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Language Policy in Ukraine: What People Want the State to Do

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This article seeks to shed more light on Ukraine's language problem by specifying popular views of policies the state should pursue in the language domain. Aiming at the delineation of possible ways to reconcile the preferences of main ethnolinguistic and regional groups, it analyzes their views of the valid and desirable legislative and institutional arrangements. The data come from a nationwide representative mass survey and twenty focus groups in different parts of Ukraine. The analysis shows that Ukrainian-speakers would like to see their language dominant in all domains but are ready to put up with the widespread use of Russian, provided that their own right to use Ukrainian is not questioned and the titular language retains the priority status and exclusive role in some symbolically important practices. In contrast, Russian-speakers prefer an upgrade of the status of Russian, which they present as a way to ensure the equality of speakers of the two languages but most of them actually want official bilingualism to let them remain unilingual in their capacities both as citizens and as employees. The best solution would be to adopt compromise legislation providing for a limited upgrade of the status of Russian and then facilitate its observance by both bureaucrats and citizens. However, the new language law adopted under President Yanukovich was widely perceived as endangering the use of Ukrainian and thus contributed to confrontation rather than compromise.

Keywords: *language policy; language group; language status; regional language; Ukraine*

Since the early years of Ukrainian independence, one of the most controversial issues in public discourse and political process has been the so-called language problem, pertaining first and foremost to balancing the statuses and scopes of use of the country's most widespread languages, Ukrainian and Russian. Despite its unabated political prominence, both native and foreign scholars pay rather little attention to the problem's substance and prospects of solution. While in the 1990s there was a considerable scholarly interest in the issue having largely to do with the widespread expectation of its destabilizing effect on the new state's politics and security,¹ the later realization of the little likelihood of a serious conflict between the main ethnolinguistic groups led the scholars to study other, supposedly more relevant issues. Moreover, even those few texts that did analyze language politics focused rather on the political exploitation of the unresolved problem than on

possible parameters of a compromise solution, all the more so because the analyses showed the reluctance of major parties to work for such a solution.² Similarly, studies of public opinion have mostly included only one aspect of language-related beliefs, namely, the attitudes towards an upgrade of the legal status of Russian, which has been the most obvious matter of controversy.³ Although several rather comprehensive studies of language politics were published in recent years,⁴ they did not pay much attention to preferences of different groups regarding specific institutional arrangements and possibilities to reconcile these preferences.

This article seeks to shed more light on Ukraine's language problem by specifying popular views of policies the state should pursue in the language domain and, related to this, views of the nature of the current problem in the domain and the state's dealing therewith. Aiming at the delineation of possible ways to reconcile the preferences of main ethnolinguistic and regional groups, it thoroughly analyzes their views of the general legislative framework and some specific institutional arrangements. The data come from a nationwide representative mass survey (N=2015) and twenty focus groups with participants from different age cohorts in five cities in different parts of Ukraine (the centrally located capital of Kyiv, Donetsk in the south-east, Odesa in the south, Lutsk in the north-west, and Lviv in the west), both administered by the Kyiv-based *Hromadska dumka* center in December 2006. Although advantages of combining quantitative and qualitative methods are widely recognized, such combination has been rarely used in studies of language politics in Ukraine or other post-Soviet countries.⁵ The survey data indicate that one way to reconcile the preferences of Ukrainian- and Russian-speakers regarding language statuses could be to recognize Russian as a second official language in those places where the population overwhelmingly uses it in various social practices and supports a greater or lesser upgrade of its legal status. Accordingly, the analysis focuses on how the respondents in different parts of Ukraine view the appropriate coexistence of the two main languages in those regions and whether they could accept a limited upgrade of the status of Russian as a durable solution of the language problem. In conclusion, I briefly examine the new language law adopted in the summer of 2012 and argue that although it granted Russian an apparently moderate status, many provisions of the law and the manner of its implementation precluded its acceptance by society as a truly compromise solution.

Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet Policies

Prior to analyzing popular views of the language problem and its possible solutions, I would like to briefly describe the language situation in Ukrainian society and the language policy of the Ukrainian state which influence these views as well as being influenced by them. This also requires an assessment of Soviet legacies that largely determine the post-Soviet language situation and policy.

Perhaps the most peculiar feature of Ukraine's language situation and the most durable legacy of the Soviet language policy is a vast discrepancy between ethnic and language identities on one hand and between language identity and practice on the other. This discrepancy pertains first and foremost to the spread of the Russian language among members of other ethnic groups who nevertheless mostly retain their ethnic and, to a lesser extent, linguistic identity. While self-declared ethnic Russians constituted, according to the latest census of 2001, 17 percent of Ukraine's residents, the share of those calling Russian their native language was 30 percent and the people primarily using that language in everyday life amounted, as surveys indicated, to at least half of the population.⁶ The large-scale change of language practice by ethnic Ukrainians and members of the minority groups without the respective ethnic and, in most cases, linguistic re-identification resulted from an ambivalent policy of the Soviet regime. After the abandonment in the 1930s of an early Soviet attempt to make the non-Russian languages dominant in their eponymous republics, this policy came to promote Russian as the language of social mobility and inter-ethnic integration of citizens in all parts of the USSR but largely continued to encourage their identification with the primordially conceived ethnic groups and their eponymous languages.⁷

The Russifying dimension of the policy ensured predominant use of the Russian language in prestigious social domains and places with high percentage of ethnic Russians who were no longer required to learn and use the languages of people among whom they lived. This meant the increasing prevalence of Russian in the cities, particularly in the more urbanized east and south of Ukraine where most Russian migrants settled and where, accordingly, most newcomers from the Ukrainian countryside sooner or later switched to Russian as their main language or at least did not pass Ukrainian to their children. It is in these cities that the two above-mentioned discrepancies were the largest as most people switching to Russian in their language practice adhered to their Ukrainian ethnic identity which the regime did not pressure them to renounce, and many also retained the notion of Ukrainian as native language which thus meant an attachment rather than practice (for descendants of those who had switched to Russian, it was often the language they never learned or used but nevertheless identified with). At the same time, Ukrainian continued to dominate in the countryside as well as in the western regions, which became part of the USSR as late as World War II and then received relatively few ethnic Russians and were not subjected to strong Russification of public life.⁸ Language practice largely correlated there to linguistic and ethnic identity, with the predominance of Ukrainian(s) according to all criteria. Moreover, Ukrainian retained a strong presence in the educational, cultural, and media domains throughout the republic, albeit with a marked regional differentiation which both reflected and shaped the preferences of the respective populations (the notable exception being Crimea, which was transferred from the Russian to Ukrainian republic in 1954 and did not develop almost any infrastructure for meeting linguistic demands of its

sizable Ukrainian-speaking minority). But then in the last Soviet decades the schools with the Ukrainian language of instruction all but disappeared in many cities of the east and south, and in higher education the use of that language was mostly limited to philological departments, except for the western regions.⁹

The political liberalization during the 1980s perestroika enabled an attempt to translate the largely symbolic position of Ukrainian as the national language of the eponymous group and “its” republic into the clear legal status as the state language of the Ukrainian SSR which would, in turn, pave the way for its communicative role as the main language of all regions and social domains. This attempt which was initiated by the nationalist (national-democratic) opposition and then supported by a moderate part of the communist nomenklatura manifested itself most vividly in an amendment to the republic’s Constitution and the language law of 1989 which declared Ukrainian the only state language of the Ukrainian SSR and provided for its comprehensive use. However, the nomenklatura managed to dilute the significance of the new status of the titular language by simultaneously declaring that the Ukrainian SSR “shall provide for the free use of the Russian language as the interethnic communication language of [the peoples] of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”¹⁰ The post-Soviet Constitution of 1996 demoted Russian to the status as a national minority language, although the ambiguous provision on “the free development, use and protection of Russian, and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine” was subsequently used by that language’s champions as a justification of its continued uninhibited use in all social domains, well beyond the minority language scope.¹¹

At the same time, the champions of Russian tried from the early years of independence to make it a second state/official language, while the supporters of wider use of Ukrainian sought to clearly stipulate its position as the only state language and even the only legitimate language of the public domain, except for designated places and activities of national minorities. Given roughly equal strengths of the two parties in the parliament, all attempts to adopt a new language law failed, all the more so because the executive, particularly under President Leonid Kuchma was content with the ambiguous legislation enabling its arbitrary implementation. In the meantime, pro-Russian political forces tried to make up for the supposedly inadequate nationwide status of their language by entitling it to official use in many predominantly Russian-speaking oblasts and cities where they controlled the regional/local councils. Since 2006, with the coming into effect in Ukraine of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages they tried to get Russian recognized as a “regional” language in the south-eastern regions or even the whole country, allegedly in accordance with the charter. During the presidency of the pro-Ukrainianization Viktor Yushchenko these attempts were frustrated by courts on the appeals of prosecutors who argued that the councils in question had encroached on the exclusive prerogative of the parliament to determine language statuses.¹² In contrast, the election of Viktor Yanukovych who had long declared his support for an upgrade of

the status of Russian inspired a new wave of declarations of that language as “regional” in the east and south. Two years later, in the summer of 2012 Yanukovych’s Party of Regions finally succeeded in adopting a new language law which granted Russian the “regional” status on half of Ukraine’s territory and legalized its use in many domains all over the country. This move was widely perceived as intended to boost the party’s popularity among its core constituency on the eve of the parliamentary election of 2012.¹³

The implementation of the legislative norms varied greatly by both region and domain as well as fluctuating in accordance with the preferences of the current executive. The only domain where the use of Ukrainian largely corresponded to its legal status as the state language was education, where the shares of Ukrainian-language schools and pre-schools were increasing rather steadily under all three previous presidents. After the two decades of independence, these shares (82 and 86 percent of children, respectively, in the academic year 2010–2011) exceeded not only the percentage of people declaring it native language but also that of the eponymous ethnic group. The dominance of the state language in higher education became even stronger (90 percent of students). However, while Ukrainian quickly established itself as the main language of education in the west and center, where this change was mostly supported by the authorities and residents, the Ukrainianization proceeded much more slowly in the east and south, where the reluctance of the population was fed by politicians and bureaucrats. Of those places where the focus group discussions were held in 2006, the share of schoolchildren instructed in Ukrainian amounted at that time to more than 99 percent in Lviv and Volhynia (Luts’k) oblasts, 96 percent in the city of Kyiv, 65 percent in Odesa oblast, and 29 percent in Donetsk oblast (the figure for Crimea was as low as 5 percent). Moreover, in the predominantly Russian-speaking localities, the use of Ukrainian was often limited to lessons, with the extracurricular activities and informal communication between students and teachers taking place in Russian.¹⁴ The supporters of the uninhibited use of Russian complained about its alleged discrimination in education not only in the west and center but also in the east and south where many parents were said to be denied the right to get their children educated in their language of preference. With the election of Yanukovych, the local authorities in Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, and some other cities whose local councils were controlled by his Party of Regions started promoting the reversion to the use of Russian in education and other domains where it had been more or less replaced with Ukrainian.¹⁵

Public administration is another domain where the transition to Ukrainian was regionally uneven and usually pertaining to certain practices but not others. Here the dividing line lay between written and spoken language which only coincided in the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking regions. Even in the east and south (with the partial exception of Crimea whose autonomy status and ethnic Russian majority enabled official use of Russian alongside and often instead of Ukrainian), the officials sooner or later put the signs on the doors of their offices and started issuing

documents in the state language. This language regime, which eventually extended to private organizations inasmuch as they corresponded with and submitted documentation to the state authorities, meant that citizens had to read texts and fill in forms in a language they often did not feel comfortable with and whose imposition, accordingly, they resented (see below). At the same time, even in the capital many officials spoke Russian not only among themselves but also with visitors whose preferences they routinely disregarded. In the east and south, Russian remained the only spoken language in most public offices, to say nothing of private ones. Fluency in Ukrainian was not made a precondition for assuming positions in public service or even in the government, and in every consecutive cabinet a few ministers spoke primarily Russian in public, including under Yushchenko, who consistently stressed the need to use and promote Ukrainian. Under the more ambiguous Yanukovich, a number of high-ranking central officials exclusively relied on Russian (even though the president called some of them to learn Ukrainian) and local authorities in several eastern and southern cities announced their intention to work primarily in the language of their deputies' and constituency's preference. The Odesa mayor Oleksii Kostusev reportedly went as far as demanding that all documents submitted for his consideration be in Russian.¹⁶

Yet another domain highly relevant to the analysis of popular views below is the media, which provided evidence of both continued dominance of Russian and insensitive attempts of the authorities to impose Ukrainian. With no legislative or administrative restrictions on the language use in the print media, most popular newspapers and magazines (except for western regions and official outlets of various authorities throughout Ukraine) appeared in Russian. That language was preferred by consumers in big cities (whose more accessible and affluent population the producers and advertisers primarily targeted) and more or less readily accepted elsewhere if there were no similar products in Ukrainian. Therefore, the dominance of Russian was steadily strengthening regardless of fluctuations of official policy; at the time of the survey and focus groups analyzed in this article, the share of copies in that language constituted 63 percent for newspapers and 70 percent for magazines and journals.¹⁷ In contrast, the broadcasting media was legally obliged to use predominantly Ukrainian but an ambiguous wording of the law and the reluctance of the government to implement it enabled for many years the prevalence of Russian on most television and especially radio stations. It is only since 2006, with the adoption of a stricter law and the appointment of more resolute membership of a body overseeing its implementation, that the stations were pressured to meet the requirements of the law and their respective licenses, which meant at least 75 percent or more for nationwide broadcasters. Although the daily share of products with Ukrainian sound (rather than subtitles) remained considerably lower and in the prime time the Russian language prevailed on most television stations,¹⁸ the very process of changing the accustomed language regime of media consumption left many Russian- and

even some Ukrainian-speakers discontent as the analysis of the 2006 survey and focus group discussions will demonstrate. Similarly to other domains, the election of Yanukovych led to a more Russian-friendly policy which allowed the broadcasters to stop worrying about strict implementation of the language requirements.¹⁹ With the adoption of the new law, these requirements were dropped altogether.²⁰

Such uneven and rather lenient policies contributed to the maintenance of the language situation inherited from the Soviet times as they allowed most people to use their preferred language in most practices, including the workplace and communication with state officials. Actually, an analysis of language practices reported by the respondents in the same survey by *Hromadska dumka* demonstrated that Ukrainophones were more likely to give up their language preferences in the Russian-dominated environment of big cities than Russophones in mainly Ukrainian-language towns and villages. Moreover, the respondents under 30 who had been raised in independent Ukraine and largely schooled in Ukrainian declared a reliance on Russian no less frequently than people in their thirties and forties who had been socialized in the late Soviet decades at times of aggressive Russification.²¹ Accordingly, the relative weights of the groups of people who revealed in surveys their everyday preference for the Ukrainian and Russian languages remained rather stable during the years of independence, with a slight advantage of the Russian-speakers.²² At the same time, the declared attachment to Ukrainian as native language did not decrease either, and the figure for the 2001 census, 67.5 percent turned out somewhat higher than in the last Soviet census of 1989, even though the growth was not as big as that for self-declared ethnic Ukrainians whose share reached almost 78 percent.²³ The inherited discrepancy between language practice and identity and between linguistic and ethnic dimensions of identity was thus reproduced, which contributed to the ambivalence of popular views of language situation and language policy. Remarkably, a regression analysis of the *Hromadska dumka* survey data showed that the respondents' native language influenced their language-related attitudes and policy preferences more strongly than the language of everyday use, which is why it makes sense to define language groups by the former indicator rather than the latter,²⁴ just as I will do in the analysis below.

Views of the Language Problem

A common argument in public discourse reads that there is no genuine language problem in Ukraine and politicians keep creating it artificially for their own purposes—or that there would be no problem if it were not for politicians. This argument has perhaps been most frequently articulated by politicians themselves as they seek to discredit their opponents' efforts deemed to be dangerous. In particular, the supporters of the Ukrainian language argued that the proponents of an official status of

Russian pursued a goal of little relevance to Ukraine's population. At the same time, pro-presidential "centrist" parties of the Kuchma era put forward a similar argument against both pro-Ukrainophone and pro-Russophone groupings seeking to undermine status quo. Kuchma's successor Yushchenko stressed the problem of the limited use of Ukrainian while not seeing any problem with Russian, and current president Yanukovich speaks of the need to ensure the rights of Russian-speakers but rarely mentions those who (wish to) speak Ukrainian.²⁵ The argument is often backed by references to survey data indicating that language matters are not among the top priorities of most Ukrainian citizens who are supposedly preoccupied first and foremost with economic problems. In fact, the popular attitudes are more ambiguous as demonstrated by two nationwide surveys of mid-2007. To be sure, neither an upgrade of the status of Russian nor the promotion of Ukrainian language and culture was in any ethnic or regional group considered nearly as important as an increase of living standards, fighting corruption, or other socioeconomic goals. However, not only were the two language issues listed among the most important problems by 19 and 16 percent of respondents respectively, but also the status of Russian turned out to be important for 34 percent in the Donbas and Crimea and the promotion of Ukrainian for 28 percent in western Ukraine.²⁶ Moreover, while 46 percent of the respondents supported the opinion that the language issue is not topical at all as "everybody speaks whatever language they want," 22 percent considered it urgent.²⁷

To the extent the population does see a problem in the language domain, what does that problem consist in? The survey and focus group discussions conducted by *Hromadska dumka* in 2006 provide abundant data for examining this question. The data show that Ukrainian- and Russian-speakers differed both in reasons for and strengths of discontent with the policies of the state.²⁸ Although most participants in all focus groups supported the dominant view that the language problem was mostly caused by political instigations, their answers to specific questions revealed their beliefs that there was also real substance of the problem. For Russian-speakers, particularly in the east and south, it was perceived constraints on their use of preferred language in certain communicative practices which some of them qualified as discrimination against their group. Most frequently, they complained about the necessity to fill in various forms, in both state and private organizations, in the state language which they could not write well enough, having been educated in Russian, in most cases during the Soviet times. Another, less often mentioned, practice where the Russophones believed they were deprived of choice was buying medicines many of which had instructions in the state language only.²⁹ In this case, people admitted to their limited ability to *comprehend* Ukrainian, although most of them explained this limitation by the abundance of specialized terminology in medical instructions.

However, the Russian-speakers' resentment was not limited to those practices where Ukrainian was the only language in use. Many participants complained about

the school instruction of their children or grandchildren primarily in Ukrainian, particularly the lack or an optional status of lessons of the Russian language and the inclusion of the Russian literature in the world literature course, with the use of (allegedly inadequate) Ukrainian translations of well-known Russian texts. Even stronger was dissatisfaction with the translation into Ukrainian of televised Russian movies and shows whereby voices of popular actors got deprived of their perceived beauty. While Russian-speaking respondents expressed their support for free and fair choice of language, they failed to recognize that it was their own choice of a school or a TV channel that had exposed them or their children to a language they would not like to use, as there was no shortage of Russian-language schools or television products in Donetsk and Odesa where these complaints were most frequently articulated. In blaming the allegedly Ukrainianizing state, these people did not even realize or admit that their discomfort of watching a movie or a show in (the low-quality) Ukrainian had more to do with the channels' choice of a particular way to meet the state requirement of a certain percentage of air time in the state language, namely, by translating also Russian-language products rather than diminishing their share and using Ukrainian only for domestic and Western-made products. It can thus be said that Russian-speakers in the east and south tended to blame the state for any instances of their active or passive use of Ukrainian which many of them would like to exclude from their life altogether. In Kyiv, only a few participants expressed such concerns, partly because the proficiency in Ukrainian is much higher there than in Donetsk or Odesa, even though most people in the capital speak Russian in their everyday life, especially among the young generation.³⁰

In contrast, Ukrainian-speakers of western Ukraine did not seem to see any constraints on their own right to use their preferred language and were primarily concerned about the use of Russian in those domains where they would like to hear only or predominantly Ukrainian. The most frequent complaint of focus group participants in Lutsk and Lviv was about the Russian language of many deputies of the national parliament which these participants considered a domain where only the state language might be used. Other than that, many respondents resented the reluctance of Russophone compatriots in the east, south, and even the capital to learn and use Ukrainian as demonstrated by their usual non-reciprocation of, and occasional hostile reaction to, the Ukrainian language of westerners. Only a few participants mentioned the dominance of Russian in many practices of the media. On the one hand, Ukrainophones appeared to be much less critical than Russophones of language policies of the state, which might have to do with the fact that at the time of these focus group discussions the state was primarily embodied by the pro-Ukrainianization President Yushchenko. On the other, Ukrainian-speaking participants virtually did not express their concern about the failure of non-state actors such as the media or businesses to ensure these citizens' right to use Ukrainian in the respective practices or the failure of the state to make them do so. The latter fact had to do both with the

weak idea of the employees' duty to adjust to language choice of visitors/customers (see below) and with the acceptability of the well-known and long-used Russian language to many of those people who mostly spoke Ukrainian in their everyday life but in many practices readily tolerated or in some cases even preferred Russian.

The survey data confirm the focus group findings. To begin with, the respondents considering Russian their native language and those living in the regions where this language predominates displayed a much more critical attitude towards the state policy in the language domain than people primarily attached to Ukrainian and residents of the western and central parts of the country. While 44 percent of Ukrainian-speakers and 41 percent of westerners viewed this policy positively or rather positively, similar assessments were declared only by 22 percent of Russian-speakers and 31 percent of residents of the east and south.³¹ Accordingly, 32 percent of Russophones and 26 percent of eastern-southern respondents assessed the state policy unequivocally negatively, in comparison with 15 percent of Ukrainophones and westerners. Very different turned out to be also the two language groups' perceptions of the frequency of discrimination against Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking citizens. As Table 1 demonstrates, not only did both groups more readily admitted to having encountered acts of discrimination against their own members than against those of the other group,³² but also this asymmetry was much greater among Russophones than Ukrainophones. Remarkably, encounters of discrimination against speakers of their respective languages were most frequently reported by respondents from those regions where these languages predominate in most social practices (Ukrainian in the west and Russian in the east and south). While some of these respondents may have encountered such discrimination when traveling to other regions, the focus group data suggest that many perceived as discriminatory those practices in their own regions which did not fit their preferences, particularly when this meant their own forced (or so they believed) use of a language other than they would have preferred. Since Russian-speakers much more readily assessed such discrepancies between preferences and experiences as instances of discrimination, even in the sample as a whole this group turned out to be perceived as more frequently discriminated against than its Ukrainian-speaking counterpart.

That the discrimination perceived by Russophones consisted partly in constraints on the use of Russian in the media which started to be imposed not long before the time of the survey and focus group discussions is demonstrated by responses to the questions on the degree to which the language situation in Ukraine makes it possible for the Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking population to satisfy their respective cultural and informational needs (see Table 2). Although most respondents argued that the needs of both main language groups were largely satisfied, the conditions were believed to be considerably less favorable for the Russophones than Ukrainophones. Once again, the beliefs of the two groups regarding their own situation and that of the other group were sharply asymmetrical. While Ukrainian-speakers assessed the conditions of the two groups as roughly equal, Russian-speakers considered

Table 1
Responses to the Survey Question “Have You Encountered Manifestations of Discrimination against Ukrainian-Speaking Citizens on the Part of Russian-Speaking Ones/Against Russian-Speaking Citizens on the Part of Ukrainian-Speaking Ones (on the Basis of Language)” (frequencies in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Respondents		Ukrainian-Speakers		Russian-Speakers	
	Discrimination against Ukrainian-Speakers	Discrimination against Russian-Speakers	Discrimination against Ukrainian-Speakers	Discrimination against Russian-Speakers	Discrimination against Ukrainian-Speakers	Discrimination against Russian-Speakers
Yes, quite often (+2)	5.7	8.4	6.9	3.9	4.8	13.4
Yes, but rarely (+1)	16.1	20.5	18.5	17.6	13.3	27.4
No (-1)	73.5	67.0	70.4	74.5	80.5	57.3
Mean	-0.46	-0.30	-0.38	-0.49	-0.57	-0.03

Table 2
Responses to the Survey Questions “To What Degree Does the Language Situation in Ukraine Make It Possible for the Ukrainian-Speaking/Russian-Speaking Population to Satisfy Their Cultural and Informational Needs” (frequencies in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Respondents		Ukrainian-Speakers		Russian-Speakers	
	Needs of Ukrainian-Speakers	Needs of Russian-Speakers	Needs of Ukrainian-Speakers	Needs of Russian-Speakers	Needs of Ukrainian-Speakers	Needs of Russian-Speakers
Fully ensures (+2)	31.8	22.7	24.0	22.5	44.3	23.2
Rather ensures (+1)	34.4	34.3	34.5	36.8	34.5	33.6
Somewhat ensures (0)	22.1	24.4	28.6	26.9	14.0	20.5
Rather does not ensure (-1)	5.0	8.7	6.4	6.0	2.2	11.9
Does not ensure at all (-2)	2.3	4.2	3.2	2.4	1.2	7.6
Mean	+0.89	+0.63	+0.70	+0.71	+1.19	+0.53

themselves to be put at a great disadvantage vis-à-vis speakers of Ukrainian, a language which they believed was being imposed in the cultural and informational domain. That is, the continued dominance of Russian in many media and mass culture practices did not worry Ukrainophones nearly as much as current attempts to increase the use of Ukrainian discontended Russophones. This new facet of the perceived language problem was readily added to grievances of Russian-speakers pertaining to the exclusive use of Ukrainian in documentation and its increasing prevalence in education.

Status Solution

A well-established fact is that a considerable part of Ukraine's population prompted by political forces such as the Party of Regions sees a solution of the language problem in an upgrade of the legal status of Russian, and the support of this solution is the strongest among the Russian-speakers and in the eastern and southern regions where they predominate.³³ The survey and focus group data confirm the fact and supplement it by a finer structure of preferences and motivations. The survey question on the appropriate status of the Ukrainian and Russian languages included as many as six combinations going beyond the dichotomous choice of unilingualism versus bilingualism and encompassing options from the full dominance of Ukrainian in the public domain through various forms of coexistence of the two languages to the full dominance of Russian. In addition to the then legal configuration with Russian as a minority language and the actual situation with Russian as a spoken language in most social practices, alongside of Ukrainian, the versions of coexistence the respondents were to choose from included the formal legal equality of the two languages long demanded by those parties claiming to represent the Russian-speaking population and the use of Russian as a second official language in those regions where the majority of the population wants it, an arrangement resembling one these parties pushed for shortly before the survey was conducted (see below).³⁴ While not strictly commensurate as legal solutions, the proposed options enabled a better understanding of people's actual preferences.

The responses for the whole sample and separately for main linguistic and regional groups are presented in Table 3. The strong support for an upgrade of the status of Russian among its native-language speakers and residents of the east and south is confirmed, as is a vast gap between their preferences and those of Ukrainian-speakers and westerners. However, it is clear that given more options, the supporters of an upgrade do not necessarily choose the status of Russian as a state language on a par with Ukrainian, even though this option turned out twice as popular among Russian-speakers and easterners/southerners as an official status in "their" regions only. At the same time, a third of Ukrainian-speakers and a quarter of western residents proved ready to tolerate either a moderate upgrade of the status of Russian or its actual use as a spoken language of the public domain alongside of Ukrainian. But then the mean values of these groups' preferences did not much exceed the legal status quo (2), while for Russian-speakers and eastern-southern respondents these values were close to the limited formal upgrade of Russian (4). Preferences of residents of the central regions and of the sample as a whole were mostly located within the middle of the spectrum, with a rather even distribution between the preservation of the current (formal or actual) situation and its minimal change. It may thus seem that the state should have just let the then situation of non-legalized prevalence of Russian in most social practices persist, as the only parts of the population insisting on a change in the

Table 3
Responses to the Survey Question “What Do You Think the Status of the Ukrainian and Russian Languages Should Be in Ukraine?” (frequencies in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Respondents	Native Language		Region		
		Ukrainian	Russian	West	Center	East + South
Ukrainian should be the only state language, with Russian excluded from all domains of life (1)	11.1	18.3	0.9	25.1	11.9	5.1
Ukrainian is the state language, Russian has the same rights as all other national minority languages (2)	26.4	35.1	13.3	44.3	30.3	16.8
Ukrainian is the state language, Russian is used alongside it only as a spoken language (3)	16.5	20.8	10.6	17.9	21.7	12.5
Ukrainian is the state language, Russian is used alongside it as an official language in those regions where the majority of the population wants this (4)	17.4	14.0	21.6	8.4	17.9	20.5
Ukrainian and Russian should be the state languages with equal rights (5)	24.8	8.2	49.6	3.2	12.3	41.4
Russian should be the only state language, with Ukrainian excluded from all domains of life (6)	1.2	0.5	2.2	0.0	1.2	1.6
Mean	3.14	2.51	4.07	2.17	2.78	3.75

legal status of that language were Russian-speakers and residents of the eastern–southern regions. However, given that these were not only very large parts (the native-language Russophones constitute almost a third of the population, and the east and south combined comprise as much as a half) but also the most discontented with the current situation, one could argue that it was more beneficial for national unity and political stability to make a modest concession to their demand and try to persuade the other parts to accept it as fair and not threatening their vital interests.

Responses to two further questions of the survey shed more light on different groups’ attitudes towards a limited upgrade of the status of Russian. When asked whether, “on the legislative level,” that language should have “certain priority over the languages of other national minorities residing on Ukraine’s territory,” the respondents turned out to be as polarized as in their status preferences. While about two-thirds of Russian-speakers and eastern–southern residents answered yes or rather yes, well over a half of Ukrainian-speakers and as much as three quarters of westerners resolutely or hesitantly rejected the suggestion. The sample as a whole was thus rather evenly divided between positive and negative attitudes. However, when confronted with two opposite assessments of the attempt made then to grant Russian the status of a “regional” language in many eastern–central cities and provinces, the

Table 4
Responses to the Survey Question “Which of the Two Statements Do You Support More?” (frequencies in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Respondents	Native Language		Region		
		Ukrainian	Russian	West	Center	East + South
The former (+2)	41.7	24.1	67.5	8.2	31.1	61.6
Rather the former (+1)	13.5	12.9	12.8	6.3	19.6	12.3
Neither the former nor the latter (0)	9.0	8.5	8.9	8.4	9.2	9.2
Rather the latter (-1)	12.6	17.9	4.5	18.9	17.6	6.7
The latter (-2)	18.4	30.1	3.9	52.1	16.1	6.7
Mean	+0.48	-0.17	+1.36	-1.00	+0.32	+1.15

Note: The two statements referred to were as follows: (1) “The regional status of the Russian language solves the language issue and does not threaten the development of the Ukrainian language in those regions where it will be introduced” and (2) “The regional status of the Russian language exacerbates the language issue in the country; the granting of the regional status to Russian will lead to the definite exclusion of Ukrainian from these regions; it is introduced to make it possible not to learn Ukrainian.”

respondents turned out much more supportive of the move (see Table 4). The residents of the west were the only group with overwhelming support of the view that this upgrade “exacerbates the language issue in the country” and “will lead to the definite exclusion of Ukrainian” in those regions where Russian becomes official, while even among Ukrainophones it was shared by less than a half of the respondents. Not only in the east and south but also in the center and, accordingly, in Ukraine as a whole most people instead resolutely or hesitantly agreed that this move “solves the language issue and does not endanger the development of the Ukrainian language” in the regions concerned.

Remarkably, in all linguistic and regional groups, the share of respondents favoring this positive view was significantly higher than that of people supporting the status of Russian as a local official or a state language (values 4 to 6 in Table 3). Apart from the well-known ambivalence of the Ukrainian population’s attitudes in general and with regard to language matters in particular,³⁵ the difference in responses to different questions might have to do with the Ukrainophones’ opposition to the formal elevation of Russian above the languages of other minorities (something which was not mentioned in the question on the assessment of the attempt at upgrading its status) and their greater readiness to accept Russian as an official language only in certain—in most cases, not their own—regions than as a nationwide state language. Let us look at focus group data for more information.

In all focus groups in Donetsk and Odesa, most participants wholeheartedly supported the full-scale upgrade of Russian to a second state language which they

presented as a means to ensure the citizens' freedom of language choice in all social domains and thus exclude discrimination on the basis of language. As argued above, the practice most often referred to in this regard was the forms citizens have to complete in various organizations which supposedly deprived them of such choice. Although most speakers did not specify on what territory this principle of free choice must be applied, some explicitly mentioned that they were preoccupied with their own regions and did not seek to impose the use of Russian on the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking west. As a participant in an Odesa group expressed it, easterners did not want "to make life more complicated" for westerners (age 31 to 42 years, in Russian).³⁶ To be sure, some respondents warned that the elevation of Russian to an official status would undermine the utility and prestige of Ukrainian which people in the east and south would be able to easily ignore in all their practices and thus feel no need to learn properly. However, most others did not care, as seen from the following exchange in the same group (in Russian):

Moderator: In your region, in Odesa, does [the use of] Ukrainian correspond to the concept of a state language?

9: No.

5: No. Not even close.

5: The only [exception] is papers.

7: Yes, documentation.

8: Only documentation.

5: I think that documentation should be conducted in the two languages.

9: In the two languages.

5: In those languages people understand.

4: You don't take into account expenses if it is conducted in two languages, you do not take into account expenses.

9: And maybe one should let the Russian-speaking regions to conduct it in Russian [only]; this is also an option.

4: Then Ukrainian will never become a state language, at least here.

6: And is it necessary?

Several participants in the Donetsk and Odesa groups expressed similar warnings also with regard to the then attempt to introduce Russian as a "regional" language in the east and south. Some others were more concerned about a divisive effect of this unilateral political move of the local or provincial councils which might evoke hostility in the Ukrainian-speaking parts of the country and provoke other minorities to demand that their respective languages be also recognized as official on certain territories (Crimean Tatars were most often mentioned as likely to do so). But more concern was expressed about a lack of tangible effects of the local decision regarding the status of Russian, in particular the fact that documents still had to be written in Ukrainian, especially if meant to be sent to the capital. As expressed by a man in Odesa (age 18 to 30 years, in Russian):

No, I think this is wrong. That is, they told themselves: “Well, we have made [Russian] regional here.” What has this notion “regional” given [anybody]? People speak Russian as they did before. For people, nothing has changed. And what [has changed] for them [bureaucrats], have they started to write documents in Russian? I don’t think so because documents [are] to be sent to Kyiv, they write [them] in Ukrainian anyway.

This man called instead for a national referendum on the status of Russian as a state language which he believed would really legalize its use in all parts of Ukraine and make it possible for everybody to speak and, admittedly, to write “either in Russian or in Ukrainian.” However, most other people from Odesa and Donetsk welcomed the regional status of Russian as, in the words of one of them, “an absolutely logical, forced measure” intended “to preserve [the use of Russian] at least on a certain level, since we cannot put an end to this absurd [of having to use Ukrainian only]” (Odesa, age 18 to 30 years, in Russian).

Most participants in the Lviv, Lutsk, and Kyiv groups were concerned about the same consequences of the legal upgrade of Russian but unlike people in Donetsk and Odesa, this concern made them oppose the move. On the one hand, they considered this initiative pernicious to the use of Ukrainian in those regions where Russian became official and, therefore, expected problems for Ukrainian-speaking people from other parts if they wished to study or work in the east and south. On the other, they did not see any current difficulties for the Russian-speakers who only had to write documents in Ukrainian (which most people in the west and capital did not consider a problem) and could otherwise freely use Russian if they so wished. As argued above, it is the exclusive use of Ukrainian in documentation, politics, and other practices of the state that its supporters primarily sought to retain; hence, they wanted easterners to adjust their linguistic habits to the existing legislation (rather than the other way around) and thought it would only take will and a little effort. Accordingly, western and Kyivan participants emphasized the political nature of the upgrade initiative, its alleged intention to escalate inter-regional tensions or even strengthen Ukraine’s subordination to Russia, which some saw as backing or initiating this move. As the following excerpt from a Kyiv group (age 18 to 30 years, in Russian) demonstrates, this perceived threat to their dear values of Ukraine’s sovereignty and national identity led even many of those people who preferred to speak Russian in everyday life, particularly in the capital, to reject the regional status of that language:

4: This is already politics, it is very bad.

Moderator: One should not do so?

2: This is what I want to say, because Ukraine is now anyway, in effect, under Russia.

6: Yes, yes, entirely under Russia.

2: And if we also take these, well, various statuses of Russian . . .

6: We will lose our dignity.

2: And what is the point? Then we could as well join Russia.

Moderator: No, we want a second [official] language, we want more Russian-language schools, and suddenly [this] is proposed and you view it negatively, why?

2: Because everybody knows Russian anyway, you see, nobody infringes on it, here we are sitting and speaking Russian and nobody says that “we are in Ukraine, why are you speaking Russian?” And to assume the status of Russian as a second national language . . .

6: Legislation, yes.

2: You know, if only because of Russia, it is not worth [doing].

Moderator: Fine. Sure. Your opinion?

4: Very negative, of course.

Moderator: Why?

4: It must not be so. You see, everything begins from the little, then it will spread, this will all be politics, Russia will welcome [it and say], “Let all Ukraine switch to Russian, why do you do so [little], only [certain] regions?”

At an extreme, this rejection of the allegedly dangerous demand led several participants to suggest that those who insist on using Russian should go to Russia, as in this statement by a young man in Lviv (age 18 to 30 years, in Ukrainian): “If they consider themselves Russians, want so much to communicate in Russian—[the way to] Moscow is open.” The similar blunt denial of the right to officially use Russian anywhere but in Russia was articulated by another Lvivan participant in response to the question whether Russian should have legislative priority over languages of other minorities: “[It] may not have any priority on somebody else’s territory. Let it have priority on its own territory” (age older than 55 years, in Ukrainian). However, such denial was exceptional even in Lviv, to say nothing of Kyiv where most participants in all groups spoke Russian and did not relate the language to “somebody else’s territory.” Still, some participants in Kyiv argued that if Russian had a priority status, it would “begin to dominate” and “provoke little linguistic brothers who will also demand the same status” (age 43 to 55 years, in Russian). Most participants in the west and capital did not see “what makes Russian better than any other language” spoken in Ukraine (Kyiv, age 31 to 42 years, in Russian). In contrast, eastern and southern respondents explained the need of prioritizing Russian over minority languages by a much bigger number of the speakers of the former than of the latter and the supposedly common knowledge of Russian by members of other minorities. One participant in an Odesa group bluntly argued that the minorities “have to adjust” to the dominance of Russian in that part of Ukraine (age older than 55 years, in Russian).

Regional Language: Potential for a Compromise

It thus appears that the focus group data confirm the reluctance of the supporters of Ukrainian to admit the formal priority of Russian over other minority languages nationwide but does not show much evidence of their acceptance of the then attempt to make Russian official in south-eastern regions only. However, it should be taken

into account that this reluctance was largely caused by a unilateral nature of the attempt and its vehement denunciation by political forces supporting an enhanced role of Ukrainian. To assess the compromise potential of the status of Russian as an official language in the regions of its predominant use by the population, it would be preferable to elicit the respondents' views of this solution if it were to be introduced by an agreement of elites representing different political forces and different parts of the country. To be sure, such responses cannot but be affected by the memory of the unilateral attempt and the confrontation it led to, all the more so in research conducted soon afterwards, but this influence need not be decisive and depends on the wording of the questions. The survey and focus group discussions by *Hromadska dumka* each included a group of questions inquiring about various aspects of this issue and variously combining the assessments of the regional language solution in general and of its then enactment in particular.

Two questions in the survey asked about the appropriate language regime of the documentation and oral communication between employees and visitors in the state institutions of those regions where Russian had been declared a regional language. By clearly referring to the specific decisions on the regional status of Russian, these questions predictably elicited a strong negative reaction of Ukrainian-speakers, especially westerners who mostly insisted on the use of Ukrainian in both practices under discussion. However, the degrees of support for other options in responses to each question and differences between these degrees for different questions make it possible to assess the potential for acceptance of limited bilingualism by those who would ideally have Ukrainian only. At the same time, the choices made by people supporting as wide use of Russian as possible indicate whether they wanted Russian alongside or instead of Ukrainian and, accordingly, whether their preferences could be reconciled with those of the moderate part of the supporters of Ukrainian.

The responses regarding the preferred language regime of the documentation are presented in Table 5. In addition to native language and region used in the previous tables, here the preferences are also broken down by the respondents' views of the very move to grant Russian the regional status, in order to examine preferred regimes of its supporters and opponents (defined as those who have resolutely or hesitantly chosen the former or the latter statement in Table 4, respectively). Two findings are particularly remarkable. First, in all categories the support for the conduct of documentation in both languages turned out to be significantly stronger than for the use of either language, arguably at the discretion of the respective employee or his or her supervisors. This preference for the costly duplication of documents over the arbitrary usage of a language chosen by bureaucrats seems to indicate the realization of the need to ensure equal rights of the speakers of both widespread languages, which was emphasized by many focus group participants in Donetsk and Odesa. At the same time, the percentage of those supporting such equality is not much higher among Russophones than among Ukrainophones, and it constitutes just

Table 5
Responses to the Survey Question “In What Language Should the Documentation Be Conducted in State Institutions of Those Regions Which Have Decided to Grant Russian the Status as a Regional Language?”
(in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Respondents	Native Language		Region			View of the Regional Status	
		Ukrainian	Russian	West	Center	East + South	Positive	Negative
In Ukrainian	37.9	51.7	11.7	78.1	40.1	21.0	23.8	64.5
In Russian	23.0	10.7	46.0	2.9	16.2	35.2	30.6	9.5
In both languages	22.2	19.5	23.3	11.9	23.3	25.5	26.8	14.6
Either in Ukrainian or in Russian [Na vybir]	13.9	9.0	17.6	4.5	15.5	16.5	16.7	9.3

above a quarter even in the category of the respondents favoring the decision on the regional status of Russian as a move solving the language problem. While the Ukrainian-speakers and westerners mostly opted for the exclusive use of Ukrainian in the documentation despite the declared upgrade of Russian, most Russian-speakers and eastern–southern residents either preferred the exclusive use of Russian or allowed it to be chosen at the discretion of bureaucrats who usually feel more comfortable with Russian than Ukrainian in the regions concerned.

Therefore, notwithstanding the Russophones’ declared support for official bilingualism as a precondition for equal treatment of the speakers of the two languages, for most of them bilingualism actually meant the right to speak exclusively Russian not only for citizens but also for public servants, hence, in effect, Russian unilingualism (as their opponents had long argued). The regional status of Russian would limit such unilingualism to the respective regions as documents sent to the capital would probably have to use Ukrainian, but the recognition of Russian as a second state language would provide an opportunity to completely ignore Ukrainian for all those willing to do so, at least in the predominantly Russian-speaking regions where Ukrainian would thus be thoroughly marginalized. The following exchange in Donetsk (age 18 to 30 years, in Russian) illustrates this prospect vividly:

Moderator: Okay, in your opinion, in what language should the documentation be conducted in state institutions in those regions where the Russian-speaking population predominates?

3: As long as, well, Ukrainian is the state language, probably in Ukrainian.

Moderator: If Russian is [a second state language]?

3: If Russian is, then we will use it.

Table 6
Responses to the Survey Question “In What Language Should
Communication Take Place in State Institutions of Those Regions Which
Have Decided to Grant Russian the Status as a Regional Language?”
(in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Responders	Native Language		Region			View of the Regional Status	
		Ukrainian	Russian	West	Center	East + South	Positive	Negative
In Ukrainian	27.5	43.4	5.8	65.3	29.8	11.5	14.7	50.3
In Russian	26.8	15.5	47.9	3.7	20.3	39.9	36.8	11.9
At employee’s discretion	16.1	15.8	14.4	10.6	21.7	14.5	17.8	12.0
At visitor’s discretion	25.8	20.5	30.2	15.6	23.7	31.1	28.1	22.7

Moderator: Then we will use it.

6: Yes, yes, the same [opinion].

Moderator: What?

6: I agree. When Russian is [a state language], then of course in Russian. Enterprises.

Moderator: Only in Russian?

6: Why do what is unnecessary? [Zachem lishnee?]

Preferences with regard to oral communication between bureaucrats and citizens are somewhat different (see Table 6). Given the above-described perception of the state language as pertaining first and foremost to documentation, for oral interaction both Ukrainophones and Russophones are more inclined to accept the use of Russian or coexistence of the two languages. Therefore, the shares of respondents in the whole sample opting for the communication in Ukrainian and in Russian respectively are roughly equal. At the same time, the two features of the documentation data are noticeable here too. On the one hand, in all categories the support for visitor’s discretion is stronger than for that of the employee, which seems to indicate the realization of the asymmetry between the two participants in the institutional interaction whereby citizens’ *rights* are ensured by public servants’ *obligation* to adjust to their language preferences. On the other hand, similarly to documentation, the share of those who prioritize the citizens’ rights over bureaucratic comfort is less than a third even among Russian-speakers and residents of the eastern–southern regions, while most respondents in these categories either clearly prefer the exclusive use of Russian or allow it to be imposed by bureaucrats who mostly prefer that language in the regions under discussion.

Focus group data supplement these findings. Most participants in Lviv, Lutsk, and Kyiv insisted that public servants in all parts of the country must speak the state language, even though they admitted that if a visitor does not understand it the bureaucrat

should switch to Russian or another language they may have in common. Many argued that the employee's starting a conversation in Ukrainian would encourage the visitors to use it too or, as one participant in a Lviv group expressed it, that "the state official should set an example for citizens of that [Russian-speaking] region" (age 18 to 30 years, in Ukrainian). Actually, people in the west and capital believed that their eastern-southern compatriots understood Ukrainian well enough to be spoken to; hence they lamented the lack of pressure on those people to better learn and more often use the state language. For their part, many respondents in Donetsk and Odesa argued that unlike ordinary citizens, bureaucrats must know both languages and use them according to visitors' preferences. Here is an eloquent example from a Donetsk group (age 31 to 45 years, in Russian):

Moderator: If the bureaucrat does not know the language in which visitors [speak]?

4: No, with rare exceptions [he does, otherwise] an interpreter is summoned.

Moderator: But again, I am a bureaucrat, I know only Russian. You have come to me and communicate in Ukrainian, I do not understand you.

8: This is a bureaucrat unsuitable for the occupation.

Moderator: May one speak of occupational suitability?

3: Yes.

7: One *should* speak [of suitability].

8: This is the state language.

9: You see, the point is that a bureaucrat is the people's servant, right? Then he is by definition unsuitable [if he does not speak the state language].

Moderator: Valia, what is your opinion? [On] the bureaucrat's oral communication with a citizen.

2: He must know both Russian and Ukrainian, understand?

Another respondent from Donetsk argued that "officials" [rukovoditeli] must pass exams in both languages in order to be able to communicate with citizens in either language as they are obliged to adjust to citizens' preferences (age older than 55 years, in Russian). The issue of a language exam for public servants has repeatedly been raised by champions of the wider use of Ukrainian but it was never formally introduced, even though the knowledge of the state language was supposedly an element of the certification of certain categories of employees. The responses to the survey question on the appropriateness of such a test in the state language which are presented in Table 7 shed light on attitudes of different groups of the population. In addition to native language and region, here the responses are also broken down by the most popular preferences regarding the statuses of Ukrainian and Russian (see Table 3 above). While Ukrainian-speakers and western respondents approved of a test overwhelmingly, more than a half of Russian-speakers and almost a half of eastern-southern residents were opposed to the idea, yet a quarter to a third supported it. Predictably, the level of support correlated with the preferences for the status of Russian vis-à-vis Ukrainian, with those wishing the two languages to be

Table 7
Responses to the Survey Question “Should an Exam (Certification) in the Ukrainian Language for All Public Servants Be Introduced?” (in percentage; undecided responses not shown)

	All Responders	Native Language		Region			Preferences Regarding Russian		
		Ukrainian	Russian	West	Center	East + South	Minority or spoken	Regional	Second state
Yes	51.7	68.0	25.5	77.0	61.3	35.7	61.0	43.9	30.5
No	34.5	19.3	58.4	13.5	26.3	47.9	28.9	40.2	50.1

legally equal being the most critical of an exam in Ukrainian which would reinforce its status as the only state language. Remarkably, the respondents opting for the official use of Russian in certain regions were evenly divided in their attitudes towards the idea, meaning a rather strong support for an examination in Ukrainian among those who seemed to primarily care about the use of Russian.

It can be assumed that if exams in both Ukrainian and Russian as official languages for eastern–southern provinces or cities were in question, the opponents of the legalization of the use of Russian would be more critical than with regard to an exam in Ukrainian only, while the supporters of the legalized bilingualism would be more approving. However, it is hard to judge how much this declared support for the examination of bureaucrats’ language proficiency as a precondition for the implementation of citizens’ rights reflected the readiness to have all public servants exposed to such exams, including many respondents themselves. It is revealing that while a number of focus group participants argued in favor of bureaucrats’ bilingual proficiency and adjustment to the language of visitors, none acknowledged the fact that he or she too would have to learn and use both languages. This is all the more remarkable because many of these participants worked in the public sector and some of these complained about difficulties of filling out forms in Ukrainian, which they apparently did not know well enough even for that. Among instances of the discrimination against Russian-speakers, a kindergarten teacher from Donetsk (age 43 to 55 years) mentioned being forced to use Ukrainian in her communication with children, which neither she nor other participants recognized as part of her suitability for a job in a Ukrainian-language educational establishment. Another participant in the same group, a nurse, said that she was not forced to use Ukrainian but if she were, she would consider this discrimination. She implicitly extended this notion to include the obligation to speak a language other than her language of preference in any practice, thereby disregarding the right of her Ukrainophone patients to receive medical service in *their* preferred language.

It is this insistence by a large share of Russian-speakers on their own right to rely exclusively on Russian that makes problematic the implementation of real bilingualism in Ukraine on either a national or regional level. By limiting those who are obliged to know and use both languages to a small group of “officials,” ordinary (and even not so ordinary) Russophones fail to accept the need of their own effort and, therefore, the cost of official bilingualism to society as a whole. They thus hope for such bilingualism which would let them and most other Russian-speakers remain unilingual, either not realizing or not caring that this would deprive their Ukrainian-speaking compatriots of the same right. This conscious or unconscious unfairness of the proposed bilingualism makes it problematic as a compromise solution of the language problem, all the more so because many Ukrainophones do not want any (official) bilingualism whatsoever.

Conclusion

The above analysis has proven that the Ukrainian citizens have very diverse and rather ambivalent preferences regarding the language situation in the country and the state’s policy in the language domain, preferences which both shape and are shaped by their perceptions of the current language situation and policy. Ukrainian-speakers would like to see their language dominant in all domains but most of them are ready to put up with the widespread use of Russian, provided that their own right to use Ukrainian is not questioned and the titular language retains the priority status and exclusive role in some symbolically important practices such as official documentation or public speech of statesmen. In contrast, Russian-speakers prefer an upgrade of the status of Russian, which they present as a way to ensure the equality of speakers of the two widespread languages, but focus group discussions clearly show that most of these people actually want official bilingualism to let them remain unilingual in their capacities both as citizens and as employees. These preferences clearly prevail in those regions where the speakers of the respective languages predominate, and in the central part of the country the supporters of the opposite solutions coexist more equally, albeit with a certain advantage of those favoring a greater role of Ukrainian.

It thus seems that the situation of the formal priority of Ukrainian and largely unconstrained use of both languages in actual communication which existed until the adoption of the new language law in the summer of 2012 should have been preserved, as it gave members of both language groups what they primarily cared about. However, this situation was problematic both because it caused rather strong discontent on the part of Russian-speakers, particularly in the east and south and, no less important, because it created a vast gap between the law and practice, which contributed to routine and often unnoticed violations of rights of speakers of all languages. I thus argued for a long time that it would be preferable to adopt new language legislation based on a political compromise between the opposing preferences and

then facilitate its observance by both bureaucrats and citizens.³⁷ The compromise should, in my view, consist in the recognition of Russian and other languages as official in those regions and localities where their native-language speakers constitute a considerable share of the population.³⁸ This solution would make Russian official in those regions where the majority of residents support such upgrade and the representative bodies have tried to introduce it, as well as granting this status to languages of other large minorities (Crimean Tatars, Romanians, Hungarians, etc.) on smaller territories of their respective compact settlement. In order to make this solution acceptable for most Ukrainian-speakers and effective in protecting language rights, the state should ensure that regional or local official languages are used alongside and not instead of the state one and that bureaucrats adjust to citizens' choices rather than the other way around. This includes facilitating and then examining public servants' proficiency in Ukrainian and the respective official language, conducting documentation for citizens' use in both languages and, no less important, teaching people to take advantage of their right in their capacity as citizens and fulfill their duty as employees.

The problem is that the regime of President Yanukovich is no more willing to create preconditions for the implementation of language rights than its predecessors were, even if it speaks of the need to ensure rights of Russian-speakers, supposedly in accordance with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Not only are the regime's leading figures doing little to make bureaucrats respect citizens' preferences in any domain but also many of them would like to remove the obligation to use Ukrainian for themselves and other people preferring Russian. The above-mentioned language law of July 2012, while proclaiming the right to officially use as many as eighteen "regional" languages on territories of their speakers' concentration, was primarily preoccupied with ensuring the use of Russian on "its" territory and beyond. Although it granted Russian the seemingly compromise-oriented "regional" status in the eastern and southern provinces, many provisions of the law provide for the use of Russian on the entire territory of Ukraine, often instead (rather than alongside) of the formally superior titular language, either by declaring the right to freely choose a language in a certain practice or by removing the requirement regarding the use of Ukrainian and thus allowing the transnational markets to decide in favor of more widespread Russian.³⁹ The dubious realization of the potentially compromise solution of limited multilingualism exacerbated old fears of supporters of Ukrainian that the Party of Regions wanted to pave the way for actual unilingualism in the east and south and the predominance of Russian nationwide. The very submission by the ruling party's deputies in the fall of 2010 of a draft law providing for an upgrade of the status of Russian was resolutely denounced by political parties and cultural elites preoccupied with the facilitation of the use of Ukrainian, which caused Yanukovich to put the law's adoption on hold, all the more so because it was also criticized by authoritative international bodies monitoring the observance of democracy and minority rights.⁴⁰ However, on the eve of the 2012

parliamentary election the president instructed his party to ensure the adoption of a slightly modified draft (and then promptly signed it into law) because this move was suggested by his strategists as beneficial to the party's popularity among its core constituency in the eastern and southern regions. The adoption was vehemently opposed by the parliamentary opposition and Ukrainophone and pro-European public activists leading to protracted street protests and the statements of the regional councils in the west declaring the law invalid on their respective territories.⁴¹ Although the president sought to appease the supporters of Ukrainian by creating a working group to prepare amendments to the law and a special governmental program intended to promote Ukrainian,⁴² the damage to intergroup tolerance and cooperation had been done. Rather than paving the way for a compromise, the new law has galvanized attempts of speakers of Ukrainian, Russian, and sizeable minority groups to pursue their respective group agendas.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Dominique Arel, "Language Politics in Independent Ukraine: Towards One or Two State Languages," *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 3 (1995): 597–621; Jan Germen Janmaat, *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian Speaking Population* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2000); Susan Stewart, *Sprachenpolitik als Sicherheitsproblem in der Ukraine* (Mannheim: Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, 2000).

2. See, for instance, Volodymyr Kulyk, "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 (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag, 2006): 117–40; Kataryna Wolczuk, "Whose Ukraine? Language and Regional Factors in the 2004 and 2006 Elections in Ukraine," *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 5 (2007): 521–47.

3. See, for instance, Dominique Arel and Valeri Khmelko, "The Russian Factor and Territorial Polarization in Ukraine," *The Harriman Review* 9, no. 1-2 (1996): 81–91; Yevgenii Golovakha and Natalia Panina, "Dvuiazychie v Ukraine: real'noe sostoiianie i perspektivy," *Rossiisko-ukrainskii biulleten'* 6–7 (2000): 142–47.

4. O. M. Mayboroda et al., eds., *Movna sytuatsiia v Ukraïni: mizh konfliktom i konsensusom* (Kyiv: Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2008); Juliane Besters-Dilger, ed., *Language Policy and Language Situation in Ukraine: Analysis and Recommendations* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009); Oleksandr Vyshniak, *Movna sytuatsiia ta status mov v Ukraïni: dynamika, problemy, perspektivy (sotsiologichnyi analiz)* (Kyiv: Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2009).

5. The most notable exception is David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

6. All-Ukrainian population census 2001, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/> (accessed 10 June 2011); Vyshniak, *Movna sytuatsiia ta status mov v Ukraïni*, 32–50.

7. Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 79–124, 442–61; Volodymyr Kulyk, "Constructing common sense: Language and ethnicity in Ukrainian public discourse," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006): 287–92.

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11. Constitution of Ukraine, adopted 28 June 1996, art. 10, <http://www.rada.gov.ua/const/conengl.htm> (accessed 5 August 2010).

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22. V. Ye. Khmel'ko, "Lingvo-etnichna struktura Ukraïny: regional'ni osoblyvosti ta tendentsii zmin za roky nezalezhnosti," *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMa. Sotsiologichni nauky* 32 (2004): 8.

23. All-Ukrainian population census, 2001.

24. Volodymyr Kulyk, "Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity, and Political Cleavages: Evidence from Ukraine," *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 3 (2001): 627–48.

25. Kulyk, *Dyskurs ukrains'kykh medii*, 430–33; Kulyk, "Language Policies and Language Attitudes," 25; "Ianukovykh obitsiae rosiis'kii movi nalezhne mistse," *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, 28 April 2010, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2010/05/28/5084390/> (accessed 5 August 2010).

26. Vyshniak, *Movna sytuatsiia ta status mov*, 103–4.

27. *Ibid.*, 115.

28. No question on participants' language identity or practice was asked in focus groups. Therefore, references to Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking participants mean those who somehow indicated in the discussion their preference for the respective languages. Language choice in the discussion itself cannot be used as a reliable indicator since few participants deviated from the dominant language of the group (which was partly prompted by an initial address of the moderator in accordance with common knowledge of language preferences of the respective city's population).

29. Cf. Pogrebinskii, ed., *Russkii iazyk v Ukraine*, 270–72. If pressured by the authorities to use the state language in a certain practice, producers (Ukrainian and foreign alike) did not usually bother to use any other language that Ukrainian consumers might prefer; otherwise they often limited their language menu to Russian. Both choices seem to be based on the assumption that everybody in Ukraine understands the two languages well enough.

30. Zaluzniak and Masenko, *Movna sytuatsiia Kyeva*, 8, 24.

31. As explained in the previous section, I define language groups in terms of native language and thus designate as Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking (or, alternately, Ukrainophone and Russophone) those respondents in the *Hromadska dumka* survey who declared the respective languages native. Thus defined Ukrainian-speakers constitute 56 percent and Russian-speakers 32 percent of the sample. Further 11 percent declared both Ukrainian and Russian native, and 1 percent other languages. Regional breakdown of the sample is as follows: west (19 percent) includes Volhynia, Rivne, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia oblasts; center (32 percent) encompasses Khmelnytskyi, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, and Chernihiv oblasts as well as the city of Kyiv; east and south (49 percent) mean Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa oblasts as well as the Crimean autonomy.

32. It is likely that most respondents perceived "Ukrainian-speaking citizens" and "Russian-speaking citizens" referred to in this pair of questions in terms of language practice rather than identity as it is the former that another person can more easily find out or guess. However, the greater readiness of the respondents to register/report instances of discrimination against members of their "own" group must have also to do with their attachment to the group language, that is, with its perception as native. Similar ambiguity is likely to affect responses to two questions dealt with in Table 2.

33. Arel and Khmelko, "The Russian Factor," 87; Golovakha and Panina, "Dvuiazychie v Ukraine," 145; Vyshniak, *Movna sytuatsiia*, 121–26.

34. Kulyk, "Language Policies and Language Attitudes," 29–31.

35. *Ibid.*, 43–47.

36. When quoting from a focus group discussion, I mention the city and age category of the group, the language of the excerpt which is otherwise lost in translation and, for interactions involving several speakers, the numbers of the participants as indicated in transcripts by the *Hromadska Duma* center (although arbitrary, the numbering makes it possible to distinguish the participants from one another).

37. See, e.g., Volodymyr Kulyk, "Ievropeis'ka khartiia ta ukrains'kyi vybit," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 14 July 2001, 17; Kulyk, "Language Policies and Language Attitudes in Post-Orange Ukraine," p. 49.

38. Such a solution would require decisions on both who counts as a speaker of a certain language and what minimal share of its members in the population warrants its official use on a certain territory. The speakers should, in my opinion, be defined as those who declared the respective language native in the latest census, as this declaration reflects not the mere fact of mainly speaking a particular language but the identification with the language as one's own which, as argued above, is correlated with the preference for its use in society and support by the state. At least this meaning would gain prominence in the following censuses if citizens became aware of consequences their declaration would have for language policy, although this would also intensify attempts by supporters of different languages to have their respective language and ethnic groups "correctly" counted. As for the minimal share of speakers, different states have used levels from 50 to just 8 percent and some have chosen a lower threshold for a language

to be used in the interaction between citizens' and the authorities and a higher one for its full-fledged use in the authorities' work. This differentiated approach is preferable in that it lets the state respond to citizens' preferences without spending unnecessary costs on translation. Cf. Dominique Arel, "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 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 92–120.

39. Ekspertnyi vysnovok shchodo novykh proektiv Zakonu pro movy Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsional'nykh doslidzhen' im. I. F. Kurasa NAN Ukraïny, posted 6 November 2010, <http://dt.ua/articles/61365> (accessed 15 November 2010); Volodymyr Kulyk, "Chomu zakonoproekt Kolesnichenka ne vede do rozv'iazannia movnoi problemy," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 4 June 2012, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2012/06/4/6965668> (accessed 5 June 2012).

40. "BYuT blokuvatyme movne pytannia v Radi," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 22 September 2010, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2010/09/22/5406021>; "Yanukovycha i Lytvyna zaklykaiut' perepysaty movnyi proekt," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 26 September 2010, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2010/09/26/5415288>; "Zakon pro movy poky shcho ne rozhlianut'?", *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 18 October 2010, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2010/10/18/5488718>; "Venetsians'ka komisiia proty pryrvniuvannia rosiis'koï movy do derzhavnoi," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 28 March 2011, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/03/28/6060048> (all accessed 5 April 2011).

41. "Opozytsiia ide z Verkhovnoi Rady do kintsia sesii," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 3 July 2012, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2012/07/3/6967931>; Mustafa Naiem, "Vnutrishnia kukhnia Partii Rehioniv," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 6 July 2012, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2012/07/6/6968257>; "Ternopil's'ka obrlada oholosyla zakon pro movy 'poza zakonom,'" *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 16 August 2012, http://news.dt.ua/POLITICS/ternopilska_obrada_ogolosila_zakon_pro_movi_poza_zakonom-107122.html (all accessed 22 August 2012).

42. "Yanukovyeh: Ia zavzhdy hovoriu movoiu tykh liudei, iaki tam zhyvut'," *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, 22 August 2012, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2012/08/22/6971280> (accessed 25 August 2012).

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