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## LANGUAGE POLICY OF UKRAINE: POST-COLONIAL TRADITIONS AND ANTI-COLONIAL TENDENCIES

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*The article describes common features of the colonial impact of Russia in the form of empire and the Soviet Union on the language policy of Ukraine, specifics of anti-colonial resistance, and post-colonial manifestations caused by the deliberate purposeful influence of pro-Russian politicians and the unconscious creation of norms of the Ukrainian language and foundations of the language policy under the influence of the inertia formed in the colonial society. Two aspects of Ukraine's language policy were highlighted: the codification of literary language norms and the legislative consolidation of the status of languages functioning in Ukraine, along with their specific uses across various aspects of social life. The article also describes the influence of Ukrainian linguists' inertia and the habit of perceiving Ukrainian-language phenomena through the prism of the Russian language, as well as the codification of the norms of the Ukrainian literary language by analogy with the Russian language. The article analyzes Ukraine's language legislation, which establishes the status of Ukrainian as the state language and addresses the languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities. It also examines the normative regulation of the Russian language before the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, when pro-Russian politicians systematically promoted its special status, limiting the use of Ukrainian and neglecting the languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities. Additionally, the article addresses the current status of Russian as the language of the aggressor and occupying country. The positive impact of the Council of Europe and its bodies' expert assessments on Ukraine's language legislation, particularly in ensuring the language rights of national minorities, has been demonstrated.*

**Keywords:** language policy, language legislation, language norm, state language, language of national minorities, language of indigenous people.

**Доценко О. Л. Мовна політика України: постколоніальні традиції й антиколоніальні тенденції**

*У статті схарактеризовано загальні риси колоніального впливу Росії у форматі імперії та Радянського Союзу на мовну політику України, специфіку антиколоніального спротиву та постколоніальних проявів, спричинених свідомим цілеспрямованим впливом проросійських політиків та неусвідомленим творенням норм української мови та засад мовної політики під впливом інерції, сформованої в колоніальному суспільстві. Акцентовано на двох чинниках мовної політики України: кодифікації норм літературної мови та законодавчому закріпленні статусів мов, що*

*функціонують в Україні, специфіки їх використання в різних сферах життя суспільства. Описано вплив інерції українських мовознавців, звички сприймати явища української мови крізь призму російської, кодифікувати норми української літературної мови за аналогією до російської. Проаналізовано мовне законодавство України, що визначає статус української мови як державної, мов корінних народів і національних меншин, а також особливості нормативного регулювання вживання російської мови до повномасштабного вторгнення Російської Федерації на територію України, коли проросійські політики послідовно та цілеспрямовано просували її особливий статус, обмежуючи сфери функціонування української та ігноруючи мови корінних народів і національних меншин, а також нинішній статус як мови країни-агресора, країни-окупанта. Продемонстровано позитивний вплив на мовне законодавство України експертної оцінки Ради Європи та її органів щодо забезпечення мовних прав представників національних меншин.*

**Ключові слова:** мовна політика, мовне законодавство, норма мови, державна мова, мова національної меншини, мова корінного народу.

## Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian relations in 30 years of our state's renewed independence are defined by a unique simultaneous combination of the colonial, anti-colonial, and post-colonial character of the socio-political attitudes of representatives of various population strata. O. Fedun, for example, wrote about this, analyzing the literary process and noting that colonial conditions do not disappear immediately after independence is proclaimed; rather, they persist over time (Fedun, 2001, p. 10). However, this applies not only to the cultural and artistic spheres but also to the political, legal, and linguistic spheres. The analysis of Ukraine's still-developing language legislation reveals a combination of three outlined strategies: anti-colonial (the first language law in the USSR, which established Ukrainian, not Russian, as the state language of the Union Republic), colonial (the consistent lobbying by pro-Russian political forces to diminish the status of Ukrainian and restrict its use in various spheres), and post-colonial (the continuous support of pro-Ukrainian politicians in response to Russian manipulations).

The article analyzes post-colonial trends accompanying state attempts to regulate language processes, marked by Ukraine's prolonged influence under Russian ideology. This influence occurred in two ways: through direct intervention by pro-Russian politicians in state language policy, aimed at limiting the use of Ukrainian, and through the inertia of Ukrainian politicians and linguists in developing independent language policy principles free of Russian influence. While the active influence of pro-Russian forces is evident in the regulation of language use in Ukraine – particularly in granting the Russian language special status, limiting the use of Ukrainian, and neglecting the linguistic rights of national minorities and indigenous peoples – there is also an unconscious influence of imperial standards on

Ukraine's language policy, especially in the codification norms of the Ukrainian language.

Given the sensitivity of the language issue in the context of Russian aggression, we consider it appropriate to consider key problems related to the clash of colonial pro-Russian approaches and anti-colonial tendencies in the language policy of Ukrainians. We consider it relevant to differentiate their manifestations in the system of legislative regulation of the functioning of languages in Ukraine, as well as in the procedure for fixing and codifying the norms of the modern Ukrainian literary language. The principal objective of our article is to underscore the conscious colonial influence of Russia and pro-Russian forces, as well as unconscious and post-colonial tendencies, that persist in this region, despite efforts to establish a unique system of language legislation and consolidate specific Ukrainian-language forms at the language system level, specifically in the original description and lexicographical sources. This is because identifying and eliminating these tendencies will help to bolster Ukrainian society around the Ukrainian language as the primary means of public communication in Ukraine and the representation of Ukrainian identity.

### **Methodological notes**

The methodology of postcolonial Ukrainian studies should become the subject of thorough scientific study to develop effective methods for analyzing the Russian influence on the language system and the peculiarities of the functioning of languages in Ukraine. It also requires the attention of scientists, and linguists in particular, to substantiate the specifics of Ukrainian realities and develop a professional terminology system for postcolonial studies that is adequate to Ukrainian realities and understandable to Western scientists. After all, the traditional perception of postcolonialism does not correspond to the formal status of Ukraine, which objectively was not a colony either in the Russian Empire or in the Soviet Union. However, a significant restriction of the right of Ukrainians and other indigenous ethnic groups of Ukraine (Crimean Tatars, Krymchaks, Urums, Rumeys, etc.) to express their own national identity and develop and function in their languages was caused by deliberate intervention organized by the state authorities of the empire in both language systems and in the language situation and language policy. Unfortunately, the consequences of such influence, to a greater or lesser extent, we still observe in various spheres of Ukrainian life. Therefore, as M. Wingender rightly notes about the work C. Levisen and E. Sippola, «Postcolonial linguistics is understood as an umbrella term for "language in postcolonial contexts" and

"postcolonial approaches to the study of language" (Levisen & Sippola, 2019, p. 1) as well as (post)colonialistic practices in multilingual language situations» (Wingender, 2025, p. 9). Analysis of the extent to which Russian imperial policy influenced the way languages and their systems functioned in Ukraine is urgently needed, as is the development of strategies to eliminate the detrimental effects of colonial traditions on Ukrainians' daily lives.

In selecting the methodological techniques of our research, we are guided by successful cases of postcolonial studies, in particular, the work of M. Wingender, in which the language situation in Ukraine is investigated from the perspective of «(post)colonialistic practices in multilingual language situations, which include, for example, language bans, hierarchization of languages in multilingual states or assimilation policies» (Wingender, 2025, p. 12). To identify and analyze them, current Ukrainian legislation and historical regulatory documents were analyzed, as well as the main means of codification of the Ukrainian language: spelling and academic dictionaries.

### **Theoretical Background**

The relevance of postcolonial studies is evidenced by the considerable attention paid to this problem by representatives of various fields of knowledge. Linguistic studies also actively address the problem of the post-imperial, postcolonial status of the Ukrainian language. Ukrainian methodological and linguistic postcolonial studies are being developed by linguists from both Ukraine and abroad: A. Danylenko, S. Del Gaudio, M. Wingender, N. Kobchenko, L. Pidkuimukha, N. Yasakova and others.

In 2025, the issue of the journal of the National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" "Language: Classical – Modern – Postmodern" was dedicated to the problem of postcolonial linguistic studies. In the foreword to the publication, Professor N. Kobchenko rightly noted that postcolonial linguistic studies in the context of Ukraine «has greater importance due to Russia's full-scale invasion, as it facilitates the understanding of the anticolonial nature of this war and decolonial processes of wartime» (Kobchenko, 2025, p. 5).

### **Results and Discussion**

The normalization of the literary language is a crucial factor in Ukraine's language policy, as it affects public sentiment. It can provoke both irritation and reluctance to learn Ukrainian, as well as full approval, leading to societal polarization

and disputes over certain norms and innovations. The codification of literary language norms is clearly influenced by linguists' political preferences, which, in turn, shape their development. For Ukraine, the standardization and normalization of the language – especially the codification of such norms – are highly sensitive issues, as they are tied to a 70-year history of the Soviet authorities' artificial, ideologically driven efforts to bring the Ukrainian and Russian languages closer together. In fact, there was a deliberate and systematic destruction of the Ukrainian language system, starting with the adoption of the Ukrainian orthography in 1933, which replaced the balanced orthographic code of the Ukrainization era – the Skrypnyk orthography, implemented in 1928. Unfortunately, Ukrainians still use the Soviet-based spelling, as the state institutions responsible for shaping the norms of the Ukrainian language have not yet fully escaped the influence of the Russian worldview. This has once again hindered the adoption of a spelling system that would better align with the structure of the Ukrainian language. Linguist and professor Larysa Masenko, a leading researcher at the Institute of the Ukrainian Language of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, discussed this in an interview with Yulia Borysko on the 'Yellow Sneakers' channel. She focused on the attempt to adopt one of the best versions of Ukrainian orthography, developed by a group of linguists led by Doctor of Philological Sciences Vasyl Nimchuk. Attempts to approve a spelling variant that aligned with the Ukrainian language system were resisted by the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which adhered to pro-Russian Soviet linguistic standards. Larysa Masenko described the events of 2001 as follows: "Masenko: I was present... Some people voted <...>, to adopt the spelling. I was with Nina Klymenko. Well, but... a whole group of opponents has gathered, saying, "We should stick to the 1933 spelling." This includes Petro Tolochko and a few other individuals, some of whom previously wrote denunciations. You know, we didn't have any lustrations. A lot of people remain in high positions who, during Soviet times, faithfully served the regime <...> And they messed up the spelling. They said, it can't be adopted. They were in the majority, while the defenders were fewer in number.<...>

*Borysko:* Was it the pro-Russians who did it, or was Moscow's strong influence more veiled?

*Masenko:* Pro-Russians, pro-Russians. Those were people who were used to following all party instructions.

*Borysko:* Even if the party no longer exists in its former form?

*Masenko:* It's as if the party no longer exists, but some inertia remains..." (Feminityvy ta inshi bytvy ..., 2024). Even after 10 years of renewed independence,

pro-Russian lobbyists within the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine were so powerful that Ukrainian scholars could not overcome them. Unfortunately, the 2019 spelling reforms largely ignored the norms proposed in the 2001 version, developed by the group led by Vasyl Nimchuk.

In 2019, the Ukrainian Orthographic Commission carefully renewed some specific Ukrainian forms by introducing two options: retaining the older form, such as 'rosyish,' and adding a new Ukrainian-specific form. For example, they kept the letter combination "au" by using "ay" in borrowings from Ancient Greek and Latin, reflecting the stable tradition of two orthographic options. *аудінція and авдінція, аудиторія and авдиторія, лауреат and лавреат, науза and навза*" (Ukrainskyi pravopys, 2019, p. 162) etc. Example where spelling is perceived through a prism of the Russian language: spelling of the surnames *Джигарханян (Dzhyharkhanian), Жильєрон (Zhylieron), Тажибáев (Tazhybáiev), Чиковáні (Chukováni), Абаши́дзе (Abashydzhe), Вáшингтón (Váshynhtón), Тсусерон (Цицєрón)* in § 144 "Slavic Surnames and Names" of the applicable Ukrainian Spelling, where clause 7 «Representation of the Russian letter "и"» states: «by letter "и"» а) after *дж, ж, ч, ш, щ* and *ц*, and before consonants: *Дорóжин (Dorozhyn), Лóчин (Lochyn), Чíчиков (Chychukov), Гáршин (Harshyn), Шíшкін (Shyshkin), Гóщин (Hoshchyn), Щиглóв (Shchyhlov), Цеці́лін (Tsetsylin)*, which is also true for the surnames of the other peoples: *Джигарханян (Dzhyharkhanian), Жильєрон (Zhylieron), Тажибáев (Tazhybáiev), Чиковáні (Chukováni), Абаши́дзе (Abashydzhe), Вáшингтón (Váshynhtón)*, etc. including *Чингісхán (Chynhiskhan)*; but *i* must be used before vowel: *Жіонó (Zhiono), Туціáн (Tutsian), Циолкóвський (Tsiolkovskiy)*" (Ukrainskyi pravopys, 2019, p. 177). This version of presenting "surnames of other nations" is included in the section on writing Russian proper names, rather than in the subsection "Vowel Sounds and Letters for Vowels" in Chapter III, "Spelling of Words of Foreign Origin". This is because many of these surnames originate from the languages of nations that were part of the USSR, such as Armenian and Georgian. However, it is difficult to explain the inclusion of surnames like such as *Váshynhtón, and Тсусерон* in this context.

A similar situation arises with the codification of lexical norms. N. Yasakova thoroughly examined the influence of ideological factors on lexicographic practices in Soviet Ukraine. After thoroughly studying the 11-volume Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language (1970-1980), the researcher noted that "due to the inclusion of certain words not characteristic of the Ukrainian language, their incorrect interpretation, and the selection of illustrations, the DUL contributed to the

integration of Russian cultural elements into the Ukrainian cultural space". For example, the lexemes *кулеб'яка* (*kulebyak*) and *щї* (*shchi*) are included in the dictionary, both illustrated by a questionable statement from the 1957 edition of *Ukrainian Dishes: Ukrainian cuisine has borrowed some dishes from Russian cuisine, which has enriched its variety. These dishes include shchi, solianka, pelmeni, kulebiaka, and others.* (DUL-11, v.4, p.390; DUL-11, т. 11, p. 589). The interpretations of both lexemes do not provide any information about the origin of the dishes, instead domesticating the corresponding names: «*KULEBIAKA*, -y, f. A long, large pie made of sourdough with meat, fish, porridge, etc." (SUM-11, vol. 4, p. 390); "SHCHI, shchiv, pl. A liquid dish made of shredded cabbage" (SUM-11, vol. 11, p. 589)" (Yasakova, 2023, p. 157). It is interesting to note that *kulebiaka* is also included in the new twenty-volume Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language, although it is marked as 'a dish of traditional Russian cuisine' (SUM 20). Despite the ideological clarification of the lexeme *kulebiaka's* meaning, we view its inclusion in the dictionary as a consequence of post-Soviet inertia, as Larysa Masenko discussed. This reflects a lack of critical understanding regarding the appropriateness of introducing elements of Russian culture into the linguistic and cultural space of Ukrainians. Moreover, this lexeme is practically unused in recorded speech, as evidenced by the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language, which provides only three examples of its usage. (Fig. 1. Use of the lexeme *kulebiaka* in the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language). Instead, the lexeme of one of the lexical-semantic groups of dish names with *kulebiaka* is *божрач* (*bohrach*), which has many more fixations in the corpus (Fig. 2. The lexeme *bohrach* is used in the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language. Although it is borrowed from Hungarian and reflects aspects of Ukrainian life, it is not recorded in the 20-volume Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language.

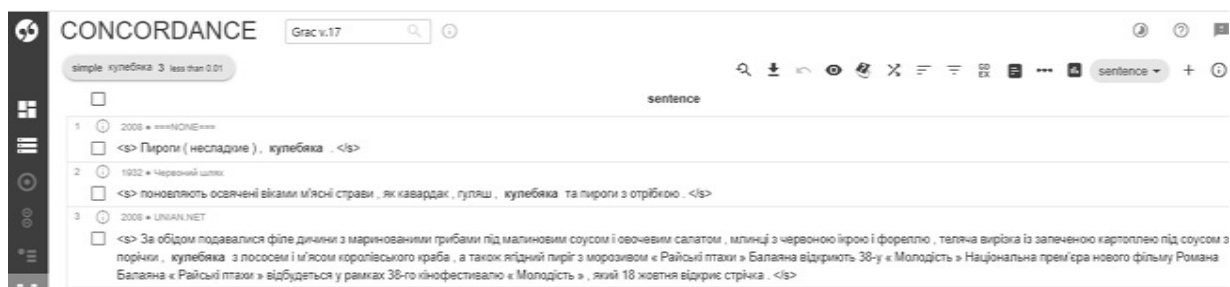


Figure 1. Use of the lexeme *kulebiaka* in the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language

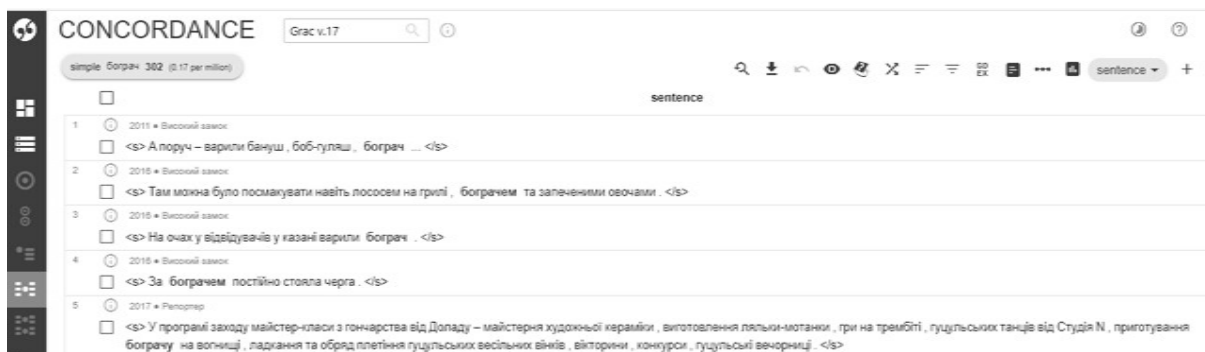


Figure 2. Use of the lexeme *bohrach* in the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language

Soviet ideology and its influence on Ukrainian lexicography also led to the fact that the Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language (1970-1980) lacked lexemes «a significant number of names referring to the members of nationalistic organisations, armed groups, and derived from the names of their leaders, e.g. *banderivets*, *bulbivets*, *melnykivets*» (Yasakova, 2025, p. 156), nouns denoting persons associated with the idea of Ukraine's political Independence (*derzhavnyk*, *samostiinyk*, *zhovtblakytynk*). The researcher explains this by saying that «the dictionary was created under conditions of total state control and ideological pressure, which changed according to the political situation in the USSR, but never ceased. Evidently, the traumatic experience of previous generations of Ukrainian linguists also impacted the research guidelines, way of thinking, and lexicographical practice of linguists» (Yasakova, 2025, p. 154).

Thus, modern Ukrainian lexicography remains influenced by imperial pro-Russian narratives, reflecting outdated Soviet ideological imprints rather than the realities of Ukrainian life. Now, "it is necessary to embark on the path of decolonizing consciousness at the linguistic level by thoroughly studying the colonial-totalitarian legacy in linguistics. This will help address the injuries caused and overcome the neo-colonial influences of Russia" (Yasakova, 2023, p. 139).

In the realm of normative regulation of language use in Ukraine, the deliberate influence of pro-Russian political forces has been, and continues to be, quite noticeable. Moreover, it is more expressive and aggressive now than it was during the formation of Ukrainian statehood in the 1920s. The power of the pro-Russian lobby in the Ukrainian parliament during the post-Soviet period significantly surpasses the post-imperial influence on language policy formation at the beginning of the 20th century. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Russian language was not granted any special

status in legislation, and the rights of national minorities were safeguarded in a way that did not provoke separatism. As stated, "On the territory of the U.P.R., no obstacles shall be imposed on the preservation and development of the culture of national minorities in all areas that do not threaten the state's integrity" (Proiekt Konstytutsii, 1921). At the same time, the cited document clearly defined the status of the Ukrainian language: "The state language in the U.P.R. is Ukrainian. All written requests to the U.P.R.'s institutions shall be applied in Ukrainian. If a citizen makes an oral request to the institution and is unable to do so in Ukrainian, he or she must use interpreter services. Judicial institutions, in legal proceedings, provide the defendant, witnesses, and (competent) knowledgeable persons (experts) who do not speak Ukrainian with a state-appointed translator who takes the appropriate oath" (Proiekt Konstytutsii, 1921). However, the 1996 Constitution of Ukraine contained a language article that became a compromise. The fact was mentioned many times by people's deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the 1st convocation, in particular by Yaroslav Kendzor: "Article 10 defining the language: "The state language in Ukraine is the Ukrainian language." First poll: 238 votes. 300... dream on... "The state language in Ukraine is the Ukrainian language. The state ensures comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of public life on the territory of Ukraine." We were discussing the article for two or three hours, until we could retain it. Some communists didn't vote. We had to write: "Ukraine guarantees free development, use and protection of the Russian and other languages of national minorities", otherwise it wouldn't be adopted. Even though Russian is also the national minority's language, for some reason, there is no Polish or Hungarian language. We had to compromise because they didn't vote - that's all" (Tyshchenko-Lamanskyi, 2022). The opposition between "Russian" and "other" languages in the Constitution is a typical consequence of Ukraine's post-colonial syndrome. On one hand, pro-Russian forces lobbied for a special status for the Russian language, while on the other hand, pro-Ukrainian deputies were compelled to choose between the options presented by these lobbyists. As a result, we are left with the shameful labelling of representatives of many peoples who are citizens of Ukraine with the pronoun "other".

When it comes to languages that differ from the language of the titular nation – Ukrainians – the opposition between "Russian" and "others", without naming these "others" or using an ill-conceived list, is a typical manifestation of the post-colonial syndrome. We can trace this dichotomy in most of the normative acts of the early 1990s, from the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR and the Law "On Languages in

the Ukrainian SSR" to the current Constitution of Ukraine. In the following years, lobbying by pro-Russian political forces for the special status of the Russian language grew stronger, and this occurred under the guise of caring for national minorities.

In addition to systematically narrowing the spheres in which the Ukrainian language functioned, pro-Russian political forces continued the imperial tradition of neglecting minority rights. "In the Russian Empire, numerous nationalities were excluded from official cultural discourse, viewed only as "speechless" objects, with voices and testimonies assigned to them by the imperial culture. "To a large extent, the relationship between the colonial center and the periphery is characterized by the "silence" of the latter (Sinchenko, 2016).

To this day, Ukrainian legislation has not defined a list of minorities for whom Ukraine is responsible for creating democratic conditions for life, development, and the use of their languages. At the same time, Ukraine has a very positive extensive in defining the language rights of indigenous peoples through the Law of Ukraine "On Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine", adopted by the Verkhovna Rada on July 1, 2021. This legislative act specifically declares the cultural, educational, informational, and linguistic rights of indigenous peoples, which include the Crimean Tatars, Karaites, and Krymchaks. Article 4 of the analyzed law guarantees protection against any actions aimed at any forced integration, against the European tradition of recognizing coexistence among different national and ethnic communities as social and civil integration. In countries like Poland, this is reflected in activities aimed at improving key aspects of life for minority groups, including living conditions, access to education, the labor market, social insurance, and health care. <...>Notably, part 4 of this article guarantees the state's commitment to researching, preserving, and developing the languages of Ukraine's indigenous peoples that are under threat of extinction." The implementation of these provisions will undoubtedly contribute to the harmonization of the lives of Crimean Tatars, Karaites, and Krymchaks within Ukrainian society (Dotsenko, 2022, p. 101).

Despite the high legal standard of the Law on Indigenous Peoples, which could serve as a model for creating a normative framework for the rights of national and ethnic minorities, it was not this law but the anti-constitutional, pro-Russian Kivalov-Kolesnichenko law – aimed at granting special status to the regional Russian language – that influenced the legislator when formulating the provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On National Minorities (Communities)". The situation is improved by oversight from the European Union, which Ukraine is striving to join. EU accession is contingent on meeting several requirements, including upholding the rights of

national minorities. Owing to the close supervision of the Venice Commission and other EU institutions, Ukraine approved a list of the languages of national minorities (communities) and indigenous peoples of Ukraine that are at risk of extinction (Cabinet of Ministers Decree No. 670, dated 07.06.2024, "On Approval of the List of Languages of National Minorities (Communities) and Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine that are at Risk of Extinction"). These are Belarusian, Gagauz, Yiddish, Karaim, Crimean Tatar, Crimean, Roma, Rumey, and Urum. Ukraine has also developed the Procedure for the Formation and Operation of the Centers for National Minorities (Communities), which have been functioning effectively, as evidenced by the published results of their activities. Only in September 2024, two large-scale events dedicated to the preservation of Ukraine's cultural diversity were held: The All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Forum "Greeks of Ukraine: Preserving Identity Amid Russian Aggression. Socio-Political, Historical-Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects"; and the Forum of National Societies of Lviv Oblast." Therefore, the European direction in the development of language policy has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the coexistence of Ukrainians, as the titular nation, with representatives of indigenous peoples and national minorities. It is also, without a doubt, the current driving force behind anti-colonial trends in Ukraine's language policy.

It is important to note that, in the context of the unprecedented military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Russian language has acquired a special status as the language of the aggressor country. This is reflected in Article 10 of the Law of Ukraine "On National Minorities (Communities)", which states: "The provisions of parts two, three, five, seven through eleven, and thirteen of this article apply to the languages of national minorities (communities) of Ukraine that are official languages of the European Union, languages of national minorities (communities) or languages covered under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, according to the Law of Ukraine "On the Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages", except for the national minority (community) languages that are the state (official) languages of the country recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as aggressor or occupying state". On the one hand, this provision significantly limits the use of the Russian language in public spaces, including during meetings, conferences, rallies, exhibitions, training courses, seminars, discussions, forums, and cultural or entertainment events. On the other hand, we can also see features of a post-colonial attitude towards Russian as a special language, which is not mentioned in a negative context in the article. The

euphemism "language of a national minority (community), which is the state (official) language of a state recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as an aggressor or occupying state" is clearly identified by Ukrainians as referring to the Russian language. However, this descriptive phrasing reflects a conscious or unconscious attempt to avoid vilifying the Russian language and Russians as an ethnic group, despite their role in the war against Ukrainians. Thus, granting a special status to the Russian language is accompanied by both anti-colonial tendencies and, unfortunately, the post-colonial tradition of exalting the "elder brother".

The situation around the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, particularly the first attempt in 2000, is telling. That attempt was entirely focused on expanding the use of the Russian language, reflecting the traditional approach of its lobbyists. This attitude toward the Russian language, seen especially under the pro-Russian authorities of independent Ukraine, is evident in the way the law defines which minorities it applies to: "2: The provisions of Part III of the Charter apply to the languages of the following nationalities: **Russians**, Jews, Belarusians, Moldovans, Romanians, Crimean Tatars, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Greeks, Germans, Gagauz, and Slovaks" (Law of Ukraine No. 802-IV, 2003). In the Law of Ukraine "On the Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages", adopted by the Verkhovna Rada in 2003, the order of national minority names was changed to an alphabetical list, and the list itself was expanded. However, the document did not differentiate between national and ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples. According to the provisions of the law on the ratification of the Charter, national languages that are official in the countries where the respective nations are the titular groups (Belarusian, Bulgarian, Greek, Moldovan, German, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Slovak, and Hungarian) were granted the same legal status. This includes Crimean Tatar, the language of Ukraine's indigenous ethnic group, and Gagauz, the language of an ethnic group without its own state, with many of its Ukrainian representatives living in Bessarabia. Note that this law does not refer to the Roma and the Roma language. Some national minorities that have lived on Ukrainian territory for more than 100 years have also been neglected. For example, the Armenian language is not mentioned, despite the fact that Armenian communities have existed in cities such as Kyiv, Lviv, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Volodymyr, Lutsk, and others since at least the 15th century. It is evident that the framers of language laws were not overly concerned with the fate of the languages of the titular nation or the national and ethnic minorities of Ukraine. Instead, they focused on expanding the use of the Russian language, thus advancing colonial pro-Russian interests, for which

they acted as lobbyists. Unfortunately, the list of languages of national and ethnic minorities was not included in the recently adopted Law of Ukraine "On National Minorities (Communities)". However, this law has consistently narrowed the use of Ukrainian as the state language, particularly in areas such as external and internal advertising, book publishing, and distribution. The situation changed only in 2024-2025, when, at the request of the European Union and in order to implement the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine developed and submitted for consideration to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine a new official translation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The main goal of these changes was to exclude the Russian language from the Charter, and that is exactly what happened. However, close attention to the Russian language distracted attention from languages that should be protected in Ukraine. Only thanks to the active intervention in the situation of representatives of minority communities did the Urumqi, Rumei, Yiddish, and Roma languages get into the law On Ratification of European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages but Armenian never got into the list of endangered languages.

### **Conclusions and Perspectives**

Since Ukraine restored its independence in 1991, the country's language policy has been consistently influenced by the post-colonial status of Ukrainian and the languages of indigenous peoples, as well as national and ethnic minorities. These languages have been marginalized through systematic lobbying for the expansion of Russian by pro-Russian politicians and scholars. However, the anti-colonial resistance of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, supported by European organizations aimed at aligning Ukrainian legislation with EU standards, is increasingly becoming dominant in Ukraine's political system. This resistance will contribute to the formulation and implementation of a language policy grounded in democracy, the rule of law, and respect for every citizen of the state. This should be facilitated by the further development of postcolonial studies in Ukraine, the development of their methodology, and the study of negative colonial tendencies that we can still observe in the field of language policy and language use, in particular, the identified examples identified and described in our study. We consider the conscious and unconscious pro-Russian influence on the formation of the Ukrainian terminological system, in particular the legal one, to be promising for further linguistic understanding.

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