



# Social and Cultural Situation in the Context of Linguistic Policy in Ukraine 50-60th of the XXth Century

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## Abstract

The article considers the peculiarities of the social and cultural linguistic situation in Ukraine in 1950s-1960s. A special attention is paid to the fact that there was a Ukrainian-Russian way of communication that was a result of the active and purposeful implementing of the Russian language into all spheres of social life of soviet Ukrainians. The authors prove that the purposeful russification, damaging and discreditation of the Ukrainian language slowed down the development of Ukrainian national culture. It has become a threat for consolidation and development of Ukrainian nation. In the result, nowadays we deal with the linguistic incompetence and the low level of realizing the national self-identity of Ukrainians who started to depend on historical realias. The study of the development of the Ukrainian language at various stages of its formation is very important. It helps to understand the causes and find ways to solve many modern language problems. Thus, an this article is an actual and important scientific research. Authors study such important issues as the linguistic incompetence of Ukrainians, the existence of bilingualism, the priority of the Russian language and the influence of Russian culture, the low level of national self-awareness, national self-identity, and others. the authors made a thorough analysis of the peculiarities of the linguistic situation in Ukraine in the 1950s and 1960s, studied the content, factors and implications of the linguistic policy of Soviet power in Ukraine, outlined the prospects for future research in this field.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, books publishing, linguistic policy, national identity, russification, social and cultural situation, surzhyk, vocabulary, the Ukrainian language.

## 1. Introduction

The existence of current linguistic problems in Ukraine has its roots in cultural deformations inherited by the soviet totalitarian regime. Colonial policy of the soviet authority and communist ideology dominance caused limited development of many life spheres of the community. These processes are noticed in the linguistic sphere.

The Russian language managed to replace and change Ukrainian as the language of communication on the big territory of its spreading. It complicated the development of Ukrainian and interfered the realization of extremely important national language function which is nation consolidation. It is suggested to examine the peculiarities of language situation in Ukraine during the 1950s-1960s, the main methods for realization of this cultural policy by the soviet authority.

It was period of Khrushchev's "Thaw" - liberalization period. This period characterized by partial democratization of Stalin's totalitarian regime and implementation of liberal reforms in all spheres of life. This is about easing autocratic regime, stopping of mass terror and repression, decreasing of ideological control over the population and expansion freedoms and opportunities for citizens. Liberalization also took place in the language sphere, but no fundamental changes occurred. But liberal reforms were inadequate and fundamentally did not change the foundations of

the totalitarian system. The Soviet authorities took a principled position on this issue – the position of purposeful and total Russification.

The linguistic policy of the soviet authority was determined by certain official documents. In particular, it is: "The Law on Languages Equality in Ukraine" adopted in 1927 by the Council of People's Commissars; articles № 40, 110 and 121 of the USSR Constitution, and the same articles №109, 120 of the Ukrainian SSR; The USSR "Law on Strengthening the Connection Between School and Life and on Further Development of the Social Education in the USSR" adopted in 1958 and the same law in Ukraine adopted in 1959; new National program accepted by the 22nd convention of the USSR communist party (November, 17-31, 1961), and other documents and legislative acts.

According to the law, in all Soviet Republics, Russian had an international language status, so, it was on a priority. At the same time, it was allowed to pass acts, hold a court meetings and studying in the native language. In Ukrainian Republic, it was in Ukrainian. According to this, the common used languages on the Republic's territory were Ukrainian and Russian. However, soviet authority has always tried to narrow the Ukrainian language sphere of usage.

The USSR "Law on Strengthening the Connection Between School and Life and on Further Development of the Social Education in the USSR" adopted on December, 25, 1958 (the

law in Ukraine was adopted on April, 17, 1959) and new national program accepted by the 22nd convention of the USSR communist party (November, 17-31, 1961) were showing a very planned and purposeful russification. Documents announced the idea of the “total merging of nations” and creating a new historical community, “soviet nation”, for which the common language would be Russian because those were Russians who played the main role in soviet history and socialistic achievements [1]; [2].

Soviet propaganda actively imposed a thought about the fact that the Russian language was “the second native” one for non-Russian people who live in the USSR. Thus, there was an intense learning of Russian in soviet republics, in Ukraine as well. In the result of such policy, people started to use Ukrainian-Russian language – surzhyk, the situation of artificial bilingualism appeared. Surzhyk means, preferably, “household speech”, which combines the lexical and grammatical elements of different languages without respecting the norms of the literary language. We suggest reviewing the methods of implementing russification in Ukraine more detailed.

The linguistic assimilation (russification) was made by means of official political, social and cultural life, army, recordkeeping, education, mass media where the Russian language was used. First, one of the main causes of this process was the educational system, starting from kindergartens. The Ministry of Education of Ukraine got large number of complaints in which Ukrainians showed their dissatisfaction with Russian-speaking kindergartens. «We, the mothers who live in Kyiv, protest and require only native language (it means Ukrainian) in kindergartens and similar institutes. Going to the kindergarten, our children do not understand other language but native. This, there can be no nurturing when kindergarteners talk to them in Russian», - it was written in one of the letters [3]. There were a lot of such letters, however that complains remained without an answer. The authority did not react to those addresses. Instead, it supported any initiative about implementing the Russian language into Ukrainians’ life.

Thus, the official linguistic policy promoted an increase of Russian-speaking educational establishments in the Republic. It was happening due to the decreasing number of Ukrainian schools (see Table 1: The number of Ukrainian-language and Russian-language schools) [4].

**Table 1:** The number of Ukrainian-language and Russian-language schools

Period, years	Ukrainian language schools, in percentages (%)	Russian-language schools, in percentages (%)
1948-1949	90	8
1955-1956	86	12
1958-1959	85	13
1959-1960	84	14
1961-1962	83	15
1965-1966	82	16

In large cities and industrial regions of the Republic, where a lot of Russians and other nations representatives lived, almost all schools were Russian-speaking. For example, in Crimean district only 3 schools were registered and in separate Crimean cities, - Torez, Zhdan, Komunarsk, Sevastopol, - there were none of them [5].

It is necessary to mention that there were more Russian-speaking schools in those cities, where the number of Ukrainians was very large. Particularly, in 1956 in Lviv where the percentage of Ukrainian population was 85% and Russian – only 8,5%, the percentage of Ukrainian-speaking schools was 43% and Russian-speaking – 52% [6]. Thus, it didn't correspond to Lviv dwelling national cast.

Except the Ukrainian-speaking educational institutions decreasing, there were some inner processes, which caused discrimination of the Ukrainian and its riddance in studying. In this way, Russian-speaking schools had a better financial and technical foundation,

educational, working conditions were perfectly. And teachers of Russian language and literature had a higher salary than teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature.

At the beginning of 1960s, there appeared a certain tendency of reducing the number of hours, given for studying the Ukrainian language and literature at school [7]. Gradually, the Ukrainian language knowledge has stopped to be required during entering the university in Ukraine. The whole studying process in the high school was mostly in Russian language, however there were more than 60% of Ukrainian students at high school [8].

The native language was also ousted in book publishing. The ideological policy of Soviet power was aimed at reducing the number of Ukrainian literature, books and periodicals. In particular, the part of the Ukrainian- language printed matter was less than half of all publications (see Table 2: The number of Ukrainian-language books in Ukraine (1960) [9].

**Table 2:** The number of Ukrainian-language books, brochures, newspapers and other editions in Ukraine (1960)

Period, years	of all (the total number of)	including Ukrainian - language editions
Books and brochures	7 889	3 844
Newspapers	3280	2692
Other editions	369	192

Ukrainians often drew the attention of the authorities to the need to expand Ukrainian-language newspapers, magazines, fiction, textbooks, and other books. But the power reacted only at the request of citizens to increase Russian-language printed products [10].

It is necessary to mention that, agitation political and linguistic literature was published in Ukrainian. Instead, popular, educative and scientific literature was mostly in Russian. In 1958, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR did not publish any scientific papers on higher mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, physiology, medicine, etc. B. Antonenko-Davydovych, a famous Ukrainian writer, publicist and linguist, speaking to the participants of republican conference which occurred on 11-15, February, 1963 in Kyiv National University, mentioned: “It is very sad that today there is almost no technical literature edited in our native language. And when a writer managed to print his book in Ukrainian, it was a very small print run of 500-1000 copies” [11].

In 1963, according to the information of the USSR Central Institute of Bibliography, one of the biggest scientific and technical publishing houses of Ukraine – “Tekhvydav” (“Tekhnika”) – published 121 books in Russian and only 32 in Ukrainian (includes books for universities in Russian – 11, in Ukrainian – 1) [12]. In 1963, the state publishing of architectural and civil engineering literature edited 122 books in Russian and just 11 in Ukrainian. Medical literature publishing house edited 188 and 54 respectively [13]. Even agricultural literature publishing mostly for Ukrainian-speaking citizens was in Russian language.

Republican publishing houses explained the reasons of such disproportion by a low demand of the population on Ukrainian literature and its unprofitability. In the result, the funds of bookshops, newsstands, libraries and educational institutes consisted of Russian literature predominantly. For example, in the biggest Poltava library – Poltava Regional Ivan Kotliarevskui Library – on January, 1, 1956 there were 45 111 Ukrainian books (about 20% of the total) and 180 510 in Russian (about 80% 20% of the total) [14]. In 1959 Kharkiv Scientific Volodymyr Korolenko library received 117 193 books, 3,6% of which were in Ukrainian and 84,8% - in Russian [15].

Famous Ukrainian writer, K.Hryb, analyzing the books in Kyiv schools libraries, wrote with a great sadness that Ukrainian schools practically did not have Ukrainian books for schoolchildren. The books’ percentage was very low [16].

Radio, theatre and cinema were actively used as tools for russification. In particular, the republican radio gave the great part of their ether to transmissions from Moscow and its broadcasts were only in Russian. Besides this, a lot of broadcast held by the republican radio were in Russian.

It was a difficult period in the development of Ukrainian scientific terminology. This period is characterized by a complete stagnation in the development of Ukrainian terminology. Despite the fact that Ukrainian science was developing, the Ukrainian terminology in that industry was not used, since there was no need for textbooks or dictionaries in Ukrainian. For more than 40 years only a few works (monographs, textbooks) have been published in Ukrainian.

The Dictionary Commission was created by Academy of Sciences of USSR in 1957. It was headed by an academician I. Shtokalo. Its task was to publish 18 Russian-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Russian dictionaries. However, the result of the Commission's work was publishing of 16 Russian-Ukrainian terminological dictionaries. None of Ukrainian-Russian ones was published.

Special "Recommendations of the All-Union Meeting on the Development of Terminology in Peoples of the USSR Literary Languages" were adopted, which prompted "nations confluence" policy and "friendship of peoples" in the language issue in 1961.

In the 1970s, all specialized scientific journals of the USSR Academy of Sciences on natural and technical sciences were translated into the Russian language edition, which led to further Ukrainian scientific and technical terminology Russification [17].

During the 70s- 80s several conferences were held (Zhytomyr, 1976; Kyiv, 1978, 1980 and others). The problem which was discussed was scientific and technical terminology. The participants of the conferences mentioned in their speeches that the main source of development and replenishment of Ukrainian terminology was the Russian language. It was considered to be positive and the only possible way. As a result a part of Ukrainian terms was replaced by Russian ones. Those borrowings which were not represented in the Russian language were removed. Loan translations were actively supported.

Such terminological policy of the Soviet Union caused the loss of individual features of Ukrainian terminology. The latter almost turned into a copy of Russian terminology. During several decades Ukrainian scientists were in a conceptual field of the cognate Russian language. This language penetrated the consciousness of Ukrainians so strongly that sometimes only a specialist can differentiate Ukrainians and Russian forms. The Ukrainian language took those terms of the Russian language which are used with an inappropriate meaning. Loan translations built with deviation from norms of Ukrainian word formation.

B. Antonenko-Davydovych, with total dissatisfaction claimed that there were more Russian theatres in Ukraine than Ukrainian ones [11]. So, In Lviv only 1 theatre out of 7 was Ukrainian-speaking. Out of 50 theatres-studios, founded in Ukraine at the beginning of the 1980s, only 2 were Ukrainian-speaking. All musical comedy theatres were also Russian-speaking. Almost all performances were held in Russian.

Cinema, the most popular type of arts also was almost total in Russian. Ukrainian film studios had to present films in Ukrainian in Russian dubbing. Moreover, the ideological propaganda through soviet TV was showing the idea that the Ukrainian language was not prestigious. It had a low status. This, of course, made the Russian language and culture popular and caused its fastening in Ukrainian culture.

There was a purposeful interfering into the inner structure of the Ukrainian language on the lexical and grammatical levels. At that time, reedited academic dictionaries, the rules of Ukrainian orthography, books, different manuals etc, showed that a lot of words and terms that are not appropriate for Ukrainian were artificially implemented from the Russian language. As the

result of the Russian language dictate and the usage of Russian words, phrases, lexical and grammatical forms copied, the great Ukrainian part of words, unique lexical units and phrasalisms were not actively used.

As a result of the total russification, Ukrainians demonstrated the interest towards learning Russian and using it in everyday life and communication. The data about the increasing number of students in Russian-speaking schools witnessed that. Thus, in 1959, the educational reform, which gave a right to people to choose the language for their children studying, was accepted. Official data shows that Ukrainians gave their preference to Russian-speaking schools: in average, there were 190 students in one Ukrainian-speaking school and 524 in Russian-speaking [18]. Even in Sumy, Khmelnytsk, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia where the Russian population was less than 10%, there were more than 50% students studied in russian-speaking schools.

The choose of Ukrainians to learn the Russian language can be explained by its prioritized status in Ukrainian Republic and USSR. As it was mentioned above, the majority of books, journals, newspapers and professional literature was written in Russian. Studying, clerical work and military service were also held in Russian. It has become obligatory for servants to know Russian in Soviet Ukraine. So, the Russian language was more profitable, perspective and necessary.

Moreover, the Russian language was more upscaled. Those, who spoke it, informally belonged to the "upper" class of society and those, who spoke Ukrainian – accordingly to the "lower" one. Ukrainian as the language for studying and communication was losing its status and became a prerogative for the countryside. It was supposed to be the language of serfs, villains and peasants.

That's why, most of Ukrainians were ashamed to talk in Ukrainian in order not to associate themselves with backward village. Coming for studying or working on factories, the rural youth was changing Ukrainian into Russian very fast. As a result, the everyday usage of Russian was significantly expanding. The number of Russian-speaking Ukrainians was growing. First, it was happening on industrial territories: in Crimean, Donetsk, Luhansk, Odessa and other districts.

At the same time, it is necessary to mention that fast Russian language support did not work out. The countryside population was speaking mostly Ukrainian. Thus, about 80 % of people were speaking Ukrainian in Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Chernihiv, Khmelnytskyi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Lviv, Volyn districts and others. Another 20% who were changing to Russian language, as a rule, did not fully refuse from Ukrainian. That is why, surzhyk, illiteral and full of Ukrainian and Russian words language, becomes the everyday language for most Ukrainians. It caused the linguistic incompetence of millions of Ukrainians who became dependant on historical realities.

A big part of Ukrainian intellectual liberal community also continued to speak Ukrainian. Furthermore, deep deformations in national and language policy caused a protest among conscious Ukrainians and were a start to renew a native language protection movement. Central governmental bodies, newspapers editorial offices and other publishing houses received many letters about illegal supplantation of Ukrainian or about complete russification.

B. Antonenko-Davydovych, I. Drach, D. Pavlychko, N. Uzhvii, M. Bazhan, O. Honchar, L. Dmyterko, S. Kryzhanivskyi, N. Rybak, M. Rylskyi, M. Rudenko, T. Franko, M. Shumylo and many other famous Ukrainian culture representatives spread Ukrainian, fought for Ukrainian culture and showed their dissatisfaction about the linguistic policy of soviet authority in the letters to local newspapers and magazines.

For example, O. Dovzhenko, a well-known Soviet Ukrainian director and writer, wrote about it in his diary: "Everything in the Ukrainian republic, where 40 million people live, is in Russian language... This situation does not exist anywhere in the

world ... This is unthinkable, immoral ... This is a hard deception ... And sorrow and shame ... " [19].

Another well-known Ukrainian writer A. Malishko took an active public position on the protection of the Ukrainian language. He openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the policy of Russification. He spoke of outright and unlawful discrimination of Ukrainian culture and language [19, 65]. Such views of the poet dissatisfied with the authorities and condemned such criticism [20].

The majority of participants of the Third Society of Ukrainian Authors plenary session, which occurred on January, 10-11, 1962 in Kyiv, also spoke about the Ukrainian language and culture falling off. In particular I. Muratov sharply criticized the linguistic policy of the authority and the party. He claimed, "because of such policy, the whole culture is threat" for Ukrainian nation and its culture [21].

V. Kushnir, a student of the historical faculty of Uzhhorod National University, left the following notes in his diary: «Ukraine [...] is gradually suffocating with Moskow. There is almost no Ukrainian in Ukraine [...] The Ukrainian language is replaced by other words "[22].

For these words, V. Kushnir was expelled from the university and released up to 5 years in prison in the colonies. In the staff report, the head of the department of science and culture of the Central Committee of the CPU noted the existence of the misconception of Ukrainian citizens on the current state and future of the Ukrainian language and literary criticism among students of the Faculty of Philology of the Kyiv National University [23].

The main question was the one about the common status of Ukrainian language in the society and on the republican conference in Kyiv in 1963 about the Ukrainian language culture, which was organized by Kyiv National T. Shevchenko University and Linguistic Institute of the USSR Science Academy. More than 800 teachers, writers and scientists took part in the conference. Participants judged the theory of nations bilingualism and talked about spreading of the Ukrainian language usage and elimination of artificial blocks for its development. With the aim of overcoming the visible deformations in the linguistic policy of Ukraine, the participants brought to a focus a chain of requirements to authoritative bodies. They wrote about studying in Ukrainian in all educational establishments, in kindergartens, promoting the native language in institutions and enterprises, in trade etc., giving a state support to publishing houses and cinematography [24]. However, recommendations have not been implemented.

Ivan Dzyuba showed these issues in his work "Internationalism or russification" (1965). This book-manifest played a great role in awaking the national consciousness in a massive denationalized society. The author was truthful about the policy of Russification. Pointing out that this poses a great threat to the further development of the Ukrainian nation. Russian language and culture will gradually eliminate the Ukrainian language and culture, and even completely eliminate it. The Soviet power began to persecute the writer for such views and thoughts. It was evaluated as a protest against official policy.

Even some politicians, in particular, S. Chervonenko, the Secretary of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine on the culture and education issues, P. Shelest, the First Secretary of Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine, S. Hrechukha, Presidium member of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine and Vice-head of the USSR Cabinet Council, believed that the Ukrainian language should remain obligatory for studying in Russian-speaking schools of Ukraine, it is necessary to expand the scope of its functioning [24].

The Ukrainian language issue worried even those Ukrainians who lived abroad and could express their thoughts with more freedom.

V. Hryshko disclosed this issue in his brochure "Who is supported by whom? Opened letter-answer to Yurii Smolych". "Having discussed the Ukrainian writer, V. Hryshko said about a large number of facts proving Russification in Ukraine: reducing the number of Ukrainian books, ousting the Ukrainian language for education, etc. He argued that for 40 millions there were very few Ukrainians in the Ukrainian literature. There are only a few thousand Ukrainians who need this.

Very often the quantity of that books was even higher than in the Republic. The author also paid attention to the fact that 8-10 millions of Ukrainians who are beyond the borders of the country in Soviet Union do not have any Ukrainian cultural life since there are no Ukrainian schools, publishings or theatres. [25].

Ukrainian miner from Russia also wrote about it: "Why people can't take in Ukrainian newspaper or magazine here? It is not possible to take any Ukrainian book in kiosks, libraries and book shops. Though, so many Ukrainians live here" [26].

For that reason, V. Svystun, the representative of Ukrainian diaspora said: «No Ukrainian state exists [...]. Everything is in Russian. Moskow destroys Ukrainian culture and implements its own» [27].

Consequently, we can state that in the 1960s a strong opposition movement emerged among the Ukrainian liberal intellectual community. This part of Ukrainians tried to fight against Russification, took Ukrainian language, popularized Ukrainian culture. So, we are talking about a temporary national cultural renaissance in the wake of liberal reforms.

However, a lot of requests and requirements about the Ukrainian language defense did not find a big organized support or even "understanding" from authority and were classified as the "nationalism indicators", "politically incorrect", "ideologically unhealthy", and even "menace" for soviet society. The Soviet authorities condemned such views, because they considered them dangerous for their existence. It also did not coincide with the official course of Soviet rule. The spreading of radical attitudes in society and the "danger" of others thoughts concerning the official linguistic policy caused the appropriate reaction of the state's government. During 1961-1964, many Ukrainians who tried to resist Russification of Ukraine were prosecuted by punitive bodies for their statements and views. They even were deprived of liberty (prisoners) [11].

With such nonconformity, the soviet authority hold a decisive and strong fight, so after some time, rebels against russification and movement for the Ukrainian language defense were oppressed. In the 1970's, the movement of resistance to the Russification policy of Soviet power was suppressed, liberalization was curtailed.

## 2. Conclusions

So, period 1950s-1960s are characterized as a period of liberalization. Liberal reforms did not touch the speech sphere. In this regard, the Soviet authorities took a principled position. The main postulates of the ideological system remained unchanged: total control over the life of society, the ideologization of culture and the existence of censorship. Such measures hampered the development of Ukrainian national culture, formed a nihilistic and indifferent attitude towards native history, traditions, language and literature, and limited the development of national consciousness.

These processes are clearly traceable in the speech sphere. We have a distorted linguistic situation, significant language deformations. This prevents the language from realizing an important function - the consolidation of the nation. It is the national language that plays an important role in the state-building process.

The analyses of soviet authority national and linguistic policy in 1950s-1960s, indicates the continuous and purposeful process of russification, which was happening in Ukraine.

Fast narrowing of using Ukrainian on the big territory of Ukraine, damaging and discreditation had negative consequences for its development. The process of the Ukrainian language slowing down negatively influenced on the Ukrainians national self-consciousness. Continues and purposeful linguistic assimilation significantly lowered the level of national self-consciousness and self-identification of Ukrainians, formed the complex of their language and culture deficiency. In the result, even now we have the dominative position of the Russian language, situation of artificial bilingualism, surzhyk usage, low language resistance and low prestige of the Ukrainian language. And despite the fact that assimilation did not reached its final goal, it weakened the firmness of the Ukrainian people, caused their dependence on the state which language they are speaking on, and also made a threat for Ukrainian society consolidation.

The Russian-speaking atmosphere in Ukraine, which was formed during the colonial period, prevents the spread of Ukrainian language and creates a conflict of languages. The overcoming of the consequences of assimilation and the elimination of language deformations should become a priority direction of the state's cultural policy. This implies an adequate increase in efforts by the government and public organizations to change the situation in favor of the Ukrainian language in order to restore the fullness of state-building functions to it.

Ukrainian language is currently undergoing intensive style development: its denominational style is reviving, modern political discourse is formed on a new basis, the formation of military terminology takes place. In some styles, in particular in the artistic and journalistic, partly scientific, the processes of expanding the vocabulary and phraseological composition, the intensification of dialect influences, and the return of derivatives in word-formation types and grammatical forms removed in the preceding period became more active.

Many spelling, terminological and lexicographic issues are waiting for their solution. In the field of linguistic politics, speech culture, one has to go from the false path of artificial convergence of the Ukrainian language with Russian and orient with the natural, determined by the historical tradition, ways of development, to return to the Ukrainian language the naturalness of sound, the expression, structure of sentence and phrases.

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