

**PEN AND SWORD:
TRACING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION
OF UKRAINE'S LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY IN WARTIME¹**

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Abstract. *This paper considers the current language-in-education policy in Ukraine within the broad context of language ideologies and sociolinguistic developments, which have taken place since Maidan. In particular, I draw attention to the most recent changes in language education that have occurred due to the full-scale Russian invasion. Since the declaration of its independence in 1991, Ukraine has tried to balance the protection and promotion of Ukrainian as the sole state language, with the preservation of education in national minority languages through immersion education and bilingual schools and classes. Russia's war against Ukraine and its temporary occupation of Ukrainian territories have brought changes to the domain of language education, which will be discussed.*

Key words: *Ukraine, language-in-education policy, Russian-Ukrainian war, linguicide, language policy, minority languages.*

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1. Introduction

Since the declaration of independence in 1991, the language-in-education policy in Ukraine has been aimed at simultaneously revitalizing and promoting Ukrainian as the only state language and a marker of Ukrainian identity, while protecting and preserving national minorities' rights to education in their own languages. State and communal educational institutions have facilitated the implementation of policies preserving the linguistic educational rights of national minorities. Ukrainian has been taught as a separate subject in these institutions, rather than serving as the primary language of education. The system of these educational institutions has been non-uniform, and to a large extent, has depended on regional characteristics and the educational demands of one or another linguistic group. Additionally, Ukrainian language-in-education policy has been influenced by variations in population density, the existence of a collective will to maintain national language and culture, societal prejudices, and in some cases, the support of foreign countries.

This ethnic and linguistic diversity has piqued scholarly interests in recent years. Over the last few decades, language education in Ukraine has been the focus of several publications, which present both theoretical research and empirical studies. Applying a rich array of methodological frameworks, the authors of these publications incorporate analyses of many themes, such as language education of certain communities (Kulyk 2013, Csernicskó & Orosz 2019), language attitudes (Friedman 2016), and language ideologies and practices (Kudriavtseva 2021) in the educational sphere. Bilaniuk & Melnyk (2008) look at the educational practices in Ukraine within the broad context of shifting Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism and minority language education.

The authors point out that, in the educational sphere, legislative and institutional changes post-independence aimed to increase the status of Ukrainian as the sole state language. At the same time, the authors made the prediction that Russian-language schools will remain for some time due to regional peculiarities and the social practices of the Russian-speaking population. They argued as well that non-Russian minority language education will continue. However, since this publication, many important events have occurred that have changed specific ideological dimensions and sociolinguistic practices related to the educational sphere. Among them are: Euromaidan, the Russian-Ukrainian war – which began in 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and the Donbas region – as well as the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine beginning February 24, 2022. At the state legislative level, a few important laws have been adopted, namely the “Law on Education” (2017) and the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language” (2019), which also affected language-in-education policy in Ukraine. Therefore, there is a need for an update to Bilaniuk & Melnyk’s findings in the context of recent sociolinguistic changes.

This paper aims to analyze language education in Ukraine using Churchill’s (1986) model of education for linguistic and cultural minorities within a broad context of the profound changes that have taken place in Ukraine after 2014. In particular, special attention is paid to the contemporary situation and the impact that the full-scale Russian invasion has had on language practices and language ideologies in both

the sociolinguistic and educational domains. After providing a brief background for the study, I will explain my approach and the Churchill's methodological framework. Then, I will examine the most recent ideological issues and sociolinguistic practices which take place in Ukraine due to the above-discussed events. Finally, I will analyze language-in-education policy after 2014 as well as the public initiatives in language education which occurred due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

2. Background

The current Ukrainian sociolinguistic situation is nevertheless deeply-rooted in its past. While a full account of the historical background of language policy in Ukraine is beyond the scope of this article, I will provide below a brief overview to situate the current sociolinguistic changes within their historical context.

At many times in its history, the Ukrainian language has been subject to suppression and bans, including in the educational system. The website "Chronology of Linguistic Events in Ukraine: The External History of the Ukrainian Language" provides information about such suppressions. In the 19th century, there were two imperial documents that introduced the policy of prohibiting the use of Ukrainian, which at that time was called "Little Russian." The so-called Valuev Decree (1863) stated that, "teaching in all schools is without exception in the common Russian language, and nowhere is use of the Little Russian language permitted" as well as "a Little Russian language has not, does not, and cannot exist" (Magocsi 2010: 393). The *Ems Ukase* (or Ems Decree) (1876), among other restrictions, outlawed the publication in the Russian Empire of "all original works or translations" in Ukrainian, with the exception of historical sources, and the staging of all performances in Ukrainian; moreover, no subject would be permitted to be taught in Ukrainian in lower-level schools (Magocsi 2010: 396).

In the early years of the Soviet Union, the policy of *korenizatsiya* (indigenization, rooting) was introduced. In Soviet Ukraine it was known as Ukrainianization. The main goal of this policy was the implementation of Soviet ideology in Ukrainian society through the Ukrainian language, as well as the strengthening of socialism in the Soviet Empire at large (Masenko 2017; Martin 2019; Pavlenko 2008). When the regime succeeded in these aims, in the 1930s the policy of Ukrainianization was replaced by the policy of Russification. At that time Soviet propaganda introduced the idea of the special status of the Russian language as a language of inter-ethnic communication and the language of the "leaders of world proletariat" Lenin and Stalin, which made speakers of this language privileged (Masenko 2017). Historically, Russian speakers in Ukraine had enjoyed a privileged position, and as Mykola Riabchuk (2000) points out, the Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine was privileged not only politically and culturally – as a representative of the imperial majority – but also socially. A significant factor in Russophone social privilege is owed to their status as a predominantly urban population, purporting them to be superior to the predominantly rural Ukrainophones enslaved by the collective farm system. Riabchuk's opinion echoes the opinion of the well-known Ukrainian dissident Ivan Dzyuba, who pointed out that the real anti-Ukrainian policy was not to prohibit

the use of Ukrainian (because that would be impossible), but to make it so that people themselves no longer wanted to speak it (Dzyuba 1998).

As an independent state, Ukraine proclaimed Ukrainian as the sole state language. In many publications, the term “state language” is used as a synonym for “official language,” but in the post-Soviet context, this concept carries a symbolic meaning (Hogan-Brun & Melnyk 2012). The idea of state language and not just an official language reflects the ideology which acknowledges the prominent role that the language plays in the Ukrainian national identity and state formation. For Ukraine, the Ukrainian language became a symbol of statehood together with the national anthem, flag, and the coat of arms. As a result of this policy, Ukrainian obtained a higher status in the society and its usage has expanded, especially in the official and educational domains. At the same time, before the war, Russian language usage prevailed in many spheres, such as business, sports, and in popular culture – especially in the south and east of the country and in many Ukrainian cities. Russian remained a popular tool of communication.

A large-scale asymmetrical Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism was a visible feature of sociolinguistic developments of the state and a substantial part of the country’s linguistic landscape (Masenko 2004; Melnyk & Csernicskó 2010). This asymmetrical bilingualism was not only societal, but also regional. Much of the population spoke Russian fluently, but a significant percentage of population did not speak Ukrainian. This was also since many ethnic Ukrainians in the east and south as well as representatives of national minorities (Belarusians, Jews, Greeks) were russified. The situation with Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism became even more complicated because of *surzhyk*, or a mixed Ukrainian-Russian vernacular and a “high degree of code switching by bilinguals” (Bilaniuk 2005: 105).¹ After the declaration of independence, when the state faced the task of protecting the Ukrainian language and restoring its prestigious status, *surzhyk* was perceived negatively by linguists, writers, and other intellectuals.

For example, Yuri Andrukhovych called it “*krovozmisne dytia bilinhvizmu*” (an inbred child of bilingualism.) The negative attitudes towards *surzhyk* and the emphasis on purism were “part of efforts to elevate and define a prestigious Ukrainian language, to separate it from its connotation as a backward peasant language” (Bilaniuk & Melnyk 2008: 71). Gradually, with the strengthening of the Ukrainian language as the state language, attitudes toward *surzhyk* have been changing. Writers began to use it in their works as an authentic language (such as Les’ Poderevyans’kyi, Sayhon), and after the war began, discussions about *surzhyk* and negative attitudes toward it have decreased, perhaps because many Ukrainian defenders themselves speak *surzhyk*.

However, this sociolinguistic situation of bilingualism did not change the official language policy of monolingualism, and as Aneta Pavlenko (2006: 86) points out, the choice of a single, rather than dual, language policy can be understood as a strategy of resistance to the high degree of Russification. In Ukraine, there has been a powerful legislative framework that has regulated the status and functioning of languages.

¹ For more information about *surzhyk* see Bilaniuk (2005), Masenko (2019).

Ukrainian legislation has been aimed at strengthening the status of the Ukrainian language as the state language and protecting the development and use of languages of national minorities. The legal basis of language policy was established by many legal documents, among them the Ukrainian Constitution, language laws, and special laws and treaties with neighboring countries.¹ However, in many cases, these legal documents were prescriptive by nature and did not provide the requisite legal tools and mechanisms for regulating language situations, or protecting language rights. Although they significantly changed the situation with the official use of Ukrainian language as the state language, only to a lesser extent did they influence the sociolinguistic situation and the real language practices of the population.

The situation however markedly changed following 2014, after Euromaidan and the occupation of Crimea and the Donbas, and especially after the start of the full-scale invasion by Russia on February 24, 2022. Language policy became a part of the national ideology “Army-Language-Faith” (*Armiya, mova, vira*) for the formation of contemporary Ukrainian identity (Ukrains’ka Pravda 2018). The peculiarity of this period in the sociolinguistic development of Ukraine lies within the combination of top-down efforts for strengthening the official status of the Ukrainian language and bottom-up public initiatives and activities in promoting its usage and development. These will be discussed below.

3. Methodology

Since the paper considers the most recent changes in language education and linguistic practices in Ukrainian society related to the war, it relies on the most recent publications in Ukrainian media and social media platforms as well as on the information from official websites of the Ministry of Education and Science, Language ombudsman, city councils, etc. When analyzing these different primary and secondary sources, I examined references to education policy and changes in the education sphere occurring during the war that began in 2014 and from the time of the full-scale invasion. I searched for information on how this invasion changed the ideological dimension of the language issue in Ukrainian society and how these changes have influenced educational practices, including in the occupied territories. Thus, in terms of theoretical approach, this is a qualitative and interpretive study.

In this paper, Ukraine’s language-in-education policy since 2014 is analyzed using Churchill’s (1986) framework of state responses to the education of cultural and linguistic minorities. This model is a complex taxonomy of six stages of policy responses to the educational and language needs of minority groups, including definitions, educational issues, and language outlook. Stephen May (2012), in his publication, *Language and Minority rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language*, provides a thorough analysis and explanation of these stages; for the purpose of this research, I will be using his simplified model:

¹ For more information regarding independent Ukraine’s legislative action prior to 2014 see: Csernicskó & Fedinec (2016), Besters-Dil’her (2008), Moser (2014).

- Stage 1 represents assimilation and submersion in the majority language in education.
- Stage 2 is a modified form of assimilation. This stage associates a minority group's educational disadvantage with family status. Some supplementary programs are promoted to facilitate adjustment to the so-called majority society.
- Stage 3 is so-called multicultural education. As May points out, "the essence of this multicultural model is the recognition of the rights to be different and to be respected for it, not necessarily to maintain a distinct language and culture" (May 2012: 185).
- Stage 4 recognizes the need for support of the minority language, at least as a transitional measure. In education, this is usually implemented through transitional bilingual education programs, which use a minority language in the initial years of schooling.
- Stage 5 recognizes the rights of minorities to maintain and develop their language and cultures in private life and corresponds to the maintenance of bilingual programs that teach through a minority language in schools.
- Stage 6 sees the granting of full official status to a minority language.

Later in this paper I will show how this model correlates with language-in-education policy in Ukraine and what stage corresponds to the current Ukrainian situation.

4. Language Ideologies and Sociolinguistic Developments after 2014

The current situation in education should be discussed in the broader context of language ideologies and sociolinguistic practices as educational practices are deeply rooted in language policy and the language use of Ukrainian society. These changes and tendencies in sociocultural and linguistic developments have become the subject of several national polls and surveys. The polls show the favorable attitude of Ukrainians towards the Ukrainian language as a single state language.

In 2019, the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies conducted a survey on language preferences (UNIAN 2020). The majority of Ukrainians surveyed believed that Ukrainian should be the country's only state language. At the same time, they held that the Russian language should not be subject to restrictions in the private communications of citizens. These data are consistent with the data of another poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in August 2020. The study showed that most Ukrainians in all regions supported the idea that all citizens of Ukraine should be able to speak the state language, that Ukrainian should be the language of communication for civil servants and officials, and that most subjects in all public schools should be taught in the state language.

Regarding the prestige of speaking Ukrainian and Russian, as well as their social roles, studies reveal that Ukrainian has been more often valued for its symbolic importance while Russian has been predominantly seen as a communicative tool (Kulyk 2019; Kudriavtseva 2021). Some research highlights positive language attitudes and shifts toward Ukrainian among Russophone citizens after Euromaidan (Kulyk 2016; Seals 2019). For some citizens, their language usage is a conscious choice (*svidomy vybir*); for others, it is part of their heritage; and for still others, it is a political statement.

Each of these narratives shows a key theme – the increasing importance of the Ukrainian language in national identity after Euromaidan and continued Russian aggression against Ukraine. However, despite these positive attitudes, a large number of Ukrainian citizens remained Russophone (or primarily Russian speaking), especially in the south and east. The ideology of “it does not matter what language one speaks” is reflected in the linguistic practices of many Russian speakers who view themselves as part of the Ukrainian nation but hesitate to change their daily language preferences (Kulyk 2016). As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, language is not an automatic marker of identity or national orientation (as Russian-speaking Ukrainians speakers see themselves *as Ukrainians* and are fighting to defend Ukrainian sovereignty).

Besides sociolinguistic changes in language choice and language attitudes, there were very important changes in language policy after Maidan:

- in April 2019 the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language,” which greatly expanded protections for the state language (see Kudriavtseva 2019);
- the position of State Language Protection Commissioner was established in 2019;
- in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language,” the National Commission on State Language Standards was established. The commission develops and approves standards of the Ukrainian language as the state language as well as develops methods for testing its proficiency.

As noted earlier, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, significantly changed the ideological dimension and sociolinguistic practices of Ukrainian society, both at the official and everyday levels. At the official level, the use of the Russian language continues to decrease. This is evidenced both from the data of sociological surveys and policies of the government, as well as city or municipal councils. As Ukrainian political analyst Mykola Riabchuk points out, we continue to observe the delegitimization of Russian on the official level (Riabchuk 2022). The most recent examples of such delegitimization include the following:

- new norms of the language law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language” came into force in July 2022. They regulate the use of the state language on the Internet and the language of computer software. A computer program with

a user interface deployed in Ukraine must have a user interface in the national language and/or English or other official languages of the European Union (Ukrinform 2022);

- the Kyiv City Council renamed more than forty city objects (streets, squares etc.) as a part of de-Russification (Kyiv City Council 2022);
- in April 2023, President Zelensky signed the law "On the Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and the Decolonization of Toponymy" (Zakon 2023);
- on July 20, 2022, the mayor of the city of Dnipro announced "gentle Ukrainianization." According to the state official, this campaign aims to protect the language and unite Ukrainians, considering the multinational nature of the city (Dniprorada 2022). Gentle Ukrainianization refers to measures aimed at gradually transitioning to the Ukrainian language in all spheres of life of Ukrainian society, both in official structures and in the population, as well as creating conditions and opportunities for such a transition.

At all stages of the implementation of language legislation, the Ukrainian state has provided a certain period of time to implement the relevant language norms. For instance, in May 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the "Concept of the State Targeted National and Cultural Program to Ensure the Comprehensive Development and Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language in All Spheres of Public Life" until 2030. Then Minister of Culture and Information Policy Oleksandr Tkachenko noted that his ministry "adheres to soft Ukrainianization, which will have a long-term effect" (Ukrinform 2021). The program presupposes the mandatory use of the Ukrainian language by civil servants, opening a network of Ukrainian language courses, improving the quality of teaching the state language in educational institutions, supporting and popularizing the Ukrainian language abroad, promoting research in the field of Ukrainian linguistics, supporting innovations and improving the quality of Ukrainian cultural products, encouraging dubbing of films into Ukrainian, supporting book publishing in Ukraine, and so on.

Specific actions of the official bodies of Ukraine to reduce the influence and use of the Russian language are visible. However, a new state channel FreeDom broadcasting in Russian appeared on Ukrainian television after February 24. Here we can observe a re-conceptualization of the most important language function – language as a tool of communication. In the current situation, this language function transforms into a new ideology: language is not only a means of communication but is also a way of combating Russian propaganda. Since this Russian-language channel is viewed by Russian-speaking audiences of Ukraine as well as Russophone audiences of the post-Soviet sphere, language appears as a real-time tool for conveying important information in the most efficient way.

The same ideology is observed at non-official levels and in private communication. For example, a military expert, Oleh Zhdanov, provides daily, real-time information on the war's operational situation *via* his own YouTube channel. Zhdanov speaks Ukrainian and uses Ukrainian in many of his media interviews. However, he speaks Russian on his channel. He begins his analytical report with a Ukrainian greeting, and then switches to Russian, as he prepares his reports not only for his Ukrainian listeners, but also for Russian speakers from Russia and the temporarily occupied territories.

The importance of language as an effective communication tool is especially evident when Ukrainian defenders use Russian on the battlefield to convey critical information quickly and effectively. This is also evident in situations of non-reciprocal bilingualism, when one soldier speaks Ukrainian and the other responds in Russian.

The ideological use of language as a weapon is also experiencing an observable re-conceptualization, such that a famous Ukrainian actor, Volodymyr Rashchuk, who is now fighting in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, encourages and calls on Ukrainians to speak Ukrainian. He observes that speaking Ukrainian helps in the battlefield, while associating every Russophone Ukrainian with an incoming artillery shell and with the horrors of the battlefield. He asks citizens to return to their roots, and thus to finally become Ukrainians. He stresses that this is imperative for Ukrainian defenders and assists them tremendously.¹ For Ukrainian society, the Ukrainian language is the language of resistance.

As for private communication, language usage depends primarily on such factors as personal language preferences, the temporary Russian occupation of the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine, and, as a result, the resettlement of the population from these regions mainly to the western regions or abroad. On March 19, 2022, the sociological group Rating, a non-governmental, independent research organization, conducted a national poll titled "The Language Issue in Ukraine" (Rating Group 2022). According to the survey, the number of people who consider Ukrainian to be their native language increased from 57% in 2012 to 76% in 2022. However, this does not mean that these people use Ukrainian in their everyday interactions. Often people determine as native (*ridna mova*) the language which corresponds to their ethnic heritage, the language of their people; even if they speak this language poorly, they believe that this is "how things should be" (Bilaniuk & Melnyk 2008: 346). At the same time the study confirms a decrease in the percentage of self-identified Russian speakers among respondents (about 40% in 2012, 26% at the end of 2021, and 18% at the beginning of the war).

Nevertheless, despite the full-scale invasion, people still use Russian or both the Ukrainian and Russian languages in everyday communication. According to Rating Group's research, this is explained by the fact that the process of switching to another language requires some adaptation. It is also confirmed by my communications with some internally displaced people from the eastern and southern regions who are not able

¹ The video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6Z_u7AQrW4. The issue of language choice in the military is a very important one and requires further research. As noted by an anonymous reviewer of this paper there is a "need to balance strategic considerations with complex issues of morale."

immediately switch to Ukrainian due to insufficient knowledge of the state language. In sum, Rating Group concludes that, even though the war is a challenge to the entire society, it has accelerated the process of Ukrainians' linguistic self-identification and the societal shift toward the Ukrainian language (Rating Group 2022).

The situation with Ukrainian and Russian in social media also deserves special attention. In "Ukrainian Language in Social Networks: What Changed after Russian Invasion?" (June 2022), the Center for Content Analysis (Tsentr content analizu 2022) shows that, despite the fact that the number of Ukrainian-language posts on social media has grown significantly after the beginning of the full-scale invasion, it is still smaller than the number of Russian-language posts. The Ukrainian language prevails on *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *Twitter*, while Russian prevails on *TikTok* and *YouTube*. On *YouTube*, only 5% of the content is in the Ukrainian language. According to the researchers, the level of Ukrainian language on *YouTube* is low due to the monetization algorithm. They also explain the trend in *TikTok* by the generation gap: this social platform is primarily a place for young people to communicate, and it shows a higher level of Russification among the young audience.

5. Language-in-Education Policy after 2014

Ukraine inherited its system of national schools from the former Soviet Union (in the context of this research, "national schools" refers to schools where national or ethnic minority languages are the languages of instruction). At the same time, after independence, some new tendencies have appeared in the national school system. First, the number of Ukrainian schools has increased while the number of Russian schools has decreased. In addition, after independence, Crimean Tatar schools were opened due to the mass repatriation of Crimean Tatars to Ukraine. The structure of the minority educational system and the number of their educational institutions both depend on different factors such as: individual needs; the importance of a minority within a given region; minority demographic concentration; political power; the assistance of a corresponding kinstate.

In the Methodology section, I reviewed Churchill's model of state responses to minority education. In this model, what stage currently describes Ukraine and what educational policy does Ukraine represent? Although it is difficult to determine the clear boundaries of each stage, after independence, the Ukrainian language-in-education policy in general corresponded to stage 5 in this typology. Ukraine has recognized the importance of maintaining minority languages and cultures, and minority education could be described as "minority language immersion" where instruction in minority schools was in the minority language. In addition to the full-immersion educational establishments, Ukraine has had bilingual and trilingual schools with separate but parallel language classes. Also, the minority language has been taught as a subject in schools with Ukrainian as the language of instruction.

However, important changes have occurred in the language-in-education policy after Maidan and especially after 2017 when the new Law on Education (Zakon 2017) was adopted. This law changed the model of language-in-education from full immersion to bilingual education for some linguistic minorities, and this step can be understood as strategy for further protection and promotion of the state language.

Such a policy provides implementation of the key reform of the Ministry of Education and Science, the “New Ukrainian school”. The primary goal is to create a schooling system where students enjoy studying and where they acquire not only knowledge, but also the ability to apply it in everyday life. According to the Ministry website, instead of memorizing facts and concepts, students will acquire competencies. Two prioritized competencies are fluency in the state language and the ability to communicate in native (if different from the state) and foreign languages (Nova ukrayins’ka shkola n.d.). To develop these competencies, Ukraine has changed its language-in-education in minority schools from full immersion to bilingual education, which corresponds to stage 4 in Churchill’s taxonomy. The Law on Education (Article 7) provides the following models for language education of national minorities (Zakon 2017):

- The first model provides the possibility of obtaining pre-school and general secondary education in the native language, along with the Ukrainian language, in schools for indigenous peoples of Ukraine.¹
- The second model focuses on other national minorities. For them, pre-school and primary education will be conducted in the language of the national minority, with compulsory study of the Ukrainian language. In addition, “One or more subjects may be taught in two or more languages – the state language, English, and other official languages of the European Union.”

Another important document which specifies the language education in Ukraine is the law “On complete general secondary education” (Zakon 2020). Article 5 determines three models for language-in-education policy. The first model relates to the indigenous peoples of Ukraine who have the right to receive complete education in their native language along with the state language. The second model concerns national minorities whose languages are official languages of the EU. The representatives of these minorities have the right to receive education in elementary school in their native language where Ukrainian is taught as a subject. In the 5–9 grades, the instruction in Ukrainian

¹ According to the Law of Ukraine “On the Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine,” these are Crimean Tatars, Karaims, and Krymchaks. The Law on Education applies to Crimean Tatars only since the other groups are too small numerically. As such, Crimean Tatars require a separate model of language education due to their special status in Ukrainian society. The people were deported from Crimea in 1944 by the Soviet authorities, and their mass repatriation became possible only in 1991. Before the occupation of Crimea there were 15 national schools with Crimean Tatar as the language of instruction. In 2021, 7 schools remained but, in those schools, Russian has become the language of instruction, and Crimean Tatar is taught only as a subject (QirimNews 2021).

is gradually increased from 20% in the 5th grade to at least 40% in the 9th grade. In high school, at least 60% of school time should be taught in Ukrainian.

The third model pertains to “other national minorities” (these are Russian speakers in Russian schools). For them, at least 80% of school time in junior high and high schools should be taught in the state language. The law also states that these measures are related to state-funded schools. Private educational establishments have a free choice of language of instruction. However, according to this law, Ukrainian should be taught in these schools and students should acquire language proficiency according to the state standards (Zakon 2020; see also Kudriavtseva 2020).

The information agency UNIAN (Leshchenko 2021), with reference to the Ministry of Education, has informed that, in the 2020-2021 academic year, the educational process in secondary education institutions was conducted in the following languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities: Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, Moldovan, German, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Slovak, Hungarian, and Ukrainian. According to the same source, in the 2020-2021 academic year, there were 874 secondary education institutions (public, communal, and private) with classes in which education was provided in minority languages along with the state language. Of them, 671 are bilingual schools and 203 schools had instruction in only one language (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. National minority schools in 2020-2021 academic year

Language	Number of schools	Regions
Hungarian	73 (6 private)	Zakarpattia region
Romanian	69	Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi regions
Russian	55 (35 private)	Dnipro, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernivtsi, Chernihiv, and Kyiv
Polish	4	Lviv region
German	1	Kyiv
Moldovan	1	Odesa region
Total:	203	

Table 2. Bilingual schools in 2020-2021 academic year

Languages	Number of Schools	Regions
Ukrainian and Russian	603 (22 private)	19 regions and Kyiv (excluding regions: Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi)
Ukrainian and Hungarian	27	Zakarpattia region
Ukrainian and Romanian	19	Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi regions
Ukrainian and Moldavian	16	Odesa region
Ukrainian and Polish	2	Khmelnytsky region
Ukrainian and Bulgarian	1	Odesa region
Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar	1	Kherson region
Ukrainian, Russian and Crimean Tatar	1	Kherson region
Ukrainian and Slovak	1	Zakarpattia region
Total:	671	

Even though national minority schools still exist, the new Law on Education presupposes the transition from the immersion model to the bilingual model. The bilingual model of education was criticized by representatives of national minorities, especially Hungarian, Romanian, and Russian as well as representatives of the kin states in violation of linguistic rights (Csernicskó 2021; Kostyuk 2017; Prykhid 2017). Also, the law has been examined by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission. The Parliamentary Assembly in its resolution 2189 (2017), acknowledged that “knowledge of the official language(s) of a State is a factor of social cohesion and integration and it is legitimate for States to promote the learning of their official language.” At the same time, it expressed its concern that “these national minorities, who were previously entitled to have monolingual schools and fully fledged curricula in their own language, now find themselves in a situation where education in their own languages can be provided (along with education in Ukrainian) only until the end of primary education” (Resolution 2017). The Venice Commission has also recognized that “it is a legitimate and commendable aim for states to promote the strengthening of the state language and its command by all citizens, and to take action for its learning by all, as a way to address existing inequalities and to facilitate more effective integration of persons belonging to national minorities into society.” At the same time the Commission has provided some recommendations, among them are “to continue ensuring a sufficient proportion of education in minority languages at the primary and secondary levels,” to improve the quality of instruction of the state language, to provide more time for the educational reform, as well as to exempt private language schools from the new language requirements (for all recommendations, see (Venice Commission 2017)). Why has Ukraine, which has expressed its desire to join the European Union, taken these steps of changing its educational model that raises such concerns?

Changes in language-in-education policy can be explained by both internal and external factors, including the growing importance of language issues in the field of national security after the Russian-Ukrainian war began, the status of the study of the Ukrainian language in certain national communities, and the limited social mobility and integration of representatives of certain national minorities in Ukrainian society.

In Ukraine, the language issue has become a matter of national security after 2014. According to the Revolution of Dignity Project (Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, n.d.) Russia has weaponized “the language question as a pretext for occupying or annexing Ukrainian territories, and actively exploited the issue in its propaganda war and disinformation campaign.” Since the occupation of the Crimean and the Donbas regions, Russian officials have repeatedly declared their intention to protect the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. This narrative continued even after the beginning of the full-scale invasion on February 24, though the population of the mainly Russian-speaking cities and towns in the east and south was under constant attacks and shelling. The Ukrainian State Language Protection Commissioner Taras Kremin argues that the protection of the state language is the protection of national interests, it is a matter of the constitutional order, it is a matter for Ukraine’s strategies and, moreover, it is a matter for all those things that determine the development and success of the Ukrainian state (Ombudsman 2022a).

Another issue which drew the attention of the State Commissioner was the large number of violations of language legislation in Ukraine after 2019 when the law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language” was adopted. In April 2021, he pointed out that local authorities in the southern regions were slow to implement the language law and did not want to transfer schools into Ukrainian as a language of instruction.

Another important factor about promoting Ukrainian language acquisition in minority schools through bilingual programs is the situation regarding the state language skills among the students in minority schools. After proclaiming independence, Ukraine has been implementing its language policy through balancing support and promotion of Ukrainian language with the development of minority education and minority linguistic rights. Kulyk (2013) argues that such an approach does not necessarily consider student progress and social mobility.

In October 2017, then Minister of Education Liliya Hrynevych pointed out that more than half of children attending schools with Hungarian and Romanian languages of instruction cannot pass the external examination in Ukrainian (UNIAN 2017). This external examination serves as an entrance exam to Ukrainian universities. Thus, without this exam, students from minority schools have no access to higher education in Ukraine. This is especially true for schools in rural areas where, according to the minister, in places where the population density of national minorities is very high, a child does not hear the Ukrainian language at all. Almost the same results are presented in the investigation on the platform texty.org.ua (TEXSTY 2017). According to their investigation project, Hungarians are the least integrated into Ukrainian society, judging by the results of the external evaluation. 42% of Hungarian children do not take this test in any significant number. Romanians take the exam but, like Hungarians, have poor results. Bulgarians take external examinations at the national level.

The limited educational opportunities for national minorities bring up another issue – the limited integration of national minorities into the national context. Representatives of national minorities who are not able to pass the external examination and continue their education will not be able to build a successful career in Ukraine and participate in public life. It is expected that this social immobility of Ukrainian minorities due to lack of state language skills can be reduced or even eliminated with the implementation of the provisions of the new Law on Education (Hrynevych 2017). Having compared school systems of the two national minorities – the Hungarians and the Crimean Tatars – Kulyk argues that the introduction of bilingual education is the best way to solve the problem of limited social mobility for the first group and the vulnerability of cultural identity of the other (Kulyk 2013).

The situation with the Hungarian community is different than the other national minorities. Hungarians in Ukraine have a full cycle of education in the national language – from kindergarten to the Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. Thus, they can realize their intellectual potential without Ukrainian as a state language.

This also causes another problem, namely, that of brain drain. Many students go to study in educational establishments in Hungary. Although there is no exact data on the number of graduates who choose education outside of Ukraine, the assumption can be made from the observation of the university entrance campaign in Transcarpathia. For example, in 2017 the regional state administration of the region pointed out that the number of university applicants was very insignificant. In Uzhhorod State University, the region's leading university, the competition for some majors was very low. In some cases, the university was not even able to fill the state order (*byudzhetni mistysya*) (TEXTSTY 2017).

Another important topic is public initiatives in language education, which have been growing since the full-scale invasion. In Ukraine, language education is provided not only by state institutions. There are language courses, free websites, phone apps and other public initiatives with which one can learn the official language as well as the languages of national minorities. These public bottom-up initiatives are aligned with official state language policy.

Some examples of these initiatives are:

- *Free Ukrainian Language Courses*. This project started in 2013 in different cities of Ukraine under the slogan “Teach your friend to speak Ukrainian.” This initiative was one of the first in Ukraine to provide adults with opportunities to learn the Ukrainian language for free, modify teaching approaches, and promote the language. The instructors voluntarily created and launched the country's first Ukrainian language courses for all interested. From 2020, the instructors have been actively promoting Ukrainian language courses online on the educational platform *E-Mova* (E-language) as a full immersion program (for more details on this volunteer initiative see (Kudriavtseva 2023)).
- A school in the village of Chaiky near Kyiv founded by the Crimean Tatar Association “Birlik Center” opened in September 2021. This village is a place of compact residence of Crimean Tatars, as well as Muslims from post-Soviet and other countries. They began with grades 5 through 8, and they plan to expand.
- The mobile application “Yoi” created for primary school students who are native speakers of Hungarian or Romanian to facilitate the study of the Ukrainian language. Although the program is primarily aimed at the national minorities of Transcarpathia and Bukovyna, it can also be used to teach students who speak other languages.
- *Free English Language Learning Project* from Innovative and Digital Education Association.

After the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022, these public initiatives in language education can be viewed as a method of civil resistance to the Russian occupation. Such public initiatives are a manifestation of language ideology – “language matters” (Bilaniuk 2016).

Sometimes these initiatives are the results of the activity of local authorities and volunteers. One of the examples is a free Ukrainian language course organized in Kryvyi Rih, a city near the front line and the city where President Zelensky was born and raised. From July 1, 2022, in Kryvyi Rih, every district of the city opened "*Spilkuimosia ukrainskoiu*" (Let's speak Ukrainian) language clubs. 23 such clubs were located in libraries throughout the city. Community members had an opportunity to learn Ukrainian and meet with writers, artists, and public figures. For those who wanted to learn the language remotely, the city held two-month online courses "Speaking Ukrainian correctly" for which more than 500 residents of Kryvyi Rih had signed up. According to Oleksandr Vilkul, the head of the Kryvyi Rih military administration, the city wants to make the process of transition to Ukrainian "gentle" and comfortable. He also posits that, historically, the people of Kryvyi Rih would speak mostly in Russian, but now language is their weapon of agency (Novynarnia 2022b).

Volunteer initiatives for studying Ukrainian are also mentioned on the website of the Ukrainian Language Ombudsman (Ombudsman 2022b). The official page of the Commissioner's office hosts a collection of more than 250 free online resources, courses, conversation clubs, and online educational platforms for mastering the Ukrainian language. The title of this page, "Volunteer Initiatives to Study the Ukrainian Language Are a Powerful Language Front for Local Communities," underscores the importance of civil society actions and resonates strongly with the ideology of "language as a weapon."

6. Impact of the Full-scale Invasion on Language Education in Ukraine: Situation in temporarily occupied territories

Another important issue is the education situation in temporarily occupied territories, which were highly impacted by the full-scale invasion. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which has created a webpage with updated information on the number of Ukrainian educational institutions destroyed by Russia's attack on Ukraine, 3,416 institutions have been damaged with 363 destroyed (Zaklady). In addition to reporting on the physical destruction of educational establishments, government officials also report on violations of the language rights of the Ukrainian-speaking population in occupied territories. The State Language Protection Commissioner Taras Kremin has noted that in April 2022, the Russians announced the resumption of education in the temporary occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. However, that education did not include the teaching of such subjects as the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature, and the history of Ukraine (Ukrains'ka Pravda 2022a).

In July 2022, the press service of the Main Intelligence office of the Ministry of Defense informed that in the Polohy district of the Zaporizhzhia region the occupation authorities forced Ukrainian citizens to send their children to schools and pre-schools that operated according to the Russian curriculum (Novynarnia 2022a). According to the office, teachers and educators in these educational establishments came from the Russian Federation. In case of disagreement, parents received threats that their children would be taken away from them and sent to boarding schools.

Also, the occupation authorities implemented a punishment for parents who refused to send their children to these educational establishments – military service for men, and community work for women.

Serhii Haidai, the then head of Luhansk military-civilian administration, in his interview to Freedom TV channel on July 31, 2022, reported that, in the occupied territories of the Luhansk region, punitive measures were being taken against people with a clear pro-Ukrainian position. In addition, Ukrainian-language literature as well as books about Ukraine in general were being destroyed (Haidai 2022). The mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, reported in March 2022 that the occupational regime forced school educators to teach in the Russian language (Ukrains'ka Pravda 2022b).

The Commissioner Taras Kremin has characterized the language policy of the Russian Federation in the temporary occupied territories as linguicide.¹ On the State Language Protection Commissioner website, there is a page entitled “Russian Policy of Linguicide in the Occupied Territories of Ukraine as a Way of Dismantling the Constitutional Order of Ukraine and an Element of Genocide against the Ukrainian People.” On this page, linguicide is described as “the aggressor nation’s actions in the temporarily occupied territories aimed at removal of the Ukrainian language from public space and public use, as well as discrimination, harassment or persecution of Ukrainian citizens because of language” (Ombudsman 2022a). Also, this page reports on over a hundred violations of the linguistic rights of Ukrainian speakers and discrimination against people who openly express their pro-Ukrainian position.

7. Concluding Remarks

Russia’s war against Ukraine and the full-scale invasion have highlighted the importance of expounding and tracking the progress of linguistic trends and practices in Ukraine. In addition, these factors continue to attract attention to contrasting language ideologies “language does not matter” and “language matters” (Bilaniuk 2016). Along with the existence of these two main ideologies, we may observe a rethinking of some functions of language, which acquire special importance in connection with the war and which may be shaped into separate ideologies – language as an effective tool of communication, and language as a weapon.

In case of Ukraine, it can be predicted that the position of the Russian language in the official, and especially, in the educational sphere will decrease. At the same time, the Russian language continues to be present on television and on *YouTube* because the language serves as a tool for fighting Russian propaganda and conveying information in the most effective way. As importantly, Russian-language programs are designed not only for Ukrainians, but also for Russian speakers from Russia and other states. The reduction of Russian in the official sphere does not imply its complete displacement in private communication. The Russian language will not disappear for some time since there are citizens who are not ready to switch to Ukrainian immediately.

¹ For more information about linguicide see: Rudnytskyj (1967).

However, due to the invasion, there has been a decided trend towards the diminution of Russian in the private sphere.

Language-in-education policy in Ukraine then correlates with the ideology “language matters,” where language is viewed as a matter of national security and as a tool of nation building and social mobility. Institutional changes in educational domains have aimed at strengthening the status and position of Ukrainian as the state language. Despite the existence of private Russian-language schools, it can be expected that, due to the full-scale invasion, the status of Russian as a language of instruction and a school subject will be decreasing. Also, we can expect to see the availability of minority language education. In this context, a challenge for Ukraine in its language-in-education policy will be a balanced policy in promotion of the Ukrainian language and the protection of linguistic and educational rights of national minorities.

Although language education in Ukraine has recently been analyzed in several publications, there is room for deeper research in the following areas: empirical studies on changes of language practices in educational establishments due to the implementation of the new Law on Education (2017); language education of temporarily displaced children in Ukraine and abroad; comparative research on language developments in the educational domain, etc. The situation in the temporary occupied territories deserves special attention. In this case, Russia is not only pushing its narratives, but also is once again trying to use language as a pressure tool. The impact of the war on the language practices of Ukrainian society and the educational sphere requires further careful documentation and research through qualitative and quantitative methods – surveys, interviews, and observations. These methods will allow to investigate and answer important questions, such as whether attitudes toward languages have changed among representatives of national minorities; or what is the situation with the Russian language, and what are the attitudes toward the Russian language in the Ukrainian school system in different regions. They also will help to research the language situation in the communities of Ukrainian immigrants.

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