

The Sociolinguistic Situation In Ukraine

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Abstract

In Ukraine, the issue of language has been intimately bound up with the idea of obtaining national independence and statehood. It is, in effect, a matter of existential significance, which has proved to be especially relevant in the context of the current Russian aggression. In view of the sensitivity of the language issue, the topic suggested for discussion will encompass two points.

Firstly, the sociolinguistic situation is viewed in terms of the balance between the national (=state) language and minority languages (seventeen in total) to be achieved through the implementation of Article 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine (28.06.96). It guarantees free development, use and protection of the Russian language and other national minority languages. Indicatively, said languages are deemed to require mandatory interaction with the Ukrainian language, with the supremacy of the latter, its involvement in all public spheres, including the education sector, the primary target of which is fostering **national identity**. Nevertheless, the path to a balanced sociolinguistic situation has not been smooth due to a set of sociopolitical issues entwined with the linguistic ones. Attempts to introduce Russian as the second state language on a par with Ukrainian or essentially to expand the employment of regional languages (e.g. The Law of Ukraine, 03.03.12) have been rejected as not complying with the ideology of the **Ukrainian statehood formation**.

Secondly, the assertion of the national language with regional varieties unfolded prior to The Declaration of Independence (24.08.91) in response to the long-standing aspirations of the Ukrainian people to disengage from the Soviet legacy. Since then, there has been a strategic endeavor to minimize the use of Russian in all public sectors and by doing so gradually eliminate the consequences of massive russification. By excluding the Russian language from public communication, the state-governed language policy ensures a mighty impetus to the Ukrainian language development in terms of its covering all socio-functional domains. It becomes a crucial link to the cause of national consolidation, and as the instrument of distinguishing *self vs. alien* in the course of the Russian-Ukrainian war (The Law on the Media, 31.03.23). The dynamism of present-day Ukrainian, the changes occurring at its structural levels and the resulting discourse practices are further presented for discussion.

Key words: sociolinguistic, Ukrainian, Russian, minority languages, statehood, national identity