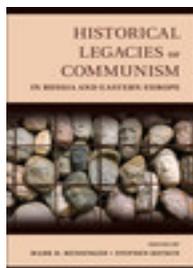


Cambridge Books Online

<http://ebooks.cambridge.org/>



Historical Legacies of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe

Edited by Mark Beissinger, Stephen Kotkin

Book DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107286191>

Online ISBN: 9781107286191

Hardback ISBN: 9781107054172

Paperback ISBN: 9781107679917

Chapter

10 - Soviet Nationalities Policies and the Discrepancy between Ethnocultural Identification and Language Practice in Ukraine pp. 202-221

Chapter DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107286191.010>

Cambridge University Press

Soviet Nationalities Policies and the Discrepancy between Ethnocultural Identification and Language Practice in Ukraine

Volodymyr Kulyk

One of the peculiar consequences of Soviet nationalities policy in Ukraine is a large-scale discrepancy between ethnic identification and language use.¹ This discrepancy is the result of the interaction between, on the one hand, policies promoting the use of Russian as a language of social mobility and interethnic integration and, on the other, policies promoting identification with primordially conceived ethnic groups and their eponymous languages. While the former policies gradually increased the number of ethnic Ukrainians and members of non-Russian minorities speaking mainly Russian in their everyday life, the latter policies impeded a change of ethnic and linguistic identity in alignment with language practice. Although the discrepancy was to be found in many other parts of the former USSR, in Ukraine its scale was larger than in most of the other union republics that became independent in 1991 (and comparable to patterns found in the lower-level autonomous units within the Russian Federation), primarily because of the more aggressive linguistic Russification of the late Soviet decades. Remarkably, this discrepancy persists in post-Soviet Ukraine, even though its policies with regard to ethnicity and language differ significantly from those of the Soviet regime. The continuation of this phenomenon in a radically different political and cultural context warrants its classification as a legacy of the communist decades, in the sense of “a durable causal relationship between earlier institutions and practices and those of the present in the wake of a macrohistorical rupture” as proposed by Kotkin and Beissinger in their introduction to this volume.

My inquiry into the emergence and persistence of a discrepancy between ethnolinguistic identity and language practice does not stem from a normative belief that the two should necessarily be congruent, but rather from an empirical observation that in most countries they tend to be, suggesting that there must be some reasons why Ukraine and some other post-Soviet societies stand apart. In the following sections, I will examine the origins of this

mismatch and the reasons for its persistence in post-Soviet Ukraine. But first it is worth describing in some detail the phenomenon itself, both in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The Phenomenon of Discrepant Ethnic and Linguistic Markers

A lack of correspondence between ethnicity and language was first discussed by scholars in the 1970s as a widespread phenomenon in Soviet society after the censuses of 1959 and 1970 had shown an increasing percentage of non-Russians who declared Russian as their native language. The interpretation of this percentage as a measure of linguistic assimilation was facilitated by the finding that the share of those claiming Russian as their native language was considerably higher among populations with more interest in and exposure to the Russian language, such as urban residents, youth, and Slavs. Moreover, it generally increased with every census as more people grew affected by Russification processes (Silver 1974). But the overall level of Russification seemed rather modest: according to the 1970 data, even in cities the share of those whose declared native language differed from their ethnic identification did not exceed a quarter of the population in any union republic. The figures for those residents of Ukraine identifying as Ukrainians and claiming Russian as their native language (second highest among union republics after Belarus) were 17 percent in the cities and 23 percent in the capital (Silver 1975, 592–97). The situation did not change significantly during the two following decades: the last Soviet census of 1989 revealed the level of acceptance of Russian as the native language among those claiming Ukrainian nationality to be 12 percent in Ukraine as a whole and 19 percent in the cities. In all but two other union republics, the proportion of those urban residents claiming the titular ethnicity of the republic but declaring Russian as their native language was below 4 percent (Kaiser 1994, 273, 276).

It was the obvious discrepancy between these modest figures for titulars claiming Russian as their native language and the observed linguistic practice in many big cities of Ukraine and some other republics (i.e., the actual predominance of Russian on the streets) that made Soviet scholars and their Western colleagues begin to reconsider the meaning of the census declaration of native language. Most scholars came to believe that this declaration reflected not so much communicative competence or linguistic practice as loyalty to the ethnic group associated with the language. Pointing to this “psychological and self-identificatory content of the ‘native tongue’ category” in the Soviet census, Rasma Karklins challenged the “frequently encountered argument that the generally high percentage of non-Russians regarding the language of their name-giving nationality as their native tongue indicates a low level of linguistic assimilation.” Rather, she argued, “it indicates a high level of ethnic self-assurance” (1980, 421).

This conceptual decoupling of native language and language of everyday use led scholars to realize that there was a much wider gap between language

practice and ethnic identification than measured in the census (that is, a much greater presence of Russian-language usage in the non-Russian republics, particularly Ukraine, than the census data indicated). This gap was fully revealed by the mass surveys that became routine only after the breakup of the USSR. According to an annual series of surveys by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), in terms of the language people prefer to use in communication with a supposedly bilingual and accommodating interviewer, the share of Ukrainian speakers in the country's population as a whole is less than half (44 percent, according to the aggregated data of the surveys between 1991 and 1994) – a huge difference from almost two-thirds (65 percent in the 1989 census) who considered Ukrainian their native language. The survey data also showed a sharp regional differentiation in language preference patterns, with preference for using Ukrainian ranging (according to 2003 data) from an overwhelming 95 percent in the west to only 16 percent in the east and 8 percent in the south (Khmelko 2004).

While it is debatable how much this “language of convenience” reflects the respondents' everyday preference as distinct from their perception of the appropriate language for interaction with an institutionally empowered stranger (in this case, the survey canvasser), other data show that even in the most intimate and unconstrained context of the family, Ukrainian by no means predominates. An annual survey series by the Institute of Sociology (IS) of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine has revealed that the Ukrainian language was exclusively used in family communication by slightly more than a third of respondents (37 percent in 1992). The share of people exclusively speaking Russian in the home was not much smaller (29 percent), and the remaining portion of the population used both of these languages (32 percent). Remarkably, the preference for Ukrainian in the family communication has not become much stronger in the years since Ukraine became an independent state and Ukrainian was granted the status as the country's sole official (state) language. At the same time, the use of Russian in the home significantly increased by the 2000s at the expense of the use of both languages (Resul'taty 2006, 482). Similarly, the supposed language of convenience during these years shifted only slightly toward Ukrainian, which was, according to the aggregate data of 2000–03, preferred by 48 percent of respondents, as opposed to 52 percent preferring Russian (Khmelko 2004).

Russian thus did not become less prominent in the language practice of Ukraine's residents. Nor did their identification with Ukrainian nationality or Ukrainian language weaken. In the IS annual surveys, the share of respondents declaring Ukrainian as their native language oscillated between 59 percent and 64 percent, not much lower than the level indicated by the 1989 Soviet census (Resul'taty 2006, 482). In the first post-Soviet census of 2001 (All-Ukrainian n/d), this share even slightly increased to 68 percent, although the increase was twice as small as that of self-declared ethnic Ukrainians (to 78 percent, mostly at the expense of those who identified themselves as Russians). Some

scholars argued that the retention of Ukrainian as native language confirmed the tautological nature of this characteristic vis-à-vis ethnicity (nationality) and therefore considered it redundant (Arel 2002a), while others disregarded this characteristic in view of its conceptual ambiguity, that is, the varied interpretations that respondents were likely to have made of the census question (Shul'ga 2009). However, focus group discussions administered by the Hromadska Dumka (HD) center in 2006 in five Ukrainian cities showed that while participants did attach different meanings to the notion of native language, it was nonetheless meaningful, important, and stable for almost all of them (even though some tried to reconcile their ethnocultural attachment and language practice by declaring both Ukrainian and Russian languages as native). Moreover, a regression analysis of the results of a survey conducted by the same center in 2006 revealed that native language had at least as strong an impact as everyday language on the respondents' preferences with regard to various aspects of language policy – and even more remarkably, with regard to other identity-related matters such as foreign policy and historical memory (Kulyk 2011).

The relative stability of both ethnocultural identity and language practice since independence means that a discrepancy between them remains roughly as large as it was at the end of the Soviet period. While most surveys did not inquire about all relevant characteristics or did not measure them on commensurate scales, the Hromadska Dumka survey of 2006 enables comparisons of the distributions by the ethnic and linguistic dimensions of identity on the one hand and by language identity and practice on the other. To be sure, these distributions differ from those obtained in censuses and many surveys using census-like categories, as the HD survey also allowed mixed identities and complex language repertoires (e.g., both the Ukrainian and Russian languages as native or using both of them “equally” in one's everyday life). However, the use of the same scale for all three variables makes it possible to compare not only the exclusive “flanks” but also the hybrid “middles” and the relative strengths of hybrid choices. Table 10.1 presents the distributions for declared nationality, native language, and the main language of everyday use. As differences between the figures in adjacent columns show, the two gaps turn out to be almost identical – in each of them the loss in the Ukrainian part being transformed into roughly equal gains for the Russian and hybrid components. With few hybrid responses to the nationality question, the share of ethnic Ukrainians matches the census result, while the considerable hybridity in native language responses comes exclusively at the cost of Ukrainian ones, with the figure for Russian being even higher than in the census. The hybridity is the greatest in the distribution by everyday language, which also corresponds to the results of the KIIS surveys in that the Ukrainian speakers are somewhat fewer than the Russian speakers.

While it is clear from Table 10.1 that most of the people having ethnolinguistic characteristics at variance with one another are ethnic Ukrainians

TABLE 10.1. *The Distribution of Respondents in the 2006 Survey in Ukraine by Nationality, Native Language and Everyday Language (in Percentage)*

	Nationality	Native Language	Everyday Language
Ukrainian	77.0	55.5	35.3
Both	0.7	11.1	23.5
Russian	20.3	32.0	40.3
Other	2.0	1.4	0.9

who use mainly Russian in everyday life, statistical analysis of the survey data also reveals the spatial and social distribution of this group. By comparing the mean values of the nationality, native language, and everyday language variables (ordered on the three-point scale from Ukrainian to both to Russian, with other identities/languages excluded) for various subsamples, I have ascertained that the discrepancy between ethnicity and language is the largest in the eastern and southern regions and in large cities. These linguistic environments contributed to the predominant use of Russian by people who, at the same time, usually retained their Ukrainian linguistic and/or ethnic identity. Moreover, a comparison of mean values for different age categories shows that younger respondents are more likely than older ones to *both* identify as Ukrainians and speak primarily Russian. The discrepancy between ethnocultural identity and language practice is thus larger among the younger generation, and hence is unlikely to shrink in the immediate future.

A similar discrepancy can be found in a number of other parts of the former USSR. The late Soviet censuses and post-Soviet sociolinguistic studies indicate that the largest share of those claiming the titular nationality but considering Russian as their native language and/or speaking primarily Russian in everyday life is to be found in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and (even more so) in Russia's "national" autonomies (Kaiser 1994, 273; Brown 2005; Smagulova 2008). Not in all cases is there enough data to convincingly demonstrate a discrepancy and examine its relation to demographic characteristics, as censuses do not usually inquire about language practice, and language-related surveys are relatively rare and limited in what they ask. The best evidence has been provided by the so-called Colton-Hough survey, which was conducted in sixteen autonomous republics of the Russian Federation in 1993 and thus, as far as ethno-linguistic categorizations and language practices were concerned, reflected the impact of Soviet policies as modified by late Soviet nationalist mobilizations (cf. Gorenburg 2001). This survey differed from the 2006 Ukrainian one in that it limited the list of options that the respondents could choose to census-like exclusive categories and did not ask a question on the language(s) of everyday use in general, but rather inquired about the respondents' communication with their parents, spouses, and children. Table 10.2 presents the data for nationality, native language, and two aspects of language use for eight

TABLE 10.2. *The Distribution of Respondents in the 1993 Survey in Russia's Autonomies by Nationality, Native Language and Two Aspects of Language Use (in Percentage; N/A Responses Excluded)*

	Nationality		Native Language		Language Spoken to Mother		Language Spoken to Children	
	Titular	Russian	Titular	Russian	Titular	Russian	Titular	Russian
Chuvashia	68.8	23.0	61.6	31.8	59.5	34.1	40.4	56.1
Tuva	65.3	30.7	64.9	32.1	63.0	34.6	59.4	40.0
Kalmykia	50.5	47.9	47.9	43.8	23.6	69.9	11.0	85.4
Tatarstan	47.3	44.2	46.9	47.8	40.5	54.8	30.6	67.5
Sakha	38.1	46.8	38.2	54.0	36.4	55.6	33.0	65.3
Mari El	35.4	53.8	31.2	61.8	27.7	66.1	17.8	80.4
Buriatia	23.8	69.9	22.3	75.6	18.9	79.2	13.8	85.9
Karelia	20.4	63.7	12.4	81.7	13.8	79.9	3.8	94.7

republics. Despite a large variation in the degree of discrepancy between ethnic identification and language use that cannot be explained by differences in the share of the titular nationality relative to Russians, the direction of the discrepancy is the same in all republics. Moreover, in most republics the discrepancy is considerably larger in cities than in villages and among younger respondents than among older ones.

At the same time, discrepancies between ethnicity and language are by no means limited to the former USSR. Two kinds of ethnolinguistic situations seem to be particularly likely to produce such discrepancies. On the one hand, migration to other countries rapidly changes the communication repertoires of people who find themselves in a different linguistic environment, but does not necessarily deprive them of distinct ethnic identity; hence societies with large numbers of recent migrants are often characterized by considerable ethnolinguistic mismatch. For example, while 35 million people asserted Hispanic ethnicity in the 2000 U.S. survey, only 28 million reported speaking Spanish at home, either as the only language or along with others (Grieco and Cassidy 2001; Shin and Bruno 2003). On the other hand, in many societies local languages were largely abandoned in favor of those of foreign rulers, but the descendants of their former speakers retain “autochthonous” ethnic identity and even try (usually with limited success) to “revive” their perceived group languages. Thus the eponymous languages of Ireland and Basque Country are spoken by a clear minority of those who identify themselves as Irish and Basque, respectively. However, these two types of situations are different from that found in the post-Soviet states in that they lack the kind of institutionalized linguistic and ethnic identities with which language practice could be juxtaposed. Hardly any state in the world contributed as much to the formation of a discrepancy between ethnocultural identities and language practices

through its long-term policies aimed at pushing these identities and practices in opposite directions as did the USSR.

Origins of the Legacy: Soviet Nationalities and Language Policies

I turn now to examine more thoroughly Soviet policies with regard to ethnic and linguistic identity on the one hand and to language practices on the other, focusing first and foremost on their specific features and their consequences in Ukraine. The origins of these policies lay in the 1920s, when the Soviet leadership responded to the power of non-Russian nationalisms – which had been vividly demonstrated during the revolution and civil war – by “systematically promoting the national consciousness of its ethnic minorities and establishing for them many of the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state” (Martin 2001, 1). The best-known manifestations of this establishment were the creation of a multilayered structure of national territories, the promotion of national elites into positions of leadership in the respective territories, and support for the development and wider use of non-Russian languages. Moreover, as Martin emphasizes, the instillation of national consciousness also included “the aggressive promotion of symbolic markers of national identity” such as folklore, classic literature, commemoration of historical events, and so on (2001, 13). While initially meant as a response to already existing national feelings of the non-Russians, the indigenization policies of the 1920s and early 1930s quickly expanded to include the *creation* of mass-level national consciousness among those groups where it had previously been limited to parts of the elites. The state ascription of ethnonational identity to all its citizens was complete with the inclusion of the nationality question in the first Soviet general census of 1926 and the introduction of the respective entry in internal passports in 1932. Originally meant to be a matter of individual consciousness and thus choice, nationality was transformed into an inheritable and virtually unchangeable characteristic, at least from the point of view of the state (Zaslavsky and Luryi 1979; Hirsch 1997).

Although the Bolsheviks considered language one of the most important traits of nationality, they ascribed linguistic identity separately from ethnic identity. While introducing the census category “nationality,” the Soviet leaders, upon the recommendation of ethnographers, retained the question on native language, with the purpose of registering the extent of tsarist assimilation which, they believed, should be undone by teaching all citizens the languages of “their” nationalities (Hirsch 1997; Arel 2002b). The promotion of acquisition and use of numerous non-Russian languages, first and foremost the titular languages of the union republics and lower-level units, was a crucial component of the indigenization policy. The promotion was designed to include the codification of languages, making the indigenous and nonindigenous populations literate and professionally competent in them, bringing these languages to the workplace on both the elite and mass levels, and

establishing cultural facilities for the (re)production of the languages' knowledge, use, and legitimacy.

For less than a decade during its relatively determined implementation, this policy brought truly impressive results, even though it failed to achieve some of its goals. In Ukraine, while more than a dozen languages were used in education, the media, and administrative bodies of various levels, the main result of the policy was an increasing use of the titular language in those domains where Russian had dominated during the tsarist rule. Not only did literacy in Ukrainian increase drastically, but Ukrainian also became the main language of primary and secondary education, so that even ethnic Russians were partly schooled in Ukrainian. Even more impressive was the change in the media, with an overwhelming majority of books and newspapers published in Ukrainian by the end of the 1920s (Krawchenko 1985, 86–98; Martin 2001, 106–10). Moreover, the titular language was gradually introduced in most institutions of higher education in what Martin called “the most successful effort to Ukrainize a recalcitrant Russian urban island” (2001, 112).

At the same time, two other crucial urban domains of language use – the factory and the office – remained predominantly Russian-speaking, despite a considerable influx of ethnic Ukrainian villagers in the course of industrialization. Martin argues that “a Ukrainian peasant arriving in a major Ukrainian city in 1932 would most likely be compelled to adopt Russian as his workplace language” (2001, 122). In his view, the main reason for the failure of comprehensive linguistic Ukrainianization lay in the combination of the passive resistance of the Russian and russified urban population and the party leadership's refusal to pursue a hard-line approach similar to that pursued in areas that were its top priorities, collectivization and industrialization. Instead of the titular language becoming dominant in all domains of public life, a bilingual environment emerged in Ukraine where “Russian would be the dominant language in the economic, industrial, and hard-line political spheres, whereas Ukrainian would predominate in the cultural, rural, and soft-line political spheres” (2001, 123).

Since 1933, a rather 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. Not only were educational and cultural facilities in languages other than Ukrainian and Russian mostly abolished, but the share of facilities working in the titular language decreased considerably during the 1930s. By the end of the decade, the share of Ukrainian-language book titles dropped by half. The educational changes were particularly perceptible in the eastern and southern cities where instruction in Ukrainian had drastically expanded only several years earlier. However, as of 1937, 83 percent of all school students in the republic were still learning in Ukrainian, which exceeded by 10 percent the share of ethnic Ukrainians in the population as a whole. At the same time, Russian was made a mandatory subject in all schools of the USSR regardless of the language of instruction to ensure

general competence in the language that was seen as a unifying force within the multiethnic society. De-Ukrainianization of education was reinforced by the arrests or dismissal of thousands of teachers, scholars, administrators, and even college students during the Great Purge, which hit ethnic Ukrainians disproportionately hard. The same was true for creative intelligentsia, white-collar staff, and the communist party membership (Krawchenko 1985, 132–52). This asymmetrical terror signaled the regime's changed priorities to the elites and masses no less clearly than official statements.

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 characterized by a gradual expansion of the former language and shrinking of the latter. The large-scale immigration from Russia and other republics, which the state encouraged and at times imposed, strengthened the role of Russian as a lingua franca, particularly in the cities where most migrants worked and lived. Moreover, the increasing subordination of Ukraine's industry to the union ministries imposed Russian as the language of documentation and thereby contributed to its spread in higher education and managerial communication. In turn, this pressured lower-level staff (largely consisting of Ukrainian-speaking migrants from the countryside) to accommodate their superiors' language preferences. At the same time, higher education also came to be largely subordinated to the union authorities and thus progressively russified, leading to an influx of students from outside of Ukraine (Krawchenko 1985, 222–26). Although these process affected all parts of Ukraine, in the western regions that 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 (Szporluk 2000).

This mutual reinforcement of various mechanisms of Russification was primarily characteristic of the cities, with their big factories, universities, and high-level offices. This was all the more so in the east and south where Russian had predominated in urban public and private life since tsarist times. Although Ukrainian continued to be used in many cultural and symbolic practices, its presence diminished steadily, as illustrated by book publishing, where in 1988 the share of Ukrainian-language titles was more than three times lower than the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians in the population (Kaiser 1994, 259). At the same time, the public use of Ukrainian in other domains could well be perceived in the cities outside the west as a sign of rural backwardness or a manifestation of nationalist opposition to the regime. This perception was once again reinforced in the 1960s to the early 1980s by the repression and public denunciation of hundreds of Ukrainian-speaking cultural elites protesting against what they viewed as comprehensive Russification of Ukraine (Krawchenko 1985, 250–53).

Although school education remained one of the most Ukrainian-speaking of public practices, it was also subject to Russification pressures from both

the government and citizens, the latter influenced by the increasing use (and therefore usefulness) of Russian. A major shift in the education policy was introduced in 1958 by a new law on education that replaced the principle of instruction in the child's native language – usually understood in this regard as the language of his/her nationality – 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 the mid-1980s, except for the western regions (Bilinsky 1962; Krawchenko 1985, 229–35). In the late 1970s, the regime made a more determined effort to increase knowledge of Russian in the “national” republics, which was primarily caused by its inadequate knowledge among non-Slavic populations, but nevertheless ended up having the most perceptible ramifications for knowledge and use of the titular languages in Ukraine and Belarus (Solchanyk 1982). 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 putative ethnic group (Natsional'nyi 1991, 78–79; Kaiser 1994, 290, 294).

These changes in language competence and use were not, however, 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, even if individual members of the nations were not necessarily expected to speak these languages. Even at the times of the most active promotion of Russian language, glorification of the Russian nation, and prosecution of any forms of perceived non-Russian nationalism, the “continued existence of nationally defined communities and the legitimacy of their claims to particular cultural, territorial, economic and political identities ... was never in doubt” (Slezkine 1994, 441). Moreover, the revision of nationalities policy in the 1930s included, as Martin put it, “a dramatic turn away from the former Soviet view of nations as fundamentally modern constructs and toward an emphasis on the deep primordial roots of modern nations” (2001, 443). 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 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.

However, not only did Soviet state policies reproduce the dominant perception of the existence of nations and individual belonging to one of them, but they also made this existence and belonging symbolically prominent and

socially meaningful. The primordialist understanding was also manifested in official discourse and cultural policy by the increased attention to the national cultures of the Soviet peoples and glorification of their achievements, which, however, also had to be reconciled with the emphasis on multinational unity and the primacy of Russian culture as an asset of all “brotherly” peoples (Martin 2001, 443–57). It was these “internationalist” achievements of the Soviet nations that were featured in education, the official calendar, toponymy, and other domains. Moreover, nationality continued to be used as a criterion for affirmative action in many spheres, from the party leadership to university enrollment (although in Ukraine such use was not as pervasive as in some other republics). With some geographical and chronological variation, this promotion of ethnonational identities persisted until the very end of the USSR and paved the way for nationalist mobilization of many Soviet peoples, eventually resulting in the dissolution of the union.

As for the predominant declaration by the non-Russians in general and the Ukrainians in particular of their respective group languages as native (whether or not they actually spoke the language), it was facilitated by the presentation of languages as the most natural and valuable attributes of nations. This presentation continued in public discourse long after the promotion of the *use* of “national” languages ceased to be a priority within Soviet nationalities policy. It was supported by administrative, educational, media, and other institutions in the 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 (since independence, Russian has been dropped or replaced by English as the supposed international language). 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, and so forth (the only exception was Crimea, which had not acquired a Ukrainian ethnolinguistic dimension after its transfer from the Russian Federation to Ukraine in 1954). By declaring Ukrainian their native language, Russian-speaking Ukrainians – to the extent their choice was based on reflection rather than sheer inertia – displayed their support for its limited use by the state, even after they had ceased using that language in their own everyday life.

Mechanisms of the Legacy’s Reproduction

The policies of the independent Ukrainian state regarding ethnicity and language differed considerably from Soviet policies, but the differences have not altered the inherited discrepancies between the citizens’ ethnocultural identities and language practices. While the Ukrainocentric orientation of public discourse on ethnolinguistic matters strengthened Ukrainian ethnic and (to a lesser extent) linguistic identities, the policy with regard to language use did not really precipitate a Ukrainian language “revival” among Russian-speaking

Ukrainians. Therefore, the discrepancy was not only reproduced, but actually grew larger, as suggested by patterns of language use and ethnic identification within the younger generation.

The proclamation of Ukraine's independence resulted from nationalist mobilization, which in turn was instigated by public discourse emphasizing ethnocultural and economic grievances of ethnic Ukrainians and, by extension, other residents of the republic. In addition to the neglect of history and culture, degradation of the environment, and economic exploitation by Moscow, one of the main grievances pertained to the marginalization of the Ukrainian language, which nationalists considered the only appropriate means of communication and self-expression for ethnic Ukrainians. They thus lamented the discrepancy between language and ethnicity and, accordingly, the perceived deviation of Ukraine's ethnolinguistic structure from that of European nation-states that were considered as models for independent Ukraine. Viewed as the product of the Russification policies of the Soviet regime, this "deviation" was to be undone by the post-Soviet Ukrainian state by means of the "de-Russification" of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and members of non-Russian minorities (Kulyk 2001).

However, the nationalist opposition to the Soviet regime was defeated in the parliamentary and presidential elections of 1990–91 and thus denied a chance to engage in the full-fledged implementation of this agenda. The victorious *nomenklatura* headed by President Leonid Kravchuk took over some of the opposition's slogans and suggestions to legitimize the new state and to promote the loyalty of its citizens, but it avoided radical measures capable of provoking social division and unrest. Kravchuk's ethnocultural policy continued the Soviet glorification of the national, except that it was no longer constrained by the primacy of the Russian and could overtly oppose it. Official discourse sought to implant in public consciousness Ukrainian nationalist myths, traditions, and symbols, particularly those relating to the history of Ukraine in its allegedly incessant resistance to Russia's imperial policies. Kravchuk's policy promoted a form of nation building that featured the Ukrainian ethnic core but seemed inclusive enough to engage minorities (including Russians), because discursive "othering" was supposedly directed against Russian imperialism rather than the Russian people. However, a severe economic crisis broke popular faith in the president and his nation-building policy, which his opponents could present (particularly in the east and south) as "nationalism" and "forcible Ukrainianization" (Motyl 1995; Kulyk 2001).

Leonid Kuchma was elected president in 1994 largely because of the support of Russian speakers from the east and south. He emphasized friendly and mutually beneficial relations with Russia (while not abandoning Kravchuk's effort to build a partnership with the West) and downplayed anti-Russian themes in public discourse. Moreover, while promoting the integrity of the Ukrainian state, he allowed and even encouraged regional authorities in the east and west to feature symbols and traditions favored by their respective

populations. His successor, Viktor Yushchenko, who came to power in the wake of the Orange Revolution of 2004, revived and strengthened anti-Russian themes in public discourse (the most prominent of them being Soviet/Russian responsibility for the Great Famine of 1932–33) and reemphasized a pro-Western foreign policy orientation, thereby provoking deterioration of the relations with Russia (Kulyk 2001; Portnov 2010, 40–90). In turn, the fourth President Viktor Yanukovich mostly reverted to Kuchma’s ambiguity in both foreign policy and identity discourse. Notwithstanding these obvious oscillations, there has been a remarkable continuity in the promotion of national identity featuring the Ukrainian ethnocultural core. It has resulted from the common view of all presidents (and many other prominent statesmen) that such promotion constitutes an important element of state building. A contributing factor has been the parliamentary confrontation between the supporters of this view and those preferring a less Ukrainocentric orientation (such as Yanukovich’s Party of Regions), which has hindered considerable changes in many domains.

The continuity of nation-building policies was most noticeable in education, whose subject structure and content consistently prioritized Ukrainian culture and history defined primarily in ethnic terms. In particular, history textbooks featured the Ukrainian “liberation struggle” largely directed against Russia, although teachers did not always transmit the prescribed message, particularly in predominantly Russian-speaking regions (Wanner 1998, chap. 4; Janmaat 2000, chap. 3, 4; Rodgers 2007). Ethnic Ukrainian culture and history was also featured in other state-controlled practices such as museums, the official calendar, and public monuments, except for the east and south, where local authorities sought to assert the legitimacy of the Russian and Soviet tradition. This assertion was particularly prominent under Yushchenko, when it played an important role in the political confrontation between Orange and anti-Orange forces (Wanner 1998, chap. 6, 7; Portnov 2010, 90–98; Zhurzhenko 2011).

While recognizing ethnocultural rights and occasionally acknowledging specific cultural achievements of minorities, the state was otherwise not inclined to differentiate between the civic nation and its titular ethnic core, thereby contributing to the popular confusion of these two identities. The confusion was also facilitated by the abolition of passport registration of nationality (allegedly in order to bring Ukrainian practice in conformity with European standards). This was not, however, accompanied by the abandonment of the discourse of nationalities as the constituent units of Ukrainian society, even though this discourse became much less prominent than it was in the USSR. Not only was the nationality question retained (albeit with a somewhat different wording) in the post-Soviet census of 2001, but its results also were presented by statisticians and journalists (in accordance with the ingrained Soviet tradition) as reflecting the actual sizes of objective groups. Given the continuation of the accustomed understanding of nationality, the discontinuation of its unchangeable ascription did not lead to any noticeable re-identification of

Russian-speaking Ukrainians so as to make their nationality match their everyday language. Quite the contrary, the census registered a clear increase in the share of self-declared Ukrainians. Moreover, the reported “disappearance” of about a quarter of Ukraine’s Russians did not provoke any visible protests against the census results or the situation it supposedly reflected, so that the increasing identification with the titular group was mostly perceived as normal (Arel 2002a; Kulyk 2010, chap. 6).

The increase partly had to do with the more pronounced Ukrainian identification of the youth, who inherited the predominant understanding of nationality as primordial and, therefore, viewed it as entirely distinct from language practice. At the same time, many young people raised in independent Ukraine could interpret their declared Ukrainian identity not so much as an ethnic identity as a civic one. A survey conducted by KIIS in 2012 confirmed that while 75 percent of respondents defined their nationality by that of their parents (or one of their parents), 16 percent defined it by the country they lived in and 4 percent by the language they spoke. Remarkably, the youngest adult cohort (18 to 29 years) demonstrated both the strongest Ukrainian identification and the strongest tendency to define it in civic terms (by the country of residence). However, the youth was no more inclined than older respondents to view their nationality as defined by language practice.

Both change and continuity were also characteristic of policy with regard to language use. All presidents sought to promote the knowledge and use of Ukrainian without antagonizing Russian speakers and endangering social stability. However, Kravchuk and Yushchenko prioritized the promotion, and Kuchma and Yanukovych stability (which, after the period of perceived Ukrainianization, meant offering some reassurances to Russian speakers). Moreover, the confrontation between supporters of the dominance of Ukrainian and proponents of formal equality between the two languages often resulted in a legislative stalemate best illustrated by the longevity of the ambiguous language law of 1989, which neither party was able to change in its favor until as late as 2012. The confrontation became particularly heated after the Orange Revolution, when anti-Orange elites presented the Russian language as a crucial element of the distinct identity of the east and south and vehemently opposed attempts by the Orange regime to expand the use of Ukrainian at the expense of Russian. This opposition was supported and partly instigated by the Russian government’s effort to ensure the continued prevalence of Russian in Ukraine as a means of keeping Ukraine under Moscow’s influence. At the same time, there was an impressive heterogeneity in terms of regions and social domains, which both reflected and shaped popular preferences. While in the west Russian was quickly marginalized in the public sphere, in the east and south it retained its dominance in most practices, even those controlled by the state. The expansion of Ukrainian in education continued throughout the years of independence and brought the share of Ukrainian-language schools above that of ethnic Ukrainians (and back to the level of the late 1920s). In

contrast, the use of the titular language in print media has actually decreased in comparison with the last Soviet decades, and in cinemas Ukrainian was not at all present until 2007. Notwithstanding the rather aggressive promotion of Ukrainian in the broadcast media under Yushchenko, Russian continued to dominate prime-time television on all major nationwide channels (Kulyk 2006, 2009, 2013).

Whatever their specific preferences, there was a clear limit to what policy makers believed could be done in the language domain because of expected resistance on the part of elites and masses to more radical changes. For example, none of the presidents dared or deemed it necessary to impose strict requirements regarding the mastery of the state language by state employees or even high-ranking officials. Therefore, while Ukrainian gradually replaced Russian in official documents, in their oral interactions with visitors most public servants speak whatever language they prefer (given that both Ukrainian and Russian are widely believed to be comprehensible to all residents of the country) rather than reciprocating the visitors' preference. Actually, most Ukrainians believe that public servants should respond in Ukrainian to those citizens addressing them in that language. Fifty-seven percent of respondents in the KIIS survey of 2012 applied this principle to the entire Ukraine and a further 21 percent limited it to those territories where Ukrainian speakers constitute a majority of the population (even in the east and south, 36 percent supported the former option, while 34 percent preferred the latter). However, citizens rarely stand up for their language rights – or even consider them to be violated. In the 2006 survey of Hromadska Dumka, only 6 percent of respondents declared having fairly often encountered instances of discrimination against Ukrainian speakers, and 8 percent admitted similar encounters involving Russian speakers (for the members of the respective language groups as defined by the main everyday language, the figures were 5 percent and 12 percent, respectively). This means that the failure of public servants to reciprocate the language choice of citizens addressing them is usually not perceived as violation of citizens' rights. At the same time, these and other survey data (particularly those pertaining to the media consumption) demonstrate that Russian speakers are more likely to perceive any imposition of the unaccustomed and less-known Ukrainian as violating their rights than Ukrainian speakers are to complain about the continued use of the more familiar and well-known Russian (Kulyk 2013). This asymmetry of grievances is another factor hindering the adoption of more resolute Ukrainianization policies by the state.

As a result, most Russian speakers can rely on their language in virtually all contexts and can even impose their preferred linguistic environment on those who would prefer Ukrainian but are ready to use Russian. In the 2006 survey, 83 percent of those speaking mostly Russian at home said they also used it in their place of work or study; this exceeded the analogous figure for Ukrainian speakers (78 percent), which means that the higher status of Ukrainian does not necessarily translate into more favorable conditions for its use. Russian

continues to dominate the workplace in big cities, where it was identified as the main language of work by 58 percent of respondents (versus 20 percent indicating that they use mostly Ukrainian). Therefore, as during the Ukrainization of the 1920s, a Ukrainian-speaking migrant from the countryside is likely to have to use Russian in the workplace. Although education in Ukrainian ensures better *knowledge* of Ukrainian among the younger generation in comparison with older generations, the younger generation *uses* Russian as much as older generations in cities, and significantly more in towns and villages. Accordingly, societal bilingualism with the predominance of Russian is likely to be reproduced in the next generation, because Russian speakers intend to raise their children mainly in Russian, even if they are more willing to let them combine the two languages than they themselves do (Kulyk 2007, 298–305).

Many people see no contradiction between the state promotion of Ukrainian and their own predominant use of Russian. A majority of Russian speakers, however, would like the state to bring its policy in conformity with popular preferences by legalizing the use of Russian in all social domains alongside of Ukrainian, so that everyone would supposedly speak whichever language they want. Of those respondents in the 2006 survey who defined their nationality as Ukrainian but reported speaking mostly Russian in their everyday life, 61 percent supported an upgrade of the status of Russian, and 59 percent called such an upgrade the most important task confronting the state's language policy. On the eve of the parliamentary election of 2012, Yanukovych and his party decided to fulfill these wishes to please their largely Russian-speaking constituency. This change in the legal framework both reflected and encouraged the curtailment of state efforts to overcome the consequences of Soviet Russification by bringing language practice into line with ethnic and linguistic identities.

Conclusion

In post-Soviet Ukraine, the persistence of the discrepancy between ethnolinguistic identity and language practice results from two separate processes that continue, albeit in a modified form, those processes set in motion under communist rule. In terms suggested by Kotkin and Beissinger, the legacy relationship in both cases is best characterized as what they refer to as translation (an old practice finds new purpose and is redeployed in a different way), although elements of what they call parameter setting are also noticeable. On the one hand, the ethnocultural policies of the Ukrainian state continue the Soviet glorification of the national in general and of the titular nation in particular. The main difference is that the latter no longer has to concede primacy to Russian culture, but instead is constrained by pressures from international minority rights organizations and the kin states of sizable minorities within Ukraine. Rather than emphasizing the Ukrainians' distinctiveness among the brotherly Soviet peoples, the policies of independent Ukraine came primarily to serve as a

means for building a Ukrainian civic nation with an eponymous ethnocultural core. The new practice retains a fundamental parameter of the old one: while categorization by nationality ceased to be a pervasive and influential social practice, the category itself remains legitimate and meaningful to both elites and masses in their thinking about the composition and organization of society, even though the Ukrainian identification has acquired a civic overtone that implicitly challenges the perceived primordialism of ethnic groups.

On the other hand, policies in the language domain reproduce societal bilingualism with considerable heterogeneity of practices in different regions and social domains and varying combinations of the two languages in individual language repertoires. Contrary to the Soviet regime's primary preoccupation with the knowledge and use of Russian, the Ukrainian state promotes first and foremost the titular language both as the language of the supposed core ethnonation and as a factor (or at least an attribute) of state independence. However, this promotion is constrained not only by pressures from European organizations and kin state governments (particularly Russia), but also by the potential discontent of constituencies who care about language practices much more than ethnocultural symbols. Moreover, the inherited advantage of Russian over Ukrainian is reinforced by increasing globalization in the media, trade, tourism, and other domains, which facilitates knowledge and use of Russian (alongside or instead of English) as the regional lingua franca. In terms of parameters set during the Soviet decades, Russian continues to be viewed by many members of both language groups as better known among Ukraine's population and better suited for certain communicative practices. While learning and speaking Ukrainian by those accustomed to Russian is no longer considered unreasonable, it has by no means become inconceivable for Ukrainian speakers to use Russian in institutional or everyday communication.

A discrepancy between ethnolinguistic identities and language practice can be found in many societies around the globe, but it is not always as perceptible and measurable as it is in the post-Soviet countries, which continue employing Soviet categories of nationality and native language. Among comparable countries, the persistence of this ethnolinguistic discrepancy varies. Restoring the conformity between ethnicity and language has been easier in countries like Moldova, where even after Soviet Russification Russian remained the main language of a relatively small number of titulars, and thus of a minority of the general population. At the same time, the lack of strong political contestation in Kazakhstan contributed to a remarkable success of the state's relatively mild promotion of the knowledge and use of Kazakh within the eponymous group, particularly in the younger generation, leading to the gradual curtailment (although by no means elimination) of the discrepancy between ethnic identity and language use. In Ukraine, by contrast, Russian is too pervasive to recede without state pressure, and politics is too competitive to leave such pressure unopposed. In the still more russified Belarus, even the refusal of the authorities to apply such pressure is resolutely contested, although contestation is muted

by the authoritarian nature of the political regime. Whatever the differences between these two countries, they are similar in that the continued prevalence of Russian in language practice coexists with the increasing identification with the titular group.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Mark Beissinger for his comments on earlier drafts of this text and to participants in the conference on “Historical Legacies of Communism” at Princeton University in April 2011 for their responses to my presentation. The 2006 survey in Ukraine was part of a collaborative project supported by the International Association for the promotion of cooperation with scientists from the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union (INTAS). The Ukrainian survey of 2012 was funded by a grant awarded to me by the Shevchenko Scientific Society in America from the Natalia Danylchenko Endowment Fund. Timothy Colton and Dmitry Gorenburg kindly made the data of the 1993 survey in Russia’s autonomies (the Colton-Hough survey) available to me. Unless indicated otherwise, the survey results reported throughout the text are based on my processing of the raw data.

References

- All-Ukrainian Population Census 2001. No date. <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/>.
- Arel, Dominique. 2002a. “Interpreting ‘Nationality’ and ‘Language’ in the 2001 Ukrainian Census.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 18(3): 213–49.
- 2002b. “Language Categories in Censuses: Backward- or Forward-Looking?” In *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel, 92–120. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bilinsky, Yaroslav. 1962. “The Soviet Educational Laws of 1958–59 and Soviet Nationality Policy.” *Soviet Studies* 14(2): 138–57.
- Brown, N. Anthony. 2005. “Language and Identity in Belarus.” *Language Policy* 4(3): 311–32.
- Gorenburg, Dmitry. 2001. “Nationalism for the Masses: Popular Support for Nationalism in Russia’s Ethnic Republics.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53(1): 73–104.
- Grieco, Elizabeth M. and Rachel C. Cassidy. 2001. “Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin.” *Census 2000 Brief*, C2KBR/01-1 (March). <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/cenbro1-1.pdf>.
- Hirsch, Francine. 1997. “The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category *Nationality* in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses.” *Slavic Review* 56(2): 251–78.
- Janmaat, Jan Germen. 2000. *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Population*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- Kaiser, Robert J. 1994. *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Karklins, Rasma. 1980. “A Note on ‘Nationality’ and ‘Native Tongue’ as Census Categories in 1979.” *Soviet Studies* 32(3): 415–22.

- Khmelko, V. Ye. 2004. *Lingvo-etnichna struktura Ukraïny: regional'ni osoblyvosti ta tendentsii zmin za roky nezalezhnosti*. <http://www.kiis.com.ua/txt/pdf/ing-ethn.pdf>.
- Krawchenko, Bohdan. 1985. *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. 2001. "The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Beyond Brubaker." *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 27(1-2): 197-221.
2006. "Normalisation of Ambiguity: Policies and Discourses on Language Issues in Post-Soviet Ukraine." In *History, Language and Society in the Borderlands of Europe: Ukraine and Belarus in Focus*, ed. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, 117-40. Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag.
2007. "The Demography of Language Practices and Attitudes in Ukraine." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 29(1-4): 295-326.
2009. "Language Policies and Language Attitudes in Post-Soviet Ukraine." In *Language Policy and Language Situation in Ukraine: Analysis and Recommendations*, ed. Juliane Besters-Dilger, 15-55. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
2010. *Dyskurs ukrains'kykh medii: identychnosti, ideolohii, vladni stosunky*. Kyiv: Krytyka.
2011. "Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity, and Political Cleavages: Evidence from Ukraine." *Nations and Nationalism* 17(3): 627-48.
2013. "Language Policy in the Ukrainian Media: Authorities, Producers and Consumers." *Europe-Asia Studies* 65(7): 1417-43.
- Martin, Terry. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923 - 1939*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.
- Motyl, Alexander J. 1995. "The Conceptual President: Leonid Kravchuk and the Politics of Surrealism." In *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker, 103-21. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR. Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 g.* 1991. Moscow: Finansy i statistika.
- Portnov, Andrei. 2010. *Uprazhneniia s istoriei po-ukrainski*. Moscow: OGI, Polit.ru, Memorial.
- "Rezultaty natsional'nykh shchorichnykh monitorynhovykh opytuvan' 1992-2006 rokiv." 2006. In *Ukrains'ke suspil'stvo 1992-2006: Sotsiolohichni monitorynh*, ed. V. Vorona and M. Shul'ha, 419-569. Kyiv: Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.
- Rodgers, Peter. 2007. "Compliance or Contradiction? Teaching 'History' in the 'New' Ukraine: A View from Ukraine's Eastern Borderlands." *Europe-Asia Studies* 59(3): 503-19.
- Shin, Hyon B. and Rosalind Bruno. 2003. "Language Use and English-Speaking Ability: 2000." *Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR-29* (October). <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-29.pdf>.
- Shul'ga, Nikolai. 2009. "Rodnoi iazyk: nadumannyi konstrukt ili real'nost'." <http://odnarodyna.com.ua/topics/1/252.html>.
- Silver, Brian. 1974. "Soviet Mobilization and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities." *The American Political Science Review* 68(1): 45-66.
1975. "Methods of Deriving Data on Bilingualism from the 1970 Soviet Census." *Soviet Studies* 27(4): 574-97.

- Slezkine, Yuri. 1994. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 54(3): 414–52.
- Smagulova, Juldyz. 2008. "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11(3–4): 440–75.
- Solchanyk, Roman. 1982. "Russian Language and Soviet Politics." *Soviet Studies* xxxiv(1): 23–42.
- Szporluk, Roman. 2000. "West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical Tradition, Social Communication, and Linguistic Assimilation." In Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the USSR*, 109–38. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.
- Wanner, Catherine. 1998. *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Zaslavsky, Victor and Yuri Luryi. 1979. "The Passport System in the USSR and Changes in Soviet Society." *Soviet Union* 6(2): 137–53.
- Zhurzhenko, Tatiana. 2011. "'Capital of Despair': Holodomor Memory and Political Conflicts in Kharkiv after the Orange Revolution." *East European Politics and Societies* 25(3): 597–639.