

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY IN UKRAINE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE KRAVCHYK AND KYCHMA ADMINISTRATIONS

Pavlusenko Olena

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61345/1339-7915.2025.1.15>

Annotation. The language policy of the president is a criterion for determining the internal values of any country and an indicator of the state's foreign policy course. The president's policy demonstrates the situation with the provision of language rights, including national minorities. These aspects are particularly important for those international partners who have close historical and cultural connections.

Open support for global language standards is a demonstration of respect for linguistic diversity and democratic values.

Previously, as now, the main direction is comprehensive support for the development and popularization of the state language as a symbol of national identity. However, the processes of globalization, military conflicts, migration, and close international cooperation currently pose new demands. Today requires a balance in the process of ensuring the rights of all participants in language relations, demonstrating a policy based on the principles of equality, impartiality, fairness, and tolerance.

The president's language policy shapes the positive or negative image of the state. This is especially important for those countries that plan to become a part of the European family in the future. After all, a policy based on adherence to international law, the principles of linguistic equality, and the protection of minority rights are key requirements of international organizations such as the Council of Europe.

State support for international language projects, educational and cultural exchanges promote close cooperation with global partners, strengthening international support and trust.

Currently, as Ukraine is in a state of war, respect for the Ukrainian language as the state language is a factor that promotes the unity of the Ukrainian people in the struggle against the Russian "older brother" and in resisting Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Supporting the study and popularization of English as the language of international communication in Ukraine is a priority direction of today's language policy. After all, language is currently an element of a common defense scheme, one of the main tools for barrier-free communication with international partners in the process of fighting the enemy.

Key words: Ukraine, institute, English language, history, law, language policy.

1. Introduction.

The president's language policy is an extremely important element of the state's competitiveness. It shapes national identity, ensures the effective functioning of the state and society, and strengthens the country's international image. Furthermore, it promotes economic development and the proficiency of citizens, opens opportunities for international trade, attracting foreign investment, and participation in global political, cultural, and economic processes.

2. The methodological basis of the study.

Considering modern global challenges, globalization processes, and the war on the territory of Ukraine, state language policy is an extremely important factor in guaranteeing the national security of the country. In the current conditions, policy in the language sphere must be comprehensive and balance between supporting and popularizing the state language, the languages of national minorities, and English as the language of international communication. Such approach should be based on the principles of respect, caution, and tact.

The issues of language relations and language policy in Ukraine have been studied by such scholars as: V.V. Zabolotskyi, V.P. Kolisnyk, N.P. Pozhydaieva, O.O. Pershukova, M.H. Pradivliannyi, V.A. Hamaniuk, L.P. Pukhovska, V.H. Redko, L.P. Rapatska, Zh.A. Shevchuk, S.V. Shumlianskyi, and others. Juliane Besters-Dilger, a foreign scientist, has also paid attention to the study of this.

However, a comprehensive study on the genesis and development in the legal system of Ukraine of such institution as the institution of the English language during the times of L.M. Kravchuk and L.D. Kuchma has not been presented in the literature.

3. The purpose of this article is to reveal the peculiarities of the legal and regulatory support for the institution of the English language in Ukraine during the presidencies of Kravchuk and Kuchma. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to: study the historiography of this institution; determine what was objectively expedient for the majority of society at that time and whether these norms were enshrined in the relevant legislative acts; analyze the compliance of the legal and regulatory framework governing this area with the requirements of public morality, the criteria of justice, freedom, equality, and humanism; consider this issue not only through the prism of the quality of legal formalization, but also through the prism of international standards, principles of law, which on the one hand have the purpose of law, and on the other hand are a criterion for the compliance of law with these standards.

4. Review and discussion.

The period of Leonid Kravchuk's presidency spans from 1991 to 1994. At this time, the country had just gained its independence and began to shape its identity. The Law of the USSR "On Languages in the USSR," adopted in 1989, laid the legal foundations for the development of the Ukrainian language. In 1991, Ukraine declared its independence, and Ukrainian acquired the status of the state language.

Russian, which had been dominant during the Soviet period, continued to be widely used in all spheres of life, especially in the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine. Russian was widely used but did not have official status. The government of Ukraine also developed a language policy aimed at strengthening the status of the Ukrainian language and ensuring its use in all spheres of life.

At the same time, Ukrainian was being introduced into the education sector. New specialties related to Ukrainian philology began to appear in higher education institutions.

During this period, the need arose to ensure the rights of national minorities to use their languages. The amount of Ukrainian content in the mass media also gradually increased.

Overall, the period from 1991 to 1994 was a time of forming a new linguistic situation in Ukraine, where the Ukrainian language began to establish itself as the state language, but the Russian language continued to play a significant role.

After gaining independence, Ukraine aspired to integrate into the international community. Teachers and students began to participate in international exchange programs. Opportunities for study and internships abroad also emerged. This contributed to the popularization of English language learning.

In general, after 1991, interest in learning English among Ukrainians increased significantly. Most conscious citizens began clearly understanding that knowledge of English is extremely important for personal and professional development.

This was an obvious fact, as Ukraine opened its borders for international cooperation, establishing political, economic, and business ties.

As a result, a significant number of Ukrainians began to learn English to ensure their competitiveness in the labor market.

After all, the development of the economy provoked the emergence of foreign investors, and, as a result, a demand for specialists with knowledge of the English language.

The education system was also in a state of reform during this period. The government's educational policy was aimed at strengthening the study of foreign languages. New specialties related to English philology and translation became available for study. The pace of English language implementation accelerated.

In the process of researching and analyzing the period of Leonid Kravchuk's presidential rule, important changes occurred in the education system starting in 1991, but specific legislative acts aimed at increasing attention to the study of the English language were not adopted. However, the educational reforms that took place during this period created the prerequisites for the spread of English language learning.

In 1991, the Law of the USSR "On Education" was adopted, which became the basis for reforming the education system and defined the foundations for the study of foreign languages. It became the legal basis for the development of Ukrainian-language education and expanded opportunities for learning foreign languages.

Analyzing this regulatory legal act, it should be emphasized that, according to its provisions, the formation of a comprehensively developed personality through the mastery of foreign languages is one of the fundamental goals of education.

Also, analyzing the needs of society and the foundations of international cooperation, the mandatory study of foreign languages was introduced in secondary educational institutions. International languages such as English, German, and French were prioritized [1].

Such conditions stimulated the demand for educational institutions that would provide a proper level of English language teaching. There is an active development of specialized schools with in-depth study of English, as demand creates supply. The need to prepare a modern generation fluent in foreign languages became apparent.

In-depth study of foreign languages stimulated the introduction of new standards, which were formed in the process of restructuring the education system in Ukraine during this period.

It is also impossible to ignore the adoption in 1993 of the State National Program "Education" ("Ukraine of the XXI Century"). This program formulated the main strategies for the development of the education system in Ukraine and emphasized the study of foreign languages as a basis for Ukraine's integration into the world community [2].

According to a study conducted by journalists of Hromadske, it is unclear whether Leonid Makarovych studied foreign languages, as he never spoke them publicly [3]. At the same time, his policy was aimed at popularizing the study of foreign languages.

On June 14, 1994, at the end of his term, Leonid Kravchuk signed an extremely important agreement for Ukraine on partnership and cooperation with the European Union. The importance of signing this pact lies in the fact that the EU thereby acknowledged Ukraine's significance as a strategic partner. After all, Ukraine became the first state among the former Soviet Union member countries to sign such an agreement. This pact became fundamental for Ukraine's European integration.

The era of Leonid Kuchma's presidency spans from 1994 to 2005. During this period, the policy of international cooperation did not cease but only gained momentum. Consequently, interest in learning English only grew. Leonid Kuchma planned to solidify Ukraine's status in the international arena as a worthy political and economic partner.

It was Kuchma who finally ratified the "Budapest Memorandum" in December 1994. This agreement regulated the main conditions under which Ukraine renounced the world's third-largest nuclear potential in exchange for guarantees of territorial integrity from the United States, Great Britain, and Russia.

In 1997, Leonid Kuchma continued to follow his chosen vector of international policy and signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between Ukraine and NATO. This document is one of the fundamental ones in Ukraine's relations with the Alliance [4].

In 2002, the Ukraine-NATO Action Plan was signed, which fixed Ukraine's aspiration for membership in the alliance.

September 2003 was marked for Ukraine by the signing of an agreement on the creation of a Single Economic Space. This treaty envisaged close cooperation between Ukraine and Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Russia in the economic sphere. However, Ukraine's participation in the project was limited to signing only.

Leonid Danylovych Kuchma was the president who tried to be equally loyal to both Russia on the one hand and NATO and the EU on the other.

This manner of conducting his policy was called the "multi-vector policy."

As we have previously noted in our research, Leonid Kuchma made no secret of the fact that he did not know the state language, let alone speak English. When he tried to conduct a dialogue in the state language, it rather resembled surzhyk (a mix of Ukrainian and Russian) than pure Ukrainian. In his election speeches, he emphasized a policy of rapprochement with Russia and promised Russian as the second state language. As a result, he encouraged the Russian-speaking population to make an obvious choice in the upcoming presidential race [5].

Before the 1999 elections, President Kuchma allowed examinations to be taken in Russian in Ukrainian educational institutions. Leonid Danylovych emphasized that, "The state language for us should be Ukrainian, and Russian needs to be given official status. But this completely depends on the legislators," said Leonid Kuchma in an interview in 2001 [6].

Kuchma was the head of state who clearly understood the irreversible processes taking place in Ukraine, namely the inevitable integration into the international community. During his presidency, an active international policy was pursued, covering the educational, economic, and business sectors. Globalization processes intensified the demands on the skills that a specialist aspiring to high positions and planning to build a successful career should possess. Now, fluency in English was added to the list. At that time, the demand for English-speaking specialists was growing rapidly, especially in the fields of computer technology and business.

The presidency of Leonid Danylovych Kuchma played an extraordinary role for Ukraine. In the process of his leadership, our country significantly advanced in the direction of European integration. After all, Kuchma signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (1994), which became an important step on the path to European integration. He also signed the Strategy for Ukraine's Integration into the EU in 1998, which outlined the main areas of cooperation with the EU.

According to Article 52(3) of the agreement, attention was also focused on the approximation of standardization policies in training, education, and science [7]. At the end of 1994, the Ukraine-EU Committee was established.

V.R. Sidenko, in his article "Conceptual Principles of the Strategy for Ukraine's Integration into the Structures of the European Union," notes the necessity of considering that any strategy of integration

development is real only if certain fundamental conditions are met and there is an objective assessment of a complex of factors, and we fully and completely support his opinion [8].

But we'd like to add to the above that the qualifications of specialists involved in resolving any issue, the level of proficiency in the language of international communication for the purpose of further avoiding misunderstandings if the issue involves communication with foreign partners, as well as clear and coordinated teamwork, are extremely important. Ukraine's cooperation with representatives of the international community significantly intensified during the time of Leonid Kuchma. It is also impossible to ignore the fact that in 1995 Ukraine became a member of the Council of Europe. Cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund significantly increased. Although Ukraine has been a member of the IMF since 1992, active cooperation with this international financial organization began precisely during the time of Leonid Danylovych.

Results. From the above, there were no significant legislative changes aimed at increasing the requirements for learning English during the years of Leonid Kuchma's or Leonid Kravchuk's presidency. However, an extremely active international policy was pursued, which was closely linked to the educational sphere and the language sector. International exchange programs for students and teachers were actively implemented, and legislative agreements that were fundamental for the further integration of Ukraine into the European Family were agreed upon. All these actions positively influenced the general trends in the development of education, international cooperation, and the further popularization of English as a language that opens borders.

5. Conclusions.

The terms of office of Ukrainian Presidents Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma fall on the period of the establishment of independent Ukraine.

The fundamental directions according to which the language policy of the heads of state was implemented were aimed at establishing Ukraine as an independent state, guaranteeing and ensuring the rights of national minorities, and establishing a dialogue with international partners for further cooperation.

Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk laid the foundations for the promotion and affirmation of the Ukrainian language in the international arena. Leonid Danylovych Kuchma tried to balance between Russia and Europe, pursuing a multi-vector policy. The Russian language during his presidency closely entered the lives of Ukrainians, but at the same time, he could not close his eyes and ignore the European aspirations of Ukrainians in matters of integration and mastering the language of international communication. Both presidents faced complex internal and external challenges in the process of forming language policy, and all the changes that arose because of such actions had both positive and negative consequences for the Ukrainian people.

The fluency of the first persons of the state in foreign languages contributes to a feeling of pride in one's president and in a flourishing Ukraine. This acts as a certain internal driving force that encourages each person to follow this example and develop in their field and language. If the president is fluent in English, French, or any other foreign language, this is an indicator that the person respects those countries, cultures, and international partners with whom they communicate in their language.

References:

1. Law of the Ukrainian SSR "On Education" of 1991, 1060-XII, [in Ukrainian] URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1060-12#Text>.
2. The State National Program "Education" ("Ukraine of the XXI Century"), 1993, 896-93-п, [in Ukrainian] URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/896-93-%D0%BF#Text>.

3. Advanced or complete zero: How well do Ukrainian presidents speak English? (n.d.). *Hromadske*. URL <https://hromadske.ua/posts/advanced-chi-povnij-nul-naskilki-dobre-ukrayinski-prezidenti-volodiyut-anglijskoyu>.
4. Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1997, 994_002, April 1, 2025, [in Ukrainian] URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994_002#Text.
5. Frantsuz-Yakovets, T.A., Pavlusenko, O.V. (2023, February 25). The Institute of the English Language in Ukraine: Historical and Legal Dimension. *KROK*, [in Ukrainian] URL: <https://lbku.krok.edu.ua/index.php/legalbulletin/article/view/360>.
6. Journalists analyzed which of the Ukrainian presidents speaks English best. (2021). *Glavcom*, [in Ukrainian] URL: <https://glavcom.ua/country/politics/zhurnalisti-proanalizuvali-hto-z-ukrajinskih-prezidentiv-naykrashche-govoriv-anglijskoyu-777364.html>.
7. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Ukraine and the European Communities and their Member States of 1994, [in Ukrainian] URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/998_012#Text.
8. Sidenko, V.R. (n.d.). Conceptual principles of Ukraine's integration strategy into the European Union structures. *Ekonomika i prohnozuvannia*. [in Ukrainian] URL: https://eip.org.ua/docs/EP_01_2_26_uk.pdf.

Olena Pavlusenko,

PhD student "KROK" University

the Department of Theory and History of the State and Law,

Senior Lecturer Kyiv National Transport University

the Department of Foreign Languages

E-mail: elenapavlusenko2018@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-4350-0147