landscape" (Kiss & Wingender, 2025), and "Languages and Cultures in Times of War" (Shumytska & Krouglov, 2025). The authors of these and other papers have noted in passing the symbolism of the letter "ї" generally (Kosmeda, 2020, pp. 15–17) and, in particular, the symbolic meaning of letters in this war (Ruda, 2025, pp. 43–44). Particular

attention is given to the letter "ї" in N. Gergało-Dąbek's paper (Gergało-Dąbek, 2023). The scholar describes examples of textual and visual representations of this letter as an "epitome of Ukrainian identity", provides some cases of its use in naming practices, and outlines its employment as a symbol of resistance in occupied Ukrainian cities. Although the ideological function of this letter, which has changed during the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, makes a case for the requirement of a holistic analysis with a retrospective approach.

An equally important mission of this article is to demonstrate the applicability of certain concepts developed to explain social processes in so-called traditional colonies to analyze the past and present of Ukraine. This fact will become one more argument in favor of the universality of the postcolonial and decolonial perspectives for studying the practices of establishing and preserving the dominance of one state formation over another, and the consequences of this dominance.

In the second section, the research methodology is characterized, based mainly on the theoretical principles of postcolonial studies, language ideology, and historical discourse analysis. In particular, comprehension of such concepts as colonial thinking, anticolonial thinking, postcolonial state, and decolonization is provided with regard to their specific application in the Ukrainian context. The third section describes the sources of empirical material and the process of its selection. The fourth section outlines symbolic meanings of the letter "ї" in the late Soviet period, serving as a background for analysis. In the fifth section, the language ideologies represented by the textual and visual manifestations of the letter "ї" till February 24, 2022 are analyzed, and in the sixth section, its new symbolic meanings and ideological functions are addressed, which can be observed after February 24, 2022. The seventh section summarizes the shifts in the language ideologies of Ukrainians that have taken place after Russia's full-scale invasion and highlights those changes that testify to the overcoming of colonial structures of thinking.

2. Methodological framework

A mixed methods approach based on theoretical issues of several interdisciplinary fields is employed in this research. The main focus is on postcolonial studies, language ideology, and critical discourse analysis. The analysis of the language ideologies of the Ukrainian society is conducted through the lens of postcolonial and decolonial theories; therefore, it is important to outline the

application of its key concepts. This study employs the statement about the persistence of colonialism, i.e., different forms of control and domination of one state over another, even after formal liberation from political dependence, as a starting point for the research. It uses the framework of scholars elaborating on the concept of 'coloniality', the main feature of which is self-understanding within the dichotomy 'colonizer–colonized' (Mignolo, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2006; Quijano, 2007). Summarizing the features of coloniality provided in these papers, O. Kotliar outlines its three dimensions: "a) as a space that has been politically hierarchical, preserving and reproducing colonial structures; b) as a state of those who, despite decolonisation in political and legal spheres, remained in the space, built and equipped by the coloniser, where the colonial model continues to (self-reproduce; c) as a new form of interaction between the coloniser and the colonised outside of colonial structures" (Kotliar, n.d.).

One of the main concepts employed by scholars to describe manifestations of coloniality in the contemporary world is colonial thinking. There are two conceptions of this phenomenon developed in two different fields of research. W. Mignolo considers this occurrence in the social dimension as a modern epistemological system that qualifies all non-European knowledge and non-European cultures as inferior or insignificant, and he uses the term "colonial thinking" (Mignolo, 2009; Mignolo, 2013). E.J.R. David and S. Okazaki, who work with this occurrence in the field of psychology, define it as a state of consciousness in which individuals or groups consider their identity as secondary in comparison with a former colonizer, and they use the term "colonial mentality" (David & Okazaki, 2006a). In examining Filipinos in the United States, scholars identify four stages of colonial mentality: the first involves denigration of the Filipino self; the second, denigration of Filipino culture or the body; the third, discrimination against less Americanized Filipinos; and the fourth, the tolerance of both historical and contemporary oppression of Filipinos and Filipino Americans (David & Okazaki, 2006b). Applying this concept to the Ukrainian historical experience, it seems to be appropriate to interpret it as an inherited by the Ukrainian society way of self-identification and self-assessment within the frame of the semantic opposition "Russia – Ukraine" where the former component embraces such associations as "great", "progressive", "prestige", and the latter one is "little", "inferior", "provincial" Being in this cognitive frame leads to

admiring Russian culture as a standard [1], thus a view of oneself from the colonizer's perspective proceeds to reproduce the inferiority complex in each subsequent generation [2]. Also, the term "colonial thinking" seems to be more appropriate in researching language ideologies, as it is considered a process of forming ideas, perceptions, judgments, and beliefs about oneself and the world.

Profound analysis of Ukraine's experience after declaring independence in 1991 entails incorporating the concepts anticolonial, postcolonial, and decolonial that construct different terms combined with various nouns. Most often, these terms are used to define different historical periods or different modes of thinking (Pavlyshyn, 1997; Shkandrij & Kravchenko, n.d.). It is worth emphasizing some interpretative issues in the context of the current research.

Firstly, this concerns anticolonial thinking, which means resistance to imperial governance, denying the scale of values established by the colonizer, and the intellectual and cultural opposition (Pavlyshyn, 1997, pp. 226–227; Shkandrii, 2023; Kassymbekova & Chokobaeva, 2023). An important feature of anticolonial thinking is that it maintains its holder within the dichotomy "colonizer–colonized", since it uses an upside-down assessment scale as a tool to counter imperial narratives. In particular, in the Ukrainian context, anticolonial discursive practices imply the celebration of individuals, events, and artifacts that deny the inferiority of the Ukrainian culture and were marginalized or erased by Soviet governance (Pavlyshyn, 1997, p. 226). The constant efforts to emphasize the superiority of Ukrainian culture and the antiquity of Ukrainian history, which sometimes leads to hyperbolization and the construction of new national myths, can also be added to these practices.

Secondly, it is worth noting the interpretative and methodological diversity of the term "postcolonial". Latin American scholars reject the concept of

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[1] A special study is required on the tendency to label Ukrainian artists by combining the adjective "Ukrainian" with the surname of a prominent Russian figure, for example: Ivan Franko as the "Ukrainian Dostoevsky" (see: https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=747385), Ihor Pavliuk as the "Ukrainian Lermontov" (see: https://zolotapektoral.te.ua/спогади-про-українського-поета-ігоря/).

Also noteworthy in this context is the title of the book by Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine from 1994 to 2005 — "*Ukraine Is Not Russia*" (2003) — primarily addressed to an international audience.

[2] Inferiority complex of Ukrainians have been described with the term "malorosiystvo" ('little Russianism') (Malaniuk, 1959; Lysiak-Rudnytskyi, 2019; Solchanyk, 1992; Riabchuk, 2000, pp. 194–219).

"postcolonial thinking" as they consider postcolonial studies a product of Western academia (Mignolo, 2007) and argue that its focus is on historical colonialism. In contrast, they develop decolonial theory and elaborate on the concept of "decolonial thinking". However, these two concepts seem to be applied to one theoretical framework. As an attribute lexeme "postcolonial" indeed describes better a historical period rather a mode of thinking. At the same time, it does not seem to be a period of decolonization, but rather preparation for or transition to it. Also, it is hard to accept the statement that "postcolonial" means precisely "departure" from such oppositions as "center–peripheries", "empire–colony", "high culture–low culture" (see Skandrij & Kravchenko, n.d. approach). More convincing, however, seems to be the observation of M. Mellino who argues: "The postcolonial could therefore be considered as a political expression aimed at describing tensions and conflicts of an ongoing "long transition," of a contradictory phase characterized by a past that does not pass and a future that has not yet arrived" (Mellino, 2018, p. 13). On the other hand, it cannot be denied that this term embraces: a critical understanding of colonialism, in particular how colonialism shapes culture, beliefs, power hierarchies, etc.; analysis of its consequences (Pavlyshyn, 2023); and "revisions and recombinations of narratives rooted in the traumatic colonial past" (Biedarieva, n.d.). Taking it into consideration, as well as the Ukrainian experience, we distinguish two uses and understandings of the term "postcolonial":

1) Postcolonial period – a period that begins with the moment of formal liberation and is marked by ambivalence, which consists of the co-existence of colonial and anticolonial thinking structures, inherited imperial and restored or newly constructed national narratives, seeking for or restoration of national identity, and attempting to depart from the borders of the opposition "colonizer–colonized" In the present study, the concept of "social ambivalence" is employed, which in general is defined as "the simultaneous orientation of individuals toward incompatible, mutually exclusive values and preferences" (Riabchuk, 2019, p. 152);
2) Postcolonial analysis – the process of reflecting on the consequences of colonialism, estimating their influence on the present by revealing colonial practices, ideas, narratives, and structures of thought that have still been preserved.

And finally, overcoming the aforementioned ambivalence, conscious rejection of colonial thinking structures, which entails a departure from the dichot-

omy "colonizer–colonized" in self-awareness and self-presentation, can be defined with the notion "decolonization". This departure means a refusal to orient oneself towards the former metropole and to contend with it, and as a result, abolish the inferiority complex. Accordingly, it seems to be logical to understand "decolonial" both as a practice of overcoming postcolonial ambivalence and a mode of thinking. In a global context, W. Mignolo argues that "the task of de-colonial thinking and the enactment of the de-colonial option in the 21st century starts from epistemic de-linking: from acts of epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 15). In the context of the Ukrainian experience, decolonial thinking can be defined as a way of producing ideas, forming assessments and beliefs, constructing identity, and self-presentation, which is not based on the semantic opposition 'Russia–Ukraine', and is free of the inferiority complex and imperial narratives.

Researching of language ideologies of former colonized societies became one of the central fields in postcolonial linguistics. For they clearly reflect how political factors, social hierarchies, and cultural prejudices influence community beliefs and perceptions about development/ backwardness, correctness/ incorrectness, prestige/ insignificance, purity/ clutter etc. of their languages. The term "linguistic ideology" is used in the meaning of "this collective order, that is, the beliefs and attitudes that shape speakers' relationships to their own and others' languages, mediating between the social practice of language and the socioeconomic and political structures within which it occurs (Cavanaugh, 2020, p. 52). This study utilizes P.L. Garvin's theoretical framework, which identifies four types of language attitudes—language loyalty, pride, desire to participate, and norm awareness (Garvin, 1993, pp. 47–48). The scholar further differentiates between pragmatic loyalty, characterized by a relatively detached belief in the superiority of one's language, and emotional loyalty, referred to as the "national-treasure" attitude. This latter attitude reflects a deeply affectionate connection with one's mother tongue and its standard variant, regarded as a vital and cherished component of national heritage (Garvin, 1993, p. 49). Studying language ideologies and language behavior of Ukrainians shows that the "national-treasure" attitude prevails in the society (Yavorska, 2010; Kulyk, 2007; Riabchuk, 2019, p. 145), and that fact may be connected to their traumatic colonial experience. To cover all possible manifestations of language ideologies, according to K. Woolard, the concept of 'representation of language ideology' has been used. She notes, "Language ideologies occur not only as mental constructs and in verbalizations but also in

embodied practices and dispositions and in material phenomena such as visual representations" (Woolard, 2020, p. 2).

As for the commonly applied critical discourse analysis approach to the methodology of postcolonial linguistics and to analysing language ideologies, it seems to be appropriate to employ it in the present study. In particular, taking into account the peculiarities of the empirical material, the author adapts R. Wodak's methodology of the discourse-historical approach directed at analysing changes in discursive practices over a certain period (Wodak, 2009). Applying the discourse-historical approach to the study of changes in language ideologies and pointing at the specifics of their representation, it is relevant to mention generally the interaction between ideology and discourse formulated by M. Riabchuk: "Ideology is, first and foremost, a thing that is spoken about; discourse is how it is spoken, with what means, in what connection with the other narratives; discourse is also a particular perspective, selection of material, emphasis and hedging, omission; it is finally not only texts, but also various other forms of symbolic representation – from monuments to postage stamps, from military parades and national holidays to pictures in school textbooks" (Riabchuk, 2019, p. 57). Accordingly, in order to achieve the goal of the present study, discourse analysis entails revising texts, objects of linguistic landscape, curricula, visual content, etc., to reveal convictions and beliefs about language shaped under the influence of colonial policy and convictions and beliefs about language that testify to the liberation from colonial thinking structures.

Given the diversity of the collected material, some statements from other linguistic fields are employed in addition to the aforementioned research tools, namely:

- *Graphic linguistics* (as a comprehensive research field of written symbols). This field is based on the assertion that graphemes, besides their traditional function (to encode sounds in writing), can develop into independent lexemes and express a certain meanings, and in some cases, embody pragmatic functions in certain discourses (Kosmeda & Sobol, 2018, p. 65). As for the letter "ї", it not only "undergoes semanticization and pragmatization, functioning as a productive mechanism for the formation of a system of nomens" (Kosmeda, 2020, pp. 16–17), but also, as this study shows, represents language ideologies.
- *Linguistic landscape*. The present study applies a wide interpretation of the concept "Linguistic landscape", according to which it is not limited by

"wall signs", but "embraces the whole public space" (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009). B. Azhniuk argues for the hierarchical frame of this concept and divides it into the so-called core and the peripheral zone. In particular, he considers objects listed in Landry & Bourhis's definition of the linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) as a core manifestation. B. Azhniuk treats the other objects of public space that contain text messages, such as outfits and tattoos on visible parts of the body, as the peripheral zone, or micro-landscape. This approach is caused by the fact that they are also broadcasters of socially important messages for a wide audience (Azniuk, 2024, pp. 91–93).

- *Geosemiotics*. R. Scollon and S.W. Scollon's (2003) model of geosemiotics offers an effective way of analysing visual manifestations of the letter "ї" in the linguistic landscape and social media. As R. Scollon and S.W. Scollon state, geosemiotics is "the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 2). The framework of this approach brings 3 separate semiotic systems together: interactional order (analysis of target audience of the object of the linguistic landscape), visual semiotics (visual elements of the sign and means of its representation – font, colour, size etc.), and place semiotics (language code preference, especially in signs that use multiple codes, and locations where a sign is physically placed). In other words, geosemiotic analysis provides findings of how visual design, material, location, and social context of the sign determine its symbolic and ideological value.

3. Data collecting

As already mentioned, the empirical basis of the present research is a corpus of secondary textual and visual manifestations of the letter "ї" collected from various sources. The main selection criteria are accessibility and broad public awareness of the unit, i.e., its presence within the public real or virtual space. The sources for compiling this corpus include:

1) covers of Ukrainian language textbooks published from the late 1980s to the present, and popular social magazines targeted at the whole of Ukraine.
2) texts related to the letter "ї" that have become well-known or even a source of allusions in another textual or visual content.
3) platforms for e-learning that offer the Ukrainian language courses, such as: EdEra (https://ed-era.com/courses/); E-mova (Є-мова, https://emova.org.

ua/courses/); Mova – DNK natsiyi (Мова – ДНК нації, https://ukr-mova.in.ua); Yedyni (Єдині, https://yedyni.org).

4) publications in central mass media, in particular "Ukrainska Pravda", "UNIAN", about events dedicated to Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language (November 9, October 27 from 2023 [3]) and International Mother Language Day (February 21), as well as posts about this, which were wildly on Facebook.
5) Facebook posts published between 2010 [4] and 2025 by communities that pose themselves as language activists, namely: Chysta mova (Чиста мова 'Pure Language', https://www.facebook.com/chystamova), Ukrayins'ka mova (Українська мова 'the Ukrainian Language', https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064482052811), Davay zaymemsia textom (Давай займемось текстом 'Let's make text', https://www.facebook.com/maketexts), Mova (https://www.facebook.com/mova.ukr), Portal movnoyi polityky (Портал мовної політики 'Language Policy Portal', https://www.facebook.com/language.policy), Ukrainer (https://www.facebook.com/ukrainernet), Perehod' na ukrayins'ku (Переходь на українську 'Switch to Ukrainian', https://www.facebook.com/perehodnamovu), Ukrayinomovnyy Kyiv (Україномовний Київ 'Ukrainian-speaking Kyiv', https://www.facebook.com/groups/ukyiv), #ukrayins'koyu (#українською '#in-Ukrainian', https://www.facebook.com/groups/ukrainskoiu), Valentnist' (Валентність 'Valence', https://www.facebook.com/valency.rethink), Navchay ukrayins'koyu (Навчай українською 'Teach in Ukrainian' https://www.facebook.com/teach.in.ukrainian); Shchebetarnia (Щебетарня 'Twittering', https://www.facebook.com/shchebetarnya), Bezkoshtovni kursy ukrayins'koyi movy (Безкоштовні курси української мови 'Free Ukrainian language Courses', https://www.facebook.com/MovaKursy), B'yurko-Mov'yurko (Б'юрко-мов'юрко 'Language Bureau', https://www.facebook.com/BurkoMovurko/photos), etc.
6) Since February 2022, posters by artists who actively respond to military and cultural events, in particular Nikita Titov (https://www.facebook.com/nikitavltitov) and Oleksandr Grekov (https://www.facebook.com/aleksandrgrekhov), have been added separately.

[3] In 2023, following the adoption of a new ecclesiastical calendar that shifted fixed feasts by 13 days, the date of the Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language was changed by Presidential Decree No. 455/2023 from 9 November to 27 October.

[4] The year in which the article's author registered on this social media platform.

7) since Ukrainian clothing producers began to use the letter “ї” other slogans of Ukrainian resistance, and popular posters by artists in prints on T-shirts, sweatshirts, and souvenir items, these goods are included in the corpus; they were collected in the Google search engine using search queries ‘futbolka ї kupyty/ buy ї T-shirt’ (футболка ї купити) та ‘futbolky z patriotychnymy pryntamy/ T-shirts with patriotic prints’ (футболки з патріотичними принтами).

4. Symbolic meanings of the letter “ї” in the late Soviet Period

Some ideological connotations of the letter “ї” could be observed even in the late Soviet period. First, this letter, together with the other ones that are absent from the Russian alphabet «і» and «є», was depicted on the cover of the Ukrainian language school textbooks, or, according to those titles, textbooks on the native language. On the one hand, such visual design provided to the letter “ї” a meaning of a symbol of the Ukrainian language, an attribute of its recognition and, on the other hand, served as an argument for Soviet narratives about “extreme closeness of the fraternal languages” that differ by only few of letters. Taking into consideration the total domination of the Russian language in all spheres of social life and in education, in particular, using this letter as a symbol of the Ukrainian language did not so much underline its uniqueness but labelled its nominal representation on the imperial linguistic map.

Secondly, in this period, appearance of one more symbolic meaning of the letter “ї”– verbalization of resistance can be observed. In the late 1980s, Lviv scholars, writers, and cultural activists launched “Independent Cultural Magazine «Ї»”, whose aim was to publish reflections about Ukrainian history and culture, vectors of its development, human rights, civil society, inter-ethnic relations, etc. Until 1995, issues had been made by photocopying in Vilnius, transferred to Lviv, stapled, and spread. One of the founders and editor-in-chief of the magazine Taras Vozniak mentions:

> …decided to call it with one, but a very Ukrainian letter *“Ї”*. It is the testimony of our uniqueness and at the same time the promise to dot the i’s and cross the t’s – *“ї”* (https://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/voznyak/67643f7605fdd/ accessed 20.05.2025)

What is remarkable in this case, is that the letter “ї” is a kind of complex embodiment of Ukrainian identity and resistance to the Soviet system at the same time. This combination could be attributed to the metaphor of the status

of the colonized, for whom the choice of their own identity is equal to the confrontation with the empire that is trying to erase this identity.

In summary, these outcomes show that the ideological meaning of the letter "ї" that was shaped in the late Soviet period, on the one hand, was related to the official discourse as a representation of the exotism of the colonized that empires tolerate. And, on the other hand, having gained the connotation of resistance, it denoted the coming out of hiding for counter-discourse (anticolonial discourse).

5. The letter "ї" as a representation of language ideologies from 1991 to 2022: postcolonial ambivalence

After Ukraine proclaimed its independence, the necessity to resist the Soviet system/ colonial authorities formally disappeared. De jure, the secondary status of the Ukrainian language disappeared as well, but de facto, it is still maintained due to the fact that Russian has been dominant in most spheres of social life and has preserved the prestige status as a metropolitan language for quite a long time. The Ukrainian language starts to compete with Russian for communicative space and prestige. This fact might be a reason that, between the two mentioned above symbolic functions of the letter «ї», the first one began to spread and deepen and the second fell into decline: this graphic sign anchored as a symbol of the Ukrainian language and quit to be associated with resistance. Here are just a few examples: 1) in 2007-2008, the non-governmental organization "Don't be Indifferent!" used this letter on the cover of their brochure, for the all-Ukrainian project "Switch to Ukrainian!" (https://readymag.website/kis/nbb/ accessed 20.05.2025); 2) the community and organization Ukraïner, who positions themselves as a media forum with "unique stories, video and photo content about Ukrainian historical regions as well as about Ukrainian context abroad", rendered its name in Latin letters but incorporated the letter "ї" in it (https://www.ukrainer.net/expedition/ accessed 20.05.2025); 3) the community Ukrayinomovnyy Kyiv 'Ukrainian-speaking Kyiv' combined in its logo letters «К» and "ї" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/ukyiv accessed 20.05.2025).

Experts in political studies, analysing the results of sociological surveys, have already emphasized the ambivalence of the language situation and language policy in Ukraine after 1991. Perhaps before 2022, the greatest paradoxes consist in the fact that: 1) a significant percentage of Ukrainians who consider Ukrainian their native language used Russian in everyday communication; 2) the percentage

of people who wanted to make a wider use of Ukrainian substantially exceeded the percentage of those who wanted to limit the use of Russian; 3) and conversely – more respondents supported the expansion of Russian than the restriction Ukrainian (Kulyk, 2008; Riabchuk, 2019, pp. 147–150). These results lead to the conclusion about certain language ideologies, in particular about prevailing language attitudes as a national symbol, rather than a tool of everyday usage (Riabchuk, 2019, p. 157). Textual and visual manifestations of the letter "ї" from 1991 to February 2022 reflect an ambiguous attitude of the Ukrainian society towards the Ukrainian language. The language ideologies represented by this grapheme can be defined, on the one hand, as admiring the uniqueness of the Ukrainian language, pride, national-treasure attitude, sacralization, and, on the other hand, as a conviction about its weakness and endangerment.

Some of these language ideologies (uniqueness, pride, national-treasure attitude) may indicate the orientation of the liberated society to the promotion of their native culture, and the construction of identity based on national peculiarities. At the same time, the justification of the uniqueness of the Ukrainian language is based on the comparison with Russian, and a national-treasure attitude and sacralization seem to embody the offset of its inherent secondary state and non-prestige in the communication space. These elements generally align with the perspective of anticolonial thinking. At the same time, the metaphor of treasure and sacralization expresses the idea of its preservation, which can be interpreted as a protection from the influence, i.e., its "sealing" in the current state. This contradicts the idea of language development and, consequently, the idea of the possibility to satisfy all communicative needs of speakers, and that fact facilitates the Soviet narrative about the inferiority of the Ukrainian language and the limitation of its functions to domestic life, folklore, and fiction. In other words, the same language ideologies seem to reflect colonial thinking structures as well. The popularity of the language ideologies of weakness and endangerment, on the one hand, can be explained as a legacy of colonialism, but on the other hand, their continuity was encouraged by the real dominance of the Russian language in the public space even after 1991. These ideologies broadcast the narrative of preservation of the Ukrainian language, but not using and enhancing it, thus contributing to the preservation of the current situation.

Aforementioned Ivan Malkovych's poem "The Village Teacher's Encouragement" [5] (1997), which is famous for its title "The little candle of the letter «Ї»", played a remarkable part in reinforcing and sharing these language atti-

[5] In Mark Andryczyk's translation, the title reads "The Village Teacher's Lesson".

tudes. The image of the little candle that embodies the letter "ї" anchors associations of the Ukrainian language with fragility, vulnerability, and sacredness. The range of tender light of the ї-candle is not large, even a child needs to defend it with their *tiny palms* to keep it burning. The strophe about the little candle of the letter «ї», as the whole poem in general, creates the impression of weakness and endangerment of the Ukrainian language. Language means are used for the verbalization of the image, in particular words such as *svichechka* 'little candle', *dolonky* 'tiny palms' that contain the diminutive suffixes make this association stronger. In this way, the image of "ї"as a tiny candle broadcasts the narrative of the necessity to defend the Ukrainian language as a condition of its maintenance.

This may not be the most essential of thing,
but you, o child,
you are called upon to defend with your tiny palms
the fragile little candle of the letter "ї",

and also,
stretched out on your tiptoes,
to protect the small crescent moon
of the letter "Є",
which was carved out of the sky
along with a tiny bit of thread.

Because they say, o child,
that our language is like a nightingale's song.

And they are right.

But remember,
that one day
the time may come,
when our language
will not be remembered
by even the smallest of nightingales.

That is why you cannot depend
only on nightingales
child [6].

[6] Translated by Mark Andryczyk. The White Chalk of Days: The Contemporary Ukrainian Literature Series Anthology, edited by Mark Andryczyk, Boston 2017, p. 230.

The same language ideologies can be observed in the linguistic landscape of Ukraine, in particular, art objects in the form of the letter «ї». In 2013, in Rivne, in honour of International Mother Language Day (February 21), the highest shape of this letter was erected (Fig. 1). This sculpture was included in the "Book of Records of Ukraine". In 2021, in Lanivtsi of the Ternopil region, in honour of the Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language (November 9), a metal monument of the letter "ї" was installed (Fig. 2). It is an indicative fact that this art installation titled "The Ukrainian Language is Unique" was built in the town centre in the place of the former monument to "The first Komsomol members", which was dismantled after the Law on Decommunization (adopted in 2015).

Figure 1.
https://www.volynpost.com/news/11593-rekordnu-bukvu-i-postavyly-u-rivnomu-foto

Figure 2.
https://lb.ua/culture/2021/11/10/498278_pamyatnik_literi_i_vstanovili.html

These embodiments of the letter "ї" in the linguistic landscape indicate some ambiguity. On the one hand, such actions could be interpreted as the manifestation of the anticolonial way of thinking, since the search for unique features of their own culture, exalting it to the level of the national treasure, is inherent to societies just liberated from colonial dependence as a result of colonial trauma caused by imperial assimilation and appropriation practices. On the other hand, a monument is an architectural construction that is installed in memory of a certain person who has already died or an event that has already taken place. In other words, any monument, regardless of whether it commemorates grief or celebrates an important event, conveys the concept of the past. Monuments that commemorate tragic events also embody the concepts of sorrow, loss, and death. Taking it into consideration, monuments to the letter "ї" can be interpreted as broadcasting the idea of the past of the Ukrainian language and the pride of this past. In particular, the practice of laying flowers (see Fig. 2), which is perhaps caused by the erasure of its essence in collective consciousness, reinforces the motif of longing for the past and also gives these monuments the symbolism of loss. The most controversial aspect of this fact is that there are no more official restrictions for using Ukrainian; it is an official language with all accompanying privileges. And in this context, the monuments to the letter "ї" broadcast the narrative about Ukrainian as an endangered, dead, or non-existent language that was cultivated during centuries by the Russian Empire in an explicit way and then by the Soviet Union in an implicit way. At first glance, these artworks attest a respectful attitude to the language, but also represent its reception through the colonizer's lens, so they demonstrate the coloniality of thinking. In addition, they anchor the ideology of endangerment in the mind of Ukrainians.

Of interest here is the project «Ї-map». In August 2016, Volodymyr Nakonechnyi created a Facebook community "Ukrainian-speaking Kyiv" to unite those Kyiv citizens who are concerned about language assertion and to counteract the russification of the capital's public discourse environment in a more organized manner. The statement about "priority of projects, initiatives, publications, etc., aimed not so much at the defence of the (weak) language, as at the **assertion of the (strong) language**" (https://ukyiv.site/spilnota/ accessed 20.05.2025) was declared as one of the values of the community. In 2021, the community came up with the idea to create an interactive platform "The Map of Ukrainian-Speaking Kyiv", whose aim was to mark all Kyivan establishments whose owners support the official position to use the Ukrainian

language only in customer service. After "Untypical Marketing Agency "Marketernia" joined this project, it broadened to creating a global worldwide service with the title «Ї-map». In such a way, the target audience of the project became wider, including the Ukrainian diaspora. The purpose of the map is worded in a list of points, the first one being quite illustrative:

> Every Ukrainian-speaking citizen of any Ukrainian city can always find a place to enter **without a risk of language discrimination** (bold font – author) (https://marketernia.agency/sotsium/i-mapa/ accessed 20.05.2025).

That is, in spite of the community's declaring priorities (assertion of the strong language), its product (project «Ї-map») broadcasts the idea of weakness and endangerment of the Ukrainian language and recognition of the dominant status of the former metropole language.

This idea of endangerment facilitates the manipulative potential of the letter «ї». For instance, in 2020, the publishing house "Portal" published the children's book "Ї. Special letter" written by Oksana Lushchevska. The abstract from the book goes

> The words "Ukraïna 'Ukraine'" and "Kyïv 'Kyiv'" are impossible without this letter. It is so special that it was under threat of being excluded from many words. The history of the letter Ї is the history of the Ukrainian language (Lushchevska, 2020).

The two final pages deal with the "interesting facts about the letter Ї", two of which attract attention:

> 1) 1930s. The Soviet government that fought with every Ukrainian issue wanted to make the Ukrainian language closer to Russian. The letter Ї was eliminated from many words, for example Eneïda.
> 2) 1990s. The new edition of the Ukrainian Spelling Codex was adopted, and the inherent Ukrainian letters were returned to usage.

These passages make an impression of the ban on the letter «ї», that could hardly reflect the reality. Indeed, according to the first common for all Ukrainians, the Ukrainian Spelling Codex of 1929, «і» after vowels in borrowings should be replaced with «ї», for instance: *Енеїда, егоїст, архаїзм* (Ukrainskyi pravopys, 1929, p. 67). As is known, in 1933, this Spelling Codex was proclaimed as "bourgeois-nationalist" and was banned, instead, the new Spelling Codex was adopted. In the Ukrainian Spelling Codex of 1929, the aforementioned rule had been changed: «і» after vowels in borrowings should be repre-

sented with «і», for instance: *Енеіда, егоізм, архаічний* (Ukrainskyi pravopys, 1933, p. 62). But in the 1945-edition of the same Codex, the rule of 1929 was reestablished (Ukrainskyi pravopys, 1945, p. 105). As for the edition of 1990, it returned to the Ukrainian alphabet the letter «ґ», which was completely removed in 1933.

The case with the analysed book could exemplify M. Riabchuk's statement, that the liberated captive demonizes the Horde (Riabchuk, 2011, pp. 194–195). It is difficult to judge the author's aim or motives, but the result of such rather manipulative statements is treating the narrative about harassment, abuse, and long suffering of the Ukrainian language, in other words, the narrative of failure. In addition, such juggling with facts might levy studies on the colonial policy of the Bolsheviks in the cultural sphere and devaluate pieces of evidence of the real practices concerning artificial remaking norms of the Ukrainian language in accordance with the norms of Russian.

The colonial ways of thinking can also be observed in the memes based on the letter "ї" that had been shared on social media until 2022. One of the most popular is a combination of the picture of this letter in the centre of a warning road sign and the phrase "Caution. The Ukrainian language" (Fig. 3). Taking into consideration that the purpose of the warning road signs is to inform drivers about a dangerous road section and make them be ready to use additional safety measures this meme could be interpreted as an ironic warning for speakers to be ready to take extra efforts while communicating. On the one hand, this visual image ironizes the fact that communication in Ukrainian is something extraordinary for some citizens and requires additional attention and effort. But on the other hand, it also reflects the echoes of the Soviet narrative about the unnaturalness of the Ukrainian language in the public sphere.

Figure 3. https://prikol.i.ua/view/476124/

Figure 4. https://uamodna.com/articles/pogovorymo-ale-e-odna-umova/

One more remarkable case of the representation of language ideologies till 2022 is phrases like "Ukrainian is sexy", "Ukrainian is tempting", where the letter "ї" is drawn as a woman's silhouette, two dots of which symbolize the female breast (Fig. 4). This visualization seem to be an indication of the view on oneself through the lens of colonizer as it reflects typical colonial practice to feminize colonized nation, often resorting to portraying the country as an attractive woman (Thompson, p. 64; Shkandrii, 2023, p. 155). This image might also be influenced by the Soviet propaganda posters about the "friendship of nations", on which Ukraine was portrayed as a woman, and by imperial and Soviet stereotypes about "pretty khokhlushkas" [7].

Language ideologies of the femininity and sexuality of the Ukrainian language, as well as ideologies of the sanctity and endangerment, were also represented in the linguistic landscape of Ukraine. In particular, in 2016, the designer Sviatoslav Kobzenko created a clothes collection "Your language" for the brand «Fashion AID». The collection consisted of 5 T-shirts with a print in the centre of which includes a big letter or letter combination and one of the phrases: «Є – it's sensual, your language», «ЙО – it's fashion, your language», «Ї – it's unique, your language», «ЬО – it's soft, your language», «Ґ – it's blasting, your language». Fashion AID is a social brand that helps HIV-positive children. It positions itself as "stylish and explicit," which "is not shy thinking and talking about sex" (https://fashion-aid.in.ua/contact accessed 20.05.2025). The title of the news about this event is also telling: 'A collection of T-shirts about the sexuality of the Ukrainian language was presented in honour of the Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language' (https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2016/11/2/219707/ accessed 20.05.2025). There is one interesting detail that could also enhance the idea of sexuality of the Ukrainian language: the Ukrainian word *mova* 'language' is grammatically a feminine noun. On the one hand, the creation of this collection fixes the inherent Ukrainian society's

[7] "Khokhlushka" – a derogatory term used mostly by russians to address or talk about Ukrainian women and girls.

belief about femininity and sexuality of the Ukrainian language, and on the other hand, it is also a tool of spreading and embedding this language ideology. And taking into consideration the traditional association of femininity with weakness, this language attitude relates to a certain set "sanctity – endangerment – weakness".

However, analysing the choice of the letters and letter combinations for these prints, attention should be paid to one more interesting detail, which also reveals the coloniality of thinking. «Ї», «є», and «ґ» are letters absent from the Russian alphabet, «йо» and «ьо» correspond to the phonetical realization of the Russian letter «ё» in different word positions. This choice must be motivated by the author's aim to emphasize the peculiarities of the Ukrainian language, to highlight its uniqueness. But these peculiarities of the Ukrainian language have been established as a result of its comparison with Russian. This fact evidences the orientation on the language of the empire as a kind of standard and, accordingly, the perception of your own language as secondary. In such a way, this collection represents still existing in the Ukrainian society in that period the tendency to construct its own identity on the ground of comparison with Russian culture, that is, the former colonizer, the tendency to comprehend itself in the frame of dichotomy "colonizer–colonized".

Overall, these outcomes indicate that language ideologies represented with the letter "ї" during the period of 1991 – 2022, reflect the ambivalence of thinking that embraces anticolonial and colonial features simultaneously. On the one hand, widespread during this period, language ideologies of uniqueness, national-treasure attitude, and sacralization were determined to reject imperial and Soviet narratives about the inferiority, provincialism, and lack of prestige of the Ukrainian language, and on the other hand, were shaped within the dichotomy "Russian–Ukrainian". The ideology of femininity explicitly broadcasted a colonial way of thinking, as it indicates a view of oneself from the colonizer's perspective. Also, the preservation of a huge number of markers of the empire's presence in the Ukrainian cultural space (primarily, the strong position of the Russian language) led to the persistence of ideologies of weakness and endangerment.

6. The letter "ї" as a representation of language ideologies after the February 2022: anticolonial resistance and decolonization of minds

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, the shifts in language ideologies of the Ukrainian society, deconstruction of the outlined above narratives, and

shaping of counter-discourse have occurred and are developing quite rapidly. The idea of resistance that appeared in the late Soviet period and was erased in the first decades after Ukraine proclaimed independence became the prevailing symbolic meaning of the letter «ї».

The language ideologies of femininity and sacristy fell under deconstruction first. The ideologies of masculinity and a pragmatic attitude towards the language (ability to meet any communicative needs (Garvin, 1993)) have taken their places. In the first weeks of the invasion, the post about the letter "ї" as a symbol of strength, where it is associated with male reproductive organs, became extremely popular:

> And remember: the Ukrainian language is the only one that has the letter «ї»… such as… has two balls. Wishes to the Armed Forces of Ukraine: Fucking hit them! Glory to Ukraine! (see Fig. 5)

This image could be predestined by the idiom *maty yaytsia* 'to have balls', which means 'to have courage/ to show bravery'. In a way, it might have also been a continuation of the already well-known at that point phrase by a Ukrainian border guard "Russian warship, go fuck yourself", that had become a Ukrainians' slogan of resistance during the first months of the full-scaled invasion.

One of the manifestations of the ideology of sacralisation of the Ukrainian language was the conviction of Ukrainians that it does not have obscene vocabulary, and that all these words are Russian in origin. The common representations of this attitude were widespread in the public discourse variants of the statement "Swear words make you moskal". So, active use of obscene expressions, in particular the word їbashyty 'to fucking hit them' pointing to Armed Forces' of Ukraine actions towards occupants, can be treated as desacralization and inviolability of the Ukrainian language, changing its status from the iconography to weapons, that is, changing its function from symbolic to practical.

There are some facts that testify to the anchoring of this tendency. For instance, the online course "Movyty. Motyvy" ("Мовити. Мотиви" 'To speak. Motives') (https://bit.ly/4lkRXKZ accessed 12.09.2025) was designed as a course in Ukrainian for everyday purposes. One more case is an "unconventional" textbook on "modern spoken Ukrainian" that includes an introduction to dialect means, obscenities, and contemporary memes and aphorisms. The cover of this textbook is illustrated with capital and small letters "ї"(Fig. 6), which seem to demonstrate a shift in language ideology of loyalty from a national-treasure attitude to a pragmatic one.

Later, this letter became a symbol of the resistance movement of the Ukrainian underground in the occupied territories of Kherson and then Mariupol. Participants of this movement drew the letter “ї” with chalk in public places or stuck posters with this letter up on the buildings where occupants were going to conduct so-called referendums. On some of these posters, the letter “ї” functions as an euphemism of the word ‘fuck’, for instance: “Russian war-referendum, go Ї yourself” (Fig. 7). The leader of the Kherson resistance movement explains the choice of this symbol like this:

…in summer, we decided to draw the letter «Р» [8] on the buildings where they were preparing pseudo-referendums. But the colleague from the communication agency suggested thinking of something unique. «Ґ»? «Є»? It would be funny. But the letter “ї” as a new symbol of resistance won everybody’s preferences. Then the movement “Mariupol is acting” accepted this letter as their symbol as well (https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/city/city-experience/333237-zhovta-strichka-ta-litera-yi-interv-yu-z-koordinatorom-ruhu-oporu-v-hersoni accessed 10.05.2025).

Figure 5.

[8] “R” in English.

Figure 6. https://www.facebook.com/EdEraUa/posts/pfbid028SSBKU89x9b3z5YCBbssP7StykcBsnJWskxDM4213nhT31VoNNfgKBa99xwf73fol

Figure 7. https://lb.ua/society/2022/09/23/530364_okupanti_pogrozhuyut_vibiti_dveri.html

The artists' visualisations of the new meanings of this letter reflect its subsequent rethinking. In particular, Nikita Titov created a series of posters where this letter broadcasts the motif of strength, rage, and resistance (dots in the form of clenched fists – Fig. 8), the defending strength (dots in the form of air defence missiles – Fig. 9), solidarity (Ukrainian flag in the form of the word "свої" 'ours' with clearly defined dots under "ї"– Fig. 10), and gratitude to the Armed Forces (dots in the form of heart with the sign "air defence" – Fig. 11) [9].

Figure 8.

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

Figure 11.

[9] All posters are from the Facebook page of Nikita Titov – https://www.facebook.com/nikitavltitov

The most remarkable shift in the language ideologies is the evolution of the letter "ї" image from a tiny candle (source of the light with a limited range of spreading) to an air defence system (a powerful defence tool with a wide range of spreading). It evidences a shift in the language attitude from the perception of the Ukrainian language as an object for defending to a tool of defence. If the image of the tiny candle broadcasts the idea about the necessity to defend the Ukrainian language, then the image of the air defence system disseminates the idea that the Ukrainian language is defending its speakers. This change is also reflected in the other works, for instance, Anastasia Ponomariova's interpretation, showing this letter as a kozak holding two occupants' skulls with two crossed sabres (Fig. 12), and Eld Roland's picture shows servicemen holding a javelin in the shape of the letter "ї"(Fig. 13).

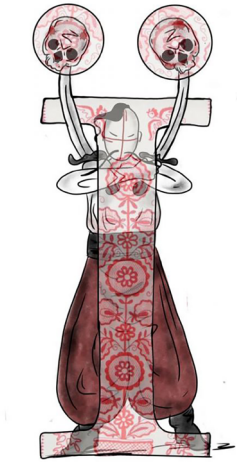

Figure 12. https://v-variant.com.ua/mariupolski-khudozhnyky-stvoryly-znak-ukrainskoho-sprotyvu-yi/

Figure 13. https://ag.com.ua/news/operativna-informaciya-z-regioniv-merezhi-aktivnoyi-gromadi-10092022_956/

During this period, the letter "ї" has acquired another symbolic meaning – 'sovereignty' – representing the shaping of a new linguistic ideology in Ukrainian society – the awareness of the Ukrainian language as an active factor in state-building and state-existential processes. The names of Ukrainian cities and towns written in the shape of Tryzub (Trident, the Coat of Arms of Ukraine – Fig. 14, 15) with the letter "ї" in its core can be examples of the visual representations of this language ideology.

Figure 14. Nikita Titov

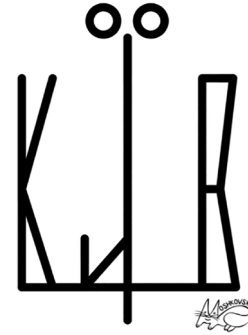

Figure 15. https://wall31.com/t-shirts/men-t-shirt/kiyiv/648

It shows a drastic shift, especially in view of the fact that until February 2022, Ukrainian society had perceived the role of the language in state-building as something passive. The narrative "off the agenda" in relation to the language issue was quite popular even among patriotic citizens. Then, after the annexation of Crimea and the start of military aggression on the Donbas in 2014, the ideology of Ukraine's bilingualism, represented by the slogan "Yedyna krayina. Yedinaia strana" ('One Country' in Ukrainian and Russian), was actively promoted. This slogan with the Ukrainian flag in the background had been the logo of Ukrainian national TV channels since March 2, 2014. Also, placed on billboards, it had become an element of the linguistic landscape in many Ukrainian cities. But after February 2022, Petro Poroshenko's political campaign slogan "Army! Language! Faith!" was actualized; it got the status not just of a language attitude, but of a national idea.

It is interesting to compare representations of language ideologies on outfits before and after the full-scale invasion. If before 2022, the letter "ї" on T-shirts symbolized femininity and sexuality, as mentioned in the previous section, then after 2022, it started representing strength, rage, and struggle with Russia. This letter is pictured with teeth on T-shirts, sweatshirts, and souvenir items (for instance, Fig. 16), especially a remarkable visualization, where it holds in its teeth the Russian letter "ё" (Fig. 17), and a print with two crossed letters as "a warning to those who dare to infringe upon our sovereignty"

Figure 16. https://wall31.com/sweatshirts/sweatshirts-unisex/yi/727

Figure 17. https://wall31.com/t-shirts/men-t-shirt/zla-litera-yi/512

Figure 18. https://vozianov.design/yii-t-shirt/

(https://vozianov.design/yii-t-shirt/ accessed 10.05.2025, Fig. 18). This letter occurs on the products of some brands precisely as a sign of Mariupol's resistance and gains additional meaning of solidarity. In particular, in the autumn of 2022, the brand German Apparel and the YouTube show "Ebaut" ("Ебаут") released a charity collection "My blood" among whose key symbols is the letter "ї" as a sign of resistance of the occupied cities (https://germanapparel.

co/e-x-g-my-blood/ accessed 20.05.2025). In a similar way, the organization «Ukraïner» offers an eco-bag with the "ï"-print, enabling Ukrainians, both at home and overseas, to express their national position in this way (https://www.ukrainer.net/litera-i/ 20.05.2025).

Gradually, the image of the letter "ï" without stylisation and additional attributes on clothes, jewellery, passport covers, and even tattoos has become a means of demonstrating solidarity and belonging to the Ukrainian community. In this way, this letter becomes a representation of the prestige of both the Ukrainian language in particular and the Ukrainian people in general, assuming the status of a symbol of Ukrainian identity. This ideology is more fully represented in the name of a new Ukrainian brand of clothing "13th letter" [10]; whose creators explain the name as "Ї is an identification of Ukraine with a proper address No 13 in the alphabet" (https://www.instagram.com/13litera.ua/). One more case of the representation of the ideology "language is a national identity" is a picture of a split letter "ї" on the cover of the first edition M. Tymoshyk's book "Moscowization of Bukovyna (1940–1990)" (Fig. 19).

Figure 19. https://bukvoid.com.ua/reviews/books/2024/03/14/174502.html

Finally, outlining the shifts in language ideologies that took place after Russia's full-scale invasion, it is worth noting the persistence of some of them. First of all, it is the ideology of uniqueness, which, however, has obtained some new meanings related to the struggle for its existence and the memory of

[10] Registered on Instagram in April 2022.

Figure 20. https://www.facebook.com/ochmanity/posts/pfbid0yT2tk4QS7QsMU7RJnYuWbCX2w2b7WLAYfjLGjw3A3KA6QRwQzwLHUHhgWhLDhEncl

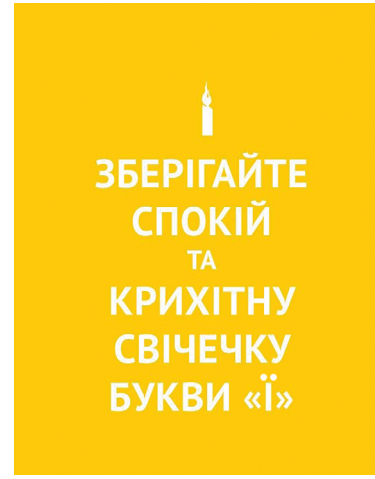

Figure 21. https://www.volynnews.com/messages/1878/

its past. Also, the set of words that are traditionally used to illustrate the symbolic meaning of this letter has become wider: next to the word *Ukaïna*, appeared words *heroï 'heroes'* and *o. Zmiïnyi 'Snake island'*[11] (Fig. 20). An interesting representation of preserving the ideology of uniqueness is the variation of the motivating poster '*Keep Calm and Carry On*' that, as known, was created by the British government to support the fighting spirit of their citizens before World War II began. In 2014, after Russia invaded Donbas, a remake of this poster – '*Keep Calm and Clean a Machine Gun*'– became popular on Ukrainian social media. And in 2023, another variation of this poster became popular. It has a transparent allusion to Ivan Malkovych's poem: '*Keep Calm and a Tiny Candle of the letter «Ї»*' and was created by Illia Strongovskyi in 2012 (Fig. 21). But till 2023 it was not actively shared in social media. Now

[11] Snake Island is an island in the Black Sea that marks Ukraine's territorial waters. On the 24th of February 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion started from some directions. Among the other actions, Russian troops came to this island and offered to surrender to Ukrainian bounder guards, but they received the answer: "Russian warship go fuck yourself". After fighting for some hours the aggressors captured the island. On the 4th of July 2022, after regular attacks Ukraine returned the island under its control.

this poster seems to reinterpret playfully and somewhat ironically the image of the candle as a symbol of the Ukrainian language and simultaneously represents it not as an object that needs defending, but as a symbol of the identity and a tool of resistance.

Figure 22. https://knu.ua/news/12887

This slightly updated ideology of uniqueness continues to be expressed in the linguistic landscape. In particular, in September 2022, the building of the Institute of Philology at Taras Shevchenko National University was adorned with a mini-sculpture in the shape of the letter "ї," decorated with fragments of stained glass from the building's windows that were destroyed during a missile strike on December 31, 2022. This mini-sculpture is part of the art project "Shukay" ("*Шукай*"/ Seek for), which aims to promote Kyiv's history with mini-sculptures, which are city symbols, installed in different places of the capital and accompanied by plaques with QR-codes (https://shukai.com.ua). Besides the physical embodiment of the sculpture, two statements from the opening speech of the project author Yulia Bevzenko are meaningful:

> 1) …the letter Ї is a real Ukrainian treasure since it is absent in the other Slavic alphabets. It distinguishes us from others, emphasizing our uniqueness. Modern Ukrainians mark with it various things – from clothing to street objects – outlining in such a way their identity and authenticity, which was under the risk of erasure for centuries.
> 2) If you think that the dots over the letter Ї resemble bullets, doubt not. Because language is indeed a weapon! (https://knu.ua/ua/news/12887 accesed 20.05.2025).

To summarize shifts in language ideologies that have taken place after Russia's full-scale invasion, it is worth pointing out a crucial one – overcoming of demeaning stereotypes: weakness, endangerment, inferiority as a result of comparison with Russian as the standard. This letter now symbolizes masculinity, strength, and resistance. The uniqueness of the Ukrainian language has already been acknowledged not on the basis of comparison with Russian, but in a global context. It is possible to interpret this as self-reflection beyond the dichotomy "colonizer–colonized". Also, a rethinking of the status of the Ukrainian language can be observed: its role in constructing identity and maintaining sovereignty is changing from symbolic to practical.

7. Conclusions

As numerous studies on societies with experience of colonial dependence show, coloniality does not disappear at the moment of liberation, but can continue for a long time, in particular due to the preservation of colonial practices and colonial way of thinking. This situation is often combined with the rejection of inherited imperial narratives and attempts to overcome the inferiority complex by constructing new ones, which can be described as postcolonial ambivalence. Ukrainian society also experienced this condition after declaring independence in 1991. And only Russia's full-scale invasion has caused substantial changes in public consciousness, dealing with overcoming social ambivalence and colonial thinking structures. One of the manifestations of this overcoming is shifts in language ideologies that have been traced on the example of the functioning of one of the symbols of the Ukrainian language, the letter «ї», in the discursive space.

Since Ukraine's independence, language ideologies have been characterised by a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, they reflect on searching and constructing the identity of the Ukrainian people by establishing the value of the Ukrainian language. But on the other hand, defining the uniqueness of the Ukrainian language through its comparison with Russian, its feminization attests the view of themselves from the colonizer's perspective. In that period, textual and visual images of the letter "ї" symbolized an attitude towards the language as a national treasure, sacralization, weakness, and endangerment. The main message broadcast by them was '*We must defend/ keep the Ukrainian language*'. The indexical value of this letter encompassed the Ukrainian-speaking citizens who felt uncomfortable due to the limited

functional space of the Ukrainian language and even experienced linguistic victimization.

The full-scale invasion of Russia has become the catalyst for overcoming the colonial ways of thinking and postcolonial ambivalence. It is worth underlining that the Ukrainian experience does not fit into the classical chronological model of development, according to which colonized societies first engage in anticolonial resistance, liberating themselves from political dependence, then go through a postcolonial period, reflecting on the traumatic colonial experience, and finally transit to a decolonial state, having freed themselves from colonial practices and producing independent narratives directed towards the future. The peculiarity of the Ukrainian case is that although the decolonial state started after the postcolonial period, it is running parallel to anticolonial resistance – armed resistance to the threat of recolonization. This peculiarity is reflected in language ideologies.

First and foremost, the language ideologies of femininity, weakness, and endangerment undergo decline; replaced by polar opposites – masculinity, strength, and resistance. Also, the shift to desacralization is significant, which was especially noticeable in the first months of the full-scale invasion and manifested itself in the wide use of obscene language in private and public communicative spheres. These changes can evidence a definitive transition to an anticolonial mode of thinking. The rejection of the ideology of sacralization leads to shifts in the ideology of loyalty: the national-treasure attitude is changed to a pragmatic one (as a means of communication). This, in turn, promotes rethinking of the role of the Ukrainian language in preserving sovereignty: its use has already been realized as a prerequisite for identity. The main message broadcast by the textual and visual images of the letter "ї" after February 2022 is '*The Ukrainian language defends us*'. Its indexical value of marginality has changed to the one of prestige: it has become a symbol of solidarity not for a limited group, but for all citizens of Ukraine. The language ideology of uniqueness, although preserved to this day, has acquired a somewhat different meaning: the authenticity of the Ukrainian language is represented not for comparison with Russian but on a wider scale. These shifts can testify to overcoming postcolonial ambivalence, departing from the cognitive frame 'colonizer–colonized', and transmitting to a decolonial mode of thinking. These changes testify to the overcoming of postcolonial ambivalence, the departure from the dichotomy of "colonizer-colonized," and the transition to decolonial structures of thought.

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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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SHAPING OF IMPERIAL DISCOURSE AND COUNTER-DISCOURSE: FROM HISTORY TO THE CURRENT SITUATION

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MS 45 OF VITA CONSTANTINI-CYRILLI: POLITICALLY CORRECT TEXTUAL INTERVENTIONS

Abstract

Saint Constantine-Cyril died in 869; shortly afterwards, and certainly before 882, the Life of Constantine-Cyril was written in Greek by an anonymous author. The original Greek text of the Life (Vita Constantini-Cyrilli, hereafter VC) appears to be lost, and we possess only a translation into Old Bulgarian that is Old Church Slavonic (hereafter OCS), which very probably originated also in the 9th century. The original Greek text of VC had been translated into OCS by means of a highly literal translation technique, and the resulting Grecisms in the OCS version made the text virtually incomprehensible to the Slavic copyists, who produced a wealth of variant readings in the OCS text. The situation is further complicated because the earliest preserved copy of VC is known only from a manuscript dated 1469, and consequently, any discussion of its content demands detailed philological analysis.

In this article, we keep the philological commentary to the minimum and concentrate on a single manuscript, distinguished by its content – VC (manu-

script no.45 = MS 45). The special variant readings in MS 45 are unique in the history of the textual transmission of VC and consist of substantial additions and reformulations of entire sentences. The variants did not originate from attempts to resolve linguistic difficulties in the text, as can be observed in other copies of VC, but rather the variant readings of MS 45 appear to constitute a deliberate redactional reframing of the text. The interventions in MS 45 focus exclusively on Constantine-Cyril's Moravian mission, his invention of Slavic letters, and his role as apostle to the Slavs. The additions of MS 45 emphasize his theological and political competence and the cultural importance of his work for all Slavic countries. Ultimately, the variant readings of MS 45 connect the events of the 9th century anachronistically with features of the Muscovite culture of the 16th–17th centuries. The study polemically asks if the textual interventions in MS 45 can be viewed in the light of translation theory after its "ideological turn", which acknowledges politically motivated changes in texts.

Keywords: *Vita Constantini-Cyrilli*, variant readings, redactional intervention, cultural appropriation.

1. Introduction

The production of a text and its publication are regularly associated with redactional work, which aims to optimize the reception of the text. In the context of translation, however, redactional intervention becomes an ambivalent matter. On the one hand, shaping of textual content with regard to the assumed receptive resources of a target audience may be necessary if the source text includes culture-specific information that the audience for the target text would hardly understand. On the other hand, translation is considered to be a *faithful* representation of the *original*, which excludes any textual interventions by the translator. The distinction between the 'proper' redactional work of authors and the 'improper' redactional interventions of translators is, however, no longer commonly acknowledged. After the *linguistic turn* in translation theory in the 1970s, which called for pragmatic, not merely lexical, equivalence between source and target text, and after the *cultural turn* in translation theory around 1990, which focusses on the 'fortune of translated texts in the receiving culture' (Bassnett, 2007, p. 16), the contemporary *ideological turn* in translation studies 'refers to a changed perspective of seeing translation as a means of ideological resistance' (Leung, 2006, p. 130). According to these theories, translation can be seen as a means of altering the colonising representation of

the world in the source text by giving voice to the suppressed views of the colonised in the language of the translation.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Background

The manual handwritten transmission of Church Slavonic texts necessarily always implied a degree of partial translation. As Church Slavonic became an exclusively written language, in contrast to the spoken vernaculars of the respective Slavic communities, and as the lexical and grammatical norms of the *Slavonic* language grew increasingly obscure, the copyists of Church Slavonic texts were challenged to either reproduce lingual utterances that were no longer productive in their own language, or to give the text a linguistic editorial reworking in order to reduce the distance to their contemporary language. Such editorial intervention by scribes (including occasional errors or other disruptions in the text transmission) makes it necessary to critically review variant readings in the manuscript documents of a given text and try to establish an assumed original reading. While philology provides the methodological background for editorial work, text linguistics supplies the methodological foundation to analyse the redactional work of the old scribes.

This paper analyses the redactional work of a scribe who not only linguistically transferred the text of *Vita Constantini-Cyrilli* (hereafter VC) into an Eastern redaction of Church Slavonic, but who also introduced extensive editorial changes to the text. The philological problems of VC are not the focus of this article; only the basic information necessary to understand the scribe's interventions is supplied.

The Greek original of VC was written between 869 and 'avec certitude à la fin de 882' (Meyvaert and Devos, 1955, pp. 435, 437), but it was soon lost. We have good reasons to believe that the Old Church Slavonic (OCS) translation of the Greek original was produced in the ninth century as well, but the transmission of the OCS text is attested only from as late as 1469. The linguistic transmission of VC underwent 600 years of silence, and because the Slavic scribes struggled with a Slavonic text, which was highly dependent on underlying Greek morphosyntactic structures, they introduced a variety of variant readings which, in many cases – because of 600 years of undocumented text transmission – cannot be unified anymore. However, one relatively late copy of VC stands out from all other copies of VC, showing lengthy additions to the text that cannot be classified as mere variant readings. We will document (3)

and discuss (4) the textual additions of MS 45, and conclude with a critical remark on the ideology of textual interventions (5).

3. Data

A manuscript copy of VC from the the late seventeenth century, written by a Russian scribe and presenting the text of VC according to the variant readings of its South Slavic redaction,[1] is numbered 45 in the chronological ordering of manuscript copies as established by Mirčeva (2014, p. 44). Formerly, this manuscript had been listed as no. 16 (e.g. in Grivec and Tomšič, 1960) according to the chronological sequence of scholarly publications of VC copies. MS 45 is unique in that it displays lengthy additions to the text which are not found in other copies of VC. Nevertheless, it may be speculated that these additions in MS 45 were not made by the scribe himself. Some passages show problematic morphology (XV: 18-22 *на своемъ сѣдалищѹ* instead *сѣдалищи*[2]), lexical semantics (XIV: 2 *богомъ наѹстими* = 'incited/ persuaded by God'[3]) or morpho-syntax (XV: 2, a rather enigmatic passive construction *и абїе по пророческ'мъ словѹ исполнилсѧ* = ('suddenly he [Constantine-Cyril] had been fulfilled?'), all of which suggest that the additions presented by MS 45, may already have been inserted in an earlier manuscript copy. However, we have no evidence of such a peculiar text transmission. It is noteworthy that no linguistic archaisms demand to date the additions in MS 45 back to the ninth century. Rather, it can be suggested that the additions display information and wording, which point to an East Slavic origin not earlier than the sixteenth century.

Apart from occasional variant readings of single lexical units (or minor rearrangements of sentential units, as in XVIII: 13) MS 45 exhibits some major additions to the text[4] of VC, starting with chapter XIII. The following

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[1] See for example the finite sentences with да in XV: 1. The distinction between an East and a South 'redaction' of VC refers to linguistic peculiarities, not to redactional reworking of text content. Regarding content the proximity of the additions in MS 45 and in the Life of Cyril as given in the Reading Menologion of Dmitrij Rostovskij (feast: May 11th) has already been mentioned (Diddi, 2004, p. 69), however the textual connection between has still to be established. Rostovskij's reworking of VC is not treated in this paper.

[2] Judging by the lemma *сѣдалище*, SJS: 380 did not include the additions of MS 45 into the vocabulary.

[3] SJS: 323 lists the verb only in a negative meaning 'incite, instigate, persuade' (without reference to VC).

[4] OCS text of VC edited by Grivec and Tomšič (1960), chapters are quoted with roman and sentences with arabic numerals. The edition serves as textual base in Daiber (2023), (*see for a critical discussion of variant readings*).

table contains all additions in MS 45, which may be described as redactional interventions.

	MS 45: additions to (+) or paraphrases of (=) sentences in the [common text of VC][5]
XIII:1	[Философь же иде въ Цариградь.] + и дошедъ и приѭтъ его царь радостїю велїею, такожде и патрїархъ и весъ свѭщенны' чинъ. [The philosopher went to Constantinople.] + and having come there[6] the Emperor (immediately) received him with great joy, as well as the Patriarch and all clerical order.
XIV:2	[Растислав' бо морав'скы кнеѕь богомь оустимь съвѣть сътвори съ кнеѕы своими моравлѭани и посла къ цароу Михаилѹ глаголѥ] = ростиславъ бо и свѭатополкъ, кнѭзѣ моравскїи и тѹровскїи и всеи россїи, богомъ наѹстими быша, совѣтъ сотвориша со кнѭзи своими моравскими, такожде и кнѭзь панонски' коцлѭакъ, велїею радостїю совѣтѹ ихъ помощникъ имъ бысть. и послаша къ царю михаилѹ до цариграда кнѭзеи своихъ, глаголюще сице, благочестивыи царю и велики кнѭже. [Rastislav, the Moravian prince, informed by God, held a council together with his Moravian princes, and he sent to the Emperor Michael, speaking] = Rastislav and Svatopolk, the princes of Moravia and of Turov and of whole Russia, were informed by God; they held a council with their Moravian princes, and also the prince of Pannonia, Kocak, was with great joy a helper to them for their council. And they sent their princes to the Emperor Michael to Constantinople, speaking so 'Righteous Emperor und Great princes'.
XIV:4	[то посли ны, владыко] = молимъ тѧ, владыко, благоволи о насъ и посли намъ [епископа и оучителѧ такого] [so send us, o Lord] = we plea to you, o Lord, have mercy on us and send us [a bishop and such a teacher]

[5] I have been asked to translate the additions of MS 45 into English (German translations see in Daiber, 2023): I use only one form of proper names (e.g. Rastislav, not Rostislav) and look for the most neutral meaning in translating the titles of actors (prince, emperor and so on) regardless of historical circumstances; as the redactional interventions of MS 45 have the form of additions to and insertions into already grammatically saturated utterances, they often produce controversial syntactic constructions, which I could not conceal in the translation. Lastly, I did not unify the translations in this section with those found elsewhere in the paper, because the translations are only meant as a guide for understanding the OCS text and cannot replace it.

[6] The participle preterite active *дошедъ* can formally also be related to the Emperor, as if the sentence runs 'and going towards him ,and' the Emperor immediately received him …', which would be a (as it seems to me, more rare) heterosubjective variant of the syndetic use of the participle with the possible modal meaning 'immediately'; see footnote 8.

XIV:6	[събрав’ же съборь царь и призва Костан’тина философа и сътвори слышати рѣчь сию и рече] = и доидоша ко цариградѹ божїим поспѣшенїемъ и возвѣстиша царѹ михаилѹ, о какови вещи доидоша моравлѧне. собравъ же царь соборъ со патрїархи и з болѧри своими, такожде и со константиномъ философомъ и совѣщаша благо, царь же и патриархъ сътвори слышати речъ сїю всѣмъ и нача вѣщати ко философѹ. [after having gathered a council the Emperor called Constantine the philosopher and let him hear this speech and spoke] = and they went right to Constantinople, quickened by God, and explained to the Emperor Michael, for which purpose the Moravians had come. The Emperor, after having gathered a council together with the Patriarchs and with his powerful, as well as with Constantine the philosopher, they concluded benevolently; the Emperor and the Patriarch let everybody hear this speech and they began to explain it to the philosopher.
XIV:12	[wтвеща юмоу пакы царь и съ Вар’дою и оумомь своимь] + и мѹдростїю аггелскою, лѹчше божїею [after that answered him the Emperor together with his uncle Bardas[7]] + and (inspired by) angelic, better to say, Godly wisdom
XIV:13-14	[шьдь же философь по прьвомѹ wбычаю на молитвѹ се наложи, и съ инѣми поспѣш’никы. 14: вьскорѣ же ю юмоу богъ ꙗви, послоушаю молитвь своихь рабь и абиє сложи писмена и начеть бесѣдѹ писати eѵаггел’скѹ] = по томѹ же обычаю во полѹнощи молитвѹ дѣꙗше, и абїе воскорѣ послѹшавъ молитвѹ своего раба, отверзъ емѹ ѹмъ и вшедъ во храминѹ и отверзъ кънигы и сложи[8] бѹквы славенскы и начатъ бесѣдѹ писати еуаггелскѹ [after having gone, the philosopher, according to his proper customary behaviour, resorted to prayer, together with other comrades. 14: And quickly God revealed this to him, Who is attentive to the prayers of His servants, and immediately he formed letters and started to write the speech of the Gospel] = according to this custom he produced a prayer at midnight, and quickly, having been attentive to the prayer of His servant, [God] opened his reason and, after having gone to his chamber and having opened the books, he [= the philosopher] formed Slavic letters and began to write the speech of the Gospel

[7] See Daiber 2023: 287: the utterance *и оумомь своимь* is a corrupted from **вуємъ своимъ* ‘his uncle’; although *оумомь своимь* is in the correct case to follow preposition *съ* = ‘with’, it is impossible in Slavic to express instrumental meaning ‘with the help of his reason/ by using his mind’ by a comitative construction ‘with’, therefore I chose the paraphrase ‘inspired by’. The syntactic impossibility led in some mss. to variant readings with the proper noun ‘Bardas’, but only MS 45 is adding more terms to support the concept ‘reason’.

[8] The mostly tautosubjective construction ‘participle + conjunction + finite verb’ (here: *отверзъ … и сложи*) can be a modal marker for an immediate chain of events (see upcoming article in *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*), but is a rather frequent and semantically bleached construction in Middle Bulgarian and Old East Slavic due to the decreasing morphological productivity of participles. According to the author (Daiber, 2023), the preserved text of VC has suffered (sometimes beyond repair) from six centuries of undocumented

XIV:15	возвѣсти же и патриархѹ о сложенїи бѹкъвъ + [възвесели же се царь …] He [given the textual nature of an addition, most probably: the Emperor] reported also to the Patriarch about the creation of letters + [the Emperor rejoiced …]
XIV:19	[подобно великомоу царѹ Кон’стан’тинѹ] + абїе ѭтсѣ пѹти философъ [similar to the great Emperor Constantine] + immediately the philosopher set out on his way
XV:1	[Дошьдшѹ же ѥмоу Моравы] + прїѭали его кнѧзїе ростиславъ и свѭтополкъ (,) во свои палати его воведоша и великѹю честъ емѹ даша. онъ же совѣщалъ сѧ со кнѧзи да быша емѹ ѹченикь собрали да врѹчитъ имъ бѹквы в наѹченїе. [[Constantine], after having come to Moravia] + the princes Rastislav and Svatopolk received him, escorted him into their palaces and did him great honour. He discussed with the princes, that they would assemble pupils in order that he would hand over to them letters and teaching.
XV:2	[въскорѣ же въсь црьковныи чинь прїимь] = оны же воскорѣ повѣленное имъ сотвориша и совокѹпиша младцовъ патдесѧтъ [sic], онъ же благослови ихъ и дасть имъ бѹквы. овыи младци божїею благодатїю преспѣвахѹ в наѹченїи едины въ славенскомъ, дрѹзии же в греческомъ да бы разѹмѣли силѹ книгы. и ихъ изѹчи [наоучи ѥ оутрьници и часовwмь и вечер’нїи и павечер’ници и таинѣи слоуж’бѣ[9]] + и тамо остави и инии ѹченїѧ грамматикїю и мѹсикїю. пребысть тамо во моравѣ мѣсѧцеи четиридесѧть и абїе по пророческ’мъ словѹ исполнилсѧ. Quickly he accepted the whole Church service] = they quickly did what had been ordered to them and gathered around 50 young boys, he then blessed them and gave them the letters. Those young boys, by the grace of God, very successfully received the teaching, the ones in Slavonic, the others in Greek, in order to understand the meaning of the Book. And he taught them [the morning, the mid-day and the evening Hourly services and the Eucharist Service] + and he stayed there and taught them other teachings, grammar and music. All in all he was in Moravia for forty months and (?) immediately was fulfilled according to the word of the Prophet.
XV:18-22	[м͡же месець створи въ Моравѣ и иде свести оученикы своє. 19. прѣѥт’ же ѥго идоуща Коц’лы, кнѥзь панон’скы, и възлюбль вел’ми словен’скыи книгы наоучити се имь и въда до н͡оученикьь оучити се имь. 20. велию чьсть ѥмѹ сътворь, мимо проводи и. 21. не възет’ же ни wть Растислава ни wть Коц’лѧ ни злата ни сребра ни иноє вещи, положивь eѵаггел’скоє слово и бес пище. 22. тькмо плѣн’никь испрошь wть обwю ѳ͡съть и wтпоусти ихъ.] = и тако наѹчивь ихъ страхѹ и законѹ божїю и паки ѭтсѧ пѹти ко царствѹющемѹ градѹ. кнѧзи же его со великою честїю опровождахѹ и даваша емѹ много злата и сребра, онь же не хотѧше не токмо злата и сребра, ни инныѧ вещи, положивъ еуаггелское

South and East Slavic text transmission, it is hard to decide whether the appearance of the construction ‘participle + conjunction’ in VC is due to the later text transmission, or eventually indicates an original modal meaning, in this case: ‘having opened the books, he immediately formed letters …’.

[9] The OCS text, quoted according to its appearance in the mss., is damaged; see comment at the end of section 4.3.

	слово и без пища, но токмо испросивъ грековъ плѣненныхъ отъ обо(и)хъ девѣать сотъ и отпѹсти ихъ, самъ же иде пѹтемъ, радѹѣасѣа со ѹченики своими, да ѣавить цареви и патриархѹ отъ плода трѹда своего. но идѹщѹ емѹ пѹтемъ, кнѣазь панонскии коцьлѣакъ со своими болѣары честь емѹ велїїю сотворъ и возлюбль велми книги словенскїа и наѹчи сѣа отъ него и вда до тридесѣатъ ѹчениковъ, и мимо провождъ его и даѣаше емѹ много богатства, онъ же не хотѣаше. егда же приходѣаше ко цариградѹ, тамо же емѹ во срѣтенїе патриархъ со причтомъ своимъ и со болѣары сотвориша. дошедъ до царѣа, велїїю честь прїѣатъ и сѣде на своемъ сѣдалищѹ малое времѣа, и паки на благовѣстїе ѹтверждает сѣа на славенскїе страны. дошедъ же во свои градъ, таможе родивсѣа, оттѹдѹ во далныѣа страны, даже до рыма. [Forty months he was active in Moravia and he went to take/ consecrate[10] his pupils. 19. While he was on his way, Kocak, the prince of Pannonia, received him and he very much loved the Slavonic books to be instructed by them and he gave him 50 pupils to teach them. He did him great honour and escorted him (through his country). 21. He did not take, neither from Rastislav, nor from Kocak, neither gold, nor silver, nor another thing, laying down the word of the Gospel without taking advantage. 22. He only asked for 900 prisoners from both and those he set free.] = And so he taught them the fear and law of God and then set out again on his way to the city of the Emperor. The princes escorted him with great honour and constantly offered him much gold and silver, but he did want not only no gold and no silver, but also no other thing, laying down the word of the Gospel without taking advantage, and only having asked for 900 Greek prisoners from both he sat those free. He himself went his way, rejoicing with his pupils, that he may present to the Emperor and the Patriarch from the fruits of his labour. But while he was on his way, the Pannonian prince Kocak together with his powerful did him great honour and he loved very much the Slavonic books and let himself be instructed by him, and he gave him 30 pupils, and escorted him (through his country) and they constantly offered him much riches, he would not want it. When they came to Constantinople, there the Patriarch with his clergy and the powerful had prepared to meet him. After having come to the Emperor, he received great honour and he sat on his chair (as professor) for a short time, and then again was dedicated to preaching in the Slavic lands, having gone to his town, where he was born, and from there on to regions far away, even to Rome.
XVII:1-2	[И оувѣдѣвь и римскыи папа посла по нь] = и ѹвидѣвъ андриѣанъ, римскии папа, моленїе посла честными мѹжи и философи, дабы дошелъ в римъ. и егда доидоша посланныи папою молиша его, онъ же преклонисѣа ко моленїю. [и дошьд’шѹ ємѹ въ Римь] = егда приближисѣа во римъ [изыде самь апостолыкь] + и папа [Андрѣьань …] [And having learned of it the Roman Pope sent for him] = and having learned of it, Adrian, the Roman Pope, sent a plea through honourable men and philosophers, that he should go to Rome. And when the approached him the Papal envoys implored him, he was inclined to their plea. [And after having come to Romer] = When he came nearer to Rome [the Apostolic father himself came out] + and the Pope [Adrian …]

[10] Cf. comment in Daiber 2023: 315.

4. Results and discussion

The additions of MS 45 to VC have the character of deliberate redactional work. Notably, they are found only in the text's final third. Chapter XIII recounts Cyril's profession as a professor in Constantinople, who is (Chapter XIV) entrusted by the Emperor to lead the Moravian mission and, as a prerequisite to this task, he invents the first Slavic script (Chapter XV). There are no redactional interventions found in Chapter XVI, which, however, is for the most part a translation of 1 Cor 14:5-39. At the beginning of Chapter XVII, we find the next (and final) paraphrasing addition. The topics 'invention of the Glagolica' (XIV), 'resistance of the Western clergy' (XV) and 'acceptance of the Slavic translation by the Pope' (XVII) are the principal concerns of the redactional activity in MS 45. Remarkably, the anonymous scribe of MS 45 shares his focus with the majority of scholarly literature about VC and, to an even greater extent, with the popular remembrance of Cyril and Method, the 'Apostles of the Slavs', to this day.

At first glance, it is obvious that the additions in MS 45 serve to emphasize the political importance of Constantine-Cyril's mission. A closer reading singles out three recurring topics, which may be labelled 'national hegemony', 'cultural importance' and 'Eastern Orthodoxy'. These topics are intertwined, as national hegemony is framed in terms of a certain concept of governance that in turn carries cultural and theological implications. We do not discuss individual additions from different points of view, but rather classify them according to their dominant argumentative function.

4.1. National hegemony

When Constantine-Cyril returns to Constantinople (XIII:1), all manuscripts of VC relate that he continued with his life as a professor 'after having seen the Tsar'. However, MS 45 narrates that the Emperor, together with the Patriarch and all the clergy of the city, expressed great respect upon Constantine-Cyril's arrival. Depending on the question to which person the preterite participle in this sentence refers, there is even room for the interpretation that the Emperor himself actively proceeded towards Constantine-Cyril in order to mark his arrival ceremonially. In any case, the addition in MS 45 indicates that, on the occasion of Constantine-Cyril's return to Constantinople, an official reception had been arranged. In chapter XVII: 2-4 we are presented with practically the same situation. When Constantine-Cyril arrives in Rome, the Pope himself 'together with all inhabitants carrying candles' is prepared to meet him. Yet

while only MS 45 records an official reception of Constantine-Cyril in Constantinople, the official reception marking his arrival in Rome is attested in all manuscripts and is historically far more credible. Pope Adrian together with the peoples 'went out' and met the Orthodox missionaries when they entered Rome or its immediate vicinity. The Slavic utterance *изити* (*изиде самь апостолыкь Андрѣѭань*, XVII:2) is probably rendering Gk. ἐξέρξομαι (τινι), 'to go out towards someone' (Bauer and Aland, 1988, p. 555), but both Greek and Slavic leave it to the context to indicate what distance must be covered for the meeting to occur. In the case of Constantine–Cyril's arrival in Rome, the Pope met the Slavic delegation at one of the city gates at least, for the ceremonial meeting is not, in fact, directed at Constantine-Cyril or any other living person in his company, but at the relics of pope Clement I, which Constantine-Cyril had discovered in Kherson (VIII: 16) and was now bringing back to Rome. The Latin Lives of Constantine-Cyril, without exception, consider the translation of Clement's relics as his most important achievement,[11] and the information in XVII:2 about a ceremonial reception of Constantine-Cyril in Rome is fully credible from a historical point of view. In comparison with the reception in Rome, the official reception of Constantine-Cyril in Constantinople attended by the Emperor, the Patriarch and 'all the clerical ranks', is not only an individual addition of MS 45 to XIII:1 but also appears rather exaggerated in the context of the narration, since the mission to the Khazars, from which Cyril was returning, had not been a success. The Khazars, the majority of whom were of the Jewish faith, did not officially accept Byzantine orthodoxy as state religion: only 200 scholars (XI:41) converted to Christianity, indicating that the Khaganate did not wish to tie itself too closely to the Byzantine Empire, apart from statements of friendship (XI: 41, 44) and the occasional use of military expertise (cf. Daiber, 2023, p. 266, commentary). The narrative context of XIII:1 does not support the idea of a triumphal return to Constantinople in the presence of the entire clergy. On the contrary, the addition in MS 45 seems to have intended to create a parallel between the honouring of Cyril in West (XVII:2) and in the East (XIII:1). It is therefore consistent that, in the same manner, MS 45 also embellishes the welcoming reception of Constantin-Cyril in Moravia (XV:1), adding the detail that he was accommo-

[11] Commenting on the content of the recently discovered documents about Constantine-Cyril in the Latin sphere: 'As regards the Latin sources, the motif of the translation of the relics of Pope Clemens Romanus by Constantine-Cyril rests at the basis of practically all discoveries of greater importance made during the last five decades' (Bărlieva, 2007, p. 94).

dated in the palaces of the rulers with great honour (*во свои палати его воведоша и великѹю честъ емѹ даша*).

Passages earlier in the text (XII:1, XV:1), which were reworked to correspond with a later one (XVII:2), are signs of deliberate redactional work. In XIV:2, the scribe of MS 45 also includes information that does not appear in the original text until XV:19. The ruler of Pannonia, Kocak, may have been in political alliance with the rulers of Greater Moravia, Rastislav and Svatopolk. Unlike Greater Moravia, however, Pannonia, and more broadly, the small kingdoms in this area, which came into existence after Charlemagne had defeated the Avars in 803, were already more or less tied to the Papal see.[12] That Kocak may have wanted to seek Byzantine economic and military assistance to resist the expansion of the East Frankish Empire is possible; yet the claim that he accepted the diplomatic initiative of Greater Moravia 'gladly as a helper' is not supported by historical evidence. The addition in MS 45 reveals no certain diplomatic intention on Kocak's part but describes the actors' intentions through the cliché 'with great joy' (XIII:1, XIV:2). The historically dubious idea that Kocak was a 'helper' of Rastislav and Svatopolk seems to serve another cliché as well, namely 'Slavic brotherhood'. The idea of Slavic brotherhood is expressively evident in the anachronistic claim that Svatopolk could have been 'prince of Moravia and of Turov and of whole Russia' (note: not 'Rus'). The scribe connects the Moravian mission of the year 863 with the Christianisation of the Kyivan Rus' in 988, when Turov, one of the more important cities in the East Slavic realm in the tenth century, is also first mentioned.[13] The anachronistic and spatial 'fake news' in the addition to XIV:2 lead to the conclusion that the scribe of MS 45 conceptualises the historical events surrounding the Moravian mission of Constantine-Cyril, firstly, as a

[12] The problem is historically difficult and cannot be deepened here. Suffice it to say that Hadrian II later appointed Method, Constantine-Cyril's brother, as bishop in the region of Pannonia, which would not have happened if these areas had been suspected of turning away from Rome towards Byzantine. For details concerning Kocak's possible motives, connected with the Patriarchate of Venice, see Verkholantsev (2012).

[13] Under the year 980: *Бѣ бо Рогъволодъ пришелъ и[з] заморья*, *имяше власть свою в Полотьскѣ, а туры Туровѣ, от него же и туровци прозвашася* (PVL, p. 54). I have no idea how the additions in MS 45 make a connection between the proper Name Koc[lj]ak and russ. *тур*/ tur 'bull', unless 'Kocak' is etymologically interpreted as a form of protoslavic **kotьcь* 'cage' resp. Old Polish kociel 'cage for domestic animals' (Derksen, 2008, p. 241) and thus fits the information of PVL that the city name Turov came into being, because it had been the cage for bulls (tur).

broad Slavic movement, which is connected, secondly, with the dominant position of the Orthodox Church in the Eastern Slavic Area, to which, thirdly, the scribe belongs himself. He imagines that the rulers of Moravia and the Byzantine Emperor would have addressed each other by the title 'Grand Prince' (*великий князь*).This title is specific to the East Slavic regions, first appearing in Kyiv (Melnikova, 2011, p. 115), but finally it will be the grand prince of Moscow who will be grand prince and 'tsar' as the supreme leader of the emerging Russian Empire. Indeed, when the scribe lets the Moravian ambassadors approach the Byzantine emperor as 'very honourable Tsar and Grand Prince' (*благочестивыи царю и велики кнѧже*) would have been appropriate for addressing the Muscovite Grand Prince, who had officially assumed the title *Tsar* since the reign of Ivan IV.[14] Additionally, the title 'Grand Prince' places the Byzantine Emperor on the same level with the Russian Tsar, which is exactly the point of view of the famous ideology of 'Moscow – the third Rome'.[15] If we add to this the passage in XIV:12, which portrays the Byzantine emperor as acting not merely rationally (as in the original text of VC), but under the influence of 'angelic, to be precise divine wisdom' (*мѹдростїю аггелскою, лѹчше божїею*), we have a direct expression of the theological foundation of caesaropapism (as upheld, again, by Ivan IV). As a final remark connected with the topic of the implicit concept of '(Russian) national hegemony' in the additions of MS 45, I would like to draw attention to the verb *благоволити* in XIV:4. The verb *благоволити* is primarily known from Mt 17:5 (*сеи есть сынъ мои [возлюбленныи], о немже благовилихъ*[16]) and, with the exception of Izbornik 1076 (*... не вьсѧка доуша въ всемь благоволить*[17]), it is predominantly used in reference to a Person of the

[14] There is a serious discussion about the nature of the title and the political resp. theological ideology connected with it (see Filyushkin, 2006); the year of the coronation of Ivan IV. in 1547 often serves as the historical reference point for the official career of the title.

[15] The concept of the 'Third Rome' is widely disputed, particularly regarding the extent to which it was truly a dominant political doctrine of Moscow, rather than merely a rhetorical cover for Russia's imperial claims (see, for example, the cautious approach in Laats 2009). This question has renewed relevance today, as evident in the sermons of Russia's political and ecclesiastical elites.

[16] Ostrog Bible (1581), see an added вьзлюблены in Codex Marianus (OCS, 11th c.) resp. возлюбленный in Elizabeth Bible (1751, quoted after 4th ed. 1762).

[17] 9 examples for благоволити in NKRJa <ruscorpora.ru/>, of which 7 are connected with God and 2 display the quoted sentence from the Izbornik (24.03.2025). – Likewise, SUM XVI/ XVII 2: 93 shows *благоволити* ('to show favour') resp. *благоволеніє* in a specifically 'religious' sense. I am grateful to the first reviewer of my article for this hint.

Trinity. It is only in Muscovite Russia, e.g. in the writings of Maksim Grek, that the verb appears to have become usable in relation to the tsar. This is, of course, a subjective impression which could be demonstrated objectively only through rigorous corpus study; however, the humble plea to the Emperor in XIV:4 is pragmatically different from the language used in VC, being more characteristic of the East Slavic or Russian usage in the sixteenth century.

4.2. Cultural importance

In this section, we comment on information in the additions to MS 45, which expand Constantine-Cyril's profile as a theological scholar to include political competence and broad erudition. Firstly, in underlining the statesmanlike abilities of Constantine-Cyril, we find him on a par with the most powerful rulers of his time (XIV: 6, XV: 1), who (against the original text of VC) do not take decisions without consulting him. The scribe is eager to emphasise this point even against the logic of the narrative. When the Emperor discusses his plans with the Patriarch and 'also with philosopher Konstantin; (XIV: 6 *такожде и со константиномъ философомъ*), MS 45 is forced to construct the textual cohesion with the subsequent reported speech of the Tsar by asserting that, although Constantin-Cyril was allegedly present at the consultation, the Tsar and Patriarch later had to inform him about the outcome. The scribe is clearly aware of the narrative inconsistency and seeks to cover it through a change in the linguistic register, as if Cyril's knowledge of the assembly's decision nevertheless had to be officially 'explained' (*вѣщати*) to him.

Apart from Constantine-Cyri's political competence, MS 45 also seeks to emphasise the universal erudition of the Saint. In the addition to XV:2 we are told that Constantine-Cyril not only taught his Moravian students the Office of the Hours and the Eucharistic service, but also instructed some of them in 'Greek, in order for them to understand the meaning of the book' (*дрꙋзии же в греческомъ да бы разꙋмѣли силꙋ книгы*). In mentioning the need for knowledge of Greek, the addition is, of course, not intended to assess the quality of the new Church Slavonic Bible translation. I see two possible motivations for the remark, and both are anachronistic with regard to VC.

The first possibility is that the addition in MS 45 seeks to emphasise that Orthodoxy is connected with theological writings in Greek rather than Latin, which are, on the contrary, associated with Catholicism. However, translations from Greek, apart from those that came to Greater Moravia in the context of

the Byzantine Moravian mission, are not well documented in the West Slavic domain. The Church Slavonic texts of the Czech redaction are predominantly translations from Latin (Vepřek, 2013), and even when they contain quotations from the Bible, the influence of the Vulgate is notable (e.g. Čermák, 2013). The claim that Constantine-Cyril might have introduced Greek (translation) studies in Greater Moravia is not supported by the character of Church Slavonic texts of Western origin.

The other possibility is that the addition in MS 45 frames the events of the Moravian mission within a Russian context. During the century-long handwritten transmission of Church Slavonic, which is, linguistically, Old Bulgarian, writings in the East Slavic realm, the grammatical norms of the native East Slavic language of the copyists had become so different from South Slavic Old Bulgarian, that the copyists committed numerous language errors. Finally, in the seventeenth century, Patriarch Nikon saw fit for a 'correction of the books' (*книжная справка*) by revising the Church Slavonic texts on the basis of their Greek originals. Not until the establishment of the 'Slavic Greek Latin Academy' in 1682/1685 in Moscow had there been any serious Greek studies in Russia.[18] The addition of MS 45 seems to reflect an increased interest in Greek in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia rather than the historical situation in Greater Moravia. When it is added that Constantine-Cyril taught his pupils 'grammar and music' (*грамматикїю и мѵ́сикїю*), one is again reminded of Russian cultural circumstances, in which the anonymous Serbian tractate 'On the eight parts of speech' (Weiher, 1977) was circulating as a work attributed to Constantin-Cyril. Concerning music, there seems to be no specific text ascribed to Constantine-Cyril (cf. Vladyshevskaja, 2006), however, Church Slavonic liturgical books (e.g. the Triodion) containing musical notation could have motivated the association.

[18] 'Здесь впервые в истории страны сформировалась плеяда просвещенных людей, в чьих образовании и опыте сочетались традиционная культура православных книжников с познаниями в гуманитарных науках своего времени и классических языках' [Here, for the first time in the history of our country, there formed a Pléjade of enlightened people, and in their education and experience came together the traditional culture of orthodox book scholars with knowledge in the humanitarian disciplines of their time and with knowledge in the classical languages.] (Ramazanova, 2024, p. 103). We would like to add that the Greek brothers Ioannikios and Sofronios Lichudis (Podskalsky, 2015) served as executives of the Academy, but many teachers had been recruited from the Kyivan Theological Academy, founded by Petro Mohyla as early as 1632; most of the intellectual input into Russia's 17th century came from the periphery of the Empire.

4.3. Orthodoxy

We will examine information from the additions in MS 45 that particularly underline the difference between Catholic and Orthodox Christianity. Similar to the use of *благоволити* (XIV: 4, see 4.1), stressing the Moravian rulers' submissive attitude towards the Byzantine emperor, MS 45 depicts the Roman Pope addressing Constantine-Cyril in an exaggeratedly humble, almost petitioning manner (XVII: 1-2). While the original text of VC relates that the Pope ordered the Byzantine missionaries to come to Rome, the addition in MS 45 imagines a high-ranking delegation travelling to Greater Moravia and asking Constantine-Cyril to meet the pope in Rome, which in the end Constantine-Cyril is 'inclined' to do (*преклонисѧ*). Historically, the Pope had no reason to plead with the Byzantine missionaries but, on the contrary, was fully entitled to demand a justification of their actions within a domain belonging to Roman authority. No one was allowed any missionary venture within the Roman domains without first being ordained as a missionary bishop, a position to which Method was later promoted to. The veneration that Pope Adrian II eventually expressed towards Constantine-Cyril, by laying him to rest in the sarcophagus originally manufactured for his own funeral (XVIII: 19), can hardly be responsible for the exaggerated plea attributed to Pope Nicholas I. The anonymous author of the additions may not have known, or it may have made no difference to him, that it had been Pope Nicholas I, who summoned the Byzantine missionaries to Rome in November 867, but after Nicholas's death on 13 November the same year, Pope Adrian II received them. The Pope's humility in inviting the Byzantine missionaries is historically unfounded, and so is the addition to XVII: 1-2 of the anticipation of the reverence that Adrian II later showed at the funeral of Constantine-Cyril (XVIII: 19). Rather, the addition intends to present Constantine-Cyril as an acclaimed theologian to whom even the Catholic Pope was obliged to show reverence. Constantine-Cyril's authority, according to the additions in MS 45, has transcendental foundations. The addition to XIV: 19 depicts him as reacting immediately (*абїе ѭтсѧ пѵ́ти философъ*) to the suggestion that he should fulfil the task, once begun by Roman Emperor Constantin, nota bene, the namesake of Constantinople as successor to the 'first' Italian Rome; it all fits this long perspectives of 'first' and 'second' Rome that Constantine-Cyril is enacting a 'prophetical saying' (*по пророческ҃мъ словѵ́*, XV: 2). The addition does not specify exactly which prophecy is meant, as the number '40' occurs many times in the Old Testament and the Gospels, but surely, the alleged prophecy concerns the mission of bringing Orthodoxy to the Slavs, even to those within the Catholic domain.

The strongest intervention in the text of VC, which considerably weakens its narrative cohesion, is the long addition found in XV: 18-22, which serves to downplay any connection of Constantine-Cyril with the Catholic sphere. Contrary to all other copies of VC and to all historical evidence, the addition claims that immediately after his activities in Greater Moravia, Constantine-Cyril travelled back to Byzantium (*паки ѭтсѭ пѵти ко царествѵющемѵ градѵ*), istopping briefl with Pannonian ruler Kocak (*идѵщѵ емѵ пѵтемъ, кнѧзь панонскии коцьлѧкъ со своими болѧры честь емѵ велїю сотворъ*), before finally reaching Constantinople, where the Patriarch, the clergy, and state officials prepared an official reception for him (*емѵ во срѣтенїе патриархъ со причтомъ своимъ и со болѧры*). Constantine-Cyril received great honours from the hand of the Tsar, then 'sits for a short while on his professorial chair' (*сѣде на своемъ сѣдалищѵ малое времѧ*), until he starts travelling through the 'Slavic lands' (*славенскїе страны*) in order to preach the Gospel (*на благовѣстїе*). Eventually, Constantine-Cyril visits his native town of Saloniki, from which he heads off to 'remote countries' (*дал[ь]ныѧ страны*) and finally 'even' comes 'to Rome' (*даже до рыма*).

The long addition resumes the ceremonial receptions of Cyril, his pan-Slavic intentions, and his superior erudition. Moreover, Cyril is pictured as the 'Apostle to the Slavs', who travels through the Slavic countries, and eventually, coming from his Greek home town, reaches Rome as the geographical extreme. The layout is significant: Greek as the point of origin, the Slavic realm as the space of transmission, and Rome as the ultimate, and somehow improbable ('even'), border where Constantine-Cyril encounters the Catholic 'Other'. It is possible, that the noun *боляр*/ Boljar[19] in the addition indicates again that the scribe is conceptualizing the Moravian Mission from and within a Russian perspective.

The geographical layout of the addition to XV: 18-22 is similar to the geographical layout in the legend about Apostle Andrew (cf. PVL, p. 12). Andrew, preaching in Sinop and intending to go to Rome, somehow strays from his route: first, he prophetically founds Kyiv, then going up the Dnieper, he reaches Novgorod, where he witnesses curious bathing rituals, and finally he comes to Rome and then returns to Sinop on the Black Sea – the exit point of his

[19] Appearing several times in OCS (SJS, p. 136), *боляръ* is numerously documented in Church Slavonic texts of the Eastern (Russian) redaction, while Old Russian *бояринъ* gradually becomes the prominent form (Vasmer, 1986, p. 203). Besides its use in the Eastern realms, the term was also used in the South Slavic areas.

travel route. Andrew, much to the delight of PVL's tenth-century recipients, travels the whole Rus', and, likewise, Constantine-Cyril travels the Slavic lands. Like Andrew, Constantine-Cyril also reaches Rome, and in both stories nothing can be said about the vertex of the elliptical route. It seems to me that the additions to XV: 18-22 are an intertextual reminiscence of the travelling apostle Andrew in PVL.

From the viewpoint of text linguistics, the long addition to XV: 18-22 could potentially serve as the final part of the text. The remark that Constantine-Cyril made it 'even' to Rome sounds like an unfounded and hardly credible tale, which does not encourage further elaboration. We have no knowledge of a text transmission of VC that ends the story in this way, but the addition of MS 45 could have ended the whole narration here.

Apart from paraphrasing formulations from the common text of VC, the addition to XV: 18-22 conveys the unexpected information that Constantine-Cyril, instead of accepting earthly riches, could have asked for the liberation of 'Greek' prisoners (*испросивъ грековъ плѣненныхъ*). The liberation of prisoners is a recurrent motif in hagiography and occurs three times in VC (Daiber, 2023, p. 75), but only once (XI: 45), when he takes his leave from the Khazars, does Constantine-Cyril ask for 'Greek' prisoners, which is plausible, because some may have still remained in the area after earlier Khazar-Byzantine wars (ibid., p. 266). Asking for Greek prisoners in Pannonia is not supported by historical evidence, and one may speculate if the scribe wished to suggest that Pannonia, having experienced Constantine-Cyril's missionary activity, tended to become a Byzantine ally and therefore released the former enemy's soldiers. Such a reading gives the next sentence, in which Constantine-Cyril is eager to report the 'fruit of his labor' (*плода трѹда своего*) to the Byzantine Emperor, a political undertone: namely, that the mission was accomplished by accepting one more ally into the Orthodox ranks.

The account of Constantine-Cyril's invention of the Slavic letters, which we will finally consider, shows a clear sign of monastic culture. On the one hand, the additions to XIV: 13-14 and 15 are unremarkable, because they only embellish the common version of VC with some expected details, but, on the other hand, it is rather unexpected that Cyril had prayed 'at midnight'. Let us look at this in more detail. The common text of VC tells us that Cyril, 'according to his long-established[20] habit, resorted to prayer' (*по прьвомѹ*

[20] OCS *по прьвомѹ wбычаю* should hardly be translated literally 'according to first behaviour', because it translates into an expression with Greek ἀρχαῖος, which means 'original, genuine' (Bauer and Aland, 1988, p. 223).

wбычаю на молитвѹ се наложи) before he sat down and invented the Slavic letters. That a monk should have a habit of praying (e.g. VII: 4, VIII: 24) is unsurprising, but in the context of his linguistic achievements, the formulation of XIV: 13 recalls the passage VIII: 12, where Constantine-Cyril sat down and prayed before successfully reconciling the variant readings in the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch.[21] The common text of XIV: 14 even makes a lexical reference to VIII: 24 by repeating the utterance 'resort to prayer' (*на молитвѹ се наложи*), although this may have been unintentionally caused by the fact that VC is a translation, and in Greek there may well have been an idiomatic utterance with τίθημι (see the meaning 'to resort to', Bauer and Aland, 1988, p. 1627). MS 45 does not repeat the utterance 'resort to prayer', but has *молитвѹ дѣꙗше*[22], thus employing a more idiomatically Slavic phrasing. Yet, MS 45 creates its own intertextual connection by informing the reader that Constantine-Cyril prayed *во полѹнощи* ('in the midst of the night').The same detail is also highlighted in XV: 2, where the common text of XV: 2 relates that Cyril taught his pupils 'the service of the morning hour and the lunch (hour) and the evening (hour)', expressed syntactically as three coordinated objects (*оутренѣ годинѣ ... обѣднѣи ... вечернѣи*), congruent in case (dative) and number (singular). The nominal objects are not related to OCS construction *учити* + accusative, but to the underlying Greek construction παιδεύω + dative.[23] Some manuscripts, however, expand the line of original dative objects by inserting the accusative object *павечер'ници* (= gr. ἀπόδειπνον „after the evening meal"), and the accusative shows that that the term was secondarily inserted to agree with *учити*. Some scribes, among them the scribe responsible for the additions in MS 45, insist that Constantine-Cyril taught the Service of the Hours, including midnight prayer. However, not everyone, e.g. members of the secular clergy, could pray at night, and so a certain custom evolved already in the Carolingian period.The daytime prayers had to all be observed,

[21] Cf. Daiber 2023: 186 and commentary p. 194; the story does not tell a linguistic miracle, as if Cyril had been enabled to understand a book written in Hebrew, but the story displays his theological-hermeneutical abilities.

[22] The verb *дѣꙗти* 'to do, make' in the meaning of a *verbum dicendi* is not unusual (Daiber, 2023, p. 19).

[23] The wording of VC requires a thoroughly philological approach, because the singular dative objects are, one the one hand, all present in the manuscripts, but, on the other hand, not all together in one manuscript (Daiber, 2023, pp. 297, 306).

and the three main hours (the ones mentioned in VC) were to be recited under all conditions.The night prayers, however, could be merged with the neighbouring hours, either immediately following Compline (evening prayer) or preceding Matins (morning prayer). Scheduling of the nightly hourly services had been determined with regard to the secular clergy, 'denn für diese war naturgemäß der Nachtgottesdienst kaum durchführbar' (Feiler, 1901, p. 31). Praying at midnight, in the literal sense of the term, was characteristic only of ascetic monks or monks who lived under strict monastic rule and were not obliged to do daily work. The addition of Cyril's midnight prayer in XV: 2 can be singled out philologically as a secondary addition, and the addition of MS 45 to XIV: 13 is secondary per se. The secondary additions, which emphasise the 'midnight prayer', reveal more about the monastic scribes of VC than about historical reality.[24]

4.4. Summarizing the observations

Together with the repeated attempts in the additions of MS 45 to emphasise the importance of the Patriarch alongside the Byzantine Tsar (XIV: 15), we may conclude that these additions were made by a Russian monk who presents Constantine-Cyril as the political and cultural eminent Apostle to the Slavs. The scribe of the additions is proud of Eastern Orthodoxy, in sharp contrast to 'Rome', and agrees to Muscovite caesaropapism and its pan-Slavic claims. Moreover, the scribe displays an awareness of linguistic problems associated with Church Slavonic translations from Greek. The peculiarities of the additions in MS 45 allow to locate and date their origin most probably somewhere in Russia between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries.

Not every reader, however, may agree with my interpretation, considering the conclusions somehow exaggerated given the scarcity of information available in the additions of MS 45. Interpretation is made within a hermeneutic circle, and other readers may come to different contextualisations. For the purposes of this paper, I consider this interpretation satisfactory, and I would regard it as refuted only if it could not be accepted that the additions of MS 45 are anachronistic and intentionally compromise the integrity of the original narration.

[24] Historically, the Moravian lands had already been christianised by Western clergy and were under Catholic rule; without being consecrated as a bishop, nobody, not even a Byzantine missionary, could ordain his pupils as priests, and so, most probably, Constantine-Cyril educated his pupils to serve as secular clergy.

5. Conclusions and discussion

It is well known in medieval studies that scribes, in the process of copying texts, occasionally commented on them. Teeuwen (2016)[25] observes that additions made in margins or blank space became a default feature of medieval texts from the Carolingian period onwards. The scribes' behaviour has been explained by a certain view on mediality. Handwritten texts, unique in their graphical appearance, descended from book scrolls readable only in linear sequence and contributed to the concept that a text stores the visible outline of its author's unique 'voice', which can be revived by a reader who, in articulating letters, makes the silent voice of the author audible again. This concept (present also in VC III: 17) seems to have provided sufficient motivation for a dialogical interplay between the author's voice and that of the scribe. However, the seminal article on 'voces paginarum' (Balogh, 1927, p. 234) already cites evidence from the the fifth century suggesting 'daß die klösterliche Abschreibearbeit nur mehr die Vernunft, die Hände und die Augen beschäftigte, die Stimme aber nicht mehr'. We should be careful about treating the concept of 'text as voice (nota bene, still used metaphorically today) as a sufficient motivation for the author of the additions in MS 45 significantly altering the narrative of VC.

Medieval comments in manuscripts were added 'for clarifying the meaning of words'[26] and appear visually distinct from the text itself. As long as the comment is clearly distinguishable from the base text, it is disputable to consider glosses an 'appropriation' of the text (Teeuwen, 2018 passim, no definition of the term 'appropriation' offered), even when the marginal commentaries exceed the extent of the original text.

Drawing on material from the East Slavic tradition, Shaimerdenova (2012) distinguishes between marginal, interlinear, and intertextual glosses,[27] all of

[25] 'The vast majority of manuscripts that survive also contain annotations and additions, which reflect how these manuscripts were read, used, extended, summarized or criticized by their circles of copyists and readers' (Teeuwen, 2016, p. 1).

[26] Shaimerdenova, 2012, p. 22 on the example of the 11th c. Ostromirovo Evangelije.

[27] Shaimerdenova, 2012: 1. marginal glosses, 'by far the earliest form of gloss' (ibid., p. 21), 2. interlinear glosses, which are 'found … much rarer than marginal glosses' and are mostly used for lingual annotations, and finally disappear with the introduction of book printing (ibid., p. 27); 3. intertextual glosses, 'the most widespread type': 'Such glosses are, from an orthographical perspective, absorbed into the main text.' They 'may be found both before (prepositional) and after (postpositional) the word requiring a gloss' (ibid., p. 28).

which are mainly used to explain the meaning of uncommon or foreign words. The additions in MS 45, however, are not concerned with explaining existing information, but with introducing new information. Shaimerdenova (ibid., pp. 71–73) refers to these additions as 'editorial glosses',[28] which, 'as a rule … are found in great number in works of ecclesiastical literature'.The editorial glosses are 'related to the correction and editing of Church Slavonic literature' and also frequently appear in translations, where they can be detected only by 'comparing the translation with its original text'.

Neither the concept of 'text as voice', nor the common practice of medieval scribes to comment on the text they copied by producing interlinear, inserted or marginal glosses entail editorial interventions which cannot be detected by a reader. However, Shaimerdenova's observation that editorial work is often found in 'works of ecclesiastical literature' applies to the additions in MS 45 and supports their dating to sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Russia. We will leave aside the question of whether the editorial work in MS 45 shares characteristics with redactional interventions in East Slavic book production (e.g. in Makarij's *Great Menology*), but take it for granted that the scribe of the additions in MS 45 made, probably, his textual interventions in accordance with the conventions of his time, and believed his text interventions to be a good thing, even though readers might not distinguish between his additions and the original text.

Altering the wording of a text is an indication of the editor's view of how the text should be used. While the medieval custom to insert glosses in manuscripts serves the purpose of clarifying, supporting, or commenting on the argumentation, the insertion of redactional paraphrases and ahistoric information serves to reframe a text in order to promote its empathic reception among contemporary readers. The scribe of the additions in MS 45 conceived of the *Life of Constantine-Cyril* not so much as a work of historical information, but as a work of 'edification'. Again, we leave aside the question of to what extent hagiographical texts are written with an edifying intention, a question that would lead to a historical discussion of how VC is related to other hagio-

[28] It is disputable whether interventions in a text, be it abridgement, paraphrase or addition of sentences, should be called 'glosses' at all, especially when they can only be detected by comparing original and 'glossed' (= altered wording). The term 'editorial intervention', as used in this paper, seems to better denote the fact: reworking of an original text.

graphical works of the ninth century.[29] We emphasise only that the scribe of MS 45 shifts the intended use of VC even further towards the pole of 'edification'. He does so from the standpoint of his time: The Moravian mission of Constantine-Cyril, in the eyes of ninth-century observers, was a local affair, yet it ultimately caused a historical movement of continental and epochal significance. The rise of the Kyjivan and the Muscovite empires respectively is not conceivable without it.

The intentions and the stance of the scribe who produced the additions in MS 45, remind us of similar tendencies in our time. The didactic intention in the redactional reworking of texts has been a topic for discussion in theories of bilingual text transmission, which thought of translation as a 'space' where cultural differences are to be negotiated. Prunč (2002) surveys various theories that call for and legitimise textual interventions in order to produce a target text sensitive to the cultural values and societal circumstances of its intended audience, even when such interventions involve alterations of the text not detectable without comparison of the translation with its source.[30] These theories, mostly from the 1990s, have become reality in our time when translations or reworked editions of texts appear with politically correct wording (e.g., the removal of the 'n-words' from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*) or with paraphrases and omissions (e.g., the exclusion of Mohammed in Dante's *Inferno*). All these textual interventions are performed in the conviction that they serve a higher goal. However, such good intentions can appear as a dialectical mirror of the supremacy against which the measures are directed, a phenomenon which was noted in the field of translation theory in

[29] Byzantine hagiography displays recurrent textual units that were fully developed during the reworking of the Lives by Metaphrastes (10th c.). VC lacks certain such units (e.g. *captatio benevolentiae* of the scribe), which are already attested in the 9th c. (see an example in Pratsch, 2012, p. 24). Since VC, being considered an original Slavic work, has not been treated as an example of Byzantine hagiography, we cannot summarise here therefore the intentions of the Greek author of VC. It can only be said that VC is based on the textual records of Constantine-Cyril's disputations with various interlocutors (Tachiaos, 2005, pp. 46, 48, 280 Anm.), which allows us to suggest, that the Greek author's intention in composing the text was strongly connected with its use for historical documentation.

[30] Cf. Prunč, 2012, pp. 80 (functional translation), 263 (translation as active re-reading and re-writing admits openly to manipulate the source text and show off the signs of its manipulation, on the example of feminist translation), 266 ('foreignizing translation' as a form of post-colonial translation).

the 1990s by Prunč (2012, p. 266[31]) and is noted today, in the field of postcolonial theory (Uffelmann, 2020, p. 147[32]). Text interventions that attempt to eliminate unwanted features in historical documents follow a paradoxical logic where they eliminate the historical facts, which are the motivation for their intervention, in the first place. The additions to the text of VC, as found in MS 45, display the scribe's intention to sharpen the difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and, if I am not mistaken, these were made at a time when Muscovite culture found itself in opposition to influences from Catholic Counter-Reformation. The text interventions in MS 45 can be compared to the text interventions, proposed by ideological translation theory, in that both interventions are politically motivated. MS 45 demonstrates that framing historical events in order to reshape them according to contemporary political identity is an act of cultural appropriation. While there is nothing objectionable in openly presenting one's own perspective, the manipulation of wording and information to promote a politically intended use of the given text does not open a dialogical space, but rather closes it.

[31] 'Was als Rebellion konzipiert ist, wird in den mächtigen, aufgrund ihrer selbstproduzierten Übersättigung stereotypisierten Literaturen zur literarischen Innovation. Dadurch wird das System nicht untergraben, sondern dynamisiert …' [What is conceptualized as rebellion, becomes a literary innovation within the mighty and, because of self-produced supersaturation, stereotyped literatures. This does not undermine the system, but dynamizes it …]

[32] Uffelmann recommends "(1) to again and again confine postcolonially inspired research to heuristic and negative dialectical use, which (2) allows preventing necessary local adoptions from falling into structural epistemic nationalism or methodological 'autonomism'."

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNSAID IN THE DICTIONARY: LEXICOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE OF THE STATUS OF UKRAINIANS IN THE SOVIET UNION

Background. *The eleven-volume "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language", published in the Soviet Union, avoided mentioning certain words and meanings. Given the socio-political circumstances under which it was created, and the history of Soviet interference in the publication of Ukrainian dictionaries, the omission of certain words and phrases is to be considered in the context of the implementation of state policy towards Ukrainians as one of the USSR nations. A vivid example is the practice of lexicographical processing of names that reveal the fight of Ukrainians for their political independence.*

Contribution to the research field. *The novelty of this research lies in the fact that, using nouns denoting persons as an example, it discloses the practice of silencing in the Soviet dictionary of certain words intended to strengthen the influence of the authorities, and construct a Ukrainian identity which was suitable for the Russian-Soviet empire.*

Purpose. *The aim of the article from the perspective of post-colonial linguistics is to highlight the causes and consequences of the absence from the most comprehensive Ukrainian Soviet dictionary of nouns denoting persons, associated with the experience of resistance to Moscow authorities and the idea of creating a Ukrainian state.*

Methods. *The research is based on the principles of critical discourse-analysis by N. Fairclough, who emphasises the connection between language, authorities, and ideology. The analysis of the dictionary includes textual, discursive and socio-cultural dimensions.*

Causes and consequences of omissions in the dictionary have been interpreted from the perspective of the post-colonial approach, having taken into account the consequences of the creation of the dictionary as well as the practice of using omitted words in Ukrainian texts from different years. Data from the General Regional Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language (GRAC) was used to establish the practice of word usage.

Results. *The dictionary does not contain names referring to members of nationalist organisations and armed groups, derived from the names of their leaders (banderivets, bulbivets, melnykivets[1]), names of military formations and political organisations (upivets and ounivets[2].) The dictionary also lacks the names mazepynets and bohdanivets[3], associated with Ivan Mazepa and Bohdan*

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[1] TN *banderivets / bulbivets / melnykivets* – **Banderite**.A follower of **Stepan Bandera**, one of the leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) / A follower of **Taras Borovets**, nicknamed «Bulba-Borovets», the leader of the armed group called the **Polissian Sich**, one of the earliest Ukrainian resistance units during World War II / **Melnykites**. Followers of **Andrii Melnyk**, another leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (1940's). Source: https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CB%5CA%5CBanderaStepan.htm

https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CB%5CO%5CBorovetsTaras.htm

https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CM%5CE%5CMelnykAndrii.htm

[2] TN *upivets / ounivets* – A member of the **UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army)**, a Ukrainian partisan army formed during World War II main goals were to fight for Ukrainian independence and resist both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union / A member of the **OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists)**, a political organization created in 1929 to work for Ukrainian independence, often through underground activity. Source: https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CU%5CK%5CUkrainianInsurgentArmy.htm

https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CO%5CR%5COrganizationofUkrainianNationalists.htm

[3] TN *mazepynets / bohdanivets* – A supporter of **Hetman Ivan Mazepa** (1640–1709), a Ukrainian leader, ruled the Cossack Hetmanate and in 1708 allied with Sweden's King Charles XII against Russia's Tsar Peter I, hoping to secure Ukraine's independence. After that, *mazepynets* was often used (esp. negatively by Russians) to mean a Ukrainian who supported independence from Russia / A soldier of the **Bohdan Khmelnytsky Regiment**, formed during World War I, created in 1917 in Kyiv, named after Bohdan Khmelnytsky (the 17th-century Cossack leader), and became one of the first military units of the Ukrainian People's Republic. Source: https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CM%5CA%5CMazepaIvan.htm

https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CK%5CH%5CKhmelnytskyBohdan.htm

Kmelnytsky, two historical figures, crucial to the formation of Ukrainian identity, as well as the terms derzhavnyk and samostiinyk[4], linked to the idea of the political independence of Ukraine, and being key components of the anti-imperial discourse. Most of these words were used in Soviet publications to condemn the actions of "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists". All of these words appeared in works banned by the Moscow authorities that covered Ukraine's past or the activities of Ukrainians outside the USSR.

Discussion. *The eleven-volume "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language" represents Ukrainians in accordance with the official ideology of the USSR. Its authors were unable to describe the past and the present of their nation in a full manner. As a result, epistemological gaps in the dictionary contributed to the construction of Ukrainian national identity, which was part of the Soviet imperial project.*

A critical study of Ukrainian dictionaries will make it possible to trace ideological changes and the construction of Ukrainian national identity during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Interpreting what was silenced in Soviet-era works will help to understand the specifics of the Ukrainian colonial experience and improve the scientific description of the Ukrainian language.

Keywords: dictionary, Ukrainian language, post-colonial linguistics, Soviet colonialism, discourse, noun, Ukrainian national identity.

1. Introduction

The eleven-volume **"**Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language", which covered over one hundred thousand items, was a real cultural event for Ukraine. This work was the first academic explanatory dictionary in the history of Ukrainian lexicography. Until then, bilingual Russian-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Russian dictionaries, which pursued, first and foremost, a practical aim, had been most numerous. The heuristic value of the monolingual explanatory dictionary was undeniable, since not only was it a lexical treasury, but also a

[4] TN *derzhavnyk* / *samostiinyk* – From the word **«derzhava»** = 'state'. A person who believes in building and strengthening a **Ukrainian state** (government, institutions, laws). The word was often used for politicians or activists who thought the most important goal was to create and maintain a functioning Ukrainian state / From the word **«samostiinist»** = 'independence'. A person who insists on **full Ukrainian independence**, separate from any foreign rule (Polish, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Soviet, etc.). The term was especially strong in the early 20th century. *Samostiinyky* often rejected autonomy or federal solutions and demanded a completely independent Ukraine.

tool of discovering the Ukrainian language and culture. In contrast to the users of the bilingual dictionaries, who were mostly a wide audience of both professionals and non-professionals, native Ukrainian speakers, as well as those who did not speak Ukrainian, the explanatory dictionary gained the audience of primarily field experts.

Exploring the connection between lexicography and cultural and linguistic independence, C. Uchechukwu noted the importance of the target audience of dictionaries. According to C. Uchechukwu's observations, "the movement towards cultural or political independence can contribute to a shift in the target audience of lexicographic works of a language" (Uchechukwu, 2011, p. 204). In case of the Igbo language, as with other African languages, there has been a notable shift from a European audience, a wide audience which includes those learning the language, as well as those who already speak it, to a narrower audience of native speakers (Uchechukwu, 2011, p. 209). For the Ukrainian language, whose native speakers lived in the Russian Empire and later in the USSR, the main task was to emerge from the shadow of the Russian language, which was possible by means of using bilingual dictionaries. Therefore, according to O. Taranenko, Russian-Ukrainian translation dictionaries were the main genre of Ukrainian lexicography for a long time (Taranenko, 2018, p. 5). At the same time, the development of Ukrainian lexicography can be traced through various periods when interest in bilingual dictionaries intensified, weakened, or when dictionaries changed their ideological focus.

At the beginning of the 20th century, "The Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language", edited by B. Hrinchenko (Hrinchenko, 1907–1909), played an important role in standardising the Ukrainian literary language. Since it was published in an empire, where the Russian language dominated, it was formally intended for Russian-speaking readers, and opened the Ukrainian world to a wide Russian-speaking audience. The dictionary provided Russian equivalents or definitions of registered Ukrainian words, accompanied by illustrative material. The Ukrainian audience became the primary consumers of the dictionary. It was highly praised by the Ukrainian public figures, and became the foundation for the creation of subsequent dictionaries, most of which were also bilingual.

The emergence in the 1920s of a significant number of Ukrainian dictionaries, intended for a wider audience, was connected with a national policy of the Bolsheviks. The demonstrative support of the non-Russian peoples was aimed at levelling their desire for political independence. According to T. Martin, at

that time the Bolsheviks were building a kind of Affirmative Action Empire, where nations did not resist the unitarian and centralised structure of the Soviet state. This state could hardly be considered a classic empire, since it had used a new strategy which made it impossible to perceive it as an empire. The state centre was not officially identified with Russia, but the hierarchy of state-building and colonial peoples remained. Russians had to suppress their own national interests, identifying themselves with the supranational Affirmative Action Empire (Martin, 2013, pp. 34–40). Dictionaries of this period were aimed at Ukrainians, as well as representatives of other nations who lived in Ukraine and needed special language training for skilled work in various fields. These were often bilingual dictionaries, written, however, in the Ukrainian language.

At the end of the 1920s, Ukrainisation was halted and the authors of many dictionaries were repressed. Their lexicographical works were banned because they revealed numerous differences between the Ukrainian and Russian languages, which did not correspond to the new national policy. The fate of the Russian-Ukrainian Dictionary, edited by A. Krymsky and S. Yefremov, is indicative. It first began to be published in 1924, but was never published in its entirety, and its materials were not taken into account in the compiling of other dictionaries during the Soviet era (for more details, see Pozdran, 2026). As S. Plokhy summed up, Stalin used the Great Famine (*TN* Holodomor) and the Great Terror to "transform an autonomous and often independent-minded republic into an ordinary province of the Soviet Union" (Plokhy, 2021, p. 334).

Although there were some differences in the bilingual translation dictionaries of the following decades, caused by Moscow tightening or loosening its grip through the use of repressive practices, they were aimed at the same audience. Those were translation dictionaries designed for the Ukrainian consumer, a citizen of the USSR, who was in constant contact with the Russian language, which was the language of the central authorities, the media, higher education, the army, and culture among other things. The aim of such dictionaries was to help Ukrainians feel more at home in a society dominated by the Russian language.

The creation of the monolingual explanatory dictionary signified the transition of Ukrainian lexicography to a new level, and marked an important step towards a more structured description of Ukrainian lexis without reference to Russian vocabulary. At the same time, the dictionary became a tool of Russian propaganda. Communist ideology was reflected in definitions of lexemes, the

choice of stylistic remarks, and usage examples. I. Renchka demonstrated this in her works, having analysed how the dictionary presented the names of political parties, movements and ideologies, artistic directions, as well as vocabulary related to religion and economics (Renchka, 2018a, 2018b).

The clear ideological bias of the Soviet dictionary was one of the reasons to compile a new explanatory dictionary in Independent Ukraine, with its authors declaring the underlying principles of its compilation in the preface. In particular, they noted the need to rid the dictionary of the vestiges of the totalitarian regime, conduct de-ideolisation of the lexicographical material, ensure lexicographical objectivity, expand the visual database by including works of the previously banned authors, and introduce material which reflected national and historical realities. It is worth noting that the authors identified "filling lexical gaps" as a separate task of their work – "incorporating into the lexical inventory commonly used vocabulary which was omitted from the eleven-volume "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language" (Rusanivskyi et al., 2010, p. 8).

The Soviet dictionary, tasked with recording the lexical composition of the Ukrainian language as fully as possible, omitted certain lexical units and their meanings. Taking into consideration the socio-political circumstances under which this dictionary was created, as well as the history of Soviet interference in the publication of Ukrainian dictionaries, the omission of certain elements should be considered in the context of the implementation of state policy regarding Ukrainians as one of the nations of the USSR. A clear example of this would be the lexicographical practice of processing names associated with the struggle of Ukrainians for their independence.

2. Theoretical Background

The aim of the article from the perspective of post-colonial linguistics is to highlight the causes and consequences of the absence from the most comprehensive Ukrainian Soviet dictionary of nouns denoting persons associated with the experience of resistance to Moscow authorities and the idea of creating a Ukrainian state. Using as the basis the principles of critical discourse-analysis by N. Fairclough, who emphasises the connection between language, authorities, ideology, the article interprets the dictionary combining textual, discursive and socio-cultural dimensions. According to N. Fairclough, "Textual analysis can often give excellent insights about what is 'in' a text, but what is absent from a text is often just as significant from the perspective of socio-cultural analysis" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 5).

The social importance of dictionaries has resulted in their interpretation as indicators of certain ideologies in a significant number of studies (Demska, 2012; Alnizar, 2025; Włodarczyk-Stachurska, 2015; Moon, 2014). A multifaceted interpretation of dictionary articles, based on the principle of critical discourse analysis introduced by N. Fairclough, was realised, in particular, in the works of F. Alnizar, V. N. Mufidah, and Z. Yani. The researchers emphasise that "Lexicography is not merely about describing language but about shaping knowledge" (Alnizar, 2025, p. 133), and that dictionaries "function as cultural instruments that shape, preserve and institutionalise dominant knowledge systems" (Alnizar, 2025, p. 149).

In the case of the academic monolingual explanatory dictionary of the Ukrainian language, its unique influence can be clearly noted since for a long time it has been, and still remains, an authoritative source of information for anyone working with Ukrainian, including writers, editors, teachers, journalists, and scholars. The publication of the new twenty-volume monolingual explanatory dictionary of the Ukrainian language has not been finalised yet, while the more limited explanatory dictionaries, published in Independent Ukraine, cannot fully satisfy users, since they do not provide all the necessary information, and often tend to be abridged versions of this Soviet dictionary.

The need to consider Ukrainian dictionaries from a post-colonial perspective is not evident, since Ukraine was never a colony in a classical sense. Ukrainian dictionaries are not examples of colonial lexicographical works, in which authors-Europeans introduced the unknown exotic world to their compatriots, describing a foreign language through the lens of their own. Ukrainian lands were not separated from the centre of the Russian, and later Russian-Soviet, Empire by an ocean, and Ukrainian cultural tradition was not perceived by Russians as foreign; instead they sought to appropriate it rather than distance themselves from it. It was, clearly, this cultural closeness of the Slavic nations that led scholars not to regard Ukrainians as a colonised nation. For example, A. Bennigsen, speaking about colonialism in the Soviet Union, excluded the territories inhabited by Ukrainians and Belarusians from consideration, "professing the Orthodox religion and whose cultures and historical traditions are scarcely distinguishable from the Russian" (Bennigsen, 1969, p. 145). A. Bennigsen did not regard relations between Russians and many other nations of the Empire as colonial, with the Slavic nations being a case not even worth considering. According to the Ukrainian political scientist M. Riabczuk, "Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova represent an intermediate case

between rather standard colonialism in the Russo-Soviet Asia and Caucasus and a rather light neocolonial rule over Central and Eastern Europe. On the one hand, as a group, they did not enjoy even the limited sovereignty as did their western neighbors" (Riabczuk, 2013, p. 56). Thus, post-colonial analysis can be applied to these post-Soviet countries, provided that appropriate precautions are taken into account.

Y. Hrytsak argues that the post-colonial approach is not enough for interpretation of Ukrainian-Russian relations and it might be ineffective for understanding of the past and present of Ukraine in the global context. The renowned Ukrainian historian notes that Ukrainians possess a wide range of colonial experience, which cannot be reduced to the relations between the core, the periphery and the colony. According to Y. Hrystak, "Ukraine's two roles – as the core of the Russian and Soviet projects, on the one hand, and as the center of anti-imperial and anti-Soviet resistance, on the other – represent two opposite extremes in the varieties of Ukrainian colonial experiences" (Hrytsak, 2015, pp. 733–734).

In our opinion, the colonial experience of Ukrainians provides grounds for using the post-colonial approach for studying the past and the present functioning of the Ukrainian language, as well as for the interpretation of linguistic works about it. The peculiarity of the colonial experience shared by Ukrainians necessitates the critical use of the post-colonial research tools, while adjusting them accordingly to the peculiarities of the Ukrainian situation. As A. Matusiak has aptly noted, Ukrainians "in the imperial project of the "Russian world" have always been the peripheral shell of the imperial centre" (Matusiak, 2020, p. 223). Studies of the Ukrainian language from the post-colonial perspective ought to include the ambivalent status of Ukrainians in the Russian and Soviet empires, and the multiplicity of their colonial experiences. Ignoring and inadequately processing colonial traumas in Ukrainian linguistics will result in a distorted perception of language processes, and a misunderstanding of the factors and trends of language development.

One of the directions of post-colonial research of the Ukrainian language is the deconstruction of the dominant discourse, expressed by linguistic works, in particular lexicographical ones. In this regard, it is particularly important to trace which fragments of Ukrainian experience related to national identity are not represented in the most authoritative dictionary of the Ukrainian language from the Soviet period.

3. Data

The study analyses the text of the eleven-volume "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language" (Bilodid et al., 1970–1980), published by the leading scientific publishing house of the Ukrainian SSR, "Naukova Dumka" (TN "Scientific Thought") between 1970 and 1980. To establish the practice of word usage in Ukrainian texts from different years, data from the General Regional Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language (Heneralnyi rehionalno anotovanyi korpus ukrainskoi movy / HRAC-18) has been used.

4. The Incompleteness of the Ukrainian Academic Dictionary in Relation to Soviet Identity Construction

4.1. Conditions for the Creation of the Dictionary and its Source Base

A multifunctional view of text involves studying the discursive practices it is embedded in, in particular, examining the processes of text production, distribution and consumption. The Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language was created by a team of lexicographers at the O. O. Potebnia Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, a state institution whose activities were constantly subject to ideological pressure, particularly noticeable in the humanities. Work on the dictionary began in the second half of the 1950s, when Stalin's repressive practices were still well remembered and their consequences were acutely felt at both the institutional and personal levels. The Encyclopedia of Ukrainian History notes that "the intensified struggle against 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism' led to the elimination of almost all Ukrainian studies institutions of the academy in the early 1930s, and periodicals and serial publications in the humanities ceased to exist" (Shpak & Yurkova, 2010, p. 249). During the 1930s, many employees of the Academy of Sciences were repressed and lost their jobs. In his 1959 work "The Generation of the 1920s in Ukrainian Linguistics", Y. Shevelov stated, "The 1920s generation of linguistics was exterminated ruthlessly and senselessly. They were accused of nationalism and sabotage "on the language front". A tiny handful of those left survived only physically. Severed from live scientific contacts, and often from teaching at universities, they were spiritually crashed, forever intimidated, without any opportunity to work on the topics dear to their hearts and without possibility to publish their scientific works, they merely vegetated during the decades that followed" (Sheveliov, 2002, p. 24). In particular, most

of the authors of the aforementioned academic Russian-Ukrainian dictionary was repressed: V. Gantsov, H. Holoskevich, S. Yefremov, A. Krymsky, and A. Nikovsky. Y. Shevelov states the decline of Ukrainian linguistics, which only partially recovered in the mid-1950s, although it did not reach the level of the 1920s, as it was under significant Russian influence (Shevelov, 2002, p. 25). Thus, the dictionary was created under conditions of total state control and ideological pressure, which changed according to the political situation in the USSR, but never ceased. Evidently, the traumatic experience of previous generations of Ukrainian linguists also impacted the research guidelines, way of thinking, and lexicographical practice of linguists.

The Soviet authorities directly interfered in the work of lexicographers. V. Vynnyk, one of the authors of the dictionary, who worked in the Department of Lexicology and Lexicography at the Institute of Linguistics from 1963 to 1988, in his article "How the eleven-volume academic explanatory dictionary of the Ukrainian language was created", mentions the practice of removing materials from the lexical card index of the Institute of Linguistics in the 1930s. In particular, "ideologically harmful» words and illustrations were removed, selected from folk art, Ukrainian translations of the Bible, works by writers regarded as «bourgeois-nationalist", repressed writers and public figures (Vynnyk, 2012, p. 19). V. Vynnyk notes the later impact of Communist Party ideologists on the formation of the source base of the dictionary, in particular the ban on the use of works written by Ukrainians outside the Ukrainian SSR. The lexicographer sees the main flaw of the dictionary to be its disregard for the functioning of the language outside Soviet Ukraine, in the diaspora, where millions of Ukrainians lived (Vynnyk, 2012, p. 25).

The circumstances under which the dictionary was created influenced the shaping of its source base, which, consequently, was reflected in the comprehensiveness of the lexical inventory, the content of definitions, and the nature of the visual material. The preface to the dictionary, which characterises its scope and structure and is included in the first volume, lacks information about the ideological restrictions regarding the recording of vocabulary in the lexical inventory or interpretations of certain definitions. On the contrary, the editorial team of the dictionary highlights the enormous volume of lexical material, collected from various 18th–20th century sources. The user experiences descriptions of Ukrainian vocabulary it their full comprehensiveness, although due to official prohibitions, lexicographists were unable to process a significant number of texts from the early the 20th century, when the Ukrainian

movement assumed a political character, as well as texts written by Ukrainians who did not live in the USSR and did not support communist ideology.

The authors' ideological bias is evidenced by the general statement that the dictionary "reflects the state and development of the modern Ukrainian language vocabulary, whose true flourishing became possible only after the Great October Socialist Revolution thanks to a successful implementation of Lenin's national policy" (Bilodid et al., 1970–1980, v.1, p. VI). This statement in the preface to the dictionary, on the one hand, emphasises Ukraine's dependence on the politics of the imperial centre, and, on the other hand, stresses its positive nature. The ruling ideology is presented as conducive to national development. Even though Ukraine had to obey Moscow's decisions, its power is not depicted as domineering foreign power, but rather the ruling ideology represented as its own. The structure of the list of used sources is noteworthy in this regard. It is headed by a section entitled "Political Literature", which includes works by Lenin, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, as well as various documents and materials regarding the activities of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. All these sources are united not only by their political orientation, but also by the fact that they are translations from Russian. In spite of this, they are not included in the category "Translated Literature". This category includes 15 translations of works of fiction by Russian authors (almost half of which are works by M. Gorky), two collections of literary-critical articles by Russian authors, and only five translations from other languages. Ideologically important translations from Russian are listed in the dictionary first among Ukrainian sources, before the list of Ukrainian works of fiction, therefore making them closer and normalising them for Ukrainian readers. Ideological literature is not marked as translated, because in that case the ideology itself may be perceived as foreign.

The source base of the dictionary covers only those texts that did not contradict the Soviet view of history and contemporary life of Ukrainians within the Ukrainian SSR. The dictionary's list of sources does not include many literary and opinion journalism texts published in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, documents regarding Ukrainian statehood of 1917–1921, works by Ukrainian writers and figures of the Ukrainian movement, periodicals published abroad, as well as works by Ukrainian Soviet public figures who had been repressed and banned in the USSR. The part of Ukrainian experience that was ideologically alien to the Soviet authorities remained invisible to the dictionary user.

4.2. Omissions at the Level of Dictionary Entries

The most noticeable result of ideological control exerted over the creation of the dictionary was the incompleteness of its lexical inventory. Among the words describing important aspects of life of Ukrainians in the multinational Russian, and later Soviet Empire, which are not mentioned in the dictionary, are lexical units referring to the followers of different branches of the Ukrainian movement. It had been actively developing starting from the mid-19th century, giving rise to its own national discourse, opposed to the imperial one, which is represented in many texts. It includes numerous nouns denoting persons which appeared in different periods and were associated with different historical events, personalities, as well as different views regarding the development of the Ukrainian project. The authors of the dictionary might not have been aware of some of these words due to the prohibition of many texts, while other words had already made history by the time the dictionary was compiled. However, there were also words that were quite relevant and known to a wide circle of Ukrainian speakers.

4.2.1. Words Associated with the Names of the Ukrainian Movement Figures and Names of Organisations

The lexical inventory of the dictionary does not include a significant number of names referring to the members of nationalistic organisations, armed groups, and derived from the names of their leaders, e.g. *banderivets, bulbivets, melnykivets.* However, these words were used in Soviet printed media and fiction – (1), (2), (3):

(1) *Vsi ukrainski natsionalisty:* ***melnykivtsi***, ***banderivtsi*** *i* ***bulbivtsi*** *organizuvaly bandy, shcho nikoly ne vystupaly proty nimtsiv, ale zavzhdy proty chervonoi armii i chervonykh partyzan* (Ukrainskyi dobrovolets, 1944, HRAK-18).
All Ukrainian nationalists: ***melnykivtsi***, ***banderivtsi***, *and* ***bulbivtsi***[5] *organised gangs that never opposed Germans, but were always against the Red Army and Red Partisans* (Ukrainian volunteer, 1944, HRAK-18).

(2) *Viduchyly my* ***bulbivtsiv*** *ta* ***banderivtsiv*** *napadaty na partyzaniv* (A. Shyian, 1944, HRAK-18).
We've weaned ***bulbivtsi*** *and* ***banderivtsi*** *from attacking partisans* (A. Shyian, 1944, HRAK-18).

(3) *Odnoho razu o 1-i hodyni vnochi* ***banderivtsi*** *napaly na nashu khatu i khotily zabyty mene* (Vilne zhyttia, 1945, HRAK-18).

[5] TN *melnykivtsi, banderivtsi,* and *bulbivtsi* – plural forms of *melnykivets, banderivets, bulbivets.*

Once, around 1a.m. ***banderivtsi*** *broke into our house and wanted to kill me* (Vilne Zhyttia 'Free Life', 1945, HRAK-18).

Propaganda used these words in order to portray Ukrainians fighting against Soviet rule as traitors and criminals that pose a threat to the lives and wellbeing of honest people. The name *banderivets* was used most often. L. Masenko points to the wide use of this word after the Second World War as a way to discriminate against Ukrainian patriots. Initially, the word *banderivets* referred to a follower of S. Bandera, however, later it started to be used to refer to any "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist". L. Masenko highlights that the word *banderivets* carried an extremely negative evaluative connotation in the totalitarian discourse, and the propaganda tried intensively to promote the image of violent criminals called *banderivtsi.* The renowned Ukrainian linguist recalls, in particular, the negative portrayal of *banderivtsi* in the works of Y. Melnychuk, which was used in the eleven-volume "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language" to illustrate the adverb *dochasno* (TN *prematurely*) (Masenko, 2017, pp. 88–91). The paradoxical situation when a word is available in the dictionary as part of an illustration, but not included in the lexical inventory can be attributed to text censorship at the editing or publishing stage. The censor, obviously, had removed the dictionary entry related to the word *banderivets,* but failed to notice it in one of the illustrations.

The word *banderivets* and its derivatives emerged many years later in an additional volume of the "Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language", which was published in 2017 and was ideologically a very different edition. It recorded several meanings of the word *banderivets*, stating the possibility of both positive and negative assessments depending on the beliefs of the author of the statement: "*Banderivtsi* (singular: *banderivets (m), banderivka (f)*). 1. *Historically* Members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, led by Stepan Bandera. 2. *figurative, colloquial, positive or negative*. Conscious Ukrainians" (Hrytsenko et al., 2017, v. 1, p. 43).

The interpretation of the words *banderivets, bulbivets,* and *melnykivets* would have required mentioning the names of the leaders of the Ukrainian Movement, S. Bandera, A. Melnyk, and T. Bulba-Borovets, in the Soviet dictionary. Even if their actions were viewed negatively, this would have meant emphasising the experience of armed resistance to Soviet rule. Moreover, the same words were used with a neutral or positive connotation by foreign Ukrainian sources that opposed the Soviet empire, – (4), (5), (6):

(4) *Yakykh by zakhodiv bolshevyky ne vzhyvaly, to pravda pro nas,* ***banderivtsiv****, pravda pro vyzvolnu borotbu ukrainskoho narodu zavzhdy sobi promostyt shliakh do sovietskykh narodnikh mas* (P. Fedun-Poltava,1948, HRAK-18).
Regardless of the measures the Bolsheviks took, it's all true about us, ***banderivtsi****, the truth about the Ukrainian Liberation Struggle will always find a way to the Soviet masses* (P. Fedun-Poltava, 1948, HRAK-18).

(5) *Usi dermanski khloptsi, usi do odnoho, u* ***banderivtsiakh****, u* ***melnykivtsiakh****, u* ***bulbivtsiakh****...* (U. Samchuk, 1958, HRAK-18).
All the lads from Derman[6]*, absolutely all of them are now* ***banderivtsi, melnykivtsi, bulbivtsi…*** (U. Samchuk, 1958, HRAK-18).

(6) *V tabori ch. 11 uviazneno velyku kilkist molodykh ukraintsiv, yaki nazyvaiut sebe* ***banderivtsiamy*** (A. Mykulyn, 1958, HRAK-18).
"A great number of young Ukrainians who call themselves ***banderivtsi*** *are imprisoned in camp p. 11"* (A. Mykulyn, 1958, HRAK-18).

Thus, the absence from the dictionary of such words as *banderivets, bulbivets, melnykivets* contributed to the silencing of information about the past and part of the present life of the Ukrainian nation.

The words *upivets* and *ounivets* were just as "dangerous". They referred to members of the military formations of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA), which was associated with the national liberation movement during the Second World War and in the post-war period, and participants of the political movement of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which aimed to build an independent Ukrainian state. The word *upivets* was most likely not used in the public Soviet discourse, while the word *ounivets* was used in printed media, fiction and reference books. It is noteworthy that it was also used in the multi-volume encyclopedia "The History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR", which received the USSR State Prize. In the volumes describing the Soviet view of the history of western Ukraine, the word *ounivets* is one of the instruments of official propaganda – (7), (8):

(7) *Ta* ***ounivtsiam*** *ne vdalosia domohtysia zdiisnennia svoiei pidloi mety* (Istoriia mist i sil Ukrainskoi RSR, Chernivetska oblast, 1969, HRAK-18).
Ounivtsi*, however, failed to achieve their mean aim* (The History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR, Chernitsi region, 1969, HRAK-18).

(8) *Sela y mista staly svidkamy naistrakhitlyvishykh zlochyniv okupantiv i* ***ounivtsiv*** (Istoriia mist i sil Ukrainskoi RSR, Ivano-Frankivska oblast, 1971, HRAK-18).
Villages and towns witnessed the most hideous crimes committed by occupiers and ***ounivtsi*** (The History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR, Ivano-Frankivsk region, 1971, HRAK-18).

[6] TN *Derman*' – a village in the Rivne region in the western part of Ukraine.

Thus, although the term *ounivets* was used by Soviet historical science and propaganda, it was ignored by the academic dictionary of the Ukrainian language.

The words *upivets* and *ounivets* were used in texts by Ukrainians in the western diaspora who approved of the activities of the OUN and UIA – (9), (10), (11):

(9) *Stvoriuvannia demoralizatsii i rozbyttia sered prybulykh z Kraiu* ***upivtsiv****, vyklykannia sered nykh dvokratnoho rozkolu* (S. Bandera, 1949, HRAK-18).
Sowing discord and demoralisation among the ***upivtsi*** *who arrived from the Lands, causing a double split among them* (S. Bandera, 1949, HRAK-18).

(10) ***Upivtsi*** *niiakykh vtrat ne maly, khoch bulo yikh vsoho dva roi* (U. Samchuk, 1958, HRAK-18).
Upivtsi *suffered zero losses, even though there were only two swarms of them* (U. Samchuk, 1958, HRAK-18).

(11) *Tak v "osobomu otdieli" dovidalys, pyshut avtory knyzhky, pro te, shcho v polku diialy* ***ounivtsi*** (Visti kombatanta, 1971, HRAK-18).
That is how the "special department" found out, according to the authors of the book, about ***ounivtsi*** *who acted in the regiment"* (Visti Kombatanta "Combatant News"[7], 1971, HRAK-18).

The importance of the OUN and UIA for anti-Soviet Ukrainian discourse, as well as the reluctance to provide full names of Ukrainian nationalist organisations in the definitions, even in an imperial context, could be the reasons for the absence of the words *upivets* and *ounivets* in the dictionary inventory.

The dictionary included no mention of the terms *mazepynets* and *bohdanivets* associated with the historical figures of Ivan Mazepa and Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who were important for the formation of the Ukrainian idea. This was, possibly, caused by limited sources used, or because the words were related to the development of the idea of Ukrainian statehood, as well as the events of 1917–1921, when Ukrainians fought against Russians in an attempt to create their own state. In the dictionary, this period is represented primarily by the terms *petliurivets*, *petliurivskyi*, and "*petliurivshchyna"*. They are connected with the name of Symon Petliura, a Ukrainian public figure and military leader, whom the dictionary called "one of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois nationalist party" (Bilodid, 1970–1980, v. 6, p. 344).

Given that many Ukrainian texts in the USSR were banned, lexicographers might not have been aware of the use of the words *mazepynets* and *bohdaniv-*

[7] *TN Visti Kombatanta (Eng."Combatant News")* – a scientific, historical, and socio-political journal that was first published in 1961 in the United States.

ets in the Kyiv press at the beginning of the 20th century, or that *bohdanivtsi* were the soldiers of the 1st Ukrainian Regiment (named after B.Khmelnytsky), who fought against the Bolshevik army, in particular defending Poltava and Kyiv. Even the examples of the primary meanings of the use of the word *mazepynets*, which referred to distant historical events, might not have been discovered by linguists due to the tendentiousness in the presentation of the history of the Russian Empire during the Soviet period. Initially, *mazepinets* referred to the supporters of Hetman Ivan Mazepa, who in 1709 concluded a military alliance against Moscow with the Swedish King Charles XII. Later, in the Russian Empire, the word *mazepynets* began to be used to negatively describe supporters of autonomy and political independence for Ukraine. The use of the word *mazepynets* in Ukrainian texts evidences that it was regarded as reflecting the coloniser's view of the colonised, labeling them as traitors.

(12) *Prozyvaly yikh zradnykamy, separatystamy,* ***mazepyntsiamy*** *za se* (M. Hrushevskyi, 1912, HRAK-18).
They were called traitors, separatists, ***mazepyntsi*** (M. Hrushevsky, 1912, HRAK-18).

(13) *Dosyt bude pryhadaty, shcho vzhe v nashi chasy, na pochatku 20-ho stolittia, ukrainskyi vyzvolnyi rukh buv okhreshchenyi yoho vorohamy imenem "mazepynstva", a prykhylnykiv tsoho rukhu nazyvano "****mazepyntsiamy****"* (D. Doroshenko, 1933, HRAK-18).
*It would be enough to remember that in our times, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Ukrainian Liberation Movement was nicknamed by its enemies "mazepynstvo", and its followers were labelled '****mazepyntsi****'* (D. Doroshenko, 1933, HRAK-18).

It is noteworthy that after the disappearance of colonial restrictions, when Ukraine became an independent state, the words *mazepynets*, *petliurivets*, and *banderivets* began to be actively used in public domain to demonstrate the attitude towards Ukrainians in the Russian Empire – (14), (15), (16):

(14) *U rizni chasy ukraintsiv nazyvaly "****mazepyntsiamy****", potim "****petliurivtsiamy****", a teper "****banderivtsiamy****"* (Ukraina moloda, 2010, HRAK-18).
*At different times, Ukrainians were called "****mazepyntsi"****, then* ***"petliurivtsi"****, and now* ***"banderivtsi"*** (Ukraina Moloda 'Young Ukraine'[8], 2010, HRAK-18).

(15) *I zavzhdy bortsiv za tsi idealy rosiiski okupanty oholoshuvaly bandytamy, prykleiuvaly yim prynyzlyvi klychky typu* ***mazepyntsi, petliurivtsi, banderivtsi****...* (Den, 2014, HRAK-18).

[8] TN Ukraina Moloda 'Young Ukraine' is a daily Ukrainian-language newspaper based in Kyiv.

The fighters for these ideals were always declared criminals by Russian occupiers, and were given humiliating nicknames like ***mazepyntsi, petliurivtsi, banderivtsi…***
(Den ʻDay'[9], 2014, HRAK-18).

(16) *U diiachiv ukrainskoho vyzvolnoho rukhu zavzhdy buly imena: spochatku vony buly* ***mazepyntsiamy****, todi vony staly* ***petliurivtsiamy****, a vzhe potim* ***banderivtsiamy***
(NV, 2022, HRAK-18).
The leaders of the Ukrainian Liberation Movement always had names: initially they were ***mazepyntsi****, then they became* ***petliurivtsi****, and only later* ***banderivtsi****.*
(NV ʻThe New Voice of Ukraine'[10], 2022, HRAK-18).

The words *banderivets*, *bulbivets*, *melnykivets*, *upivets*, *ounivets*, *mazepynets*, and *bohdanivets* attest to the existence of Ukraine's armed resistance to imperial coercion. Their consistent coverage in the dictionary could have destroyed the image of Ukrainians living happily in a multinational state and would have recorded names that at different times were used to negatively assess and condemn Ukrainians for their aspiration for political independence. The absence of such words in the most authoritative dictionary contributed to the normalisation of the colonial situation and was natural for a text that represented imperial discourse. Words associated with the names of well-known public figures of the Ukrainian movement and Ukrainian organisations referred to the counter-discourse which had been constructed using prohibited works.

4.2.2. Nouns Denoting Persons Associated with the Idea of Ukraine's Political Independence

The active development of the Ukrainian Movement at the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th century, as well as the realisation of prospects and tasks of the Ukrainian project, required putting new senses into words. During this period, the works of Ukrainian public figures emphasised the nouns denoting persons that attested to the influence of the idea of Ukraine's political independence. The word *derzhavnyk,* which was initially used to refer to a public figure, obtained a new meaning – ʻa supporter of Ukrainian statehood'. The first meaning was recorded at the beginning of the 20th century in Hrinchenko's dictionary. The use of the word in both meanings can be observed in a considerable number of Ukrainian texts of that period, as well as later, mainly in works published outside the Ukrainian SSR – (17), (18), (19), (20):

[9] Den (Eng. *Day*) – a newspaper.

[10] *The New Voice of Ukraine* or simply as the *New Voice (NV)* is a Ukrainian, English and Russian language digital newspaper based in Ukraine.

(17) *Ot teper nimetski* ***derzhavnyky*** *vidibraly vid Frantsii Alzas i Lotarynhiiu, ne pytaiuchy yii liudei i yavno proty yikh voli* (M. Drahomanov, 1913, HRAK-18).
So now German ***derzhavnyky*** *have taken Alsace and Lorraine from France without asking its people and clearly against their will.* (M. Drahomanov, 1913, HRAK-18).

(18) *I ukrainski* ***derzhavnyky****, i komunisty, i bili ta chervoni rosiiany opysuiut sebe yak hrupu, shcho proishla cherez vazhki strasti i ponesla velyki zhertvy …* (M. Kulish, 1929, HRAK-18).
Ukrainian ***derzhavnyky,*** *and communists, and white and red Russians describe themselves as a group that endured hardships and suffered great losses…* (M. Kulish, 1929, HRAK-18).

(19) *I Somko, i Bohun, i Doroshenko, yak velyki ukrainski* ***derzhavnyky*** *zaznaly porazok, bo ne zrushyly narodnykh mas* (Ia. Stetsko, 1951, HRAK-18).
Somko, and Bohun, and Doroshenko, being truly great Ukrainian ***derzhavnyky,*** *all lost, because they failed to stir the masses* (Y. Stetsko, 1951, HRAK-18).

(20) *Vin – virnyi i poslidovnyi ukrainskyi* ***derzhavnyk*** (Visti kombatanta, 1970, HRAK-18).
He is a loyal and consistent Ukrainian ***derzhavnyk*** (Visti Kombatanta ʻCombatant News', 1970, HRAK-18).

The importance of the word *derzhavnyk* in constructing a national counter-discourse is stressed by the fact that it became part of the names of Ukrainian political organisations, therefore gaining an official status. The Ukrainian Union of Farmers-Derzhavnyky (UUFD), and later the Union of Hetmans-Derzhavnyky, (UHD) were monarchist in orientation and operated abroad, where they distributed their publications for an extended period of time, including during the preparation and publication of the dictionary. The UHD, which had branches in all countries of the Ukrainian diaspora, was perceived by the Moscow authorities as hostile, because it aimed to restore Ukrainian statehood (Ostashko, 2012).

In Soviet Ukrainian sources, the word *derzhavnyk* was not commonly used, although it was associated with Ukrainian anti-imperial discourse, so the academic dictionary ignored both the practice of using the word *derzhavnyk* in both meanings and the experience of its lexicographical fixation. Although the dictionary edited by B. Hrinchenko is mentioned in the Preface as one of the sources, its materials were used selectively. In total, about 25,000 words from B. Hrinchenko's dictionary were not included in the eleven-volume explanatory monolingual dictionary (Hnatiuk, 2014, p. 16). According to V. Vynnyk, "From the early 1930s, the dictionary edited by B. Hrinchenko was effectively banned as "bourgeois-nationalist" and unavailable to the general public" (Vynnyk, 2013, pp. 20–21). In 1958, while preparations for an academic dictionary

of the Ukrainian language were underway, Hrinchenko's work was republished, but initially the Institute of Linguistics intended to censor the publication: "A group was established in the dictionary department tasked with putting together lists of words that were to be removed from the lexical inventory and illustrative material that was also to be removed when the dictionary was republished" (Vynnyk, 2013, p. 21). Later, it was decided to publish the dictionary without omissions, but with a preface containing a warning to users.

Since the 1990s, when Ukraine became an independent state, the word *derzhavnyk* has been actively used in the media, educational and scientific literature, and in the Verkhovna Rada – (21), (22), (23):

(21) *Yak i Lypynskyi, Dontsov — perekonanyi **derzhavnyk**; yak i Lypynskyi, vin – prykhylnyk elitarnoi derzhavy* (M. Popovych, 1998, HRAK-18).
*Just like Lypynsky, Donstov is a convinced **derzhavnyk**, just like Lypynsky, he is a supporter of an elitist state* (M. Popovich, 1998, HRAK-18).

(22) *My znaiemo, shcho tsia liudyna ye **derzhavnykom**, ye patriotom i vona vestyme nas u pravylnomu napriami* (Iz stenohram Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy, 1998, HRAK-18).
*We know that this person is a **derzhavnyk**, a patriot, and will lead us in the right direction* (From the transcript of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1998, HRAK-18).

(23) *Ale my ne pidnialy Franka, a vin ye svitovym heniiem, naibilshym ukrainskym **derzhavnykom*** (Vysokyi zamok, 2009, HRAK-18).
*But we did not elevate Franko, although he is a world genius and Ukraine's greatest **derzhavnyk*** (Vysokyi Zamok, 'High Castle', 2009, HRAK-18).

In political debates and journalism, the term began to be used to name "a politician who cares about the interests of the state" (24), (25):

(24) *Yakshcho za tsiu spravu vizmutsia naukovtsi y **derzhavnyky**, a ne prodazhni polityky hroshovykh mishkiv, sprava ukrainizatsii Ukrainy nabere konstruktyvnoho i lehitymnoho kharakteru* (Den, 2016, HRAK-18).
*If scientists and **derzhavnyky** take on this cause, rather than corrupt politicians with deep pockets, the process of Ukrainisation will assume a constructive and legitimate character* (Den', 2016, HRAK-18).

(25) *Zaishlo bahato novykh oblych, ale malo **derzhavnykiv*** (NV, 2019, HRAK-18).
*Many new faces have emerged, but few **derzhavnyky** among them* (NV, 2019, HRAK-18).

The lexical inventory dictionary also does not include the word *samostiinyk*, whose use is closely linked to the political processes of the early 20th century. In texts from this period, it occasionally referred to supporters of political independence in different countries, but in most cases, it referred to the Ukrainian context. The word *samostiinyk* was primarily associated with the idea of Ukrainian independence. Importantly, it referred not only to supporters

of the idea, but also to those who actively implemented it, members of relevant political parties and movements, and concerned not only the past, but also the present life of Ukrainians.

(26) *Sohodnia chuiu, shcho ya y my vsi nikoly ne buly y ne mozhemo buty* ***samostiinykamy****, bo samostiinytstvo tse vykliuchno sotsiialistychna prykmeta* (V. Lypynskyi, 1926, HRAK-18).
Today, I hear that I and all of us have never been and cannot be ***samostiinyky****, because independence is an exclusively socialist trait* (V. Lypynsky, 1926, HRAK-18).

(27) *M. Mikhnovskoho pidderzhav dr. Ivan Lutsenko ta inshi* ***samostiinyky*** (P. Mirchuk, 1953, HRAK-18).
M. Mikhnovsky was supported by Dr. Ivan Lutsenko and other ***samostiinyky*** (P. Mirchuk, 1953, HRAK-18).

(28) *Ta tse, dorohyi mii, zhovto-blakytnyi prapor ukrainskoi kontrrevoliutsii, prapor* ***samostiinykiv****!* (Ia. Rudnytskyi, 1966, HRAK-18).
But this, my dear, is the yellow and blue flag of the Ukrainian counterrevolution, the flag of ***samostiinyky****!* (Y. Rudnytsky, 1966, HRAK-18)

The word *samostiinyk* was used as part of the name of one of the Ukrainian parties associated with the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 – the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Samostiinyky (UPSS), and was also used in the names of periodicals (Boiko, 2019). In 1918, the UPSS published a weekly magazine, called "Samostiinyk", and in the 1950s, a weekly, and later a monthly, magazine called "Ukrainian Samostiinyk", associated with the OUN, was published in Munich. The words *samostiinyk* and *derzhavnyk* also became part of the official name of the part of the OUN led by S. Bandera. From 1943, it used the name OUN *Samostiuniky Derzhavnyky* (OUNSD).

The word *samostiinyk* also appeared in the works of Ukrainian Soviet writers and in opinion journalism, where the activities of supporters of Ukrainian independence were portrayed as bourgeois-nationalist and counterrevolutionary – (29), (30), (31):

(29) Vykryky, **samostiinyky** ne daiut yomu hovoryty (O. Korniichuk, 1933, HRAK-18).
Shouts, ***samostiinyky*** *won't let* him speak (O. Korniichuk, 1933, HRAK-18).

(30) *– Chuie moia dusha, shcho tsei* ***samostiinyk*** *naklyche bidu i na svoiu, i na tvoiu holovu* (M. Stelmakh, 1961, HRAK-18). – My soul senses that this ***samostiinyk*** will bring trouble upon both himself and you (M. Stelmakh, 1961, HRAK-18).

(31) *I vse tse chynyly natsionalistychni "provodyri" vzhe pislia toho, yak Hitler odverto napliuvav na yikhni marennia pro "vidrodzhennia samostiinoi Ukrainy", navit postriliav ta povishav kilkokh osoblyvo zapalnykh ukrainskykh "****samostiinykiv****"* (Perets, 1980, HRAK-18).

*And all this was done by nationalist "leaders" after Hitler had openly spat on their delusions of "reviving an independent Ukraine" and even shot and hanged several particularly ardent Ukrainian "**samostiinyky**"* ('Perets', 'Pepper'[11], 1980, HRAK-18).

In spite of this, the dictionary did not follow Soviet propaganda, choosing instead to remain silent. However, the dictionary inventory includes the word *zhovtoblakytnyk* (yellow-blue), used by Soviet propaganda, along with the terms *mazepynets petliurivets*, and *banderivets*, to condemn and discredit the actions of supporters of Ukrainian independence – (32), (33):

(32) *Ostannia nadiia **zhovtoblakytnykiv** lusnula pid nimetskym chobotom, nache nadutyi svyniachyi mikhur* (Ia. Halan, 1943, HRAK-18).
*The last hope of **zhovtoblakytnyky** burst under the German boot like an inflated pig's bladder* (Y. Halan, 1943, HRAK-18).

(33) *Os iz yakoho dzherela berut vodu, shchob prymusyty krutytysia koleso antyradianskoho mlyna, i **zhovtoblakytnyky**, i patentovani suchasni "radianolohy"* (Komunist Ukrainy, 1973, HRAK-18).
*That's the source from which they draw water to turn the wheel of the anti-Soviet mill, both the **zhovtoblakytnyky** and the patented modern "sovietologists"* (Communist of Ukraine, 1973, HRAK-18).

The dictionary presented the word *zhovtoblakytnyk* as a derogatory term for a "representative of the Ukrainian national bourgeois revolution" (Bilodid et al., 1970–1980). v. 2, p. 541). In contrast to the words *derzhavnyk* and *samostiynik*, the word *zhovtoblakytnyk* was not coined within the Ukrainian movement. It was a derogatory term that appeared within the Soviet imperial discourse and stopped to be used in texts published after Ukraine's declaration of independence.

4.3. Socio-Historical Factors and Consequences of Vocabulary Gaps for the Construction of Ukrainian Identity

For the USSR, ideological censorship of any publications was common practice.

There were words that could have been excluded from the dictionary or removed from it in the process of scientific or literary editing, as well as during technical preparation for publication. Government control was exercised at all stages of work on the dictionary, and at each stage a decision could have been made not to draw attention to certain words. In a totalitarian state, different

[11] TN Perets', 'Pepper' is a Ukrainian satirical and humorous illustrated magazine.

words were classified as “dangerous”. Important for the interpretation of the dictionary from a post-colonial perspective was the establishment of the fact that words related to the national memory of the colonised, the experience of anti-colonial struggle and the creation of their own state, the assessment of imperial expansion and domination, the development and dissemination of ideas about liberation from foreign rule, and the need for their own state were removed.

The analysis of the lexicographical description of nouns denoting persons in the Ukrainian language dictionary published in the USSR demonstrates selectivity in the formation of the lexical inventory. It omits the words that deny the authenticity of Moscow’s dominance, its voluntary acceptance by Ukrainians, and the absence of imperial pressure. Nouns denoting persons associated with the names of the Ukrainian Movement leaders and the names of organisations that fought for the Ukrainian state brought to the attention of language speakers historical and contemporary facts of resistance to Moscow’s rule, demonstrating the subjectivity of Ukrainians and their aspiration to have their own state. These words showed the Ukrainians’ perception Ukrainians themselves had of Soviet power as foreign and recorded their long experience of armed resistance to Moscow.

Due to the incompleteness of the information presented about the nation’s past, the dictionary became one of the instruments for constructing a version of Ukrainian national identity that was convenient for the Moscow authorities to subjugate. Given the dictionary’s function, its authority in society, and the distribution of this edition to all scientific and educational institutions and libraries of the Ukrainian SSR, the spread of a censored view of the past was directed at the majority of Ukrainian speakers. In the USSR, the state controlled not only all publishing houses, but also the sale of all books, “ensuring that the information important to it was read and absorbed by as many people as possible” (Kyrydon, 2024, p. 28). Different reference books, textbooks, and manuals offered a similar selectivity in their portrayal of the past. In particular, the Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia, published in 1959–1965 in 17 volumes in Ukrainian, and later republished in 1974–1985 not only in Ukrainian but also in Russian, did not contain articles about the UIA, S. Bandera, T. Bulba-Borovets, A. Melnyk, and other figures of the Ukrainian Movement, although S. Bandera and A. Melnyk were mentioned in the article on the OUN.

The Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, created under Soviet control, ignored the existence of Ukrainian anti-imperial discourse, represented in texts from both the pre-Soviet past and the Soviet period, published both in Ukraine and abroad. Meanwhile, as M. Ryabchuk noted, the rise of the Ukrainian national project was possible due to the decisive rejection of colonial "normality", and then, accordingly, the national identity was molded within its discursive framework (Ryabchuk, 2019, p. 116). The desire to establish an independent state was reflected at the linguistic level in the specific terms *derzhavnyk* and *samostiynik,* which were actively used in Ukrainian anti-imperial discourse. The censorship of these words concealed from users of the Soviet dictionary a certain way of thinking about Ukraine's past, present and future, offering only an imperial perspective.

By exercising complete control over the media, scientific and educational discourse, the authorities supported discursive practices that affirmed the dominance of the imperial narrative about the historical unity of Ukraine and Russia, and therefore the authenticity of their membership in the USSR. The fact that Russians were considered pioneers in implementing communist ideology was a strong argument in favour of their civilisational superiority. Formal recognition of the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian people and culture through the creation of the Ukrainian SSR, which was entirely controlled from Moscow, was presented as the ultimate level of self-realisation for Ukrainians. The unavailability in the USSR of Ukrainian texts that represented a non-imperial vision of Ukraine, especially foreign ones, state control over all stages of work on the dictionary, and the cruelty inherent in the Soviet regime in persecuting dissenters led to the incompleteness of the dictionary, which its authors did not always realise and readers might not have noticed.

When using the Ukrainian Soviet dictionary nowadays, it is important to take into consideration the fact that it was created by a subjugated nation under the control of the imperial centre, and thus its data does not always reflect the real state of affairs. In our opinion, in this case, it is worth considering the opinion of Ch. Spivak, expressed in the now classic work of post-colonial studies, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" "When we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important" (Spivak, 1994, p. 82). In a text as special as the Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language, created under the conditions of the Russian-Soviet empire, the unsaid requires special attention from researchers.

5. Conclusions

The publication of a dictionary is a kind of ideological act, since its text is determined by certain social factors, and ultimately, influences society. The eleven-volume Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language contains important information about the Ukrainian language and culture; however, it portrays Ukrainians in compliance with the official ideology of the USSR. The authors of the Soviet Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language were unable to fully cover the past and present of their nation. This was influenced by the state's total control over the creation and publication of the dictionary, as well as the traumatic experience of Ukrainians living in a Soviet totalitarian state. Consequently, the dictionary became an instrument of authoritarian control and a form of colonising activity, performed by the colonised themselves.

The words disclosing the experience of armed and political struggle of Ukrainians against Moscow's rule and capturing important aspects of Ukrainian anti-imperial discourse remained invisible to dictionary users. Due to the ban on processing texts written by Ukrainians outside the USSR, the dictionary offered a false view of the Ukrainian nation. The epistemological gaps in the dictionary contributed to the construction of Ukrainian national identity as part of the Soviet imperial project.

A critical study of Ukrainian Soviet dictionaries, as well as dictionaries published later in independent Ukraine, will make it possible to trace changes in ideological orientations reflected in lexicographical practice, and analyse the role of dictionaries in constructing the national identity of Ukrainians in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Interpreting what remained unsaid in dictionaries, as well as in linguistic works and language teaching works of the Soviet period will help to understand the peculiarities of the colonial experience of Ukrainians and improve the scientific description of the Ukrainian language.

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COLONIAL ROUTES: HOW SOVIET LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM FRAMED UKRAINIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

Abstract

Background. *Translation has long been a recognized site of power and political struggle, especially in colonial and post-imperial contexts. However, the specific impact of the Soviet Union's policy of linguistic imperialism, which used Russian as an intermediary language for dialogue with the West, has not received the critical coverage it warrants. This practice was not merely a matter of convenience; it was a deliberate strategy to filter non-Russian literatures through a hegemonic lens, effectively framing Western perceptions and serving as a tool for cultural and linguistic erasure.*

Purpose. *The present article seeks to examine the Soviet-era translational mediation of Ukrainian literature into English via Russian, arguing that this practice reproduced colonial hierarchies and perpetuated linguistic imperialism.*

Contribution to the research field. The presented combination of findings provides support for the conceptual premise that indirect translation via an imperial language is a key mechanism for perpetuating linguistic violence. By interrogating the structural invisibility of Ukrainian language and identity in global literary circuits of 1950s–1970s and analyzing English translations via Russian, this paper contributes to the fields of linguistics, Ukrainian and

translation studies by demonstrating how the perception of Russian as a neutral conduit in fact obscured the Soviet linguicism and rendered it unaccountable.

Methods. *This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the ideological shaping of Ukrainian literary narratives for an Anglophone audience. The research follows a two-part process. First, a corpus is compiled, after which the research proceeds with a deconstructive analysis. This analysis applies a framework of decolonial analytics and editorial studies of translation, which was developed elsewhere by the author, along with a comparative close reading of the source, intermediary, and target texts. This method is used to identify the linguistic manipulations that occur in the process of translation.*

Results. *The article posits that indirect translation through Russian, which served as an imperial lingua franca and colonial intermediary in Soviet times, functioned as a tool of appropriation. This process "sanitized" Ukrainian texts for an Anglophone audience by filtering them through a Moscow-centered epistemic lens. In other words, by using Russian as the intermediary, the Soviet system controlled what was translated, how it was translated, and, most importantly, how Ukrainian literature was perceived internationally. The very act of forcing texts through the filter of an imperial language marginalized Ukraine's literary identity and enforced Russian as the dominant cultural and linguistic authority. This demonstrates a form of linguistic imperialism where the translational practice itself becomes a tool for imperial erasure.*

Discussion. *Soviet-era mediation of Ukrainian literature through Russian was a well-crafted instrument of linguistic imperialism, systematically erasing Ukrainian cultural and linguistic distinctiveness for Western audiences. In light of this, it is an academic and ethical imperative to adopt a new framework of linguistic accountability, which demands that translators, publishers, and scholars critically acknowledge and transparently account for the historical and political processes of mediation that have skewed cultural representation in post-imperial contexts. By doing so, the framework directly confronts "colonialingualism", which entrenches colonial legacies, imperial mindsets and inequitable practices in the current discourse.*

Keywords: linguistic imperialism, colonial appropriation, indirect translation, Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature, Soviet cultural policy, translation studies.

Historically, it has always been the powerful
who have spoken or been spoken of. Colonial discourse
and postcolonial studies have not been good with languages.
The areas [Eastern Europe – I. O.] you study can turn
this around. Your field can offer spectacular opportunities
for history to join hands with literary criticism
in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological.
G. Ch. Spivak (2006, p. 829)

The language others consider
whimsical, obstinate,
intentional, eccentric –
as if you grabbed a kitchen knife
when everyone politely reached for a fork,
and you chop with it the shared topic
until blood spurts from it…
O. Slyvynsky (2023, p. 21)

1. Introduction

In February 2014, as Russia's annexation of Crimea unfolded, *The Guardian* published a piece "Short on knowledge of Ukrainian literature? Read on."[1] The article's sincere motive – to shed light on Ukraine's literary tradition – was undermined by a profound irony. The recommended reading list, intended as a "guide to books by authors from Ukrainian territory," featured not a single Ukrainian-language writer. Instead, to help readers "get the handle" on the situation, the list included works like Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, Babel's *Maria*, or Bulgakov's *The White Guard*, all of which are defined as having been written by authors "born in places in present-day Ukraine."[2] This selection, while well-intentioned, inadvertently underscored the very problem it sought to address: the persistent invisibility of Ukrainian-language literature and the dominance of an imperial (Russified) episteme in Western knowledge production.

This paradoxical framing in Western media was not an isolated incident; rather, it was a symptom of a deeper, historically rooted issue: the long-standing practice of mediating Ukrainian literature through Russian. This process has systematically shaped an understanding of Ukrainian identity that is fil-

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/feb/28/ukraine-literature-writers-fiction-guide
[2] Ibid.

tered through a Russian narrative, perpetuating a dependent relationship in the dominant knowledge systems.

At times, Ukrainian literature has been entirely silenced from scholarly discourse. For instance, the renowned two-volume *Routledge Encyclopedia of literary translation into English* (see Classe, 2000) includes articles on nearly all Slavic-language literatures (Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Serbo-Croat) but pointedly excludes Ukrainian, which underscores its discursive absence.

Indeed, the last decade of Russia's invasion and the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war has led to a notable increase in the translation, discussion and media presence of Ukrainian literature. To illustrate, a stark contrast is visible in the 2024 article "Discovering Ukrainian Literature: what to read."[3] While sharing the same aim as *The Guardian*'s 2014 piece, this recent publication already signals a significant shift in the discourse:

> "Why exactly was the literature of one of Europe's largest countries so unfamiliar? Ukrainian literature is, after all, pretty much as old as any other in Europe – it has its medieval texts, its impressive baroque tradition; its Romantics fit the broader European nationalist patterns; it has its realists and its avant-garde, its modernists and postmodernists. And yet it has barely penetrated the broader world literary consciousness. Well, the reason is simple: Russia. […] Russia has had an obsession with controlling Ukraine and an obsessive fear of losing it. […] While Russian literature has been widely translated, supported by the powerful resources of the Russian state in its various guises, Ukrainian literature has been suppressed by that same state – translation from and into Ukrainian has been carefully policed, at times banned entirely, by Tsarist or Soviet authorities" (Blacker, 2024).

In fact, numerous mid-20th-century English publications of Ukrainian literary works were produced via "carefully policed" Russian intermediaries, and they continue to be referenced mostly uncritically in academia. As a result, their inherent biases and linguistic manipulations persist in contemporary discourse, as they have not been sufficiently interrogated. Ultimately, deconstructive approach is necessary to not only restore Ukrainian linguistic agency but also to challenge the very foundations of imperial erasure that have long marginalized Ukraine's literary and cultural identity.

The present article thus aims to examine the Soviet-era translational mediation of Ukrainian literature into English via Russian, arguing that this practice reproduced colonial hierarchies and perpetuated linguistic imperial-

[3] https://platformraam.nl/artikelen/2624-discovering-ukrainian-literature-what-to-read

ism. As part of the author's ongoing initiative (Odrekhivska, 2024a, 2024b) to trace how Ukrainian literature has been perceived and discursively presented in the Anglophone sphere, this study will revolve around the following research question: In what ways do these translational practices, which were shaped by a controlled Soviet apparatus, function as a form of linguistic imperialism?

2. Theoretical Background

The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, situated at the intersection of linguistics, translation studies, and literary history, to explore how the mediation of Ukrainian literature through Russian to the Anglophone readership during the Soviet era functioned as a tool of linguistic imperialism and to uncover the colonial aesthetics embedded in these translation practices. Surprisingly, as observed by I. Popa (2018, p. 425), scholarship on communism and Eastern Europe has, for the most part, overlooked translation issues.

R. Phillipson (2010, p. 1) underscores that language is "one of the most durable legacies of colonial and imperial expansion." From this perspective, *linguistic imperialism* is a central mechanism by which one language is privileged and actively used to marginalize or eradicate others in an overarching structure of asymmetrical, unequal exchange – where linguistic dominance is inextricably linked to broader forms of economic and political power (Phillipson, 2010, p. 2). In fact, linguistic imperialism is "a sub-type of linguicism" (Phillipson, 2010, p. 75).

The theoretical lens of linguistic imperialism is particularly useful for understanding Soviet translation practices. In her study of this period, S. Witt (2017, p. 167) concludes that the "literatures of the peoples of the USSR" – an administrative label for non-Russian literatures – were almost "exclusively translated into other European languages via Russian editions." This large-scale strategy of indirect translation was a deliberate effort to create a controlled and monolithic image of a unified Soviet literature for an international audience, thus assert Russian's central, hegemonic role.

Also referred to as intermediate (Toury, 1988, p. 139), mediated (Linder, 2014, p. 58), or second-hand translation (Popovič, 1976, p. 19), *indirect translation* is defined as "a translation of a translation" (in our case: *Ukrainian text* → *Russian translation* → *English translation*), a practice often rooted in the power dynamics between languages and cultures in the world linguistic and translation system (Rosa, Pięta and Maia, 2017, p. 114). Moreover, scholar-

ship has long attached a strong negative stigma to indirect translation (see Davier, Marin-Lacarta, Pöchhacker, Gambier, Ivaska, and Pięta, 2023), often treating such texts as inferior or inherently distorted. To their political advantage, Soviet publishers deliberately concealed the fact that these were indirect translations, presenting them as if the Russian versions were the original texts. Thus, Russian, as the dominant language, mediated and shaped the representation of "others", a practice that directly contributed to cultural appropriation.

Further underscoring this centralized control, S. Witt highlights the January 1940 resolution "On the Regulation of Literary Translations from the Languages of the Peoples of the USSR," which – among other things – required the Gorky Institute of World Literature to create an "all-Union scholarly archive" to collect "all materials relating to the literary translation" from non-Russian languages (Witt, 2017, p. 177). By demanding copies of "all intermediate" versions (ibid.), this archive was designed to function as a "central control instance" (ibid.), effectively institutionalizing state oversight of the interlingual translation process. S. Witt posits: "Apart from giving a hint about the quality of a particular work, they offered the editor an opportunity to reject politically unacceptable texts at an early stage, before wasting money on the final translation" (ibid.). On the other hand, *Inootdel*, the foreign section of *Glavlit* – the main arm of the Soviet censorship apparatus – was specifically responsible for the preventative censorship of all publications in foreign languages intended for export, including literature sent abroad for sale or book-exchange (Sherry, 2015, p. 49). This editorial gatekeeping emphasizes the nexus between translation and ideological control.

In this context, linguistic imperialism emerges as "a primary component of cultural imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 53), given that "linguistic domination is strongly tied to cultural hegemony" (Baumgarten, 2021, p. 1581). The strategic dimension of this dynamic is further illuminated by V. Korablyova (2024, p. 12), who argues that "the importance of Ukraine to Russia's self-identity exceeds that of an internal colony... It also represents an "internal West" that must be subjugated, controlled, and incorporated to prove both the empire's grandeur and its Europeanness." Approached from this angle, mediating Ukrainian literature through Russian was a calculated act aimed at appropriating Ukraine's "Europeanness," and, by filtering Ukrainian works, the Soviet Union could project a curated, "Europeanized" version of its literature, asserting cultural sophistication and global relevance while simultaneously colonizing Ukraine from within.

In other words, linguistic imperialism was a foundational and well-thought-out strategy of the Soviets to control cultural flows. In their recent work, both I. Pustovoit and V. Panov posit that the Russian language still functions as an instrument of imperialism, arguing that a modern empire operates through multiple, interconnected axes of power, with language being a significant one (Pustovoit, 2024; Panov, 2025).

As a result, Ukraine has often been perceived in the Anglophone West primarily through a Soviet Russian lens, frequently relegated to the status of "a derivative region" within Russia's sphere of influence. This dynamic can be analyzed through the concept of *inter-imperiality*, a term introduced L. Doyle (2020, p. 1–2) to describe how competing empires interact and shape global power relations and literature. As I. Popa (2018, p. 424) notes, the international circulation of literary works was a key tool in the intellectual Cold War, which was utilized by both rival geopolitical camps. In this light, M.E. Jarlhøj and R-V. Valijärvi aptly state that "Russian and English are dominant imperial languages which yield cultural and financial power even after the fall of the respective empires" (Jarlhøj and Valijärvi, 2023, p. 11). This interconnectedness of imperial knowledge systems produces a common reservoir, or "imperial cloud," from which is difficult to later disengage (Kamissek and Kreienbaum, 2016, p. 164). Indeed, hegemonic relationships tend to "firmly remain in place even after their power base has been removed" (Baumgarten, 2021, p. 1580).

This resonates with M. L. Pratt's concept of *imperial afterlives*, where inter-imperiality and the longue durée intersect, and in which language is one of the most enduring manifestations (Pratt, 2015, p. 355). In this line of reasoning, S. Baumgarten (2021, p. 1580) argues that "linguistic domination leaps into *linguistic hegemony* when people internalize the power and ideology of a prevailing discourse to such an extent that they forget their own subjection to its manipulative force." (emphasis – I.O.)

Taken together, these concepts underscore the critical importance of analyzing English translations of Ukrainian literary works mediated through Russian: they represent a key site in which this "imperial cloud" was produced, making their deconstruction essential to disentangle the imperial afterlives that continue to shape Western knowledge about Ukraine.

3. The Research Data

For this study, I collected a representative corpus of Ukrainian literary works published in English translation via Russian by the Soviet press *Prog-*

ress Publishers between the 1950s and 1970s, a period defined by severely centralized and controlled translation practices. This timeframe was selected because, from the mid-1950s onward, translation policy in the Soviet Union was redirected to "establish Russian as *the* language of the Soviet Union" (Grenoble, 2003, p. 57), which decisively shaped the circulation of Ukrainian literature abroad. The corpus was compiled using the extensive resources of the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) Library, which houses one of the world's largest collections of translated Soviet-era editions of Ukrainian classics, developed through the foundational efforts of the late W. Swoboda.

The selection principle for the corpus was twofold: (1) only those works of Ukrainian authors that were published in English via Russian mediation by Progress Publishers were included, and (2) within this set, priority was given to editions that were explicitly presented to Anglophone readers as "representative" of Ukrainian culture. This resulted in a sample of 17 titles, sufficient to demonstrate recurring editorial and translational strategies while remaining manageable for detailed textual comparison.

The information about Progress Publishers is crucial for the methodology because the institutional context is not merely background: it conditioned every stage of textual production, from translation choices to paratextual framing. Established in 1931, the Moscow-based Progress Publishers became particularly notable in 1963 when it assumed the role of the Foreign Languages Publishing House, a state-run entity responsible for producing "Soviet literature", propaganda and other themed books in numerous foreign languages. Drawing on Yuri Pankov's 2011 article "Literatura spetsialnogo naznacheniia" ("Special Purpose Literature"), the special editorial department of Progress Publishers operated under strict state control, as its activities were monitored by the First Department (KGB), and all work had to be conducted within secure, dedicated facilities with safes. Ironically, this centralized control was paradoxically framed for a global audience as an open dialogue: each book included a "request to readers," which, while inviting feedback on translation and design, also served to reinforce a state-guided approach to literary output. It was not until 1982 that the publisher's organizational structure was altered, with the literary fiction division being separated and renamed Raduga Publishers, whereas Progress began to focus exclusively on scientific and political literature. Yet, as will be demonstrated, the linguistic and translation policy established by Progress was not abandoned but continued by its successor,

Raduga Publishers. Such circumstances demonstrate that the translation process was not neutral but ideologically mediated – hence why the publisher's institutional profile must be considered part of the methodological framework rather than extraneous history.

Progress Publishers translated and published numerous texts from Ukrainian classics – including works by Ivan Franko and Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi – and anthologies of Ukrainian fiction into English, all of which passed through Russian as an intermediary language. Since English-language publishers specializing in world classics have largely ignored Ukrainian literature (Blacker, 2024), these obscure Soviet-era editions of Ukrainian classics still persist in being used in university programs.

After the corpus was established, I applied a qualitative research design structured around three interrelated steps. First, I conducted a deconstructive editorial analysis, drawing on the decolonial analytics of translation and publishing practices I have elaborated elsewhere (Odrekhivska, 2017, 2024a). This included paratextual materials such as prefaces, series titles, and "requests to readers." Second, I engaged in comparative close reading of source texts (Ukrainian), intermediary texts (Russian), and target texts (English). By "close reading," I mean a slow, detailed textual analysis attentive to lexical choices, orthographic shifts, omissions, and semantic reframings. Comparative close reading was applied systematically to the entire corpus, although with greater focus on passages where semantic, cultural, or ideological distortion was most evident. Third, I synthesized these findings to identify patterns of what I term appropriative manipulations, i.e. linguistic and editorial practices that reframed Ukrainian literature for an Anglophone readership in ways consistent with Soviet ideological objectives.

Such a stepwise approach makes it possible to move from macro-level institutional context (the role of Progress Publishers) to micro-level textual detail (manipulations), thereby revealing how the Soviet translation apparatus enacted epistemic violence against Ukrainian cultural expression while presenting itself as global literary mediation.

4. Linguistic Violence in Practice: A Case of Filtering Ukrainian Literature through the Imperial Lens

The practice of indirect translation identified in the preceding sections takes on concrete form when examined through specific editorial and linguistic interventions. Selected from the compiled corpus, the following cases re-

veal how practices of linguistic appropriation in Soviet-era translated volumes structured both the representation of Ukrainian literature and the epistemic frames through which it was mediated to Anglophone audiences.

In 1970, Progress Publishers in Moscow released the anthology *Stories of the Soviet Ukraine* with a print run of 4800 copies. Immediately following the table of contents, the book explicitly states that all texts by the 18 featured authors were translated from the Russian. Afterwards, a statement – presented only in Russian – positions the edition under the series "Ukraina rasskazyvaet. Rasskazy pisatelei sovetskoi Ukrainy" ("Ukraine tells. Stories of writers of Soviet Ukraine"), which creates the illusion that these stories were originally written in Russian. Nowhere in the edition it is indicated about intermediary translations from Ukrainian into Russian before being rendered into English. The fact that these are indirect translations is also concealed by the complete absence of any mention of the translators – both for the English versions and for the intermediary Russian ones. This strategic framing effectively erased the Ukrainian origin of the works, presenting them as derivatives of Soviet Russian-language literature.

This approach has been a consistent pattern. For example, it is evident in the 1957 collection of Ivan Franko's work, *Boa Constrictor and Other Stories*, or in the 1958 edition of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi's *Chrysalis and Other Stories*, both released by the Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House and translated into English from Russian by Fainna Solasko and Jacob Guralsky, respectively. These editions include Russian prefatory material and alternative Russian titles – *Udav i drugie rasskazy* and *Kukolka i drugie rasskazy* – which reinforce the illusion that the original texts were Russian compositions.

For instance, the English translation of O. Dovzhenko's "The Enchanted Desna" for the anthology *Stories of the Soviet Ukraine* was based on a Russian-language excerpt from the 1964 Russian edition of his works published by Sovetskii pisatel. This 1964 volume indicated in the preface that "A. Dovzhenko wrote in Russian and Ukrainian," and that works originally in Ukrainian are presented therein in translation. However, while other translated stories in the contents are credited to their Russian translators, "*Zacharovannaia Desna"* is left with no such indication. This deliberate omission strategically masks the original language of Dovzhenko's masterpiece, leaving the reader to assume it was written in Russian. In other words, an invisible translation of Dovzhenko's magnum opus into Russian preserved this "blind framing" in English, completely obscuring the work's Ukrainian-language origin.

A critical re-examination of the 1970 anthology's contents also reveals that the names of all contributing writers were transliterated from Russian, not their original Ukrainian, e.g. Alexander Dovzhenko, Andrei Golovko, Mikhail Stelmakh, Grigor Tiutiunnik, Ostap Vishnya and others, effectively erasing the authors' Ukrainian identities and anchoring them in the Russian linguistic and cultural context. This ideological framing is further amplified in the introduction by V. Korotych: he opens with a claim that "two out of every three Ukrainian writers left for active service in the very first days of the Great Patriotic War" (Stories of the Soviet Ukraine, 1970, p. 7), ostensibly to honour Ukrainian sacrifice, yet this rhetorical gesture simultaneously subsumes Ukrainian literary history into the Soviet *patria.* The erasure deepens in his treatment of the 1930s – a decade violently marked by the Stalinist purges of a generation of Ukrainian artists and writers, symbolically termed the "Executed Renaissance" by Jerzy Giedroyc. V. Korotych portrays the period as one of vibrant literary production, mentioning only three authors (each listed under the Russified form of their names): "In speaking of the 20s and 30s we refer again and again to the works of Pyotr Panch, Ivan Lye and Mikhail Stelmakh, while the years of the Patriotic War have been immortalized by Alexander Dovzhenko, Oles Gonchar and Semyon Zbanatsky" (Stories of the Soviet Ukraine, 1970, pp. 8–9). This selective remembrance whitewashes the catastrophic silencing of Ukrainian voices, entrenching the anthology's overarching agenda of linguistic and cultural colonization.

V. Korotych, a prominent Soviet Ukrainian poet, exemplifies what H. Arendt termed the effect of "parvenu" – the phenomenon in which individuals from marginalized or subordinate backgrounds internalize and adopt the identity of the dominant group, as well as become "willing agents" of colonial domination, actively enforcing the imperial order that subjugates their own compatriots (Arendt, 1951, pp. 64–65). This mode of conformism, as H. Arendt notes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, is marked by a constant undercurrent of regret. (ibid.) Such ambivalence surfaces in Korotych's introduction, where, despite the overall ideological framing, he makes a rare and notable aside: "One cannot but admire the spirit of a people who as recently as fifty odd years ago was ruled by a tsarist edict that outlawed the Ukrainian language" (Stories of the Soviet Ukraine, 1970, p. 6), which is a clear allusion to the Ems Ukaz and subsequent imperial decrees aimed at banning the use of Ukrainian in print, education, and public performance. On the one hand, this remark might be read as an expression of anti-imperial solidarity, i.e., a cri-

tique of the tsarist regime's suppression of Ukrainian, especially when considered alongside Korotych's continuation that "books and literary magazines in Ukrainian are now published in printings of from 5 to 150 thousand copies" (Stories of the Soviet Ukraine, 1970, p. 7). Yet, on the other hand, a deconstructive reading reveals it as an act of masquerade: while ostensibly condemning 19th-century Russification measures, Korotych simultaneously enacts a Soviet project that replicates very similar dynamics of linguistic erasure, albeit under a different imperial banner.

The practice of Russified transliteration is not limited to the authors' names in the anthology. A closer reading of the stories unearths that the same pattern extends to the names of characters and other proper nouns: for instance, in O. Dovzhenko's texts, characters are identified as *Galya, Semyon* and *Yeryoma*, while in Ye. Hutsalo's stories, we find *Gritsko* and *Gorpina*. This systematic approach effectively displaces Ukrainian phonetic specifics, solidifying the pretense of a Russian-language "source text" at the micro-level of the narrative itself.

Worth mentioning in this context is the case of M. Tarnawsky, who, upon discovering that F. Solasko's Russian-mediated rendition of Ivan Franko's "Boa Constrictor" was the only available English version for his Ukrainian literature syllabus, "slightly edited" the text, primarily by adjusting proper and character names, to position the work within its authentic Ukrainian context (see Franko, n.d.). This instance highlights a pragmatic response to the scarcity of direct translations: when commissioning a new translation is not feasible, the practice of revising existing texts emerges as a strategy to reframe their colonial imprint. Without such intervention, these texts are read and used in their Russified versions, such as prominent Ukrainian author Vsevolod Nestaiko's masterpiece, which was published in 1983 by the Moscow-based Raduga (inheriting the legacy of Progress Publishers) under the title *Two Toreadors from Vasukovka Village*, taking a 1980 translated-into-Russian edition as its source text. This book's framing is consistent with the pattern of using Russified names (e.g., Pavlusha becomes Pavlik, Yarysha becomes Irina, and Vasukivka as Vasukovka village in the title, to name a few). Moreover, it is further exemplified by the paratextual information on the back cover, which states: "Two Russian country boys spend a night on a desert island, take a trip to a big city and have many exciting adventures" (Nestaiko, 1983). It explicitly misidentifies the protagonists as "two Russian country boys," thus erasing

their Ukrainian identity. To this day, this remains the only available English translation.

As a result, the persistence of these formats in the absence of direct translations not only normalizes the Russian-mediated version as the "original," but also institutionalizes a distorted cultural frame in which Ukrainian literature is read, taught and archived through the imperial lens.

5. Conclusions

This study has revealed how Soviet-era mediation of Ukrainian literature through Russian functioned as a tool of linguistic imperialism, shaping Western perceptions through deliberate acts of cultural and linguistic erasure. By positioning Russian as the intermediary, the Soviet system controlled what was translated, how it was translated, and, most importantly, how Ukrainian literature was framed and perceived internationally.

Historical mediation cannot be divorced from its present-day consequences. The continued absence of direct translations and the persistence of Russian-mediated versions make it imperative to revisit existing translations, interrogate inherited translation chains, dismantle inherited colonial frameworks of interpretation and develop editorial practices that foreground the linguistic and cultural integrity of the source.

In light of these findings, adopting a framework of *linguistic accountability* – a concept that underscores the ethical and political responsibility of translators, publishers, and scholars in post-imperial contexts, is vital. It calls for transparent acknowledgment and critical reflection on mediation processes that shape cultural representation, promoting more honest engagements with the legacies of imperial domination. Upholding linguistic accountability resists "colonialingualism" (Meighan, 2022, p. 146), which, covertly or overtly, sustains colonial legacies, imperial mindsets and inequitable practices. It also insists on cultivating alternative pathways: commissioning new translations, producing critical re-editions and generating contextual scholarship that reinsert the erased linguistic and cultural dimensions into public circulation.

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DECONSTRUCTING THE 'RUSSIAN WORLD' IDEOLOGY: UKRAINIAN PUBLIC FIGURES' DISCOURSE IN TIMES OF WAR

Abstract

Background. *The "Russian world" (russkij mir) concept has become a central ideological instrument in Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Promoted as a civilisational model grounded in shared language, culture, and values, it has been widely studied from geopolitical and historical perspectives. However, its discursive deconstruction by Ukrainian public figures remains underexplored.*

Contribution to the research field. *The present study raises the possibility that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can uncover how wartime political communication functions as ideological resistance. These findings help us to understand how public actors reframe a hostile ideological construct through language, and how such discourse contributes to shaping national and international narratives of war, identity, and sovereignty.*

Purpose. *The article aims to identify and analyse strategies and lexical tools used by Ukrainian political and religious leaders to counter the "Russian world" ideology in public communication during the full-scale invasion.*

Methods. *The study applies van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis to a corpus of statements, social media posts, interviews, and speeches produced by key Ukrainian figures between March 2022 and April 2023. Semantic strategies such as categorisation, polarisation, and lexicalisation are used as the primary analytical tools.*

Results. *The analysis reveals how the "Russian world" doctrine is consistently portrayed as an ideology of violence, occupation, destruction, and geno-*

cide. Linguistic choices, such as epithets, sensory framing, irony, and orthographic resistance (e.g., writing русский мір, русскій мір instead of російський світ), are used to delegitimise the enemy. The dual meaning of mir (peace/world) is leveraged to highlight the ideological contradictions inherent in Russian narratives.

Discussion. *The findings demonstrate how language becomes a tool of symbolic resistance in wartime. Ukrainian discourse not only exposes the violent core of russkij mir but also contributes to shaping a shared moral and civilisational identity. This analysis opens new perspectives for interdisciplinary research into information warfare, political discourse, and national identity formation.*

Keywords: Russian world, critical discourse analysis, Ukraine, wartime communication, ideology, political narrative.

1. Introduction and Background

The concept of the "Russian world" (russkij mir)[1] has become a focal point in discussions surrounding Russian identity, geopolitics, and relations with neighbouring states. Rooted in historical ties and cultural unity, the doctrine has evolved over time, particularly during Vladimir Putin's presidency, to assert Russia's influence over Russian-speaking populations and promote a vision of a broader cultural and geopolitical sphere.

This study is informed by real-world events surrounding Putin's regime, which has been formulating a doctrine to legitimise the annexation of territories neighbouring Russia, known as the "near abroad". This doctrine emphasises protecting and promoting cultural values such as the Russian language, culture, and historical memories. However, this apparent concern for Russian civilisation may mask a deeper intention to foster a sense of common nationhood. The concept of "spiritual ties" (Renan, 1990) within the Russian world suggests a desire for cohabitation, echoing Renan's notion of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006).

Russian ideologists have employed various strategies to define and support their doctrine. While Putin's elaboration at the Congress of Compatriots in 2018 (TASS, 2018) emphasised a non-compulsory role for religion within the notion of the Russian world, other ideologists have incorporated Orthodox Christianity (Russian Orthodox Church) as an essential element (Ksenofon-

[1] In this paper, I use terms "Russian world" and "russkii mir" as full equivalents.

tov, 2018). Huizinga (2024) understands the "Russian world" as a "heretical national theology that expresses a mythical, teleological understanding of Russia not as a mere nation among other nations, but as the standard-bearer of a great Orthodox Christian civilisation."

The full-scale intervention in Ukraine has led to significant sociocultural changes, altering attitudes towards the Russian language, culture, and the "Russian world" ideology (Slovo i dilo, 10.03.2023). Before the invasion, only 4% of Ukrainians viewed Russia as friendly, but after the invasion, 95% considered it an enemy state. Support for severing ties with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate rose from 63% to 74%, and 51% believe its activities should be banned in Ukraine (Sotsiolohichna hrupa "Rejtynh", 08.04.2022). Ukrainian language usage increased, with more people using it at home, work, and study, rejecting Russian as the language of the enemy (Kulyk, 2023). The perception of Ukrainian identity also shifted, with 75% of respondents viewing Ukraine as the rightful heir to Kyivan Rus (Sotsiolohichna hrupa "Rejtynh", 27.07.2021). In 2021, 55% of Ukrainians did not consider themselves part of the same historical and spiritual space as Russians (Ibidem). According to a survey conducted by the Razumkov Center conducted from April 28 to May 3, 2023, at the request of ZN.UA, 68.5% of respondents categorically refuse such reconciliation (Tsaruk, 2023).

Resistance to Russia and its ideology is also evident at official and legal levels. A draft law "On the decolonisation of the humanitarian sphere of Ukraine" has been submitted to the Verkhovna Rada. On April 21, 2023, Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed the law "On Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and Decolonisation of Toponymy," aimed at liberating the country from the markers of the "Russian world" (Viatrovych, 2023). This law criminalises and condemns the Russian imperial policy, prohibiting the promotion of its symbols. Consequently, Ukraine is undergoing a re-evaluation of the "Russian world" concept and recognising its destructive nature at official and business levels.

Although the ideology of the "Russian world" has been examined from various perspectives, and its deconstruction in contemporary Ukrainian popular culture has received scholarly attention (Kiss et al., 2024), its dismantling in the social media posts, interviews, and speeches of Ukrainian public figures during the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war has yet to be systematically explored. In this study, I have used the term "deconstruction" in a broad sense, specifically as the destruction of an idea, while the verb "to deconstruct" is

taken as equivalent to "to dismantle". In this article, I intend to explore how the "Russian world" ideology is addressed, evaluated, and deconstructed in the statements of high-ranking Ukrainian officials, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council Oleksij Danilov, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Advisor Mykhajlo Podoljak, and Metropolitan Epiphanius, among others. The study utilises Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the relationships between language, society, power, and traditional ideology within implied discourse.

The instrumentalisation of ancient history, collective memory, and language issues has been used to justify Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. By employing the concept of the "Russian world," the Kremlin positions itself as the protector and authority over all aspects it claims are part of Russian culture. This paper aims to analyse the strategic narratives employed by Ukrainian public figures as they counter the doctrine of the "Russian world" in the context of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2. The Concept of the "Russian World"

Definitions of the "Russian world" have centred around territories, people, values, and cultural and humanitarian ties, with official narratives serving to justify Russia's interventionism under the guise of preserving civilisation and common values. These strategic narratives serve as a form of public diplomacy or propaganda, rationalising Russia's missionary role in the world. They project an image of commendable cultural heritage preservation, over which the Russian government asserts its oversight.

In this study, I will not concentrate on the historical aspect of the "Russian world" notion, even though it has many definitions and deep historical roots. Instead, I will outline the current sense where this concept is recognized as an "international, interstate, and intercontinental civilization" (Kravchenko, 2018, p. 8), following the aim of "uniting disunited Russian-speaking compatriots" (Aleynikova, 2017, p. 6) since the "Russian world" constitution and unification are due to "the Russian language and the Russian-speaking Russian/Soviet culture, together with historical memory" (Tishkov, 2017). Since 2010, the concept of the "Russian world" has been expanded beyond its previous scope, as the policy represented a form of "soft power" that ultimately evolved into a political conflict and military aggression (Laruelle, 2015). Laruelle (2015, p. 1) also acknowledges the inherent ambiguity of the concept, stating, "This blurriness is structural to the concept, and allows it to be

reinterpreted within multiple contexts." Starodubtseva (2022, p. 144), having analysed some definitions of the "Russian world", categorises the essential meanings of the concept, namely the "Russian world as a civilisation, as a linguistic community, and, in a rare case, as an Orthodox community". Etymologically, the "Russian world" leads us to the mythological personification of "Holy Russia". Holy Russia is organically perceived as a proper name, not as a combination of an epithet with an ethnonym or a geographical name. This is not a characteristic of Russia, but a complete mythological complex "Sviatoruska zemlia", which is interpreted as a world axis around which the world system revolves (Denysenko, 2023, p. 37). Analysing the terminological definition of the "Russian world" concept, Horkusha (2023, p. 16) points out that "ruskii mir" cannot be translated either as *руський мир* (lit. "Rus' peace") or as *російський світ* (lit. "Russian world"). The researcher underlines that "russkii mir" "denotes a state of world-order in which every element of the system occupies the place, condition, and form predetermined for it by the demiurge of this system – the ideologist and propagandist. This system is moulded at various levels by the instruments wielded by the sovereign/tsar/leader: the Russian army, the Church (Russian Orthodox Church – *L.P.*), and propagandists" (Ibidem). After Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the "Russian world" concept attracted the attention of scholars and has become the object of various interdisciplinary research (Denysenko, 2023; Horkusha, 2023; Noubel, 2022; Poiarkova, 2023; Polegkyi & Bushuyev, 2022). Since 2014, the "Russian world" has become a tool for the legitimisation of invading Crimea and Donbas and full-scale war against Ukraine, as well as a determining component of Putin's official ideology. In his articles (Putin, 2021) and speeches (Vneplanovoe soveshchanie, 2023), Putin presented his version of Ukrainian history to demonstrate Ukraine's inferiority, minimise its culture, and distort its language. Declaring that Ukraine had been created by Vladimir Lenin and had not existed before, Putin proclaimed that large parts of its territory had always been purely Russian territory. According to Cotter (2016), Putin has been advocating the "Russian world" for a long time, and it has become central and crucial to his strategic mindset. In the meantime, Young (2022) believes that the idea of the "Russian world" creation was a decisive impetus for the annexation of Crimea and is currently a motivating concept underpinning and legitimising Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Moreover, the notion of the "Russian world" as well as the role of its main components has been recently fixed and developed in the of-

ficial documents of the Russian Federation, namely the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation* (July 3, 2021), *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation "On Approval of the Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad"* (September 5, 2022), *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (March 31, 2023). In the *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, such notions as the "Russian world", "preservation of the Russian people", "strengthening the role of the Russian language", "preservation of historical memory" and the formation of a just world order have been officially introduced. The recent political and official discourses of the Kremlin aimed to transmit the "Russian world" globally and to level the historical and cultural role of Ukraine, enabling researchers to classify this ideology as a tool for legitimising the full-scale war. For example, Poiarkova (2023, p. 70) assumes that the "Russian world" turned into "an informational weapon of the Russian-Ukrainian war, as it acted as a foundation: 1) for the solidarity of Russian society based on the picture of the world, which is common to the post-Soviet space; 2) universal meaningful life guidelines that replaced ideological schemes with a generalization of the common experience of survival in the USSR; 3) subjectivity of Russians, which allowed them to join world history and build their own identity".

The "Russian world" is the "construction of the new era, which to a large extent repeats the ideas of the elites of the Russian Empire before the 1917 revolution" (Yermolenko, 2019, p. 53). During that period, Ukrainians were defined as "Little Russians" and proclaimed as a part of the Russian nation, which consisted of "Great Russians" and "Belarussians"[2] (Ibidem). In 2014, when Russia intervened in Ukraine, the Russian propagandistic media and Russian politicians announced that Donbas and 'Novorossiya' are part of the "Russian World", and "Ukraine cannot be an independent state because it has always been part of the "Russian World" (Yermolenko, 2019, p. 10). Later, in 2022, these statements of Russian historical propaganda became a justification for the full-scale invasion since "the neo-imperial ambitions of the Russian elites will have never allowed them to accept the fact that Ukraine is an independent sovereign state, as well as that Ukrainians even are

[2] Although the correct spelling is *Belarusians*, I have deliberately used the Russianised form *Belarussians* in this context to highlight how Russia perceives Belarus as an inseparable part of itself, reflected in the name Belarussia (literally "White Russia").

a separate nation" (Prymachenko, 2022). Denysenko (2023, p. 38) argues that the integrity of Ukraine was not and cannot be intrinsically valuable for Russians and the "Russian world". Moreover, "the liquidation of Ukraine in its current composition under the existing conditions would be good for the Russians because it becomes their prison" (Ibidem). In other words, "Russian world is a synonym of Russian fascism, the essence of which is noteworthy implemented into the practice of dehumanisation of everything that is Ukrainian" (Denysenko, 2023, p. 76).

3. Theoretical and Methodological Background

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its principal theoretical and methodological framework, drawing particularly on the socio-cognitive model developed by Teun A. van Dijk (1980, 1993, 2006). CDA offers a powerful means of analysing the relationships between discourse, power, and ideology, especially in political and military conflict contexts. It enables the study of how language not only reflects but also shapes social and political realities, including the legitimisation of violence, resistance to domination, and the (re)construction of group identities.

Van Dijk's (1993, 2005) approach to CDA operates on both the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. At the macro level, social analysis focuses on portraying power imbalances between societal groups (Van Dijk, 1995, 2005).

The micro-level focuses on textual and linguistic features, specifically syntactic structures, local semantics, lexical choices, thematic content, and narrative organisation. Van Dijk (2005) identifies 25 specific discursive strategies for micro-level analysis (Van Dijk, 2005, pp. 735–736), and the following ones have been employed in this paper: *comparison, euphemism, evidentiality, example/illustration, generalisation, irony, lexicalisation, metaphor, national self-glorification, polarisation,* and *us-them categorisation*.

In this article, I focus primarily on the micro-level, examining how public figures linguistically frame the concept of the "Russian world" in statements, interviews, speeches, and social media posts. However, the analysis is informed by macro-level considerations, particularly those relating to Ukrainian resistance to Russian neo-imperial ideology and military aggression.

The selection of contexts was based on the presence of terms like *русскій мір*, *російський світ*, *руський світ* (in Ukr.), *русский мир* (in Rus.) (lit. Eng. Russian world, Russian peace), *Russian world*, *russkij mir* in the aforementioned sources. In Ukrainian political and media discourse, the concept of the

"Russian world" is frequently rendered not as the standard Ukrainian equivalent *російський світ*, but rather in its Russian-language form: *русский мир* or *русскій мір*. This orthographic and linguistic choice is deliberate; it signals distancing and alienation from the ideology, emphasising its foreignness, ideological strangeness, and aggressive otherness. With a qualitative approach, the data were segmented into individual sentences and contexts, which were then grouped into categories and subcategories that represented the discursive strategies associated with the concept of the "Russian world."

A central analytical focus is on semantic strategies identified in van Dijk's (1995, p. 22) socio-cognitive model: *positive self-representation* and *negative other-representation*. These strategies are discursive mechanisms used to construct group identities and oppositional narratives, most notably, in-group vs out-group dichotomies. Through discursive tools such as categorisation, lexicalisation, polarisation, and evaluative labelling, Ukrainian officials reinforce the image of Ukraine as a peaceful, sovereign, and civilised nation, while portraying the "Russian world" as a destructive, genocidal, and imperialist ideology. The analysis also considers how actors such as Russia and its military are attributed agency in expressions of violence and dehumanisation.

CDA thus allows for the systematic analysis of how discourse encodes ideological meaning through repeated patterns of language use. In the context of this research, these include references to the "Russian world" as a metaphorical and literal vehicle for violence, cultural erasure, and historical revisionism. The focus on discursive categorisation, rather than metaphor or epithet per se, provides a nuanced account of how meaning is stabilised, challenged, or contested through repeated lexical and thematic framings.

While the concept of strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2018), which has been used to examine the importance of persuasion in conflicts (de Franco, 2012; Simpson, 2012), is also relevant to this topic, especially given that political actors aim to shape perceptions of legitimacy, memory, and identity (Liao, 2012), this study integrates such concerns within the CDA framework.

Rather than analysing narrative structure separately, I consider strategic narratives to be macro-discursive formations that are realised through concrete discursive strategies. In other words, CDA provides the tools to deconstruct the linguistic forms and ideological underpinnings through which strategic narratives acquire meaning and power. In doing so, the study addresses both the *content* and the *form* of wartime political discourse.

Thus, CDA offers a comprehensive lens through which to explore the linguistic representations of the "Russian world", as articulated by Ukrainian public figures. It enables the identification of discursive strategies that delegitimise the enemy, reinforce national identity, and promote resistance – strategies that are central to both information warfare and the broader struggle over ideological hegemony in the post-2022 geopolitical landscape.

While writing this paper, I utilised ChatGPT-4 to enhance the fluency and accuracy, and Grammarly Premium was employed for spelling and grammar checks. DeepL and ChatGPT-4 were also used for the initial translation from Ukrainian and Russian to English of the social media posts and interview quotes, which I then edited and refined to ensure both accuracy and stylistic consistency. These resources were used exclusively for language quality improvement and translation support purposes, with no bearing on the substantive material, analysis, or interpretation of the study. As a non-native English author, I relied on these resources to refine my writing style and improve readability.

4. Research Data

The research data for this study includes:

- ✓ Speeches of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, along with selected posts from his Twitter and Telegram accounts.
- ✓ Twitter and Telegram posts, video appeals, and written interviews by Mykhailo Podoliak, Adviser to the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine.
- ✓ Twitter posts, addresses, and online media interviews of Metropolitan Epiphanius, Head of Ukraine's Orthodox Church.
- ✓ Twitter posts and selected interviews by Dmytro Kuleba, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (2020–2024).
- ✓ Written interviews and selected Facebook posts by Oleksii Danilov, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine (2019–2024).

Although this paper does not delve deeply into voice and nonverbal communication, videos of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's daily speeches have also been included. Discourse analysis facilitates an understanding of how messages about the "Russian world" are conveyed through word stress, metaphors, lexical choices, and other linguistic devices. This analysis transcends language, addressing social issues and political, geopolitical, and historical contexts.

The study covers the period from March 1, 2022, to April 15, 2023, encompassing more than a year of the full-scale Russian military intervention in

Ukraine. I provided English translations for the data, except for some English-written Twitter posts by Mykhailo Podoliak.

5. Thematic Categories of the "Russian World" Deconstruction

While Kremlin propaganda asserts that Russia embodies a unique civilisation and high culture, aims to protect traditional Russian values and the Russian-speaking population, and seeks to cleanse Ukraine of Nazis, Ukrainian officials emphasise a starkly different perspective. Through speeches, statements, interviews, and social media posts, high-ranking Ukrainian officials highlight that the "Russian world" doctrine promoted by Russia leads to tears, devastation, and mass torture. These counter-narratives are not merely oppositional; they seek to delegitimise the ideological core of the "Russian world" and expose its underlying genocidal logic. The findings are grouped into thematic categories based on semantic strategies (categorisation, polarisation, lexicalisation, and evaluative framing) through which Ukrainian political and religious figures construct ideological resistance to the "Russian world."

5.1. The "Russian world" as violence and death

One of the most pervasive discursive framings presents the "Russian world" as inherently violent. Lexical markers such as mass executions, torture, abduction, and concentration camps recontextualise the term as a euphemism for atrocity. For instance, in Podoliak's tweet – (1):

(1) *Mass killing by cruise missiles is the essence of the 'Russian world'* (@ Podolyak_M, 29.04.2022).

The lexical equivalence *essence of* has been used to define the entire ideological construct by its violent manifestations. In the following fragment, the use of present time *nyshchyt' (destroying)* and *vbyvaje (killing)* demonstrates the ongoing processual representation of harm – (2):

(2) *Zaraz u bilshosti ukraintsiv vidkrylysia ochi, shcho take «russkii mir», shcho vin prynis v Ukrainu velyke zlo – nyshchyt myrne naselennia, vbivaie nevynnykh ditok* (see Tarasov, 2022).
Currently, the majority of Ukrainians have opened their eyes to what the 'Russian world' is, that it has brought great evil to Ukraine – it is destroying the civilian population, killing innocent children" (see Tarasov, 2022).

This allows for the possibility of situating the violence in the immediate present. Another example refers to the past and invokes Holocaust imagery – (3):

(3) *...under the brand of 'Russian world'. Only half a step away from gas chambers* (@Podolyak_M, 09.08.2022).

This metaphor intensifies the ideological critique by associating "Russian world" with the ultimate historical symbol of genocidal policy. Moreover, it is emphasised that the "Russian world" aims to obliterate Ukrainian identity and the Ukrainian nation – (4):

(4) *Want to know what is "Russian world" on the occupied territories? 1000 and 1 ways of torture. Kidnapping. Mass executions, rapes. Only because our people identify themselves as Ukrainians* (@Podolyak_M, 22.11.2022).

In certain contexts, a parallel is drawn between the emergence of the "Russian world" and the policy of genocide against the Ukrainian people, as for Russians – (5)

(5) *...tse ne pytannia zakhystu yakykhos "narodiv Donbasu" chy rosiiskomovnoho naselennia. […] tse konkretna viina na znyshchennia chuzhoi kultury, chuzhoi identychnosti, chuzhykh liudei, chuzhoi terytorii* (see Rik nezlamnosti Ukrajiny, 2023).
… it is not a matter of protecting some 'peoples of Donbas' or the Russian-speaking population. […] this is a concrete war to destroy someone else's culture, someone else's identity, someone else's people, someone else's territory (see Rik nezlamnosti Ukrajiny, 2023).

The deliberate repetition of the phrase *someone else's* serves a rhetorical function: it emphasises that Ukraine does not belong to Russia. This repetition directly counters the Russian imperial narrative that persistently denies Ukrainian sovereignty by claiming Ukrainian territories as historically and/or spiritually "theirs".

Moreover, the sensory register combines auditory imagery with rhetorical questioning, reinforcing the omnipresence of violence and appealing to international audiences' moral perception – (6):

(6) *The pre-Christmas sound of sirens in Kyiv… With cruise missiles, Russia offers to 'start peace talks', 'restore fraternal relations', 'finish off international law'… Is there anyone who still does not hear these real sounds of 'Russian world'?* (@Podolyak_M, 23.12.2022).

5.2. "Russian world" as a destructive and devastating force

In contrast to the previous category, which primarily addressed killings and violence against individuals, this category concerns the destruction of infrastructure, buildings, and related facilities. What links the two categories is the

deployment of the "Russian world" doctrine in distinctly negative connotations, consistently framed as a destructive force, as illustrated in the following context – (7):

(7) *"Russkyi mir" – tse povna ruinatsiia. Perekonanyi, shcho nadali, napevno, vzhe ne znaidetsia zhodnoho ukraintsia, yakyi by skhvalno stavyvsia do tsykh idei, bo ideia «russkoho myra» vbyvaie vse zhyve* (see Tarasov, 2022).
'Russian world' is complete destruction. I am convinced that in the future there will certainly not be a single Ukrainian who would approve of these ideas, because the idea of the 'Russian world' kills all life (see Tarasov, 2022).

Such metaphorical extension as *kills all life* is used to demonstrate ideological toxicity. The lexical field includes burnt, ruined, mutilated, and devastated, which cluster around destruction and moral desecration – (8), (9):

(8) *Burnt fields in Ukraine. This is the face of the 'Russian world': destruction, death, and devastation"* (@Podolyak_M, 12.08.2022).

(9) *Ponivechenyi khram, zruinovani budynky, zhorovani liudy, obirvani abo skalicheni zhyttia – os shcho po sobi zalyshyv «russkii mir» za kilka tyzhniv okupatsii* (@ Epifaniy, 13.04.2022).
A mutilated temple, destroyed houses, grieving people, severed or mutilated lives – that is what the 'Russian world' left after a few weeks of occupation (@ Epifaniy, 13.04.2022).

Such formulations evoke sacred/profane dichotomies, portraying the "Russian world" as not just violent but spiritually corrupt. In the following fragment, the adjective *evil*, meaning 'profoundly immoral and wicked', brings a negative connotation to the "Russian world" concept – (10):

(10) *120+ missiles over Ukraine launched by the 'evil Russian world' to destroy critical infrastructure & kill civilians en masse"* (@Podolyak_M, 29.12.2022).

The "showcase of the Russian world" is metaphorically termed "a showcase of evil" since the entire world witnessed the cruelty of the Russians – (11):

(11) *A sproby rosiiskykh okupantiv zrobyty iz zakhoplenykh terytorii «vytrynu russkoho myra» ostatochno ta beznadijno provaluiutsia... "Vitrina russkoho mira" vyiavylasia pokhmuroiu "siroiu zonoiu" zi zruinovanymy zhyttiamy, budynkamy, FSBivtsiamy, shcho masovo z'iavylysia, bandamy maroderiv ta inshym treshem* (@M_Podolyak, 01.08.2022).
And the attempts of the Russian occupiers to turn the captured territories into a 'showcase of the Russian world' ultimately failed. The 'showcase of the Russian world' turned out to be a gloomy 'grey zone' with destroyed lives, houses, schools, hospitals, FSB officers who appeared en masse, gangs of looters and other trash" (@M_Podolyak, 01.08.2022).

Moreover, metaphors such as the failed "showcase of russkii mir" becoming a "grey zone" further ridicule the failed state project. Here, the lexicalisation of failure is used to strip the "Russian world" of prestige.

5.3. "Russian world" as a criminal ideology and a racist and genocidal doctrine

5.3.1. The "Russian world" as a criminal ideology and the new Nazism

Statements by Metropolitan Epiphanius position "Russian world" as a criminal ideology, frequently comparing it to Nazism, as the approval of brutal actions is common to both ideologies – 12:

(12) *Ideolohiia „ruskoho mira" ye tym samym, chym ye ideolohiia natsyzmu. Vona vypravdovuie nasylstvo, vbyvstvo, viinu ta henotsyd, tomu maie buty vidkynuta i zasudzhena tak samo, yak zasudzhenyi natsyzm, yoho ideolohy ta yoho zlochyny* (see Zhytnjuk, 2022).
The ideology of the "Russian world" is the same as the ideology of Nazism. It justifies violence, murder, war, and genocide, so it must be rejected and condemned just as Nazism, its ideologues and its crimes" (see Zhytnjuk, 2022).

This dehumanisation is a discursive inversion of Russia's own propaganda, which often claims to fight fascism. Furthermore, Epiphanius asserts that the creators and leaders of this criminal ideology are the head of the Moscow Patriarchate, Kirill Gundiajev, and his followers, and Patriarch Kirill is recognised by him as one who chose the antichrist – 13:

(13) *Idetsia pro dobro i zlo yak take i pro vlasnyi vybir dlia kozhnoho: ty z Bohom chy z dyiavolom? Kyrylo Hundiaiev svii vybir na koryst sprav antykhrysta vzhe zrobyv* (see Zhytnjuk, 2022).
It is about good and evil as such and about personal choice for everyone: are you with God or with the devil? Kyrylo Gundiajev has already made his choice in favour of the cause of the antichrist" (see Zhytnjuk, 2022).

In this context, the antichrist is not merely an ephemeral character of Christian eschatology; rather, he is attributed with a concrete face and name – 14:

(14) *Putin upodibniuietsia antykhrystu, vin volodiie vsima yoho yakostiamy. A my znaiemo, shcho dyiavol namahaietsia znyshchyty vse zhyve. Osoblyvo vin protydiie liudiam, namahaietsia nyshchyty tvorinnia Bozhe. Zaraz tsia viina i ye proiavom u sviti tsoho zla — zla, yake povynno buty znyshchene* (see Tarasov, 2022).
Putin is likened to the antichrist; he has all of his properties. And we know that the devil is trying to devastate everything alive. He especially opposes people and tries to destroy the creation of God. This war is a manifestation of this evil in the world, and this evil must be destroyed (see Tarasov, 2022).

The quote likening Putin to the antichrist literalises this evil through a religious symbolic register, adding eschatological weight.

5.3.2. The "Russian world" as an ethnic-phyletic and racist doctrine

Metropolitan Epiphanius points out that the Russian Orthodox Church disseminates the heretical ethno-phyletic doctrine of the "Russian world" and fosters schisms among the Orthodox (@Epifaniy, 26.05.2022). Moreover, in his Letter to Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, regarding the bringing of Russian Patriarch Kirill to canonical responsibility and depriving him of the Patriarchal throne, Epiphanius emphasises that Kirill, whose attention had long been focused on geopolitical issues, "decided to join the creation of the 'Russian world' doctrine". This doctrine is a nationalist ethno-phyletic theory about the nation's and the state's special role in the world and the church (Lyst shchodo prytjahnennja, 2022). This theory is also recognised as racist since it portrays Russia and the 'Russian world' as "something fundamentally better and higher than other peoples". According to this ideology, "Russia's historical neighbours – Ukrainians and Belarusians – have the right to exist exclusively as part of Russian reality" (Ibidem). Given that the Russian Orthodox Church is perceived as one of the pillars of the "Russian World", the so-called Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is seen as "a definite outpost of Russia and Putin in Ukraine" (see Tarasov, 2022).

5.4. The Russian world as a threat to Ukraine and the civilised world

The concept of the "Russian world" is perceived as menacing since it has evolved into a quasi-ideological foundation for an aggressive imperialist policy. It is utilised to legitimise Russian aggression by asserting that certain territories of Ukraine culturally belong to the "Russian world" – 15:

(15) *Ideolohiia "russkoho mira" ta yii instrumenty ye realnoiu zahrozoiu dlia Ukrainy, tomu oboviazok derzhavy – zakhystyty ukrainsku relihiinu spilnotu i vsikh hromadian vid neii* (Mytropolyt Epifanij, 2023).
The ideology of the 'Russian world' and its tools are a real threat to Ukraine; therefore, the state's duty is to protect the Ukrainian religious community and all citizens from it" (Mytropolyt Epifanij, 2023).

Furthermore, the ideology of the Russian Orthodox Church is viewed as threatening not only Ukraine but also the entire Orthodox world – 16:

(16) *Pochynaiuchy yak minimum z zhovtnia 2018 roku, vsi dii patriarkha Kyryla pidporiadkovani konkretnii politychnii meti. Vin prahne radykalno zbilshyty prysutnist RPC za mezhamy Rosii, maksymalno poslabyty Vselenskyi Patriarkhat ta hrekomovni Pomisni Tserkvy* (see Lyst shchodo prytjahnennja, 2022).
Since at least October 2018, all of Patriarch Kirill's actions have been subordinated to a specific political goal. He seeks to significantly expand the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, aiming to weaken the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek-speaking Autocephalous Churches as much as possible (see Lyst shchodo prytjahnennja, 2022).

This narrative reframes the "Russian world" not only as a threat to Ukraine but to global peace. It is described as a contagion – 17:

(17) *YeS maie rozumity: zahravaty z prorosiiskymy politykamy – tse klykaty "russkyi varvarskii mir" do Yevropy* (@Podolyak_M, 10.04.2022).
The EU must understand that flirting with pro-Russian politicians is tantamount to inviting the 'Russian barbaric world' into Europe (@Podolyak_M, 10.04.2022).

Here, *barbaric* is an epithet of otherness, invoking a civilisational binary (civilised vs savage) and turning Russia's framing against itself. Mykhailo Podoliak underscores the political dimension of the "Russian world," which involves intervening in the internal affairs of European countries – 18:

(18) *Rf ne zupynytsia, yakshcho ne prohraie. Vona prodovzhyt investuvaty u teroryzm v Yevropi. I bude robyty tse shche zukhvalishe. Vtruchatymetsia u natsionalni vybory, vbivatyme politychnykh oponentiv, a spalakhy separatyzmu stanut normoiu. Chy v takomu sviti vy khochete zhyty? Bo tse i ye "russkii mir"* (@Podolyak_M, 04.02.2023).
Rf [Russian Federation – L.P.] will not stop until it loses. It will continue to invest in terrorism in Europe. And it will do it even more defiantly. National elections will be interfered with, political opponents will be killed, and outbreaks of separatism will become the norm. Is this the world you want to live in? Because this is the "Russian world" (@Podolyak_M, 04.02.2023).

This tweet relies on hypophora and apocalyptic framing, warning of a descent into chaos as the logical consequence of tolerating the "Russian world". Moreover, a rhetorical question is employed to resonate with local sentiments and convey certain appeals. Goffman (1976) underscores the significance of posing questions in social interactions. In political discourse, questioning can capture the audience's attention and prompt them to contemplate the statement. Furthermore, in the high-ranking officials' statements, every single Russian is regarded as a potential threat in any civilised country – 19:

(19) *Rosiiskyi pasport spryimaietsia u sviti yak maksymalno toksychnyi. Tse mitka, za yakoiu u bud-iakii tsyvilizovanii kraini vyznachaiut potentsiinoho nosiia tsinnostei*

„russkoho mira», a otzhe, reputatsiinu ta bezpekovu zahrozu (@M_Podolyak, 13.08.2022).
The Russian passport is perceived as the most toxic in the world. It is a label by which any civilised country identifies a potential bearer of the "Russian world" values, and therefore a reputational and security threat (@M_Podolyak, 13.08.2022).

5.5. Lexical Ambiguity and Ideological Wordplay: "Mir" as World vs Peace

The Russian term "mir" means both 'world' and 'peace', and this homonymic ambiguity is a key site of ideological struggle. Ukrainian public figures weaponise this ambiguity to expose the hypocrisy of Russian discourse. For instance, in the following fragment, the ironic contrast has been used to reveal semantic dissonance – 20:

(20) *Etot "russkii mir" – eto otkrytaia rosiiskaia voina i mirom tam, izvinite, i ne pakhnet* (BBC, 14.04.2022).
This 'Russian peace' is an open Russian war, and there is no smell of peace" (BBC, 14.04.2022).

Other excerpts illustrate the usage of the "russkii mir" concept in the meaning of the "world" – (21), (22):

(21) *tak nazyvaemyj «russkii mir», kotoryi okupanty nesut na ukrainskie zemli, yavliaetsa mirom smerti. Da i sama Rosiia nakhoditsa uzhe vne chelovecheskoi tsivilizatsii* (see Lielich, 2022).
...the so-called 'Russian world', which the occupiers are bringing to Ukrainian lands, is a world of death" (see Lielich, 2022).

(22) *Russkyi mir – eto mir smerti, krovi, voni i nenavisti. V Ukraine eto nepriemlemo. V Ukraine sushchestvenno drugoi tip zhizni* (see Lielich, 2022).
The 'Russian world' is a world of death, blood, stench and hatred. In Ukraine, this is unacceptable. In Ukraine, there is a completely different type of life (see Lielich, 2022).

In these fragments, the *mir* is sarcastically redefined as a dystopia. The semantic saturation of *mir* (peace/world/death) is resolved by Ukrainian voices in favour of the latter, reinforcing the contrast with Ukrainian ideals.

In both interpretations, *mir* as 'peace' and 'world', it is emphasised that the "russkii mir" brings death and destruction, and being a representative of the "Russian world" as a sociocultural space poses a threat to Ukraine and the world.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this article reveals that the strategies employed by Ukrainian public figures to counter Russian narratives are multifaceted and assertive. By

framing Russians as barbarians, savages, and brutes through direct labelling, mini-narratives of atrocities, and metaphorical characterisation, Ukrainians effectively dismantle the Russian self-image of representing civilisation and high culture. They further undermine the Russian concept of "mir" (peace) by exposing the inherent violence, war, crime, and destruction that define the so-called "Russian world." When Russians claim to be protectors and custodians of civilisation, Ukrainians reverse this narrative by highlighting the ruins, deaths, and criminal actions perpetrated by Russians in Ukraine. In response to Russian assertions of a special mission to improve the planet and unite people against perceived threats, Ukrainians counter with evidence of Russian racism and bigotry.

These strategies collectively serve to reveal the stark contrast between Russian claims and their actions, thereby fortifying the Ukrainian stance and discrediting Russian propaganda. The strategic narratives used by Ukrainian public figures have been employed to influence public perception, social beliefs, and values, as well as to appeal to the recipients' emotions in political communicative events. Moreover, the use of these strategic narratives has enabled the deconstruction of the image of Russia and the "Russian world" doctrine by employing the "Other-negative" approach.

This study contributes to the understanding of how political leaders use various strategic communication approaches during military conflicts to influence public perceptions. Future research may further explore the connection between leadership's strategic narratives and information warfare.

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MAPPING IDENTITIES: LANGUAGE POLITICS AND DIVERSITY IN UKRAINE

Review of: Kiss, Nadiya, and Monika Wingender, editors. *Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine: National Minorities, Language Biographies, and Linguistic Landscape*. Ibidem-Verlag, 2025

The title of the volume *Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine* immediately speaks to the urgency and relevance of its content. In light of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, questions surrounding language, identity, and power have intensified and gained new dimensions. Language has emerged not only as a cultural and communicative medium but also as a battleground for ideological and political confrontation. As language is increasingly perceived as a marker of allegiance, the shifting dynamics of linguistic practices in Ukraine call for rigorous academic investigation – an effort this volume undertakes with depth and breadth.

The sociolinguistic and political dimensions of language in Ukraine have long attracted scholarly attention, particularly regarding the legacy of Russification and the Soviet Union's assimilationist policies. Foundational studies such as *Ukrainska mova u XX storichchi: istoriia linhvotsydu* [Ukrainian Language in the Twentieth Century: The History of Linguicide] (Masenko et al.,

2005) and *Mova radianskoho totalitaryzmu* [The Language of Soviet Totalitarianism] (Masenko, 2017) explore how ideological pressures and state apparatuses contributed to the forced convergence of Ukrainian and Russian. Oksana Zabuzhko has sharply characterized the cultural and existential role of language, asserting that "language performs, among other things, a crucial philosophical and worldview function: it anchors an ethnos to its natural environment, to the landscape, to that kin, materially inhabited cosmos – complete with flora and fauna – that constitutes the inorganic body of the people" (Zabuzhko, 2009, p. 108). These discussions have acquired new resonance amid the ongoing war, and a new wave of research has addressed transformations in linguistic and cultural behavior provoked by invasion, displacement, and resistance (Shumytska et al., 2025; Kudriavtseva et al., 2024).

This new volume, edited by Nadiya Kiss and Monika Wingender, makes a timely and empirically grounded contribution to these debates. Based on the final results of the international project *Contested Language Diversity: Dealing with Minority Languages in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia*, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (2020–2023) through its "Trilateral Partnerships" program, the book reflects both domestic and international interest in the complexities of Ukraine's linguistic landscape. Importantly, the study also highlights how language policy in Ukraine has evolved as a post-Soviet state, especially through key legislative developments such as the *Law on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language* (2019), the *Law on Indigenous Peoples* (2021), and the *Law on National Minorities (Communities)* (2022).

Throughout the volume, the authors examine how language policies and practices in Ukraine have undergone profound changes, offering case studies and empirical data to trace their effects across public discourse, education, media, and everyday life. Notably, the book emphasizes both top-down and bottom-up perspectives, including voices from national minority communities and everyday speakers. As the editors note, Ukraine's language policy is not merely a matter of regulation but also of contested belonging and symbolic negotiation.

The structure of the volume reflects this multifaceted approach. Section I, "Influence of the War on Language Use and Attitudes", focuses on shifts in linguistic behavior, attitudes toward Ukrainian and Russian, and the broader implications of language in wartime. Drawing on interviews, public discourse, sociological surveys, and institutional practices, the six chapters explore the

transformation of language ideologies among internally displaced persons, students, business owners, and educators. Topics range from textbook content analysis to the moral values of bilingual youth, all against the backdrop of an intensified sense of national identity.

Section II, "Indigenous People, National Minorities and Regional Perspectives", expands the scope by investigating language experiences across diverse regions and ethnolinguistic groups in Ukraine, including Crimean Tatars, ethnic Russians, and communities in Transcarpathia, Chernihiv, and the Danube Delta. Comprising eight chapters, this part of the volume foregrounds the interplay between regional diversity and national policy, using tools such as linguistic landscape analysis, biographical interviews, and media studies to map Ukraine's pluralistic yet contested language ecology.

As the editors aptly observe, "The volume offers not only a broad analysis of Ukraine's language policy and language situation, but also a broad regional sociolinguistic exploration, tackling such underrepresented regions in research as Odesa, Vinnytsia, Chernihiv, Transcarpathia, Ternopil, and Lviv" (Kiss et al., 2025, p. 9). In doing so, the book enriches both Ukrainian studies and sociolinguistics more broadly, while also laying the groundwork for future research and dialogue.

Section I: Influence of the War on Language Use and Attitudes

The first chapter, "Language Behavior of Ukrainians Against the Background of the Full-Scale War: Trends of Change" (Svitlana Sokolova), offers empirical insight into shifting language practices during wartime, focusing on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host communities. Based on comparative data, the study reveals a significant increase in positive attitudes toward Ukrainian (over 50%) and a sharp decline in support for Russian (over 70%). Half of the IDPs transitioned to speaking Ukrainian, with 93% approving its broader use. These findings suggest that "the situation is now very favorable for strengthening the position of Ukrainian as the state language, but the problem of possible conflict between those who use Ukrainian and Russian requires in-depth study" (34). This observation reflects how societal upheaval is reshaping linguistic norms – not as passive consequence but as active redefinition of identity.

The study also invites further inquiry into how regional linguistic dynamics are influenced by patterns of displacement and resettlement across Ukraine – such as in Dnipropetrovsk region (in particular Kryvyi Rih) or Kiro-

vohrad region (notably Kropyvnytskyi) – where shifts in language use may signal complex processes of mutual adaptation and transformation between local populations and newly arrived communities.

The next chapter, "Language and War: Language-Related Discourse in Ukraine Since the Beginning of the Full-Scale Invasion" (Olena Ruda), builds on this observation by analyzing how language has become not only an issue of communication or preference but a powerful discursive marker of survival, resistance, and ideological affiliation. As the author notes, the discourse on language has undergone a radical transformation, becoming "more radical, symbolic and pejorative", reflecting "the existential state of society – the experience of collective and personal trauma" (37). In this discursive shift, Ukrainian is framed as a language of moral choice, while Russian becomes the language of occupation. The physical invasion is paralleled by symbolic acts such as the replacement of Ukrainian toponyms – *Mariupol* (Маріуполь) with *Мариуполь* – and the removal of Ukrainian books and textbooks from occupied territories, underscoring the idea that "language is the same weapon in terms of damage as missiles" (45). The phrase "Ї against Z", referencing letters emblematic of Ukrainian and Russian military-cultural imaginaries respectively, encapsulates the symbolic war: "This war is a war for the letters I, Ї, Є, Г" (43).

In this context, language is no longer merely metaphorically politicized – it becomes mobilized in wartime initiatives such as the national language marathon, the "Yedyni" course, and discourse-monitoring platforms like "Analyze". These reflect a heightened awareness that "the Ukrainian language is not only a sign of national identity and citizenship but also a weapon for fighting the enemy" (Ukrainer, qtd. in Kiss & Wingender, 2025, p. 42). The rhetorical shift is mirrored in public discourse, including statements by top officials: for instance, the Secretary of the National Security Council Oleksii Danilov's assertion that Russian "must disappear from our territory altogether as a part of the enemy propaganda and brainwashing of our population" (39). While such declarations could be misinterpreted internationally as linguicide, the chapter carefully distinguishes between state-driven regulation and grassroots acts of linguistic solidarity and cultural reassertion.

Ruda also addresses long-standing ambiguities in Ukrainian language policy, shaped by mass bilingualism and politically motivated hesitation to enforce regulation. The "centrist" stance often led to strategic vagueness, as seen in former slogans like "Yedyna Kraina – Yedinaia Strana". Yet the war

has prompted a more defined position among both politicians and the broader population. President Zelenskyi himself, who previously communicated primarily in Russian, has come to embody this shift as his public use of Ukrainian increasingly reflects authenticity and alignment with national sentiment – paralleling changes observed among local leaders such as those in Kharkiv or Kryvyi Rih.

Importantly, the chapter highlights how linguistic manipulation functions as a tool of disinformation and conflict. Tactics such as redefining "native language" or "right to choose" are used to mask or distort the implications of language use in public space. As Ruda notes, trolling is a tactic in information warfare that provokes opponents into poorly judged statements through manipulative techniques like spreading disinformation, distorting facts, misinterpreting statements, discrediting individuals and groups, labeling, and using irony and derogatory language (56). The analysis of common memes and phrases – "Russian warship, go to f*ck yourself", "Good evening, we are from Ukraine", "Put the seeds in your pocket" – attests to how language has also become a means of humor, resistance, and shared trauma (64). At the same time, the shift in media identity, such as the rebranding of *Novoie Vremia* to *NV (New Voice)*, illustrates how institutions seek to sever associations with Russian language and culture as "the antithesis of everything we believe in" (46).

While the chapter draws richly from online discourse and social media, one methodological note deserves attention: several quotes – such as "Unfortunately, there are no cigarettes [in Ukrainian]; 'cigarettes' [in Russian] – don't even ask" (53) – would benefit from consistent transliteration and glossing of Ukrainian and Russian lexical forms. Providing such contrasts in Latin script, even for non-Slavic readers, helps illuminate the subtle but significant differences in language use and perception – especially valuable for international audiences unfamiliar with Ukrainian linguistic realities. This approach is effectively employed elsewhere in the chapter, such as in examples of *surzhyk* (53) or the evaluative terms *rosiiski posipaky*, *vata*, and *ruskomirtsi* (58–59), which are accompanied by concise definitions and cultural explanations.

Shifting the focus to the business sphere, the chapter "Russia Must Be Opposed on All Fronts: How the Full-Scale War Has Changed Language Situation in the Ukrainian Business Environment" (Liudmyla Pidkuimukha) further demonstrates how wartime conditions have redefined linguistic behavior. Drawing on interviews with business owners and CEOs as well as their public

social media posts, the author explores how language choices have become a matter of identity construction, ideological positioning, and economic strategy. As she notes, language behavior, language choice, and language attitude describe the language situation studied during the full-scale Russian–Ukrainian war (70), revealing a growing tendency to abandon Russian in favor of Ukrainian as both a civic responsibility and a brand of reputational alignment.

The chapter contributes new ground to the volume by focusing on a previously underexplored sphere – business – and highlights how linguistic transformations here reflect broader social shifts. The Ukrainian language is now regarded as an "essential identity marker" (71), and sociological data supports this reorientation: 86% of respondents in a 2022 survey by the "Rating" group favored Ukrainian as the only state language – a 10% increase compared to 2021. Only 3% supported Russian as a second state language (72). These author's findings offer a clear picture of language attitudes in flux, though they raise broader questions that remain unexplored in the chapter – for instance, why a significant share of Ukrainians continue to report Russian as their "native" language, even when it is not tied to ethnic Russian identity. The historical circumstances of Soviet-era linguistic policy and the reasons behind the enduring legacy of Russian as a default medium of business or daily interaction remain largely implicit. Why is the focus of such surveys predominantly on Russian, and not, for example, Hungarian, Polish, or Bulgarian minority languages?

Nevertheless, the statistical data is illuminating. By October 2022, employers posted 84% of job listings in Ukrainian and only 13% in Russian, according to Work.ua analysts (75). Among CVs, Ukrainian was used more often by younger candidates aged 16–25 and those in the 40–44 range, while applicants over 55– those raised during the Soviet Union – still predominantly submitted resumés in Russian (75). These generational patterns are critical, as they reflect the long-term effects of Soviet-era Russification, the persistence of inherited language habits, and in many cases, the unintentional reproduction of those habits by post-Soviet generations. This dimension opens space for research into how Russian continues to be transmitted to children today – through parental input and social media – even though it is no longer formally taught in most Ukrainian schools, especially after 2022. Such questions are particularly urgent given growing public concern about informal sources of Russian language acquisition, with implications for national cultural policy and educational planning.

In this regard, Pidkuimukha's conclusion suggests important directions for future investigation: "It would be revealing to organize in-depth interviews with the Ukrainian business persons to understand how switching to Ukrainian and removing Russian from the websites and applications has influenced the business and how the situation inside the companies has changed" (86). This idea could also be extended by considering whether these changes are connected not only to symbolic identity but to the reorientation of target markets: the loss of the Russophone consumer base in Russia, Belarus, and occupied territories has rendered investment in Russian-language infrastructure unprofitable. Instead, businesses are likely to refocus on Ukrainian and English-speaking audiences, both domestically and across the diaspora. This trend is not only linguistic but economic and geopolitical.

The article also captures how language choice has become morally charged. For many business leaders, Ukrainian is now seen as "the language of brave and free people" (83), while Russian is increasingly associated with "those who kill, rape, rob, and those who believe that 'not everything is so clear-cut'" (ibid.). This symbolic polarization underscores how deeply language is embedded in the ethical framework of wartime Ukrainian society. As Vladyslav Rashkovan of the IMF noted, even when children already know Russian, "they should communicate in Ukrainian" (ibid.). Such remarks point not only to evolving linguistic preferences but also to shifting expectations of civic conduct.

Another important angle emerges in the analysis of the contribution "Totalitarian Echoes: Mapping the Influence on Ukrainian Language Textbooks" (Anastasiia Onatii), which addresses a less visible but ideologically charged area of language policy: school textbooks. Through comparative content and cartographic analysis, the study investigates how Ukrainian schoolbooks, specifically for grades 4 to 6, have reflected shifting ideological paradigms from the Soviet era to post-independence Ukraine. The analysis centers on the selection and frequency of place names, revealing that Soviet-era textbooks (1955, 1985) included a disproportionately high number of Russian toponyms, while Ukrainian geographic references were either sparse (1955) or only slightly more prevalent (1985). In contrast, post-1991 textbooks (1992, 2013, 2018) display a significant increase in the representation of Ukrainian toponyms, particularly from central and western regions, although eastern Ukraine remains conspicuously underrepresented (91–97).

Onatii's use of cartographic visualization is particularly effective in illustrating how linguistic content reflects geopolitical imagination. By overlaying place name mentions onto a contemporary map of Ukraine, the study reveals overlaps between textbook geographies and the areas targeted by Russia during the first three months of the 2022 invasion. This juxtaposition suggests not only that textbook content was ideologically coded, but that it may have long served to legitimize imperial territorial claims: "The research question concerned whether there is a connection between how the totalitarian empire viewed Ukrainian lands and the events Ukraine has experienced since the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war" (100–101). Such findings underscore the need to critically reassess how educational materials shape national spatial imaginaries, and how this shaping can have long-term geopolitical consequences.

The chapter also makes an important terminological observation: textbooks from the early post-independence period (e.g., *Ridna mova* [Native Language for 6th Grade], Peredrii, 1992) bear the word *"Mother Tongue"* in the title, in contrast to both Soviet and later post-2010 editions that use *"Ukrainian Language"*. As Onatii notes, "The attribute 'native' takes on such a strong meaning that it is even reflected in the textbook's title" (106). This return to *ridna mova* [mother tongue] in official usage may be seen as part of a broader discursive decolonization, reasserting Ukrainian as the default and inherited language of Ukrainian children. It also marks a rupture with Soviet practices where "native language" often referred to Russian, while Ukrainian was listed separately. This terminological shift opens avenues for further analysis of how linguistic framing in educational policy affects identity formation.

The focus on school handbooks within Ukraine offers important insight, but it also invites comparison with Ukrainian educational efforts in the diaspora. While Soviet schoolbooks privileged Russian toponyms, Ukrainian diaspora communities – in Canada and Australia, for example – produced textbooks and readers (e.g., those by Petro Volyniak, Mariia Deiko, respectively) that consistently centered Ukrainian geography and culture. Integrating such materials into future comparative studies could provide a fuller picture of how geography, ideology, and language policy intersect across time and space. These diasporic materials also reflect broader cultural efforts to assert Ukrainian identity in contrast to external influences, often through the recurring motif of self vs. other, embedded in both linguistic choices and curricular narratives (Vardanian, *Svii – chuzhyi*).

Although the quantitative increase of Ukrainian place names in post-Soviet school textbooks is clear, Onatii also points to their uneven regional distribution: western Ukraine, absent in Soviet-era books, becomes dominant in the post-independence period, while eastern and southern regions remain underrepresented (113). This gap reflects both a historical deficit in national cultural policy and the deep-rooted consequences of Soviet-era Russification in those regions. Yet, as post-2014 curricular reforms continue, attention to regional inclusivity in educational content remains crucial for fostering a shared civic identity. Here too, Ukrainian diasporic materials – long attentive to Ukraine's territorial wholeness – may offer instructive models.

Further insight into the linguistic consequences of war comes from the chapter "Changes in Language and National Consciousness of Ukrainians in the Period of Russia's Full-Scale War in Ukraine" (Natalija Matvejeva), which continues the thread of sociolinguistic transformation by emphasizing the link between language use and national identity during wartime. Drawing on a series of sociological surveys conducted throughout 2022 (Rating, KMIS, Gradus), as well as reflections from students at Ternopil National Pedagogical University, the study outlines an observable shift toward Ukrainian monolingualism in public life. The data show a steady increase in the presence and perceived value of the Ukrainian language in various domains of communication. Language here functions not merely as a tool, but as "a kind of marker of the nation" (120), deeply tied to Ukraine's symbolic and political self-understanding.

Importantly, the author reminds us that "everyone associates France with the French language, Germany with the German language, Great Britain with English, while Ukraine due to its history of colonization is associated not only with the Ukrainian language, but also with Russian" (ibid.). This double association is a result of centuries of colonization, particularly Russification, which, as Matvejeva notes with reference to Masenko (*Mova i polityka*), systematically denationalized the Ukrainian population. This insight is timely and well-framed, yet it may benefit from further nuance. While the Russian imperial and Soviet legacies are central to Ukraine's linguistic struggles, Ukraine's history is also shaped by other colonial and regional forces – its division between neighboring empires such as Austria-Hungary, Poland, and Romania has also left linguistic imprints. These layered historical circumstances, and their varying impact on language, are further explored in the later chapters of the volume, offering a broader perspective on how language and identity have evolved under multiple regimes of domination.

The final chapter of the section, "Moral Values of the Ukrainian-Speaking and Russian-Speaking Students in Bilingual Settings" (Taras Tkachuk), approaches language choice through the lens of value orientations, drawing on Schwartz's theory of basic human values. Based on a survey of 944 high school students from the Vinnytsia region, the study identifies correlations between language practices (Ukrainian-speaking, Russian-speaking, and bilingual) and dominant moral values. While students from both urban and suburban generally share similar tendencies, some distinctions emerge: for instance, students from Vinnytsia prioritize universalism, power, self-direction, and achievement, whereas those from smaller towns emphasize safety, benevolence, and traditions – particularly among bilingual respondents (141).

Although the author uses the term *periphery* to denote students from smaller settlements, this terminology deserves further scrutiny. Within postcolonial discourse, *center–periphery* binaries often carry connotations of marginality or diminished value, unintentionally framing non-urban populations as second-tier. If this term is retained, it would be important to clarify whether the author indeed subscribes to a socio-symbolic hierarchy between urban and rural respondents, or whether a more neutral designation – such as *suburban* – might better reflect the study's intent.

At the same time, the chapter introduces a valuable angle by connecting language choice to ethical self-positioning. For instance, Ukrainian-speaking students rank achievement, conformity, and tradition more highly, while Russian-speaking students show greater emphasis on hedonism and self-direction (154). These associations, while tentative, invite deeper exploration into how language socialization intersects with moral development in contemporary Ukraine, particularly in regions historically shaped by overlapping linguistic and ideological legacies.

This concluding chapter reinforces the broader trajectory of Section I, where language use is increasingly linked not only to identity and politics but also to value systems and ethical frameworks – a connection that becomes especially salient in times of national upheaval.

Section II: Indigenous People, National Minorities and Regional Perspectives

The first chapter of the second section, "Crimean Tatars in the Context of War, Displacement and Forced Migration: Language Policy and Behavior" (Nadiya Kiss and Ivanna Car), offers a much-needed focus on a minority per-

spective within the broader Ukrainian sociolinguistic landscape. Drawing on legislative analysis and eleven linguistic biographies, the authors demonstrate how war, occupation, and forced migration have prompted Crimean Tatars to reassess their linguistic practices – most notably, distancing themselves from Russian and reaffirming the role of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar in their identity formation (170–174). Particularly striking is the respondents' understanding of *mother tongue* as a layered notion that may include both Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian (165–166), reflecting hybrid identities shaped by political allegiance and cultural belonging.

This chapter is a particular strength of the volume, offering rare and timely insight into the linguistic experiences of a community that has long been underrepresented in language policy research. As the authors note, the Crimean Tatar case calls for continued investigation using diverse sociolinguistic methods, particularly with regard to age, regional background, and language adaptation (196–197). In accordance with "Strategy for the Development of the Crimean Tatar Language for 2022–2032", the study's conceptualization of the Crimean Tatar language as "divided" refers to the coexistence of different alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin), generational shifts in language use, divergent educational practices, and the contrasting language policies of Ukraine and the occupying Russian authorities (qtd. in Kiss & Wingender, 2025, p. 174). In this sense, the chapter lays the groundwork for comparative research on identity and multilingual repertoires among displaced Crimean Tatars. It also highlights the broader need to systematically analyze language issues in other minoritized communities in Ukraine – an agenda that remains both underexplored and urgently necessary.

Continuing the exploration of minority and regional language practices, "Ethnolinguistic Demarcation of Public Space in the Linguistic Landscape of Transcarpathia, Ukraine" (Bohdan Azhniuk) shifts the focus from individual language biographies to spatial and symbolic markers of identity. Drawing on the concept of the linguistic landscape (LL), the chapter examines how multilingual signage – top-down and bottom-up – reflects and negotiates ethnolinguistic boundaries in Transcarpathia, particularly between Ukrainian and Hungarian communities.

What is particularly interesting, Azhniuk expands the notion of LL beyond official signage to include commercial signs, murals, graffiti, and informal home-made inscriptions (202). This broader scope allows for a more complex view of how public space functions as a site of symbolic contestation and identity-making. Importantly, the author highlights the increasing presence of

the "local vernacular of the Ukrainian language" in commercial signage, particularly in restaurants and cafés. This vernacular, Azhniuk argues, is "not only an exotic decoration" but also a symbolically charged element that "enhances its symbolic power and vitality" (239), "however there is no direct evidence of the dialect's symbolic competition with the standard Ukrainian for political loyalty of the local residents" (240).

The chapter also stresses the different communicative roles of official and unofficial signs: while top-down signage conveys state-approved messages, bottom-up inscriptions are more personalized and community-driven (210). In areas with high concentrations of ethnic Hungarians, such as Berehovo, LL items often show "symmetrical Ukrainian-Hungarian bilingualism", though even here Ukrainian tends to dominate in informal signage (239–240). In Uzhhorod, by contrast, Hungarian appears mostly in private commercial contexts. These patterns, as the author notes, have implications for understanding how language hierarchies and group identities are visually articulated. His chapter thus contributes to broader debates about linguistic space, state language policies, and local multilingual practices in post-Soviet contexts.

Turning to another aspect of language practices in Transcarpathia, Lesia Hychko's chapter "Language Situation of National Minorities in Transcarpathia: Socio-Communicative Elements of Design and Linguistic Landscape" complements Azhniuk's study by shifting attention to bilingualism in everyday visual communication – particularly in tourism, advertising, and education. Drawing from both public signage and textbook design, the author demonstrates how Hungarian-Ukrainian coexistence is embedded not only in linguistic content but also in graphic aesthetics and national color symbolism. Bilingual and multilingual practices are shown to enhance communicative effectiveness, especially in areas where national minorities are densely settled.

What stands out in this contribution is its attention to technological mediation of language space, including smartphone settings, UI localization (e.g., LinkedIn's Ukrainian interface), and machine translation tools like DeepL (245–246). This expands the notion of linguistic landscape into the personal digital sphere, underscoring how multilingual identity is shaped not only offline but also through everyday technological interactions. Hychko also provocatively reflects on the graphic potential of Ukrainian Cyrillic, suggesting aesthetic reappropriation as a way to enhance its visibility and symbolic appeal – adding a creative dimension to the broader discourse on language and national representation.

While previous chapters have addressed the linguistic diversity of Transcarpathia, Halyna Shumytska's contribution, "Autobiographical Narrative of Linguistic Personality Formation in a Multilingual Border Region: Documentation Based on In-Depth Interviews," offers an in-depth examination of the linguistic biographies of Hungarian and Romanian minorities, employing a triangulation method that integrates autobiographical narratives, media discourse, and official language policy documents. The author shows how these personal narratives not only recount language use but also function as tools for identity construction and self-reflection.

What emerges clearly is the psychological insight into how narrators reconstruct their life stories and linguistic experiences, gaining new perspectives on their identity (274). This approach recalls the methodology employed by Nadiya Kiss and Ivanna Car in their earlier contribution to this volume, where Tatar linguistic biographies are analyzed to shed light on minority language dynamics. The triangulation situates these individual experiences within broader sociopolitical and institutional frameworks, deepening our understanding of contested language diversity (276).

Shumytska's findings reveal generational differences: older generations educated during the Soviet period speak their native minority language, Russian, and Ukrainian, while younger generations raised in independent Ukraine use mainly their native language and Ukrainian, often alongside other languages. Moreover, urban residents tend to have stronger multilingual skills, and public sector workers demonstrate better command of the official language than those in the private sector (295). These insights highlight the complex sociolinguistic landscape shaped by historical and political changes in the region.

Building on these observations, the chapter "Media Discussions on the Functioning of Minority Languages in Transcarpathia" (Vasyl Sharkan) examines Ukrainian online media coverage of national minority languages in Transcarpathia from April 2019 to December 2022. The study identifies two distinct periods: before and after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Before the war, media attention focused primarily on the status of the Hungarian language in education, reflecting ongoing regional tensions. After the outbreak, coverage shifted toward the role of the Russian language in Ukraine, debates around the national minorities law, and initiatives to expand Ukrainian language learning opportunities for minority groups (299–314).

Sharkan employs Google News and local media sources to analyze content, revealing that 75% of coverage concerns the Hungarian minority, with much smaller shares addressing Romanian, Slovak, Roma, and German communities. The article highlights a pluralism of opinions in Transcarpathian media, both "external" pluralism from multiple viewpoints and "internal" pluralism within specific platforms, such as *Media Vista* and *Infopost* (318–319).

The observations in this chapter are thought-provoking and intertextually reference recent news about "espionage scandals" involving Hungary, which have heightened public attention to ethnic and linguistic loyalties in Transcarpathia (Spike, 2025; "SBU vykryla", 2025). These "spy-scandals" reveal how geopolitical tensions influence both local public sentiment and the policies of Ukraine and Hungary concerning minority languages. The media discourse thus becomes a site where language ideologies intersect with national security concerns and identity politics. This dynamic illustrates how linguistic issues are not isolated cultural questions but are deeply embedded in broader political strategies aimed at managing (or contesting) minority loyalty and integration.

By contextualizing media representations within these broader tensions, Sharkan's contribution provides a timely and nuanced understanding of the interplay between language policy, minority rights, and interstate relations in the border region of Transcarpathia. This adds an important dimension to the analysis of minority language functioning in Ukraine and highlights the need for further research on the intersection of language ideologies, regional geopolitics, and media influence (317–319).

The next chapter "Language Adaptation of Ethnic Russians in the West of Ukraine" (Ivanna Car) explores the language biographies of three ethnic Russians living in a Ukrainian-speaking village in the Lviv region. Through qualitative analysis of these biographies recorded in 2021, Car examines how prolonged exposure to a Ukrainian-speaking environment – combined with political and psychological factors – shaped the informants' language behavior, national identity, and language attitudes (325–326).

The study applies the method of language biography, which enables a diachronic perspective on language use, preferences, and shifts, as well as on sociocultural embeddedness (327–328). The analysis is structured around such themes as childhood, education, career, family, identity, and perceptions of language policy and the broader sociopolitical context. Notably, none of the informants reported experiences of discrimination based on language or ethnicity, although their individual trajectories of adaptation varied (325).

One of the article's most compelling observations is that language adaptation occurred in parallel with sociocultural integration: the informants adopted local traditions and, in some cases, even altered their political views. This correlation between linguistic and ideological transformation makes the case particularly relevant in the broader context of post-Soviet identity negotiations. Moreover, the author convincingly shows how the language choices of these individuals influenced the national and linguistic identification of their children and grandchildren.

In their chapter, "From the Observations of Dynamics of Language Situation in the Multilingual Area Between the Dniester and the Danube Rivers", Andriy Kolesnykov and Maryna Delyusto present the results of a long-term observation of language dynamics in one of Ukraine's most linguistically diverse areas: the southern region between the Dniester and Danube rivers (TBDD), also known as Southern Besarabiia or Buiak (348). Drawing on extensive empirical material –language biographies, participant observation, responses to language and education laws, media analysis, and public discourse – the authors identify three key stages in the development of the regional language situation: the post-Soviet period (1991–2000), the pre-war period (2001–2022), and the ongoing war period (since February 24, 2022).

The study provides a critical view of language policy in Ukraine by highlighting the tension between *de jure* and *de facto* language use and emphasizing the need to strengthen the communicative functionality of Ukrainian as a state language – particularly in everyday and interethnic communication. The authors argue that the true marker of the Ukrainian language's entrenchment in the region is its adoption as the primary means of interethnic communication.

The article provides a critical assessment of Ukraine's language policy, especially the persistent gap between official policies and everyday language use. During the pre-war period (2001–2022), the authors argue, Ukrainian still failed to become the main tool of interethnic communication in the region, revealing the limited effectiveness of state policy over three decades of independence. This insight invites reflection on the paradoxical situation in Ukraine itself: while neighboring countries such as Hungary and Romania actively promote their languages in Ukraine through well-funded cultural institutions, Ukraine has long lacked a comparable strategic vision for promoting Ukrainian, even on its territory. This raises the fundamental question of whether the Ukrainian state truly believes in the value of its language and is willing to

position it as a European language. In this context, Kolesnykov and Delyusto suggest that Ukrainian should be granted the status of an official EU language even before Ukraine's formal accession. They frame this move as a symbolic and practical boost for the language's prestige and future development.

The final chapter "Perception of the Ukrainian Language Amongst National Minority Representatives in Chernihiv" (Svitlana Nemyrovska) explores the perceptions and language biographies of representatives of six national minorities in Chernihiv, focusing on shifts in attitudes toward Ukrainian and minority languages from Soviet times to the Russian invasion in 2022. Based on nine interviews conducted in 2021, the study reveals a predominantly bilingual environment (Ukrainian–Russian), in which minority languages have been almost entirely marginalized. Russian remains dominant in the private sphere, while Ukrainian, though formally accepted as the official language, is often not actively spoken by respondents. A notable strength of this chapter is the inclusion of bilingual interview transcripts (393–394). Presenting both the original responses and their English translations allows readers to grasp nuances of the original speech that are often lost in translation. This approach improves the transparency of analysis and should be more widely adopted in studies of multilingual contexts.

A key historical insight is that Russification shaped Chernihiv's linguistic identity for over a century, reinforced by the region's border location and perceived detachment from national cultural processes. The study underlines the paradox of minority representatives supporting Ukrainian as a state language, despite limited competence or daily use, and notes intergenerational differences: younger people tend to emigrate, while older generations retain sentimental attachments to Russian and the Soviet past.

Although the methodology of language biographies provides valuable insight into lived linguistic experience, the inclusion of historical context – tracing the city's political and demographic shifts from Kyivan Rus through the Russian Empire –proves essential. It not only enriches the sociolinguistic analysis but also challenges potential manipulations of historical narratives, particularly in international discourse. As seen in other chapters (e.g., on Hungary and Romania), such background helps explain how current language attitudes have evolved over centuries of geopolitical transformation.

This volume employs a robust sociolinguistic methodology, notably the use of language biographies, to explore the complex language dynamics in contemporary Ukraine. The analytical material extends beyond personal narratives to

include official data, media content, and a rich historical context – although a more consistent inclusion of historical background and linguistic unification in the representation of proper names would further strengthen the work.

A recurrent challenge throughout the volume is the inconsistent transliteration of Ukrainian proper names. For example, the author Halyna Shumytska's name appears with different spellings in the table of contents and the bibliography. This inconsistency disperses efforts toward standardized transliteration, potentially hindering discoverability of personal names, place names, and institutional titles. It is recommended that authors uniformly apply official transliteration standards across the entire text (see, e.g., "Ofitsiina transliteratsiia"). For instance, the official English spelling of "Ощадбанк" is "Oschadbank", as reflected on its official website, yet variants appear in the volume. Another example is the spelling of "Mykolajiv" instead of the official form "Mykolaiv" (84). Similarly, other examples reveal transliterations influenced by Polish or Czech conventions, reflecting an attempt to approximate Ukrainian contexts for a European readership but ultimately diverging from established international standards. Clarifying the transliteration system used and adhering to it consistently would aid both scholarly rigor and practical utility. Thus, it would have been helpful to indicate at the beginning of the volume which system of transliteration is being used for Ukrainian names. This book review applies the official system of Ukrainian transliteration to ensure consistency in rendering proper names, except for personal names of the contributing authors, which are cited as they appear in the original chapters.

This inconsistency also underscores a broader issue in the field of Ukrainian studies: the need for standardized transliteration and equivalence of Ukrainian proper names in English-language publications. A well-known example is the spelling of "Chornobyl" in English. While the official Ukrainian documents have not yet updated the spelling, the Russian-influenced form "Chernobyl" has been commonly used in the past (Plokhy, 2018). More recently, both Ukrainian and international scholars (e.g., Vardanian, 2022; Zelenenka et al., 2024; Rush-Cooper, 2024) have increasingly adopted the standardized Ukrainian transliteration "Chornobyl". Addressing this issue is crucial for the dissemination and recognition of Ukrainian scholarship and cultural identity globally. The volume's highlighting of this discourse – language policy and representation of Ukrainian within academic research – is a valuable meta-reflection that warrants further investigation and harmonization.

The appeal of this book lies in several key strengths:

1. It provides a broad and nuanced academic perspective on language situations and language policy in Ukraine from a sociolinguistic viewpoint.
2. The volume's evidence-based approach offers insights grounded in empirical research rather than propaganda, addressing important topics such as the contested role of Russian as a second official language, the status and use of Hungarian and Romanian in other Ukrainian regions, and ongoing improvements in state language policy alongside the growing recognition of Ukrainian as a European language.
3. The examples and reflections around language use inspire further engagement and dialogue. Readers find themselves immersed in the discourse on language issues, where previously invisible social phenomena become visible, and grassroots language activism – by bloggers, social media contributors, and language clubs – gains new significance.
4. The extensive factual material, drawn from surveys, interviews, social media, blogs, and official statistics, is accompanied by critical analysis and a rich visual apparatus (graphs, charts, screenshots, etc.), which collectively document the real presence of languages and their speakers in Ukraine's sociolinguistic landscape.

Overall, the volume offers a timely and necessary contribution to understanding Ukraine's language realities and policies, while pointing toward the need for greater methodological rigor in linguistic representation and transliteration in academic publishing.

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UKRAINE–RUSSIA RELATIONS: CASE STUDY OR CHALLENGE FOR DECOLONIAL THEORY?

Review of: Biedarieva, Svitlana. *Ambicoloniality and War: The Ukrainian-Russian Case*. Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2025.

The development of postcolonial studies has reached such a potent level as of now, enabling it to answer many difficult questions regarding the relationships between former colonizers and former colonized. At the same time, considerable criticism has been voiced in connection with the postcolonial approach being applied to researching the past and present of Ukraine. Russia's war against Ukraine, in particular its full-scale stage, on the one hand, has reduced some notes of caution regarding the appropriateness of applying postcolonial and decolonial lenses to studying Ukrainian history and contemporary issues, and, on the other hand, raised some methodological questions, challenging some established frameworks. In this context, the release of Svitlana Biedarieva's book is very timely. On the one hand, it clarifies certain issues in the discussion about the colonial status of Ukraine, and, on the other hand, it initiates a completely new discussion – on the concept of ambicoloniality. In my opinion, the dual role of this book is determined by the motives that encouraged the author to write it, their aims, the object of research, and the dynamics of the academic field. In my view, understanding these four points is the key to interpreting the book.

Although the author concludes the book by explaining the motives that prompted her to undertake the writing, it seems important for us to begin with

these motives. As S.Biedarieva points out, "This book was born out of a necessity to deal with trauma—a personal trauma of estrangement from the homeland because of the unjust war ravaging it; a collective trauma of witnessing previously unimaginable atrocities and the deaths of those near and far alike; and a historical trauma of colonial belonging and invisibility, of the denial of agency, and of the lack of presence and subjectivity" (p. 217). According to the author herself, the book does not eliminate these traumas but rather aims to restore justice in what is arguably its most significant contribution – by drawing the attention of international academia to Ukraine as an important object of theoretical analysis. It is worth noting that S. Biedarieva successfully accomplished this task. The aim of the book is "to provide a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of Ukraine's diverse identities, numerous faces and voices, multiculturality, and internal hybridity (as opposed to postcolonial hybridity), liberated from the influence of the dominant Russian perspectives" (p. 2). This goal leads to a focus on the identity of contemporary Ukraine, reflected through the analysis of art practices and works against the diachronic prospect of social and political contexts, especially in wartime.

The academic context, or methodological background, of the book requires more clarification. As is commonly known, two theories have been developed around the study of the experience, culture, and social processes in countries with a colonial legacy – postcolonial theory and decolonial theory, which employ slightly different analytical approaches and descriptive frameworks. Some concepts of both theories are able to explain the processes that took place in Ukraine during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. At the same time, certain fundamental principles of these theories need to be adapted according to the peculiarities of the relations between Ukraine and Russia. But as S. Biedarieva notes, "he notions of the 'postcolonial' and the 'decolonial' are not interchangeable; rather, they reflect two different stages of liberation from colonial entanglement" (p. 2). And it is precisely this kind of chronotope that she applies to describe the social processes taking place in Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union, distinguishing between the postcolonial and decolonial stages of development. The book seeks to resolve this contradiction by introducing new terminology to describe the specific colonial relations between Ukraine and Russia, as well as new methodological approaches to theorizing their close entanglement within the broader process of dismantling the post-Soviet space.

In outlining the theoretical foundations, S. Biedarieva draws on the works of classical postcolonial and decolonial theorists, while simultaneously engaging in debate with some of them—such as Mignolo—regarding his insufficient understanding of the Ukrainian context. Agreeing with those scholars who argue that the explanatory power of postcolonial theory has become limited, the author proposes a new theoretical framework. This framework encompasses a set of original concepts, developed specifically to explain the relationship between Russia and Ukraine, the specificity of which does not fully fit into the established theoretical models of postcolonial and decolonial studies. Below is a brief outline of these authorial concepts.

● *Ambicoloniality*. Firstly, it is a concept of ambicoloniality that is echoed in the title of the book. It is established as an alternative to the dichotomy of 'coloniality/decoloniality'. Ambicoloniality entails considering the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized not through the prism of subject–object but rather subject–subject relations, interpreting power as a form of symbolic exchange rooted in the cultural potency of the parties involved and facilitated by their shared border. As the author emphasizes, "The prefix "ambi-" refers to the symmetrical, mirroring processes of entanglement ongoing in the colonized state and its colonizer" (p. 69). In that way, she denies the basics of postcolonial and decolonial theories as she reconstitutes the colonized from an object of power into an active agent within power relations. This agency manifests itself in the symbolic power of the colonized over the colonizer. Within the framework of ambicoloniality, the colonizer exerts economic and political influence on the colonized, while the colonized, in turn, exercises symbolic influence over the colonizer—the influence that is revealed in the latter's fascination with "the symbolic field of the subordinated country and the desire to appropriate it" (p. 71). In other words, Ukraine's power over Russia lies in Russia's desire to appropriate Ukraine.

The concept of ambicoloniality was designed to interpret the specific nature of the Ukrainian–Russian relationship and to be applicable to other post-imperial contexts in the post-Soviet space. As Svitlana Biedarieva argues, "In the case of Ukraine—and other now-independent countries of Eastern Europe, such as Belarus, the Baltic states, Kazakhstan, or Georgia, among others, the condition of side-by-side coexistence with the more powerful neighbor resulted in a slow hybridization of mutual impacts. This slow fusion formed a much stronger bond between the colonizer and the colonized, including the impossibility of drawing a divisive line within some of the syncretic forma-

tions and the related inability of identifying one side's agency in the production of these hybrid constructions of culture" (p. 70).

Applying this theoretical framework to the analysis of Ukrainian–Russian relations, the author arrives at a rather unexpected conclusion: the current neocolonial war waged by Russia and Ukraine's anticolonial resistance are causing the collapse of the ambicolonial condition. The object of desire (Ukraine) becomes unattainable for the colonizer (Russia), and the mutual exchange of influences thus becomes impossible. The author expresses the conviction that "Now, in refusing to be this ghost of colonial daydreaming, Ukraine becomes Russia's symbolic colonizer" (p. 166).

● *Synchronic and diachronic colonization*. Referring to Saussure's distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistic changes, S. Biedarieva suggests applying this typology to the description of types of colonization in order to capture their temporal logic of development. Synchronic colonization entails the rapid extraction of resources or the swift establishment of political and economic dominance over a specific region or population. Therefore, it often denotes the occupation of a territory through a sequence of events unfolding within a relatively brief period of time. Conversely, diachronic colonization describes a long-term process in which control and influence are consolidated progressively. This process may include the steady implementation of colonial policies and practices, the penetration of colonial culture and values, the emergence of creolized and syncretic narratives, the slow transformation of epistemological frameworks, and the sustained suppression of local languages and cultures. Using these terms, the colonization of Ukraine by both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union exemplifies diachronic colonization, which leads to ambicoloniality of relationships between these countries. Russia's current invasion of Ukraine is can be seen as a break with diachronic colonization and a transition to its synchronic model, thus initiating the disintegration of the ambicoloniality.

● *Swift and slow decolonization*. Slow decolonization can be understood as a gradual postcolonial transformation characterized by the recombination of historically intertwined narratives. In contrast, "swift" decolonization entails a decisive rupture with the colonial entanglement of contested history and their replacement by new forms of epistemological production. At times, this "swift" decolonization manifests itself through acts of anti-colonial resistance. The author traces the process of decolonization in Ukraine from the Euromaidan and outlines the transition from slow to swift decolonization. In par-

ticular, the full-scale invasion has ultimately shifted all processes into the mode of swift decolonization. The author emphasises, "In response to the synchronic neocolonial attempts, the decolonization process can be only "swift," induced by decolonial processes that resemble the radicalism of the anti-colonial struggle (in parallel with the actual armed resistance to Russia's violent invasion)" (p. 73).

● *Anachronic colonialism and anachronic anti-colonialism*. The scholar refers to contemporary attempts to restore colonial relations and neocolonial ambitions – emerging in a world where empires as political entities no longer exist and all former colonies hold the status of independent states – as "anachronic colonialism". Accordingly, Ukraine's anti-colonial resistance, which is both natural and justified within the global postcolonial stage of development, appears as an anachronic phenomenon. At the same time, however, it constitutes an integral element of Ukraine's decolonial condition. The immediate need for Ukraine's anti-colonial struggle – as the only means to counter violence – has generated corresponding anti-colonial manifestations in culture. This situation, defined by the tension between an anti-colonial stance and a decolonial situation, is described by the author as *anachronic* in relation to the conventional logic of how formerly subordinate nations evolve after liberation from colonial rule (pp. 45–46).

Evidently, another concept – the term *recurrent colonialism* – may be seen as a synonym for this phenomenon. According to the author, this form of coloniality tends to occur more frequently in countries sharing a common border than in those whose colonial relations developed across distances. This, she argues, explains the recurrence of anti-colonial discourse in Ukrainian culture and determines the specificity of Ukrainian coloniality as a condition that is recurrently postcolonial (p. 47).

● *Syncretic polarization*. This process occurs when two elements, once regarded as similar, become divided by a newly constructed boundary that highlights their differences. Phenomena that had previously been perceived as "neutral" variations are, through syncretic polarization, reoriented into binary oppositions, marked as either "plus" or "minus." As a result of this syncretic polarization, Ukraine's decolonial processes assume the features of anti-colonial resistance. The scholar defines two stages of syncretic polarization: radical (anti-colonial) and stabilizing (decolonial). In the context of war, the aim of syncretic polarization is to accentuate differences while leaving similarities in a grey zone. As the author notes, syncretic polarization serves

as an instrument of self-decolonization. One of its most striking manifestations is the switching to the Ukrainian language. Since S. Biedarieva regards the Russian language primarily as a channel of colonial influence, the switching to Ukrainian is interpreted both as an act of self-decolonization and as a collective turn toward the homogenization of the informational sphere – an integral part of the broader, intensive anti-colonial process. Thus, language becomes, on the one hand, the principal domain of syncretic polarization and, on the other, a simultaneous instrument of both decolonization and anti-colonial resistance.

In addition to the concepts specifically designed for the proposed theory, S. Biedarieva also modifies several well-known notions, adapting them to the theoretical framework of ambicoloniality and to the interpretation of the processes taking place in Ukraine and Russia, as well as their mutual relations: abyssal line (from Boaventura de Sousa Santos), zero-point epistemology/knowledge (from Walter Mignolo), necropolitics (from Achille Mbembe), and morphology of domination (from Sheldon Pollock). It is worth noting that the book's terminology is not imposed on the reader all at once but rather introduced gradually, step by step, so that each new chapter establishes connections between previously presented concepts, forming a coherent system for understanding complex processes.

Beyond its methodological dimension, the book also clearly reveals a narrative aspect that can be described as the story of Ukraine's transition from a postcolonial condition to a decolonial situation. As the analysis of social processes and artistic practices demonstrates, this transition is not instantenous, but irreversible. It begins with Euromaidan and culminates in the full-scale invasion, marking the start of an accelerated decolonization movement. According to the author, the goal of decolonization in Ukraine is to replace postcolonial ambivalence with an internal hybridity, understood as the unity of regional and ethnonational cultural features. The tendencies observed in Ukraine's artistic life suggest that the country is successfully moving in this direction, a process further facilitated by the internal displacement of many citizens. Ultimately, the complete decolonization of Ukraine also signifies its liberation from the web of ambicolonial relations.

These outcomes are also grounded in the author's reflections on key events in Ukraine that have already become part of history. Among them are: the celebration of the anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' in Kyiv in 2023; the "yolka" – the unfinished New Year's tree on Independence Square in 2014 that

became a symbol of Euromaidan; the destruction of the Hryhorii Skovoroda Museum by a direct Russian missile strike in May 2022; the shooting of civilians in Irpin during their evacuation; and the explosion of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant in June 2023.

Artistic interpretations of these events – such as Anna Zvyagintseva's photo series *from the Event (Gap)* (2014), depicting paving stones dismantled during Euromaidan; Zhanna Kadyrova's installation *Palianytsia* (2022); Yevgenia Belorusets's *The War Diary* (2022) and her photo series documenting the first 42 days of the invasion in Kyiv between February and April 2022; and the opera *Gaia-24: Opera del Mondo* (2024) by Roman Grygoriv and Illia Razumeiko, which focuses on the devastating consequences of the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant by the Russian army. Together, these works illustrate how contemporary Ukrainian artists reflect how Ukraine resists Russia's neocolonial attempts while simultaneously enacting a decolonial turn. At the same time, the analysis of these artistic practices and works contributes to the broader exploration of the epistemology of violence.

Another advantage of the reviewed book lies in the author's explanation of how, within the Ukrainian context, the epistemology of the oppressed coexists with the aspiration toward modernity and the orientation toward European values. On the one hand, this presents unique challenges for the application of decolonial theory, and on the other, constitute a unique case study for rethinking and expanding the concept of decoloniality.

While acknowledging the considerable merits of the reviewed work and its substantial contribution to the study of colonial relations in general – and to the inclusion of the Ukrainian case into this theoretical paradigm in particular – it is nevertheless important to highlight several contentious points whose critical discussion may contribute to development of the theory proposed in the book.

The first of these is related to the interpretation of the concept of ambicoloniality. The author repeatedly emphasizes that "the ambicoloniality of Russia vis-à-vis Ukraine manifested in the visual culture and literature of both countries" (p. 74) and that "cultural proximity and the continuous exchange of influences between Ukraine and Russia across their shared border" (p. 88) are defining features of their relationship. She even employs the notion of *fusion* when discussing the interaction of the two cultural spheres. The book provides numerous examples of Ukrainian social processes, cultural products, and practices characterized by hybridity resulting from Russian influence, for instance,

surzhyk, political movements advocating two state languages, the Ukrainian Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, and artworks such as David Burliuk's *Man with Two Faces* (1912), Oleh Tistol's *Reunification* (1988), etc. At the same time, we are not offered corresponding examples hybridity within Russian cultural space shaped by Ukraine's influence. This imbalance, if addressed, could further strengthen the conceptual foundation of the proposed theory of ambicoloniality.

Throughout the text, there are two occurrences where S. Biedarieva offers an illustration of the embodiment of ambicolonialism in the Russian cultural field. The first is Joseph Brodsky's poem 'On the Independence of Ukraine'. I fully agree with the author that it is an eloquent illustration of the Russian imperialist vision of Ukraine, however, it appears somewhat overrated to me to consider it a manifestation of the hybridity of Russian culture due to the influence of Ukrainian culture. The second example is the visit of St. Petersburg artist Piotr Pavlensky and his speech in front of Euromaidan, which S. Biedarieva interprets as "a manifestation of ambicolonial relations in the form of an idea of exchange of revolutionary impulses" (p. 128). Yet, again, if we are talking about exchange and penetration at the societal level, this is a penetration of Russian impulses into the Ukrainian sociocultural field. The fact that individual Russian citizens were inspired by Euromaidan provides little basis for extrapolating this to Russian society as a whole or for suggesting the emergence of broader movements capable of reshaping its sociocultural landscape.

The book devotes considerable attention to Russia's appropriation of Ukrainian artists (e.g., Skovoroda, Gogol, Kuindzhi, Malevich) within its exploration of the cultural interpenetration characteristic of ambicolonial relations. In my opinion, however, appropriation should not be equated with mutual exchange, since in such cases, the movement of cultural products and their creators occur in only one direction – from the colonized culture toward the imperial one. The presentation of Ukrainian artists as Russian, both within the empire and to the outside world, may therefore be interpreted not as a *fusion* leading to the hybridization of the colonizer's culture, but rather as the incorporation of Ukrainian elements into Russian culture. It seems that an analysis of how the legacy of these appropriated artists influenced the subsequent development of Russian artistic practices and cultural production would have strengthened the author's argument.

Moreover, the appropriation of Ukrainian artists entails the deprivation of Ukraine's cultural agency, rendering it invisible and voiceless on the global

stage. This brings us to another problematic aspect of the suggested theory – namely, the treatment of Ukraine as Russia's *inner West*, its more culturally developed component. While this idea is not new and has often been cited by critics opposing the application of postcolonial and decolonial methodologies to the study of Ukrainian–Russian relations – since, in classical cases, the more culturally developed country colonizes the less developed one – the author uses it as an argument in favor of interpreting these relations as ambicolonial. According to this reasoning, a less culturally developed country colonizes a more developed one, thereby colonizing itself internally. However, in my opinion, for this dynamic to function as a mechanism of self-colonization, Russia would have to acknowledge Ukraine's cultural superiority – something for which there is no evidence throughout the three-century history of their relationship. On the contrary, there exists an abundance of literature, often presented by Russian scholars as academic research, asserting Ukraine's supposed civilizational inferiority and cultural backwardness. A telling selection of such statements can be found in M. Nayem's recent work (Nayem, 2025, pp. 85-89). Apropos of this, among other aspects, she highlights the construction of Ukrainians' 'asianness' in 19th-century Russian ethnographic discourse (Nayem, 2025, pp. 99-103). In the absence of any representation within the imperial sociocultural sphere that portrays the conquered nation as culturally superior, the thesis of Ukraine's "inner West" reads more as a form of self-consolation on the part of the colonized.

Another concern of mine is related to clarifying the concept of ambicoloniality. Given that the concept of ambicoloniality proposed in the book presupposes an examination of the mutual influences between the parties engaged in colonial relations, it would have been logical to include a more detailed analysis of recent cultural and social processes within Russia. Chapter 5 addresses this issue by examining the implications of the full-scale invasion for Russia itself and its potential internal transformations; however, these observations remain preliminary, suggesting directions for future research rather than a fully developed analysis.

Another aspect of the book that I cannot fail to mention is the underestimation of the role of language in colonial relationships. In S. Biedarieva's theory, language is presented merely as a means of communication, while its symbolic and identificational functions appear to be neutralized. In particular, the author argues, "While ambicoloniality relies on linguistic channels to make colonial intentions operative, language per se cannot be included

among the tools of colonial domination" (p. 84). This interpretation is difficult to accept, since both lived experience and numerous scholarly studies – of which there are too many to enumerate here – demonstrate that language, and specifically the Russian language, has been and remains one of the principal instruments for constructing a sense of inferiority and for establishing and maintaining social and cultural hierarchies. For instance, Ye. Kuznietsova has recently provided an insightful account of the mechanisms and tools employed by the Soviet Union to eradicate minority languages, elevate Russian above others, and consolidate its dominance across all aspects of social life (Kuznietsova, 2023). According to Biedarieva, the growing use of Ukrainian in recent years has been driven by the need to resist and protect against disinformation disseminated by Russian media channels – an explanation that lies within the field of rational reasoning. Yet, at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, for most people the decision to switch to Ukrainian was motivated by emotional factors, as evidenced by a growing body of recent research (Renchka, 2023; Kiss, 2024; Kulyk, 2024; Kudriavtseva, 2025; Sokolova, 2025).

Despite the reservations and certain disagreement with some of the conceptual aspects, I regard the publication of this book – especially in English – as an important event for both global academic community and Ukrainian scientific thought. Firstly, it does not only speak about Ukraine in a Ukrainian voice to the world, but also weaves the country's history into the broader narrative of colonial relations. The book does more than simply question the declining explanatory power of decolonial theories in relation to Ukraine and the need for a modified methodology; it offers a new analytical framework. Secondly, addressing Ukrainian readers as well, the book offers answers to a number of difficult and often sensitive questions, presenting certain phenomena from a new perspective while also provoking further reflection. This, ultimately, convinces us that the book should be translated into Ukrainian as soon as possible – so that the discussion may continue and, perhaps, lead to the emergence of truth.

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ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРІВ

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