Language and Identity in post-Soviet Ukraine: Transformation of an Unbroken Bond

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Abstract
Language has traditionally been a crucial component of Ukrainian identity. Given the lack of independent statehood, Ukrainian identity was primarily ethnocultural rather than civic. However, the contradictory policies of the Soviet regime produced a large-scale discrepancy between the language use and ethnocultural identity. Moreover, independence boosted Ukrainian civic identity and stimulated reconsideration of its relationship with the ethnocultural identity of the titular group. Although the Ukrainian language occupies a special place in both main versions of Ukrainian identity, it has to be reconciled with the continued reliance on Russian of about half of Ukraine's citizens. At the same time, the perception of oneself as Ukrainian is gradually shifting from ethnocultural to civic, particularly among the young generations raised in independent Ukraine. Last but not least, the escalation of an identity struggle in the wake of the Orange Revolution led to different dynamics in the two parts of the country.

Key words: language, identity, native language, everyday language, Ukraine

Introduction

Although a close relationship between language and identity is widely recognised, its specific nature in a particular socio-historical context often remains assumed rather than explored. In this article, I will analyse a special role of the titular language in Ukrainian ethnic and national identity as well as a change in this role after the establishment of the independent Ukrainian state. Before examining the relationship between language and identity in the specific Ukrainian context, I would like to problematise each of these concepts and their relation more generally.

Language can be defined as human capacity for communication and self-expression, more specifically, for acquiring and using systems of communication and self-expression which are, not by chance, also called languages. A language is a system recognised in this capacity, that is, codified and imposed in certain domains of use (in contrast to such standardised languages, other systems are called dialects, slangs, mixtures, etc., by which terms their systematicity is denied). The latter meaning directly relates language to identity: a language is a system used by a particular collectivity – first and foremost, a nation – whose identity it expresses and is part of. Therefore, ideally there should be one-to-one correspondence between languages and nations, or languages and national identities of which eponymous languages are the key part. However, this correspondence can be violated if changes in

language are not accompanied by changes in identity, that is, if people come to speak a different language than that of their group but continue to identify with that group, or, conversely, come to identify with a different group but speak the language of the former one. Identity is self-perception, or rather self-perception which can be sustained in interaction with others. That is, one's self-categorization should be matched by the categorization applied by others. The categorization in a given act of interaction results, on the one hand, from features displayed in this very act and, on the other, from pre-established categories assumed to be valid in all interactions. For immediate categorization, language is an important element, together with other perceptible features such as race, sex, age, etc., or even more important than these because 'the presence of a communication barrier renders such differences immediately relevant … in social encounters, making it more likely that they will be used as rules of thumb', that is, endowed with special significance as a point of personal reference informing one's understanding of and behavior in a given situation.[1] Simply put, people are likely to treat those speaking a different language as different from themselves, which affects – in most cases negatively – their manner of interaction with such people. Those speaking the same language tend to be viewed as similar and, by extension, kindred, potentially worthy of favourable treatment. This special significance makes a person's language use a crucial part of a set of references commonly referred to as ethnicity or ethnic identity, which also includes perceptions of common descent, history, religion and way of life with other members of the same ethnic group.

However, once established, this relation of language to ethnicity and its concomitant attributes (appearance, customs, religion, etc.) is not easy to change in further acts of interaction where the same person may display different features. Since these attributes are assumed to be inherent to the group's members, the membership in it becomes permanent and perceived to be based on inheritance rather than performance. According to Fishman, '[i]t is precisely because language is so often taken as a biological inheritance that its association with ethnic paternity is both frequent and powerful.'[2] The established social system of categorization thus supersedes one resulting from direct interpersonal interaction. Of course, the original categorization was related to language use of people in question but its subsequent internalization by these people made it rather independent from actual use of the group identified by the eponymous language. The Ukrainian situation provides an excellent illustration of this transformation.

Language and identity in Ukraine before independence

The external categorization of the ancestors of today's Ukrainians on the basis of language they spoke did not initially coincide with the internal one which was primarily based on religion, class, and locality. Any stable ethnocultural identity did not become widespread among the low classes until the early 20th century which was marked by overt competition between different projects of national or supranational identity whose elite proponents sought to win over peasant masses.[3] But among the educated strata there emerged already in the nineteenth century a vision of the Ukrainian people as encompassing all those who speak the Ukrainian language in all of its varieties. Remarkably, this vision included people living in different states, primarily the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. At the end of that century nationalist elites in Galicia and then in Russian Ukraine articulated the idea of uniting

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[1] H. E. Hale, 'Explaining ethnicity,' *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4,2004, p. 474.
[2] J. A. Fishman, *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective*, Clevedon and Philadelphia, Multilingual Matters, 1989, p. 26.
[3] B. Krawchenko, Social Change and National Consciousness on Twentieth-Century Ukraine, London, Macmillan 1985, p. 49.

all territories with Ukrainian population in one independent state, even though this idea was far from dominant even among the intelligentsia, let alone among the political or economic elites.[4]

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, first and foremost in Galicia, the development of education, civil society and mass politics brought the elite idea of nation to the masses even before World War I when this idea manifested itself in the large-scale support for Ukrainian independence during the military confrontation with the Poles. Actually, the distinction from the Poles (primarily religious but also linguistic) and competition with the Poles strongly facilitated the spread of ethnic awareness among Galician Ukrainians who increasingly abandoned the self-designation as Ruthenians.[5] Under the inter-war Polish rule, this idea gained further strength due to ethnically-based discrimination which contributed to the participation in or support for the nationalist resistance movement, particularly during World War II.[6]

In the Russian Empire, the ethnocultural self-identification of Ukrainians was hindered by the proximity of languages and, more importantly, by the religion with Russians. Although the Russian scholarly and cultural elite was aware of linguistic distinctiveness of the residents of what it called Little Russia, the degree of this distinctiveness and, accordingly, the status of Ukrainian variety as a separate language or a dialect of Russian were debatable, with the predominance of the latter interpretation at least until the 1905 revolution. And it was this interpretation that was clearly favoured by the imperial administration as demonstrated by the infamous Valuev circular of 1863 which banned most Ukrainian-language publications on the grounds that 'no separate Little Russian language has ever existed, exists, or can exist.'[7] The decade of relative political liberalization and accompanying cultural animation after 1905 was not sufficient to implant the idea of Ukrainian nationhood into mass consciousness, so this process largely took place during the political and military confrontation in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution. The weak sense of ethnocultural distinctiveness among Ukrainian masses is traditionally considered one of the main reasons for the failure of attempts to establish an independent statehood in this period.[8]

Paradoxically, the Bolsheviks prevailing over Ukrainian nationalists crucially contributed to the spread of ethnolinguistic identity among ordinary Ukrainians. After several years of hostility to Ukrainian distinctiveness, the Bolshevik regime began promoting it in education, media, public administration and other domains.[9] According to Brubaker, the ethno-national identity of Ukrainians and other major ethnic groups of the USSR was institutionalised in two ways. To focus on the linguistic dimension, the regime, on the one hand, introduced standardised Ukrainian as the main territorial language of the Ukrainian SSR, or one of the two main languages alongside of the all-Union Russian, supposedly in recognition of the predominantly Ukrainian population of the republic. On the other hand, Ukrainian ethnicity and language were recognised and, at the same time, imposed as personal characteristics of individuals of the supposedly Ukrainian origin.[10] Remarkably, the practice of ascribing

[4] I. L. Rudnytsky, 'The Fourth Universal and Its Ideological Antecedents,' in T. Hunczak (ed.), *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1977, pp. 186-219; R. Szporluk, 'Ukraine: From imperial periphery to a sovereign state,' *Daedalus*, Vol. 126, No. 3, 1997, pp. 86-119.

[5] I. L. Rudnytsky, 'The Ukrainian National Movement on the Eve of the First World War,' *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XI, No. 2, 1977, pp. 141-154.

[6] P. R. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996. See chapter 44.

[7] D. Saunders, 'Russia's Ukrainian policy (1847-1905): A demographic approach,' *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 1995, pp. 181-208; Magocsi, op. cit., chapter 29.

[8] See e.g. Magocsi, op. cit., chapter 39.

[9] T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923 – 1939*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2001, chapter 3; Krawchenko, op. cit., chapter 2.

[10] R. Brubaker, 'Nationhood and the national question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia: An institutional account,' *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1994, pp. 47-78.

individual ethnicity and language conceptually separated these two notions, even if it practically aimed at bringing the latter into conformance with the former. While in the Russian Empire the census of 1897 inquired about spoken language and established ethnicity on the assumption of congruence between the two, the Bolsheviks sought to ascertain the two characteristics – nationality and native language – separately in order to measure the gap between them which was perceived as a result of imperial russification and meant to be overcome by future policies of de-assimilation.[11] But then this gap was within single-digit percentage even in the big cities, not least because those 'reverting' to their 'abandoned' non-Russian nationality usually declared its language as native.

However, since 1933, a radical change in the regime's priorities brought about rapid strengthening of the Russian-language component of public life at the expense of Ukrainian and minority languages. Notwithstanding some oscillations in state policies between the aggressive promotion of Russian and the moderate support for Ukrainian, the decades after World War II were characterised by a gradual expansion of the former language and shrinking of the latter. The large-scale immigration from Russia and other republics strengthened the role of Russian as a lingua franca, particularly in the cities where most migrants worked and lived. Although Ukrainian continued to be used in many cultural and symbolic practices, its presence diminished steadily.[12] These process affected all parts of Ukraine, but to varying degrees. In the western regions which had been incorporated by the USSR during World War II and experienced large-scale nationalist resistance the regime tolerated a high level of national awareness and thus allowed the continued prevalence of Ukrainian in education, the media, and many other domains.[13]

A major shift in the education policy was introduced in 1958 by a new law on education which replaced the principle of instruction in the child's native language with the principle of free parental choice. Moreover, the law made the languages of the republics' titular nationalities an optional subject in Russian-language schools while retaining Russian as a mandatory subject in schools with other languages of instruction. This shift brought about a drastic decline in urban titular-language education in Ukraine from the 1960s through mid-1980s, except of the western regions.[14] As a result, 60 percent of ethnic Ukrainians in the 1989 census declared knowledge of Russian as a second language, but only 33 percent of Ukraine's Russians claimed knowledge of Ukrainian. Moreover, even among ethnic Ukrainians 5 percent admitted to not knowing the language of their declared ethnic group.[15]

However, these changes in language competence and use were not accompanied by a commensurate change in linguistic and ethnic identities. Apart from cultural inertia, the predominant retention of these identities was made possible by public discourses and practices recognizing and supporting the existence of separate nations distinguishable first and foremost by 'their' languages. Moreover, the revision of nationalities policy in the 1930s included, to quote Martin, 'a dramatic turn away from the former Soviet view of nations as

[11] D. Arel, 'Language categories in censuses: backward- or forward-looking?,' in D. I. Kertzer and D. Arel (eds.), *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 92-120.

[12] Krawchenko, op. cit., chapters 3 and 5; R. J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, chapter 6.

[13] R. Szporluk, 'West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical tradition, social communication, and linguistic assimilation,' *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, January 1979, pp. 76-98.

[14] Y. Bilinsky, 'The Soviet educational laws of 1958-59 and Soviet nationality policy,' *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1962, pp. 138–157; Krawchenko, op. cit., pp. 229-235.

[15] *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR. Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 g.*, Moscow, Finansy i stattistika, 1991, pp. 78–79; Kaiser, op. cit., pp. 290, 294.

fundamentally modern constructs and toward an emphasis on the deep primordial roots of modern nations.'[16] This primordialism was a consequence of a shift in emphasis from class to ethnically-conceived people as a principal unit of social organization. The registration of nationality in passports (compounded with the prohibition of free choice and change of passport nationality) both reflected and reinforced the perception of ethnicity as a permanent hereditary characteristic which, in turn, found its reflection in the continuity of census declarations. The predominant declaration by the Ukrainians of their group languages as native was facilitated by the presentation of languages as the most natural and valuable attributes of the eponymous nations. This presentation continued in public discourse long after the promotion of the *use* of 'national' languages ceased to be a priority of the Soviet nationalities policy. This perception was supported by administrative, educational, media and other institutions in Ukraine and other republics using their titular languages, usually along with Russian whereby the former language appeared to be that of the republic and the latter that of the union.[17] Even in the cities of eastern and southern Ukraine where Russian fully dominated in public communication, Ukrainian continued to perform important symbolic functions in public signage, official documentations, etc. The only exception was Crimea, which had not acquired a Ukrainian ethnolinguistic dimension after its transfer from the Russian Federation to Ukraine in 1954: Russian remained the only language of all public practices.

Transformation of Ukrainian identity at the time of independence

With the establishment of the independent Ukrainian state, the Ukrainian identity started to change in several crucial respects. First of all, the new state deemphasised ethnicity as a factor of social life and a marker of individual identity. In particular, it discontinued the Soviet practice of registering ethnicity in passports, allegedly in order to bring Ukrainian practice in conformity with the European standards. Moreover, while recognizing particular cultural needs and rights of ethnic minorities, the state was otherwise not inclined to differentiate between the civic nation and its titular ethnic core. The idea of nationalities as the constituent units of Ukrainian society was retained and relied upon in some practices such as the census, but public discourse also frequently referred to Ukrainianness of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin. As a result, the notion 'Ukrainian,' in addition to its traditional ethnic meaning, increasingly acquired a civic one, particularly among young people who were raised in independent Ukraine without the state-prescribed nationality.

To illustrate this point, I will use data of a survey which conducted in February 2012 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS).[18] As a follow-up to the question who they consider themselves by nationality, the respondents were asked to explain how they define their nationality, that is, to choose among the suggested options that referred to hereditary, civic, linguistic and attitudinal criteria. As Table 1 shows, a clear majority in all ethnic and linguistic groups opted for the hereditary way (by nationality of one's parents), although this way may conceal the ethnocultural or civic criterion as inherited from parents who may have defined nationality by either language or country. At the same time, one in six respondents defined nationality in civic terms, that is, by the country of residence. No wonder that such definition turned out to be more popular with ethnic Ukrainians: for them, living in Ukraine was another reason to consider themselves Ukrainian. In contrast, ethnic Russians more

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[16] Martin, op. cit., p. 443.
[17] V. Kulyk, 'Constructing common sense: Language and ethnicity in Ukrainian public discourse,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2006, pp. 281-314.
[18] The survey was funded by a grant awarded to me by the Shevchenko Scientific Society in America from the Natalia Danylchenko Endowment Fund.

frequently chose nationality in accordance to the language they speak. While the two main linguistic groups (hereafter defined by the main language of everyday use) differ radically in the likelihood of applying the linguistic criterion, the difference in the popularity of the civic definition was much smaller due to this definition's appeal to many Russophones who, accordingly, declared themselves ethnically Ukrainian rather than Russian. Finally, the attitudinal criterion (by my attitude to this nationality) turned out to be least popular in almost all groups.

Table 1. Frequencies of answers to the survey question 'Different people define their national belonging in different ways. Please tell how exactly you define your nationality. Give one most important answer' (KIIS, February 2012, in percentage; 'other's and 'hard to say' responses not shown)

Define nationality by:	All	Nationality		Everyday language		Age cohort		
		Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian	18-29	40-49	70+
Nationality of my parents (or one of my parents)	75.8	75.0	78.3	80.7	72.4	71.7	76.9	81.4
Country I live in	15.7	19.6	2.9	15.0	13.8	19.1	15.3	13.2
Language I speak	4.4	2.4	12.1	1.0	8.3	4.7	3.6	2.3
My attitude toward this nationality	2.8	2.0	4.9	2.5	3.4	2.9	2.8	1.9

Differences between age cohorts are smaller which is consistent with my earlier finding that age does not exert a big influence on language practice or attitudes.[19] Nevertheless, the data for three assorted cohorts (at both ends and in the middle of the age spectrum) in Table 1 show that young people are somewhat more likely than older ones to define nationality by the country of residence and somewhat less likely to copy it from their parents.[20] This confirms that the socialisation in independent Ukraine without the imposed hereditary notion of nationality makes the youth more inclined to view themselves as Ukrainian regardless of ethnic origin. At the same time, a clear majority of respondents in all cohorts apply the hereditary criterion which will thus continue to prevail in the years to come.

The second change results from the promotion of the Ukrainian language in independent Ukraine: however moderate and inconsistent, it has increased the prominence of the language as an important element of Ukrainian identity. The majority of Ukrainians reject the view that speaking the titular language is a prerequisite for being a legitimate citizen of the Ukrainian state or a worthwhile member of the Ukrainian nation. For instance, in a December 2005 nationwide survey of the Razumkov Centre, only 41% of respondents listed the exclusive use of the Ukrainian language among essential features of a Ukrainian patriot, a much lower level than for civic characteristics such as work for Ukraine's good (81%), the wish to cultivate love for Ukraine in one's children (78%) and the respect for Ukrainian laws and power institutes (75%).[21] At the same time, the social role of the titular language as a cultural foundation of Ukraine's independence and a factor of social integration has been accepted by a considerable part of the population as demonstrated by further data of the 2012 KIIS survey referred to above.

The respondents were asked if they considered the Ukrainian language important for Ukraine's citizens and if so, to list up to three reasons why. As Table 2 shows, few respondents

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[19] V. Kulyk, 'Demographic factors of language practices and attitudes in Ukraine,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1–4, 2007, pp. 295–326.
[20] Differences in the popularity of the linguistic and attitudinal criteria are too small to attribute them any social significance.
[21] 'Spil'na identychnist' hromadian Ukraïny: osoblyvosti i problemy stanovlennia,' *Natsional'na bezpeka i oborona Ukraïny*, No. 7, 2006, p. 11.

said that Ukrainian was not important; although this view was much more widespread among ethnic Russians and Russophones, the share of its supporters did not exceed 10 per cent in any ethnolinguistic or demographic group. Among the reasons for importance, the status of Ukrainian as the state language was referred to by a clear majority in all groups, but primarily among ethnic Ukrainians and Ukrainian-speakers. While this designation combined the roles of Ukrainian as the language of the state and the (main) language of the nation, other answers pertained to its relation to certain parts of citizens or society as a whole. Ethnic Ukrainians and Ukrainophones were more likely than Russians and Russophones to value the titular language as supposedly common to all Ukrainian citizens rather than particular to its speakers. Some of the options they chose were not of ethnocultural origin but of social legitimacy, such as 'the language of the largest nationality' and 'a language traditionally spoken in Ukraine': these are roles justifying the priority of the Ukrainian language, hence they were primarily supported by its speakers. Other options pertain to civic values, namely the two last options designating the titular language as 'a foundation of Ukraine's independence' and 'a language that unites Ukrainian society': together they were embraced by 33% of all respondents but 43% of Ukrainophones. In contrast, Russians and Russian-speakers were more likely to admit the importance of Ukrainian as something that did not pertain to them, such as its predominance in the west (it is an important language, just not ours) or even its being a language of great literary and artistic work (which still does not make it common to all Ukrainian citizens). Age differences were much smaller than ethnolinguistic ones but young people were somewhat more likely to value the civic and unifying role of Ukrainian. It can thus be expected that this new role will gain prominence in the future.

Table 2. Frequencies of answers to the survey question 'Do you consider the Ukrainian language important? If so, please tell why you believe so. If it is difficult for you to indicate just one reason, please choose several but no more than three reasons which are most important to you' (KIIS, February 2012, in percentage; 'other's and 'hard to say' responses not shown)

Ukrainian language is important because it is:	All	Nationality		Everyday language		Age cohort		
		Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian	18-29	40-49	70+
state language	73.5	76.9	60.5	83.1	62.9	74.1	73.9	73.9
language traditionally spoken in Ukraine	28.5	30.3	20.5	32.2	24.3	25.5	26.9	35.8
language of Ukraine's largest nationality	24.8	27.1	15.6	32.5	16.6	25.9	23.8	18.3
language of the majority of people in western oblasts	15.0	11.4	27.4	8.5	22.2	14.2	14.1	14.0
language of great literary and artistic work	8.9	7.9	11.2	7.0	10.1	8.6	7.9	9.3
language that constitutes a foundation of Ukraine's independence	19.5	22.2	9.5	26.3	12.6	23.1	19.7	14.8
language that unites Ukrainian society	13.6	14.4	10.3	16.2	9.9	15.5	13.3	9.7
I do not consider this language important	3.0	1.6	8.1	0.2	7.0	2.9	3.3	2.7

This data illustrates another important point, namely that the perceived value of the Ukrainian language is not limited to its actual use, or its communicative function. Put another way, Ukrainians value the titular language more than they actually speak it. The main reason for the continued discrepancy between language identity and practice – between native and everyday language – lies in the moderate and inconsistent language policy which does not require people to speak the state language even in the public sector, contrary to lamentations

about forcible Ukrainianization.[22] In fact, as the same KIIS survey demonstrates, a shift toward Ukrainian is more pronounced at home than at work meaning that it is not caused by a pressure on the part of the state or non-state employers.[23] At the same time, the perceived social importance of the titular language urges many people who speak mainly Russian themselves to support the increased use of Ukrainian by the state, one may say, to want the state to do what they do not want to do themselves. Moreover, many people want the state to promote Ukrainian in such a way as not to infringe on their own linguistic comfort with the predominance of Russians.

As explained in the previous section, the perception of a language one does not speak much or even at all as one's native language reflects this positive attitude and identification, but they are not as strong as to urge people to switch to this language in everyday life or at least use it more actively as a second spoken language. This argument is supported by the responses to the KIIS survey's question on the reasons for declaring a certain language as native (the declaration having been made in a previous question) which demonstrates the increased importance of civic considerations in people's identification with the Ukrainian language. Asked to provide up to three reasons for identifying their native language, a quarter of all respondents gave as one of the reasons that language being 'the language of my country' (see Table 3). That such definition pertains primarily to Ukrainian is confirmed by the fact that a much higher percentage of Ukrainian-speakers than Russian-speakers chose this option. Nevertheless, in all groups the main criterion for identifying one's native language turned out to be the replication of the choice of one's parents – whatever combination of ethnic, linguistic and civic factors this may involve. Once again, differences between age cohorts are not as great as between ethnolinguistic groups. In all cohorts, the most popular way of defining native language is by the language of parents. However, young people are somewhat less inclined to follow this way and more likely to take one of the alternative approaches, either linguistic (by use or thinking) or civic (by the country of residence). There is no clear change toward one alternative meaning but the close relation between native language and ancestral ethnicity is being gradually undermined.

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[22] V. Kulyk, 'Soviet nationalities policies and the discrepancy between ethnocultural identification and language practice in Ukraine,' in M. Beissinger and S. Kotkin (eds.), *Historical Legacies of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press (forthcoming).
[23] This conclusion is based on my analysis of raw data.

Table 3. Frequencies of answers to the survey question 'Why it is this language that you consider native? If it is difficult for you to indicate just one reason, please choose several but no more than three reasons which are most important to you' (KIIS, February 2012, in percentage; 'other's and 'hard to say' responses not shown)

This is the language:	All	Nationality		Everyday language		Age cohort		
		Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian	18-29	40-49	70+
of my parents	67.8	69.1	62.0	80.4	58.2	69.4	68.9	68.8
of my nationality	28.3	30.4	21.3	38.8	16.6	31.5	27.4	30.7
of my country	25.2	29.5	9.5	35.9	12.0	29.3	23.8	25.3
in which I think	17.8	14.6	27.1	13.9	27.2	18.2	17.9	13.3
which I normally use	25.9	24.3	30.5	16.5	35.7	24.6	26.1	20.6
which I know best	11.8	10.1	15.8	7.0	19.2	13.5	12.0	8.2
which I love most	7.1	7.2	6.6	8.1	6.6	10.2	6.2	5.8
which I first learned	15.7	14.7	18.2	10.9	19.4	13.1	16.7	16.0

The discrepancy between the perceived social importance of Ukrainian and the comfort of continued reliance on Russian is resolved by many people in relegating the titular language to the symbolic realm, with little consequence for communicative practice. To illustrate this point, I will use data from a survey conducted in December 2006 by the sociological centre *Hromadska Dumka.*[24] To make my point clearer, I will juxtapose responses to two questions pertaining to the symbolic and communicative functions of the Ukrainian language, respectively. One question asked the respondents if they agree that Ukrainian language is one of the symbols of Ukrainian statehood. The other question asked if the Ukrainian language should be used in Ukraine in a greater, equal or lesser scope than 'now' (meaning at the time of the survey). As the figures in Table 4 demonstrate, the symbolic role of Ukrainian was supported by the overwhelming majority of respondents, including a majority of Russians and Russophones (of course, the level of support among ethnic Ukrainians and Ukrainophones was much higher than that). In contrast, less than two fifths of all respondents and less than one fifth of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers wanted the titular language to be more actively used in communicative practice. Although the support for greater use of Ukrainian clearly exceeded the support for lesser use, it was far from predominant as another two fifths opted for the 'same scope as now.' The youth supported each of these propositions more emphatically than older people but the gap between the two levels of support (the difference between figures in the upper and lower lines of the table) turned out to be the same for both cohorts. That is, even when asked about society as a whole rather than their own language practice, most people declared a preference for the preservation of the status quo or a very moderate increase of the use of Ukrainian which would be largely limited to symbolic domains. Their preference is thus in line with language policy of the Yanukovych regime which recognizes the formal priority of Ukrainian but tolerates or even encourages the actual dominance of Russian in both private and public sector.

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[24] The survey was conducted within the framework of the research project 'Language Policy in Ukraine: Anthropological, Linguistic and Further Perspectives,' which was implemented in 2006–2008 by an international team of scholars with the financial support of the International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (INTAS).

Table 4. Frequencies of certain answers to the survey questions 'Do you agree with the statement that the Ukrainian language is one of the symbols of Ukraine's statehood?' and 'Do you believe that the Ukrainian language should be used in Ukraine in a greater scope than now, the same as now, or a lesser than now?' (*Hromadska Dumka*, December 2006, in percentage)

	All	Nationality		Everyday language		Age cohort		
		Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian	18-29	40-49	70+
Ukrainian language is a symbol of Ukrainian statehood: yes or rather yes	71.2	74.4	59.3	87.6	57.6	72.1	70.5	64.5
Ukrainian language should be used more than now	42.4	50.2	15.2	70.8	18.3	43.7	43.8	32.3

To conclude, the key question of the current relation between Ukrainian language and identity is what role the former should play in the latter. The special role of the titular language is recognised in both main versions of Ukrainian identity proposed by the elites and espoused by the population in independent Ukraine. These versions which can be called Ukrainian nationalist and East Slavic, entail Ukraine's development as a Ukrainian nation-state and a part of the Russian-dominated post-Soviet realm, respectively. For the latter version proposed by Yanukovych's Party of Regions, the role of the titular language is limited to symbolic rituals and is not expected to affect communicative practice beyond one particular linguistic group and the territory of its predominant residence. The ancestral language is thus not considered an essential element of contemporary Ukrainian identity. In contrast, the Orange parties currently in opposition reject this view as damaging for Ukraine's post-imperial emancipation and transformation, and propose instead an enhancement of both the symbolic and communicative roles of the titular language in society which would both reflect and reinforce its central place in identity.[25] The nationalist version seems to be effective in the west and centre of Ukraine but mostly rejected in the east and south. Rather than the gradual Ukrainianisation of the entire country, we may be witnessing its deepening division into two parts with different languages and identities, a process accelerated by the Orange Revolution and the responsive mobilisation in the south-east.

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[25] V. Kulyk, 'The media, history and identity: competing narratives of the past in the Ukrainian popular press,' *National Identities*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2011, pp. 287-303.