

HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF SUBJECTIVATION OF THE RUSSIAN MINORITY IN THE CONTEXT OF BILINGUALISM IN UKRAINE: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTEXTS

The article is dedicated to analyzing the problems of history and current state of subjectivation of the Russian minority in the context of bilingualism in Ukraine, in particular in theoretical and empirical contexts, especially at the background of events that took place in Ukraine after 2013-2014. It has been stated that bilingualism is really inherent in Ukraine, in particular in the format of coexistence of Ukrainian and Russian languages as the most widespread (in the same order) native languages and languages of everyday communication. At the same time, it has been observed that the language issues do not correspond to the ethnic issues and the composition of the population of Ukraine, since there are many more ethnic Ukrainians than Ukrainian language everyday speakers and users. On this basis, it has been proved that the language issue subjects and politicizes the Russian minority in Ukraine, even though the latter often denies the fact that language competition in a national space inevitably leads to a split in society on the basis of language. The main reason is that the balance between understanding the language as a symbol of identity and a means of communication is disturbed in Ukraine.

Keywords: language, Ukrainian language, Russian language, bilingualism, Russian minority, Russian-speaking population, Ukraine.

HISTORIA I OBECNY STAN SUBIEKTYWIZACJI MNIEJSZOŚCI ROSYJSKIEJ W KONTEKŚCIE BILINGWIZMU NA UKRAINIE: CZĘŚĆ TEORETYCZNA I EMPIRYCZNA

W artykule przeanalizowano problematykę historii i aktualnego stanu subiektywizacji mniejszości rosyjskiej w kontekście dwujęzyczności na Ukrainie, w szczególności w części teoretycznej i empirycznej, zwłaszcza na tle wydarzeń, które miały miejsce na Ukrainie po latach 2013-2014. Stwierdzono, że bilingwizm jest rzeczywiście nieodłączną cechą Ukrainy, w szczególności w formacie współlistnienia języków ukraińskiego i rosyjskiego jako najbardziej rozpowszechnionych (w tej samej kolejności) języków ojczystych i języków codziennego porozumiewania się. Jednocześnie zauważono, że problematyka językowa nie odpowiada problemom etnicznym i składowi ludności na Ukrainie, ponieważ etnicznych Ukraińców jest znacznie więcej niż mówiących w języku ukraińskim. Na tej podstawie udowodniono, że problematyka językowa upolitycznia mniejszość rosyjską na Ukrainie, choć ta ostatnia często zaprzecza, że

rywalizacja językowa w jednej przestrzeni narodowej nieuchronnie prowadzi do językowego podziału społeczeństwa. A głównym powodem jest to, że na Ukrainie zachwiana jest równowaga między rozumieniem języka jako symbolu tożsamości i środka komunikacji.

Słowa kluczowe: język, język ukraiński, język rosyjski, bilingwizm, mniejszość rosyjska, ludność rosyjskojęzyczna, Ukraina.

ІСТОРИЯ ТА ЧИННИЙ СТАН СУБ'ЄКТИВАЦІЇ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ МЕНШИНИ У КОНТЕКСТІ БІЛІНГВІЗМУ В УКРАЇНІ: ТЕОРЕТИЧНИЙ Й ЕМПІРИЧНИЙ РОЗРІЗИ

У статті проаналізовано проблематику історії та чинного стану суб'єктивної російської меншини у контексті білінгвізму в Україні, зокрема в теоретичному й емпіричному розрізах, особливо на тлі подій, які відбулись в Україні після 2013–2014 рр. Констатовано, що Україні дійсно притаманний білінгвізм, зокрема у форматі співіснування української і російської мов як найрозповсюджених (в такому ж порядку) рідних мов та мов повсякденного спілкування. Разом із цим, відстежено, що мовна тематика не відповідає етнічній проблематиці і складу населення в Україні, оскільки етнічних українців значно більше, ніж її повсякденних носіїв та користувачів. На цій підставі доведено, що мовне питання суб'єктивує та політизує російську меншину в Україні, навіть попри те, що остання часто заперечує той факт, що конкуренція мов в одному національному просторі неминуче веде до розколу суспільства на мовному ґрунті. А головна причина у тому, що в Україні порушено рівновагу між розумінням мови як символу ідентичності й засобу комунікації.

Ключові слова: мова, українська мова, російська мова, білінгвізм, російська меншина, російськомовне населення, Україна.

Ukraine is an independent and sovereign state, which many theorists, politicians and practitioners, quite often mistakenly, call multinational. Although according to all official data (however, quite old and not quite relevant to the real political situation, especially as of 2014–2021) there is one dominant titular ethnic group – Ukrainians – with a share of 80 percent of the population; and the largest national minority – Russian – is or at least was (according to official data as of 2001, as there were no recent censuses and no official data) no more than 18 percent. Interestingly, compared to 1989, when the previous census was conducted – but still within the Ukrainian SSR – the share of ethnic Russians in Ukraine decreased by almost 5 percent. It is also very important that at the same time, in fact, after 2014 – the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Donbas, where

most ethnic Russians lived in Ukraine – the situation has changed even more, as the share of ethnic Russians who influence or can influence socio-political (in particular the party-electoral) process in Ukraine has decreased further and very significantly. However, the peculiarity of the processes of political subjectification of the Russian minority in Ukraine has always been not just an appeal to its number, but instead or in parallel to the issues of linguistic diversity, Russian-speaking population and the phenomenon of bilingualism in Ukraine, what in one way or another has been used before and is still used in the socio-political discourse and political process, and was also significantly used during or after the annexation of Crimea, the occupation of Eastern Donbas and after that. All these things certainly actualize the scientific problematic of the history and current state of subjectivity of the Russian minority in the context of bilingualism in Ukraine, in particular in theoretical and empirical terms, especially against the background of events that took place in Ukraine after 2013-2014.

It is noteworthy that the reference to the general theoretical literature, including the authorship of various scientists, gives all / proper reasons to note that today there is no single view on the role of language in nation-building, even in academic environment. The fact that self-identification with a particular language is in itself a subjective and therefore a psychological choice makes it difficult to determine the exact role of a language marker on the issue of citizenship and status on national / ethnic grounds. The meaning given to language in the formation of national consciousness varies from different forms of understanding the political process from one scholar to another, and therefore from situation to situation. Although some researchers emphasize the importance of language in the context of certain regions of the world, in particular for Central and Eastern Europe, others argue that the role of language should not be overestimated. In order to demonstrate the extent to which the opinions of the two opposing approaches differ, it is sufficient to give a few examples.

For example, T. Waters appeals to the American anthropological linguist E. Sapir, who emphasizes that “the fact of everyday speech is a powerful symbol for those who speak a particular language”. The psychological significance of this goes beyond the association of the nationalities’ languages, political formations and smaller social groups, but the exceptional importance of language differences for psychological symbolization compared to official groups is the intuitive feeling of the majority. In the same spirit, W. von Humboldt has long ago argued that each language has its own distinctive features and structures that significantly determine the scope of the worldview of the speaker. J. Fishman similarly notes that in his native language each nation distinguishes itself and contains the statute of its cultural history in the treasury of its language¹. By analogy, C. Hayes emphasizes the role of language as a way of connecting with the “glorious” past², and B. Schaefer notes that the spiritual wealth of a nation is preserved in its language and can be used only by those who understand it³. As a result, T. Kuzio and E. Shils are convinced that participation in a common language performs a solidifying and generative function, as a result of which the language is or can be given

¹ Rucker R., *Nationalism and Culture*, London 1997.; Fishman J., *Language and Nationalism*, [w:] Wolf S. (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe: 1815 to the Present: A Reader*, Wyd. Routledge 1996, s. 158.

² Hayes C., *Essays on Nationalism*, Wyd. Russell & Russell 1966.

³ Shafer B., *Nationalism: Myth and Reality*, New York 1955, s. 122.

a kind of sacred character⁴. In contrast, another group of scientists argues that there is a need to be somewhat more skeptical to the absolute meaning given or ascribed to language in the process of forming a national identity. The same T. Kuzio believes that the importance of languages should not be overestimated⁵, and P. Pirie, in the same spirit, argues that despite the fact that the use of language is an important factor that informs about national self-identification and political relations, it should not be considered as "... Alpha and Omega of national identity"⁶.

By projecting such a scientific dilemma on Ukraine, it should be noted that almost every large national group in this country, including the ethnic Ukrainian majority, is concerned about the status and position regarding the use of their own language⁷.

Nevertheless, the debates on the status of the Russian language, however, has been and remain the most politically important in the linguistic and even socio-political issue of the entire post-communist period of Ukraine's political history; although in this context it is necessary to distinguish two periods of Ukraine's political history before and after the events of 2013-2014. One of the manifestations of this is the frequency with which this issue has been raised and is still being raised in the Ukrainian parliament. . This was especially true for the period before the annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Donbas; as, for example, as far back as 2006, the Committee of the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine) on Culture and Spirituality considered 18 different bills on the problem of Russian language and bilingualism". And this despite the fact that the law "On language in the Ukrainian SSR" of 1989 and the current Constitution of Ukraine (in its various editions) of 1996, which regulated that still do the issue of language use in independent Ukraine, defining in the Ukrainian language the state status. In addition, the Constitution of Ukraine nominally guarantees the free development, use and protection of Russian and other minority languages in Ukraine. However, this has historically and very often outraged and outrages Russian citizens of Ukraine, as they do not always consider Russian to be a minority language. Their arguments are based on appeals to the notion of human rights and liberal values, which are clearly articulated and widespread in Ukraine, as are the arguments of their opponents⁸. On the other hand, this situation is the reason why the defenders of the constitutional status quo in the issue of languages – both before and after the events of 2013-2014 – consider the conditional but obvious privileged status of the Ukrainian language as a form of positive discrimination or a sample of positive actions aimed at strengthening and reviving the language, which was historically discriminated throughout the history of the

⁴ Shils E., *Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and a Civil Society*, „Nations and Nationalism“ 1995, vol 1, nr. 1, s. 102-103.; Kuzio T., *Ukraine: State and Nation-building*, Wyd. Routledge 1998, s. 168.

⁵ Kuzio T., *Ukraine: State and Nation-building*, Wyd. Routledge 1998, s. 168.

⁶ Pirie P., *National Identity and Politics in Southern and Eastern Ukraine*, „Europe-Asia Studies“ 1996, vol. 48, nr. 7, s. 1081.

⁷ Kulyk V., *Constructing Common Sense: Language and Ethnicity in Ukrainian Public Discourse*, „Ethnic and Racial Studies“ 2006, vol 29, s. 281-314.; Stepanenko V., *Identities and Language Politics in Ukraine: The Challenges of Nation-State Building*, [w:] Daftary F., Grin F. (eds.), *Nation-Building and Language Politics in Transition Countries*, Wyd. Open Society Institute 2003, s. 107-137.; Janmaat J., *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Population*, Wyd. Royal Dutch Geographical Society, Universiteit van Amsterdam 2000.; Arl D., *Ukraine: The Temptation of the Nationalizing State*, [w:] Tismaneanu V. (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Wyd. M.E. Sharpe 1995, s. 157-188.

⁸ Stepanenko V., *Identities and Language Politics in Ukraine: The Challenges of Nation-State Building*, [w:] Daftary F., Grin F. (eds.), *Nation-Building and Language Politics in Transition Countries*, Wyd. Open Society Institute 2003, s. 107-137.

Russian Empire and the USSR. Therefore, granting a similar status to the Russian language, in their opinion, will undermine the efforts to restore the Ukrainian language and further strengthen its key competitors, which during Ukraine's independence managed to gain communicative dominance as a result of historical consequences of policies aimed even at language assimilation of the Ukrainians⁹.

With this in mind, our study consistently examines data on regional and socio-linguistic features and the nature of language use in Ukraine – both before and after 2013-2014. Leaving aside all the problems related to the clarity and truthfulness of the interpretation of the data¹⁰, there are noticeable common features of the language situation in Ukraine, which remain relatively indisputable throughout almost the entire period of its independence.

In terms of geographical distribution, Ukrainian language is predominant in the western part of the country and in rural areas in most parts of the country, while Russian one is predominant in cities outside the western and possibly central and northern parts of Ukraine – i.e. in the south-eastern part of the country. This is despite the fact that the majority of the country's population has been and remains bilingual – uses Ukrainian and Russian languages – with a much larger share among Ukrainian-speaking citizens among ethnic Ukrainians than among Russian-speaking ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians in Ukraine. In this regard, regular inquiries which were or are conducted by various sociological structures and researchers in Ukraine provide data that allow us to draw some conclusions about the continuity and changes in language practice or, as some scholars point out, the preferences of linguistic choice in this country¹¹.

Table 1. Definition / choice by citizens of the status of “native language” in Ukraine (1994-2021)¹²

Year	1994	1997	2001	2005	2012	2017	2020	2021
Ukrainian language	62,3	62,4	67,5	64,3	62,0	67,7	64,1	63,0
Russian language, or Russian and Ukrainian language	34,7	35,1	29,6	34,4	36,0	31,2	34,5	35,0
Other	3,0	2,5	2,9	1,3	2,0	1,1	1,4	2,0

⁹ Masenko L., *Language and Politics*, Wyd. Soniashnyk 1999.

¹⁰ Janmaat J., *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Population*, Wyd. Royal Dutch Geographical Society, Universiteit van Amsterdam 2000; Stepanenko V., *Identities and Language Politics in Ukraine: The Challenges of Nation-State Building*, [w:] Daftary F., Grin F. (eds.), *Nation-Building and Language Politics in Transition Countries*, Wyd. Open Society Institute 2003, s. 107-137.

¹¹ Uehling G., *The First Independent Ukrainian Census: Myths, Miscoding and Missed Opportunities*, „Ethnic and Racial Studies“ 2004, vol 27, nr. 1, s. 149-170.

¹² Panina N., *Ukrains'ke suspilstvo 1994-2005: sotsiologichni monitorynh*, Wyd. Sophia 2005.; Vyshniak O., *Movna sytuatsiia ta status mov v Ukraini: dynamika, problemy, perspektyvy (sotsiologichni analiz)*, Wyd. Instytut sotsiologii NAN Ukrainy 2009.; *Movy spilkuvannia ukrainstiv*, Wyd. Research & Branding Group (arkhivovano 4 berezen 2016), źródło: https://web.archive.org/web/20160304190106/http://www.rb.com.ua/upload/medialibrary/PR_Ry_Ukr_2012.pdf [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Dumly nasclennia Ukrainy shchodo zovnishnoi polityky ta movnoho pytannia*, Wyd. Kyivskiy mizhnarodnyi instytut sotsiologii, źródło: http://www.kiis.com.ua/materials/pr/20130321_ForAff/foreign_affairs.pdf [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Etnichna ta movna identychnist*, [w:] *Osnovni zasady i shliakhy formuvannia spilnoi identychnosti hromadian Ukrainy. Informatsiino-analitychni materialy do Kruhloho stolu 12 kvitnia 2017 r.*, Wyd. Tsentr Razumkova 2017, s. 6, źródło: https://razumkov.org.ua/images/Material_Conference/2017_04_12_ident/2017-Identi-3.pdf [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Movna sytuatsiia Ukrainy v sotsiolinhvistychnykh vymirakh. Viina z Rosiieiu vplynula na bahatokh*, „Radio Svoboda“ 1 travnia 2020, źródło: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30586236.html> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Ukrainska mova: shliakh u*

One of the most frequently used questions was and remains to find out the choice of Ukrainian citizens regarding their “native language” during the period after the restoration of the independence of this state (see Table 1). The answers to this question have changed and are changing in a rather narrow range. After all, mostly only data that give an answer in the form of another language or another answer tend to correlate with significant percentage differences, and in the other the Ukrainian language always predominates in the interpretation as native to Russian one. Therefore, it must be assumed that Ukraine is alternately characterized by a decrease or increase in the share of people whose native language is different from the two main languages in Ukraine – Ukrainian and Russian.

As for these two languages, the latest opinion polls first registered a slight increase and then a slight decrease in the share of people who consider Ukrainian as their mother tongue and vice versa in the case of Russian as their mother tongue. At the same time, the rates of use of Russian as a native language were relatively highest in different time periods, in particular first in the late 90s of the 20th century, then in 2005 – after the “Orange Revolution”, – later in 2012 – in the period presidency of Viktor Yanukovich – and finally in 2020-2021 – during the rule of Volodymyr Zelenskyi. Controversial and negative dynamics in these time periods were characteristic of the Ukrainian language as a native language, although, of course, it has always prevailed over the Russian language in Ukraine. Nevertheless, in general, it follows from this statistical situation that in Ukraine the predominance of Ukrainian language over Russian as native ones is much smaller than the predominance of the Ukrainian national element over the Russian national minority in Ukraine.

Table 2. Definition / choice by citizens of the status of “language of communication” in Ukraine (1994-2021)¹³

Year	1994	1997	2001	2005	2012	2017	2020	2021
Ukrainian language	36,7	38,2	36,9	41,8	44,0	55,5	46,9	49,0
Russian language	32,4	34,5	36,7	36,4	35,0	23,2	31,8	49,0
Ukrainian and Russian language	29,4	26,8	25,8	21,6	20,0	20,5	20,8	–
Other	1,5	0,5	0,6	0,2	1,0	0,8	0,5	2,0

¹³ Panina N., *Ukrains'ke suspil'stvo 1994-2005: sotsiologichniy monitorynh*, Wyd. Sophia 2005.; Vyshniak O., *Movna sytuatsiia ta status mov v Ukraini: dynamika, problemy, perspektyvy (sotsiologichniy analiz)*, Wyd. Instytut sotsiologii NAN Ukrainy 2009.; *Movy spilkuvannia ukrainciv*, Wyd. Research & Branding Group (arkhivovano 4 berezen 2016), źródło: https://web.archive.org/web/20160304190106/http://www.rb.com.ua/upload/medialibrary/PR_Ry_Ukr_2012.pdf [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Dumky naselennia Ukrainy shchodo zovnishnoi polityky ta movnoho pytannia*, Wyd. Kyivskiy mizhnarodnyi instytut sotsiologii, źródło: http://www.kiis.com.ua/materials/pr/20130321_ForAff/foreign_affairs.pdf [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Etnichna ta movna identychnist*, [w:] *Osnovni zasady i shliakhy formuvannia spilnoi identychnosti hromadian Ukrainy. Informatsiino-analitychni materialy do Kruhloho stolu 12 kvitnia 2017 r.*, Wyd. Tsentrazumkova 2017, s. 6, źródło: https://razumkov.org.ua/images/Material_Conference/2017_04_12_ident/2017-Identi-3.pdf [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Movna sytuatsiia Ukrainy v sotsiologicheskikh vymirakh. Viina z Rosiieiu vplynula na bahatokh*, „Radio Svoboda” 1 travnia 2020, źródło: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30586236.html> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Ukrainska mova: shliakh u nezalezhnii Ukraini*, Wyd. Demokratychni initsiatyvy, 10 veresnia 2020, źródło: <https://dif.org.ua/article/ukrainska-mova-shlyakh-u-nezalezhnii-ukraini> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].; *Doslidzhennia: movna sytuatsiia v Ukraini*, Wyd. Kantar TNS Online Track 2021, źródło: <https://tns-ua.com/news/doslidzhennya-movna-situatsiya-v-ukrayini> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].

This pattern is even more evident in the case of appeals to data and statistics on the definition and choice of citizens' status of their "language of communication" (especially at home and in the family) in Ukraine in the same time period (see Table 2). In particular, it was found that in the field of language use in the private sector the situation is not as stable as in the case of the choice of native languages.

After all, initially, in particular until 2005, there was a relatively stable increase in the share of people who used mainly either Ukrainian or Russian language in the family, in particular due to a decrease in the share of people who used two languages at the same time. As a result of various socio-political events, the situation in this direction continued in 2005–2012, but in 2012 the processes of much faster increase of the share of Ukrainian language use and reduction of the share of Russian language in everyday communication began, which peaked in 2017. In contrast, after the change in the structure of power in Ukraine in 2019, the country gradually began reverse and opposite processes – a gradual decrease in the share of Ukrainian and increase the share of Russian as a language of everyday communication, and without changing the share of the population, which in this context typically communicates simultaneously in two languages. At the same time, according to a poll conducted by Kantar TNS in 2021, which did not take into account the share of simultaneous daily use of Ukrainian language and Russian one, the ratio of their separate use was virtually identical and equal (see Table. 2). But the most important thing in this context is that the use of Ukrainian as a language of communication is much less intense than its interpretation as a native language in Ukraine, and this is typical for the entire period after the restoration of independence and this further widens the gap between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians in Ukraine.

Against this background, it is very important that the increase in the number of people who mostly speak Russian is latent earlier (until 2012–2013) and later (since 2013–2014 and again since 2020–2021) both latent, and openly created or still creates grounds for forming a conclusion about the growing importance of the Russian element in the process of formation of the Ukrainian state, and thus indirectly testified or still testifies to the subjectivation of the Russian national minority through the popularization of the Russian language in Ukraine and through the phenomenon of bilingualism in this country. The fact that the number of people who claimed to use mainly Ukrainian language with the highest rates (in their time periods) in 2005 or 2017, and the number of people who claimed that they mostly used Russian one – respectively in 2005, 2012 and 2021 are certainly a consequence of the increased characteristics of the definition of ethno-linguistic identities in Ukraine, what, for example, was associated or conditioned by the course and consequences of the events of the "Orange Revolution" in 2004 and "Revolution of Dignity" in 2013–2014, and also "waves" of kickbacks from them in the following years and decades. Therefore, all this once again argues that language is an important marker of identity or identities in Ukraine, because its symbolic meaning is important for both Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking citizens of this country, especially against the background of the initial formation and subsequent destruction of more polarized than traditional, installations after certain landmark socio-political events in Ukraine.

A similar pattern, although less expressed, characterizes the respondents' answers to another question about language. The fact is that in Ukraine, surveys are often conducted on the need to give Russian the status of state

or specific official one. Moreover, the dynamics in this case is also context-dependent – primarily on significant socio-political events and crises in Ukraine. Thus, at the time – after the “Orange Revolution” in 2004 – the answers of respondents in 2005 were distributed as follows: 34.4 percent (compared to 34.1 percent on average in 1994-2005) were against the status of the Russian language as official; 16.8 per cent (compared to an average of 18.0 per cent in 1994-2005) said they found it difficult to answer; 48.6 percent (vs. 47.7 percent) responded to a desire to give Russian official status (but did not specify which one). Although in general at this time less than half of the population supported the granting of some official recognition of the Russian language. Moreover, this figure, certainly always being fluctuating, still gradually changed in favor of not giving the Russian language the status of official or state, even against the background of certain “waves” of reversals of political development. Thus, according to a poll conducted by the “Democratic Initiatives” Foundation “Ukrainian Language: The Way to Independent Ukraine” since 2020, in fact 2/3 (66 percent) of Ukrainian citizens agreed that the Russian language in Ukraine can be used freely in private life, but the only state language must be Ukrainian one. Instead, only 18 percent of respondents insisted on giving Russian official status in certain regions, and 13 percent insisted that it become the state language throughout Ukraine. Therefore, the situation gradually (including due to the annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Donbas, as well as hostilities with pro-Russian groups) really developed in favor of the Ukrainian language in this context, because only in eastern Ukraine approximately equal number of citizens demanded either the status of the state language only in Ukrainian or the status of state languages in both Russian and Ukrainian. On the other hand, in all other parts of Ukraine, even in the South, supporters of the Russian language as the state language were in a colossal minority¹⁴.

Against this background, a rather interesting paradox has developed in Ukraine. On the one hand, the share of ethnic Ukrainians in this country is much higher than the share of ethnic Russians, and therefore Ukraine in this sense is a folk state or a state in which federalization on ethnic grounds should not take place. On the other hand, Ukraine is a country in which historically and for various reasons the share of supporters of the Ukrainian language as a native language and the share of its direct use in everyday life is significantly inconsistent with the (lower) share of ethnic Ukrainians in Ukraine¹⁵.

In some periods, it even manifested itself in the fact that the Russian-speaking part of Ukraine’s population, if not larger than the Ukrainian-speaking one, was at least the same, and that this ratio was determined by the fact that almost a third of Ukraine’s population was Russian-speaking ethnic Ukrainians rather than ethnic Russians. Moreover, in fact the share of the latter has decreased especially after 2014, although they are still citizens of this state, on the other hand, the share of Russian-speaking Ukrainians in Ukraine is almost unchanged, and tends more to a fixed one, albeit due to a fairly large number of bilingual citizens of this state (for details see Tables 1 and 2). In statistical terms, this is in line with a long ago published survey that typically says that 45 percent of Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, 34 percent are Russian-speaking Ukrainians, 15 percent are Russian-speaking Russians, and 6 percent are representatives of other groups typically live in Ukraine. Of special attention or caution in

¹⁴ *Ukrainska mova: shliakh u nezalezhnii Ukraini*, Wyd. Demokratychni initsiatyvy, 10 veresnia 2020, źródło: <https://dif.org.ua/article/ukrainska-mova-shlyakh-u-nezalezhnii-ukraini> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].

¹⁵ Kucherenko T., *Rehionalnyi faktor u politychnomu protsesi Ukrainy*: [Dys... kand. polit. nauk], Wyd. Kharkiv. nats. un-t im. V.N. Karazina 2001.

this context is the fact that the share of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Russians in Ukraine is or has been earlier, especially before the annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Donbas, not just equal, but even higher than Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians. And it certainly follows that Ukraine has had and still has a bilingual population structure, in which the influence of the Russian language is often used “for hire” for the subjectification of the Russian minority and to politicize the language issue (this has been the norm before, especially before 2014, but recently, in particular after 2019, this political “map” and strategy is being played out again).

This problem becomes especially important in the geographical or geopolitical sense, in particular given that such linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity or so-called bilingualism is unevenly distributed throughout Ukraine. For example, in the eastern oblasts (both before and after their partial occupation) the share of the Russian-speaking population is much higher than in the western ones, and in the southern oblasts it is significantly higher than in the northern and central ones. Thus, in the “western” region, the Russian-speaking part of the population is approximately or less than 10 percent, in the “central and northern” region it is about 40 percent, in the “southern” one it is about 70-80 percent, and in the “eastern” region it is about 90 percent. Moreover, this feature of the ethno linguistic division of the territory of Ukraine started to be in usage in the political and party-electoral process almost immediately after the restoration of independence of this country. After all, after the 1994 presidential election, which for the first time geographically divided Ukraine into two parts, it became apparent that the regional distribution of votes cast for the leading candidates was close to the regional division of the Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking populations. In particular, the calculations showed that the percentage of votes received by L. Kravchuk in different oblasts was positively and closely correlated with the percentage of Ukrainian-speaking voters in them, and the percentage of votes for L. Kuchma was positively correlated with the percentage of Russian-speaking voters in the same oblasts. Accordingly, the link to this logic and issues as a sign started to be used and promoted in the next presidential (especially in the second round) and, to a lesser extent, parliamentary elections, in particular between such presidential candidates of Ukraine as L. Kuchma and P. Symonenko in 1999, V. Yushchenko and V. Yanukovich in 2004–2005, V. Yanukovich and Y. Tymoshenko in 2010. And only the well-known events of 2013-2014 partially broke this “cliche” since it did not work or partially worked during the election of P. Poroshenko as President of Ukraine in 2014 and almost did not work when in 2019 there was competition in the second round between P. Poroshenko and V. Zelenskyi. However, the current distribution of political forces in the country and opinion polls in this regard provide sufficient grounds to predict that some political forces (as well as domestic and foreign political actors in general) are persuading Ukraine and its voters to return to electoral competition in bilingualism, although not so much for politicization of the Russian minority in Ukraine (after all, this task was largely solved as a result of previous experience and the events up to 2014).

At the same time, it is appropriate to state that bilingualism, which is historically and currently inherent in Ukraine and is inherited in the socio-political discourse and partly in the electoral process in this country, and thus Russian-Ukrainian linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity are related to the

heterogeneity of national identity of Ukraine. The fact is that linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity in Ukraine for many generations was formed under the influence not only of the history of political factors (especially in the USSR), but also through interethnic marriages and the birth of children whose nationality was officially determined only unambiguously, mainly by father's nationality, but the primary or basic language was often the mother tongue. The facts show that by the time of Ukraine's independence, there were as many as a quarter of such heterogeneous marriages in Ukraine (Ukrainian SSR), which certainly had its consequences in a few decades. The manifestations of this are that: many Ukrainians by nationality sometimes consider themselves not only Ukrainians but also Russians; many ethnic Russians consider themselves Ukrainians. It follows, in particular with reference to the results of the 2001 census in Ukraine, that there are slightly less than a third of monoethnic Ukrainians, almost one-fifth of bi-ethnic Russian-Ukrainians, almost one-tenth of monoethnic Russians and almost one one-fifth of representatives of other groups and minorities in this country. At the same time, in the northern and western parts of Ukraine there are much more monoethnic Ukrainians than bi-ethnic Russian-Ukrainians and monoethnic Russians combined, and in the southern and eastern parts there are fewer monoethnic Ukrainians than the total number of Russian-Ukrainians and monoethnic Russians. Thus, in general, in the regions of Ukraine, Russian-Ukrainian linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity is associated with the prevalence of Russian-Ukrainian bi-ethnic heterogeneity. At the same time, also at the individual level, Russian-Ukrainian linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity is significantly related to Russian-Ukrainian bi-ethnic identity. As a result, the probability of Russian speaking for bi-ethnic Russian-Ukrainians is almost two and a half times higher than for monoethnic Ukrainians.

However, such indicators characterize the dependence of linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity on ethnicity not in its pure form, but together with the influence of other factors, including gender, age, level of education, ethnicity, and type of settlement and region of residence. In general, against this background, it is proved that, other things being equal, the probability of Russian-speaking Russian-Ukrainian biathletes is almost four times higher than in the case of monoethnic Ukrainians. And this is the connection between the results obtained and the electoral geography in Ukraine, in particular, first during the presidential election, starting in 1994 and ending to a lesser extent in 2014 and 2019. After all, it is the factor of bilingualism that has repeatedly streamlined and will most likely (under the relevant political factors) continue to streamline electoral preferences in Ukraine in geographical terms. At the same time, this is complemented, especially since 2013-2014, by the context of the subjectivity of the Russian national minority in Ukraine against the background of the attitude of Ukrainian citizens to Russia – it is gradually becoming more negative, especially after the annexation of the Crimea and occupation of Eastern Donbas. On the other hand, the research shows that during almost the entire history of Ukraine after the restoration of its independence, perhaps with the exception of a short period of 2014-2019, no drastic and dramatic changes in the structure of language use or language preferences in Ukraine have taken place, although today less and fewer respondents are in favor of giving Russian official or state status, but the share of people who consider Russian their mother tongue or use it in everyday communication is almost unchanged. Perhaps the main reason for this is the fact that

politicians of all levels and directions understand that any, even short-term, fluctuations in this regard can cause political contradictions and even crises. At the same time, it generates two conclusions: on the one hand, self-consciously certain representatives of the Russian minority and the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine do not identify the language issue as fundamental, and therefore there are no linguistic bases for assessing the subjectivity of the Russian national minority in Ukraine; on the other hand, these principles are created mainly artificially and provoked by political elites, and their main concept and goal is to gain power of those parts of the population and those regions that differ from other similar units by their prerogatives.

That is why, the language issue is an electoral issue, but not a national one in the domestic and geopolitical sense, and this is well understood and applied quite effectively by pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine and Russian politicians outside this country. This is evidenced by the fact that political attention to the status of the Russian language usually fades after the election, although the problem still remains on the agenda of socio-political discourse, or at least its imposition from the outside. On the other hand, the unstable implementation of the ambitious agenda for the activation of the Ukrainian language and the conscious decision of state institutions not to apply some of the administrative and constitutional norms on the use of languages in public and institutional life have become one of the main factors explaining the lack of stability in the collective political action, which are aimed at expanding the legal status of the Russian language. It is these factors that play an important role in reducing political tensions, determining the actual (informal) language regime in various social spheres, including the media and education. This was perhaps most obvious in 2014-2021, for initially (until 2019) the Ukrainian language was privileged by law, which supporters of the use of the Russian language considered to be pressure, but later (since 2019) the reverse processes began, at least in part. One way or another, but such fluctuations were perhaps the most politicized in the past, and still politicize the issue of bilingualism in Ukraine. And this despite the fact that almost immediately after the annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Donbas, the situation developed in favor of almost undeniable progressive development of the Ukrainian language, even at the expense of Russian, but there was a lack of intensity in this direction, and therefore a certain – at least partial – reversal or “rollback” became possible.

In fact, such a construction, however, had many dangerous manifestations during the political history of Ukraine in the period up to 2013-2014. So, at one time the quintessences of the aggravation of the problems of the Russian and Russian-speaking issues were two congresses in Severodonetsk. The first one took place in November 2004 with the ideas of federalization of Ukraine and the creation of an autonomous South-Eastern Republic. And the second congress – in March 2008, on the agenda of which there was the issue of humanitarian policy, and in fact – an ultimatum to the authorities to protect the rights of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. And this despite the fact that between these congresses, in particular in 2006-2007, not surprisingly after the parliamentary elections in Ukraine, city and regional councils of the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine decided to give

Russian language the status of a regional one¹⁶. Such and similar circumstances have significantly destabilized and destabilize the interethnic situation in the “south-eastern region” and the whole country¹⁷. Moreover, the grounds for the formation of a kind of cartographic and electoral region within the South and East were the parliamentary elections of 2002 in Ukraine, when pro-Russian parties (in particular, the Communist Party of Ukraine and the bloc “For a United Ukraine”, which included the “Party of Regions”) for the first time won in most regions of Southern and Eastern Ukraine. The situation with the separation of the “South-East” deepened, as everyone knows, in 2004, when the candidate who was practically not supported in the region, Viktor Yushchenko, won the presidential election for the first time. This meant that for the first time since 1991, the regions of Southern and Eastern Ukraine were not in power, and therefore it was technologically concluded that for the first time the vast majority of ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine were not heard or taken into account. Similar events took place as a result of the “Euromaidan” and the “Revolution of Dignity” in 2013-2014, when a representative of the South-Eastern region, President Viktor Yanukovich was forced to flee the country.

However, this was inherited not only by the dissatisfaction of the ethnic Russian and a large part of the Russian-speaking population, especially in the East and the Crimea, but also the external / geopolitical politicization of this issue on the part of Russia, which resulted in the peak of a kind of regional separatism and even irredentism against the background of the events in Donbas in 2014, when unrecognized “referendums” were held in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and self-proclaimed “people’s republics” were created with Russia’s “assistance”. It was after that, against the background of the politicized subjectivation of the Russian minority and the Russian-speaking population of eastern and partly southern Ukraine, which was already dissatisfied with the political situation in the country; in particular through the filter of Russian-speaking and bilingualism, that the conflict between the center and the “region / periphery” has entered the open / armed phase. The format of politicization of the language situation and the phenomenon of bilingualism in Ukraine at that time was very successfully evidenced by a survey of the International Republican Institute, March 14-26, 2014 (and in fact at the time of the annexation of the Crimea), after all, at that time, only 29 percent of ethnic Russians in Ukraine expressed concern about pressure on the status and possibility of using the Russian language in Ukraine (which was often interpreted by Russia as the biggest problem of the Russian minority in Ukraine). Instead, 66 percent of ethnic Russians in Ukraine believe that no one prevents them from using Russian fluently¹⁸. Similar results were obtained in the regional context, as only 24 percent of respondents in southern Ukraine and 17 percent of respondents in eastern Ukraine expressed concern about the threat to the free use of the Russian language. Accordingly, only

¹⁶ Yunusov L., Spalek M., Chto mozno Kharkovu, to nelzia Krymu, „Kommersant“ 09.03.2006, źródło: <http://www.kommersant.ru/Doc-rss/656039> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].

¹⁷ Holenko V., Tykhonov V., Severodonetsk: tochky ne budet, Wyd. PTs „Maksym“ 2008.

¹⁸ Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine, „International Republican Institute“ 14-26.03.2014, źródło: <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%205%20IRI%20Public%20Opinion%20Survey%20of%20Ukraine%2C%20March%2014-26%2C%202014.pdf> [odczyt: 20.10.2021].

27 percent of respondents in southern Ukraine and 24 percent of respondents in eastern Ukraine supported the idea that Russia should send troops to Ukraine, but this was sufficient in political discourse. However, among ethnic Russians, the percentage of those who supported the direction of Russia's armed forces to "protect" (if necessary) the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine was much higher, as 43 percent were in favor and against it. A similar logic was evidenced by the results of surveys from April and December 2014, conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, because thanks to them it was traced that in most regions of southern and eastern Ukraine at that time there was an assessment of Russia as the organizer of separatism in Ukraine and as the culprit of the military events taking place in the Eastern Donbas. Identical opinion was expressed by the residents of the region about Russia's interference in Ukraine's internal affairs as illegal, as a result of which respondents generally believed that Russia unfairly protected the Russian-speaking population of Southeastern Ukraine, especially since there was no restriction on this population.

Nevertheless, historically (until 2014) and currently the Crimea and South-Eastern Ukraine in the context of ethno-political and territorial factors of regionalism and the phenomenon of politicization of Russians in Ukraine have been (especially the Crimea) and remain basic regions. Their isolation is historical and as of the moment of research is exhaustive, relevant and tested. This is happening at least because South-Eastern Ukraine has its own regional peculiarities, as the policy of assimilation has been and still is evident here, the language issue is an acute one, and the "Russian factor" has a tangible influence on the consciousness and orientations of the population. As a result, the significant heterogeneity of ethnic and cultural identification of the region, which primarily due to the language issue and bilingualism in Ukraine inevitably affects the subjectivity of the Russian minority and the Russian-speaking population in this country, including due to the historical orientation to Russia and the predominance of individual and specific interests of some Ukrainian (pro-Russian) politicians. This means that it is in the complex of these and other factors, i.e. in the format of the "Russian problem", which seems to have been reduced and still is reduced to the use of "language card" and the slogan to protect compatriots and Russian-speaking population and "violation of Russian rights", and it is necessary to look for the reasons of the political events that took place in Ukraine both before 2013-2014 and after this.

In general, there can be made several conclusions drawn against this background. One of them is that bilingualism is really visible in Ukraine, in particular in the format of coexistence of Ukrainian and Russian languages as the most common (in the same order) native languages and languages of daily communication. At the same time, the language issues do not correspond at all to the ethnic issues and the composition of the population in Ukraine, because there are many more ethnic Ukrainians than its everyday speakers and users. At the same time, it is stated that a characteristic feature of the linguistic factor of regionalism in Ukraine is its discrepancy with ethnicity, because, on the one hand, the share of ethnic Ukrainians in this state is much higher than the share of ethnic Russians, and therefore Ukraine is a folk state, however, on the other hand,

Ukraine is a country in which historically and for various reasons the share of supporters of the Ukrainian language as a mother tongue and the share of its direct use in everyday life is significantly inconsistent (lower), as mentioned above, the share of ethnic Ukrainians in Ukraine. Although the language issue in general has inevitably subjected and politicized the Russian minority in Ukraine and continues to do so, even though the latter has often denied the fact that competition between two languages in one national space inevitably leads to a linguistic split in society on linguistic grounds. It is also obvious that the post colonialism of language construction in Ukraine has led to the fact that the balance between the understanding of language as a symbol of identity and a means of communication is quite significantly disturbed in this country.

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