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UNDERSTANDING PASSIVE BILINGUALISM IN EASTERN UKRAINE

Abstract:

This essay explores the linguistic profile of native Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine from a sociolinguistic point of view. It argues that the population of Eastern Ukraine is largely fluently bilingual, with Ukrainian as the second fluent but passive language. It further argues that a supremacist Russophile worldview often prevents even the bilingual individuals themselves from recognizing their bilingualism. Moreover, Lakhtikova critiques the polling data collected by governmental agencies as to the linguistic makeup of the Eastern Ukrainian population, which are skewed toward collecting information on (largely inherited) language *attitudes*, rather than on real linguistic *abilities* of the people living in the region. The argument shows how this collected data can be misleading, representing the linguistic profile of the Eastern Ukrainian population as monolingual. The essay further delineates the internal and external factors that influence people's motivation and ability to use Ukrainian actively, and what expectations of the majority of the Russian-speaking population in the East are reasonable or unreasonable, as regards switching to Ukrainian language in the public domain in the current *linguistic* environment. Finally, obstacles and inclusive strategies for increasing self-awareness of the Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine as Ukrainian citizens are discussed.

Abstract:

Eastern Ukraine ♦ passive bilingualism ♦ language ideology ♦ multilingualism ♦ Ukrainian language

In contrast, Russian-speakers prefer an upgrade of the status of Russian, which they present as a way to ensure the equality of speakers of the two languages but most of them actually want official bilingualism to let them remain unilingual in their capacities both as citizens and as employees.

—Volodymyr Kulyk, Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, May 2013. (Kulyk 2013)

We cannot give Russia the monopoly on the Russian language!

—Serhyi Zhadan, Ukrainian poet, author and activist, Eastern Ukraine, April 2016. (Zhadan 2016)

Introduction

Native Russian speakers' competence in Ukrainian language in Eastern Ukraine is simultaneously understated and overstated by conflicting political groups, depending on their pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian agenda. Perhaps because the issue of language has been so politicized and misused in manipulating the Ukrainian Parliament, electorate, and the choice of the president in the last two decades, it became a non-issue for many ordinary people. Divorced from any involvement in politics ever since real involvement in politics meant a certain death or an indefinite stay in a labor camp (Yurchak 2005), utterly disappointed by the ineffective Ukrainian government that had not changed much since the fall of the Soviet Union (and that, in fact, was largely run by the former communist elite), ordinary people simply carried on rather comfortably in both languages—even in Eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian is rarely spoken.¹ At least this was the case until the war started in 2014—that is, when the internal language question was skillfully and yet obviously used to mask the external invader. Immediately prior to the staged “protest movement” on February 23, 2014, the nationalist Ukrainian faction voted against legislation securing the regional status of the Russian language for a significant

portion of Ukraine’s self-identified Russian speakers: about 69% and 80% of the population in, respectively, the South and East according to the combined data of eight polls conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) from February to October of 2003 (Khmel’ko 2004).²

Some claim that the sudden sway of the pro-Russian faction members toward the pro-Ukrainian faction, which formed a majority and caused the Russian language to lose its status as a regional language literally overnight, had been long in works as a planned provocation that could ensure massive public outcry and raise fear of ethnic profiling.³ Indeed, both effects were used to disorient many Russian speakers in the now occupied regions of Donetsk and Lugansk to claim the existence of a separatist movement and illegally declare a Donetsk People’s Republic and a Lugansk People’s Republic (densely populated industrial regions) as independent from Ukraine. To a great extent, I claim, a significant portion of the Russian speakers were confused about their national identity and thought that it was a good idea to be “saved” by an autocratic regime, because they were unable to identify with the Ukrainian state by way of ethnicity, language, or (its ineffective) politics. In this essay, I shall focus on the linguistic profile of the Eastern Ukrainian population and examine why members of this essentially bilingual population did not recognize themselves as such and continued to consider themselves exclusively “Russian.” In other words, this case study will examine how politics and dominant ideology impact society’s self-perception in terms of mono- and multilingualism, and how this perception influences judgments about the population’s multilingual competence on all levels—by lay people, politicians, and scholars.

Ideology clearly impacts the people scholars study, and scholars are aware of this influence when they study subjects’ attitudes toward their language(s). However, *prima facie* attitudes and biases do not tell us everything because, as it turns out in the case of Eastern Ukraine, biased self-identification “under the influence” on a massive scale is often reflected in polls used by historians and social scientists to understand linguistic *reality*, not just people’s attitudes toward it. This leads to false conclusions about reality generally. The reality I seek to describe, by looking closely at polls conducted by KIIS between 1991 and 2004 based on self-identification, is the linguistic reality of people who live and function effectively in a bilingual society, and who are unaware of the fact that Ukrainian is indeed their second, passive native language. A significant portion of the work below, then, naturally focuses on the phenomenon of passive bilingualism in Eastern Ukraine, the difficulty recognizing it in the specific political environment and the

misconceptions about its limitations—voiced equally clearly in Ukrainian media, in programmatic political documents, and in scholarly works on the subject of Ukrainian language politics as well. Once the difference between the linguistic reality in Eastern Ukraine and the biases is identified, one can start planning how to educate both Russian and Ukrainian native speakers about the quality and value of the bilingual competence of native Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine. Despite the highly politicized nature of the “language” question in Ukraine, in discussing passive bilingualism of eastern Ukrainian citizens, I shall focus primarily on linguistics. My conclusions are not based on highly structured empirical research commonly used by linguists who study bilingualism, but rather on an analysis of the linguistic contexts available to Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine that foster passive, and hinder active, bilingualism. My understanding and sympathy with people who live in Eastern Ukraine is informed by my personal experiences of living in Donetsk until 1997, learning languages there, earning a philological degree at the Donetsk National University, and working and living for three years as an interpreter for American missionaries in Petrovka, the poorest mining district of Donetsk. In course of three years, I talked to hundreds of people in this settlement, visited them in their homes and at the hospitals, ate with them, and taught their children in Sunday school.

At this time only a handful of linguists, anthropologists, historians, and sociologists are studying passive bilingualism in Eastern Ukraine, where 92.3% of the population are self-identified Russian speakers (see Table 2, section “Preferred Language”) (Khmel’ko 2004: 11). More often than not, scholars mention Eastern passive bilingualism in passing but, until recently, ascribe little importance to it in their analysis of the language-related questions in this specific region (Arel 1995, Janmaat 1999, Golovakha and Panina 2000, Kulyk 2013). This may be happening because the bilinguals themselves do not self-identify as passive bilinguals. As linguists commonly point out, only active, balanced bilingualism of high linguistic proficiency tends to be perceived, in non-specialist circles, as bilingualism proper (Edwards 2004). Therefore, only active and/or balanced bilingualism, where competency is equally strong in both languages, is deemed valuable in terms of cultural and political capital—and, consequently, as more real.⁴ This is the reason why Russian speakers’ passive competency in the Ukrainian language is not valued by pro-Ukrainian lay people, politicians and even scholars.

My personal linguistic profile can serve as a small case study in understanding the degree of exposure to and competence in the Ukrainian language in Eastern Ukraine. I graduated

from college in 1997 and left the country. All my schooling throughout college had been in Russian. Outside of school the Ukrainian language was available to children of my generation only on television, and because the Soviet TV programming was so strictly regulated, and remained consistently so throughout the 1980s, it is indeed possible to calculate the number of hours a Soviet Russian-speaking child potentially could have been exposed to the Ukrainian language. There were three children’s programs available in the 1980s: the daily, 15-minute-long “Good Night Children” (“Nadobranich, dity”), which *always* had a Ukrainian-speaking host and *sometimes* showed a short Ukrainian cartoon (often a Russian cartoon); the weekly, one-hour-long “Katrusya’s Movie Theater” (“Katrusin kinozal”), which had Ukrainian hosts and showed almost exclusively Russian cartoons; and the daily “Silver Bell” (“Sribnyi dzvinochok”), a 30-minute program about various children’s extracurricular activities and performances, which I watched without the permission of my parents on weekdays when they went to work. If one did not miss any of this programming, and if all of this programming was indeed fully in Ukrainian, this comprises at most 5.25 hours per week of passive Ukrainian language input. In addition, in second grade and half of third grade, I took formal lessons in Ukrainian language and literature four times a week. After that, I did not attend these classes, as it was still possible for parents to opt their child out of learning Ukrainian in Soviet schools.

When compared to the formal education in, and exposure to, the Ukrainian language in post-Soviet Ukraine, this Soviet exposure was of course minimal. Yet, if the current analysis and my translations from Ukrainian are any indication, it was somehow nonetheless sufficient for fostering passive folk bilingualism (language competency acquired informally from the environment, rather than learned formally in school) without any extra effort on my part. Ten years after I immigrated to the US, I discovered that I was passively fluent in Ukrainian; that I had this whole other language that had not counted for anything in my childhood but somehow stayed with me in its entirety—I could function professionally, i.e., read whichever specialist literature I wished and understand oral speech with near-native fluency. Only when Ukrainian suddenly became an asset in my translation studies career did I realize that I was, indeed, bilingual in this way, and differently so from Russian-speaking citizens of other countries.

Post-Soviet exposure to the Ukrainian language forms an even more hopeful picture for Ukraine. Scholarship, as well as polling data, show that post-Soviet exposure to Ukrainian via media, literature and film (in addition to the mandatory formal education)

has produced a much more competent bilingual population in present-day Ukraine. Bilaniuk (2010) in her studies of popular TV shows registers an increase in Ukrainian language usage through code-switching among younger generations in their early to mid-twenties, as compared with middle-aged Russian speakers who do not code-switch (Bilaniuk 2010: 118-120). The polling data that Khmel'ko analyses indicate an increase in Ukrainian language use between 1991 and 2003 (Khmel'ko 2004: 8). The number of Ukrainian schools in the central and eastern regions with education in the Ukrainian language, and also formal education in the Ukrainian language, likely will have had a positive impact on Russian speakers in the east, even if they never used the Ukrainian language to communicate outside of their school.⁵ Ukrainian media and entertainment have become much more attractive and present, both for children and adult populations. Books published in Ukrainian, the flourishing of Ukrainian rock music, and the occasional successful dubbing of a foreign film have undoubtedly increased both the readership / audience and the popularity of the Ukrainian language. In a word, the conditions for acquiring very highly functional passive bilingual competencies have improved dramatically for the younger generations, and it is time to take the Ukrainian language competency of Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine seriously.

Passive Bilingualism and Its Contexts

The importance of being bilingual is, above all, social and psychological rather than linguistic. Beyond types, categories, methods, and processes is the essential animating tension of identity. Beyond utilitarian and unemotional instrumentality, the heart of bilingualism is belonging.

— John Edwards (2004: 30)

At this time, it may seem ludicrous and even harmful to propose that native Russian speakers in Ukraine require a more careful linguistic and political consideration than has been previously afforded them since Ukraine became an independent state in 1991. The idea can be (and has been) quickly perverted to serve individual politicians and factions in promoting supremacist views, seizing power and even to staging a “resurgence” movement that smoothly morphs into a full-blown war.⁶ Yes, this is a dangerous proposition, but the worst has already happened: my peaceful, beautiful multilingual hometown, already identified as a “weak link,” has been invaded, violated and bombed. There is in this sense not much more to lose, whereas *not* treating Russian speakers with

professional, scientifically-supported consideration can potentially mean greater losses for the future of Ukraine as one nation. Namely, as a country, Ukraine can ignore the linguistic reality in the East and end up with a permanent “weak link”—a very large Russian-speaking “minority” and all the linguistic, cultural, social, political, and economic problems related to this phenomenon. Or the country can become stronger by increasing the level of awareness about its Russian-speaking population in the East and by discovering that this population, like the rest of the country, is also bilingual but in a different way. While the majority of native Ukrainian speakers are active bilinguals in Russian (with the exception, perhaps, of younger generations who did not have any formal instruction in Russian), Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine are passive bilinguals in Ukrainian, though not by self-identification. What allows me to claim that Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine are bilingual is the degree of their exposure to the Ukrainian language through media and schooling. Media are certainly however not the only factor fostering folk bilingualism in Ukraine and elsewhere. John Edwards, the British linguist and psychologist, writes about family ties to more than one language community, but he might as well be writing about the symbolic connection to the place where one is born and where one has lived all her life: “What of the other broad category, those bilinguals who have some real or understood blood attachment to more than one language community?” (Edwards 2004: 27). Is it possible, in the end, to live in a country with its own distinct state language and not know that language at least passively, with or without the presence of media influence?

The majority of bilingual societies in the world are so primarily through folk bilingualism. But this is not the case of Eastern Ukraine, where formal schooling in Ukrainian, the intensity of which has been increasing in the past twenty years dramatically, is sufficient to allow passive, and in some cases, active elite bilingualism to flourish. “Elite” bilingualism is a competency in more than one language acquired formally, through schooling (Edwards 2004). What stands in the way of people’s appreciation of the value of their folk bilingualism, paradoxically, is the partial mutual intelligibility between Russian and Ukrainian. One may indeed mistakenly think that they understand the Ukrainian language *because* it is very similar to Russian. On the other hand, what denigrates the appreciation of people’s formal schooling in Ukrainian is the forced nature of this schooling—and, in the later years in many cases, at the expense of the schooling in people’s native language.

There are several ways to determine that a society is bilingual without actually asking people about their linguistic abilities or testing them. Sociolinguists name several factors present in the society that create favorable conditions for bilingualism, such as geographical proximity of a given language community to a state where their language is the language of the state, strong sociopolitical and economic ties with this region, and cultural vitality of the community (Dorian 2004, Myers-Scotton 2006). Eastern Ukrainians happen to live between equally vital Ukrainian and Russian worlds. Furthermore, the factors influencing a group's ethnolinguistic vitality, in our case the vitality of the Russian-speaking population in Eastern Ukraine, consist of demographic strength, group status, and institutional support (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977). All these fundamental factors and facts about the sociolinguistic reality of Eastern Ukraine have gone unacknowledged among policy makers and educators. For example, the close proximity of Eastern Ukraine to the Russian Federation, the vitality and accessibility of Russian culture, and the sheer numbers of Russian speakers in the region require a policy response that takes into account the following consequences of this reality: the Russian-speaking community is strong enough to remain in Ukraine indefinitely; the majority of the population are near-native passive bilinguals in Ukrainian, and the current demographics of self-identified Russian speakers of the region hinder active bilingualism of the Russian speakers.⁷ The demographics and the intensity of exposure to the Ukrainian language in Eastern Ukraine that form Russian speakers' linguistic profile and make them different from Russian speakers elsewhere require some attention, if this significant segment of population is to be embraced.

How the Mutual Intelligibility of Languages Conceals Russian Speakers' Competency in Ukrainian

There are three angles from which ideas about the monolingual identity of the Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine are projected: 1) internal, personal self-identification; 2) external identification projected from outside of the Ukrainian borders, and 3) external identifications, projected from within Ukraine. "I'm writing in Ukrainian so that the majority of the Russian speakers would miss this text – they know or feel everything anyway," writes Nikolai Neonenko, a popular columnist, in his blog post "The Problem of Language" ("Movne Pytannya," Neonenko 2014). He thus assumes that the Russian speakers would not understand his text and will not even attempt to read in Ukrainian. The criticism is obviously aimed at Ukrainian citizens who speak Russian natively, as "the problem of language" ostensibly concerns them and not citizens of the Russian

Federation. Let us examine why this commentator thinks that Russian speakers in Ukraine will “miss” his text, simply because it is written in the Ukrainian language.

The mutual intelligibility of Russian and Ukrainian, and misconceptions about its extent, are largely to blame for why Eastern Ukrainians do not perceive themselves as bilingual, and why Russian speakers outside of Ukraine may indeed claim that they “understand everything.” In his sour remark, Neonenko is alluding to the phrase often used by Russian speakers who ‘do not speak Ukrainian’ and who claim that the mutual intelligibility of the two languages allows them to somehow intuitively “know or feel everything” said in Ukrainian.⁸ This claim and the notion of mutual intelligibility of Russian and Ukrainian languages has political underpinnings that warrant examination. The mutual intelligibility of languages “means that two speakers can understand each other [without having any formal instruction in the other language]; it equals understandability” (Myers-Scotton 2006: 18–19). Indeed, both languages have easily observable similarities in phonetic system, alphabet, grammatical structures, and vocabulary. These similarities make them, to a degree, mutually intelligible. Mutual intelligibility of languages is not an absolute, it’s a relative notion (Myers-Scotton, 2006: 19). In the popular Russophone imagination, this intelligibility is of a high degree, which to some extent justifies the frustration among Ukrainian speakers like Neonenko, because this allows Russophone supremacists and some Russian speakers to treat the Ukrainian language as one of lower status than Russian, or as not a unique language at all. The degree of this intelligibility, sociolinguists tell us, is a matter of personal perception based on political allegiance and historical developments related to the development of languages in question (Myers-Scotton 2006). For example, French and Italian have many areas in which they overlap and can be considered “almost” intelligible, but it would not occur to anyone to doubt the status of either of these national languages. Similarly, Ukrainian speakers and patriots vested in building Ukraine as an independent state would never doubt Ukrainian as a separate national language of Ukraine and claim a lesser degree of intelligibility with Russian. Predictably, Russian speakers in Russia, and Russian supremacists wherever they live, who are not interested in Ukrainian independence, will claim greater intelligibility between the two languages. However, there is a major difference, on the one hand, between citizens of Ukraine who mistakenly attribute their Ukrainian language competency to the mutual intelligibility of Russian and Ukrainian and, on the other hand, Russian speakers outside of Ukraine. Obviously, Russian-speaking Ukrainians will understand much more (if not everything) than Russian speakers who live outside of

Ukraine. Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine have acquired this passive fluency throughout their lives by virtue of living in Ukraine, learning the language formally for years, and, among younger generations, being educated in Ukrainian. This linguistic profile is hard-earned and is very different from the linguistic profile of the citizens of Russia who have had no substantial exposure to the Ukrainian language or education. It is obvious that while lamenting the unwillingness of the Russian speakers in Ukraine to learn the Ukrainian language, Neonenko typically lumps together all Russian speakers, both those in Ukraine and outside of it.

The situation with mutual intelligibility becomes even more confusing for Russian speakers because a significant segment of the Ukrainian population speaks *surzhik* – a hybrid Ukrainian and Russian variety evincing even greater mutual intelligibility with Russian. However, most Russian speakers, particularly from outside of Ukraine, would not be able to detect when they are encountering *surzhik* rather than the standard Ukrainian variety; thus their self-perceived ability to understand the “Ukrainian language” would be doubly misguided. The popular ideas about the mutual intelligibility of Russian and Ukrainian is another factor that does not allow Russian speakers in Ukraine to adequately perceive the depth of their Ukrainian language competency and, consequently, to feel that they belong.

Historically, “bilingualism” is a compromised term in Western Ukraine, identified with aggressive Russification in this region (Bilianuk 2005, Kulyk 2013). This is, perhaps, the reason why the term does not come up in the Ukrainian census and polls conducted between 1991 and 2003 by the KIIS (Khmel’ko 2004: 11). This term “bilingualism” continues to be undermined by the politicians in our time. Mirroring the politics and processes of the Russification of Ukraine, bilingualism is also being used as an excuse for promoting the idea of aggressive, top-down, state-inflicted Ukrainification. The head of the Prosvita group writes: “If a Ukrainian, because of life experience and language practice has a better command of Russian than Ukrainian, then this fact by itself does not give grounds to include such a Ukrainian among the ranks of ‘Russian-speakers.’ He is bilingual. [...] In Ukraine there aren’t people who do not understand Ukrainian at all and do not use it at least passively, therefore, there are no exclusively Russian-speaking people in Ukraine” (Hnatkevych 1999, quoted in Shumlianskyi 2010: 142).⁹ It is obvious that this statement is aimed at decreasing and dismissing the well-documented constituency of Russian speakers in Ukraine. The statement is nonsensical from the linguistic point of view, as passive bilinguals are called “passive” because they, contrary

to what Hnatkevych claims, *do not speak* their second language but can use it passively with high proficiency. This means that there *are* exclusively Russian speakers in Ukraine. Instead of denying their existence and forcing them to use Ukrainian, which can lead only to an aggravation of conflict, the intellectuals and the general population should be enlightened, made aware of their existent passive abilities in Ukrainian language.¹⁰

To integrate Ukraine, both Western and Eastern Ukrainians need to be linguistically informed so as to revise their attitudes toward both Russian and Ukrainian languages; both sides will be able then to choose to celebrate bilingualism in Eastern Ukraine, rather than to ignore, criticize, or erase it. In Edwards’s words quoted in the epigraph to this section, an acknowledgement of passive bilingualism will allow Eastern Ukrainians “to belong,” which has not only positive political ramifications, but also ethical meaning. A general understanding of the positive worth and nature of passive bilingualism in Eastern Ukraine can enlighten the general population, and specialists as well, about how and why Russian speakers in Ukraine are different from Russian speakers outside of Ukraine, i.e., what makes them uniquely *Ukrainian* Russian speakers. This understanding can in turn result in self-identification among native Russian speakers as Ukrainian citizens, not by ethnic or dominant language attributes but by citizenship; it is nonetheless clear that this process has already started, with the invasion into the region as a reaction to the violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and violent disruption of normal life.¹¹ Linguistic self-identification among the Eastern population as passive bilinguals with near-native but passive competency in the Ukrainian language is another, more personal and more permanent bond that can strengthen this civic patriotism of Ukrainian citizens who are not ethnic Ukrainians.

What Polls Can and Cannot Tell Us about Eastern Ukraine

If the mutual intelligibility of languages confuses lay people about their competency in Ukrainian, polling provides incomplete information that can, in turn, potentially confuse policy makers. Closer examination of the available polling results will tell us whether and how they reflect Eastern Ukrainians’ passive bilingualism.

The table below, based on a 1989 questionnaire, shows the “ethnolinguistic” composition of four major regional centers in Ukraine—from the most western cultural capital of Lviv, to the contemporary political capital Kiev, to the cosmopolitan commerce hub on the Black sea, Odessa, to the industrial center in the east, Donetsk.

Table 1
Ethno-linguistic Composition of four Oblast Centers in 1989

Oblast center	Ukraininophone Ukrainians (%)	Russophone Ukrainians (%)	Russians (%)	Other nationalities (%)
L'viv	76.6	2.5	16.1	4.8
Kyiv	60.0	15.4	20.9	6.7
Odesa	29.6	19.3	39.4	11.7
Donets'k	18.3	21.1	53.6	7.0

Source: Dominique Arel, *Language and the Politics of Ethnicity: The Case of Ukraine*, PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, (Urbana-Champaign) 1994, ch.3.

Citing the table above, Jan G. Janmaat (1999) emphasizes that the survey question pertains to the “mother tongue” specifically, and that the number of actual Russian speakers might be even higher. The data clearly and predominantly show horizontal bilingualism—a distribution of languages in space, where “[s]peakers [...] live in their own geographic spaces and are often monolingual” (Myers-Scotton 2006: 71). This poll shows a society split in two. The majority of the population speaks Ukrainian in the west, only a small minority of speakers in the East, with mix of Russian and Ukrainian speakers in the center. This is however an oversimplified and therefore distorted portrayal of linguistic dynamics in Ukraine, particularly in Eastern Ukraine, because of the constraining formulation of the questions posed.¹² The questions presume that there is only one “mother” language and one language spoken in the family, and do not make space for respondents to register competencies in other languages, such as Ukrainian, which they may be able to speak as well.

Studies based exclusively on these polling data often lead scholars to portray non-Ukrainian-speaking Eastern Ukrainian citizens as lacking competence in the language of their homeland (see critical remarks in Arel 1995, Janmaat 1999, Fournier 2002, Kulyk 2013). Seemingly, scholars have good reasons to perceive self-identified monolingual Russian speakers as a stumbling block in the way of Ukrainian national unity. Indeed, as specialist in West African multilingualism Gerda Mansour states, horizontal bilingualism, clearly evidenced in the poll above, is “the road to socio-economic stagnation, cultural introspection, and marginalization of languages spoken by [monolingual groups]” (Mansour 1993: 72). While neither first-language Ukrainian speakers, nor first-language

Russian speakers in the Ukraine are monolingual, the fact that Ukrainian speakers are active bilinguals due to Russification practices of the former Soviet Union is common knowledge. Russian speakers' passive bilingualism, to the contrary, is not an obvious fact even to the Russian speakers themselves.

More recent studies by scholars who work with more recent, more nuanced polling data *and also* with media and individuals (in focus groups, for example) show the existence and even blossoming of “vertical bilingualism” in Ukrainian society, where “people work, live, go to school, and shop in communities with speakers of other languages” (Myers-Scotton 2006: 71).¹³ On vertical bilingualism, Mansour states that “it is usually associated with social change, language shift among the speakers of minority languages and an expansion of one or several dynamic lingua francas” (Mansour 1993: 19). It is not accidental that Maidan activism, the Ukrainian independence movement, occurred in the centrally located and linguistically divided bilingual Kyiv and not in the western monolingual Ukrainian-speaking Lviv;¹⁴ apparently there are reasons (for instance, dynamic and fruitful vertical bilingualism) beyond mere proximity to parliament, that allowed this movement to be sustained over such a long period of time, since 1990.¹⁵ More recent polls, presented and cross-referenced by sociologist V. E. Khmel'ko, who analyzes the all-Ukrainian polls conducted between 1991 and 2003, show the intensity of this vertical bilingualism by region. The tables below show the polls, as well as Khmel'ko's own analysis of vertical bilingualism based on these polls (Khmel'ko 2004: 11).

Table 2

Division of adult population according to the ethnic, language and ethno-linguistic groups in five regions of Ukraine in 2003 (%)

Categories of adult population	Regions				
	Western	Central Western	Central Eastern	Southern	Eastern
Preferred Language					
Ukrainian	95.0	74.4	40.7	15.5	7.7
Russian	5.0	25.6	59.3	84.5	92.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Ethno-linguistic Groups					
Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians	92.1	72.8	41.2	17.1	12.3
Russian-speaking Ukrainians	1.9	16.5	44.3	42.8	49.4
Russian-speaking Russians	1.7	6.0	9.2	26.4	30.2
Other ethno-linguistic groups	4.3	4.8	5.4	13.6	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Combined data of 8 polls conducted by the KIIS from February to October of 2003 based on unmediated interviews among the representative samples of adult population of Ukraine (18 years and older).

The comparison between combined Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking groups within any of the five regions will indicate whether vertical bilingualism exists in this region. The smaller the difference in percentages of first-language Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking groups in the region (regardless of the ethnicity of the speakers) is, the higher is the degree of vertical bilingualism in the region. Thus, there are 92.1% of self-identified Ukrainian speakers in the Western regions and 79.6% of self-identified Russian speakers in the Eastern regions, which indicates that one of the languages predominates in these regions and therefore that there is a low degree of vertical bilingualism there. Other regions indicate a smaller prevalence of speakers of one group. The Eastern-Central region (encompassing the Dnipropetrovs'k, Poltava, Sumy and Chernigov regional districts) is the most balanced of all, with 41.2% self-identified Ukrainian speakers and 53.5% Russian speakers. It is also possible that the southern region is more balanced than it appears here because of the heavy population of Russian speakers in Crimea, which exerts an impact on the statistics of the region as a whole.

The geographical distribution of languages described through notions of the horizontal and vertical bilingualism of society as a whole, is superimposed onto the individual bilingualism of the Ukrainian population, which is also distributed differently among the five geographical regions and reflected consciously and unconsciously in the polls as analyzed by Khmel'ko (see Table 3 and 4 below, Khmel'ko 2004: 14). Individuals who speak two languages and do not report one preferred language, identify themselves as

bilingual in the polls; see column “Named as Preferred Language: Ukrainian and Russian.”

Table 3
Division of adult population according to the language used and language preferred in 2003 (%)

Language used	Named as preferred language			Total adult population
	Ukrainian	Ukrainian and Russian	Russian	
Ukrainian	90.6	18.9	1.3	39.7
Mix of Ukrainian and Russian	7.9	36.6	5.5	12.0 ¹⁶
Russian	1.5	44.5	93.2	48.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Unfortunately, Table 3 does not show what percentage of the *total* population named both languages as preferred. However, we do know that *within this category* 36.6% of people “mixed” these languages in their responses, and 12% of the *total* population mixed them as well. 7.9% of those who named Ukrainian as their preferred language and 5.5 % of those who named Russian as their preferred language also were observed “mixing” the two languages. At this point it is necessary to look at the terminology used in the polls closely. The term “mix” in the Ukrainian context is not particularly felicitous because of the existence of the stigmatized hybrid language variety *surzhik*. It is impossible to tell whether the speakers in the various categories of “mixed” language use listed above found the need to code-switch using two languages, or whether they spoke one hybrid variety, *surzhik*.

Table 4 below shows 10.7% of the population as speaking *surzhik*, i.e., one hybrid language and not two languages used interchangeably, as the phrase “mix” of languages may suggest, unless, of course, the term *surzhik* is misused and in some cases denotes code-switching. If, however, the term *surzhik* is used correctly to denote a hybrid variety, the only thing we can do with the term “mix” is perhaps subtract the number of *surzhik* speakers from Table 4 from those who speak a “mix” in Table 3 and determine that 1.3% of the total population might have been code-switching rather than speaking *surzhik*, which may qualify them (the 1.3%) as bilingual. This number of speakers is so

insignificant and so far removed from the real number of people who know both languages, and there are so many “ifs” included in the reading of the polling results, that it is not worthwhile to go into a discussion here of how and why *surzhik* differs from code-switching.

Table 4
Division of adult population into five ethno-linguistic groups in five regions in 2003 (%)

Language used	Regions					Total adult population
	Western	Central Western	Central Eastern	Southern	Eastern	
Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians	91.7	59.3	30.8	5.3	3.6	38.5
Surzhik-speaking Ukrainians	1.5	13.0	20.6	11.3	8.3	10.7¹⁷
Russian-speaking Ukrainians	1.3	17.2	33.5	40.0	48.6	28.0
Russian-speaking Russians	1.5	5.8	11.1	31.3	34.1	16.9
Other ethno-linguistic groups	4.0	4.7	4.0	12.2	5.4	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Code-switching or code-mixing has so many manifestations in various linguistic contexts that the term requires redefinition in each separate study setting.¹⁸ Code-switching in the Ukrainian case may or may not be conscious, i.e., controlled by the speakers, in which case *some* of the individuals in this group may be bilingual.

Individuals who claimed one preferred language and then spoke a “mix” are in a different category altogether. They were likely unaware of the fact that they mixed languages or spoke *surzhik* because it is a habitual, unmarked language behavior in their region, which may well be the case where the percentage of those who speak *surzhik* is high, as is the case in the Central Eastern region (20.6%, see Table 4). It is unlikely that individuals in the group that claimed one of the languages as preferred and then spoke a mix would *choose* to speak *surzhik* after they had claimed one or the other language, because of the low status of the hybrid variety. This group (7.9% of the self-identified Ukrainian speakers and 5.5% of the self-identified Russian speakers, Table 3) particularly well illustrates the argument of this essay as to the advanced degree of passive ability of all

Ukrainian citizens. People in this group self-identify as monolinguals, but the influence of the other language on their speech is so strong that it results in creolization of the standard variety they claim to speak. This evidence of intensive exposure to the non-preferred language permits the interpretation that *everyone* who mixes languages has been intensively exposed to the non-native language and therefore possesses a very high degree of *passive* competency in this language. Thus, the 36.6% (Table 3) of the total population who “mixed” languages can be considered at minimum advanced passive bilinguals.

Additionally, Table 3 shows that 1.5% of people used Russian in the self-identified Ukrainian speaker group and 1.3% did the reverse, using Ukrainian even though they self-identified as Russian speakers. It is unclear why this reversal would happen. This small number of individuals may have chosen not to speak their preferred language because they wished to, and could, accommodate the interviewer. This group is obviously bilingual; two factors in combination—self-identification as speakers of one language and behavior using the other language—reveal them as active bilinguals.

The analysis of polling data above thus shows a very small percentage of the population as actively bilingual. It is comprised of:

- self-identified bilinguals (an unidentified percentage of the total population);
- people who claim one language as preferred and speak with the interviewer using the other (1.5% of self-identified Ukrainian speakers and 1.3% of self-identified Russian speakers);
- those who “mix” the two languages but do not speak *surzhik* (unclear percentage).

Passive bilingualism is exhibited only through the numbers identifying those who speak *surzhik* and can be extended to all people who “mix” languages.

In addition to the hard numbers assembled through polling, it is common knowledge that, due to Russification in the Soviet period, most Ukrainian speakers became active bilinguals in Russian. However, the polls do not show this fact, perhaps for political reasons. Why, after all, ask ethnic Ukrainians, whose preferred language is Ukrainian, whether they are active bilinguals in Russian? Such a question may be interpreted by various political parties and the respondents themselves as aimed at undermining the need to develop the Ukrainian language, and even threatening the sovereignty of the Ukrainian

state—which would not be the case if Russian speakers were asked about their Ukrainian ability, as Ukrainian fluency is not assumed. The reality is such that geographical bilingualism, in combination with the personal bilingualism of the population (which varies from region to region, as demonstrated by Khmel’ko), brings to light another layer of complexity: Russian speakers’ passive bilingualism in Ukrainian. Not asking questions about active bilingualism of Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians also leads to not knowing about the passive bilingualism of the Russian-speaking population of all ethnicities.

The wealth of the polling information notwithstanding, there is not enough data in these polls to determine the passive ability of Russian speakers to use the Ukrainian language. Neither do the data reflect Russian speakers’ *awareness* of their high, near-native passive proficiency in Ukrainian. Because the majority of the Russian-speaking population resides in the East, it is fair to say that this population is the least represented in the numbers above, and therefore, least accounted for and understood.

Meanwhile, there is ample evidence that the Russian speakers in Ukraine are at minimum passive near-native bilinguals; one only has to turn on the TV, as recent research indicates (Bilaniuk 2010; Kulyk 2010). Linguistic anthropologist Laada Bilaniuk, for example, studies non-accommodating bilingual interchanges in Russian and Ukrainian—a uniquely Ukrainian phenomenon predicated upon and fostering, as she concludes, precisely this bilingualism: “[t]he practice of speaking one’s preferred language, Ukrainian or Russian, regardless of the language spoken by one’s interlocutor” that “has become wide-spread in media and public life ... since independence.” (Bilaniuk 2010: 105). Indeed, as other scholars also demonstrate, highly developed vertical bilingualism leads to highly proficient passive personal bilingualism in one and the same society (Sovik 2010).

Problems with Self-Awareness about one’s Linguistic Competence

The implicit self-identification of Russian speakers as monolinguals in the polls of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology resonates with current scholarly research. Consider the conclusion cited in the epigraph above, formulated by a representative of the Ukrainian Academy of Science: “Most of them [i.e., Russian speakers – A.L.] actually want official bilingualism to let them remain unilingual in their capacities both as citizens and as employees” (Kulyk 2013). In his research the researcher indicates that his conclusions are based on the focus group studies; at the same time, it is obvious that this

kind of conclusion could be drawn in response to the supremacist political Russian groups clamoring for the “equality” of the Russian and Ukrainian languages before the law.¹⁹ Scholars agree that these political groups indeed use the ideas of linguistic equality to maintain the region at status quo, politically and linguistically portraying Ukrainian culture and language exclusively as “ancillary to the greater Russian culture” (Shumlianskyi 2010: 149; Kulyk 2010). Kulyk’s conclusions can only mean that people support the supremacist Russophile parties, which contradicts Shumlianskyi’s own thesis that the language politics of specific parties do not represent specific population constituencies (Shumlianskyi 2010: 148–150). It is to the advantage of these parties to represent the Russian-speaking population as “unilingual” and unwilling to change, and it seems that the population has internalized these ideas contrary to the actual state of affairs in terms of its Ukrainian language acquisition. Thus, the designation of linguistic competence is not grounded in reality but is politically motivated and, as I have been attempting to show, has an impact on the population that must be counteracted through education about the value of passive bilingualism and a broad assessment of abilities.

The key words that ring disturbingly divorced from reality in Kulyk’s conclusions are ‘unilingual’ and ‘remain.’ Kulyk describes state bilingualism, suspect in the Western Ukraine and apparently desired in the East, as an excuse for the Russian-speaking population in the East not to use the Ukrainian language actively. As much as his conclusions, based on the self-identifications of his focus-group members, may be accurate, research based on self-identification may not be sufficient in this specific case. Furthermore, it may be that Russian speakers do not so much *want* to maintain the status quo, as that they are *unable* to become active users of the Ukrainian language at this time. Therefore, here, I review the language situation not from the point of what Russian-speaking Eastern Ukrainians seemingly want, but from the perspective of what they *can* and *cannot* do with the degree of language proficiency they have in two languages, i.e., from the perspective of their linguistic profile as a society. Reviewing the linguistic profile of native speakers of Russian in Eastern Ukraine and attitudes to this profile, I reconsider the laws, the opinions, and even the calls for more patriotic behavior in the light of the given sociolinguistic reality.

Misconceptions about Passive Bilingualism

Peremptory rejection of near-native passive proficiency of the native Russian speakers is only one side of the problem. The other side of the problem consists of a general belief

that, because the two languages are mutually intelligible, the Eastern population should have no trouble in learning the Ukrainian language quickly and using it actively (see the Prosvita group's document cited above). Even though the scholars and political commentators I have encountered in my research mention the population's passive bilingualism, they do not really examine it and do not know what strengths and what objective, very real limitations it has. Relying on the polling data cited above, contemporary political commentators, sociologists, historians and political scientists discuss the data within the framework of the language policy and draw conclusions about how (un)compliant the Eastern Ukrainians are to this policy, how (un)patriotic they are, and what they really want and don't want in terms of language laws in their region (Arel 1995, Janmaat 1999, Fournier 2002, Kulyk 2013). Meanwhile, the demographics mentioned above, which might either allow bilingualism to flourish or undermine it, have a major say in this situation, as Russian speakers are a *de facto* majority in the region.

Consider the 92.3% of adults in 2003 (in Table 2) who indicated Russian as a preferred language of communication in the Eastern region (Khmel'ko 2004: 11). The majority status of the Russian-speaking population greatly impacts not only people's attitudes, but also the linguistic abilities of the population as a whole in very predictable ways regarding the objective linguistic reality, not a romantic dream about the national unity of the country. While there are no hard numbers on the population percentile required for making another segment of population to change their native language, 7.7% is obviously insufficient for this purpose. Neither will the 15% of Ukrainian speakers in the Southern regions change the situation any time soon. However, the more balanced numbers in the more central regions present a different picture and a different opportunity for development of active bilingualism. The Russian-speaking population in the Central Western region is probably already actively bilingual, with 74.4% of self-identified Ukrainian speakers. And the population of the Central Eastern region—with its 40.7% Ukrainian-speaking population and opportunities for vertical mobility for bilingual individuals greater than in other regions—is well on its way.

Turning a passive near-native language ability into an active expressive skill requires either a favorable linguistic environment or a strong personal motivation to induce a person to invest time and money in formal instruction or the necessary number of hours. The former situation, when present, provides objective motivation for turning the passive language into an active one; the latter is a subjective motivation and depends on the person's priorities and life experiences, that is, a myriad of other individual factors.

Although institutional support helps, to say the least, neither objective nor subjective motivation can be controlled or constituted on the spot by a new law or language policy, or by the political opinion that favorable conditions or the correct motivations must exist. This is not to say that linguistic environments cannot be changed or that laws cannot change people's motivations—the Soviet past shows that they can, but at what expense? In a contemporary democracy these processes take time, sometimes over several generations, but they can be successful if handled with care in an informed manner.

Because native Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine constitute a majority, they create a certain linguistic reality and therefore also certain objective linguistic incentives to speak Russian rather than Ukrainian. For bilingual individuals to start speaking the language that they know only passively, their linguistic environment must change. If an environment of immersion is unavailable, as it is unavailable in Donetsk, it is highly unlikely that adults who do not have a strong command of a language and who are not comfortable using it actively will ever open their mouths to say anything, certainly not to a person who most likely prefers their active language (Russian), and even less likely to a person who has a good command of their passive language (Ukrainian, see Bilianuk 2005).²⁰ It is embarrassing to have insufficient command of a language in front of one's employees, colleagues, students or customers even if they themselves do not speak it fluently. This commonsensical observation is exacerbated in Ukraine by general sensitivity towards the ability to speak “pure” or standard variety of either Russian or Ukrainian. On this point, Bilaniuk shares some of her field observations in Ukraine:

I was frequently struck by the critical evaluations of language quality that I witnessed in everyday life and in my interviews. “His language is horrible, he is crippling the Ukrainian language!” “They think they know how to speak Russian, but that's not really Russian.” People were also self-deprecating regarding their own language, expressing insecurity about their linguistic skills. While language choice—Ukrainian or Russian—had been the focus of controversy in the establishment of institutional policies in the newly independent state, judgments of the quality of language had become common in public discourse. Language quality, particularly perceived purity and correctness, was discursively linked to social legitimacy and authority. (Bilaniuk 2009)

Obviously, an environment as the one described above is not favorable toward non-confident speakers of either language. In professional environments, one does not have the luxury of experimenting or practicing imperfect speech at the expense of personal

professional status. Who can afford to risk their students' or colleagues' respect? The problem does not however go away, even if one does have a perfect command of the language that is not commonly spoken in a given environment. Speaking a different language, no matter how well, can have an alienating effect on students, colleagues or clients, as they will perceive the speaker of the other language as different, as an outsider and not a member of their linguistic in-group—the notion of an “in-group” being an important factor in building professional and personal relationships in any society—and particularly pertinent, as we shall see below, for Eastern Ukraine (Myers-Scotton 2006). However, once in an environment where their passive language is used actively by other people on a regular basis, the exposure to the language will eventually reach a critical number of hours (varying individually from person to person). Gradually, the passive bilingual will start using the second language actively but it is unlikely that this can happen in the Eastern regions any time soon.²¹

One could certainly force change to the linguistic environment faster, as was attempted in an elementary immersion schools for Native Americans in the 19th- and 20th-century US. However, after 25 years of independence, after the Orange Revolution and Maidan, it is unlikely that Ukrainian citizens will willingly subject themselves to such treatment, and it is unlikely that good managers would create such working conditions for their employees. While language can be and has been successfully imposed on children and young adults in the institutions of elementary, secondary, and higher education, due to the naturally or traditionally hierarchical nature of communication between children with their educators, one cannot expect that the same can occur in more amorphous adult work environments, unless the work environment naturally leans toward one language rather than the other or the person whose responsibility it is to structure this environment does so dictatorially (it won't matter how lawful his or her linguistic requirements are if they are perceived as unnatural by the rest of the employees). Hence, the lack of enforcement of Ukrainian language in public institutions of Eastern Ukraine, puzzled over and lamented by many commentators, has nothing to do with politics, or patriotism, or active sabotage of the law, but everything with the social and linguistic reality often termed “work culture” of each specific office in each working place in each locality—superimposed with the lack of a service mentality in the post-Soviet officialdom, where the rules of politeness, unobserved in many cases, would require that one speak with the client, visitor, or customer in their preferred language.

Conclusion: Eastern Localism and How to Overcome It

The given linguistic environment, the mistrust of the government, the lack of economic incentive for middle-aged and older generations to learn Ukrainian—these are only part of the picture. Experts generally agree that it is difficult to predict what will happen in a given linguistic community, even if all factors influencing language maintenance and shift are accounted for, because it is hard to control how these factors are prioritized in a given community (Myers-Scotton 2006: 68-69). In the case of Eastern Ukraine, a good place to start is to understand the complexity of the factors that can potentially pull the region apart (not within, but from the rest of the country) and then examine how and by whom these are prioritized. For example, the more isolated a community is, the more likely it is to remain monolingual, maintaining horizontal bilingualism in the country, with different regions using different languages. In an interview, Serhiy Zhadan cited a startling and rather disturbing fact in this context. Before the events of 2014, nearly 70% of the Donetsk region’s population had *never* left the administrative borders of the region during their lifetime (Zhadan 2016). About the region he himself has come from, he says:

A terrible closeness of the society, a real hermetic seal is characteristic of Donbass and the rest of Eastern Ukraine—to hold on to one’s own: one’s own territory, one’s own roots, one’s own buildings [...] And general emphasis on what is your own—that is the most important. “I have this ghetto and I don’t care about what is behind the walls of this ghetto because that is no longer my world. My world is here and, for me, this is what counts.” [...] This is very typical of the Donets’k and Luhans’k regions. What was the problem in 2014? The question who is “ours” and who is a “stranger” became terribly acute. If you are from my street, you are one of us; if you came from a neighboring street, you are a stranger. Here’s a slogan used by the separatists against Ukrainian soldiers, “Why did you come to my home?” It’s a really surprising thing, this self-identification, when people identify not with [their] country, not with the state, not with its borders, but with their town, their representative, their oligarch. “We have Akhmetov, he is ours, but *their* oligarch is not ours. This problem has never been experienced so acutely in other regions of Ukraine.

Olena Stiazhkina, a historian and writer from Donetsk, echoes Zhadan, “The Soviet society had a rather pronounced verbal code. Its rules and regulations, its signs along the axis ‘our own-foreign’ were built in (if not welded into) the words.” (Stiazhkina 2013: 13). “Nashi,” or “our own” mentality does not see the need for the Ukrainian language, for change, or for anything else that is not already one’s own and familiar, even as a

means to vertical mobility, because it belongs to people who do not expect their children to leave their region. Something should be and can be done about this mentality. The statistic cited by the poet should alarm the administration in Kyiv responsible for K-12 education. To broaden the horizons of the new generations of Eastern Ukrainians, schools for example should probably have computer classes with access to the Internet. Children should probably be taken on educational field trips to the neighboring regions or even to the capital. Given that the former Soviet citizens who are Russian-speakers align themselves with the (Russian) ethnicity that is not necessarily originally theirs, the celebration of other ethnicities in the region—such as Serbian, Finnish, or any other—may awaken the population’s interest in their diverse ethnic heritage. Study of the region’s history, along with the history of the country, will likely also help with this process. What is wrong, in the end, with commissioning a few pretty songs about Ukraine in Russian and other represented languages for children to sing? In a word, the government should start investing money in secondary education in Eastern Ukrainian provinces more comprehensively and strategize more inclusively to raise the level of cultural awareness of their citizenry—with the goal of integrating it into the larger society.

Ukrainian language could benefit from a more diverse approach to its official support in the region. Supporting language and cultural diversity education as proposed above might be insufficient to boost its prestige. In 2010, a group of Ukrainian librarians visiting the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign complained about the state of publishing in the Ukrainian language. They regretted the fact that Ukrainian publishers were publishing mostly, if not exclusively, in Russian because they could not subsist on publications in Ukrainian. In comparison to Ukrainian, the Russian-language market is huge both in Ukraine and the neighboring countries. Surely, even if the Ukrainian government does not have money to support the publishers who publish in Ukrainian, there are plenty of international organizations interested in promoting the language and supporting an independent Ukraine—these organizations could change the linguistic make-up of the Ukrainian publishing world. Supporting Ukrainian language publishers will certainly increase the accessibility and prestige of the language among its population; the government should be paying attention to this aspect of Ukrainian culture and economy by helping publishers to connect with the donor organizations that do have money.

To conclude: In explaining why Russian-speakers might be unable to switch to Ukrainian, even when required to do so by law, I am not trying to gloss over the fact

there are real patriots in Eastern Ukraine, people who make conscientious choices to learn and use Ukrainian for patriotic reasons. Serhiy Zhadan, from Luhansk, chooses to write his poetry, novels and songs in Ukrainian and has become a leading political activist. We have dedicated publishers, such as VLB (Veniamin Lvovich Beliavsky), also from Donetsk, who publish in Ukrainian, and lose money on most of their projects. We have former university professors from Donetsk National University, such as historian, author and journalist Olena Stiazhkina, linguist and translator Natalia Pavliuk, and many others who teach, speak and write about the current situation—attempting to improve it by educating the general population of the region and the whole Ukraine. One cannot, however, expect that the majority of the population behave with the same degree of awareness as do these intellectuals, who work with languages anyway, and who have learned to speak Ukrainian out of patriotism or love for languages despite the unfavorable linguistic and geo-political environment. Understanding the sociolinguistic determinants and subtleties of human behavior of a whole population, along with other factors preventing integration of the country, could be the first step in forging a more nuanced and realistic language and education policy for the region—in bringing West and East together.

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¹ Alexei Yurchak's well-documented study of the last generation of Soviet citizens' everyday relationship with, and attitudes toward, the political system in which they lived, places an emphasis on the reasons and dynamics of the general population's self-distancing from politics. One of the reasons reported by the college-educated young adults of the period was that "it was not interesting," see Chapter 4, "Living 'Vnye': Deterritorialized Milieus," 126–157.

² Ukraine Verkhovna Rada. 2014. *About Considering as Void the Law of Ukraine "About the Foundations of the State Language Policy."*

³ The law *About the Foundations of the State Language Policy* was adopted before the presidential elections in 2012 upon the initiative of the Party of Regions (a pro-Russian group headed by Yanukovich). It stipulated that in the regions with at least 10% of the population speaking a language other than the state language (Ukrainian), this language would acquire the status of a regional language. After the ratification of the law, the Russian language acquired the status of regional language in a number of Ukrainian cities and regions (Ukraine, Verkhovna Rada, *About the Foundations of the State Language Policy*, 2012).

⁴ The fact that most people harbor a misconception about who is bilingual is one of the first things mentioned in introductions to bilingualism studies. Myers-Scotton (2006) writes, "'Being bilingual' doesn't imply complete mastery of two languages. [...] There is no accepted formula for exactly what's necessary for a person to claim to be a bilingual. Usually, being bilingual is associated with being able to *speak* two or more languages. [...] But how much "speaking" of an L2 counts as being bilingual? [...] With some exceptions, few bilinguals are as proficient in any second language as they are in their first language." (3)) "Balanced bilingualism is bilingualism where both languages are spoken with relatively equal proficiency." (38)

⁵ See statistics on the increase in the number of Ukrainian schools by region in Dominique Arel, 1995, “Language Politics in Independent Ukraine: Towards One or Two State Languages?” *Nationalities Papers* 23(3): 597–622, and Jan Janmaat, 1999, “Language Politics in Education and the Response of the Russians in Ukraine.” *Nationalities Papers* 27(3): 475–501.

⁶ See Stanislav Shumlianskyi’s analysis of four language groups and their programs, particularly the material on “maximalist Ukrainophiles” or the group “Prosvita” and “supremacist Russophiles” or the groups “Russkii Blok” (“The Russian Faction”) and “Russkoe Dvizhenie Ukrainy” (RDU, “The Russian Movement of Ukraine). In Stanislav Shumlianskyi, 2010, “Conflicting Abstractions: Language Groups in Language Politics in Ukraine,” *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 201: 141–144; 148–150.

⁷ See Myers-Scotton (2006) on ethnolinguistic vitality (74–76) and on factors that promote bilingualism (45–66).

⁸ The contested claim to understand “everything” comes from the nature of the phenomenon of mutual intelligibility and how the brain processes languages. While mutual intelligibility of languages allows one to understand some things, it does not disclose what one is missing or *doesn’t understand*, while our general intelligence closes the gaps (Harris and Silva 2011).

⁹ See Yuriy Hnatkevych 1999. 74-75.

¹⁰ A vivid example of an angry reaction to forced Ukrainization is the self-published 500-page *Fuckin’ Ukraine* (2016) by Nata Potemkina, a Donetsk radio hostess who received a call in the middle of the night and was informed that the broadcast in the morning would be broadcast in Ukrainian. She was apparently able to cope with the news, but the experience, according to her account, left her with a feeling of having been raped in public (Potemkina 2015).

¹¹ Author’s interview with Serhiy Zhadan and Natalia Pavliuk.

¹² Khmel’ko further observes the limiting nature of the polling questions as regards one’s ethnicity and native language, because the formulation of these questions implies that each person belongs only to one ethnos and has only one native or mother tongue. (2004: 2–3)

¹³ For scholars studying vertical bilingualism, see Bilaniuk, Sovik, Khmel’ko, and Kulyk, as cited throughout this essay.

¹⁴ Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in the center of the Ukrainian capital has been a permanent site of political protests since the start of the Ukrainian independence movement in 1990.

¹⁵ Vertical or horizontal bilingualism should not be confused with personal bilingualism, as the former describes the distribution of languages in the society as a whole, where all members of a multilingual society may be monolingual, while the latter refers to a multilingual group, members of which share the same linguistic profile.

¹⁶ My emphasis.

¹⁷ My emphasis.

¹⁸ See the complexity of linguistic classification of language mixing in Edwards (2004) and Muysken (2004). A separate study would be required to analyze the four types of surzhik varieties already identified by Bilaniuk (2005).

¹⁹ These are Russkii Blok ('The Russian Faction') and Russkoe Dvizhenie Ukrainy (RDU, 'The Russian Movement of Ukraine'), as discussed in Shumlianskyi, 148-150.

²⁰ Bilaniuk (2005) writes on this phenomenon, which makes people unsure about their ability to speak Ukrainian with confidence: "I frequently found that people who were more accustomed to speaking Russian were inhibited from using Ukrainian, fearing embarrassment that their language would be labeled surzhik [mixture of Russian and Ukrainian in Eastern Ukraine that has a very low status]" (20).

²¹ Studying the language situation in Kharkiv, Margrethe B. Sovik (2010) sees hope in changing this situation in the future generations of University teachers, who will have had Ukrainian as their language of instruction in secondary schools (5–28).