

## Interests and Power in Language Management

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**PETER LANG**

Marek Nekula / Tamah Sherman / Halina Zawiszová (eds.)

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# Contents

<b>Contributors .....</b>	<b>7</b>
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<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>11</b>
------------------------------	-----------

## **Introduction**

*Marek Nekula / Tamah Sherman / Halina Zawiszová*

Exploring interests and power in language management .....	15
--	----

## **Part I: Language ideologies**

*Goro Christoph Kimura*

Why and how ideology matters for Language Management Theory .....	37
---	----

*Petar Vuković*

Council for the Standard Croatian Language Norm: The failure of ‘hard power’ .....	51
--	----

*Jakub Kopecký*

Divergent interests and argumentation in Czech Language Consulting Center interactions .....	73
--	----

*Stephanie Rudwick*

Language politics at Stellenbosch University, South Africa .....	101
--	-----

## **Part II: Minority languages and minoritized languages**

*Roland Marti*

Language management from above (and from below), from outside (and from inside): The case of Lower Sorbian .....	125
--	-----

*Ben Ó Ceallaigh*

Interests, power and austerity in Irish-language policy 2008–2018 .....	149
---	-----

*Nadiya Kiss*

Key actors in the organized language management of Ukraine: On the materials of language legislation development and adoption ..... 177

*Solvita Burr (née Pošeiko)*

The interaction of nationalist language ideology and the interests of individual actors: An unresolved dispute over language use on Latvian house number signs ..... 203

### **Part III: Foreign language policies, teaching and learning, and use**

*Lisa Fairbrother*

Interests and power in English education policy in Japan: A focus on the high school 'Teaching/Learning English in English' policy ..... 237

*Hiroyuki Nemoto*

The investment in managing interests and power through study abroad: Literacy and identities from a translingual perspective ..... 267

*Vít Dovalil*

German as a foreign and a minority language in the light of the interests of social actors: The case of the Czech Republic ..... 293

*Chikako Ketcham*

Non-Japanese business people's use of Japanese language in their workplace in Japan ..... 329

### **Epilogue**

*Björn Jernudd*

Some remarks on power in simple and organized language management 357

**Index** ..... 369

Nadiya Kiss

# Key actors in the organized language management of Ukraine

## On the materials of language legislation development and adoption<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** The chapter highlights language management in contemporary Ukraine from the Euromaidan period (2013–2014), during Petro Poroshenko’s presidency (2014–2019) up to recent developments under the president elected in 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskyi. Based on an actor-centered approach, this study provides a detailed analysis of language legislation developments and adoption processes in different phases. The chapter examines the interests of different social groups and the power relations between various social and political actors. Through the content of law texts, media discussions, political rhetoric and expert interviews, the research gives an overview of language policy changes and competing interpretations of the language situation by various social actors. The study also pays attention to describing conflicts that occur between the actors in the process of decision-making.

**Keywords:** language management in Ukraine, actor-centered approach, language laws, language policies

## 1 Introduction

In contemporary Ukraine, language management is in the process of a vivid development. Since Ukrainian independence in 1991, language policy strategies have changed many times according to the general policies of Ukrainian presidents and leading political parties. The history of language policy dynamics is described in detail in Besters-Dilger et al. (2009), Moser (2014), Bilaniuk (2017) and in Azhniuk (2017). Moreover, Ukrainian language policy has been considered from different perspectives in numerous studies—from the historical and sociocultural (Masenko

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1 This chapter is a part of a larger post-doc project “Language Policies in Contemporary Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova” which I am currently advancing in the frame of the LOEWE research group “Conflicts in the Eastern Europe” at the Justus Liebig Giessen University, Germany. Therefore, in this chapter I will try to develop a research model of actors in language management that I could further apply in a comparative analysis of contemporary Georgian and Moldovan language policies.

2008), to ideology battles (Kulyk 2010), language and speaker rights (Pavlenko 2011), as well as multilingualism (Pavlenko 2013).

On the other hand, the very term “language management” is seldom mentioned in Ukrainian sociolinguistics (language policy and language planning are still the most frequently used terms), which creates a research gap for the presented subject. The exception is Spolsky’s work where he described early Soviet language policy strategies (Spolsky 2011: 184) and highlighted the preservation of the Ukrainian language in Ukrainian diaspora communities in the USA (Spolsky 2011: 197). Hence, in a detailed overview of language management in post-Soviet countries, Hogan-Brun & Melnyk (2012) analyze the Ukrainian situation in different contexts, including the underlying process of Russification during the Soviet era and explain the main features of language management following Ukrainian independence, especially in the sphere of education and minority languages protection. More recently, Csernicskó & Ferenc (2016) provided a chronological classification of Ukrainian language policies from 1989 until the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict began in 2014.

However, the Euromaidan revolution (2013–2014), the Russian annexation of Crimea in February–March 2014 and its military aggression in Donbas (started in 2014 and still ongoing) have stimulated grassroots movements in different spheres of public life, including cultural and language policies. Nowadays, the actors in language management decisions are not only political parties and government bodies, but also language activist groups and organizations. The goal of this project is to call attention to the chief decision-makers in the process of language management in contemporary Ukraine and to describe the strategies they use to achieve their goals.

## 2 Methodology

Using the theory of language management by Jernudd and Neustupný (1987), I would like to shed light on the changes in Ukraine’s *organized language management* after Euromaidan. Nekvapil gives a clear definition of the latter: “Organized management or also institutional management, ... is management performed by institutions” (Nekvapil 2016: 15). In addition, he defines the main goals for the organized management research: “It is certainly of particular importance for organized language management to identify language problems, i.e. such deviations from the norm which are not only noted by individual speakers in particular interactions but also receive negative evaluation” Nekvapil (2006: 97).

Therefore, I will analyze (1) which actors note the deviation from language use (in the Ukrainian context it is mainly about the use of the Ukrainian vs Russian languages in such public domains as mass-media, education, government, and parliament); (2) how they evaluate this deviation (especially in mass-media discourses, featured in articles, blogs, interviews etc.); and (3) what measures they propose to adjust to this deviation. As Kimura (2014) points out, language management theory considers language policies to be a cyclical process. Therefore, it is important for

this research to look not only at the results of language policy, but maybe more so at its formation and negotiation. Nekvapil and Sherman (2015: 1) themselves emphasized the importance of actors in language management: “Change can be initiated by various actors, such as politicians, government officials or experts appointed to solve language problems”. Furthermore, they emphasize an analysis of the “interplay of bottom-up and top-down” (Nekvapil & Sherman 2015: 2). The actor-centric approach is crucial for this study, since the depiction of the involved actors assists in highlighting power and interest relations.

In this research, I also use a triangulation method, the main principle of which is an analysis of different sources and various discourses. Therefore, the material for this research is composed of laws and draft laws on language issues, and related mass-media discussions, political rhetoric texts, as well as ten expert interviews conducted in 2018 in Kyiv, Ukraine. The experts were selected via a “snowball technique”, starting firstly with members of the working group on the language law and then asking for further contacts. As an interviewer, I tried to ask in detail about organized language management process, the role of different actors and their influence on the decision-making process. It is important to underline that it was partially a “participant observation,” since I am Ukrainian with Ukrainian as my mother tongue, was born and educated in Ukraine, previously worked at a Ukrainian university for a number of years and am myself a member of the language policy expert community. I am aware of the fact that my personal language ideologies could partly affect my research, which is why the critical discourse approach was chosen as part of my methodology as well.

Therefore, in this chapter I will present the information about the actors who try to influence language policies in Ukraine (e.g., deputies, journalists, linguists, language activists etc.), the direction of change they choose, the political interests they represent, the coalitions they form, as well as the specific measures proposed in the laws and the ensuing reactions.

### **3 “Actor-centered approach” in language policies analysis**

Language policy and planning theory (LPP theory) represents a wide spectrum of different approaches and methodological tools. In this research, I use an actor-centered analysis, since it allows us to highlight the main discursive events in contemporary Ukrainian language policies of, including such factors as power and interests. Therefore, this research seeks to understand which actors form, develop and (re)negotiate the present language policies in Ukraine.

Even in traditional LPP theory, which is often portrayed as idealistic and oriented towards a top-down present perspective, the role of actors is understood and underlined. For instance, Cooper proposed an accounting scheme for the research on language planning in which he defined several types of actors, namely—formal elites, influential, counter-elites, and non-elite policy implementers (Cooper 1989: 98). Grounding his scheme in behavioristic theory, Cooper counted other factors that were later summarized briefly by Hornberger (2005: 24): “Cooper’s



accounting framework, organized around the question ‘What actors attempt to influence what behaviors of which people for what ends under what conditions by what means through what decision-making process with what effect?’”. Hornberger, in turn, builds up her integrative model of LPP analysis, taking inspiration from the observations of the classical approach. Hence, the notion of actors has disappeared from this model, which concentrated more on the goals of language policies and the different processes within it than on issues of power, interest and agency. In addition, Dorner uses Cooper’s question scheme to build-up her research tools investigating language policies concerning minority groups. As she assumed, “language policy and planning processes as an example of social human action are highly dynamic and therefore characterized by and dependent on the involvement of all social actors at all social levels” (Dorner 2012: 157).

The classical work by Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) describes the notions of linguistic (communicative) and non-linguistic (symbolic) interests. These two varieties of the interests involve different social groups. Further, the position of actors can change at various stages of language management process: “the interest of a social group may be limited to one or several stages of the management process only. Politicians may raise certain language problems in the discussion of evaluation of language during the process of organized management. It is in the interest of such politicians to assert their participation in order to attract the attention of the voting public. However, the same politicians may be completely indifferent in regard to selecting proper adjustment or implementation procedures [...]” (Jernudd & Neustupný 1987: 78).

Zhao and Baldauf also applied the classical LPP approach and proposed a systematic classification of actors, dividing them into four main categories—(1) *people with power*—national leaders, officials; (2) *people with expertise*—linguists, applied linguists, scientists from other fields, involved in LPP, for instance, in terminological committees; (3) *people with influence* (writers, celebrities, scholars (non-linguists), priests, civil rights lawyers, artists, ad hoc group lobbyists); (4) *people with interest*—ordinary citizens at grass-root levels (see for details Zhao 2011: 910). The authors also state that actors can play productive or receptive roles in language planning. This classification should be critically reconsidered, since people with power often have influence on and interest in the process of language development etc.; therefore, what the authors present as discrete categories largely overlap. Moreover, the same person can belong to multiple groups; for instance, a scientist can also be a public figure, or an applied linguist can be a writer at the same time; they even form coalitions or networks of actors. Nevertheless, this classification is helpful in putting accent on and prioritizing certain groups of actors.

Zhao and Baldauf also established the “I-5” model of the process of realizing language planning goals which includes initiation, involvement, influence, intervention and implementation (see for details: Zhao 2011: 911–912; Zhao & Baldauf 2012: 7–9). Different actors play key roles in different stages of this process. Continuing the development of this theory, Zhao and Baldauf describe actors’ roles in diverse spheres of language planning, namely—status and corpus,

language-in-education and prestige planning. The actor-centered approach is broadly applied in the domain of language-in-education scholarship. For instance, Brown (2010) defines schoolteachers as language policy actors while Johnson and Johnson introduce the notion of “language policy arbiters” defined as “individuals who have a disproportionate amount of impact on language policies” (in their case study, school administrators play this role) (Johnson & Johnson 2014: 222). Finally, Zhao and Baldauf propose an actor-stage model, in which the classification of actors and implementation stages are combined (Zhao & Baldauf 2012: 10). This model is based on an empiric study of the Chinese script reform and has since been used by McEntee-Atalianis (2016) in a study of language policies within the depiction of the United Nations. In another publication, Zhao describes the conflicts between groups of actors, analyzing the complex nature of relations within language management agencies. As he concludes, conflicts occur more often within the same language management institutions than between representatives of different groups (Zhao 2011: 917). Moreover, he considers power relations and interests to be the root cause for the appearance of such internal conflicts: “One major reason is that LPP is an interest-bonding enterprise and the members or representatives involved with the decision-making are invariably vested with various forms of regional and economic interest. In addition, there are also individual reasons, influenced by personal inclination or linguistic ideology” (ibid).

Taking into account the connection between sociolinguistics and political science, Schmidt underlines the key role of actors in language policy formation and transformation. He states that language policies become significant at the political stage, when “political actors believe that something important is at stake regarding the status and/or use of languages in their society, and that these stakes call for intervention by the state” (Schmidt 2009: 97). As he claims, without actors’ intentions and activities, language policies would not draw public attention. Moreover, Peled (2015: 18) underlines that “national governments, community NGOs, global corporations and other political actors are all agents that are capable of realizing political and linguistic transformations”. As he concludes, “human agency certainly plays a crucial part in the shaping of that interface, even if it is incapable of achieving complete control” (ibid).

In contemporary political theory, language policies are viewed as a part of public policy and are often undermined in the frame of comparative politics (see Lamoreux 2011; Lo Bianco 2000). For this research, Foucault’s notion of governmentality is also essential, as Pennycook asserts, it drives language policy research from its classical normative top-down perspective into an analysis of discourses and macro-levels (Pennycook 2005: 65). This notion allows transferring from a single actor’s perspective to an analysis of a variety of actors: “In so doing, it moves us away from a focus on the state as an intentional actor that seeks to impose its will on the people, and instead draws our attention to much more localized and often contradictory operations of power” (ibid).

In addition, McEntee-Atalianis (2016: 213) points out those actors should be assigned to dynamic categories. She underlines that it is especially applicable in

the domain of language policies and planning: “Moreover, LPP itself is acknowledged as dynamic and negotiable in time and space; its meaning is not seated ‘in’ one text or ‘in’ the reader of the policy document or language user but emerges via the actions and discourses of multiple agents, often in transaction with one another” (Ibid). Furthermore, Spolsky’s theory of language management shifts the focus from a top-down perspective by emphasizing the grass-root initiatives that also could stimulate changes in state management. In his work *Language Management* (2011), Spolsky dedicated a whole chapter to analyzing language activist movements and their influence on language policies. Therefore, in present LPP theory, both top-down decision makers and bottom-up activists, are recognized as significant participants, responsible for language policies’ formation and the depiction of the language situation. On the other hand, the actor-centric approach towards analyzing language policies has its pros and cons, especially in describing the comparative perspectives of different countries. For instance, advocates of the historical institutionalism approach criticize sociolinguists for proceeding “without analyzing specific political actors such as the state and its institutions or, for example, political parties as institutional intermediaries between the state and society” (Sonntag & Cardinal 2015: 12). Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to take into account all possible actors, which influence language policy decisions, their interactions, possible cooperation or confrontation, networks, and coalitions.

Moormann-Kimáková (2016) herself underlines the simplification of actor-focused analysis in many publications, describing language-related conflicts in terms “group vocabularies” of majorities and minorities. Moormann-Kimáková explains the complex nature of institutions including government, media, minority organizations and international NGOs, which may affect language policies. Finally, Moormann-Kimáková introduces her own typology of language-related conflict participants, providing criteria such as territorial concentration, group age, mutual intelligibility, status and origin. Based upon the last criteria, she differentiates between minorities created by marginalization, border-minorities, minorities caused by immigration, and minorities caused by the change of identification border (for details see Moormann-Kimáková 2016: 72–77). In my research, I take into account these critical considerations, as they are crucial for the Ukrainian case.

In the frame of critical discourse studies that are regarded as one of the foremost methodological trends for investigating language policies, the role of an actor-centric analysis is also emphasized. For instance, Wodak and Meyer (2016: 11) draw attention to the behavior of actors who mostly obey their societies’ discursive rules. As other researchers point out, however, “there exist certain degrees of freedom for such actors, allowing them to act strategically and to also change power relations.” In this research, I will also explicate the models of lobbying actors’ interests as represented in the media. I will try to find answers to questions such as: how the media highlighted the role of actors in the field of language policies and how their interests are interpreted via medial means. Savski (2016: 51) argues further that the portrayal of present-day language policy practices is a challenging task for scholars because they should consider the variety of “actors involved in language



policy, the different spaces policies are created and interpreted in, and the potential for actors in such spaces to gain agency or to establish hegemony.” From a comparative perspective, my research interest is grounded in finding links between actors’ models of language policy in different post-Soviet countries, their similarities as well as their peculiarities.

## 4 Language management in contemporary Ukraine

As a post-Soviet country, Ukraine is marked by widespread Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism. As the most recent sociological data collected in the Razumkov Center survey in March 2017 shows, 68 % of Ukrainians consider Ukrainian as their mother tongue and 14 % of respondents consider Russian as their native language, while 17 % responded that they speak both Ukrainian and Russian equally with 0.7 % reporting another language (*Razumkov Center* 2017: 6). At the same time, 92 % of the respondents identify as Ukrainians, 6 % as Russians and 1.5 % as other nationalities (*ibid*). In 2013–2019, many discursive events occurred which impacted Ukrainian language policies. First of all, in the wake of the Euromaidan protests (2013–2014), researchers, as evidenced by the results of sociological surveys, perceived the unilateral annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation (2014) and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas an identity shift in Ukrainian society. As Volodymyr Kulyk points out:

One of the most noteworthy consequences of the recent events in Ukraine is a dramatic change in Ukrainian national identity. In various media one can regularly encounter assertions of individuals’ increased self-identification as Ukrainian, greater pride in being a citizen of the Ukrainian state, stronger attachment to symbols of nationhood, enhanced solidarity with compatriots, increased readiness to defend Ukraine or work for Ukraine, and increased confidence in the people’s power to change the country for the better. (Kulyk 2016: 588)

This shift is also reflected in language use, language attitudes and, consequently, in the language policies enacted by state authorities.

Researchers explicate the essence of bilingualism in Ukraine, as well as the risks of language bipolarity:

While bilingualism is not a negative phenomenon in stable societies, the situation is quite different in Ukraine. On the one hand, after gaining independence in 1991, patriotic forces considered the revival and spread of the Ukrainian language to be an uncompromising task. On the other hand, the political forces in the regions where the Russian language prevails incite the population to resist the assimilation of languages under the slogan of the Russian language protection. (Matviyishyn & Michalski 2017: 189)

Kulyk explains the asymmetrical nature of the contemporary language situation in Ukraine, grounded on the consideration that many ethnic Ukrainians speak Russian, but simultaneously “fully support Ukraine’s independence from Russia”

(Kulyk 2017: 310). Therefore, language attitudes in contemporary Ukraine are more influenced by ideologies than by a sense of ethnic belonging. This factor also had a significant impact on the behavior of political elites in the sphere of language management.

#### 4.1 Cancellation of the previous language law: Key actors

In his blog on the *Radio Liberty* website, Marusyk (2017) defines the key players in the language management process, namely: the Constitutional Court, the President, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Culture, local councils, and civil-military administrations. Criticizing most of the actors for their ignorance or slow development of mechanisms and decision-making processes, Marusyk concludes that Ukrainian language policies are progressing thanks to bottom-up, not top-down initiatives. In this period, we can see that new actors appear on the language policies' stage during the military conflict. For instance, Marusyk alludes to civil-military administrations in Donbas (local government units, assigned by central authorities in Kyiv) as examples of different behavior aimed at influencing the language attitudes of the population in these regions. While the head of the Donetsk Regional Civil-Military Administration in territories controlled by the Ukrainian government communicates in Ukrainian, the head of the Luhansk unit uses Russian in communications with public servants (*ibid*).

In this chapter, I analyze the activities of these actors to estimate what interests are expressed in their undertakings. In February 2014, the Supreme Council of Ukraine canceled the previous language law *On the principles of the state language policy* that was adopted during Yanukovych's regime in 2012. The document, frequently called the "Kivalov-Kolesnichenko law" in reference to its authors, promoted the usage of Russian in all spheres of public life and proclaimed Russian as the regional language in many parts of Ukraine. The law's adoption in Parliament was heavily contested by Ukrainian-speakers supporters as well as due to numerous procedure violations (for details, see Moser 2014). Hence, Oleksandr Turchynov, interim-President after Yanukovych fled the country, refused to authorize canceling of the language law, explaining that at first a new law should be developed. Azhniuk (2017: 372) found that the "Temporary Special Commission for drafting a new language act was set up by the Parliament on 1 March 2014 to draft a new law instead". Petro Poroshenko similarly postponed language issues after a majority of votes in the first round of voting elected him as President in May 2014. Representatives of the East-South regions of Ukraine, where Russian is widely spoken, expressed the idea of the All-Ukrainian referendum concerning the status of Russian. They suggested the idea could be put into action, "in view of the escalation of the military conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, however, the idea found no response on either central or local levels" (Azhniuk 2017: 371). Therefore, state authorities were interested in putting the language issues aside and thus distracting the public from questions that could further polarize society in light of the ongoing military conflict.

However, certain politico-social groups were dissatisfied with these language policy developments. In July 2014, a group of national deputies applied to the Constitutional Court to review the constitutionality of the above-mentioned law. In February 2018, after numerous postponements, protests by the right-wing party *Svoboda* and language activists, and three and a half years of deliberation, the Constitutional Court found the law to be “unconstitutional due to the violation of the personal voting procedure and a long consideration of the law in the Parliament” (Portal movnoji polityky 2018). The Court’s final decision was made not just because of public pressure, but also due to the human factor, namely a personnel change. Two members of the Court retired, and before new judges assumed their offices, the majority voted to cancel the law. Besides, one of the judges actively cooperated with civil society from the very beginning to promote the annulment of the law.<sup>2</sup>

The Constitutional Court, however, is not a singular body and is composed of three authorities—the President, the Parliament, and the Congress of Judges (ibid 2018). These three actors delegate an equal number of representatives to the Constitutional Court. Therefore, despite the purported separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches in the Ukrainian Constitution, we can see groups of interests within the Court. In this regard, should the Court be considered an independent actor in language policies or as a representative of different groups of interests?

Thus, the previous language law was declared as unconstitutional; however, a new law had still not been adopted due to several factors, such as “the absence of a political will,”<sup>3</sup> and the proximity of parliament elections—politicians do not want to lose the electorate who do not support the law. Ihor Slidenko, a member of the Constitutional Court commented on these circumstances in an interview. In his opinion, the situation should encourage politicians to make a decision:

Зараз ми маємо справу з правовою лакуною (прогалиною), коли суспільні відносини на законодавчому рівні не регулюються нічим, а лише нормами Конституції [...]. Ця ситуація повинна змусити народних депутатів пришвидшити свою роботу в плані підготовки нового закону, який би відповідав Конституції – і з точки зору його ухвалення, тобто без порушення процедури, і з точки зору змісту. (Portal movnoji polityky 2018)

[Now we are dealing with a legal gap, when social relations at the legislative level are not regulated by anything, but only by the norms of the Constitution [...]. This situation should force the deputies to speed up their work in terms of preparing a new law that would conform to the Constitution—in terms of its adoption (without any

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2 Interview with Taras Marusyk, ex-Deputy Chairman of the Coordination Council on the Application of the Ukrainian Language in All Spheres of Public Life under the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine, June 2018.

3 Interview with Zakhar Fedorak.

procedural irregularities), and in terms of its content.] (Translation from the original Ukrainian texts here and below are mine.)

## 4.2 Development of the new language law: Key actors

Meanwhile, agents of diverse political parties and language activists have drafted new potential language laws. One of the working groups responsible for its development, led by renowned lawyer and diplomat Volodymyr Vasylenko, had been assembled under the Ministry of Culture between September and December 2016. In January 2017, three draft laws were put on the Parliamentary agenda, which elicited a considerable discussion in the media. The development of the three draft laws was connected to the competitiveness between opposing political parties. For instance, one of the members of the party *Blok Petra Poroshenka* visited the working group meetings under the Ministry of Culture, “behaving provocatively” and later presented its own draft law to the Parliament.<sup>4</sup> The hotly debated draft law No. 5670, dubbed so by the media as a *civic draft law* due to the veracity of its proponents and its support from different political parties, was taken as a foundational text for a new language law. The draft law titled *On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as a state language* was eventually accepted for the Parliamentary agenda with minor amendments. To block the Parliamentary adoption of the law, national deputies proposed around 2,000 amendments, which experts noted as an indication of dissention and absence of consensus concerning language issues in the Parliament. Nevertheless, after two years of consideration and particular amendments (for instance, the institution of Language Inspectorate was canceled), the law was adopted on 25 April 2019.

This occurred in a moment of transition in Ukraine, since Volodymyr Zelenskyi had been elected the next President of Ukraine on 21 April, gaining his official duties a month later on 20 May. In Zelenskyi’s presidential campaign, language issues were seldom mentioned in his political rhetoric. For instance, in his pre-election program, Zelenskyi only once referred to language issues without defining his position and using generic human rights rhetoric

Треба міняти країну і змінюватися самим. Треба брати відповідальність на себе й показувати приклад майбутнім поколінням. Треба єднатися усім, хто незалежно від статі, мови, віри, національності просто ЛЮБИТЬ УКРАЇНУ! (ZeKomanda 2019)

[We must change the country and change ourselves. We must take responsibility and show the example for future generations. It is necessary to unite all those who, regardless of gender, language, religion, nationality simply LOVE UKRAINE!]

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4 Interview with Oksana Zabolotna, head of Parliament Secretariat, former coordinator of Working group for development of language draft law under the Ministry of Culture, Kyiv, Ukraine, January 2018.



In addition, his campaign made strategic general statements concerning different fields of social life, in such a way as to embrace a larger audience.

Zelenskyi's main opponent, former President Petro Poroshenko appealed to support the state status of Ukrainian and its further support and promotion in his pre-election campaign. For instance, in a September 2018 speech addressed to Parliament, Poroshenko pointed out that,

Утверджуємо українську мову – складову сили та успіху нашого народу. І надалі будемо вживати дієвих заходів для зміцнення державного статусу української мови, посилення і поширення її в усіх сферах публічного життя. (*Ukrainska Pravda* 2018).

[We support the Ukrainian language—a component of the strength and success of our people. We will continue to take effective measures to strengthen the official status of the Ukrainian language, empower and spread it in all spheres of public life.]

Similar messages were repeated in his political program:

Ми захищаємо свою мову, вкладаємо кошти у підтримку української культури. [...] Продовжимо політику підтримки української мови як єдиної державної. [...] Розширимо підтримку культурних проєктів – кіно, музики, книги та інших напрямів. (*Livuj bereh* 2019).

[We are protecting our language; we are investing in support of the Ukrainian culture. [...] We will continue the policy of support for Ukrainian as the only state language. [...] We will widen support for cultural projects—films, music, books and other directions.]

Crucially, during Poroshenko's presidency, cultural management institutions such as the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation and the Ukrainian Book Institute were established and developed. One of the notable functions of these institutions is their financial support of Ukrainian cultural productions and, consequently, Ukrainian language promotion. Moreover, one of Poroshenko's election slogans was "Army, Language, Faith", while in his final campaign phase, this slogan was more subdued and general, stating merely "Think!" The parliamentary adoption of the law was accompanied by a mass gathering of language activists and the law's supporters, near the Parliament building (see Picture 1). The slogans on the placards reflect the link between language issues and the current military conflict: "Vote for language law! Protect language—vote for law! Language is our weapon! Language is our safety!" After the adoption in Parliament by 278 votes out of 348, Petro Poroshenko signed the law in one of the last decisions of his presidency. There were attempts by national deputies and representatives of *Oppositional Block* to prevent the Parliamentary speaker from signing the document, but they were rejected by Parliament.



**Picture 1:** Supporters of Ukrainization close to Parliament building, April 2019.

Source: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/istorychne-rishennya-zakon-pro-movu/29902793.html>

The main idea of the law is the promotion of the state language in different spheres of public life by creating language management institutions like the State Language Department, providing free state courses of Ukrainian and introducing a language requirement for citizenship or government employment (public servants, national deputies, judges etc.). Newly-elected President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, who in his public speeches switched between Ukrainian and Russian (during the election campaign and after taking the office), criticized the new language law, stating “the state should assist in the development of the Ukrainian language by creating stimuli and positive examples, not by prohibitions and punishments, by complicating of bureaucratic procedures, by increasing the number of officials instead of shortening them” (official Facebook page of Volodymyr Zelenskyi, post from 25 April 2019). He also emphasized that the law was passed in a transitional period and that he will analyze it in detail during his presidency.

International actors were also involved in discussing the new Ukrainian language law. On May 17, 2019, the Russian Federation delegation asked the United Nations Security Council to convene a separate meeting to discuss the new language legislation, but the UN refused, as the request was rejected by the USA and certain EU member states (UNIAN 2019). Nevertheless, the Russian delegation made a second request, after which the UN scheduled a meeting concerning the law on 16 July 2019 (Ukrinform 2019); ironically, on the same day the language law was to enter into a force. Meanwhile, a group of fifty-one national deputies, led again by an *Oppositional Block* representative, applied to the Constitutional Court with a request to recognize the language law as unconstitutional. In this application, they stated that the law

creates “an atmosphere of intolerance towards the historic linguistic diversity that is characteristic of the united and multinational people of Ukraine,” and that “the procedure for the use of languages of national minorities in Ukraine is not regulated” (*Radio Svoboda* 2019). Therefore, we could see how opposing interest group use the identical strategies, namely in their applications to the Constitutional Court and protests of the language legislation. In her description of the current Ukrainian situation, Bilaniuk, concludes that two contrary competitive language ideologies dominate the country: “Language matters” and “Language does not matter” (see for details: Bilaniuk 2016). However, as she points out, discursive practices show that eventually language always matter (for some societal groups Ukrainian, for some Russian). As for the future, we can expect another shift in language policies towards regionalization with the Zelenskyi presidency giving more rights to Russian-speakers and national minorities, while shortening state programs for the support and development of the Ukrainian language. Another reason to expect such an outcome is that in his human resource policies, Zelenskyi has shown tight connections with ex-members *Party of Regions*—a political organization that, among other activities, promoted a widening of Russian language usage during the Yanukovych regime.

Yet it is important to underline that a broad coalition of actors formed in favor of the new language law. As Zakhar Fedorak of the Directorate of the State Language Policy under the Ministry of Culture comments: “Authors of the draft law on the state language created a strong background for its implementation thanks to a consolidation of efforts; many deputies supported this draft law as well”.<sup>5</sup> Table 1 illustrates the different groups of actors at diverse steps of language policy development.

**Table 1:** Groups of actors at different stages of the development of the new draft law on language.

Stage	Period	Actors
Initiation	March 2014	National deputies, politicians
Involvement	September – December 2016	Language activists, lawyers, linguists, the Ministry of Culture
Influence	January 2017 – ongoing	Bloggers, journalists, writers, linguists, the Constitutional Court, language activists
Intervention	January 2017 – ongoing	Politicians, right-wing language activists
Implementation	Since 16 July 2019	Ministries, public servants, teachers, language management institutions

5 Interview with Zakhar Fedorak, expert of Directorate of State Language Policy under Ministry of Culture Kyiv, Ukraine, June 2018.



### 4.3 Conflicts between the actors during the new language law development

At the same time, several conflicts appeared between actors at different stages of language policy development. First of all, at the initiation stage, a dispute erupted between politicians concerning the general conception of a new language law in an argument about the structure of the law. Finally, national deputy Oksana Syrojid, a representative of the *Samopomich* party, put forward the winning idea to create two separate draft laws—one on the state language, and another concerning the languages of national minorities.<sup>6</sup> The draft law on minorities no. 6348 was also registered in the Parliament under the title *On amendments to some laws of Ukraine on provision of development and use of languages of national minorities in Ukraine*, but was not discussed in the media.

In addition, a conflict within a group of language activists appeared during the influence and intervention stages. As Zhao and Baldauf point out: “Intervention is the traditional term for the mediation of LPP problems, though intervention also may occur during implementation—with strongly negative results, since such involvement may lead to delay or discontinuation of the implementation. Intervention in this latter sense can occur at any stage in the continuum” (Zhao & Baldauf 2012: 8). The draft law on the state language had been promoted in the media as early as January 2017 by its developers and intelligentsia with a shared linguistic ideology of widening the sphere of state language usage. Representatives of the right-wing political party *Svoboda*, for instance, the national deputy and noted linguist, Iryna Farion, criticized the law for being too weak and liberal in its promotion of the state language, calling it a half-law (Farion 2018). In addition, Larysa Nitsoj, a child writer, also famous for her provocative behavior and blogs concerning language issues, criticized the draft law since “the status of the Ukrainian language, as a state language, cannot narrow the linguistic rights and needs of minorities” (Nitsoi 2017). These views were supported by right-wing activists, which provoked a split within the language activist community. As a result, experts have since accentuated the “radicalization of language issues.”<sup>7</sup> As Zhao underlines, a conflict between actors can have positive consequences when compromises are found; at the same time, “it obviously creates a negative image of the actors and causes confusion among the public, which increases the difficulty of implementing LPP in practice” (Zhao 2011: 918).

In contemporary Ukraine, these conflicts draw the public’s attention to language issues, but simultaneously stir up negative connotations of language policies in society and postpone decision-making procedures. As Oksana Zabolotna sums up: “Civil society does much more than authorities. [...] Civil society supports the

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6 Interview with Oksana Zabolotna.

7 Interview with Anastasiia Rozlutska, head of NGO Free Courses of Ukrainian, Kyiv, Ukraine, June 2018.



language draft on the state language. A part of civil society criticizes this draft law [and their] actions are provocative”.<sup>8</sup> Another expert, Jaryna Chornohuz, explains the reasons for such behavior: “For radical right-wing political parties it is profitable to keep language issues unsolved because in that case they can promise their electorate to solve them, for this reason they are blocking the adoption of the new language law.”<sup>9</sup> At the same time, pro-Russian and Russian interest groups do not want an adoption of the new law on the state language,<sup>10</sup> since it will endorse the usage of Ukrainian.

#### 4.4 Implementation stage in language management of contemporary Ukraine

According to Zhao and Baldauf’s classification, language policy development in contemporary Ukraine mostly fail to reach the implementation stage. Moreover, Kimura proposes to add another phase to the cyclical model of language management—namely the post-implementation stage (Kimura 2014: 255). On the one hand, discourses concerning language in Ukraine are constructed and permanently supported by a vivid presence of the topic in the media. On the other hand, not many systemic changes are made in the process of language policy transformation.

Nevertheless, to fill the legal vacuum in the language sphere, ex-president Petro Poroshenko signed Decree No. 155/2018 in May 2018 *On urgent measures to strengthen the state status of the Ukrainian language and promote the creation of a united cultural space of Ukraine*. The decree foresees the development of a target state program for supporting the Ukrainian language. In this document, Poroshenko mentioned measures that echo the draft language law, for instance, a “certificate exam on the state language” (*Prezydent Ukrainy* 2018). However, language policies experts regarded the decree as merely declarative and disappointing (Marusyk 2018).

One more document that appeared to fill a legal vacuum in the language domain is the *Strategy of popularization of the state language till 2030 “Strong language—strong state”* published by the Directorate of the State Language Policy under the Ministry of Culture. Kateryna Prytula, an expert at the Directorate explains this concept: “The Ukrainian language is the language of the future, it is a successful language, it is a marker of a valuable job, and it is not only the reason for healthy patriotism and identity-formation (our own, not remained from the former Soviet Union), but also a language for communication”.<sup>11</sup> From a legal point of view, neither the decree nor the national strategy function as binding documents and therefore cannot introduce systemic transformations into language policies.

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8 Interview with Oksana Zabolotna.

9 Interview with Jaryna Chornohuz, the head of *Switch to Ukrainian* social movement.

10 Interview with Oksana Zabolotna.

11 Interview with Kateryna Prytula, expert of Directorate of State Language Policy under the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine, June 2018.

The prognoses of language policy researchers are connected to the development of the political situation in the country. As Azhniuk (2017: 382) underscores:

The future of the language legislation greatly depends on the development of the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine. If the territories occupied by pro-Russian separatists remain under Kyiv's control, the regional status of the Russian language in Ukrainian legislation will most likely be preserved. If these territories are liberated from the separatists, the only language with a legal status in the country will be Ukrainian.

At the same time, despite the negative expectations of the experts, the implementation of the law *On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as a state language* has started during Zelenskyi's presidency. For instance, newly established language management institutions, such as the National commission on standards of the state language and Ombudsman on the protection of the state language begin to function. However, the implementation of the law, the conflicts between actors that appeared during this stage of language management, needs further exploration and is beyond the research scope of this chapter.

#### **4.5 Adoption of the language legislation in the sphere of media and education: Key actors**

On the other hand, the legislative initiatives in the sphere of mass-media Ukrainization were successful both in their adoption and in implementation. For instance, Ukrainian law *On amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On television and radio broadcasting' (regarding the proportion of songs in the state language in musical radio programs)* was adopted in November 2016. According to the document, the broadcast of Ukrainian songs should be no less than 25 % (with further growing) of the overall number of songs played on the radio, concerning the total time of transmission. The Ukrainian law *On amendments to laws of Ukraine regarding the language of audio-visual (electronic) mass media* was adopted in May 2017 and supported by President Petro Poroshenko. It demands that the national TV channels use the state language in 75 % of broadcasted programs (60 % in local TV channels). Both documents were broadly discussed in the media (with unofficial titles—laws on radio- and TV-quotas) concerning the details of their implementation and their influence on the Ukrainian media market.

Changes in language regulations within education also provoked a media outcry with the involvement of not only internal, but also external actors as well. In particular, language article no. 7 in the new law *On education* adopted in September 2017 requires an increased use of the state language in education at different levels—from primary schools to universities. The mechanisms of this law have started to be implemented in 2020, so the time has been allotted to prepare the reforms accordingly. The proposal is closely tied to the situation in the Zakarpattia region, which is densely populated by Romanian and Hungarian minorities. As the results of the External Independent Evaluation on university admission exams in 2016 showed, more than ¼ of pupils in the Zakarpattia region failed the Ukrainian

language test (*Osvitnij portal Zakarpattia* 2016). Therefore, from the point of view of the Ministry of Education, new regulations should promote social integration and enable access to higher education in Ukraine for national minorities. However, external observers perceived it as a threat to the linguistic rights of national minorities. On the *Radio Liberty* website, numerous articles described this discursive event as Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Bulgarian, Greek, Moldovan and Russian Federation officials actively participated in the discussion at the diplomatic level, and criticized the law for restricting the rights of minorities (*Radio Svoboda* 2017b). Official Hungarian representatives sent complaints to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union and United Nations, transferring the discussion of domestic policies to the international level (*Radio Svoboda* 2017a).

In turn, in October 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a resolution, in which, on the one hand, criticized Ukrainian authorities for adopting the education law without previously consulting with the representatives of national minorities, and on the other hand, reiterated Ukraine's right to support and develop its own state language, taking into account the linguistic rights of minorities. Minister of Education Lilia Hrynevych went on to promise to clarify the phrasing in the language article (*Radio Svoboda* 2017b). Furthermore, in December 2017, the Venice Commission published an advisory opinion, in which the Commission members pointed out that the education law should be flexible enough to combine the promotion of the state language while preserving the languages of national minorities. The final recommendations include, in particular, "ensuring a sufficient proportion of education in minority languages at the primary and secondary levels, in addition to the teaching of the state language; to improve the quality of teaching of the state language; to amend the relevant transitional provisions of the Education Law to provide more time for a gradual reform, [...]; to ensure that the implementation of the Law does not endanger the preservation of the minorities' cultural heritage and the continuity of minority language education in traditional schools."<sup>12</sup>

Table 2 illustrates which actors were involved in the development of the language article at different stages. In this case, it is interesting to note that the intervention stage transpired on two occasions—first in June 2017 when language activists initiated a meeting with the Minister of Education to discuss the language article. After this meeting, eight of ten proposals submitted by the language activists were accepted by the Ministry of Education and introduced into the law. These amendments were mostly dedicated to strengthening the position of the state language in the education system. Later on, in September 2017, when the law was passed by Parliament, which provoked a discussion in media, the next phase of intervention began, led by diplomats and international organizations concerned about the suppression of the linguistic rights of minorities. These interventions

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12 Available at: [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2017\)030-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2017)030-e)

had a positive effect, since they gave rise to a broader dialogue that involved the representatives of national minorities. At the same time, they revealed tensions between different social groups—those who encourage the promotion of the state language and those who are occupied with the preservation of minorities' rights. In case of the second group, the role of international actors was crucial. The discussion revolving around the possible discrimination on linguistic grounds was also fueled heated by external agents, not just by the internal minorities themselves. As Taras Marusyk suggests, those representatives of Ukrainian political parties who stoked the debate have tight cultural and financial relations with external actors, especially in Hungary.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 2:** Groups of actors at different stages of language article development in the new educational law.

Stage	Period	Actors
Initiation	April 2015	National deputies, politicians
Involvement	April 2015 – September 2017	The Ministry of Education
Influence	September 2017 – ongoing	Representatives of national minorities, journalists
Intervention	June 2017 September 2017 – ongoing	Language activists Diplomats, international organizations
Implementation	Has started in 2020	The Ministry of Education, school administrators, local authorities, teachers, language activists

Recent developments show that a compromise between representatives of national minorities and the Ministry of Education and Science has been struck. In 2019, the Ministry decided to differentiate between schoolchildren who came from national minorities' families and native speakers in their Ukrainian language assessments. However, this differentiation will only be in effect during the next two years (*The Babel* 2019). After-school Ukrainian language tests are extremely important for admission to universities, and the Ministry needs to minimize particular social barriers for representatives of national minorities.

Based on an analysis of Russian-speaking blogs in Ukraine, Maksimovtsova (2017: 10) defines two main rhetorical strategies—a rhetoric of loss and rhetoric of entitlement. The rhetoric of loss is often used by opposing camps:

The frequent use of this argumentation pattern indicates that many Ukrainians feel that the position of the state language is 'threatened' and that the state needs to

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Taras Marusyk.



focus on preserving the unique cultural identity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Like those social actors who argue that Ukrainian-speakers' rights are infringed in Ukraine, the second group of claim-makers admits exactly the opposite—total Ukrainization of the public space is the violation of the rights of Russian speakers. (Maksimovtsova 2017: 17)

This statement seems to be relevant for debates on the language article in a new education law as well, since both sides of the conflict use rhetorical strategies of loss and threat.

#### **4.6 Language management in contemporary Ukraine: Key actors**

The discursive events in Ukraine's organized language management have revealed that actors form coalitions to represent their interests and that conflicts appear between different actors or even within groups, which seem homogenous at first glance. Returning to Cooper's scheme of language planning analysis, we can see the combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives in Ukraine's contemporary language policies. There is a continuous dialogue between the state and civil society concerning language policies. Different state institutions, such as the Constitutional Court, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the Parliament, and the President influence the transformation of different language policies. At the same time, language activists, represented by a number of organizations and movements, also actively participate in the decision-making processes. The media continuously highlight language policies, therefore journalists, writers, and bloggers should also be considered as actors in language policy development. All of these interrelations can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Language management in Ukraine (2013–2020) according to Cooper's scheme.

<i>What actors</i>	<b>Language Management in Ukraine</b> 2013–2020 Representatives of the state institutions International organizations Media organizations Representatives of national minorities Cultural leaders Research institutions Language activists Teachers
<i>To influence what Behaviors</i>	To encourage the learning of the Ukrainian language as the state language and to facilitate its use in different domains of public life (e.g., education, mass-media); to preserve the linguistic rights of national minorities
<i>Of which people</i>	Average citizens, journalists, pupils, students, minority representatives
<i>For what ends</i>	Social integration of minorities, access to higher education in Ukraine, Ukrainization, decrease of Russian influence in information space
<i>Under what conditions</i>	Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, economic crisis, migration
<i>By what means</i>	Legislative initiatives, draft laws, language article in law on education, new laws on language quotas in radio and television, new law on the state language, language activist movements
<i>Through what policy decision-making process</i>	Combination of the top-down and bottom-up models
<i>With what effects</i>	Public debates on language policies, Ukrainization of the media and education, shift in identities, creation of language management institutions

Language management is always tightly linked to the socio-political situation of a given country. In present-day Ukraine, the context of reorientations of language policies is the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, its ensuing economic crisis, and migration patterns. The general trend in language policies is a Ukrainization of different spheres of public life, in such a way that diminishes Russian's influence, especially in the information space. At the same time, the issues of preserving the rights of linguistic minorities are also on the agenda. Not all

initiatives have been implemented, nevertheless, the draft laws also shape public discourses on language issues in the media.

## 5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have analyzed language policies in contemporary Ukraine, applying Cooper's (1989) scheme for language planning research, as well the actors-stage model developed by Zhao and Baldauf (2012). As the results of the analysis have shown, these methodological tools reveal the main participants in the language policy process and shed light on the power relations and interests expressed or hidden in these circumstances. Different actors cooperate in language policy formation presenting strategies that are connected with their group belonging, linguistic ideologies, socio-political status, economic interests and values. These characteristics could also provoke conflicts between participants. Looking to the future, I plan to advance the typology of actors to analyze the complex nature of language policy development.

As the analysis of media and expert interviews revealed, different actors are involved at the different stages of language policy development in Ukraine. Some stages, for instance intervention, could have positive (amendment of current policies) or negative (blocking the decision-making process) effects on language policy development. Contemporary Ukraine is an informative case for the study of different, often contradicting interests of language policy participants. Consequently, these findings could be applied to an extent to other post-Soviet contexts. However, the behavior of actors is mostly a compilation of various sociocultural discursive practices, so the socio-political context should always be considered.

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