

## 1.5 LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS STATE OF MODERN UKRAINIAN YOUTH

**Introduction:** The Ukrainian language has long been influenced by Russian language (from the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> to the present day). As a result, the appearance of such linguistic phenomena as a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect and bilingualism could be observed in the early XX<sup>th</sup> century. It distorted the Ukrainians' linguistic consciousness, making it a hybrid (such phenomenon as a Russian-speaking Ukrainian testifies to this fact). The level of language proficiency is known to be a determining factor in the intellectual and cultural development of a society. Isn't that why governments of the developed European countries (Germany, France, Poland, and Latvia) are so meticulous and attentive to the language policy? The way young Ukrainian citizens perceive Ukrainian language and themselves as native speakers of this language, the degree of its popularity among boys and girls, the development of its literary version, its minimal cluttering up with common language, slang expressions and a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect at the level of national functioning are a guarantee of the further language development as well as healthy functioning of the society itself.

**Materials and methods:** The investigation into the connection of language with culture and history of native speakers, the balance between a standard language and dialects in Ukraine began in the 1960s. Such scientists as Brytsyn (2004), Demchenko, Zhluktenko, Zagnitko, Zagoruiko (2013), Koznarskyi, Kuznetsova, Matsuk, Melnychuk, Ruda, Rusanivskyi, Shumarova, Serbenska, Stavvytska, Trub, Vyhovanets, Masenko (2003), Karavanskyi, Radchuk (2002), Nepokupnyi, Nimchuk, Pavliuk, Ponomariv, Selihei (2012) et al chose a linguistic situation in Ukraine to be the subject of their research. The *task of Ukrainian sociolinguistics* is to analyze deformations experienced by the linguistic environment of Ukraine in recent years. We consider a method of sociological survey to be the best one to examine this issue.

**Results:** We examined a language situation at the level of one educational institution, conducting a survey among 200 first year students of Zhytomyr National Agro-ecological University.

*The following questions ranked first:*

*Is Ukrainian language prestigious for you?*

*Do you consider Ukrainian to be an attribute of statehood?*

*Do you speak Ukrainian in everyday life?*

*Is the language of educational courses fundamentally important for you?*

*What is your understanding of the concept "a mother tongue"?*

*Do you consider the possibility of Russian language to obtain the status of regional?*

*Do you switch to Russian in the presence of Russian speakers?*

*What language do you speak during the breaks?*

Questions concerning the young people's place of residence and the language of the locality were also included to the survey. According to the data obtained, 98% of the students consider the Ukrainian language to be their mother tongue, the rest

2% indicate the Russian language. Among 98% of respondents who consider the Ukrainian language to be a mother tongue we can observe the following situation:

(a) 44% represent Ukrainian-speaking students;

(b) 12% are Russian-speaking (i.e. those who speak Russian but consider Ukrainian as their native language, pointing to the hybrid language consciousness); 22% are bilinguals (young people who can communicate equally well in both languages in their everyday life);

(c) 22% of the respondents speak a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect. The language of young people is neither Ukrainian nor Russian in their lexical and grammatical features, but is represented as a mixture of words and illiterate translation from one language into another.

The data obtained also indicate that neither a family nor parental authority, in particular, affect the choice of the language for communication outside home. We have observed an interesting phenomenon: there exist a direct dependency on the language spoken in the family and the way young people perceive their linguistic environment. 35% of students whose families equally use and easily speak both languages Russian and Ukrainian believe that the most residents in their city also speak Russian and Ukrainian equally. In accordance with statistics, it does not correspond to reality.

It is worthwhile mentioning that 9% of those respondents who use Russian as the working language and view themselves as Russian-speaking are in fact bilingual, as evidenced by their responses in the questionnaires. Those people who use a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect in their speech perceive themselves as a linguistic personality inadequately. 16% of them present themselves as Ukrainian-speaking. Nevertheless, we can only assume that they only consider themselves to be such, because, as they indicated in the questionnaires, they talk using a mixed dialect in everyday life. Those who consider themselves bilingual do not speak two languages in daily living. The survey results show that 15% of them speak Ukrainian language. At the same time, 12% of those who speak mostly Russian are actually bilingual (judging by the responses to other questions in the survey form).

As one can observe, there is no clear boundary between the perception of Ukrainian and Russian languages in the consciousness of young people who are bilingual and use a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect. This can be explained by their self-perception. That is, they speak using a dialect but consider themselves to be Ukrainian-speaking or bilingual. They speak two languages and consider themselves to be Russian-speaking. 5% of bilinguals speak use a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect. This proves the thesis about the emergence of a mixed dialect as a linguistic phenomenon in a bilingual environment.

It is obvious that the linguistic self-esteem of 64% of all respondents contradicts the reality and does not correspond to their true linguistic identity. Together, this number makes up a third of the respondents. Is it dangerous? We think so, since it jeopardizes the development of Ukrainians' national language. This assumption is supported by the results of examining a level of students' linguistic stability. 7% of Ukrainian-speaking students, 43% of bilinguals and 30% of those using a mixed

dialect prefer to choose Russian language as a means of communication in the environment of Russian speakers. This percentage ratio clearly illustrates a threat for the Ukrainian language. It is a phenomenon of bilingualism, a situation of coexistence of two languages, not even a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect, as it was thought before obtaining the results of the study. 35% of Ukrainian-speaking students, 5% of Russian-speaking, 15% of bilinguals and 45% of those speaking a mixed dialect communicate in the Ukrainian language in the Ukrainian-speaking environment. It is the bilingual, rather than the dialect-speaking students are more reluctant to switch to Ukrainian. The desire to speak a state language is less in case of mastering and practicing another language when compared to the case when a national language has been strongly influenced by the coexistence within one state.

The confusion of linguistic consciousness, inadequate self-perception as a speaker, a representative of one or another nationality, a low level of linguistic and therefore civic awareness and linguistic resistance as a manifestation of linguistic stability are viewed as consequences of a thoughtless linguistic policy in regard to the state language of Ukraine in previous years.

Instead, during university classes representatives of all these linguistic categories (Ukrainian, Russian, and dialect-speaking as well as bilinguals) speak mostly Ukrainian. Thus, the level of Ukrainian-speaking activity during classes is much higher than in everyday life or among population in general. Studying at a state educational institution, where lectures as well as practical classes are conducted in a state language, induces to use Ukrainian language. Neither a family nor a linguistic environment gives such encouragement to use Ukrainian language. In addition, a language sample of pure, literary Ukrainian language may not be presented in students' families or environment. Except for a language sample offered (during classes) and promoted (e.g. during breaks and educative involvements) by teachers may provide learning or improvement of the language.

One can observe the cases when students for whom Ukrainian language is a mother tongue switch to a mixed dialect (11%) in their family lives. This situation does not occur during their studying. The language environment at the educational institution is therefore cleaner than outside. This testifies to an undisputed authority of the institution itself, its academic staff and, of course, the Constitution that defines the Ukrainian language as a state language. The educational institution is the place where a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect is almost absent from the classes, and besides the state Ukrainian language occurs more confidently as compared to the family and street life. Statistics shows that during breaks where the teachers' assessing and controlling the quality of language is absent, young people still speak mostly Ukrainian, regardless of what language they consider their mother tongue, irrespective of what language is used in everyday life or in a circle of peers. Both bilingual and dialect-speaking students are becoming more proficient in Ukrainian.

A person's linguistic consciousness is a part of his or her consciousness, which is examined in connection with a man's personality, national mentality (national outlook, the complex of all national cultural heritage) as well as the strategy and tactics of speech behavior (when a language is regarded as an element of general

human culture). Thus, the level of a person's language development equals to the level of a person's linguistic personality and related realities: general and linguistic culture in particular, linguistic consciousness and connected with it mentality as well as linguistic self-esteem.

It is a curious fact that Russian-speaking students perceive Ukrainian as their mother tongue and their native language as a language of their own country, illustrating a direct dependency: *a mother tongue is the language of my country*. In our view, such a relationship between a mother tongue and a language of the country is conditioned by the state status of the Ukrainian language. Thus, law and language policy are currently a significant factor in creating a positive image of the Ukrainian language among youth. The young people's recognition of the Ukrainian language as one of the attributes of the Ukrainian state confirms the fact that the state in particular is currently creating an image of the Ukrainian language, promoting it and supporting it at all levels. The point of view that is not shared by dialect-speaking students induces to ponder an issue of a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect and its negative influence on the civic position and linguistic personality. However, it is one thing to perceive the Ukrainian language as an attribute of statehood, to recognize it as a prestigious one and to be proficient in it, and another is to communicate in everyday life. The manifestation of an imaginary, false, and therefore unsteady patriotism, inferior civic position as well as imitation of a holistic linguistic personality can still be observed among a great number of young people (It is worthwhile mentioning that 52% of students are speaking a mixed dialect).

The attempt of dialect-speaking students to use the literary language during classes is regarded to be a positive thing. This demonstrates an indisputable authority of the Ukrainian language (as a state language) and teachers who act as its native speakers. Such concepts as "Higher education" and "Mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect" are obviously contradictory in their minds. Therefore, the present-day higher education is a powerful factor in the development of a state language and strengthening its status and authority among young people.

Ukrainian-speaking students (girls and boys) believe that the Ukrainian language is prestigious in Ukraine nowadays. Russian and mixed dialect-speaking students as well as bilinguals, whose number makes up 13% of all respondents, entertain doubts about the prestige of the Ukrainian language. 1% of the respondents believe that the Ukrainian language is not prestigious.

When calculating the results of the survey, we were impressed by the number of girls (42%) using a mixed dialect in everyday life. This is 26% of the total number of all respondents. Considering that girls are future mothers who will take care of children in kindergarten or at school, and that the child's vocabulary is normally formed before a child reaches 5 years, it is possible to predict that the number of mixed dialect-speaking citizens will considerably grow in a decade if the government doesn't influence the language situation. Thus, in the absence of decisive actions on the part of the state, Ukraine will receive more than one generation of mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect-speaking Ukrainians with a low level of linguistic awareness, with inadequate linguistic self-esteem and a covert civic position, which

is part of a poorly formed linguistic world-image. Will such citizens be able to build a Ukrainian state if their mentality related to the linguistic personality is not fully expressed at the language and linguistic consciousness levels?

**Conclusions:** Our research has proved that language proficiency is a key to adequate perception not only of oneself as the speaker, but also of one's linguistic environment. Adequate linguistic self-esteem and an adequate linguistic world-image are based on knowledge but not on ignorance of the language, i.e. a complete linguistic personality is formed. A person using a literary version of a language is able to distinguish pure language from a mixed dialect. This person also has adequate linguistic self-esteem and assesses his linguistic environment in a proper way.

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