

Language sciences

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LANGUAGE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY. LINGUOCIDE AS A TOOL OF RUSCISM

Summary. *This text discusses the crucial role of language as a weapon, an identity marker, and a foundational element in nation-building and distinguishing a nation on the global stage. It emphasizes the deliberate and long-standing linguistic violence inflicted by Russia on the Ukrainian language, which has intensified during the current full-scale war. The ultimate aim of this policy is the complete eradication of Ukrainians as a distinct cultural and historical community.*

Key words: *language, Ukraine, culture, full-scale war, Russian invasion, linguocide.*

Introduction. Language is far more than a mere tool for communication; it is a crucial component of socio-cultural identity. The relationship between language and culture is deeply interwoven, with each influencing and shaping the other in significant ways. Understanding this intricate connection is essential for appreciating the depth and richness of any given culture.

Language is an integral part of culture. To truly grasp the essence of a culture, one must understand its language. Culture shapes how we perceive identity, and language, being a product of culture, influences and reflects this perception. The language we use shapes our reality, thoughts, and actions, defining us in relation to others through its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.

Language and culture are inseparable because a country's language embodies its culture, conveying its cultural identity. Thus, cultural identity and language are inherently linked.

Aim. This article aims to elucidate the vital role of language in national identity, nation-building, and international distinction. It underscores the deliberate and prolonged linguistic violence perpetrated by Russia against the Ukrainian language, which has become more acute during the current full-scale war. The text argues that the ultimate goal of this policy is the complete eradication of Ukrainians as a distinct cultural and historical community.

By defining linguocide as the deliberate destruction of a language, the text highlights its role in undermining ethnic identity. This form of violence primarily targets the written language and seeks to achieve ethnocide—the elimination of a people as a distinct cultural entity—rather than physical extermination. The process of linguocide is described as a means to facilitate mass denationalization and assimilation, thereby erasing historical memory and national identity.

The text chronicles the centuries-long suppression, banning, and persecution of the Ukrainian language under Russian and Soviet rule, emphasizing that each period added to its linguistic destruction. It asserts that a common language is crucial for national solidarity and state stability. Ukrainian scholar Ivan Ohienko is cited to reinforce the intrinsic link between language and national identity, highlighting that language embodies cultural and national life, consciousness, and mental self, and is indispensable for the survival of a nation.

The Interdependence of Language and Culture

Language and culture are inextricably linked, forming a symbiotic relationship that shapes and defines human experience. This interdependence is evident in how language conveys cultural values and traditions, influences thought and perception, and fosters a sense of identity and community.

Language as a cultural product

Language is a product of culture, reflecting the history, values, and social norms of a community. Each language encompasses a unique set of idioms, metaphors, and expressions that provide insight into the cultural experiences of its speakers. For instance, the rich vocabulary related to snow in Inuit languages highlights the environmental conditions and lifestyle of Inuit communities. Similarly, languages in tropical regions might have extensive terminology for local flora and fauna, reflecting their ecological context.

Moreover, cultural practices and rituals are often deeply embedded in language. Proverbs, folk tales, and songs passed down through generations encapsulate cultural wisdom and moral values, preserving the collective memory of a community.

Language Shapes Thought and Perception.

The concept of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, suggests that the language we speak influences our cognitive processes and perception of reality. Different languages structure experiences and categorize the world in distinct ways, leading to variations in thought patterns among speakers.

For example, languages with multiple terms for different types of snow enable speakers to perceive and describe subtle differences that might be overlooked by those with a single word for snow. In languages with gendered nouns, speakers may attribute characteristics to objects based on their grammatical gender, subtly influencing their perception of those objects.

Language as a Marker of Identity

Language is a powerful and multifaceted marker of identity. It serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a key element in the construction and expression of individual and collective identities. Through language, people convey their cultural heritage, social affiliations, and personal

uniqueness. This article explores the various ways in which language functions as a marker of identity and its implications in social contexts.

Language and Cultural Identity

Language is deeply intertwined with cultural identity. It carries the history, traditions, and values of a community, serving as a living repository of cultural heritage. The specific words, idioms, and expressions used within a language reflect the unique experiences and worldview of its speakers. For instance, the use of honorifics in Japanese signifies the importance of social hierarchy and respect in Japanese culture. Similarly, the presence of numerous terms for family relations in certain languages underscores the centrality of kinship in those cultures.

By speaking a particular language, individuals connect with their cultural roots and reaffirm their belonging to a specific community. This connection is especially significant for minority groups whose languages are endangered. Efforts to revive and maintain these languages are often motivated by a desire to preserve cultural identity and heritage.

Language and Social Identity

Language also plays a crucial role in the formation of social identity. The way people speak, including their accent, dialect, and choice of words, can signal their membership in various social groups. These linguistic features often indicate a person's geographic origin, socio-economic status, education level, and even age group.

For example, regional dialects in the United Kingdom, such as Cockney or Scouse, immediately reveal the speaker's geographic background. Similarly, the use of slang or jargon can indicate belonging to a particular subculture or professional community. In multilingual societies, code-switching – the practice of alternating between languages or dialects in different contexts – can also reflect complex social identities.

Language and Personal Identity

On an individual level, language is a means of expressing personal identity. People use language to convey their thoughts, emotions, and personality traits. The choice of words, tone, and style can reflect one's character and individual preferences. Bilingual and multilingual individuals often report feeling that they express different aspects of their personality when speaking different languages.

Moreover, personal names, which are an integral part of language, carry significant identity markers. Names often reflect cultural heritage, familial connections, and personal histories. The pronunciation and spelling of names can also convey identity, and individuals may choose to modify these to better fit into certain social contexts or to assert their heritage.

Language, Power and Identity

The relationship between language and identity is also shaped by power dynamics. Dominant languages often gain prestige and are associated with social, economic, and political power. Conversely, minority languages may be marginalized, leading to social stigmatization and loss of cultural identity for their speakers. Language policies and education systems play a significant role in either reinforcing or challenging these power structures.

Efforts to promote linguistic diversity and protect minority languages are crucial for ensuring that all individuals can maintain their linguistic and cultural identities. Policies that support bilingual education, recognize multiple official languages, and encourage the use of indigenous languages in public domains contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Language is a fundamental marker of identity, intricately linked to cultural, social, and personal dimensions of human life. It reflects and shapes the way individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Understanding the role of language in identity formation highlights the importance of linguistic diversity and the need to protect and promote all languages. By valuing and

respecting linguistic identities, we can foster a more inclusive and culturally rich global community.

Social, Cohesion and Division

Language can both unite and divide. It fosters social cohesion by creating a shared sense of identity and belonging among speakers. National languages, for instance, play a significant role in nation-building by promoting unity and a collective identity.

However, linguistic diversity can also lead to social fragmentation and conflict, especially in multilingual societies. Language policies and debates over linguistic rights often become politically charged, with disputes over which languages should be officially recognized or used in education and government. These issues can exacerbate social divisions and contribute to tensions between different linguistic groups.

Globalization And Language

In an increasingly globalized world, the interdependence of language and culture faces new challenges and opportunities. While globalization promotes cross-cultural communication and exchange, it also threatens linguistic diversity. One of the most visible impacts of globalization on language is the widespread adoption of global languages, particularly English. As the dominant language of international business, science, technology, and popular culture, English has become a global lingua franca. This widespread use facilitates communication and collaboration across borders, enhancing global connectivity and economic integration.

Other languages, such as Spanish, Chinese, and French, also benefit from globalization due to their significant number of speakers and geopolitical influence. These languages are increasingly taught and learned as second or third languages, broadening their reach and impact.

Linguistic, Homogenization and Loss of Diversity

While the spread of global languages can promote understanding and cooperation, it also poses a threat to linguistic diversity. The dominance of a few major languages often comes at the expense of smaller, indigenous languages. As global languages become more prevalent, speakers of minority languages may abandon their native tongues in favor of those that offer greater economic and social opportunities.

This shift can lead to language homogenization, where linguistic diversity diminishes, and unique languages and dialects face extinction. According to UNESCO, approximately half of the world's languages are at risk of disappearing in the next few decades, resulting in a significant loss of cultural heritage and knowledge.

The Role of Technology

Technology plays a pivotal role in shaping the relationship between globalization and language. The internet and digital media have revolutionized communication, allowing for the rapid spread of information and cultural products. Online platforms facilitate language learning and exchange, making it easier for people to access resources and connect with speakers of other languages.

Social media, in particular, has become a space where linguistic diversity can thrive. Users create and share content in a multitude of languages, contributing to the preservation and revitalization of minority languages. Technology also enables the documentation and teaching of endangered languages, providing tools for communities to preserve their linguistic heritage.

The Role of Education

Education plays a crucial role in maintaining the interdependence of language and culture. Multilingual education systems that incorporate indigenous and minority languages alongside national and international languages can promote cultural diversity and inclusivity. By valuing and

teaching multiple languages, educational institutions help preserve cultural heritage and foster a deeper understanding of different worldviews.

Furthermore, incorporating cultural content into language education enriches the learning experience and enhances cultural awareness. Language learners who are exposed to the cultural contexts of the language they study are more likely to develop a nuanced understanding and appreciation of that culture.

The interdependence of language and culture is a fundamental aspect of human society. Language reflects and shapes cultural values, influences thought and perception, and contributes to individual and collective identity. Understanding this intricate relationship is essential for appreciating the richness and diversity of human experience. As globalization continues to shape our world, recognizing and preserving linguistic and cultural diversity becomes increasingly important. By fostering multilingualism and cultural awareness, we can promote mutual respect and understanding, ensuring that the interwoven tapestry of language and culture continues to thrive.

LINGUOCIDE AS A TOOL OF RUSCISM

Language is a weapon. Language is identity. Language is the basis of nation-building, its existence and prosperity, and it also performs a crucial external function: assertion and distinction among other countries of the world.

The linguistic violence that Russia is currently applying to the Ukrainian Word is a deliberate and purposeful destruction that began long ago and was carefully prepared, and during the full-scale war it became more acute than ever and came to light.

We must realize that the ultimate goal of this brutal policy is the complete criminal elimination of Ukrainians as a separate cultural and historical community.

Linguocide or language murder (Latin *lingua* - language and Latin *cidium* - murder) is the deliberate, purposeful destruction of a particular

language as the main feature of an ethnic group, nation, or people[1]. Linguocide is directed primarily against the written form of speech. The ultimate goal of linguistic violence is not genocide, i.e. the physical extermination of a particular people, but ethnocide - the elimination of this people as a separate cultural and historical community, the destruction of an ethnic group.

Linguocide is a prerequisite for mass denationalization and mancuritization: without it, it is impossible for a people to lose their historical memory, ethnic immunity, and national identity, and without this, in turn, assimilation cannot take place - the absorption of one people by another. That is why the enslavers never forgot the need to destroy the language of the enslaved peoples."[5]

For centuries, the Ukrainian language has been subjected to linguistic violence. It was suppressed, banned, anathematized, and persecuted. Both during the years of Russian tsarism and in Soviet times, attempts were made to eradicate, trample, and take away the language. Each century added new touches to the linguistic destruction of the native word.

It is well known that one of the main factors that ensure the solidarity of the population and, consequently, the stability of the state is the presence of a single common language. The prominent Ukrainian scholar Ivan Ohienko emphasized that "language is our national characteristic, our culture, the degree of our consciousness is in language. Language is a form of our life, cultural and national life, a form of national organization. Language is the clearest expression of our psyche, it is the first guardian of our mental self ... And as long as the language lives, so will the people, as a nationality. If there is no language, there will be no nationality: it will be completely scattered among the stronger people" [6, p. 239-240]. Therefore, the issue of learning and functioning of the native language has become extremely acute for Ukrainians who seek to preserve their national identity and identity.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (2007-2009), Head of the Center for Russian Studies, Vice-Rector of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, co-author of the publication "To Ban Russianism" Volodymyr Ohryzko at the roundtable on language resistance to Russian aggression said: "Moscow imperialism devours everything, but it is most fiercely opposed to the Ukrainian language and Ukraine as a whole. There is a struggle for identity here: there is Ukraine - there is no Russia. And this is what drives them into a state of special frenzy, which turns into what we have today: a terrible war to exterminate us as an ethnic group, a nation, and speakers of the state language." According to him, 131 languages are officially registered in Russia, 121 of which are endangered. So this genocidal approach to the languages of even those peoples living within the Russian Federation continues.

According to Taras Kremin, the Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language, the language policy of the occupation administrations is identical to the period of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet era. Today, in the temporarily occupied territories, not only is the Ukrainian language being supplanted by Russian, but there are also known cases of persecution and torture of Ukrainian citizens on the basis of their language. The Kremlin's policy of linguistic violence has a direct impact on all spheres of public life:

- Sphere of official communication

By default or by direct prohibition, Russian becomes the language of working communication, official events and meetings, regulations, office work, document flow, and generally the language of activity of state authorities, local governments, enterprises, organizations and institutions of various forms of ownership.

- Cultural space

Russian becomes the language of cultural, entertainment, and other events. Russian-language museum exhibitions are changed or new ones are created. Russian and Soviet music is popularized and imposed. Soviet or Russian

propaganda films are shown, Ukrainian memorials are dismantled and symbols of the soviet era or modern culture of the aggressor country are installed. Ukrainian literature is confiscated, libraries are filled with russian-language and propaganda publications, etc.

- Media sphere

Streaming of Ukrainian national and regional broadcasting has been suspended in the temporarily occupied territories. Local broadcasting companies, Internet providers, and print media have been seized. The occupiers are hijacking Ukrainian frequencies and using them to broadcast their propaganda. In fact, the aggressor country, by blocking Ukrainian media, is creating a russian-language “information ghetto” that excludes Ukrainian-language information products and deprives Ukrainian citizens of their rights to receive information in Ukrainian, as well as promotes the pro-russian narrative.

- Public space

In the temporarily occupied territories, the russian language is gradually replacing the Ukrainian language and filling the public sphere. Ukrainian-language signs, pointers, signboards, messages, inscriptions, and other textual, visual, and audio information used to inform citizens are disappearing. Settlements and streets are renamed, and the symbols and colors of the aggressor country are used in the design of the city with the corresponding information and propaganda content.

- Education sector

russian becomes the language of the educational process. Ukrainian textbooks and literature are being confiscated and destroyed, teachers and lecturers are undergoing professional retraining, schools are being accredited by russia, and the russian language is being introduced with the corresponding russian methodological support, textbooks, standards, curricula, educational process, and ideological orientation. The occupation authorities not only deprive

the right to receive education in the Ukrainian language, but also denationalize young people and form a citizen of the "ruskii mir" [7].

It is very easy to manipulate a person who has lost their mother tongue, depriving them of their national identity, original worldview and world perception. Since it is primarily the statehood of the language and the nation that can resist linguistic violence, Ukraine today needs a clear program of linguistic and cultural policy that would prevent the language issue from being used as an object of ideological manipulation. Therefore, the development of sociolinguistic research will continue to contribute to the revival, preservation and development of the Ukrainian language, its establishment as a state and official language. In this way, the national identity of Ukrainians will be defended and affirmed.

Conclusion. Language is a fundamental aspect of culture. To fully comprehend a culture, it is essential to understand its language. Culture influences our perception of identity, and language, as a product of culture, both reflects and shapes this perception. The language we use influences our reality, thoughts, and actions, defining us in relation to others through its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Language and culture are intertwined because a nation's language encapsulates its culture, conveying its cultural identity. Therefore, cultural identity and language are intrinsically connected.

The preservation and protection of the Ukrainian language are crucial not only for maintaining national identity but also for ensuring the cultural and historical continuity of the Ukrainian people. Recognizing and combating linguicide is essential for resisting assimilation and preserving the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian nation.

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