

**István Cserniczko, Kornélia Hires-László, Zoltán Karmacsi, Anita Márku, Réka Máté, & Enikő Tóth-Orosz: Ukrainian Language Policy Gone Astray**

(Törökbálint: Termini Egyesület. 2020. 101 p.)

Language policy plays a crucial role in examining the problems of nation-building in the post-Soviet space. Despite this role, only a few local scholars have explored the topic for their countries. Besides, most top-down decisions and studies have overlooked regional minorities. In light of such deficiency, this publication comes in time, because it analyzes the effect of language policy on the integration processes of minorities in Ukraine, which is common in other emerging countries as well. Moreover, this study approaches the topic from the perspectives of insider experts who represent minorities. Therefore, it is a useful piece of handy information with a well-organized reference system, and as such, highly recommended to researchers interested in the language policy of emerging nations.

The principal author is Dr. István Cserniczko, a faculty member of the University of Pannonia, the Eötvös Loránd University, and the University of Pécs. He is a Professor of Applied Linguistics, and his concern is the aspects of Sociolinguistics, Bilingualism, Language Policy, and Linguistic Human Rights. The other authors are his colleagues — Kornélia Hires-László, Zoltán Karmacsi, Anita Márku, Réka Máté, and Enikő Tóth-Orosz — staff members of the Antal Hodinka Linguistics Research Center in Berehove, Ukraine. The foreword is written by Dr. Petteri Laihonon, who is a Professor of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

The publication consists of a foreword and five sections. The foreword introduces the significance of the publication, the authors' position to the problem, and the situation created by "practical manifestations" of the government's language policy and the "grassroots multilingual reality." It also envisions the need to keep schools with mother-tongue instruction as a way to avoid conflicts, mass emigration, and under-education of minorities. The sections contain numbered paragraphs, each of which discusses a particular issue of a legal document, language policy, or the authors' position. They also give orderly information about languages, laws, and communities, presented as graphs, tables, and maps.

The introductory section describes the linguistic situation in Ukraine, providing historical, political, and demographic nuances. It further exhibits the problems of nation-building in this de facto multilingual and multiethnic country, characterized by widespread bilingualism with Russian and Ukrainian languages. The country's some minorities are unhappy with the government's current restrictive language policies aimed at shifting the State language in all spheres of life. Using quantitative data, the authors illustrate the desire of different minorities to use their heritage

languages in as many as possible domains of life in their communities. The authors also explain why the government's decision is a subject of heated debate not only within Ukraine but also in their kin states, including Russia. They consider this "mistaken language policy" and "impatient nationalism" as an action that does not lead to social consensus, as well as to a balance between promoting the State language and protecting minority rights. Moreover, the conflict has a high potential to spill over the national border, and as such, it is an alarming security issue for the rest of Europe. This view refers to the recent events in Crimea and East Ukraine, where ethnic Russians constitute a substantial community.

The next section clarifies details of the State language laws and the laws on minority languages, adopted in Ukraine during 1989-2012. They help to understand the deepest roots of the struggle between and behind these laws. The authors refer to the pre-independent language law more positively than to the post-independent language law because the former was more inclusive of minorities than the latter. They note the reluctance of both officials and activists representing the titular ethnicity to consider the linguistic rights of minorities. They also recall the event when the requirements of the European Council concerning the linguistic rights of minorities were ratified by the Supreme Council of Ukraine under much negative propaganda. In their further arguments concerning the effect of the laws on communities, authors rely on the 2001 census data, which they use in presenting the situation of languages at the regional, district, and city levels.

Special attention in the publication is paid to the recent law on supporting the State language. The authors explain how the law affects many spheres of life, including public administration, education, justice, media, culture, and sport. They note the fact that the President Poroshenko signed the law without public discourse on the eve of the upcoming presidential elections. The law presents languages in a hierarchical order, locating the State language on the top with its enormously ubiquitous role, while utterly limiting the use of minority languages. It requires every citizen to be proficient in the Ukrainian language, or otherwise, they may have problems in access to public services. It significantly increases the quota for the Ukrainian language in the mass media, which requires that online news agencies must design their landing pages in the State language. The organizers of cultural and sports events must provide interpretation into the State language. Deliberate distortion of the State language in official documents and public signs may lead to penalties. It also abolishes the right of parents and institutions to choose the medium of instruction, though the articles that limit mother tongue instruction contradict to the Ukrainian Constitution.

The above mentioned restrictions led the authors to question the compliance of the government's language policy with its international commitments. To examine,

the authors present details of the procedure of the assessment of the compliance, which was carried out by the Committee of Experts, who evaluated the government's undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In their assessment, the authors indicate the degree of compliance for each minority in seven tables, which demonstrate that the government has not been able to fulfill all its promises under the Charter. They also point to numerous discrepancies between the country's reports and the requirements of the Charter.

The summary and conclusions recount the issues of the government's language policy and its impact on local communities since "Ukraine's language policy has gone astray". The current language policy is incapable of resolving social tensions around language and is uncooperative to the well-being of both the majority and minorities. Besides, the demand for a rapid language shift is inconsistent with European laws and does not comply with international commitments. Therefore, the authors call the attention of the Council of Europe to reexamine the law on the State language.

The study provides the backbone for the analysis of the effects of language laws on nation-building processes in newly independent states. It uncovers the government's perception of nation-building and the reactions from local communities. Future studies should aim to reveal the psycho- and sociolinguistic components of ethnolinguistic issues in Ukraine and the ways to resolve some deep problems which may lead to ineffective language policies in emerging countries.

ASKAR MAMBETALIEV

University of Pannonia, Doctoral School of Multilingualism

askar.mambetaliev@gmail.com

We acknowledge the financial support of Széchenyi 2020 under the **EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00015**.