Language Impasse in Bilingual Societies: The Case of Ukraine and Russia-Ukraine War

İki Dilli Toplumlardaki Dil Çıkmazı: Ukrayna Örneği ve Rusya - Ukrayna Savaşı

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Abstract

As is known, language has a much further meaning than only providing communication among people. Therefore, it can be quite difficult to suggest solutions to the language issues that are experienced in bilingual countries. When defining language policy and planning, some language-related concepts come to the agenda again. However, it is an undeniable fact that the practice of language policy rarely concerns only language. It was not easy for Soviet republics that gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union to return to their national languages and cultures as a first step towards nationalization. One of the countries which had

Öz

Bilindiği üzere dil, insanlar arası iletişimi sağlamaktan çok daha öte bir anlam taşımaktadır. Bu nedenle, iki dilli ülkelerde yaşanan dil sorunları için ortak çözüm önerileri sunmak oldukça zor olabilmektedir. Dil politikaları ve planlamaları belirlenirken dil ile ilgili bazı kavramlar da yeniden gündeme gelmektedir. Ancak dil politikası uygulamalarının, nadiren sadece dil ile ilgili kaldığı yadsınamaz bir gerçektir. Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonra bağımsızlığını kazanan ülkelerin, uluslaşmaya yönelik ilk adım olarak ulusal dillerine ve kültürlerine dönme çalışmaları çok kolay olmamıştır. Nüfusunun azımsanmayacak bir

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this difficulty the most is Ukraine, where a substantial part of its population is composed of Russians. In the ongoing language policies, the question of whether the Russians living here are part of Ukraine or a minority often came to the fore. The dominant language especially in the southeastern parts of the country, Russian has been used as a political material by politicians from time to time and this has been one of the most important factors that brought these two Slavic peoples against each other. The Russia-Ukraine War, which started in February 2022 and still continues, is the end point of this polarisation course of these two countries. While the war, which brought these two peoples with common roots face to face, had a great resonance in the world public opinion, in the context of the language problem, which is one of the most important triggers, the question of how far the two peoples could understand each other and how different these two languages were from each other also aroused curiosity. We believe that it is very important to consider the Russian-Ukrainian war from the point of view of the problem of bilingualism, since this is a world experience that must be taken into account in such studies of the linguistic impasse. In this study will be explained societal bilingualism on the case of Ukraine, the applied language policies, the relations between Russia and Ukraine will be discussed on the basis of bilingualism and will be supported by examples provided by Russian and Ukrainian researchers.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Russian *language*, Ukranian *language*, USSR, Russia – Ukraine War.

kısmını Rusların oluşturduğu Ukrayna, bu zorluğu en fazla yaşayan ülkelerden biridir. Yürütülen dil politikalarında, burada yaşayan Rusların, bir azınlık mı yoksa artık Ukrayna'nın bir parçası mı olduğu sorusu sıklıkla gündeme gelmiştir. Ülkenin özellikle güneydoğu kesimlerinde baskın olan Rusçanın, zaman zaman bir siyaset malzemesi olarak kullanılması, bu iki Slav halkını karşı karşıya getiren en önemli etkenlerden biri olmuştur. 2022 yılının Şubat ayında başlayan ve hala devam eden Rusya - Ukrayna Savaşı, iki ülkenin kutuplaşma sürecinde gelinen son noktadır. Ortak köklere sahip bu iki halkı karşı karşıya getiren savaş, dünya kamuoyunda büyük yankı bulurken, en önemli tetikleyicilerinden olan dil sorunu bağlamında, iki halkın birbirini ne kadar anlayabildiği, bu iki dilin birbirinden ne kadar farklı olduğu konusu da merak uyandırmıştır. Dil çıkmazı ile ilgili benzer araştırmalarda dikkate alınacak bir dünya deneyimi olması bakımından, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nın iki dillilik sorunu açısından da ele alınmasının oldukça önemli olduğu kanısındayız. Bu çalışmada, toplumsal iki dillilik Ukrayna örneği üzerinden anlatılacak, uygulanan dil politikaları, Rusya ve Ukrayna ilişkileri yine iki dillilik temelinde ele alınacak, Rus ve Ukraynalı araştırmacılardan verilen örneklerle desteklenecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İki dillilik, Rusça, Ukraynaca, SSCB, Rusya - Ukrayna Savaşı.

Introduction

Bilingualism is an elaborate field of study of linguistics. The reason for its complexity is not only because of the high number of classifications within itself, but also because it is not a field restricted to linguistics.

"Contrary to monolingualism, the phenomenon of bilingualism contains more complex, individual, social, cultural, psychological and educational dimensions. Therefore, bilingualism is not limited to linguistics and studies that are done about language. Apart from linguistics, the phenomenon of bilingualism is also in close relation with issues such as immigrants, extraordinary communities, their education, psychological states, social and economic problems" (Bican, 2017, p. 354).

As to the classification within itself, the concept of bilingualism embodies many sub-categories such as individual and societal bilingualism, major language, minor language, dimensions of bilingualism, bilingualism possibilities of the child according to the status of the language, and the number of speakers. As for the definition of the concept, the Güncel Türkçe Sözlük (TDK: Contemporary Turkish Dictionary) on the website of Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Society), defines it basically as "the state of being bilingual." However, in bilingualism, there are various points of views about the mastery of languages and the levels of proficiency in these languages. For instance, Aksan (2015, p. 26) explains bilingualism as acquisition, use or learning of more than one language close to the level of one's native language due to several reasons and conditions. Similarly, Bloomfield (1973, p. 55-56) claims that one can be bilingual on condition that they become as proficient as their native language in the language that they are learning especially during their childhood and develop mastery of both languages without losing their native language. On the other hand, in response to the claim that only those who can use both languages equally well in all areas, and those who can use one language without being affected by the other can really be called bilinguals, Beardsmore (1986, p. 7) says that "in that case there would be very few real bilingual people around." While discussing bilingualism, Oksaar, (1972, p. 377-385) defines it as "one's ability to use more than one language as a form of communication and their transition between these languages." About this, Oksaar gives examples from his son who was born into a bilingual environment; Estonian and Swedish. In the events that one of the languages affects the other negatively, not being proficient enough in the native language, learning another language incompetently, or in short, being inadequate in both languages, the terms 'semilingualism' or 'limited bilingualism' are used. As a matter of fact, "the concept of semilingualism has often been misunderstood and misused. In the first place the notion should be worded as 'double semilingualism', because it refers to two languages" (Appel&Muysken, 2005, p. 107). Eastman (as cited in Alpatov, 2000, p. 140-141) likens this condition to have two second languages.

As can be understood from the explanations and the given examples, the concept of bilingualism, especially on an individual basis, can be studied in a very detailed manner. As bilingualism will be investigated mostly on a social level in this study, the basic difference between individual and societal bilingualism can be summarized as Karaağaç's (2011, p. 222-228) definition:

"Individual bilingualism, is one's state of being bilingual. Bilingual people are people whose language acquisition take place in a bilingual environment for very different reasons or those who can speak two languages. Bilingual individuals often emerge in two ways: growing in bicultural environments and learning for need. Societal bilingualism, on the other hand, is the bilingualism of a society for quite different reasons, from the life flow of the society, from the religion adopted by the society to immigration, from political reasons to being fashionable."

In societal bilingualism, apart from the language of his/her ethnic origin, there is an effective use of the common language of the country in which one lives. As specifically stated here, one's second language must be an active language used in the country. Otherwise, it would be a foreign language, not a second language. In societal bilingualism, there is a kind of coexistence obligation for many different reasons. As a result of this necessity, two or more languages can be spoken in the country. In this sense, besides bilingualism, the concept of multilingualism is also used. Yet languages learned other than the first/primary language can be second, third or more. Therefore, as Beardsmore (1986, p. 3) states, "bilingualism is an inclusive term used also for multilingualism, which is not limited to situations where only two languages are involved." From a social point of view, bilingualism is a concept that includes monolingual individuals as well as bilingual individuals. Language rights and regulations come forward when one of the languages is the official language of the country and the other is the dominant minority language. At this point, it is inevitable that language policies come into play. However, it is an undeniable fact that the practices under the name of language policy are rarely only related to language. The use of minority language by politicians as a trump card from time to time can cause a polarization between the two peoples, which may lead to war, as in the example of Russians and Ukrainians living in Ukraine.

1. Bilingualism Impasse

According to Tatar and Bashkir writer Aydar Halim "A person who loses his language loses a thousand times more than his ability to communicate with his people. […]. The love for his homeland, forests and springs is fed by the mother tongue. Nothing can take its place. The child without mother tongue is already semi-immigrant in his/her home country" (as cited in Alpatov, 2000, p. 139). As it can be understood from these words of Halim, language is a very important element with a predominant spiritual aspect for the individual and the society. However, this element can sometimes lead bilingual countries into a dead end. There are many bilingual countries in the world. Therefore, it has become inevitable to make language plans in many fields, especially in education. When viewed on an individual basis, the advantages and disadvantages that bilingualism provides a person can be discussed in detail. Even though in this study, as noted above, bilingualism will be discussed on the basis of society, some advantages it provides to the individual directly affect the society. When viewed from the point of preventing the extinction of local languages, another advantage can be mentioned about bilingualism. For example, regarding the dominance of Russian over Turkic languages, Halim states that "a Chernobyl disaster would be brought about by forgetting the native languages" (Alpatov, 2000, p. 139). Chuvash linguist Khuzangay (Alpatov, 2000, p. 141-142), who makes a negative

conclusion about being bilingual, emphasizes that a person can have command of both mother tongue and Russian, but then he will be deprived of cultural motivation in both. He says that behind the language, there will be no culture that forms the basis for it, and this will lead to the formation of a simple person who is indifferent to everything that does not directly concern him. He points out that this situation is really scary and will become serious especially in cities. From time to time, minority languages can also be seen as a threat. In this regard, Canbulat (2012, p. 13) says:

> "According to the approaches and ideologies that perceive minority languages as a threat, it is argued that the continued existence of minority languages and teaching them together with the dominant language may cause social conflicts, delay the adaptation of groups to the dominant society and cause segregation. Those who oppose this view, on the other hand, argue that national unity can exist without social unity, citing countries such as Singapore, Luxembourg and Switzerland as examples."

It should be noted here that the free teaching of minority language is not the same as the teaching in minority language, which can turn into a problem in language planning. Regarding the separate nations that arose throughout and after the USSR, Russian researcher Alpatov makes the following observations: "In bilingualism, there are opinions that an ethnicity can be maintained even when the 'mother tongue' is not used as the main language (although it is not considered a positive phenomenon)" (Alpatov, 2000, p. 139). Alpatov cites the Irish and the Scots as examples and says:

> "They haven't lost their ethics, feeling of country, or sense of ethnicity. […] However, it is important that almost all the voices in favor of bilingualism come from regions where the vernacular languages are strongly suppressed by Russian. These areas primarily include the Volga and Ural regions, as well as occasionally eastern Ukraine. It was only possible to choose between bilingualism and Russian monolingualism in this area in the conditions of the late 80s. It was quite utopian to imagine a well-educated Chuvash or Bashkir who only spoke their mother tongue. The call to abandon the Russian language immediately was too radical. Reconciliation proposals regarding the priority of mother language reinforced with paternal language (Russian) were born from this" (Alpatov, 2000, p. 139-140).

It would be useful to look at the *ana dil* (main language), *ana dili* or *anne dili* (mother tongue) and other related concepts that Alpatov mentioned here. Because these criteria, in addition to the idea of bilingualism, are highlighted when we look at studies on language rights and planning. Korkmaz (1992, p. 8) defines *ana dil* as "the common language in which languages or dialects, whose sound structure and shape structure differ more or less from each other currently in terms of meaning, were united at an unknown date in terms of root." She defined the term *ana dili* as "the language that a person gets from the family he was born into and grew up in and the society to which he was born and that forms the strongest tie in the relations between himself and the society". These two concepts can often be confusing as Sağır (2007) expressed years ago. In this case, although the issue of using the concept of *anne dili* for ethnic *ana dili* has been brought up in order to avoid confusion, there is no consensus on this issue. Moreover, as Oruç (2016) points out, contrary to what some researchers say, "the language in which a person expresses himself most comfortably may not be the *ana dili,* but the

common language of the country in which he was born." Some researchers, such as Demircan (1990, p. 14), used the expression 'first language', "the first language a person acquired when he was born, while describing the *ana dili*." In this case, the *ana dil* is the second language. The absence of agreement on all of these ideas may cause statements and political discourses concerning language planning in bilingual nations to be unclear. Only one comparable concept, the term of *родной язык*, emerges when we examine these concepts in Russian. The word *родной* here is an adjective that is derived from its noun form, meaning ancestry, root, genus, or original. *Язык* means language. "*Родной язык: 1. материнский язык,* the first thing that a person learns and internalizes from childhood, the language learned in the cradle. Typically, one or both of the parents speak this language. His primary language of communication might be another language that he picks up later. 2. *этнический язык* (ethnic language). 3. *первый язык* (first language) is employed in terms of functionality. In this sense, it is meant to be the language of socialization in a way. 4. *национальный язык* (national language). It is explained that apart from Russian, it is the language of the peoples living in Russia" (Kozhemyakina, et al., 2006, p. 187). Regarding the language problem in the USSR, Author Aydar Halim, on the other hand, focused on the concept of *отцовский язык* (father tongue) in addition to the concept of *материнский язык* (mother tongue):

> "The mother tongue is the spiritual, emotional, and emotional language of the heart. The father tongue is the language of the mind, which is absorbed and ruled by the brain. Mother tongue (родной) is another name for the first language, which is acquired through breast milk and is the language of emotions. The second language that is learned based on the mother tongue is something that is gained through the mind (intellect)" (as cited in Alpatov, 2000, p. 139).

Taking into account all these definitions, proposals for the use of the *ana dil* without obliterating the *ana dili* are put on the agenda.

2. The Case Of Ukraine

As is well known, the most crucial topic of the recent days in the world is the Russia-Ukraine War, which began at the end of February 2022 and is still ongoing fiercely. On February 24 morning, military action by Russia against Donbas marked the beginning of the conflict. It is obvious that the tension between the two nations that led to the war did not develop overnight.

The relationship between war and bilingualism and associated language policy will become clearer when we focus on the regions of Ukraine that are primarily home to Ukrainian and Russian speakers. As researcher Teres stated,

> "The features of the modern ethno-political situation in Ukraine are due to a number of historical, political and ethno-demographic factors, since Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire, and then the USSR. For this reason, the problem of the Russian and Russian-speaking population of Ukraine attracts the attention of researchers mostly in the context of Ukraine-

Russia relations, security problems, bilateral cooperation and militarization studies" (Teres, 2015, p. 149).

In some societies, such as in our country, the fact that both Russians and Ukrainians are called by a single common name 'Russian' may be related to the continuation of Ukraine's identity formation process, as well as the habit of using a certain expression. When this is the case, the clash between these two Slavic peoples who share a similar ancestry has shocked the globe greatly. How then do Russian and Ukrainian differ from one another? Can people who speak these two languages communicate with one another? Although both languages are members of the Indo-European language family's East Slavic branch, they appear to be highly similar to one another despite having distinctions. For example, although they have a common alphabet, the Russian letters 'ё, ы, э' and the 'ъ' sign are absent in the Ukrainian alphabet. However, unlike the Russian alphabet, in Ukrainian, there are letters 'г, є, i, ї'. When the similarities of the two languages are compared, it can be said that the Ukrainian language has less similar features with the Russian language than other Slavic languages. Despite the fact, that many words in both languages share the same spelling and pronunciation, they frequently have different meaning tones. As a result, understanding each other becomes challenging. It is important to remember that the elements specific to their respective historical processes account for a major portion of the distinctions between the Russian and Ukrainian languages. On the subject of Ukraine's ethnic heritage, some historians from Russia and Ukraine disagree. Some Russian historians argue that the Ukrainians never actually existed as a separate nation and that the Ukrainian language is, in a way, a corrupted version of Russian. According to these historians, the Ukrainian language is a Russo-Polish dialect, a combination of the Moscow language and the language of Poland that predominated in Western Ukraine following the fall of the Kievan Rus. For such discussions about origin, the Ukrainian linguist Pivtorok said: "There have been heated debates about our origins for decades, and the ethnic origin of Kievan Rus, which has turned from a purely scientific problem to a political one in the historical process, still continues to occupy the agenda" (Pivtorok, 2011). The researcher points out that the Kievan Rus was recognized as the first Russian state by historians, particularly those of Tsarist Russia (Ukrainian historians, on the other hand, accept it as the first period of Ukrainian history). These historians say that during the establishment of the Russian State in the Kiev region, Russian tribes lived, and after the Mongol-Tatar invasion of 1237-1240, these tribes, which are the ancestors of the Russians, migrated to the upper Volga region, and later returned to the ruined Kiev. This leads to the conclusion that the Ukrainian nation was formed by the merger of these Russian ethnic groups in the South. As a result, these historians assert that, the Russian people are the original ethnic Slavic people. Between the XI and XV centuries, the ancient Russian people were separated into three branches. Thus, three East Slavic peoples are formed: Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian. The Old Russian language, which was basically the only language, would also be split into three East Slavic languages. According to this argument, Ukrainian history and language did not start before the 14th -15th centuries. The differences between the two languages became evident with the beginning of the formation of the Russian literary language in the first half of the 18th century. Moreover, today, some Russian researchers point out that the Russian literary language is more developed and widespread, while the Ukrainian language cannot meet many terms, therefore, literary

publications in Ukraine are mostly preferred in Russian, and they show this as a reason for giving broad rights to Russian in Ukraine.

According to Alpatov (2000, p. 5)

"Language studies in the republics of the USSR started in the 20s or 30s, when there was no concept of sociolinguistics yet. However, it was too soon to draw broad conclusions regarding the sociolinguistic issues of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. Because not enough historical time had passed for this. Even though many theoretical studies, particularly those done in the second half of the 1980s, are quite serious and logically grounded, they frequently make stereotypical claims that are untrue, such as 'all languages are equal in our country, every people can speak their own language freely, and Russian is used as the language of international communication' (as cited in Razvitiye, 1976, c. 6).

In the continuation of his words, the researcher gives the following example:

"The majority of courses are taught in Ukrainian at all Ukrainian universities, however some of them are also taught in Russian per students' requests (Vzaimootnosheniye, 1980: 221-222). Contrary to such stereotypes, spoken in the spirit of that period, in fact, in most of the Ukrainian universities in 1980, the education was entirely in Russian (Alpatov, 2000, p. 5-6).

The disintegration of the USSR was made official with the signing of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Treaty in 1991. According to this, "the mutual relations of the member states of this community, which is neither a state nor a supra-state entity, will be carried out through coordination institutions to be established on equal basis" (Hüseynov, 2003, p. 395). This community, which can be considered the beginning of the relationship and cooperation initiative between the states that left the USSR and Russia, was established in December 1991 in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, by the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Also in December, the countries of the former Soviet Republic, (except for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Georgia) Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan joined the community. Georgia became a founding member in 1993. However, following Russia's invasion of Ossetia in 2009, it formally departed the union. In 2005, Turkmenistan withdrew from the full membership but remained a member as an observer. It has been in charge of the CIS since 2019. Ukraine, which is a founding member, became a de facto member in 1993, but left this membership in 2014. Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova are the current members of the Community. Although Ukraine is not considered a legal member because it has not signed the CIS charter, it is currently considered a participant and associate member of the CIS. In March 2018, there were news that Ukraine would leave the CIS: "According to the news of the Russian Interfax news agency, which is based on the deputy Svetlana Zalishchuk, a proposal is being prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to the CIS Executive Committee to withdraw from membership. It is noted that Kiev also decided to suspend the friendship agreement with Moscow" (Kazakistan.Kz. 2018). When we look at the process until Ukraine took this decision, it is seen that the tension between Russia and Ukraine has increased from time to time and there have been conflicts that led to deaths. In fact,

despite the friendship, cooperation and partnership agreement between Ukraine and Russia, which was signed for ten years in 1997 and entered into force in 1999, the relations between the two countries have entered a difficult period due to the tensions experienced until today. Due to the large number of Russian-speaking populations in the southeastern regions of Ukraine, various promises were made by Ukrainian political parties to either maximize or minimize the Russian language, especially during election periods. Tensions have often arisen about the language rights of the dominant minority Russians, and the language issue has been one of the factors that ignited the Russia-Ukraine War. The people of Ukraine, which is located between Europe and Russia in terms of its location, polarized or have been polarized as pro-Russian and pro-Western, with the effect of language policies. The direction that events took was determined by whether the newly elected leaders of Ukraine looked toward Europe or toward Russia. The CIS nations' and other nations' attitudes have also been and continue to be shaped in accordance with this.

> "After its independence in 1991 In Ukraine, the legal use of languages is regulated by the 1996 law 'Foundations of State Language Policy' and the European Regulation on Regional or Minority Languages, which was approved by the Supreme Council in 2003 but entered into force on 1 January 2006 and a number of other laws and decrees adopted in the period 2005-2009" (Lapina, 2016, p. 156).

According to the law adopted in June 1996 "Ukrainian is the official language of Ukraine. The government of Ukraine ensures that the Ukrainian language is fully developed and used in all areas of public life. Ukrainian, Russian, and other national minority languages of Ukraine are guaranteed free development, usage, and preservation" (Popov, 2020, p. 283). While this is the case, it can be seen that opinions and research on the language policies used in Ukraine vary depending on whether the researchers are primarily Russian or Ukrainian. As Alpatov (2000, p. 4) states, language situations in other countries can be handled objectively to some extent, but when it comes to your own culture and language, it is difficult not to be emotional and to stay away from a sympathetic or antipathetic approach. For instance, Russian researcher Popov deduces the following regarding the state of Ukrainian linguistics:

> "The single-language law in Ukraine is obviously at odds with the country's population's diversity of cultures and languages. When the USSR fell apart and Ukraine became independent, the majority of its citizens spoke Russian as their native tongue. In the western regions of Ukraine and in the countryside, Ukrainian was spoken. In fact, there are at least two different languages in modern Ukraine. Because the Ukrainian language is a language built on the basis of the Poltava dialect and Galician-Ukrainian. That is, the Ukrainian language or languages were the language of the village, while Russian was the language of the city. However, even in the case of the village language, the Ukrainian language has mostly been replaced by the *суржик* (surzhyk)[2] language. As a result, there are at least two languages in Ukraine (if we do not distinguish it from the literary Ukrainian based on the Poltova dialect), the majority

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[2] Surzhyk (суржик): Russian-Ukrainian mixed spoken language.

language Ukrainian and the Galician (or Galician-Ukrainian) language" (Popov, 2020, p. 283-284).

On the other hand, American researcher Skemergon's words are supported by Ukrainian researcher Teres, who makes the following remarks:

> "The dominant position in society can be both an ethnic majority and an ethnic minority. In the absence of their own state, the majority may be a 'mass ethnos' with the ethnic minority's dominant position. This was the case for the Ukrainians. While Ukrainians were the ethnic majority in the Soviet Socialist Republics, ethnic Russians had the dominant position in socio-political life and culture" (Teres, 2015, p. 149-150).

The researcher highlights that immigration in the second half of the 20th century led to the majority of Russians in Ukraine. Due to the central government's strategy of 'Russification' during the USSR era, this migration is a purposeful movement to Ukraine. The aim is to increase the number of Russians in the densely populated and well-established Ukrainian lands. Teres asserts that because they were all citizens of the USSR at the time they arrived in Ukraine, it is challenging to categorize these Russians as immigrants. Russians make up 43.28% (or around 5 million) of the population of Ukraine, according to the 1989 census. According to the data cited by Teres (2015: 149-150), after the collapse of the USSR, there were a total of 25 million Russians living in independent states, and the majority of them were in Ukraine (11.4 million). Where such a dominant minority exists, the politicization of language could not be prevented. At the beginning of the independence process:

> "For a long time, political parties avoided using the 'Russian card' in their political struggles. But over time, criticisms of the language policies of Ukraine regarding the rights of Russians here intensified. As of 1994, in Leonid Kuchma's first presidential election campaign, it was promised that Russian would be given the status of second state language for the first time in order to get the votes of voters in the southeast regions. Although this promise did not materialize, it was the beginning of the politicization of the Russian language and the catalyst for political speculation" (Teres, 2015, p. 158).

Regarding the politicization of language, researcher Pogrebinskiy (et al., 2010) says:

> "Such politicization hinders the search for a civilized and acceptable compromising solution to language problems in Ukraine. Rather than trying to 'Ukrainianize' or 'Russianize' someone, it seems more logical to accept the truth: there are and will continue to be two language communities of approximately equal size in Ukraine. The job of politicians is to create comfortable conditions for them to exercise their language rights."

The number of Russians living in Ukraine is high, but when we look at the official data of 2001, it is understood that these two language communities are not of equal size. Ukrainians make up 37541.7 of the total population, while Russians make up 8334.1, according to the results of the 2001 Ukrainian census conducted by the Ukraine State Statistical Institut (ukrcensus.gov.ua*., 2001).* Minorities like Belarusians, Moldovans, Crimean Tatars, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Romanians, and Poles make up the

remaining portion. However, it cannot be denied that this result will not constitute an obstacle for objective and rational solution proposals regarding language policies.

"The sections of the Ukrainian parliamentary election law requiring candidates to be fluent in the national language were removed in 2001 and 2006. Contrary to the Ukrainian practice, f or instance, Nursultan Nazarbayev, a candidate for president of Kazakhstan in 2005, passed the Kazakh language proficiency test" (Teres, 2015, p. 158). In these years, when the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was submitted to the Parliament three times for ratification in order to improve the status of the Russian language, the concept of 'regional language', in which Russian stands out, has also been strengthened. Afterwards, the 'Orange Revolution'[3], which started with the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential elections, and the victory of Yushchenko, "started the process of Ukrainianization in the minds of the people"(Teres, 2015, p. 159) as Teres puts it. Russian researchers Beregsasi and Chernichko (2011, p. 149-155) in their studies on the subject emphasize that Ukraine is a monolingual state according to the constitution, but it is a multilingual country where several languages are used in addition to the Ukrainian language. According to them, the political elite that came to power after the Orange Revolution wanted to make Ukraine a monolingual (both legal and de facto) country and did not give any importance to the language rights of its non-Ukrainian-speaking citizens. The regulation on the European Treaty for the Protection of Regional and Minority Languages, mentioned above and which is a controversial issue, was passed by the Ukrainian Parliament in 2006 (Council of Europe). After Viktor Yanukovych, who was defeated in the previous election, became president in 2010, the use of the Russian language and other national minority languages was expanded. State guarantees, for instance, have been made respecting the use of national minority languages and/or regional languages in court proceedings. With the passage of the law on television and radio broadcasting in 2010 (Zakon Ukrainı, 2012), the percentage of audio-visual transmissions in Ukrainian fell from 50% to 25%. In addition, the minimum 50% quota requirement for the total weekly broadcast volume of Ukrainian musical works on the radio has been abolished. Despite all this, the Russian researcher Popov (2020, p. 285) reminds that during the three years of Yanukovych's presidency, there was no serious development in the field of language, whereas the 5th item (two languages - one country!) of the 2010 election program he prepared was about the status of Russian. In support of this, some Russian experts point out that the Russian language is more commonly used as a language of communication in Ukraine and claim that the findings of opinion polls favoring the Ukrainian language do not necessarily reflect the reality. To illustrate,

"Professor Vladimir Paniotto, Director General of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, says that respondents in opinion polls on the question 'Which language do you consider to be your mother tongue' answer that their mother tongue is Ukrainian with a large

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[3] The Orange Revolution: Events in the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential elections, in which the candidate Viktor Yushchenko accused the other candidate, pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych, who won by a narrow margin, of rigging the elections in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, where the Russians are concentrated. As a result of the events, Yushchenko was elected president. The reason why it is called 'orange' is that Yushchenko used this color during his election campaign.

margin each time, but they still speak Russian when they are with friends or at home" (Popov, 2020, p. 285).

As quoted in Teres's (2015, p. 160) work 'Russians in Modern Ukraine': Protests starting with 'We want to speak our mother tongue!' and collected signatures stating that it is difficult to fill out official documents in Ukrainian, to read drug leaflets prepared only in Ukrainian, to watch films in Ukrainian were acknowledged, and in 2012, a draft law named 'Principles of State Language Policy' (Zakon Ukrainı, 2012) was prepared by the Ukrainian Parliament. With this law, the rights of speakers of eighteen regional languages, determined by this law, are regulated. Accordingly, in places where the number of speakers for each regional language is 10% or more of the total number of inhabitants, local government bodies are obliged to develop, use and preserve regional languages, by giving a special status to these languages, not to the Ukrainian language. The Russian language, on the other hand, has gained state status in thirteen of the twenty-seven first-level administrative and regional units, especially in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, Nikolayev, Odessa, Kherson and Sevastopol. But even when this law in 2012 was still in the negotiation, there were scenes similar to the images below, inside and outside.

Image 1: Ukrainian Parliament

Source: Brennan, 25 May 2012, Daily mail

Image 2: A view from outside the Ukrainian Parliament

Source: BBC Russian, 5 June 2012

Despite every arrangement, the issues could not be fully resolved. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, unrest that ensued resulted in numerous fatalities and widespread devastation. Many Ukrainians, like Ukrainian researcher Teres, saw these events as a test for Ukrainians to confirm the loyalty of millions of citizens to the Ukrainian people. The thing that ignited these conflicts, which began in the Independence Square in Kiev at the end of 2013 and are called the Euromaidan events, was the refusal of the Ukrainian government, headed by Yanukovych, to sign the European Union Association Agreement. Pro-government supporters sided with Russia and preferred the Eurasian Economic Union Agreement. The events came to an end with the dismissal of President Yanukovych at the beginning of 2014. For Ukrainians, this result is a 'Revolution of Honor' in terms of restoring their dignity. According to many Ukrainian researchers, these events have shown that the issue of the Russian language is a political issue. It has been commented that Russia uses the Russian language as a form of geopolitical tool to describe the 'Russian world.' Some Russian researchers, on the other hand, perceived the policy of supporting the state language carried out by the Ukrainian authorities (especially after the 21 February 2014 coup d'état) as a limitation of other languages spoken in Ukraine. According to Russian researchers Medvedev and Krasnov (2018, p. 161-169) , rather than stabilizing the situation in this region, the Ukrainian state authorities made radical nationalist measures that furthered racial and linguistic divisions in society. They remind the draft law on 'State Language', that (2017) proposes the use of the Ukrainian language, both in the public sphere and in the media, to cover the whole country. This law, adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament on September 28, 2017, was described by the Minister of Education of Ukraine, Liliya Grinevich, as

"the main way to modernize Ukrainian education and bring it closer to EU standards, the administration of Hungary and Romania gave a serious reaction on the seventh article.

Romania emphasized that Ukraine passed this law without first consulting its allies, severely restricting the ability of national minorities to receive an education in their mother tongue, while Hungary claimed that, within the context of the Eastern Bloc, Ukraine will suffer as a result of this law" (Tulup, 2017).

A similar attitude is experienced in today's Russia-Ukraine War. Russia's placement of 'Alexander' missile systems in Belarus is one of the most obvious examples of Belarus' attitude in this war. The Ukrainian press evaluates the predictions about how the attitudes of other states close to Russia will develop in the future.

Image 3: "Alexander' missile systems were deployed in Belarus"

Source: Ukraina Channel 24, 23.05.2022

The primary language of publishing operations has been determined to be Ukrainian in accordance with the law entitled 'Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language', which went into effect on July 16, 2019. All newspapers and magazines must be published in Ukrainian or bilingual, one of which must be Ukrainian. Apart from these, all cultural events should only be held in the state language (Ukrainian). Also, according to this law, the quota for Ukrainian language in national TV channels was increased to 90 percent. For regional media, 20 percent of daily broadcasts are allowed in Russian or other languages, while for television and radio organizations broadcasting only in the Crimean Tatar language, this quota is set at at least 40 percent of broadcast time. According to Popov, "This political maneuver protects the Crimean Tatar assembly's allegiance to them by making an exception for the Crimean Tatar language" (Popov, 2020, p. 293-295). Ukrainian must be a first language for all top government officials, including the president, prime minister, and members of the Cabinet, as well as deputies, educators, healthcare professionals, lawyers, and notaries. In all educational institutions of the country, education will be conducted in the state language.

Conditions for learning the state language in special courses will be provided for representatives of indigenous peoples and national minorities, as well as for foreigners. In addition, all foreign films will be dubbed in Ukrainian. The 'General Secondary Education' law, adopted on January 16, 2020, similar to the previous one, is based on the state language, Ukrainian, in education.

The tension between the two countries, which had been going on for years and almost turned into a war with the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, eventually turned into a war in 2022. Russian President Putin first announced that they accepted the demand for independence of Donetsk and Luhansk, where Russians live heavily in Ukraine. In the small hours of February 24, 2022, with the military operation of Russia in Donbas and Putin's address to the nation in which this operation was announced, the button of the war was pressed. Putin, though, insisted that this was a military operation with Ukraine as its justification rather than an invasion. President Zelensky followed a policy towards Ukraine and the Ukrainian language while in office from 2019 till the present in contrast to his career as a comedian, his stern and resolute attitude toward Russia caught the attention of the general public worldwide.

As the second month of the war was approaching, in the negotiations, there was an article regarding the determination of the status of the Russian language among the demands that Russia conveyed to Ukraine, and it was proposed that the first five articles, with this one coming in second, be incorporated into the Ukrainian Constitution: "1. Kiev should give up its NATO membership and maintain its neutrality (Russia will be guarantor). 2. The Russian language should be the second state language. All laws that discredit the Russian-speaking population should be repealed. 3. Crimea should be recognized as Russian territory. 4. The independence of Donetsk and Luhansk with their administrative borders (including areas currently under Ukrainian control) should be recognized. 5. Nazis must be expelled from the nation. 6. The country must be disarmed, cleared of heavy weapons" (Shlyapnikov, 2022). As the sixth month of the war is approaching, it is seen that the Russians took a step forward or backward regarding these requested articles in the ongoing negotiations.

Conclusion

The post-Soviet states that gained their independence have endeavored to establish their national identities and have made and continue to make some arrangements to return to their national languages. However, because of the prior practice of speaking Russian and the economic and political ties to Russia, this transition has not been an easy one. In Ukraine, because of the country's large Russian population, demands to elevate the status of the Russian language, political rhetoric, and language policies have at times put the country at an impasse. This has led to regional divisions, pitting Russians and Ukrainians, who are particularly numerous in the southeastern parts of the country, against each other. With Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the tension between these two Slavic peoples—one of whose primary causes was the language issue—turned into a war. The following map depicts the most recent state of the Russian-occupied Ukrainian land on the 145th day of the war, which began on February 24, 2022, and is still ongoing.
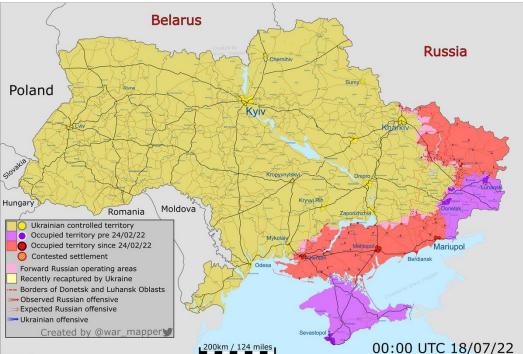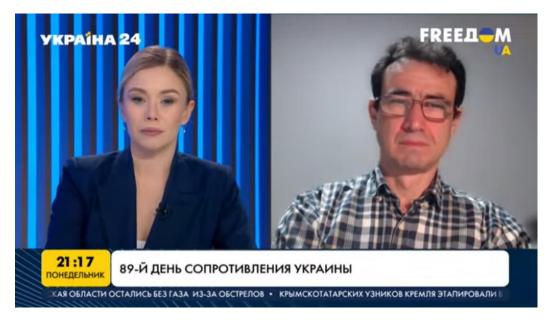
Image 4: Map of Ukraine as of July 18 - the 145th day of the Russia-Ukraine War

Source: War Map (as cited in L. Brovko, 2022)

From the very beginning, Russia has stated that this war was caused by Ukraine, denying that civilians were harmed and considering it as a misleading of public opinion by the Ukrainian government. On the other hand, Ukraine has made an effort to clarify to both European and the local Russian population that this is not the situation. The most evident example of this is that the news channel 'Ukraina 24', which had been broadcasting in Ukrainian for the state, started to broadcast in Russian later during the war. It was intriguing to convert to Russian broadcasting in this way during the conflict in order to appeal to the country's dominant minority, despite the fact that several laws had been passed requiring that the broadcast language be Ukrainian. The channel, which covers the war in every detail, occasionally reminds why the channel switched to Russian language broadcasting and states that their aim is to explain the course of the war and the events that took place in this process to all Russians and the public inside and outside the country.

Image 5: Ukrainian Resistance on the 89th Day of the War

Source: Ukraina 24, 23.05.2022

Given the events in Ukraine and the war that came at the end, it is obvious that language politics should not be just about political discourse. In modern societies, language-related issues should also have contemporary and logical solutions. The social and institutional circumstances, regulations, studies, and recommendations on language rights should all be taken into account when handling languages that are embedded in the society in general. It should be advised against using discriminating slogans in election campaigns, as was done in the case of pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian voters in Ukraine, but instead, it should be suggested that in order to successfully develop language policies, examples from the real world should be studied. Otherwise, two peoples with the same roots will inevitably be divided into 'us and you', as seen between the Russians and the Ukrainians. Nevertheless, this unrest in Ukraine, one of the most important factors of which is the language problem, shouldn't be used as an excuse to justify the invasion of Russia and the subsequent escalation of the conflict. Indeed, there is a war going on in which many civilians are killed and displaced from their homes and homeland. Therefore, Russia's invasion has drawn and continues to draw a huge reaction from the world public opinion.

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