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Language attitudes in the mass media: What attitude towards the Ukrainian language was formed by the Odesa media (2014–2023)

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Summary: The article examines the issue of the representation of language attitudes in mass media texts. The focus is on the attitude towards the Ukrainian language manifested in the texts of Odesa online publications during 2014–2023. Content analysis of the popular internet publications of Odesa has been chosen as the main method of research. We focused on mass media materials that mentioned the concepts of “The Ukrainian language” and “The Russian language”. More than 700 media texts were analyzed in total. The research enabled us to identify the main models of attitudes towards the Ukrainian language in the analyzed media through the dichotomy of ‘ours – theirs’, which changed both in intensity and content. Conditionally, we can identify the date of the change in this dichotomy as the beginning of the large-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine. During 2014–2021, a trend of ambivalent attitudes. After February 24, 2022, the language-based dichotomy ‘ours – theirs’ has changed its expressive power and clearly fixed its objects: as a rule, the Ukrainian language has become ‘ours’, whilst Russian – ‘theirs’. This, in its turn, has led to the displacement of negative evaluation rhetoric regarding the Ukrainian language in all the analyzed media. It was due to the political situation in the country and the change in many values of Ukrainians during the war.

Keywords: language attitudes, attitude towards the Ukrainian language, mass media space, media texts, context

1 Introduction

Language attitudes are an important indicator of change in both intergroup relations and state language policy. According to M. Dragojevic (2015), negative language attitudes can lead to many negative behavioral consequences, including pre-

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judice, discrimination, and problematic social interactions. In contrast, a positive attitude towards language is a key factor in the perception of the ethnolinguistic viability of a language, which is a stable indicator of language preservation.

Attitude towards language plays a significant role in the maintenance, development, and preservation of a language or, on the contrary, its decline or even extinction. It can determine language stability in a given period and predict the language situation in the future.

In this regard, the problem of determining language attitudes, language variants, and language styles is quite relevant and attracts the attention of many scientists. Today, there are various approaches and aspects to the study of language attitudes (for a review, see Dragojevic et al. 2021; Kroskrity 2016; Kircher & Zipp 2022). Language attitudes are typically studied through sociolinguistic analyses of respondents' language behavior, the language situation in the region or country, and language policy as a whole. This research helps reveal the evaluative characteristics of certain language codes, their status, prestige or non-prestige among other factors (cf., for example, Preston 1999; Garrett 2010; Vessey 2016; Hentschel & Zeller 2016; Zeller 2022; Sokolova 2023).

Most researchers define attitudes as “a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects” (Sarnoff 1970: 279), as evaluations of social objects based on characteristics such as good – bad, pleasant – unpleasant, positive – negative (Ajzen 2001: 52; Petty et al. 1997: 48). Language attitudes are also described as the feelings people have about languages (Oppenheim 1982; Crystal 2000: 215). In some studies, language attitudes are considered emotional reactions (Greenwald 1989), a special type of knowledge primarily filled with evaluative or affective content (Kruglanski 1989).

In any case, attitudes are an evaluative phenomenon, which is distinguished by its learned (and not hereditary) capability, revealed in a particular time, recognized through interpretation, and provokes specific reactions toward the object of the attitude (see about this Dawes 1972: 15–16).

Language attitudes are largely influenced by sociocultural factors, including the mass media, which play a significant role in the information society. As globalization processes and information flows intensify, the media's power to influence people increases. Moreover, the mass media, as the main source of knowledge for a large part of society, have acquired the status of a social value. They accumulate a system of moral and ethical dominants that can become ingrained in the consciousness of a mass audience. As a result, the media not only determine the value priorities of society but can also change them. Thus, they can be recognized as a special axiological and informational mechanism that broadcasts, addresses, and, under certain conditions, changes values and attitudes towards them in society (Kuznietsova 2009: 6–7).

On the one hand, the modern mass media space can be viewed as a litmus test that reflects certain public views, attitudes of society, and attitudes toward certain phenomena, actions, and processes. On the other hand, they are a determinant of changes in these views and assessments. Consumers of information search, decide, and act not only according to their beliefs but also to the ideas disseminated by the mass media. Therefore, by presenting any information, the media not only reflect attitudes but also influence their formation. With this in mind, we consider it relevant to study the mass media space as an environment that reflects, reproduces, and, under certain conditions, changes and shapes attitudes toward language.

We aim to examine language attitudes in the media discourse of Odesa. The communicative features of this southern region of Ukraine, such as its multi-coded nature, and the influence of Russification during the Soviet Union, which resulted in the Russian language being communicatively powerful in various spheres for quite some time, and the presence of active pro-Russian propaganda have led to a special interest in studying the issue of attitudes towards the state language in the mass media.

To determine the main settings regarding the attitude to the Ukrainian language in the mass media space, we conducted a content analysis of popular Odesa online publications for the period of 2014–2023, namely: *048.ua* (<https://www.048.ua/>); *Vzglyad iz Odessy* (View from Odesa) (<https://od-news.com/>); *Dumska* (<https://dumskaya.net/>); *Odessa-media* (<https://odessamedia.net/>); *Odesa.online* (<https://odesa.online/uk/>); *Odessa1.com* (<https://odessa1.com/>); *Odessa-life* (<https://odessa-life.od.ua/>); *Odessit.in.ua* (<https://odessit.in.ua/>); *Pravda za Odessu* (Truth about Odesa) (<https://zaodessu.com.ua/>); *Timer*,¹ *USIONline* (<https://usionline.com/>).

We chose online publications because they are popular and trusted by the audience. According to the study, in 2022, most Odesa consumers trust online publications, with 49 % trusting regional websites, 39 % trusting regional channels on social media, and only 22 % trusting regional television (USAID-Internews 2022).

We focused on mass media materials that mentioned the concepts of “The Ukrainian language” and “The Russian language”. We were primarily interested in contexts where attitudes towards the Ukrainian language were expressed. The analyzed materials that included these concepts were selected using a continuous sampling method. In total, we analyzed over 700 mass media materials. This study utilized a qualitative approach, which enabled us to identify the main patterns of attitudes towards the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian-speaking behavior in general that were replicated by the mass media during the specified period.

¹ As of February 27, 2022, this edition does not function.

The attitude towards language in the media is expressed in several ways:

- through linguistic means – primarily using certain evaluative words and expressions concerning language, or particular evaluative quotes from characters of the material, experts, etc;
- through the content with the emphasis on some events, issues, phenomena in the coverage.

It is important to note that in the analysis we included all the materials we found during the research, including those from publications that ceased their activities for financial or political reasons after February 24, 2022. One notable example is the closure of *Timer*, which mostly featured pro-Russian messages, propaganda, and hate speech. Criminal proceedings were initiated against the editor-in-chief of this publication, Yuriy Tkachev, in late February 2022, for charges of treason, attempts at undermining Ukraine's integrity, and obstruction of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Although *Timer* has since ceased its activities, we still included the cases we discovered earlier in our analysis. We also identified a range of pro-Russian propaganda narratives, which were promoted by this publication for an extended period (the analysis of which is presented in other studies). Even though *Timer* is no longer active and we cannot access the cases we discovered earlier on its website, we decided to include them in our analysis.

The conducted research enabled us to identify the main models of attitudes towards the Ukrainian language in the analyzed media through the dichotomy of 'ours – theirs', which changed both in intensity and content. Conditionally, the date of the change in this dichotomy can be identified as the beginning of the large-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine. Before February 24, 2022, and after, different models of attitudes towards the Ukrainian language emerged in the media space of Odesa.

2 Language attitudes in Odesa media before the Russian invasion of Ukraine

During 2014–2021, a trend of ambivalent attitudes, both positive and negative, was observed in Odesa media. The ambivalent attitude towards the Ukrainian language was primarily manifested through the reproduction of information regarding the support of the state language policy aimed at the development of the Ukrainian language, as well as its criticism, which occurred, as a rule, in a negative and evaluative context. Such an evaluative discrepancy in the presentation of materials is primarily caused by the editorial policy of the publication and the political views of

their owners. When covering various events and phenomena, the media adhere to selected points of view, reflecting events and phenomena from certain political, social, and value positions.

A positive attitude towards the Ukrainian language was formed due to the contexts in which the issue of expanding the spheres of the Ukrainian language's functioning was considered. According to our data, these were several publications that related to the consideration and analysis of problematic issues of language policy, which disseminated information about the Ukrainian-speaking behavior of certain figures and activists in the region, certain Ukrainian-language cultural events, etc. Examples include:

“Why are strict measures to revive the Hebrew language not questionable in Israel, while the law on the Ukrainian language is denied in Ukraine²?” [in Ukrainian³] (Dumska. 27.01.2017);

“Why do we love it, or What is the Ukrainian language famous for” [in Ukrainian⁴] (Odessa-media. 09.11.2021);

“Saakashvili is learning Ukrainian in Odesa” [in Russian⁵] (Vzglyad iz Odessy. 09.11.2015).

It should be noted that a positive attitude towards the Ukrainian language was rather sporadic and situational. During the analysis of the mass media materials, no tendency to disseminate contexts that consistently promote the idea that speaking Ukrainian is the norm for every Ukrainian and that the Ukrainian language is prestigious was observed.

Instead, negative attitudes towards the Ukrainian language were more evident and active. Such negative attitudes were primarily presented in the media outlets that supported Russian-language politics and, accordingly, propagated pro-Russian narratives. We believe that their Russian-speaking orientation was largely influenced by the long-term pro-Kremlin policy, which was particularly evident in the southern region of Ukraine.

It is worth noting that Odesa has a long history as a multicultural and multilingual city. However, during the Soviet era, the policy of Russification in the city played a significant role in elevating the status of the Russian language as the language of international communication and prioritizing it in all spheres of life.⁶ It is

2 Hereinafter, the translation of media materials is mine (TK).

3 “Чому не підлягають сумніву жорсткі заходи з відродження івриту в Ізраїлі, а закон про українську мову в Україні заперечується?”

4 “За що ми любимо її, або Чим славиться українська мова”.

5 “Саакашвили в Одессе учит украинский язык”.

6 However, it should not be forgotten that the cultural weight of the Ukrainian language in Odesa has always been specific (see, for example Pivtorak 2022).

also important to mention the 2012 Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Language Policy”, which was adopted with significant violations by the Verkhovna Rada. This law granted the Russian language regional status in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia regions, limiting the use of Ukrainian and contributing to further Russification in these regions.

The language practices of Russification were widely supported by the local self-government bodies in Odesa. Specifically, the Odesa City Council, in accordance with the “Law on the Principles of the State Language Policy” in 2012, designated Russian as a regional language and permitted its use in governmental, educational, and cultural institutions. Furthermore, even prior to the passage of this law, in 2011, the city council approved the “Program for the Preservation and Development of the Russian Language in Odesa for 2011–2015”. According to reports from Ukrainian media outlets, this “*decision was adopted at the session of the city council to the applause of the deputies*”⁷ (Ukrainska Pravda. 09.04.2011).

“I am happy that the program to support the Russian language in Odesa has begun to be implemented, – said Odesa Mayor Oleksiy Kostusev. – The money will be spent on the purchase of Russian textbooks and books for schools and libraries, as well as on the establishment of awards and events promoting the Russian language”⁸ (Ibid.).

Moreover, the former mayor of Odesa, Oleksiy Kostusev (who held this position from 2010–2013), was a vocal opponent of the Ukrainization of Odesa. He initiated the reduction of Ukrainian-language schools in Odesa and introduced Russian-language office management in the city hall, as repeatedly reported by the media:

“Odesa Mayor Oleksiy Kostusev proposed to communicate in Russian at the first meeting of the new executive committee of the Odesa City Council. He asked to accept Russian as the language of communication during the meeting. Deputies unanimously adopted the decision. Besides, the mayor demanded that documents be submitted to the head only in Russian”⁹ (Zahid.net. 10.12.2010).

7 “рішення було ухвалене на сесії міськради під оплески депутатів”.

8 “Я щасливий, що програма підтримки російської мови в Одесі почала втілюватися в життя», – заявив мер Одеси Олексій Костусев. Гроші будуть витрачені на закупівлю російських підручників і книжок для шкіл і бібліотек, а також на заснування премій та проведення заходів, що пропагують російську мову”.

9 “Мер Одеси Олексій Костусев запропонував спілкуватися російською на першому засіданні нового виконавчого комітету Одеської міськради. Він попросив прийняти російську мову мовою спілкування в ході проведення засідання. Депутати одноголосно ухвалили рішення. До того ж мер зажадав, щоб документи міському голові подавали також виключно російською”.

In 2011, he was among the top 5 most odious Ukrainophobes of the period of Ukraine's independence. According to Yuriy Andruhovych, "*Mayor of Odesa Kostusev [...] turns a free cosmopolitan city into a Russian backwater*" (UNIAN. 23.08.2011).

Therefore, it is quite clear how, under the pressure of such a pro-Russian government, the language policy in the socio-cultural and informational space of Odesa changed quite dramatically.¹⁰

The situation began to change for Ukrainian speakers only in 2014, the year of the Russian armed invasion of Crimea and the beginning of the war in eastern Ukraine. Gradually, this change was observed in the educational space. For example, in Odesa at that time, 51% of parents chose Russian to teach their children, while Ukrainian was chosen by 49%; in 2015, the numbers changed to 44% and 56%, respectively; and by 2017, the numbers were 41% and 59% (Ukraina moloda. 11.08.2022). In 2018, Olena Buinevich, Director of the Department of Education and Science of the Odesa City Council, stated that the parents of more than 9,400 children (83% of the total number of first graders) expressed a desire for their children to be educated in Odesa in classes with the Ukrainian language of instruction. In the 2022–2023 school year, according to Oleksandr Lonchak, Director of the Department of Education and Science of the Odesa Regional Military Administration, Russian language and literature will not be taught at all in Odesa (Ukraina moloda. 11.08.2022).

As for the media space, a significant number of Odesa media played a significant role in promoting Russian-language policies, perhaps even unknowingly. Even the fact that, until 2019, only one Odesa online publication, *IzbirKom*, was in the Ukrainian language, may indicate a certain position of these publications regarding the state language.

To implement Article 30 of the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language" dated April 25, 2019, No. 2704–VIII, all media had to switch to the Ukrainian language. However, during our research, we found that some of them remain in the Russian language, while others are conditionally bilingual, with the default switch to the Russian-language version. In some editions, only the titles are in Ukrainian, and all texts are presented in Russian. For example, *Pravda za Odessu* is entirely in Russian, and *Odessit.in.ua* is mainly published in Russian and does not have an official Ukrainian-language version. From time to time, it publishes news in Ukrainian.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that the annulment of the Odesa Regional Council's decision to designate the Russian language as a regional language in the Odesa region took place only in 2020, according to the decision of the Odesa District Administrative Court dated December 3, 2020 (Yedynyi reiestr 2020).

As for the coverage of the “language issue”, this topic turned out to be especially sensitive for such publications as *Timer*, *Pravda za Odessu* and *USIonline*, which often covered it in a negative and critical way.

These media reacted strongly to changes in state policy regarding language issues aimed at strengthening the position of the state language. They often provided distorted information, such as claiming that Russian is the native language of almost all residents of Odesa. They also referred to state language policy as the policy of radical xenophobes:

“Viktor Baransky: “We will return Odesa’s native language!”: The law, which provides for the transition of secondary schools to the Ukrainian language, was adopted in 2017, and this reform continues to this day. Since September 2020, absolutely all Russian-language schools have switched to the Ukrainian language of instruction. The Russian language, the native language of 95 % of Odessans, is now officially considered the language of national minorities, while it was deprived even of the privileges inherent in other language groups” [in Russian¹¹] (*Pravda za Odessu*. 15.10.2020);

“The policy of discrimination against the language and cultural rights of citizens, which began during Poroshenko’s time, continues in Ukraine. Zelensky did not find the strength to fulfill his election promise and instead took the side of radical xenophobes” [in Russian¹²] [in Russian] (*Pravda za Odessu*. 18.01.2021).

The idea of Odesa being Russian speaking, its regional peculiarity in terms of language and culture (as a “special region where people of non-Cossack origin live”, where Russian culture and language are “friend” and Ukrainianness is not considered a characteristic feature) were consistently promoted through the media into mass consciousness. At the same time, the concepts of “Ukrainian culture” and “Russian culture” often collided, and labels were attached to the prestige and sophistication of the Russian language. Thus, in the material “*A cherry garden*” VS “*A stupid pig*” or *how the Ukrainian language and knowledge are deformed in the school*” [in Russian¹³] (*USIonline*. 26.01.2016) the author contrasts

11 “Виктор Баранский: “Вернем Одессе родной язык!»: Закон, который предусматривает переход средних школ на украинский язык, приняли еще в 2017 году, и реформа эта продолжается по сей день. С сентября 2020 года абсолютно все русскоязычные школы перешли на украинский язык обучения. Родной для 95 % одеситов русский язык теперь официально считается языком национальных меньшинств, при этом он был лишен даже присущих другим языковым группам привилегий”.

12 “В Украине продолжается политика дискриминации языковых и культурных прав граждан, начатая еще во времена Порошенко. Зеленский не нашел в себе сил выполнить обещанное на выборах и стал на сторону радикалов-ксенофобов”.

13 “Садок вишневий” VS “свиня тупорила» или как уродуют украинский язык и сознание в школе”.

the figures of Taras Shevchenko and Alexander Pushkin, attaching negative and positive labels to them, respectively, such as: “*about Shevchenko, who is too heavy-weight for 5- to 7-year-old children (after all, this is not a life-affirming Pushkin..)*” [in Russian].

At the same time, journalists often try to justify the linguistic “distinctiveness” of the Odesa region by contrasting it with Western Ukraine. For example, in the article “*What are Odesa children taught?*” [in Russian], published in *Dumska*, the author criticizes the Ukrainian-language content of the children's magazine “The Child's World” for featuring materials about the soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and explains: “*Although we are not in Western Ukraine, it is offered to our Odesa children to read...*” [in Russian¹⁴] (*Dumska*. 30.08.2009).

As we can see, the analyzed media discourse supports stereotypical divisions (primarily based on the language principle) of residents of the South and the West, which, in turn, contributed to the creation of the image of Ukraine as a zone of interlinguistic enmity in various territories. This stereotype was reinforced by materials in which the problems of the so-called “discrimination” of the Russian language were raised, the suppression of the rights of the Russian-speaking population,¹⁵ and artificially inflating invented problems, such as:

“The Odesa Regional Council will appeal to Zelenskyi with a request not to allow “discrimination based on language” [in Russian¹⁶] (USIonline. 12.06.2019);

“Russian speakers will not be left with a choice” [in Russian¹⁷] (Odessa1.com. 04.10.2019);

“Ukrainianization by force” [in Russian ¹⁸] (Odessa1.com. 23.01.2017);

“Ukrainians ask Zelensky to stop language discrimination” [in Russian¹⁹] (Pravda za Odessu. 06.11.2020);

14 “А ведь мы находимся не на Западной Украине, это предлагают читать нашим, одесским детям”.

15 Repeated missions of international organizations, and various sociological studies on meeting the needs for training, information, and representation did not reveal the facts of the violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine or the threat of their violation (see, for example International Alert 2017).

16 “Одесский облсовет обратится к Зеленскому с просьбой не допустить “дискриминацию по языковому признаку”.

17 “Русскоязычным не оставят выбора”.

18 “Принуждение к украинизации”.

19 “Украинцы просят Зеленского остановить языковую дискриминацию”.

“An apple of Discord”: Our modern “gods” are once again trying to shake the situation by adopting not only new utility tariffs but also what kind of Law on Language already in the account and the entry into force of Article 30 on January 16, 2021, on the transition to the Ukrainian language in the service sector; All this riot of colors of nationalism in Ukraine blossomed after 2014. Remember – “Army. Language. Faith” [in Russian²⁰] (Pravda za Odessu. 15.02.2021);

“The enforcement of some provisions of the “language law” has imposed the necessity of learning the language on innocent Odessans” [in Russian²¹] (Pravda za Odessu. 25.02.2021).

Spreading narratives about the Russian-speaking region, some media outlets reacted strongly to the support of Ukrainian-language policy. In the article “*The Russian language lost its regional status in Odesa through the efforts of a Lviv activist*” (in Russian) (Pravda za Odessu. 1.09.2020), the author quotes the editor-in-chief of the online publication Timer, a well-known Russian propagandist, who openly calls for resistance against Ukrainization:

“Do you want to continue to be a “Russian speaking” Ukrainian? Excellent. These guys have new, more exciting humiliations ready for you. Get used to the coolness of someone else’s spit on your face. Or you can simply recognize the ugliness of this artificial term and simply say that you are Russians, whose native land has been given over to the occupation of political Ukrainians by the will of fate, cunning plans, and geopolitical schedules. And that you have nothing to do with this ugliness” [in Russian²²] (Pravda za Odessu. 01.09.2020).

Other publications have also taken a clear stance against language bills, framing the language issue in a negative light, as seen in the following examples:

“*Language passions, or a Ukrainian habit of stepping on the rake*” [in Russian²³] (048. 21.01.2017);

20 “Яблоко раздора”: Наши современные “боги” очередной раз пытаются раскатать ситуацию путём принятия не только новых тарифов ЖКХ, но и какого уже по счёту Закона о языке и вступления в силу с 16 января 2021 статьи 30-й о переходе на украинский язык в сфере обслуживания; Всё это буйство красок национализма в Украине расцвело после 2014 года. Помните – “Армія. Мова. Віра”.

21 “Вступление в силу некоторых положений «языкового закона» поставило ни в чем не повинных одесситов перед навязанной необходимостью изучения мовы”.

22 “Хотите и дальше быть “русскоязычным” украинцем? Отлично. У этих ребят готовы для вас новые, еще задорные унижения. Привыкайте к прохладе чужой слюны на своем лице. Или можете просто осознать уродство этого искусственного термина и просто сказать, что вы – русские, чья родная земля волею судеб, хитрых планов и геополитических раскладов отдана под оккупацию политическим украинцам. И что вы к этому уродству не имеете отношения”.

23 “Страсти по языку, или Украинская привычка наступать на грабли”.

“Ukrainian ‘Sprehenführer’²⁴ planned to rename Yuzhnyi” [in Russian ²⁵] (Pravda za Odessu 04.11.2021).

Language issues in various contexts have often been associated with language scandals, where the main issue was the inability of individuals to speak, switch to, or understand the Ukrainian language, as seen in examples like:

“Language scandal: the director of an Odesa kindergarten says she doesn’t need Ukrainian language” [in Russian ²⁶] (USIONline. 17.01.2019);

“An accident on Lvivska: the father of the culprit turned out to be a businessman who attacked a girl for speaking Ukrainian” [in Russian²⁷] (USIONline. 12.07.2018);

“A victim of language conflict: Kindergarten director was forced to quit after her conversation with a Ukrainian-speaking parent was posted online. [...] Igor Devbych said on Facebook that the director of kindergarten No. 138 considers the Ukrainian language optional in her work, the kindergarten she runs is a “bilingual institution”, and all celebrations in Ukrainian-speaking groups are held only in Russian, because “in our region, this is impossible” [in Russian²⁸] (Odesa1.com. 18.01.2019);

“An egregious case in Odesa: a woman and a man were beaten for the Ukrainian language” [In Russian²⁹] (Odessa-life. 15.09.2014).

When reporting on language conflicts, journalists often cited negative statements about the Ukrainian language or culture without providing comments, which can contribute to the dissemination of negative narratives about Ukraine in general among the masses. For example:

“An Odesa taxi driver reacted inadequately to the Ukrainian language: he promised revenge. During a ride with the host of the grand ceremonies of the Odesa Film Festival, Kyiv journalist

24 The label Ukrainian “Sprehenführer” concerning the language ombudsman has been emerging in many Russian publications for a long time.

25 “Украинский “Шпрехенфюрер” задумал переименовать Южный”.

26 “Языковой скандал: директор одесского детсада заявила, что ей не нужен украинский язык”.

27 “ДТП на Львовской: отцом виновницы оказался бизнесмен, напавший на девушку за украинский язык”.

28 “Жертва языкового конфликта: Директор детского сада была вынуждена уволиться после того, как ее разговор с украиноязычным родителем выложили в сеть. [...] Игорь Девбич сообщил в Facebook, что директор детсада №138 считает украинский язык необязательным в ее работе, садик, которым она руководит, – “двуязычное заведение”, а все праздники в украиноязычных группах проходят только на русском языке, потому что “в нашем регионе это невозможно”.

29 “Вопиющий случай в Одессе: женщину и мужчину избili за украинский язык”.

Yanina Sokolova, the taxi driver responded to her Ukrainian speech with the phrase: ‘Well, fascists, we have suffered because of you. Now there will be revenge.’ Yanina was puzzled by this and asked the driver who he was referring to as ‘fascists’. The driver then asked to speak in the language ‘the people in this city are used to speaking’ [in Russian³⁰] (Vzglyad iz Odessy. 24.07.2019);

“‘You are not in Ukraine’: a client in Odesa ‘lashed out’ the seller because of the language: You are not in Ukraine, you are in Odesa, my friend. Odessans have the right to speak Russian” [in Russian³¹] (USIonline. 09.07.2022).

Several mass media outlets reported in October 2020 on the case of a drawing teacher who was dismissed for bullying a student due to her Ukrainian-speaking behavior. The incident gained significant attention in Ukraine’s media space:

“The drawing teacher of Odesa Gymnasium No. 4, Raisa Pirogovskaya, will be fired for Ukrainophobia – she bullied a fifth-grade student, shouted at her, and brought her to tears because she speaks Ukrainian” [in Russian³²] (Dumska. 12.10.2020).

National publications that reacted to this situation drew attention to the preconditions that “formed” this situation: manipulation of the language issue in the region, support of the idea of “protection of Russian speakers” (which was repeatedly proclaimed by the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin) by some political parties in Ukraine (in particular, “The opposition platform – For Life”, which on the eve of the elections even placed billboards around the city with the promise to “return Odesa to Odesa”) (in detail see: [Radio Svoboda. 21.10.2020]).

The media in Odesa that covered this case only presented the facts, which could be seen as formally objective. However, in the context of an information war and countering Russian propaganda, such detached reporting can be considered as mild complicity in this propaganda. Additionally, given the low level of media literacy

30 “Одесский таксист неадекватно отреагировал на украинский язык: пообещал реванш. С ведущей торжественных церемоний Одесского кинофестиваля известной киевской журналисткой Яниной Соколовой произошел инцидент в одесском такси. Водитель одесского такси неадекватно отреагировал на украинскую речь Соколовой фразой: ‘Ну что, фашисты, пострадали мы из-за вас. Теперь будет реванш’, чем весьма озадачил пассажирку, если не сказать больше. Янина ответила, что он не понимает кто ‘фашист’, а кто нет. В свою очередь водитель попросил говорить с ним на том языке, на котором ‘привык говорить народ в этом городе’”.

31 “‘Ты не в Украине’: клиент в Одессе ‘наехал’ на продавца из-за языка: Да ты не в Украине, ты в Одессе, друг. Одесситы имеют право говорить на русском”.

32 “Учительницу рисования одесской гимназии №4 Раису Пировговскую уволят за украинофобию – она унижала ученицу пятого класса, кричала на нее и довела до слез из-за того, что та разговаривает на украинском языке”.

among many modern consumers of mass media (as evidenced by studies such as the “Index of Media Literacy of Ukrainians” conducted by the research agency “New Image Marketing Group” in 2020–2022 (Detector Media: 2023), it is important to provide explanations and comments on incidents that impact important value orientations of Ukrainians.

Regarding the representation of direct language attitudes, some mass media used negatively evaluated language to attract attention, which could contribute to the formation of negative attitudes towards the Ukrainian language. For example:

“Odesa minibus driver tried to kick a girl out of the bus for “calf language” [in Russian³³] (048. 18.07.2017);

“For ‘a dog language’: a teacher who insulted the Ukrainian language was fired in Chornomorsk” [in Russian³⁴] (Dumska. 17.05.2021);

““Dog language’: a teacher who insulted the Ukrainian language was fired in the Odesa region” [in Russian³⁵] (048. 18.05.2021).

As a rule, these and other similar negatively evaluated expressions are cited based on the characters in the material and, on the one hand, are actively used in the media to attract the reader’s attention, increase the clickability of the material and, on the other hand, can act as a manipulative mechanism. Their publication with provocative headlines is enough not only to stir up public sentiment and influence the formation of certain attitudes, but also to provide fodder for Russian propaganda to refer to “information in Odesa media”.

A negative attitude towards the Ukrainian language was often formed through “soft” propaganda, which involved the reproduction of nostalgic materials from the times of the USSR. Publications of archival photos of Odesa and cities in the Odesa region, often with old Soviet names, and mentions of the happy carefree times of the “unified past” of Ukraine and Russia contributed to the promotion of the idea of “brotherly nations” and simplified the information about the suppression of the Ukrainian language during Soviet times. For example, an article on *Pravda za Odesu* from February 05, 2021, claimed that

“You can ‘pull the wool’ [in the original: hang noodles on the ears] only over young people’s eyes that ‘the Ukrainian language of the Soviet Union was in decline.’ But while the older generation is alive, it remembers how many literary magazines and newspapers were published

33 “Одесский маршрутчик пытался выгнать из автобуса девушку за “телячью мову”.

34 “За ‘псячу мову’: в Черноморске уволили преподавателя, оскорбившего украинский язык”.

35 “Псяча мова’: в Одесской области уволили преподавателя, который оскорбил украинский язык”.

in those years, including in the Ukrainian language. I keep these copies of periodicals in my father's archive" [in Russian³⁶] (Pravda za Odessu. 5.02.2021).

These and similar opinions were typically expressed by unknown experts or so-called “eyewitness bloggers”. It goes without saying that for a long time, the facts of the real suppression of Ukrainian identity during the Soviet era remained outside the attention of the mass audience. However, today, data and records have been made public that confirm the policy of total Russification of Ukraine. Ukrainian literary critic Ivan Dzyuba wrote quite candidly about this back in 1965 in his study “Internationalism or Russification?”. Although the work itself was only published in Ukraine in 1990 in the magazine *Vitchyzna (Motherland)*, and as a separate book in 1998:

“There is an impression that every time new forces appear in some part of Ukrainian culture and some kind of revival begins, the bureaucratic machine becomes restless until it suppresses this revival and returns everything to a “normal” artistic level”;

“In the cities of Ukraine in 1958, only 21% of children studied in Ukrainian schools (in 1926–97%...). But even those schools that are called Ukrainian are not. It is enough to visit any ‘Ukrainian’ school in Kyiv, for example, to make sure that, outside of teaching, all their inner life is conducted in Russian and even the teachers themselves are ‘ashamed’ to speak Ukrainian, not to mention the students”;

“Newly translated editions are produced on a relatively small scale, so we have only single books from world classics” (Dziuba 1998).

Therefore, today’s slogans of some unknown “experts”, who refute these data, can only testify to the manipulation of the language issue and support for pro-Russian propaganda.

During our research, we found that there is an expressive narrative in the mass media space that associates the term “Ukrainians” with “Banderivtsi” (people of Bandera) and “Ukraine” with “Banderivshchyna”, which contributes to the evaluative attitude towards everything Ukrainian. It is well-known that Russian authorities have long demonized the image of Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian political figure, accusing him of “radical nationalism” and using it to denigrate Ukrainians, whom they contemptuously call “Banderivtsi”. Some Odesa media

36 “Можно ‘вешать лапшу’ на уши только молодёжи о том, что ‘українська мова у Радянському Союзі була в занепаді’. Но пока живо старшее поколение, оно помнит, сколько литературных журналов и газет издавалось в те годы и на украинском языке, в том числе. Я храню в архиве отца эти экземпляры периодики”.

have used these names (often as a quote) to refer to people with pro-Ukrainian views, thus replicating the meanings of pro-Russian propaganda such as “Ukrainians are Banderivtsi” and “The Ukrainian language is the language of Banderivtsi”.

“Last night, activists of the Odesa Euromaidan [...] drew a Nazi swastika and wrote: ‘Banderivtsi live here’, ‘Burn in hell’ [in Russian³⁷] (Vzglyad iz Odessy. 19.03.2014);

“In Odesa, a teacher slapped and called a student a ‘Banderov nit’ for speaking Ukrainian” [in Russian³⁸] (Odessa-media. 18.03.2015).

Some media outlets that reported on the illegal actions of supporters of the pro-Russian campaign preferred to only state the facts, often carrying pathogenic slogans in the headlines, such as “*Ukraine is fascism*”, “*Who needs this Ukrainian language?*”, “*Only Banderivtsi settled down at the history faculty*” [in Russian³⁹] (USIonline.com. 9.05.2018).

It is worth noting that since 2014, the term “Banderivtsi” and its derivatives have gradually transformed from an unambiguously negative to a positive or ambivalent one, in which, in addition to the negative meaning, a distinctly positive one has also emerged. The media began to reproduce contexts about “Banderivtsi” as real Ukrainians, patriots, defenders of Ukraine, such as:

“A comic video about the ‘Banderivtsi who flooded’ Odesa appeared on YouTube. Its authors claim that ‘the city was filled with Bandera people, who are imposing their own rules.’ This is the response of the residents of Odesa to the false propaganda of the Russian media about the ‘non-existent repression and terror’ that the inhabitants of Odesa are allegedly subjected to” [in Russian⁴⁰] (Vzglyad iz Odessy. 04.03.2014);

“In Odesa, no one is afraid of the ‘terrible Banderivtsi’” [in Russian⁴¹] (Vzglyad iz Odessy. 17.02.2014);

37 “Минувшей ночью на заборе жилого дома активистки Одесского евромайдана [...] нарисовали нацистскую свастику и написали ‘Тут живут бандеровцы’, ‘Горите в аду’”.

38 “В Одессе преподаватель ударил и обозвал студента ‘бандеровской гнидой’ за украинский язык”.

39 “Украина – это фашизм”, “Кому нужен этот украинский язык?”, “На историческом факультете засели одни бандеровцы”.

40 “Шуточное видео о “бандеровцах, заполонивших” Одессу, появилось на Ютубе. Его авторы утверждают, что ‘город заполонили бандеровцы, которые насаждают свои порядки’. Это – ответ одесситов на лживую пропаганду российских СМИ о ‘несуществующих репрессиях и терроре’, которым якобы подвергаются одесситы”.

41 “В Одессе уже никто не боится ‘страшных бандеровцев’”.

“The authorities are afraid of Banderivtsi, and Odessans are thinking about the future of their city” [in Russian⁴²] (Vzglyad iz Odessy. 01.02.2014).

3 Attitudes towards the Ukrainian language after February 24, 2022

Especially pronounced changes in the values and worldview of many Ukrainians occurred after the large-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, as evidenced by sociolinguistic and sociological research, conducted in 2022 and 2023 (see, for example, Kulyk 2023; Syuta 2023; Sokolova 2023; Sharkan’ 2023; Kulyk 2022; Sotsiolohichna hrupa Reitynh 2022; USAID-Internews 2022).

In particular, S. Sokolova, in her study of the language behaviour of internally displaced persons in Ukraine and residents of the communities that host them after Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine, reveals a deterioration in the attitude towards the Russian language in more than 70 % of the respondents (Sokolova 2023). In analysing the Ukrainian fiction and publicist discourses of 2022 and early 2023, H. Syuta notes that “the war radically changed the language behaviour of Ukrainians: it not only encouraged a decisive transition to the Ukrainian language, [...] but also depressurised the ethno-identifying content of the metaphor ‘Language is the code of the nation’ for the broadest segments of citizens” (2023: 6).

According to a sociological survey conducted at the end of February 2022 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, there was a sharp shift in the ideological views of Ukrainian society regarding any symbols associated with the aggressor country. The so-called “decommunization” and “derussification” of public opinion became noticeable. Thus, everything “Soviet” is now perceived as Russian and consequently, hostile. At the end of April 2022, Ukraine recorded the lowest rate of nostalgia for the collapse of the USSR in the history of observations (11 %), and the absolute majority (87 % of respondents) did not express regret. Additionally, the number of Russian speakers in Ukraine has gradually decreased: in 2012, approximately 40 % of respondents were Russian speakers, whereas at the end of 2021, the number decreased to 26 %. At the beginning of the war, the number further declined to 18 %, and as of the end of April, it was at 15 %. Instead, the “flow” of Russian speakers moved to the “bilingual” segment (from 15 % to 33 %). The number of those who speak only Ukrainian at home has increased slightly from 44 % to 51 % (Sotsiolohichna hrupa Reitynh 2022). The pride level of the Ukrainian language has also increased, according

42 “Власти боятся бандеровцев, а одесситы думают о будущем своего города”.

to the results of the study conducted by USAID-Internews in November 2022 (USAID-Internews 2022). Such trends were also reflected in mass media.

First, it is notable that since February 24, 2022, there have been significant changes in the editorial policy of many online publications. Most of them became bilingual (Ukrainian-Russian, Ukrainian-English) or Ukrainian-speaking,⁴³ which some of them stated in open letters addressing their readership. For example, on February 27, 2022, the site 048 published an editorial entitled “*Odesa site 048.ua will no longer write in the language of the occupier*”:

“Dear Odessans,

We, the editors of the 048.ua website, have decided to completely switch to the Ukrainian language! The Russian Federation, which had been hiding its presence in the East of our country for 8 years, has officially attacked us. Therefore, we no longer want to write in the language of the occupier!

We, the editorial staff of 048.ua, believe that it is our duty to write in Ukrainian in Ukraine at this crucial time. We apologize if we make mistakes in our text as we are getting used to this new format.

We also kindly ask you to leave comments in Ukrainian below our news and posts on social networks. Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Nation! Ukraine is above all! Let's win together!” [in Ukrainian⁴⁴] (048. 27.02.2022).

The media content itself underwent significant changes: new emphasis emerged in the coverage of language issues, as well as narratives that showed a positive attitude towards the Ukrainian language were spread.

Thus, since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, in the mass media space of Odesa, the dynamics of the vanishing of pro-Russian narratives began to be traced, which is evidenced by the conducted mass media monitoring (see, for example: Monitoring 2022). Instead, contexts in which the attitude towards the Ukrainian language as a language of unity that has become a clear marker of national and civic identity, the language of “ours”, were reproduced more and more:

⁴³ See about this: Intent. 30.08.2022.

⁴⁴ “Сайт Одеси 048.ua більше не буде писати мовою окупанта: Шановні одесити, ми, редакція сайту 048.ua, переходимо цілком та повністю на українську мову! На нас офіційно напала Російська Федерація, яка 8 років приховувала свою присутність на Сході країни. Тому більше ми не хочемо писати мовою окупанта!

Ми, редакція 048.ua, вважаємо, що зараз це важливо, це наш обов'язок писати українською в Україні. Перепрошуємо, якщо в тексті будемо допускати помилки. Нам потрібно звикнути до нового формату. Це питання часу.

Ми також просимо вас залишати коментарі українською під нашими новинами та постами в соціальних мережах. Слава Україні! Слава Нації! Україна понад усе! До перемоги разом!”.

“During the nine months of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, we acutely felt how important language is for preserving our identity, understanding the unity of the country, and the need to protect it” [in Ukrainian⁴⁵] (Dumska. 21.11.2022);

“‘Soft power’ by Taras Kremen: the Commissioner for State Protection – on language as a weapon” [in Ukrainian⁴⁶] (Dumska. 26.08.2022);

“Language matters: Odesa’s Pedagogical Institute signed a memorandum with the All-Ukrainian language project ‘Yedyni’: Now the knowledge of the Ukrainian language is a sign of belonging to civilization, a marker of ours – theirs” [in Ukrainian⁴⁷] (Dumska. 06.10.2022);

“Ukrainians now have embroidery in their hearts, not on their clothes’: Many young people are transitioning to using the Ukrainian language. Young people are starting to think differently... If you live in Ukraine and know Russian and English, but you do not know Ukrainian, your knowledge is worthless. In summary, young people have begun to realize that language matters” [in Ukrainian⁴⁸] (USOnline. 02.03.2023).

Texts about the “great Russian language” were replaced by materials about the history of the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian-language cultural projects, peculiarities of Ukrainian, and the so-called “Odesa language” (knowledge of which, according to journalists, can help residents of other regions to understand Odessans). The formation of such an information field can facilitate the understanding of the language situation, support of the state language policy, “gentle Ukrainization”, the spread of Ukrainian-language communication, and a clear awareness of one’s own national identity:

“Linguocide: how has the Ukrainian language been destroyed for 400 years?” [In Ukrainian⁴⁹] (Odessa-life. 21.02.2023);

“As they say in Odesa: 20 words incomprehensible to immigrants’
On the streets of Odesa, you can hear the Ukrainian language more and more often. People do not want to speak the language of the occupiers, so they switch to Ukrainian en masse.

45 “За дев’ять місяців повномасштабної російської агресії проти України ми особливо гостро відчули, наскільки важливою є мова для збереження нашої ідентичності, для розуміння єдності країни і необхідності її захисту”.

46 “‘М’яка сила’ Тараса Кременя: уповноважений із захисту державної – про мову як зброю”.

47 “Мова має значення: одеський ПедІн підписав меморандум із Всеукраїнським мовним проектом ‘Єдині’: Зараз знання української мови – це своєрідна ознака приналежності до цивілізації, маркер свій-чужий”.

48 “Зараз у українців вишиванка в серці, а не на вбранні»: Дуже багато молоді переходять на українську мову. Молодь починає думати інакше. ... Якщо ти живеш в Україні і знаєш російську, англійську, а українську не знаєш – гріш ціна твоім знанням. Якщо резюмувати, молодь почала розуміти, що мова має значення”.

49 “Лінгвоцид: як українську мову знищували протягом 400 років?”

It is a very good sign. But we still have an Odesa language in our city, which has many legends about it.

In fact, in modern Odesa, it is rare to hear the same Odesa language. [...] In any case, these words bring a special flavor. Some came from the Hebrew language, others from criminal jargon. And all of them are generously seasoned with humor. Today we will explain the first 20 that are still used” [in Ukrainian⁵⁰] (048. 04.11.2022);

“Ukraine with love’: 27 poets and writers published a collection of literary works... This is such a gentle Ukrainianization, we offered all authors to switch to Ukrainian and take part in the creation of the collection” [in Ukrainian⁵¹] (Odesa.online. 08.11.2022).

Support for the Ukrainian-language state policy could also be traced in materials about language scandals. When covering incidents, journalists began to focus on violations of the language law, at the same time submitting comments from experts and activists and disseminating information about the results of solving such problems. Violators of the language law were even made to apologize publicly and change their language behavior, as:

“Another language scandal followed by apologies occurred in Odesa.

In Odesa, a bakery saleswoman refused to serve a girl in the state language, which was a violation of the language law. She subsequently apologized for her behavior” [in Ukrainian⁵²] (048. 19.03.2023).

The case published in the media about the unwillingness of one of the café owners to serve a female visitor in the Ukrainian language led to the entire café staff’s shift to the state language when serving customers, which was noted by 048 (048. 17.02.2023).

50 “Як кажуть в Одесі: 20 слів, незрозумілих переселенцям.

На вулицях Одеси все частіше можна почути українську мову. Люди не хочуть розмовляти мовою окупантів, тому масово переходять на українську. Це дуже добре. Але є в нашому місті ще одеська мова, про яку ходять легенди.

Насправді, в сучасній Одесі рідко можна почути ту саму одеську мову. [...] У будь-якому випадку ці слівця привносять особливий колорит. Одні прийшли з єврейської мови, інші зі злочинного жаргону. І всі вони щедро приправлені гумором. Сьогодні пояснимо перші 20, які використовують і зараз”.

51 “Україна з любов’ю”: 27 поетів та письменників видали збірку літературних творів. Це така лагідна українізація, ми запропонували всім авторам перейти на українську та прийняти участь у створенні збірки”.

52 “Черговий мовний скандал з вибаченнями стався в Одесі. В Одесі продавчиня пекарні відмовилася обслуговувати дівчину державною мовою, чим порушила мовний закон. Згодом вона вибачилася за свою поведінку”.

The article “*Ukrainian is spoken in the village: a chauvinist woman caused a language scandal in Odesa*” (048. 03.02.2023) contains clarifications from the representative of the Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language regarding this situation and focuses on the manipulation of the language issue as a tool for waging a hybrid war against Ukraine.

Changes in the language behavior of Odesans, their shift to the Ukrainian language in everyday communication, and rejection of the Russian language as the language of the aggressor began to be recorded by some publications, which conducted their surveys and published recorded interviews:

“Ukrainian language day: do Odesans speak ‘the nightingale’s’ (solovyina mova – nightingale’s language)” [in Ukrainian⁵³] (Odessa-life. 08.11.2022);

“Chernihiv, Odesa, Chernivtsi, and Sumy: what are the attitudes to the Ukrainian language in different regions?” [in Ukrainian⁵⁴] (Odessa-life. 04.05.2023);

“How many Ukrainians speak their native language. Kyiv and Odesa are in touch” [in Ukrainian⁵⁵] (Suspilne. Kultura. 10.05.2023).

As a rule, respondents explained their reasons for changing language behavior from Russian to Ukrainian by rejecting the language of the aggressor country:

“Every day Russia destroys our cities and brings death, pain, and suffering. In other words, it brings us the ‘Russian world’. I don’t want to be a part of this ‘world’” [in Ukrainian⁵⁶] (Maxym Ch., 34 years old);

“It is important to switch to Ukrainian because it gives an opportunity to completely break away from Russian culture, which often despises other nationalities, in particular, Ukrainians” [in Ukrainian⁵⁷] (Kateryna N., 24 years old);

“Olexander lived in a Russian-speaking environment all the time and spoke Russian. He spent most of his life in Zaporizhzhia, then lived in Kyiv, and the last six years in Odesa. The full-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine was the last straw for him: ‘After the invasion, it was just the last straw, I just woke up and realized that I don’t want to speak Russian’” (Olexander Z., 24 years old) [in Ukrainian⁵⁸] (Suspilne. 01.06.2022).

53 “День української мови: чи говорять ‘солов’їною’ одесити”.

54 “Чернігів, Одеса, Чернівці та Суми: яке ставлення до української мови в різних регіонах?”.

55 “Скільки українців говорять рідною мовою. Київ та Одеса на зв’язку”.

56 “Щодня Росія знищує наші міста, несе смерть, біль та страждання. Інакше висловлюючись – несе нам ‘руській мір’. Не хочу бути частиною цього ‘міра’”.

57 “На українську важливо переходити, бо це дає можливість повністю відокремитись від російської культури, яка часто зневажає інші національності, зокрема українців”.

58 “Олександр весь час жив у російськомовному оточенні та говорив російською. Більшу частину життя він провів у Запоріжжі, потім жив у Києві, а останні шість років в Одесі. Повно-

During the full-scale invasion of Russia, the Ukrainian language began to be perceived not only as a marker of “ours”, but also as a secret code that is inaccessible and incomprehensible to the enemy. Thus, certain words and expressions have become codes for checking “friends” (Ukrainians) and “foes” (Russian enemies):

“Say: ‘Palyanytsia’ or ‘Kropivnytski palyanytsi zi smakom polunytsi prodautsia u kramnytsi bilia Ukrzaliznytsi’

(Kropivnytsy palyanytsias with strawberry flavor are sold in a shop near Ukrzaliznytsia).

Code phrases were formed, thanks to which it is easier to identify infiltrators. Thus, the word ‘palyanytsia’ is difficult for Russians to pronounce due to the phonetic features of the Ukrainian language. Phrases became a meme in social networks when during the news on the Rossiya 1 channel, Russian propagandist Olga Skabeeva stated that the code word of Ukrainians is ‘Polyanitsa, which is strawberry in Russian’ [in Ukrainian⁵⁹] (USIonline. 13.05.2022).

On this occasion, other humorous memes began to be replicated quite actively in the online space as:

“Ukrayynski molodytsi sklaly v torby palyanytsi, u koshyku polunytsi, sily v potyah zaliznytsi, poskladaly na polytsi i povezly do stolytsi. Polunytsi y palyanytsi u slavnii nashiy stolytsi pomynaly na rushnytsi. Nu a zvidty na valday, hnaty karlyka z pyvnytsi do kytaiskoyi stolytsi”⁶⁰

(The young Ukrainian women put cranberries in bags, and strawberries in a basket, boarded a railway train, put them on the shelves, and took them to the capital. Strawberries and strawberries in our glorious capital have been exchanged for guns. Well, from there, let’s chase the dwarf from the beer hall to the Chinese capital).

масштабне вторгнення на територію України стало для нього останньою краплею: ‘Після вторгнення це просто була остання крапля, я просто прокинувся і зрозумів, що я не хочу розмовляти російською мовою’”.

59 “Кажі: ‘Паляниця’ або ‘Кропивницькі паляниці зі смаком полуниці продаються у крамниці біля Укрзалізниці’.

З’явилися також кодові фрази, завдяки яким легше виявити диверсантів. Так, слово ‘паляниця’ важко вимовити росіянам через фонетичні особливості української. Фрази стали мемними у соцмережах після того, як російська пропагандистка Ольга Скабеева під час новин на каналі «Россия 1» заявила, що кодове слово українців ‘Поляница, на русском – клубника’”.

60 “Українські молодіці склали в торби паляниці, у кошику полуниці, познімали всі спідниці, повдягали ногавиці, сіли в потяг залізниці, поскладали на полиці і повезли до столиці. Полуниці й паляниці у славній нашій столиці поміняли на рушниці. Ну а звідти на валдай, гнати карлика з пивниці до китайської столиці”.

4 Conclusion and research perspectives

As we can see, the attitude towards the Ukrainian language in the mass media discourse during the analyzed period has a diverse range of assessments, which is caused primarily by the influence of the political and socio-cultural contexts.

By the beginning of 2022, there was a predominantly ambivalent attitude towards the Ukrainian language with a distinct asymmetric shift towards a negative perception. Some media, expressing support for the state language policy, reproduced texts that formed a positive attitude towards the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian-speaking behavior in general. Other mass media spread Russian propaganda narratives. They actively presented negative-evaluative attitudes towards the state language, showing an attitude towards the Ukrainian language as a “ritual” language, which is imposed by the current authorities, alien to Odessans, and functions only to fulfill legislative requirements.

The negative attitude towards the Ukrainian language was formed through the dissemination of texts that portrayed the Russian language and culture as “ours”, and “distinctly Odessan”, which was seen as different from Ukrainian and not typical of the region. The state language policy in support of the Ukrainian language was criticized, while attention was focused on invented problems regarding the “discrimination” of the Russian language and suppression of the rights of the Russian-speaking population.

Language issues were often presented in the context of language scandals, with the main incident being the reluctance of certain individuals in the media to speak or switch to Ukrainian, or to accept Ukrainian broadcasting in general. Journalists frequently resorted to using negative evaluative statements about the Ukrainian language and culture in their materials, often including offensive characteristics of Ukrainian speakers in headlines without comment.

However, since the end of February 2022 (after Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine), the language-based dichotomy of ‘ours – theirs’ has shifted significantly. In most media outlets, the Ukrainian language has become only ‘ours’, while Russian is now considered the ‘foe’. As a result, there has been a displacement of negative evaluative rhetoric about the Ukrainian language in all analyzed mass media. In the media discourse new contexts were spread. They showed the attitude towards the Ukrainian language as the language of the united Ukrainian people, the language of national and civil unity, the language of resistance to Russian aggression, the language that became a marker of ‘ours’, a secret code, incomprehensible to the enemy.

In the future, we consider it necessary to analyze the language attitudes in the materials of Telegram channels. According to the results of sociological surveys, since the beginning of 2022, they have increased their audience quite actively: after

February 24, 2022, 63.3 % of Ukrainians began reading Telegram channels for news, while before the full-scale invasion, only 35.9 % did so (Ukrainian Institute of Media and Communication 2023). In addition, it is in Telegram channels that pro-Russian propaganda has now begun to appear, as evidenced by the monitoring of the Izbir-Kom research group (Intent. 02.09.2022). Given this, it is likely that the information space of Telegram channels today can play a significant role in replicating certain mass sentiments and views, spreading the appropriate attitude to the Ukrainian language, which in turn can shape or level the common identity of Ukrainian citizens.

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