

BOOK REVIEW OPEN ACCESS

Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine: National Minorities, Language Biographies, and Linguistic Landscape

Elmira Muratova 

European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg,
Germany

**Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine: National Minorities,
Language Biographies, and Linguistic Landscape**

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Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has profoundly reshaped every dimension of Ukrainian society, including the sphere of language. In this context, the edited volume *Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine* provides a timely and empirically-grounded exploration of how the war has transformed linguistic practices, attitudes, and policies. The collection examines the intersections of language, identity, and resistance, revealing how linguistic choices have become central to moral positioning and nation-building in a time of existential struggle.

The book is organized into two main sections. The first, *"Influence of the War on Language Use and Attitudes"*, focuses on how wartime mobilization and cultural reorientation have redefined language behaviour among Ukrainians. The opening paper, *"Language Behavior of Ukrainians Against the Background of the Full-Scale War: Trends of Change"*, presents empirical data documenting a marked increase in the use of Ukrainian in both public and private communication. The author

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AUTHOR:

Elmira Muratova
European Centre for Minority Issues,
Flensburg, Germany
muratova@ecmi.de

LICENCE:

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interprets this linguistic shift not only as a patriotic reaction but also as a moral stance against the aggressor, particularly among internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The following paper, *“Language and War: Language-Related Discourse in Ukraine Since the Beginning of the Full-Scale Invasion”*, explores media narratives reflecting how Ukrainians cope with the trauma of war through linguistic creativity. Humour, neologisms, and wartime metaphors emerge as both coping mechanisms and markers of collective identity. A different dimension of linguistic change is analysed in *“‘Russia Must Be Opposed on All Fronts’: How the Full-Scale War Has Changed the Language Situation in the Ukrainian Business Environment”*. Drawing on interviews and social media materials, the author shows how entrepreneurs increasingly adopt Ukrainian as both a symbolic affirmation of national unity and a pragmatic adaptation to wartime realities.

The paper *“Totalitarian Echoes: Mapping the Influence on Ukrainian Language Textbooks”* turns to the educational sphere, tracing the persistence of Soviet linguistic ideologies in school materials. Through comparative content analysis, it illustrates how textbook narratives reproduce certain hierarchies and representations, even as they evolve in response to shifting political contexts. The section concludes with two studies on the moral and psychological dimensions of language – *“Changes in Language and National Consciousness of Ukrainians in the Period of Russia’s Full-Scale War in Ukraine”* and *“Moral Values of the Ukrainian-Speaking and Russian-Speaking Students in Bilingual Settings”*. Both underscore how language has become intertwined with moral identity, serving as a marker of ethical and civic alignment.

Together, these contributions capture the dramatic revaluation of linguistic practices in wartime Ukraine. They demonstrate how Ukrainian has evolved from a marker of ethnic belonging into a moral and political statement of solidarity. The section’s methodological diversity – ranging from surveys to discourse and content analysis – adds valuable nuance to the study of Ukraine’s ongoing linguistic transformation.

The second section, *“Indigenous People, National Minorities and Regional Perspectives”*, broadens the analytical focus to minority and regional experiences, challenging the perception of Ukraine as a linguistically homogeneous nation-state. The opening paper, *“Crimean Tatars in the Context of War, Displacement and Forced Migration: Language Policy and Behavior”*, is a particularly significant contribution. It situates the Crimean Tatar community within overlapping contexts of occupation and displacement, tracing how language practices have been shaped by both loss and adaptation. Drawing on legislation, public discourse, and language biographies, the authors highlight the tension between top-down policy frameworks and grassroots linguistic resilience.

Several papers focus on the western region of Transcarpathia, offering valuable insights into multilingual coexistence. *“Ethnolinguistic Demarcation of Public Space in the Linguistic Landscape of Transcarpathia, Ukraine”* and *“Language Situation of National Minorities in Transcarpathia: Socio-Communicative Elements of Design and Linguistic Landscape”* employ linguistic landscape analysis to document how signage reflects identity negotiation among Ukrainians, Hungarians, and Romanians. These studies show how the law on the state language

has reshaped the visibility of minority languages while maintaining patterns of coexistence and complementarity in public spaces.

Two further studies deepen this regional focus. *“Autobiographical Narrative of Linguistic Personality Formation in a Multilingual Border Region: Documentation Based on In-Depth Interviews”* offers a personal view of how language diversity is constructed and contested within minority communities, and how relations with the majority population are transformed in the context of war and displacement. Complementing this, *“Media Discussions on the Functioning of Minority Languages in Transcarpathia”* employs Google Trends analysis to reveal how different languages are conceptualized and ranked in terms of prestige within the region’s multicultural landscape.

The paper *“Language Adaptation of Ethnic Russians in the West of Ukraine”* adds another layer, using three language biographies to show how gender, age, and life circumstances shape linguistic adaptation in a new sociopolitical environment. The final two papers – *“From the Observations of Dynamics of Language Situation in the Multilingual Area Between the Dniester and the Danube Rivers”* and *“Perception of the Ukrainian Language Amongst National Minority Representatives in Chernihiv”* – broaden the scope to Ukraine’s southern and northern peripheries, highlighting how war has reconfigured majority–minority relations and language hierarchies in these diverse regions.

Overall, *Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine* succeeds in capturing the complexity and dynamism of Ukraine’s sociolinguistic transformation under the pressures of war. Its strength lies in its empirical diversity: through surveys, media analyses, linguistic landscape studies, and biographical interviews, it reveals how linguistic change manifests across social and spatial dimensions. At times, however, the volume’s heterogeneity undermines its coherence. The papers vary in theoretical depth and methodological rigor, and some lean more toward description than analysis. A stronger editorial synthesis could have articulated more clearly how the individual case studies collectively advance a shared argument about wartime language politics. Moreover, as most of the studies draw on data collected by the end of 2022, the volume does not fully reflect the subsequent evolution of language attitudes and practices in Ukraine’s rapidly changing sociopolitical context.

Despite these limitations, the book’s contribution is substantial. It documents a moment of accelerated linguistic transformation and demonstrates how war can simultaneously homogenize and diversify linguistic realities. *Contested Language Diversity in Wartime Ukraine* is a valuable addition to the scholarship on language politics, national identity, and sociocultural change in times of conflict. It will be of particular interest to scholars of sociolinguistics, nationalism, and East European studies, as well as to policymakers and educators engaged in postwar reconstruction and reconciliation. By foregrounding both majority and minority experiences – from urban Ukrainian speakers to displaced Crimean Tatars and multilingual borderland communities – the volume offers an insightful portrait of how language becomes a site of contestation, resilience, and renewal in a nation under siege.