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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE LANGUAGE POLICY IN UKRAINE: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

This article analyzes the main features of Ukraine's state language policy during its period of independence. Ensuring the linguistic interests of society is a key issue of national security for the state. Therefore, the vector of state measures aimed at regulating language relations among various social groups indicates whether the policy of the ruling elite strengthens or weakens the state by balancing or destabilizing the situation in society.

The implementation of state language policy in Ukraine is a multifaceted and long-term process that requires a balanced approach, consistency, and societal dialogue. Its success depends on the joint efforts of the state, the public, and every citizen interested in Ukraine's development and prosperity.

The article outlines the main objectives of language policy, including ensuring a high level of Ukrainian language proficiency among civil servants, developing and implementing standards for professional terminology, and creating favorable conditions for popularizing the Ukrainian language among citizens. Significant attention is paid to the role of the state language as an instrument of national security, especially in the context of the reintegration of temporarily occupied territories. The article substantiates the strategic role of the Ukrainian language as a fundamental factor in preserving national identity, ensuring social harmony, and establishing statehood. It emphasizes that the increasing share of Ukrainian-language cultural products is an important indicator of the success of language policy implementation. The integrative function of the Ukrainian language, which promotes societal consolidation, modernization of social processes, and effective counteraction to external threats, is highlighted.

*The necessity of state regulation of language issues, legislative *закреплення* (consolidation) of the state language, and implementation of mechanisms for this policy at all levels of governance*

is proven. A number of concepts, such as “state language policy,” “state regulation of language issues,” and “mechanisms for forming and implementing language policy,” are clarified. Thus, the article highlights key aspects of language policy development that are necessary to strengthen the position of the Ukrainian language as a central element of national self-determination.

Keywords: *public administration, state language policy, mechanisms for implementing state language policy, contemporary language situation in Ukraine.*

Problem setting. A language situation is a set of forms of existence of one language or a set of languages in their territorial and social interrelation and functional interaction within specific geographical regions or administrative-political entities. In other words, it is the interrelationship of different languages or different variants of one language used in a certain territory. A language situation encompasses the social conditions of language functioning, the sphere and environment of language use, and its forms of existence. Depending on the language situation, the state develops its language policy.

State language policy in Ukraine is an extremely relevant and dynamic area that reflects the complex socio-political processes taking place in the country. After Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, the issue of the Ukrainian language functioning as the state language gained even greater importance, becoming one of the key aspects of national security and identity.

In recent years, there has been a clear trend towards strengthening the role of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of public life. This is a result not only of legislative initiatives but also of growing patriotic sentiments and an understanding of the language’s importance for preserving sovereignty. More and more Ukrainian citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, support measures aimed at asserting the Ukrainian language. This indicates a shift in public consciousness and an understanding of language as an integrative factor.

Recent research and publication analysis. It is important to note that the language issue in Ukraine is constantly in the spotlight, and this applies not only to academic circles. Various aspects of language relations and state language policy are the subject of consideration by scholars such as H. Yankovska, V. Zabolotskyi, N. Popovych, Ye. Tkachenko, O. Serheieva, Yu. Kuts, I. Lopushynskyi, T. Kovalova, P. Redin, and others. This also includes the scholarly works of young researchers such as L. Belei, D. Vlasenko, H. Panchenko, H. Yevseieva, and others. Creative approaches to enhancing the prestige of the state language and giving it new appeal

are emerging. This, in turn, proves the relevance and inexhaustibility of this issue.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to analyze the implementation of the state language policy in Ukraine, its trends and prospects for development.

Article main body. Language is the most important characteristic of national self-identification not only of an individual and their spiritual culture but also of the state as a whole. That is why language policy must occupy a prominent place in the system of state priorities, as its strategic task, alongside guaranteeing human language rights, is to establish social harmony and political stability, ensure unity, and strengthen the Ukrainian state.

Language policy in Ukraine is a system of legal acts, programs, and strategies aimed at regulating the use of languages in our society. The main aspects of this policy include defining the status of the Ukrainian language as official, supporting the development of the Ukrainian language as the state language, and preserving and supporting the country's linguistic diversity. Language is a powerful instrument for state consolidation, a significant indicator of its vitality, and the main factor of the nation's geopolitical identity, giving it the prospect of its own representation in the modern world. The formation of language policy is an important direction of state activity on the path of societal consolidation.

When defining Ukraine's state language policy, there can only be two criteria for evaluating proposals regarding the language issue. The first is whether they promote interethnic peace, which no one in our country has yet managed to disrupt. The second is whether they contribute to the formation of a unified Ukrainian civil nation. An example of the state authorities' understanding of the significance of the Ukrainian language as an important factor in national state-building is the implementation of a series of measures at the level of the highest authorities aimed at promoting the development of an effective language policy for the Ukrainian state. Specifically, on March 12, 2003, parliamentary hearings "On the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language in Ukraine" were held, and recommendations were adopted on May 22 [4]. This was perhaps the first time the Verkhovna Rada considered the language issue.

The Recommendations of the parliamentary hearings emphasized the need for a consistent and balanced approach to solving language problems, preventing political speculation and interethnic conflicts on this basis. It was stressed that the use of languages in the state should be a factor of national unity and consolidation, not discord. At the same time, the parliamentary hearings acknowledged that the Ukrainian language, as the state language,

had not gained proper widespread use in all spheres of public life; on the contrary, there was a process of narrowing its scope of application; the mere declaration of the state status of the Ukrainian language was not enough for its full and irreversible establishment, requiring improvement of language legislation and ensuring mechanisms for its implementation; the language issue in Ukraine often turned into a destabilizing factor, causing social tension, generating separatist sentiments, hindering the process of forming a democratic, legal state, and threatening the sovereignty and state self-determination of Ukraine.

An important step towards expanding the use of the state language is the implementation of the task planned by the Program for the Development and Functioning of the Ukrainian Language for 2004-2010 to develop and launch a Ukrainian linguistic portal on the Internet, where information about scientific conferences, new literature in the field, etc., can be obtained [5].

Societal solidarity is primarily formed by the mass awareness of citizens of their belonging to a single linguistic and cultural space. Therefore, the spread of a single state language in a unitary state is a guarantee of its political stability. The Ukrainian language is an integral state attribute that preserves its historical continuity from ancient Kyiv Rus. As the language of the most numerous, oldest, indigenous, and titular ethnos, the Ukrainian language, in accordance with generally accepted world practice, functions as the sole state language in Ukraine.

The statehood of the Ukrainian language is a key factor in consolidating Ukrainian society throughout Ukraine, forming a modern Ukrainian political nation, a symbolic embodiment of Ukrainian statehood, and a guarantee of preserving the national identity of the Ukrainian ethnos and the state unity of Ukraine. In this regard, the Ukrainian nation and state must ensure the revival and protection of the Ukrainian language, and the qualitative development of the Ukrainian language space. Unfortunately, Ukrainian society, despite even minor, state-oriented attempts to consolidate society in the linguistic space, is still in the process of searching for its guidelines, with which it has already irrevocably delayed. Therefore, the current situation can be characterized as a constructive objective awareness at the highest levels of power of the need to adjust the state language policy in Ukraine. After all, the unconditional need for Ukrainian citizens to know and freely and universally communicate in Ukrainian as the language of the majority of the population, as a truly state language, has not yet been properly proven in society, not properly supported and encouraged, not raised to the level of prestige.

Obviously, the main reason for this state of affairs is the lack of an effective state mechanism for regulating the language issue.

In the first years of our state's independence, such a mechanism existed. To form and implement state language policy in independent Ukraine, special state bodies and institutions were created: the State Department for the Implementation of State Language Policy within the structure of the State Committee for Nationalities and Migration, and the Council on Language Policy under the President of Ukraine. Their activities were aimed at creating conditions for the development and functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language in all spheres of public life, as well as the development and use of languages of national minorities of Ukraine, and satisfying the language needs of Ukrainians living outside the state. Based on the importance of this problem, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved "Comprehensive Measures for the Comprehensive Development and Functioning of the Ukrainian Language" in 1997 [3], and later, in 2003, another government resolution approved the "State Program for the Development and Functioning of the Ukrainian Language for 2004-2010" [9]. Both documents are aimed at the development, support, and protection of the state language in Ukraine.

President Viktor Yushchenko practically did not intervene in the linguistic sphere during his first year in office. The only exception was the Decree he signed on September 26, 2005, which assigned the functions of implementing state language policy to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. At the same time, this Decree raised many questions due to its contradictory nature. It was titled "On Improving State Management in the Information Sphere," but its stated goal was "increasing the effectiveness of state language policy implementation." The only point concerning language policy was granting powers to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to implement language policy; all other provisions concerned the registration of printed publications, the expert commission for the protection of public morality, and changes in the number of staff in the Ministries of Justice, Culture and Tourism, as well as the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting [6]. The reason for the appearance and purpose of this Decree, not to mention the steps taken to implement it and its impact on the language situation in the country, are beyond discussion.

Some further attempts to strengthen state language policy were made by the previous president and were embodied in decrees: No. 625/2006 of July 18, 2006, on the establishment of the Council on Ethnonational Policy, whose competence included "the formation and

implementation of state ethnonational policy, promotion of the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation, its historical consciousness, traditions and culture, as well as the development of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities of Ukraine"; and the decree of February 15, 2010, on the Concept of State Language Policy [3], which stipulated that "the priority of state language policy should be the assertion and development of the Ukrainian language" and should be aimed at asserting "respect for the Ukrainian language and the languages of national minorities, any manifestations of disrespect are unacceptable," as stated in the documents. The content of the above-mentioned documents essentially defines the main directions of our state's language policy and the tasks of the authorities for their implementation today.

It should be noted that certain mechanisms of language policy were effective in the state within the framework of the implementation of the above-mentioned programs. These include: holding the annual All-Ukrainian competition "Best Civil Servant" (Order of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Ukraine dated 26.02.2009 No. 86/0/17-09), where proficiency in the state language is one of the criteria, though not a primary one; the introduction of the Ukrainian Language Experts Competition, which has been ongoing in Ukraine for ten years and elevates the importance of the state language in the eyes of the younger generation. Initiated by Ukrainian philanthropist P. Yatsyk, the competition gradually acquired clear state-building features, embodying the emergence of a phenomenon unusual for the Ukrainian mentality; the T. H. Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Competition, which is sporadically held by the Ministry of Education since the adoption of the Law on Languages (1989); regional Councils on National and Language Policy were established as consultative and advisory bodies aimed at promoting effective work related to developing proposals for forming national and language policy in the region, creating necessary conditions for the free development of national minorities and the functioning of the state language in all spheres of public life, and the use and protection of other languages of national minorities. However, unfortunately, over time, these institutions and regulations ceased to exist (Presidential Decree No. 1071/2001, revised on 09.02.2002), and some of them did not receive proper development.

Considering the current language situation in Ukraine, developing linguistic unity is an extremely complex process. Recently, contrary to the Constitution of Ukraine, there have been increasing calls for the introduction of official bilingualism, namely granting the status

of a second state language alongside Ukrainian to the Russian language. However, as the experience of other countries around the world shows, this does not lead to the stabilization of the language situation in the country [1].

In recent years, the absence of a state body for the implementation and control of language policy, incited by external and internal provocations, has led to the destabilization of Ukrainian society on linguistic grounds. Therefore, in our opinion, it is only a matter of practical, effective steps of state importance. In the face of confrontational resistance to language issues by some social groups, most of the state-declared language policy mechanisms today are unproductive.

For language policy to appear not as one-time actions, but as a comprehensive, systemic, long-term, and, most importantly, implemented approach, it must be institutionalized. An important step in this direction should be the creation of a state body to monitor compliance with language legislation, with clearly defined powers and prescribed mechanisms for their implementation. Such bodies function in many countries: in Kazakhstan, there is a Committee on Language Issues, in Latvia – a State Language Center, which conduct checks for compliance with language legislation.

An objective approach to creating mechanisms for state regulation of language policy, elements of which are presented in the works of the aforementioned scholars and will still be the subject of discussion at many conferences and “round tables” and further scientific research. It consists in gradually creating objective conditions that will make the Ukrainian language necessary and prestigious for everyone, especially for representatives of the authorities, civil servants. If the state language becomes a means of achieving a state career. And therefore, attractive and competitive at all levels, and the languages of national minorities will develop with state support. Doing this is quite difficult given the depth of Russification of Ukrainian society and the powerful current effect of further Russification. But everyone who is truly interested in the objective stabilization of the language issue in the state must realize – the language that is necessary in life prevails. To be guided only by patriotic feelings and considerations contrary to life circumstances can only be done by a few, but not by the vast majority of the population. Thus, the root of the issue is in the circumstances that force people to use one language or another. And the situation can be changed not by appeals, but by acute necessity.

Among the urgent tasks of tomorrow's state language policy is the implementation of language planning aimed at protecting and supporting the state language, with a view to overcoming the deformations of the country's post-colonial linguistic and cultural development in the future:

Clearly defining in the legislation of Ukraine the concepts of "national minority," "areas of compact residence," "ethnic minority," "indigenous people," "state language policy," etc.;

Guaranteeing the full and equal participation of Ukrainian citizens belonging to different ethnolinguistic communities in all spheres of life of Ukrainian society;

Supporting the right of all its members to preserve and popularize their linguistic and cultural heritage;

Assessing the contribution of ethnic communities to the development of Ukrainian society;

Maintaining an atmosphere of mutual understanding and interaction between all components of the ethnolinguistic structure of Ukrainian society;

Stimulating recognition and respect throughout Ukrainian society for the state language and the languages of all nationalities residing in Ukraine [8].

Free mastery of the Ukrainian (state) language by representatives of national minorities as citizens of Ukraine, as the language of their citizenship, is a guarantee of societal unity and stability. The functioning of the state language must be combined with a careful attitude towards the languages of national minorities. At the same time, the state status of the Ukrainian language is incompatible with propaganda aimed at introducing a second state language or any forms of regional language autonomy, because, as European and world state-building experience convinces us, there is no country where two state (official) languages function simultaneously in one territory [2].

The language issue in Ukraine has transformed from a social one to a predominantly political one; therefore, state language policy has changed not depending on societal demands, but on the foreign policy orientations of the political forces in power. Its acuteness is due to constant political manipulations around the status of the Ukrainian and Russian languages due to the awareness of the high protest potential of this issue and its ability to polarize society. Over the past years of Ukraine's independence, a legislative framework has been adopted that would allow for the gradual strengthening of the status of the Ukrainian language and

its consolidation in all public spheres of social life, forming the basis for creating a situation favorable for the development of the Ukrainian language.

Conclusion. Thus, an urgent problem for Ukraine is the development of clear state mechanisms for managing nationwide language policy, considering the current language situation, the ethnolinguistic composition of the population in Ukraine, the acuteness and conflict nature of this problem, and the objective need to preserve the identification of the Ukrainian civil nation in the conditions of further globalization of the world, as has been repeatedly stated.

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