Surzhyk and National Identity in Ukrainian Nationalist Language Ideology[1]

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This article discusses how language forms are connected with conceptualisations of national identity in contemporary Ukrainian nationalist language ideology. It especially focuses on surzhyk a pejorative collective label for non-standard language varieties that dissolve the language boundary between the Ukrainian and Russian standard languages. Although most attention in Ukrainian debates on language and national identity is directed towards the complex relations between the two standard languages, surzhyk is considered an important problem, not the least among those for whom it is a major threat to the survival of the Ukrainian language.

The language situation in contemporary Ukraine

In contemporary Ukraine the language situation is characterised by shifting regional systems of asymmetric language relations, where Ukrainian and Russian as well as the mixed language varieties that result from their interaction form the main components.[2] The situation is further complicated by a discrepancy between ethnicity and declared mother tongue; in the last Soviet census (1989) 72.9% of the population considered themselves ethnic Ukrainians, while 64% stated Ukrainian as their mother tongue.[3] According to surveys conducted annually (1992–2000) by the Kyiv Institute of Sociology (NAN) this last figure has since then remained virtually the same.[4] The same surveys confirm the existence of an even wider gap between declared mother tongue and actual language use, since not more than 39% of the respondents claim to use only Ukrainian with their family.[5] The number of persons claiming to use only Russian in the same context has during the 1990s risen to 36% and widely exceeds the number of ethnic Russians (22.1% in 1989). The remaining 25% of the respondents claimed to use both Ukrainian and Russian in their family depending on the situation, a figure which interestingly enough has diminished from 32% in 1992.[6]

If there are some data available on code-switching between Ukrainian and Russian, code-mixing (surzhyk) between the two eastern Slavonic languages is a statistically more elusive phenomenon. Due to the non-occurrence of surzhyk in censuses and the virtual non-occurrence of it in sociological surveys it is impossible to provide reliable information on the number of users. Every answer will, as states the writer and culturologist Maksym Strikha[7] depend on the definition of surzhyk, on how much a speaker has to mix his speech to make it count as surzhyk. According to Strikha, the number of people who more or less constantly use surzhyk, trying to shift to standard *Russian* or Ukrainian is not less than 20 percent of the population.

In a survey conducted in 1997 in an urban Kyiv school, 7–8 percent of the ethnic Ukrainian pupils claimed using surzhyk in contacts with their parents and grandparents.[8] The fact that surzhyk in the survey not was given as a formal alternative but was added spontaneously by some respondents gives reasons to assume that the actual number might be higher.

The lack of congruence between ethnicity, declared mother tongue and actual language use has made some researchers propose a three-fold division of the Ukrainian population: Ukrainophone Ukrainians (40%), Russophone Ukrainians (33–34%) and Russophone Russians (20–21%).[9] Although this division is more sociologically relevant than one relying solely on ethnicity, it is important to note that it, especially in the case of the Russophone Ukrainians, defines categories of analysis rather than conscious, coherently acting social groups.[10]

As regards language relations on the regional level, the main dividing line is traditionally drawn between a mainly Ukrainian speaking western Ukraine and the predominantly Russian speaking eastern and southern parts of the country. Although this to some extent is a fair description it should not be accepted without some qualifications. In eastern and southern Ukraine during the 19th and 20th centuries uneven status relations made urbanising local peasants change to Russian in an effort to adjust to city life. The predominance of Russian, which has been strengthened by migration from central Russia, is not, however, complete. In the oblasts of Charkiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovs´k and Zaporizhzhia code-switching between Ukrainian and Russian is more common in informal domains than is the use of only one language, and there is still a not insignificant number of people in this area who claims to speak only Ukrainian.[11] In large areas of western Ukraine, where historically more favourable conditions existed for the spread of Ukrainian national consciousness, Ukrainian clearly predominates, even if Russian is quite widespread in urban centres.

Language ideologies in contemporary Ukraine

This article does not, though, primarily deal with the language situation, but rather with interpretations of it in Ukrainian nationalist language ideology. A language ideology is a model for how social or cultural differences are to be linguistically expressed. It codifies language norms and contains notions on which social functions a language variety should have (Schieffelin/Woolard/Kroskrity). It further defines who is to have access to economic, social and cultural goods. Notions on language and on social belonging linked to language can thereby

work as mechanisms of exclusion and social boundary markers. Since a language ideology always contains notions on the extra-linguistic qualities of the speech community it is directed towards, definitions of who belongs and who does not involve processes of language-based border-making. Language forms and speakers are thus placed inside, outside or sometimes in between the speech communities.

In Ukrainian nationalist language ideology the speech community is defined in national terms, and language-based boundary-making is taking place in the cognitive framework of ethnonationalism. What differentiates the nationalist language ideology from other Ukrainophone strands of thought on language and national identity is the sheer emphasis on Nation and Language as values in themselves, values that is often discussed quite independently from the individual members of the nation and speakers of the language.

Where the linguistic anthropologist Laada Bilaniuk in her ground-breaking analyses of language ideologies and non-standard languages in Post-Soviet Ukraine focuses on folk attitudes and interaction between ideology and social practice[12] this article provides an elite level textual study of one of the main Ukrainian language ideologies. Although the quotes in the paper from mainly, but not exclusively, professional linguists may differ in terms of context and style, their content is coherent enough to enable me to treat them as a part of the same, nationalist, language ideology. Some of the quotes can be said to be part of the referential ideology storage of Ukrainian nationalist thought.

It is important to stress that the basic tenets of Ukrainian nationalist language ideology are represented in other similar European language ideologies as well. Many of its more distinct features can to a large extent be seen as reactions to the political and sociolinguistic contexts of statelessness, competing national identity projects and subtractive bilingualism.

The nationalist language ideology competes with other language ideologies in discussions on language and national identity in Ukraine. On the Ukrainophone side of the main dividing line in the discussions during the 1990s the nationalist language ideologists have lost some ground to the post-colonialists, a more disparate group of Western-oriented intellectuals. Making references to Fanon and other thinkers in the international post-colonial discourse, the Ukrainian post-colonialists discuss the ethnolinguistic situation in Ukraine in a context of colonialism. They seek to promote the Ukrainian language not as a value in itself, which is often the case in the nationalist language ideology, but in order to enhance the social emancipation of Ukrainian-speakers. Their language ideology defends as tenaciously as do the nationalists a language and a culture they consider threatened, but does this from a perspective of the speakers as social beings, not only as carriers of the language.[13] The social position of Ukrainian-speakers in eastern and southern Ukraine is compared with the situation of Blacks in the American South. One leading post-colonialist, the poet and journalist Mykola Ryabchuk proposes the introduction in Ukraine of the American concepts of positive discrimination and affirmative action in order to raise the social status of Ukrainian-speakers in these parts of the country.[14] Apart from the post-colonialists, there are other Ukrainophone strands of thought that do not so heavily as do the nationalists rely on language as the main marker of Ukrainian national identity.[15]

There are a number of competing notions on language and identity matters among Russophone language ideologists in Ukraine as well. They argue, sometimes on liberal, more often on ethnolinguistic grounds, in favour of raising the formal status of Russian and against perceived policies of Ukrainisation.[16] An analysis of the Russophone language ideologies is, however, beyond the scope of this article, as is an analysis of language policy in contemporary Ukraine.[17]

The nationalist views on the link of language to the nation do, I would argue, reflect an influential position among language ideologists in Ukraine. The Ukrainian nation has been conceptualised mainly through its language since the 19th century, and romantic notions on the essentiality of nations and languages and on their correlation is often accepted on a common-sense basis.[18] Although Ukrainian nationalism may well be, as argues Andrew Wilson, a minority faith, the nationalists form one of the most distinct ideological camps in Ukraine.

Language forms, social groups and boundary-making

The nationalist views on surzhyk shade light on how linguistic variation is given social meaning in language ideology. Linguistic variation in and by itself does not automatically carry any fixed significance for collective identity. Instead, in situations of widespread contact between closely related language varieties, extra-linguistic processes take on immediate importance in the delimitation of language systems inside the dialect continuum.[19] The concept of language ideology makes it possible to understand the processes that give social meaning to language forms and shape notions on the relationship of language to social identities. A language ideology places perceived systems of language forms in relation to other perceived systems of language forms. It further works as an identity narrative, relating language forms to culture and community, in this case national community, viewing language forms as either inside or outside of the community's linguistic repertoire. Language ideologies thus form vital components of larger national identity narratives.

If, as is often the case in discourse on Ukrainian national identity, language is seen as the first and foremost marker of that identity, boundary-making in the field of language becomes a central task for cultural entrepreneurs. In 19th and early 20th century discussions on the linguistic relationship between Ukrainian and Russian the search

for linguistic borderlines was not only a matter of classification and geographic distribution of language forms, it was also a qualitative question of what the borderline separated: two dialect systems of the same All-Russian language, or two separate although closely related languages. In the Ukrainian case, the period open for alternatives in the nation-building process lasted from the 1830s up to the first decades of the 20th century, when the All-Russian project collapsed with the disintegration of the Tsarist state.[20]

Discussions on which language forms should be accepted as normative in Standard Ukrainian are carried on in contemporary Ukraine. Speakers are asked to make choices of words and grammatical constructions that conform to the language ideology of entrepreneurs that strive to maximise or minimise language differences in relation to other languages. Ukrainian nationalist language ideology has traditionally emphasised variants that differ from Russian, while during large parts of the Soviet period Soviet Ukrainian linguists, recognising the separateness of the two languages, often chose variants closer to Russian at the expense of those closer to Polish or stemming from Western Ukrainian dialects.

Surzhyk would hardly have become the concern it is for Ukrainian language activists if Ukrainian and Russian were not conceptualised as comprising separate language systems. Not surprisingly, an emphasis on the need for clear-cut boundaries between the two languages has been apparent among Ukrainian language activists in contemporary Ukraine. One Ukrainian linguist argues that in a bilingual situation it is the ability to differentiate between the two languages that decides the level of culturedness and education of an individual speaker.[21] In *Anty-Surzhyk* from 1994, the linguist Oleksandra Serbens'ka writes: "Anty-Surzhyk aims to help Ukrainians understand the laws of the separate existence of two languages Ukrainian and Russian".[22] The norm-breaking function of surzhyk is one of the reasons behind the negative attitudes towards it that prevail in Ukrainian nationalist language ideology.

Individuals and groups that do not conform to clearly established formulas of identity can be referred to as liminals. From the perspective of the in-group, liminals are not considered to be as different as members of the out-group, but are at the same time refused full in-group status. It will be argued that the users of surzhyk often are liminalised in the Ukrainian nationalist language ideology. It is, though, important to keep in mind that liminalisation in the nationalist language ideology not necessarily equals liminalisation in Ukrainian society as a whole.

Surzhyk linguistic and social connotations

Surzhyk is a pejorative- compare hodge-podge- collective label for a wide range of mixed Ukrainian-Russian and Russian-Ukrainian language forms that dissolve and intertwine the structures of the two Eastern Slavonic languages[23]. Originally it was a name for a mix of rye and oat resulting in poor quality bread. A third meaning of surzhyk can be found in Hrinchenko´s early 20th century Ukrainian dictionary and signifies a person of mixed ethnic origin.[24] Although surzhyk in modern usage seldom refers to mixed grain or mixed ethnic origin, there exists no definition that covers all linguistic and socio-cultural connotations of the term. Its main linguistic characteristic is that it implies norm-breaking, non-obedience to or non-awareness of the rules of the Ukrainian and Russian standard languages, while its main social characteristic is low status for the language varieties as well as for their carriers.[25]

There is no agreement on when linguistic law-breaking becomes surzhyk; for some, like the linguist Svyatoslav Karavans´kyi[26], surzhyk begins already in pronunciation, when Ukrainian is spoken with Russian phonetic interference (akanie, yekanie), for others the term implies code-mixing on yet other linguistic levels. The definition of surzhyk given by the standard Ukrainian dictionary underlines the importance of language contact and code-mixing: "Elements of two or more languages, artificially united, not obiding by the norms of the standard language; a non-pure language".[27] There is general agreement among Ukrainian linguists on this point: what differentiates surzhyk from other non-standard language varieties in Ukraine (slang, criminal jargon, territorial dialects) is the fact that it oversteps the Ukrainian-Russian language boundary.

Because of the dominant role of language in conceptualisations of Ukrainian national identity surzhyk gets into the middle of discussions on the social and cultural legacy of Russian and Soviet rule. In the heated Ukrainian discussions on language and national identity, any language form that in some way can be regarded as a result of Russian interference may be analysed as a sign of *surzhyfikatsiya*.

The emergence of surzhyk

To understand the emergence of surzhyk as a linguistic phenomenon and as an object for discussions on national identity it is necessary to focus on the interrelated processes of modernisation and language shift from Ukrainian dialects to Russian on the one hand, and on the reconceptualisation of Ukrainianness and its relations to Russian culture on the other.

As regards the latter, the American historian P. R. Magocsi has developed a concept for understanding how the intelligentsia in late 19th century Russian Ukraine gradually reconceptualised the relations of Ukrainian culture to imperial Russian culture.[28] Earlier the Ukrainian elite viewed Ukrainian-Russian relations in a framework of multiple loyalties; it was considered possible to be simultaneously a local Little Russian patriot and a loyal servant of the

Imperial state. The concept of multiple loyalties came partly to rest upon the concept of the All-Russian nation; an imagined community rendered official support by the Tsarist regime. Beginning in the 1840s, the multiple loyalties concept faced increasing competition from mutually exclusivist notions, according to which Ukrainian and Russian were two separate Eastern Slavonic languages of two separate nations, following the linguistic classification often referred to as Eastern Slavonic. In spite of the at times severe repressive measures taken by the authorities against popularisation of Ukrainophile ideas in Russian Ukraine, the concept of separate nations slowly came to gain the upper hand, a process culminating in the break-down of the competing All-Russian project in the wake of revolution and civil war.

This reconceptualisation has important implications for the interpretation of Ukrainian-Russian code-mixing. If Little Russian is a dialect, all linguistic interaction is taking place inside the All-Russian language. If Ukrainian and Russian are separate though closely related languages of separate Ukrainian and Russian nations, all cultural border crossing is taking place between distinct national cultures. With the institutionalisation and shaping in social practice of separate Eastern Slavonic nations discussions on surzhyk are firmly placed in a context of competing national languages and identities.

The linguistic varieties known as surzhyk emerged when Ukrainian peasants from the end of the 18th century increasingly came into contact with a Russian-speaking environment, a development that was closely knit to the modernisation of Ukrainian society. This process accelerated when industrialisation facilitated working-class migration to Ukrainian cities from Central Russia and made parts of the Ukrainian peasantry urbanise. The Ukrainian cities, hosting the Russian civil and military administration as well as cultural, business, church and educational facilities, soon became areas of linguistic Russification. This was the starting point for one of the classical dichotomies in east, central, and southern Ukrainian modern history- between an as urban, modern, and prestigious perceived Russian and as rural, obsolete and non-prestigious perceived Ukrainian language and culture. Reacting to this difference in status, the urbanising peasants tried to incorporate as many Russian words as possible in their speech in order to adjust to the new language and cultural environment. In these parts of Ukraine surzhyk has served as a transitional stage in the language shift from Ukrainian dialects to Russian, a function important to have in mind when confronted by the fierce positions taken on surzhyk by Ukrainian nationalists.

Given the emergence of mixed language varieties as linguistic consequences of individual strivings to achieve higher social status under conditions of uneven status relations, Ukrainian nationalists in independent Ukraine sometimes have difficulties in discussing language shift or code-mixing on the collective level without condemning the linguistic practices of individual speakers. As we will see, the nationalist language ideology gives moral valence to language forms they consider to be pure Ukrainian and that clearly differ from Russian. As is often the case in purist ideologies, the involved ideologists render moral superiority to those who can most closely identify themselves as belonging to the preferred language base.[29]

Surzhyk has survived to our days partly as a result of new waves of urbanisation to mainly Russian-speaking cities, partly because urbanites that master standard Ukrainian or Russian can use mixed language in informal situations, in communication with their family, relatives and close friends.

In independent Ukraine, the conditions for non-standard language use have partly changed. Although negative stereotypes toward Ukrainian still prevail in eastern and southern Ukraine standard Ukrainian has been elevated to the position of sole state language. In some sense, as argues Bilaniuk, the main dividing line in language status relations in contemporary Ukraine is now drawn between the two standard languages on the one hand and the non-standard varieties on the other.[30] If surzhyk earlier was associated with urbanising Ukrainian peasants, the state language status of standard Ukrainian sometimes in official contexts results in educated Russian-speakers mixing languages in their attempts to speak or write a Ukrainian language many of them do not master to perfection.[31]

If traditionally the streets or the bazar are important locations for surzhyk, in the 1990s it was regularly heard during sessions in parliament. Trub notes the occurrence in parliament of Russian surzhyk, when Russian-speaking deputies include elements of standard Ukrainian vocabulary in their Russian speech, a fact that for Trub reflects the growing importance of Ukrainian as a language of prestige and power.[32]

Surzhyk is still, though, most often used in small or middle-size cities, rayon centras, in villages around the large city zones, where peasants have regular contact with the city, in suburbs with a large number of newly urbanized inhabitants. It can be heard in all parts of Ukraine where the Russian and Ukrainian languages meet, but takes on a local colour under the influence of dialects and the local sociolinguistic conditions. There is no specific surzhyk-speaking region in Ukraine.

The second part of the paper seeks to describe the Ukrainian nationalist language ideology by quoting from contemporary Ukrainian discussions on language and national identity. Although no coherent account of the history of the language ideology will be provided, a few key earlier statements frequently reproduced in contemporary discussions are included. Firstly, the role given to language for the nation will be examined, after which I proceed to analyse the attitudes to surzhyk that are prevalent in the ideology.

The functions of language
in Ukrainian nationalist language ideology

Native language (*ridna mova*) is a central concept in formulations of Ukrainian nationalist ideology. The individual Ukrainian is seen to be united with his nation through the native Ukrainian language. The native language is often conceived of as a natural, almost biological phenomenon that is transmitted from the mother and provides the child with the collected experiences of his nation: "With the milk of his mother/.../ the child imbibes native sounds and words that lead it to the sphere of a national world view, a national feeling for and understanding of the world."[33]

This common notion on the native language follows from a primordial, essentialist concept of the nation, prominent in many language-based nationalisms[34]. The link between language and nation was expressed in 1918 by one of the founding fathers of Ukrainian nationalist language ideology, the linguist and orthodox metropolitan professor Ivan Ohiyenko: "Language is not simply a symbol of understanding, because it is formed in a certain culture, in a certain tradition. In this way the language is the most distinct expression of our psychology, the first guard of our psychological selves/../ And as long as the language lives, the people will live on as a nationality."[35]

This statement has since independence often been quoted in Ukrainian publications on language, and the organic qualities it gives to language and nation reflect a recurring theme in general nationalist language ideology.[36] A similar thought is expressed by a Ukrainian linguist in the 1990s: "Language is the spiritual habitat of the nation. Without it the nation dissolves into empty space, disappears. Its heart stops, its historical memory stiffens, its reason grows numb."[37]

Another theme, universally prominent in nationalist language ideology is the dividing of the world into nations, each with a native language, reflecting the Weltanschaung of the nation, a world-view which is linked to the territory and formed by the experiences of the ancestors.[38] The linguist Marharyta Zhuykova expresses it this way: "The character of the language (what Wilhelm von Humboldt called its inner form) is not accidental- every nation carries in the language the most central traits of its world view, which has been shaped under specific geographical conditions as a result of an inimitable historical development."[39]

Native language, individual development and native language competence as marker of culturedness

In Ukrainian nationalist language ideology the individual is seen to be socialised by a native language that provides him with moral values and a world view that explain to him his place in time and space. The native language hence plays a role for the individual that no other language can. Even if the individual learns other languages, there is only one native language which relates him to the world around him: "An individual can master several languages depending on his abilities, inclinations and strivings, but best and most thorough the individual of course has to master the native language. And this not only because he communicates on an every day basis in this language, which he acquired at a young age, but also because the native language is an inseparable part of the native land, the voice of its people and an enchanting instrument, the sound of which reflects the finest and most tender strings of the human soul."[40]

Arguing against the concept of two native languages prevalent in Soviet sociolinguistics , the politician and historian Mykhaylo Kosiv explains why an individual can have only one native language, and discusses the consequences for an individual of being confronted with two languages regarded as native: "Can a human being really voluntarily choose his native language, his nationality? This is a mockery of the very natural essence of man, because they are one, united and unchangeable in every individual. And when we, beginning from the earliest age and in kindergarten, burden the intellect of the child with two languages that we regard as native, the psyche of the overwhelming majority of children cannot endure this, and a deep conflict develops on the psychological level as a consequence of which the language development of the child is retarded: individuals with no or half a language grows up, cruelly robbed and insulted. "[41]

The notion of the existence in an individual of two native languages as harmful has deep roots in nationalist thoughts on the connection between language and nation. The 19th and early 20th century Ukrainian linguist Oleksandr Potebnya warned against educating children in a non-native language until the native language had been able to provide them with a stable world view.[42] The second language is seen to distort the connection of the individual with his native language, depriving him of a safe moral ground on which to stand.[43]

Another characteristic feature of the nationalist language ideology is that the individual is seen to have obligations towards his native language. In Ukrainian thought this was most clearly expressed in the Commandments of the Native Language, proposed 1936 in Warsaw by professor Ivan Ohiyenko in his journal Ridna Mova. The commandments were republished 1993 in a Ukrainian university textbook on the history of the Ukrainian standard language, where they are followed by calls for the students to reflect upon how the commandments are being realized by individuals in Ukraine today.[44] The commandments are as follows:

1. The language is the heart of the nation: if the language vanishes, the nation vanishes, too.

2. A person who denounces his native language hurts his nation in its very heart.

3. The standard language is the main motor in the development of the nations spiritual culture, its strongest foundation.

4. The use in literature only of dialects strongly damages the cultural unity of the nation.

5. A nation that has not created its own common literary language cannot be called a conscious nation.

6. Every nation can have only one standard language, one pronunciation and one orthography.

7. The main native language obligation of every conscious citizen is to work for a rising of the culturedness of his standard language.

8. The state of the standard language is a measure of the cultural development of the nation.

9. The spiritual maturity of every individual, as well as the maturity of the whole nation is judged first and foremost by the culture of its standard language.

10. Every conscious citizen has to know in practice his united standard language, its pronunciation and united orthography, as well as recognise and fulfil the native language obligations to his nation.

Ohiyenko, who founded what he called the science of the native language (*nauka ridnoyi movy*), is frequently cited in writings of Ukrainian language activists in independent Ukraine. The concept of the individuals having obligations to their native language is alive in Ukraine today. In a methodological guide for teachers and linguists, supported by the Ivano-Frankivs´k oblast´ administration, the editors´ direct attention to the native language obligations of every teacher, pupil and citizen, otherwise "the Ukrainian statehood, language and nation will not be reborn in our generation"[45]. An issue of the educational society Prosvita´s journal is devoted to "the Ukrainian language, its strength, successes and problems, to the native language obligations of Ukrainians"[46].

In accordance with a tradition prominent both in nationalist and Soviet language ideology, special attention is directed towards the individual's obligations to his native language in texts by linguists working in the fields of *kul´tura rechi* and language stylistics.[47] In a common line of argument, it is stated that an individual's overall level of culturedness can be judged by the way he speaks his native tongue. In a 1996 Ukrainian dictionary from this sphere of linguistics, the authors claim the following: "Every educated person ought to develop a feeling for the language, ought to be able to choose from many possible variants the most exact, stylistically suitable and expressive, the one that best would fit the concrete situation. It is necessary to widely use the richness of synonyms in the Ukrainian language, zealously care for its pureness, avoid unjustified loan-words and language elements from beyond the standard language/.../ The language of an individual is a special litmus paper which reveals his general level of culture, education and inner intelligence. The fostering of a high level of language culture bears witness of our love and affection to the native word, of our respect for our nation and its century-old traditions."[48]

In Ukrainian nationalist language ideology the individual is seen to have one native language which carries a world view that is specific for his nation and provides him with guidance for a stable personal development. The individual has a moral obligation to protect and foster his native language. If he fails to do this, by outright language shift or by distorting it with foreign words and grammatical features, he threatens the language boundaries of the Ukrainian nation.

Surzhyk in Ukrainian nationalist language ideology

Resulting from language contact between a high status Russian and low status Ukrainian language, surzhyk is regarded as a consequence of Russian and Soviet political and cultural dominance. The nationalist language ideologists strive to cleanse the Ukrainian language of surzhyk elements by raising the linguistic awareness of Ukrainian-speakers.

Surzhyk is in a way more fundamentally provocative for the nationalist language ideology than the fact that many ethnic Ukrainians use standard Russian in everyday communication. Both phenomena dissolve the notion of clearly defined natural national communities with clearly defined cultural assets, equally distributed among their individual members. The existence of a large number of Russophone Ukrainians is a result of linguistic assimilation and – it is assumed – leads to a corresponding loss of national identity of members of one nation to another. Surzhyk goes one step further in questioning the presumptions of the nationalist language ideology. The speaker of surzhyk who has allowed his Ukrainian language to be corrupted by elements of a foreign language without mastering that language, represents a sort of cultural dead zone between the Ukrainian and Russian cultures and is by many nationalists not considered to be a full member of any of them.

A recurring theme in nationalist writings on surzhyk is that language contact resulting in mutual exchange of language elements is a natural phenomenon as long as the norms of the different languages are upheld and the exchange does not jeopardise the uniqueness of the contacting languages. If on the other hand the independence of the languages is threatened by the exchange and mixed language forms take root in the language, language contact is considered harmful. Oleksandra Serbens´ka in *Anty-Surzhyk* puts this in the following way: "The development of contacting languages, among them Ukrainian and Russian, has without question its own laws. When an individual brings words and combinations of words from another language into his language use without ruining the grammatical structure and phonetic distinguishing features of Ukrainian, keeping its beauty intact, using its inexhaustible lexical and phraseological richness, the process is natural and does not call for any objections. However, by arbitrarily

mixing words from the Ukrainian and Russian languages, by declining them and uniting them according to the Russian pattern, by building phrases in defiance of the models of the native language, the carrier of the language non-deliberately becomes "half-lingual"[49] .

After having referred to cases of interaction between Ukrainian and Russian, the well-known writer and linguist Borys Antonenko-Davydovych takes a similar position: "Such cases of interaction are completely natural and unavoidable under the conditions of communication of nations and cannot lead to any objections, if certain words and combinations of words are transferred not artificially or incorrectly, but emerge from the demands of life itself, settling down on the firm ground of another nation. It is not good when a person with a poor mastering of Ukrainian or Russian, or of them both, mixes both languages, confuses their words, declines the words of one of the languages according to the grammatical demands of the other one."[50]

In other words, language contact is natural whenever it does not, as does surzhyk, dissolve the boundaries between the languages involved.

Apart from undermining the language boundary by dissolving the language structure of the Ukrainian language, surzhyk is considered a threat to the specific Ukrainian world-view that is expressed through the language. Referring to the linguists von Humboldt, Potebnya and Hrinchenko, the author of a study on urban Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism, whose theoretical assumptions are fiercely critical to surzhyk, writes: "…But there is one more expression of assimilation- a more dangerous one: a lowering of the linguo-national consciousness of the people. In the times of the totalitarian regime and the rule of simplified sociological approaches the influence of language on thinking was underestimated, and especially merciless was the critique of the Humboldtian assumption that thinking is the kingdom of language, which defines a number of notions on the surrounding world, creating its nationally unique world view. This thought was continued by O. Potebnya, who stressed that the native language is a foundation of the national psychology. The native language secures the normal existence of ethnic communities. "As our language is, so our thoughts will be, Muscovite language leads to Muscovite thoughts (B. Hrinchenko)."[51] (Emphasis in the original. NB)

In *Anty-Surzhyk* surzhyk is seen as mixing the heritage from the past with foreign elements: "Today the word surzhyk is being used in a wider sense, as a name for the degraded, squalid spiritual world of an individual, for his isolation from what is native, as a name for a mix of remnants of the past, of what belonged to the ancestors, with the foreign, which levels personality and national-linguistic consciousness."[52]

Surzhyk in nationalist language ideology thus dissolves the Ukrainian-Russian language boundary on a structural level, by code-mixing and norm-breaking, but also on a psychological level, by distorting the bonds between the individual ethnic Ukrainian and a Ukrainian native language that is to serve him with the world-view and moral values of the nation.

As surzhyk linguistically is a liminal phenomenon, so the users of surzhyk in the nationalist language ideology are liminalised as they are not considered to speak neither standard Ukrainian nor Russian, but language mixes in between. A surzhyk-speaker who does not try to raise his level of speech risks being condemned by nationalist language activists. The poet and politician Dmytro Pavlychko writes: "Our language needs the fire of love, it needs spiritual strength! And one who breathes in surzhyk cannot have spiritual health."[53]

In a poem published in a methodological guide for language teachers, a surzhyk-speaking woman is described in a language full of scorn and moral indignation: "...it seems to her that the native word is not worthy of praise, therefore she despises her native word, it seems to her that the Russian word is more cultured, and she does not see that everyone laughs at her, because she is now neither Russian, nor Ukrainian, just a stupid, unreasonable woman, she does not respect either herself, or her nation and brings shame both to herself and to her kin."[54]

The surzhyk-speaking woman in the poem is as a result of her speech-habits seen as not possessing any distinct national culture. The absence of a national culture makes her become a laughing-stock and render her uncultivated. She is also reprimanded for not acting as a responsible Ukrainian native language speaker. By not fulfilling her native language obligations she is not contributing to the maintenance of the Ukrainian-Russian language boundary and thus isolates herself from the Ukrainian community.

In this way, an individual whose speech habits dissolve and intertwine the Ukrainian and Russian standard languages not only risks being condemned as a threat to the uniqueness of Ukrainian culture on the collective level, but is also regarded as having lost her bonds to her native culture, bonds which are seen to be a precondition for a stable personal development.

To understand the attitudes towards individual surzhyk-speakers expressed in the nationalist language ideology it is important to note that liminalisation in the language ideology does not necessarily equal liminalisation in Ukrainian society. Although surzhyk regularly is associated with lack of education and culturedness – values crucial to a society confronted with the forces of modernisation-surzhyk-speakers have reached important positions in the economic and political life of both Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine. For many urbanising peasants in eastern and southern Ukraine surzhyfication of speech (often perceived as language shift to Russian) was part of the adaptation to city life and was, as a result of prevailing language stereo-

types, probably considered more fit to urban conditions than dialect speech or, later, a shift to standard Ukrainian. Memories of social traumas of the Soviet 1930s did not do anything to counter those tendencies.[55]

Conclusions

The views expressed in the nationalist language ideology are not the only conceptualisations of language and national identity in contemporary Ukraine. Several important tenets of Ukrainian nationalist language ideology- the emphasis on standard language use, the native language-nation link, negative attitudes to non-standard speech-are however on a common-sense basis often accepted by large segments of Ukrainian society. Since few of the concepts prevalent in the ideology are of Ukrainian origin they reflect a common nationalist ideological heritage existing in many European nationalisms. The existence of a nationalist language ideology with deep roots in Romanticism in a sense therefore corresponds to normality and should probably not be considered by itself harmful to the development of Post-Soviet Ukrainian society.

There are, though, some problematic aspects of the nationalist language ideology, especially when the discussions on the consequences of Russian and Soviet rule for language use and national identification turn into condemnation of individual speakers of non-standard language varieties. Individual surzhyk-speakers are in the ideology not accepted as living inside the Ukrainian ethnic boundary under equal conditions with individuals whose Ukrainian speech habits are considered normative. Making language use a tool for social exclusion risks counteract the emancipating aspects of Ukrainophone argumentation.

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Interview conducted by the author: Maksym Strikha, 24th October 1998.

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1 This article is a part of an ongoing PhD project on language ideologies and non-standard language varieties in Ukraine. A pilot study for the thesis was conducted in Kyiv, October-November 1998 under the auspices of the research project ”European Unity in Diversity”, led by Senior Lecturer Karina Vamlings.

2 This article does not take into account neither ethnic minority languages, which in some regions (Hungarian in Transcarpathia, Romanian in Bukovyna) have an impact on the language situation, nor territorial dialects.

3 Zastavnyj pp. 110–111.

4 Golovakha/Panina p. 3.

5 Ibid p. 4. This number has slightly risen during the 1990s from 36.9% in 1992.

6 Ibid p. 4.

7 NB:s interview with Strikha in Kyiv, 24th October 1998.

8 Burda p. 3.

9 Khmelko/Wilson p. 75. These figures do not account for code-shifting or code-mixing.

10 For this point see Kuzio p. 154.

11 Golovakha/Panina p. 5. The latter category in these regions comprises between 14.8% and 22.2% of the respondents.

12 Bilaniuk 1997, 1998.

13 See the linguist Larysa Masenko for a language ideologist that combines the nationalist and post-colonial approaches.

14 Ryabchuk 1998 pp. 12–13.

15 See for example Kas´yanov and Hrytsenko (b).

16 For important texts see Grinev, Malinkovich and Svistunov (ed). For an extreme view see Zheleznyi.

17 For an analysis of discussions on bilingualism and language policy debates in contemporary Ukrainian language ideologies, see Bernsand. For an interesting account of Ukrainophone and Russophone discourse on language policy see Stewart.

18 See Bilaniuk 1997 for a study on the folk acceptance of this view.

19 The development of separate Scandinavian standard languages in a dialect continuum with a high degree of mutual comprehensibility is deeply connected with language planning by the competing Scandinavian states. See Vikør p. 108–117.

20 Miller, p. 236.

21 Trub p. 47.

22 Serben´ska p. 8.

23 In addition to mixes of Ukrainian and Russian there exist in Ukraine mixes of Ukrainian with other languages, phenomena which are sometimes referred to as *surzhyk*. Hence, there is Ukrainian-Polish *surzhyk* in Galicia and Ukrainian-Slovak in Transcarpathia. This paper, however, focuses on notions on language mixes of Ukrainian and Russian.

24 Hrinchenko p. 231. The example refers to an individual of mixed Ukrainian-Rom descent.

25 For the important point of speakers not being aware of the surzhyfication of their speech see Bilaniuk 1998 p. 83 and Flier p. 131. For the low status implications of speaking *surzhyk* see Bilaniuk 1998 pp. 149–151, 163.

26 Karavans´kyi pp. 9–10.

27 Slovnyk Ukrayins´koyi Movy p. 854.

28 Magocsi pp. 55–64.

29 Shapiro pp. 22–23.

30 Bilaniuk 1997 p. 95.

31 Bilaniuk 1997 p. 106. The pressure on civil servants to use Ukrainian should not, though, be exaggerated. For an account on the situation in eastern and southern Ukraine see Ryabchuk 1998 p. 12.

32 Trub p. 57.

33 Kosiv p. 116.

34 See for instanc the case studies in Barbour/Carmichael (eds).

35 Quoted in Hrytsenko 1998b s. 64.

36 Fishman pp. 25–27.

37 Fedyk p. 149.

[38] Fishman pp. 39–45.

[39] Zhuykova 1993 p. 123. For Whorfian influences in Ukrainian nationalist language ideology see Bilaniuk pp. 111–112.

[40] Antonenko-Davydovych p. 14.

[41] Kosiv p. 118.

[42] Vil´chyns´kyi pp. 13–14.

[43] This line of reasoning is far from unique to Ukraine (comp. the concept of semi-lingualism). Woolhiser (p. 65) argues that it was used by Non-Russian Soviet sociolinguists in the 1960s as the only politically possible argument against a strengthened role for the Russian language.

[44] Babych p. 373.

[45] Kalus´ka/Shumey p. 5.

[46] Prosvita No 7–9 2000 (front page headline).

[47] The relationship between nationalist and Soviet language ideologies is sometimes quite complex. Many of the themes of the nationalist ideology have equivalents in the Soviet linguistic subdisciplines of *kul´tura rechi* and *stilistika*. See Woolhiser for an interesting case study on sociolinguistics in Soviet Belarus.

[48] Hrynchyshyn et al pp. 14–15.

[49] Serbens´ka p. 6.

[50] Antonenko-Davydovych p. 19.

[51] Burda p. 1.

[52] Serbens´ka p. 6.

[53] Cited in Mova-dusha narodu p. 156.

[54] Kalus´ka/Shumey pp. 37–38.

[55] For an account on the results of the internalisation by the eastern Ukrainian population of Soviet social attitudes and stereotypes as a result of physical and structural violence see Ryabchuk 1999 p. 7.