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Combining identity and integration: comparative analysis of schools for two minority groups in Ukraine

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This article analyses school systems for two of Ukraine’s minorities, the Hungarians and the Crimean Tatars with the aim of assessing their success in promoting ethnocultural identity and social integration of the minority youth. I demonstrate that the exclusive instruction in Hungarian ensures the reproduction of group language knowledge and identity among the minority members but perpetuates their inability to communicate in the majority language and thus limits their social mobility. In contrast, the limited scope of education in Crimean Tatar exacerbates the problem of its poor knowledge by the group members and, therefore, vulnerability of their cultural identity. I argue that the introduction of bilingual education is the best way to solve the two groups’ educational problems.

Keywords: minority education; minority languages; Ukraine; Hungarians; Crimean Tatars

Introduction

Language processes in the educational domain of Ukrainian and other post-Soviet societies have usually been studied in terms of interplay between the greater role of the titular language, on the one hand, and linguistic rights of the Russian-speakers, on the other (Janmaat 2000; Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008; Pavlenko 2011). The prominence of the ‘Russian question’ in education and other domains where linguistic rights are implemented results both from sheer numbers of ethnic Russians and other Russian-speakers and from the defense of their rights by the Russian kin-state and, in some countries, by influential domestic parties. The controversy over the alleged discrimination against Russian-speakers has diverted public and scholarly attention from problems of other minorities, which in some cases are much more severe. Moreover, it has thus been overseen that the educational situation differs considerably from one of these smaller groups to another (but see Stewart 2005).

In another omission, the language regime of education has mostly been examined from the point of view of nation building and minority rights.

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rather than that of students’ learning progress and future life chances (e.g. Janmaat 2000; Pavlenko 2011). An underlying assumption seems to have been that members of all ethnic groups would prefer – and benefit from – education in their eponymous languages if it were not for the state’s nationalising intervention. However, this assumption is more reflective of many scholars’ essentialist emphasis on the role of ethnic identity in people’s behaviour than it is of parents’ preferences, which may be primarily shaped by considerations of educational efficiency or post-education utility. Rather than relating education first and foremost to politics, with its conflicts over perceived group interests, scholarly analyses should also view it as part of social and economic processes that determine the performance of educational establishments, the value of skills that students acquire in the process of education and, therefore, their preferences regarding this process.

This article seeks to confront the above-mentioned shortcomings. It analyses in detail the situations of two groups, the Hungarians of Transcarpathia and the Crimean Tatars of the Crimean peninsula, whose educational conditions (as well as social and cultural conditions in general) differed sharply during the Soviet time and remain very different after two decades of independence. I try to demonstrate how both the preservation of inherited facilities with the exclusive instruction in Hungarian and the limited introduction of education in Crimean Tatar have created serious problems for social integration and/or ethnocultural identity of the cohorts under consideration.

Minority education between identity and integration

Education is a crucial agent of socialisation, which is ‘concerned with the insertion of “newcomers” into existing cultural and socio-political settings’ (Biesta 2007, 27) or, more specifically, with preparing them ‘to fit successfully into the internal environment of the community of their upbringing and into the external environment’ of a wider society (Thomas and Wahrhaftig 1971, 231). This double orientation manifests itself in the choice of organisation of the educational process, knowledge and skills to be taught and the language(s) to be used. Since the introduction of state-provided mass education, the authorities in would-be national states have sought to unify the structure and content of education and orient it toward the perceived needs of entire society rather than of particular groups, even though this perception has primarily been patterned at the upper class. This was reflected, in particular, in a strong emphasis on the formation of loyal citizens of the state and the promotion of their identification with the eponymous nation (Meyer 1977). National identification and social cohesion were also promoted by the use of the titular language as the medium of instruction and extracurricular activities. Such nationalising drive precluded valorisation of particular historical memories, cultural artifacts and language varieties of (subordinate) social or ethnolinguistic groups.
In contrast, multinational empires, while promoting the knowledge and use of the metropolitan language among the elites, allowed or even encouraged mass education in local languages and with some local content. In the nineteenth century, the most advanced system of multilingual education was established in the Austro-Hungarian Empire incorporating western Ukrainian regions. In the twentieth century, a far more radical multinational project was carried out in the USSR, which came to include almost all Ukrainian-populated territories. In Ukraine, as in other ‘national’ republics, the titular language was used alongside Russian in education and other public practices, although the former language increasingly gave way to the latter (Martin 2001; Burger 2003).

In the last decades, the democratisation of the public domain in many states across the globe allowed group elites to pressure for a balance between the educational goals of socialisation into the society and into the community or, put another way, social integration and the preservation of particular identities. As far as the language regime is concerned, many ethnic-based varieties have been recognised as languages and introduced, to a varying degree, into the educational process. In the most pluralist case, some of the so-called autochthonous minorities in Western societies were allowed to create a system of monolingual education in their group languages. While the established European nation-states are more tolerant of minority education than they were in the past, considerations of loyalty and integration of minority members have led some post-communist states to curtail the monolingual education in the languages of formerly dominant groups (Hogan-Brun 2006). At the same time, immigrant languages in the USA and Western Europe can at best be used in transitional bilingual education intended to ensure that students do not fall behind while they are learning the majority language (Cummins 1989). Similarly, in most African countries the instruction in local languages is limited to primary education, while secondary schools teach in the former colonial languages, which continue to dominate the public sphere (Bamgbose 2004).

The language regimes of minority education have been studied from several main perspectives, reflecting scholars’ disciplinary and ideological preferences and dominant patterns in their respective countries. Language-policy scholars analysed the use of minority languages in education as a result of political struggle between majority and minority elites as well as between national governments and international organisations. A related body of minority-rights studies measured educational conditions of minority youth by the yardstick of their assumed willingness to be instructed in their group languages. It is these two approaches that have been taken in most studies of minority education in Ukraine and other countries of the former USSR, which examine it in the context of state efforts to promote the titular language as a factor of post-imperial nation-building (Janmaat 2000; Stewart 2005; Ciscel 2008; Kalynovs’ka 2009).
Quite different perspectives have dominated analyses of the educational contexts of Western countries, in particular the USA, where the use of minority languages even as a transitional stage came under attack in view of its allegedly negative impact on the acquisition of the dominant language. Pedagogical and psychological studies sought to explain the relatively low educational performance of minority students and variation across minority groups. The authors argued that scholars should go beyond the educational domain and ‘look not only at the social structure of the host society and the cultural background of the minority group, but also at the minority groups’ situation in the host society, including its perceptions of the opportunities available and the historical context of its relationship to the dominant group’ (Gibson 1993, 123–4). For their part, anthropological studies examined the discursive dynamics of the educational process in order to reveal underlying ideologies of language and education and demonstrate how these reflect the interests of certain groups who ‘are in a position to assign value to … cultural and linguistic capital’ (Martin-Jones and Heller 1996, 129).

In Ukraine, pedagogical studies of minority education have been rather few and not always based on an empirical analysis of student performance or parental choice (among exceptions, see Chernyi 2005; Szilágyi 2009). Anthropological and sociological studies of Ukrainian education usually dealt with the language dimension only on the margin and those few that focused on this dimension were set in contexts with no ‘truly’ minority languages – that is, other than Russian (e.g. Søvik 2007; Polese 2010). Students of minority education in Ukraine thus do not make use of many methods that have proved effective in analyses of educational processes elsewhere.

**Design of the study**

With these shortcomings in mind, I combine various approaches in order to examine the function of two sets of minority-language educational establishments in Ukraine. While grounded in language policy, my study also pays attention to the economic situation of the Hungarian and Crimean Tatar educational systems, students’ school performance and their perceptions of available opportunities in adulthood. On the one hand, I seek to assess the two systems’ success in promoting ethnocultural identity and social integration of the minority youth. On the other, I want to examine beliefs of students and parents regarding the appropriate language regime of minority education and compare them with ideologies espoused by minority elites and largely embodied in the school systems themselves.

The main methods employed in the study are semi-structured interviews with educational officials and minority activists and questionnaires administered to graduating students and their parents. Both kinds of data were collected during a week-long trip to the relevant regions in February and May 2008, respectively. In each case, I studied five schools in different parts of the province. In Transcarpathia, I chose three localities with Hungarian
Majority (the town of Berehove and villages of Dertsen, Mukacheve district, and Ianoshi, Berehove district) and two with Hungarian minority (provincial center of Uzhhorod and city of Mukacheve). In Crimea, where the Crimean Tatars do not constitute a majority in any sizable locality, I chose the provincial center of Simferopol, the towns of Bakhchysarai, Sudak and Zuia and the village of Kolchuhyne, Simferopol district.

My interviewees included the directors of the examined schools, heads of the educational departments of the respective state administrations and leaders of influential organisations of the minorities (see Appendix). The questionnaire was administered among all present students of the graduating classes (grade 11). The total number of respondents constituted 125 in Transcarpathia and 130 in Crimea, although some students failed to respond to certain questions. A complementary parental questionnaire was administered in two schools of each region (Berehove and Dertsen in Transcarpathia and Bakhchysarai and Simferopol in Crimea), where the school authorities distributed it among those high-school students (grades 11 and 10) whose parents they expected to respond. Their answers are thus far from representative for all parents of these schools, so I will only use them to indicate clear preferences and predominant motivations.

Minority education in Ukraine

Prior to analysing educational situations of the two selected groups, it is appropriate to characterise Ukraine’s minority education in general. The most prominent process in post-Soviet Ukrainian education has been a dramatic decrease in the number of schools and other establishments with instruction in Russian. During the Soviet times, Russian was the main language of higher education and prestigious employment, both in Ukraine and beyond, which urged many Ukrainians and members of other minorities to have their children educated in Russian, thus paving the way for their assimilation. After the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence, education became the first domain to experience a large-scale ‘de-Russification’, which was intended to undo the Soviet policies and contribute to the ‘building’ of a post-imperial Ukrainian nation with the titular language as one if its unifying elements. Although in the heavily Russified eastern and southern regions the transition was very slow, Ukrainian has ultimately become the dominant language of instruction everywhere except for Crimea and the Donbas. But then this Ukrainianization remains rather formal, as in most urban schools students usually switch to Russian during breaks and those from Ukrainian-speaking families arguably feel the pressure to adjust to the dominant pattern (Stepanenko 1999, 95–141; Janmaat 2000, 67–120; Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008, 351–61; Kalynovs’ka 2009, 205–15).

Apart from the ‘de-Russifying’ efforts, the state’s attitude towards instruction in minority languages has been rather favourable. The Soviet
idea of the appropriateness of educating children in their native/group language was retained and, as far as non-Russian minorities were concerned, implemented more fully than in the Soviet period. In addition to the inherited system of state-supported schools with Russian, Romanian/Moldovan, Hungarian and Polish languages of instruction, there appeared schools or separate classes (streams) teaching in Crimean Tatar, Slovak and Bulgarian. The state provided funding for minority schools, published textbooks and trained teachers in special departments of universities. Moreover, it usually did not impede attempts of the kin-states to help solve remaining problems of the respective groups’ schools, such as a lack of furniture, equipment or books in the group language (Chilachava and Pylypenko 2004, 166–76; Stewart 2005, 112, 125).

The schooling in minority languages was affected by general flaws of the educational system as well as by additional problems of minority education and specific conditions of each group. In general, the protracted economic crisis and a low priority of education on the government’s agenda caused extremely low salaries for teachers, resulting in a loss of skilled personnel, a lack of textbooks and inadequate maintenance of buildings. For minority schools, these problems were supplemented by cost and time for translating textbooks into their respective languages of instruction, since they were required to use the same books as Ukrainian-language schools, except for minority-specific subjects. An even more serious problem was teaching of the Ukrainian language and literature, for which there were few qualified teachers because in the Soviet time these schools had taught Russian as the second language and offered no Ukrainian lessons at all (Chilachava and Pylypenko 2004, 169–72; interview Hertsoh). Moreover, the approach to teaching Ukrainian failed to take into account the fact that it was a second language for minority students, many of who had little contact with it beyond the classroom (Chernychko 2009, 98–101; interviews Lendiel, Mitsyk). This resulted in poor knowledge of Ukrainian among graduates of minority-language schools, which led most of them (except for those educated in the widely-used Russian) to stay in places of their group’s prevalence or leave for higher education and/or employment in kin-states.

Minority leaders tried to resist this unfortunate tendency by demanding that their languages be used, alongside Ukrainian, in institutions of higher education in regions of the respective groups’ concentration or at least in examinations for admission thereto. At the same time, both the realisation of the inadequacy of the exclusively minority-language system for social integration and the wish to use the instruction in the titular language as an instrument of nation-building led the Ministry of Education to introduce some elements of Ukrainian (Stewart 2005, 114–29). A resolute change came in early-2008 when newly appointed minister Ivan Vakarchuk introduced independent external evaluation (or testing, as it became popularly known) of all school graduates, which was to be mandatory for
admission to any institutions of higher education. This move was primarily meant to combat rampant corruption in schools and universities by disconnecting the evaluation of graduating students from decision-making on their future (Bazhal 2008). However, the minister used this change as an excuse for the long-planned transition to entrance examinations (now replaced by tests) in the state language only. This move was part of the state effort to increase the use of Ukrainian in various domains, which became more pronounced under then President Viktor Yushchenko (Kulyk 2009, 24–35).

Minority educators and activists resolutely objected to this plan, which would arguably put the minority youth at a disadvantage. The protests made Vakarchuk allow a transitory period of two years, during which the minority-language students had to work on their Ukrainian. For this purpose, a ministerial decree envisaged gradual introduction of the state language for teaching of various subjects (U shkolakh 2008). However, the minister did not agree to postpone a mandatory test in the Ukrainian language and literature. Moreover, the two-year period was widely viewed by educators as too short for making minority students ready to take all tests in Ukrainian as of 2010. But then, on the eve of the announced transition, Vakarchuk left his office in the wake of Yushchenko’s failure in the 2010 election. The new minister Dmytro Tabachnyk decided for the continued use of six minority languages in external evaluation and as exclusive mediums in the respective schools (Riabchun 2010).

The above description of the minority education in general should not imply the uniformity across the regions and ethnic groups. Although most of the above-described problems have indeed been common to all minorities, their severity and relative priority depend on specific conditions of a particular group in a particular region. On the one hand, a persistent lack of funding means that those minorities that inherited educational facilities in their group language had a strong advantage over those for whom such facilities had to be created anew. On the other, the relationship between the majority and a minority and between Ukraine and the respective kin-state influenced the readiness of the authorities to allot available resources for that minority’s needs. Perhaps no two groups demonstrate these effects better than the Hungarians and the Crimean Tatars.

The situation of Transcarpathian Hungarians
The Hungarians compactly residing in the south-western region of Transcarpathia (Zakarpattia) can serve as an illustration of the accommodating approach of the Ukrainian state toward the minorities’ educational needs. The region where the Hungarians had been living since the ninth century was part of Hungarian-dominated entities until World War I, after which it was awarded to the newly established Czechoslovak state, seized again by Hungary with Hitler’s dismemberment of that state in 1939 and annexed by
the USSR in 1945. By making it part of the Ukrainian republic, the Soviet leadership inadvertently paved the way for its current position as a province of independent Ukraine. According to the 2001 census, there were about 151,500 Hungarians in Transcarpathia, where they constituted 12.1% of the population and were largely concentrated along the border with Hungary (All-Ukrainian Population Census n.d).

Apart from compact settlement, their knowledge of the group language was facilitated by general access to broadcasting from Hungary and a system of pre-school and school education in Hungarian. This system was originally created in Austria-Hungary, then drastically reduced during the Czechoslovak rule, shut down by the Soviets for the first decade of their control and, finally, reinstated in the 1950s (Vardy 1989, 68–74). The independent Ukrainian state has not only retained but also expanded the system. In the school year 2007/2008, when I conducted my field research, there were 71 schools with the instruction in Hungarian and 27 bilingual schools having Hungarian-language classes. The total number of students taught in that language constituted 17,366, or 10.5% of all school students of the region, which is close to the group’s share in the general population (Zadovoleninia n/d).

That these conditions enable the reproduction of the group’s competence in Hungarian and reliance on it as the main everyday language is vividly demonstrated by the results of my questionnaire, administered to graduating students of Hungarian-language schools. As Table 1 shows, most of the students reported that they used primarily Hungarian in communication with parents and friends, watching television and reading books and periodicals. The reliance on Hungarian turned out to be particularly overwhelming in places of the group’s prevalence. In those localities where Hungarians constitute a clear minority, the students used Ukrainian and Russian much more extensively but far from predominantly.

The treatment of these schools on the part of the authorities has been quite favourable. All of my interviewees denied any facts of discrimination in the allocation of funds, textbooks or any supplies. Moreover, much help came from the Hungarian authorities and private foundations. Not only did these sources facilitate renovation or construction of school buildings, replacement of furniture and stocking of libraries, but also every family with children instructed in Hungarian received an allowance from a foundation in Hungary (interview Mitsyk). Hungarian funding also made possible the functioning of a private Hungarian-language institution of higher education in Berehove, whose graduates helped reduce the deficit of schools teachers. At the same time, many teachers and other specialists were educated at several state-funded colleges in Transcarpathia, having parallel groups with the instruction in Hungarian (interview Hertsoh).

In the 1990s and early-2000s, many graduates of Transcarpathian Hungarian-language schools went to study and/or work in Hungary which,
Table 1. Self-reported language use of graduating students of five Hungarian-language schools in communicating with parents and friends, watching television, and reading books, newspapers and magazines, for the sample as a whole and separately for Hungarian-majority and Hungarian-minority localities (in percentage).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communication with parents (n = 125)</th>
<th>Communication with friends (n = 122)</th>
<th>Watching television (n = 121)</th>
<th>Reading books, periodicals (n = 119)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Hungarian majority Hungarian minority</td>
<td>All Hungarian majority Hungarian minority</td>
<td>All Hungarian majority Hungarian minority</td>
<td>All Hungarian majority Hungarian minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Hungarian</td>
<td>73.6 87.2 51.1</td>
<td>58.2 77.3 27.7</td>
<td>52.1 72.0 19.6</td>
<td>53.8 70.3 26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Ukrainian</td>
<td>3.2 0.0 8.5</td>
<td>9.8 1.3 23.4</td>
<td>3.3 0.0 8.7</td>
<td>5.9 0.0 15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally Hungarian and Ukrainian</td>
<td>17.6 11.5 27.7</td>
<td>29.5 21.3 42.6</td>
<td>19.8 14.7 28.3</td>
<td>28.0 28.4 31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.6 1.3 12.8</td>
<td>2.5 0.0 6.4</td>
<td>24.8 13.3 43.5</td>
<td>12.2 1.4 26.7</td>
</tr>
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Note: For communication with parents, the third option means speaking Hungarian with one parent and Ukrainian with the other. The fourth option mostly pertains to the use of Russian mainly or on a par with Hungarian and Ukrainian.
in turn, contributed to the popularity of these schools (interview Arpa). However, the gradual improvement of economic situation in Ukraine, together with the toughening of the conditions for students and workers from abroad in Hungary, caused the reorientation of Transcarpathian graduates to work and study in their own region. The responses to the questionnaires support the statements of both Hungarian and Ukrainian interviewees. Only one-in-six students said they intended to study or work in Hungary. In contrast, four-out-of-five declared their wish for studying in Transcarpathia, most of these in the Ukrainian language. Most of parent respondents also preferred their children’ studying and working in the region.

However, this preference was not matched by the graduates’ adequate knowledge of Ukrainian, even among those intending to use it in higher education. Less than a third of respondents said they could speak Ukrainian ‘very well’ or ‘well’, while the same share evaluated their level as poor (see Table 2). Scores for the writing ability turned out somewhat higher, which reveals the primary orientation of the Ukrainian language education towards writing or, one may say, the most perceptible deficit in oral skills. Still, less than a half of respondents considered their knowledge to be very good or good. Naturally, in places of Hungarian prevalence the level of spoken Ukrainian was particularly low. Perhaps the most striking evidence of inadequate knowledge of the state language is the fact that in Berehove, three students refused to answer my Ukrainian-language questionnaire and simply wrote on their sheets ‘Don’t understand’, while further two failed to answer the second, more complicated half of the questionnaire.

Given such poor knowledge of Ukrainian, it is not surprising that 58% of respondents would like to have external evaluation in Hungarian only, with further 31% opting for Hungarian ‘in most subjects’ (which might mean all subjects but the Ukrainian language and literature). Even among those who planned to study in Ukrainian, four-out-of-five preferred to pass

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<th>Speaking in Ukrainian (n = 119)</th>
<th>Writing in Ukrainian (n = 121)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Hungarian majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediocre</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>43.1</td>
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</tbody>
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evaluations exclusively or mainly in Hungarian, meaning that they did not rely on their current knowledge of Ukrainian and intended to improve it in the process of university studies. A few months later, the results of the tests confirmed their poor knowledge of Ukrainian. The students of the Hungarian-language schools I had studied scored much worse in the Ukrainian language and literature than in all other subjects for which they were free to use Hungarian, and much worse than students of those Ukrainian-language schools with whom they were equal in other subjects. Thus, the policy intended to ensure school graduates’ knowledge of the state language put the Hungarian youth at a disadvantage in competition for free admission to institutions of higher education and, accordingly, hindered their career chances.

Some interviewees viewed the continued use of Hungarian for admission to universities as the only way to ensure its speakers’ right to higher education. They argued that graduates of minority-language schools would never know Ukrainian as well as those who had been instructed therein, hence, evaluation solely in the state language would always mean discrimination (e.g. interviews Hertsoh, Kovach). In effect, they called for the reversion to the situation that had existed before the introduction of external evaluation with the Ukrainian language as a mandatory subject (if not yet the only medium), even if that meant poor knowledge of the state language and, therefore, restricted mobility. One minority activist explicitly presented this choice as a preference of what is good ‘for the nation’ over what is ‘not bad for parents and the child’ (interview Medvid’), thus articulating the nationalist ideology prioritising national interests over individual ones.

At the same time, many students, parents and teachers did not share this priority. They believed that status quo (ante) could not be considered adequate for the long term and, therefore, supported the view that some changes should be made in order to ensure better knowledge of Ukrainian among Hungarian youth. In all, 62% of student respondents firmly or hesitantly agreed that it was worth teaching some subjects in their school in Ukrainian ‘to make graduates’ further study and work easier’. Most parents also shared this view, as did many of the directors and higher-level officials (e.g. interviews Arpa, Bubniak). Actually, some directors told me that they were already introducing elements of Ukrainian, which most students and parents supported. Moreover, many parents allegedly requested that the number of lessons of the Ukrainian language be increased (interviews Arpa, Mitsyk, Oros).

Still, some believed that such transformation of the minority education might evoke protests or at least complaints. Therefore, they wanted the state to retain the schools with exclusive instruction in Hungarian and let those parents willing to ensure their children’s command of Ukrainian send them to majority schools (interviews Hertsoh, Mitsyk). Actually, most interviewees argued that this process was already under way (e.g. interviews
They believed that it might soon lead to drastic changes in the educational situation, while differing in their assessments thereof as either a laudable contribution to social integration or a regrettable path to a loss of group identity (e.g. interviews Oros, Kovach). But then the later revocation of the planned transition to tests exclusively in Ukrainian may have made these people more optimistic and less willing to accept any changes.

**The situation of Crimean Tatars**

The case of the Crimean Tatars provides a vivid illustration of the inability of the Ukrainian state to ensure equally favourable treatment of all ethnocultural groups. Although most problems specific to this group were inherited from the USSR, the Ukrainian authorities failed to effectively solve them due to a lack of resources, experience and, in many cases, goodwill, all the more so because the support for one group often ran counter to the perceived interests of another.

The Crimean Tatars are predominantly concentrated in the Crimean peninsula in the south of Ukraine and constitute the same share of the population of the region as the Hungarians in Transcarpathia (12%), despite being larger in numerical terms, namely 243,400 people in 2001 (All-Ukrainian Population Census n.d). The equality of relative sizes highlights the groups’ unequal opportunities to use their languages in education, although they have partly to do with more dispersed settlement of the Crimean Tatars. In the school year of 2007–2008, the Crimean Tatars had only 15 schools with the instruction in their group language as well as separate classes in 62 bi- or tri-lingual schools. The total number of schoolchildren taught in Crimean Tatar was thrice as low as those instructed in Hungarian (5903 versus 17,366), which meant almost five times as low a share of group members. Only 16.6% of the Crimean Tatars schoolchildren were taught in the group language, while others attended schools with the instruction in the language of the peninsula’s majority, Russian or, in some cases, in the state language of Ukraine. About 17% of Crimean Tatar students did not learn the group language even as a subject (Izuchenie n/d).

This inequality is rooted in the discrimination against the Crimean Tatars under the Soviet rule, which influenced their position in post-Soviet Ukraine, the majority’s attitudes toward them and their own views and resources determining the applicability of different models of education. After centuries of independent statehood, the Crimean Tatars became subjects of Russian tsars in 1783 and underwent discriminatory treatment, which led to a large-scale emigration. When the Russian Empire was transformed into the multinational Soviet state, they found themselves in a national territorial autonomy with educational and cultural facilities in their group language. This cultural renaissance came to an abrupt end in 1944, with the wholesale deportation of the group (accused of having voluntary
collaborated with the Nazi occupiers) from Crimea to Asian parts of the former USSR. For several decades, the Crimean Tatars were deprived of education in the eponymous language and largely lost fluency in it, particularly the youth. Upon return to Crimea in the late-1980s and early-1990s, the deportees and their descendants were met with a lack of housing, land, jobs, schools and other social services as well as with the hostile or indifferent attitudes of most officials and residents guided by old Soviet stereotypes and new fears of interethnic confrontation. Although the central government was rather supportive of the needs of the returnees, it lacked resources for meeting them and was apprehensive about provoking discontent of the peninsula’s Russian majority (Allworth 1998; European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2011, 27–8).

Crimean Tatar leaders viewed education in the ancestral language as a crucial factor of the preservation of the people’s language and identity (Concept 2007; interviews Chubarov, Kadzhametova). However, unlike other ethnic groups, Crimean Tatars’ demands for education in their group language were in the beginning met only under strong pressure, often escalating into violent action. In view of the authorities’ reluctance to provide buildings for their schools, parents and activists repeatedly resorted to seizures of aspired state property, while official decisions on the establishment of schools or classes often resulted from rallies and petitions. Still, most schools had to work in converted buildings which lacked necessary facilities and sometimes were in a very poor condition. Moreover, many villages and towns with a considerable share of Crimean Tatars had no instruction in the group’s language, or it was limited to classes on the primary level (interviews Kadzhametova, Seitvelieva). The non-Tatar educational officials denied any prejudice of the authorities against the group but admitted that newly established schools for the returnees had to work under worse conditions than mainstream facilities built and equipped in the Soviet times (interview Pekhar).

Crimean Tatar cultural elites tend to believe that only separate schools with the instruction in the group’s language and cultivation of its culture can create an environment contributing to the preservation of ethnocultural identity (Concept 2007; interview Kadzhametova). A crucial component of this mission (unfamiliar to those minorities mostly using their group languages in everyday life) is to ensure a good command of the Crimean Tatar language, which many students can not get at home or maintain in other practices. Students of the Crimean Tatar-language schools seem to come from rather exceptional families who consider knowledge of ‘native language’ and ‘national culture’ a high priority (cf. Chernyi 2005). Most parent respondents indicated these motives for having enrolled their children in minority-language schools. Despite this background, not all students speak the group language with parents and few use it in communication with friends, watching TV or reading books and periodicals, as demonstrated by
Table 3. Self-reported language use of graduating students of five Crimean Tatar-language schools in communicating with parents and friends, watching television and reading books, newspapers and magazines for the sample as a whole and separately for the city of Simferopol (in percentage).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communication with parents</th>
<th>Communication with friends</th>
<th>Watching television</th>
<th>Reading books, periodicals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All (n = 130)</td>
<td>Simferopol (n = 39)</td>
<td>All (n = 130)</td>
<td>Simferopol (n = 39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly in Crimean Tatar</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly in Russian</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally in Crimean Tatar and Russian</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For communication with parents, the third option means speaking Crimean Tatar with one parent and Russian with the other. The fourth option primarily pertains to the use of Ukrainian along with Crimean Tatar and/or Russian.
Table 4. Self-reported levels of the speaking and writing skills in Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and Russian by graduating students of five Crimean Tatar-language schools (in percentage) for the sample as a whole ($n = 130$) and separately for the city of Simferopol ($n = 39$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crimean Tatar</th>
<th>Ukrainian</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Simferopol</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediocre</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Kulyk
the responses of graduating students of five schools (see Table 3). The reliance on the majority language turned out to be particularly heavy in the city of Simferopol. Everywhere the primary language of speaking with friends and reading was Russian, while Ukrainian was widely used, alongside the other two languages, only for watching television.3

Given such limited use of both Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian outside of school, it is remarkable how well the students believed they knew those languages. Only about a quarter of respondents evaluated their speaking and writing skills in either of them as mediocre or poor (see Table 4). Moreover, there was no big difference between levels of oral and written proficiency, which was reported by Hungarian-language graduates. Not surprisingly, the knowledge of the main everyday language was even better, although in this case writing lagged behind speaking as the former was mostly acquired at school where Russian got less attention than Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian. While Simferopol students could not match their peers from towns and villages in their knowledge of Crimean Tatar, they were more proficient not only in Russian but also (perhaps due to higher quality of teaching) in Ukrainian. The students’ self-evaluation thus creates the impression that the Crimean Tatar schools managed to perform both the identity and integration tasks fairly well. The results of the tests the students took in the spring of 2008 confirm that the graduates of the Crimean Tatar schools had rather good knowledge of Ukrainian, as their mean scores in that language were not much lower than in other subjects, which most of them chose to take in the best-known Russian. Nor were these graduates, unlike Hungarians in Transcarpathia, hindered on the way to higher education by their scores in the Ukrainian language and literature.

However, most of the existing schools face serious problems impeding their accomplishment of this mission. To begin with, it is only in name that they are schools with the instruction in Crimean Tatar, as that language prevails only on the primary level, while in secondary school most subjects are taught in Russian, with Crimean Tatar elements at best (which is why students predominantly choose Russian for testing). As interviewed directors told me, the main obstacles to teaching in Crimean Tatar are a lack of textbooks (which are translated very slowly, mostly due to scarcity of competent people) and a lack of qualified teachers in all subjects (interviews Abibova, Akhmedov). No training of teachers for Crimean Tatar schools – other than instructors of the eponymous language and literature – has been implemented at any of the state universities, nor do Crimean Tatars have a private institution of higher education as do the Hungarians. While the former deficit has partly to do with the reluctance of the authorities, the latter is virtually predetermined by the fact that this group has no kin-state that could provide financial assistance for meeting its educational and other needs.4 This also exacerbates other problems, such as a lack of adequate building renovation, equipment and so on.5
The crucial challenge to the Crimean Tatar education have been, however, a rather ambivalent attitude of the bulk of the group, with many parents reluctant to send their children to minority schools even in those localities where they are available. While some parents prefer such schools because they can give their children knowledge of the group language and culture, others take into account pragmatic factors such as the school’s proximity to home, conditions of buildings, optional subjects offered and reputation of teachers. Moreover, the very fact of learning in – or even of – Crimean Tatar is often perceived as disadvantageous for children’s mastering of ‘essential’ subjects and/or higher education and careers, in particular outside of Crimea. In schools with the instruction in Russian or Ukrainian, many Crimean Tatar parents even renounce lessons of the minority language for their children as such lessons usually take place in addition to all others or at the time when other children learn ‘more important’ subjects (Tyschchenko et al. 2011, 46, 76; interviews Abibova, Iaiaeva). It is clear that minority members have largely internalised majority perceptions of the value of various languages, on the one hand, and of educational values, on the other. They are ready to downplay ethnocultural difference, which might put their children at a disadvantage.

Therefore, many Crimean Tatar politicians and educators believe that, in contrast to the first years after the repatriation, the main problem of education in their group language is no longer resistance of the authorities but, rather, ‘indifference’ of the masses. Similarly to their Hungarian counterparts, these elites tend to prefer the interests of the ‘nation’ over those of individuals. Hence, they deem it necessary to more actively persuade parents of the benefits of education in Crimean Tatar or even exert some pressure on them (interviews Chubarov, Seitvelieva). Given that education in the group’s language is an essential component of its cultural development, some interviewees considered appropriate to proceed to instruction of all or most subjects in Crimean Tatar, even if that led more parents to prefer mainstream schools. At the same time, they believed that it was crucially important to increase attractiveness of schools in the group language by creating opportunities to use it in various domains, for which the Ukrainian parliament should declare it one of the official languages of the Crimean autonomy (interviews Abibova, Kadzhametova). However, other interviewees considered such development unrealistic in the foreseeable future. At least for the time being, they preferred a mixed education with the expansion of the Crimean Tatar component to include all subjects in primary school and humanities on the secondary level, while keeping the state language (or rather introducing it instead of Russian) for sciences. While some considered such mixture to be appropriate only as a temporary solution under unfavorable conditions, others viewed it as the best possible option for a minority group (e.g. interviews Chubarov, Iaiaeva).
No doubt the current situation influences the views of what is realistic and appropriate, among the elites and particularly among the masses who are not fully supportive of the leaders’ nationalist priorities. It is hardly surprising that the graduating students preferred teaching of most subjects in Crimean Tatar and some in Ukrainian to the exclusive use of the group language. While the former model got support from 52% of respondents, the latter was only chosen by 16% (further 26% preferred some combination of Crimean Tatar and Russian). These preferences were consistent with the fact that two thirds of respondents intended to study at a university in Russian or Ukrainian. Most parents declared similar preferences for the group education in general and their children’s prospects in particular (cf. Chernyi 2005). Therefore, attempts to introduce exclusive education in Crimean Tatar would be met with an even warier reaction of parents which would further limit the popular base of such education and, accordingly, its contribution to the preservation of the group identity.

**Conclusion**

The above analysis has demonstrated a striking difference between the school systems for Ukraine’s two minorities. Having been moulded by divergent historical contexts, they differed not only in starting conditions but also in their treatment by the authorities, economic situation and, accordingly, language regime and educational performance, which determined their ability to fulfill the tasks of forming ethnocultural identity and promoting social integration. In the Hungarian case, a favourable attitude of the Ukrainian authorities, strong support of the kin-state and, above all, a tradition and an infrastructure developed prior to Ukraine’s independence contributed to the predominant instruction of the youth in their native language. This ensured the reproduction of language knowledge and identity among the minority members but perpetuated the problem of their inability to use Ukrainian in communication with the majority, which limited their nationwide mobility and led them to demand continued use of Hungarian in Transcarpathia. Although a long tradition of Hungarian-language education contributed to the readiness by the authorities to tolerate this situation, they became impatient with the minorities’ limited proficiency in the state language. The implementation of a policy intended to overcome this shortcoming, albeit it did not extend beyond a language test for school graduates, put the Hungarian youth at a strong disadvantage in access to higher education. Moreover, the realisation of the importance of the state language for social mobility may urge ever more Hungarians to choose an accommodating path for their children and thus eventually hinder inter-generational reproduction of the group language and identity.

The situation of the Crimean Tatar has been much more unfavourable. Since schooling in their group language had to be created anew after their
return to Crimea, it required much more money, resolution and a change of attitudes than for the Hungarians, and it could not immediately produce high-quality education that would appeal to parents choosing a school for their children. The authorities on the regional and local levels, while severely constrained by a lack of funds, often did not even want to help Crimean Tatar returnees, viewed as endangering social stability and established cultural values. Having no kin-state, the group could not get strong support from abroad. Moreover, the realisation of the little value of the minority language for career opportunities made many parents prefer educating their children in Russian or Ukrainian. As a result, the bulk of the group’s youth has been schooled in languages other than Crimean Tatar, which prevented them from mastering the latter, all the more so because they could not easily pick it up in other practices. Even in the nominally minority-language schools, the instruction in Crimean Tatar was actually limited to the primary and, in some subjects, lower secondary level. The limited use of Crimean Tatar in education exacerbated the problem of its poor knowledge by the group members and, therefore, vulnerability of their cultural identity.

The best way to solve the two groups’ educational problems seems to be the introduction of bilingual schooling. Children would be instructed in the minority language at the primary level, while having an intensive communication-oriented course of Ukrainian, and then would use the latter language for ever more subjects on the secondary level when sufficient proficiency therein is achieved. This model would allow a considerable improvement in the students’ knowledge of Ukrainian without endangering their learning of the minority language and culture, which should eventually make such schools appealing to most parents in the respective groups. However, if this model is imposed instead of the exclusive minority-language education, it may be perceived as discriminatory by many minority members, which was the problem with its attempted introduction in Ukraine in 2009 (or a similar step taken in Latvia in 2004; Hogan-Brun [2006]). Therefore, the mixed model should be launched as another option in addition to tracks with exclusive instruction in the official and the group language. This solution is applicable not only to those minorities with full-fledged systems of education in their group languages, such as Hungarians and Romanians, but also to those for which such systems are being created, for example, the Crimean Tatars or Bulgarians. As my analysis demonstrates, the creation has been impeded not only by shortages of funds but also by a lack of qualified teachers and, most important, by the apprehension of many parents that education in a lesser-used language would do their children more harm than good. A combination of the group and state languages would diminish all these obstacles, particularly the last one, thus allowing minority-tailored education to expand much faster than it has been done so far. This is not an ideal system for achieving both main goals of minority education, but it will
enable significant progress in each direction without critical loss in the other. Of course, this conclusion is only valid if one does not embrace extreme ideals favouring the achievement of one goal to the point of completely rejecting the other, that is, integration through assimilation or preservation of identity by means of segregation.

Two main problems hinder the implementation of this proposal. The first is the widespread perception of the appropriateness of monolingual instruction in minority languages for their (willing) speakers, which was brought about by the Soviet practice of such education and reinforced by post-Soviet references to minority rights. As argued above, minority leaders insist on the inviolability of such instruction, which they see as a precondition for the reproduction of group identity. ‘Rank-and-file’ members are generally supportive of schooling in their native language, although they do not share the leaders’ nationalist subordination of individual interests to collective ones. While many Hungarians and Crimean Tatars already prefer the use of both minority and majority languages in the educational process, it may take some time before most members of each group see it not as a loss of schooling in the group language but as the most adequate version thereof.

Another, specifically Ukrainian problem is a large discrepancy between the currency and prestige of the Russian language, on the one hand, and its legal status as just a minority language, on the other, which has been the main object of controversy in language policy. While some consider it dangerous to perpetuate a special role of the former imperial language, others do not accept the same treatment of languages with vastly different numbers of speakers and social functions. The problem is not only that for Russian, the transition to bilingual education is not expedient in those regions where its speakers constitute a solid majority and, therefore, can expect to combine identity and integration on the basis of their own language. The transition is also impeded by the political power of the representatives of these regions and the magnitude of their opposition to a policy they see as detrimental to their constituency. It is their coming to power in 2010 that led to the cancellation of the announced transition to bilingual education, and their opposition will continue to hinder the uniform application of this plan to all minorities in all regions. Therefore, the only way to proceed with such transition is to introduce a mixed system as a parallel option, which is likely to be more popular in those places where the prevalence of the titular language leads many minority members to seek better knowledge thereof and/or where exclusive education in the respective minority language is already considered inadequate. In this way, the state would respond to the citizens’ preferences rather than imposing its own. Such behaviour will only be possible with the democratisation and decentralisation of Ukrainian education and governance in general, which is far from certain at the time of this writing but will remain on the political agenda as long as the elites continue to declare their European aspirations.
Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. I calculated the mean scores of particular schools on the basis of data presented at the website of the authority administering the testing (http://www.vintest.org.ua/statistics.aspx). Each of the studied minority-language schools was compared with two majority-language ones of the same type in the same or a neighbouring locality. A macro-level analysis by Muravyev and Talavera (2010) confirms a big difference between the Hungarian- and Romanian-language schools, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian ones, on the other, in the mean scores in the Ukrainian language and literature, albeit for the 2009 and 2010 tests.

2. It is only in the late-1960s that Crimean Tatar started to be taught as a subject in many Central Asian schools where the group’s children studied (interview Kadzhametova).

3. Given a scarcity of TV programs, books and periodicals in Crimean Tatar, the figures for its use in these practices, however low, are probably exaggerated, indicating not so much actual patterns as those considered appropriate for Crimean Tatars. The group loyalty might also affect other figures in this and Table 4.

4. As Turkey hosts a large Crimean Tatar diaspora, it has rendered some financial and political support for the Crimean Tatars in Ukraine. In particular, several dozen youth have been admitted annually to Turkish universities on a special quota (interview Kadzhametova). However, this training seems to be more instrumental in the cultivation of the educated elite than in providing personnel for mass domains such as school education.

5. Although a major part of funds allotted by the Ukrainian government and international organization for the integration of the former deportees went for schools, these sums were far from adequate for meeting their needs (interview Dzhemilev). Private initiatives were mostly aimed at domains other than education.

References


**Appendix. List of the author’s interviews**

**Transcarpathia**


Hertsoh, Yurii, head of the education department of the Transcarpathian provincial state administration. Uzhhorod, 15 February 2008.


Mitskyk, Yuliana, director of the school no. 4 in the town of Berehove. Berehove, 12 February 2008.

Oros, Karl, director of the school in the village of Dertsen, Mukacheve district. Dertsen, 12 February 2008.

Crimea


