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**TERRITORIAL DIFFERENTIATION OF THE LANGUAGE SITUATION  
IN SUMY REGION AS A FACTOR OF FORMATION OF REGIONAL IDENTITY**

The article considers the scientific and methodological principles of geographical study of the regional identity of the population, analyzes and assesses the current state of the language situation in the region and creates recommendations for the Ukrainianization of public life in the region. The main attention is paid to the study of the language situation in Sumy region by conducting questionnaires, analysis of markers of territorial identity and information flows. The relevance of this approach is explained by the role of language as one of the most important and stable ethnic characteristics. Gender and age of respondents, as well as place of residence (type of settlement) were taken into account. The key element of the article is the results of the study, which cover the spread of Ukrainian, Russian and surzhik (pidgin) in everyday life of the region, their level of awareness about Ukrainian language being a civic value, the desire to learn foreign languages as an indicator of geopolitical orientation. According to the results of the research, a series of maps and diagrams was created.

An important manifestation of regional identity is toponymy, the names of local media, businesses and brands, catering establishments, hotels, sports teams and others. Ukrainian language as a mother tongue predominates in most administrative units of Sumy region. At the same time, the real bilingualism of the region's residents has formed the phenomenon of the most widespread so-called surzhik (pidgin) in Ukraine. Sumy region is not an integral historical and geographical region, perhaps that is why it does not have a high level of regional identity. The absence of obvious manifestations of separatism ensures a certain political stability in the region.

The process of creating a Ukrainian political nation continues, so the recommendations for the Ukrainianization of public life are based on the analysis of existing practices, existing multimedia content in the actual "information war" and take into account the ethnogeographical specifics of the region, its border position and current socio-political situation.

**Keywords:** population, region, regional identity, self-identification, language situation, information war.

**Людмила Гоженко, Сергій Сюткін. ТЕРИТОРІАЛЬНА ДИФЕРЕНЦІАЦІЯ МОВНОЇ СИТУАЦІЇ В СУМСЬКІЙ ОБЛАСТІ ЯК ФАКТОР ФОРМУВАННЯ РЕГІОНАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ**

В статті розглянуто науково-методичні засади географічного дослідження регіональної ідентичності населення, проведено аналіз і оцінку сучасного стану мовної ситуації в регіоні та сформульовано рекомендації щодо українізації суспільного життя регіону. Головна увага приділена вивченню мовної ситуації в Сумській області шляхом проведення анкетування, аналізу маркерів територіальної ідентичності та інформаційних потоків. Актуальність такого підходу пояснюється роллю мови як однієї з найважливіших та найстійкіших етнічних ознак. До уваги бралися стать і вік респондентів, а також місце проживання (тип населеного пункту). Ключовим елементом статті є результати дослідження, які охоплюють поширення української, російської мов та суржику у повсякденному житті жителів регіону, рівень усвідомлення ними української мови як громадянської цінності, бажання вивчати іноземні мови як показник геополітичної орієнтації населення області. За результатами дослідження створено серію картосхем і діаграм.

Важливим проявом регіональної ідентичності є топоніміка, назви місцевих засобів масової інформації, підприємств і торгових марок, закладів громадського харчування, готелів, спортивних команд тощо. Українська мова як рідна переважає в абсолютній більшості адміністративних одиниць Сумщини. Водночас реальна двомовність жителів області сформувала феномен найбільшого поширення на теренах України так званого суржику. Сумська область не являє собою цілісного історико-географічного регіону, можливо, саме тому не відрізняється високим рівнем регіональної ідентичності населення. Відсутність явних проявів сепаратизму забезпечує певну політичну стабільність в регіоні.

Процес творення української політичної нації триває, тому рекомендації щодо українізації суспільного життя базуються на аналізі існуючих практик, наявного мультимедійного контенту в умовах фактичної «інформаційної війни» та враховують етногеографічну специфіку регіону, його прикордонне положення і сучасну суспільно-політичну ситуацію.

**Ключові слова:** населення, регіон, регіональна ідентичність, самоідентифікація, мовна ситуація, інформаційна війна.

**Людмила Гоженко, Сергей Сюткин. ТЕРИТОРИАЛЬНАЯ ДИФФЕРЕНЦИАЦИЯ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ СИТУАЦИИ В СУМСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ КАК ФАКТОР ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ**

В статье рассмотрены научно-методические основы географического исследования региональной идентичности населения, проведены анализ и оценка современного состояния языковой ситуации в регионе и сформулированы рекомендации по украинизации общественной жизни в нем. Основное внимание уделено изучению языковой ситуации в Сумской области путем проведения анкетирования, анализа маркеров территориальной идентичности, а также информационных потоков. Актуальность такого подхода объясняется ролью языка как одного из наиболее важных и устойчивых этнических признаков. Во внимание принимались пол и возраст респондентов, а также место их проживания (тип населенного пункта). Ключевым элементом статьи являются результаты исследования, которые охватывают распространение украинского,

русского языков и суржика в повседневной жизни представителей региона, уровень ощущения ими украинского языка как гражданской ценности, желание изучать иностранные языки как показатель геополитической ориентации населения области. По результатам исследования создана серия картосхем и диаграмм.

Важным проявлением региональной идентичности является топонимика, названия местных средств массовой информации, предприятий и торговых марок, заведений общественного питания, гостиниц, спортивных команд. Украинский язык как родной лидирует в абсолютном большинстве низовых административных единиц Сумщины. В то же время реальное двуязычие жителей области сформировало феномен наибольшего распространения в Украине так называемого суржика. Сумская область не представляет собой целостный историко-географический регион, возможно, именно поэтому не отличается высоким уровнем региональной идентичности. Отсутствие явных проявлений сепаратизма обеспечивает определенную политическую стабильность в регионе.

Процесс создания украинской политической нации продолжается, поэтому рекомендации по украинизации общественной жизни базируются на анализе существующих практик и медийного контента в условиях фактической информационной войны и учитывают этногеографическую специфику региона, его приграничное положение и современную общественно-политическую ситуацию.

**Ключевые слова:** население, регион, региональная идентичность, самоидентификация, языковая ситуация, информационная война.

**Defining of the problem.** In recent years, the importance of the issue of national and regional identity has increased significantly. One of the indicators of identity is language. It is often through language or original dialect that people associate with a particular region or country. In the current situation, the language issue has acquired not only linguistic but also geopolitical meaning. In 2014, the so-called “language issues” served as a formal reason for the annexation of Crimea and the start of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, which continues up to date. At the same time, language is not only a formal indicator of belonging to a certain ethnic group or territory, but also an important factor in the formation of national and regional identity of the population. As political events in many countries show, including Ukraine, socio-political stability significantly depends on the nature of ethno-political processes, which in turn are determined by the objective realities of the territorial organization of the linguistic and ethnic part.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The study of the language factor in the formation of identity was conducted by E. Mamontova [5]. It is worth giving special attention to the publications of V. Lugovyi, A. Matvienko, Y. Perensky, O. Rafalskyi, M. Singaevska, M. Strikha, which show the development of state language policy in the educational and information space as one that most accurately allows to record, explore, and identify shortcomings and achievements of regional policy in Ukraine.

The study of the influence of the language factor on the degree of regional identity should be carried out in the framework of a comprehensive study of territorial identity. O.M. Hnatyuk and Y.B. Oliynyk [4] distinguish the following main groups of methodological approaches to the study of the territorial identity of the population:

Group I – the study of territorial identity as an element of spiritual culture;

Group II – the study of markers of territorial identity, namely artifacts and socio-facts that indicate the spatial structure of the territorial identity of the population and its content in a particular territory;

Group III – analysis of historical and geographical preconditions for the formation of this territorial identity.

These authors also highlight the cartographic method as traditional for geography and is designed to reflect the results of the main group of methods.

Group I includes two main research methods, such

as socio-geographical and content analysis of information flows.

The socio-geographical method involves the researcher receiving information directly from the inhabitants of the studied region through questionnaires, surveys, interviews, etc.

Analysis of the content of information flows involves working with local media, public statements of residents, including its authoritative representatives, comments from users in social media.

The study of markers of territorial identity (group II) allows us to distinguish the following two groups:

1) features of architecture, language, customs, traditional professions and crafts, character traits of the population, religious beliefs, folklore, structure of settlements planning, macrotoponymy, characteristic for this territory;

2) modern dynamic manifestations of territorial identity.

Analysis of historical and geographical preconditions for the formation of territorial identity includes the study of territorial and temporal conditions of social identity development within a defined territory and the study of the development of territorial identity in the past on historical-geographical (diachronic) sections.

**Statement of the objective of the research.** The objective of the research is to study the current language situation in Sumy region and develop recommendations for the “mild Ukrainization” of all areas of public life.

#### **Presentation of main material.**

The study of the territorial identity of the population includes the following stages:

1. Analysis of factors of development of territorial identity of the region.

2. Study of the territorial identity of the population of the region using the above methods.

3. Mathematical and statistical analysis of the obtained data.

4. Quality interpretation of the results obtained during mathematical and statistical analysis.

5. Analysis of the impact of territorial identity of the population on the development of the region.

6. Defining of recommendations to stakeholders to take into account the regional identity of the population in their activities [4].

The study of regional identity must be conducted comprehensively. The best results will be achieved by a

reasonable combination of methods depending on the objective of the research and the specifics of the study territory. The most relevant will be a combination of socio-geographical method, analysis of the content of information flows and research of modern manifestations of territorial identity of the region, as these methods will ensure the reliability of the results in terms of time dynamics and prospects assessment.

The usage of languages in the region is significantly influenced by the ethnic structure of the population. The ethnographic characteristics of the population are based on such concepts as ethnicity and subethnicity. The literal translation of the term "ethnicity" from the ancient Greek is "people". The authors prefer the term "ethnicity", because the term "people" is too ambiguous. It can be used to denote the population of the whole country (American or Russian people – these names do not carry an ethnic burden) and to denote the actual ethnic community (Ukrainian people, regardless of place of residence, in Canada, Russia, Kazakhstan, Poland or Ukraine).

Thus, "ethnicity is an established community of people, historically formed in a certain area and marked by common language, culture, life, mental composition, unity of ethnic identity, recorded in the self-identification, as well as awareness of the unity of ancestral origin and dissimilarity to other ethnic groups" [7, p. 44]. At the same time, the existence of the so-called "constructivist approach" should be recognized, according to which there are no real ethnic features, ethnicity is called a "mystical category", and it is worth taking into account only recognition of "oneself's – another's" and the antithesis of "we – they".

A very important feature of ethnic groups is the ability of these human groups to a stable, long-term existence through self-reproduction, including the reproduction of self-identification. In general, ethnic features are those features that have a tradition and comprehensiveness within an ethnic group, specific only to it, as well as clearly separate this ethnic group from others. Language is one of the most important and stable ethnic features.

Subethnicity is the inner part of the ethnicity, which differs in a certain territorial localization, cultural and domestic specifics, self-name, opposition to neighbours. Subethnicity is the main structural unit of the ethnicity.

Sumy region to some extent can be called as monoethnic region, because according to the 2001 census, there are 88.9% of Ukrainian population. The basis of the Ukrainian ethnicity in the Sumy region is a subethnic group of Sevryuks, who kept their self-name until the middle of the 17th century. The second largest ethnic group is Russians, who make up 9.4% of the population. Small groups of Russians live in Putyvl (where their share grows to 51.6%) and Velykopysarivka (26.7%) districts. Russians make up 12-13% of the population in Sumy, Hlukhiv and Trostyanets districts. Goryuny, a very peculiar and rather isolated small subethnicity, live on the territory of Putyvl and partly Bilopillia districts.

In Sumy region, the most common languages are Ukrainian and Russian, among other languages a small share belongs to Belarusian and Romani (Gypsy). Ukrainian is considered the mother tongue of more than

83% of the population, Russian - 15.5%, the share of other languages is very small and is 0.4%. Thus, Ukrainian language as a mother tongue predominates in the vast majority of administrative units of Sumy region.

Most residents of the region are fluent in both Ukrainian and Russian. This was shown by the original survey (68% of respondents).

At the same time, the residents of Sumy region are characterized by such a linguistic phenomenon as pidgin, a mixture of two or more languages, combined without compliance with the norms and standards of literary languages. In Sumy region, this phenomenon manifests itself in its original linguistic meaning as a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian languages. The indicator of our region in this regard is one of the largest in Ukraine (western and central regions prefer the Ukrainian language, eastern and southern – Russian, so pidgin is much less common there).

There are several dialects in the Sumy region, such as East Polissia dialect in the northern districts, Slobozhansk dialect in the eastern ones, and Naddniprovisk dialect in the south-west.

An interesting generalization can be made by those professionals who work with young people, especially in rural areas, and with those who came from the countryside to study or work in the city. These young people try to communicate in Russian in social media and with fellow peers, often not perceiving and not understanding Russian literary language by ear and when reading, that is, not fluent in it. This fact is a consequence of the stereotypical attitude to the Ukrainian language as lower by status, rural. This situation does not contribute to the formation of regional and national identity.

The predominance of a language or dialect will inevitably be reflected in the toponymy of the region. The set of toponyms of a certain region is influenced by specific factors. Local toponymy is perceived by the population as an indicator of "their" and "foreign" territories. Therefore, differences in toponymic structure are one of the factors and indicators of the territorial identity of the population, primarily national and subethnic, but also regional.

The names of places (i.e., toponyms) are often given by the indigenous population of a certain area, for which each of the toponyms has a semantic meaning. Due to this, it is possible to establish, for example, that a certain people once lived in a certain area, which is different from those who live there today. That is, toponyms often characterize the territory in terms of those peoples who once inhabited a particular area, and, accordingly, the spread of language in it.

To establish the regional identity of the population of a certain area, "horonyms", the names of any territories (districts, regions, etc.) and "oikonyms", the names of settlements, are used.

There are many classifications of toponyms, but for this study the classification by object categories of the Belarusian toponymic scientist V. Zhuchkevich is the most suitable [3]. He proposes to distinguish six groups of toponyms:

- general geographical landscapes, toponyms that indicate the physical and geographical features of the area;

- geographical, toponyms applied to rivers, lakes, other hydrographic objects, features of river valleys, lake basins, etc.;

- toponyms belonging to the relief and soils;

- floristic, those that come from the names of plant associations (here you can add zoological, coming from the names of animals);

- socio-geographical, belonging to the types of housing and settlements (as well as formed on behalf of the owners or founders);

- economic and geographical, related to the productive activities of the population.

The long stay in the USSR left many Soviet names in the toponymy of the region (they should also be attributed to socio-geographical), even despite the active processes of decommunization.

Due to decommunization, it is interesting to observe the renaming of settlements and their parts, as they are usually given back their historical names or given new names. It is also an indicator of regional identity: either residents associate themselves with a new era, a new Ukraine, or seek a return to the historical past and neutral names or seek to remain in the orbit of the former Soviet Union.

“Oikonyms” of Sumy region can be divided into several groups:

- anthropological origin, associated with the names and surnames of people (Vasylivka, Oleksandrivka, Mykhailivka, Kashchenkove, Doroshenkove, etc.);

- related to natural objects, plants and animals (Hlybne, Zabolotne, Sosnivka, Veseli Hory, Zhabkyne, Yablunika, Zhuravka, Dubovyazivka, Vovkivka, Topolya, Yastrubynе);

- related to production activities (Bochechki, Plotnikove, Stari Gonchari, Korytyshche, Kocherhy, Vovna);

- associated with the Soviet Era (Peremoga, Pershe Travnia, Pervomayske, Leninske, Progres, Oktiabershchyna).

The most numerous is the group of names of anthropological origin.

The word “sloboda”, which meant freedom, free settlement, is frequently used. Moreover, this name is found almost throughout the region, which confirms that most of the territory of Sumy region was a part of the historical and geographical region “Slobozhanshchyna”.

There are certain regularities in the spatial arrangement of “oikonyms”. In the northern part of the region, there are more toponyms ending in -e, -ovo, -ove (Ochkinе, Glazove, Doroshenkove, Mishutyne, Svarkove). In the southern part, a significant part of the names are used in the plural – Terny, Romny, Kurmany, Budky, Snizhky, Pekari, etc. The endings -ishche, -shchina (Korytyshche, Lutyshche, Vakalivshchyna, Pushkarshchyna) are used more often. South-eastern districts have mainly Slobozhansk names – Vesele, Veselyi Hai, Spirne, Kamyanske. Most names of the Soviet Era territorially “gravitate” to the Ukrainian-Russian border. The ending “-ivka” is widespread.

This pattern indicates the heterogeneity of the region, the collection of these lands in the formation of the region. Northern names are more inclined to Russian and

Belarusian, due to the proximity of the border and the predominance of the East-Polish dialect, the south-eastern districts have names close to Kharkiv, because they are united by a common “Slobozhansk origin”, the names of south-western districts of Sumy region show closeness to Naddnyprianshchyna and more similar to the names of Poltava region. Even without diving into the history, but only thanks to toponyms, we can see that Sumy region is not an integral historical and geographical region, but consists of three somewhat different regions, such as Polissia, Slobozhanshchyna and Naddnyprianshchyna.

The study of the regional identity of the population of Sumy region was based on a questionnaire [1]. 250 respondents from 13 districts of the region and the city of Sumy aged 16 to 65 were interviewed. Respondents were asked questions with graded answers. The questions concerned the degree of attachment to one's locality, region and country, as well as the desire to leave them, visiting other regions of the country, the uniqueness of the region and the unity of the country, etc. [2, 8]. One of the blocks of questions concerned the language of everyday life and the study of foreign languages.

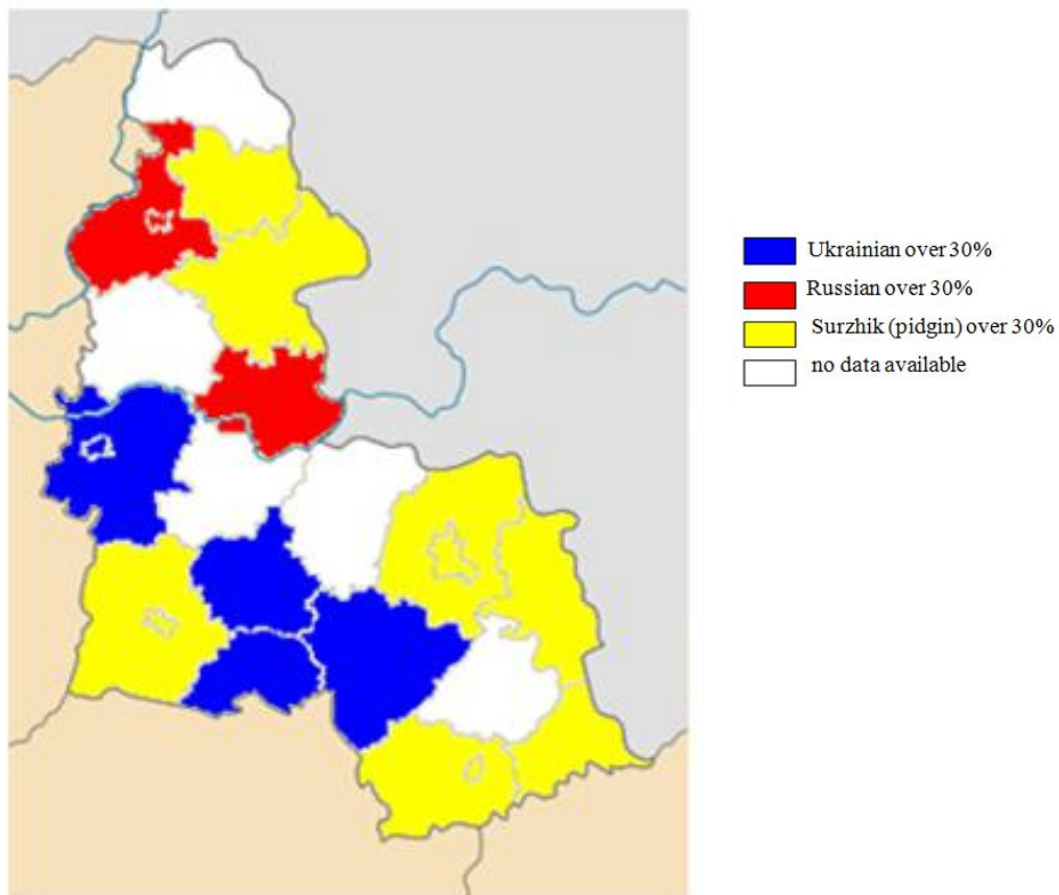
Gender, age, place of residence (type of settlement) of respondents were taken into account.

As already noted in the historical and geographical analysis, in the region there are areas with a small residence of Russians and the predominance of the Russian language. The whole area is characterized by the spread of “surzhik” (pidgin). However, it is possible to note areas with a predominance of one or another language.

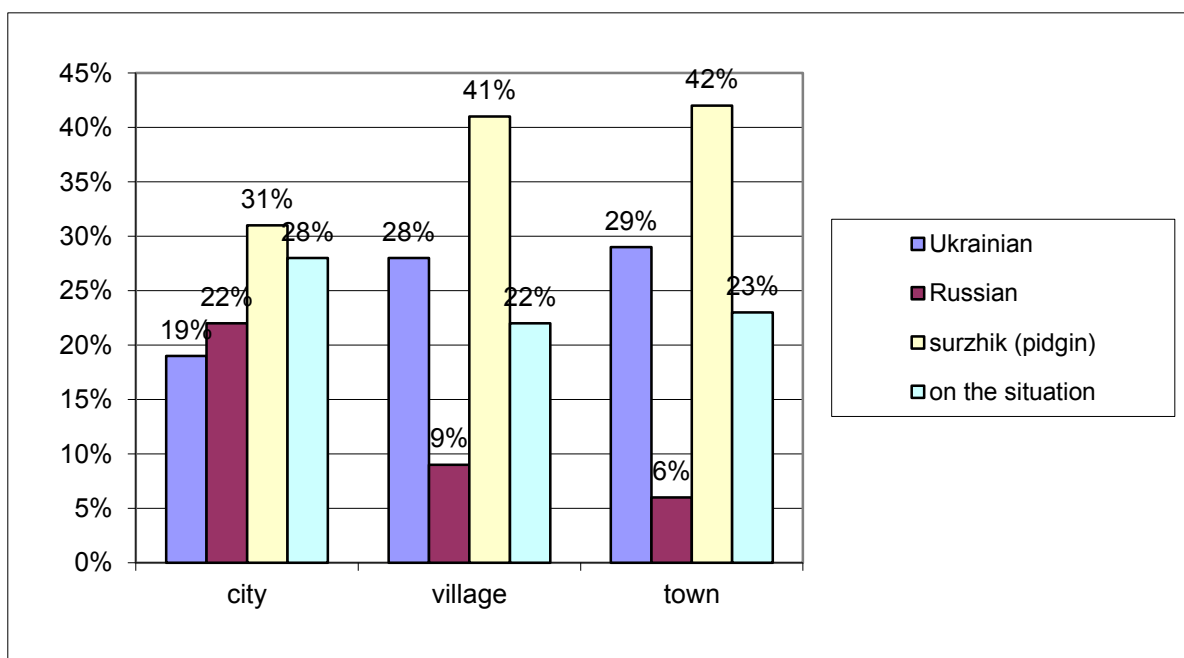
Ukrainian language predominates in Konotop, Nedrigailiv, Lipovodolinsky, Lebedinsky districts, Russian language in Shostka and Putivl districts, and in the rest of the districts the most common is surzhik (pidgin). This indicates the heterogeneity of the language structure of the region (Fig. 1).

As for Ukrainian language, the notion of a low-value, rural, “poor” language has been ingrained since the times of the Russian Empire. This statement was actively cultivated during the Soviet Era and remains relevant till nowadays. In addition, there is a larger proportion of Russians by nationality in cities compared to villages. This can be seen in the results of the questionnaire on the use of language in everyday life by type of settlement. Pidgin predominates in all types of settlements, but in villages and urban-type settlements Ukrainian language significantly predominates over Russian. Instead, in cities, Russian predominates over Ukrainian (Fig. 2). The use of Ukrainian or Russian language depending on the situation indicates a sufficient fluency in both languages.

Regarding learning of a foreign language at school, the majority of respondents (59%) were in favor of learning English (or one of the European ones). Some respondents (30%) were in favor of learning two foreign languages – Russian and English. The percentage of those who spoke in favor of learning only the Russian language is insignificant – 5% (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 1. Territorial differentiation of the distribution of languages and dialects in everyday life**



**Fig. 2. Distribution of languages and dialects in everyday life by type of settlement**

This result testifies mainly to the European vector of Ukraine's development, as well as the awareness of Ukraine's openness to the world and the importance of English language in the modern world. Interestingly, many residents of the region consider learning of Rus-

sian language unnecessary at all, because they already, in their opinion, know it well.

District newspapers and radio stations indicate the name of the district in their names or have a regional connotation ("Voice of Posullia", "Life of Lebe-

dynshchyna”, “Nash Krai”, “Ridny Krai”, “Polissia”). The vast majority of them are in Ukrainian, except for Seredyno-Budda newspaper “Znamya Truda”.

Among the newspapers published in large settle-

ments of our region are several in Russian language (“Vash Shans”, “Dankor”, “Dankor Glukhov”, “Dankor Konotop”, “Pekekriostok”, “Panorama”), which have a fairly large publication.

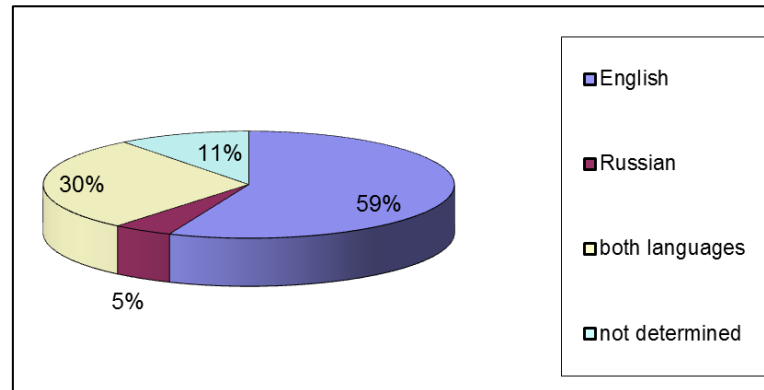


Fig. 3. Foreign language at school

In social networks, groups by interest are created with input on their territorial affiliation: “Lebedyn overheard”, “Glukhov's bulletin board”, “I love Sumy”, “Sumy gossip”, “Sumy debate”, etc. In the groups “Sumy Gossip” and “Sumy Debate” messages from official sources are published in Ukrainian, in other groups they are mostly in Russian language. In the group “I love Sumy” almost all posts are in Ukrainian, as well as most of the comments. Mostly critical comments are added in Russian. District groups usually reflect the language that is common in the area. But communication on social networks (writing comments, reviews) is done mainly in Russian.

The popularity of a particular language is manifested in the names of shops and places of public dining. In Russian-speaking districts (Shostka, Putivl) Ukrainian names are found mainly in institutions of all-Ukrainian networks – “Vatsak”, “Nasha Ryaba”, “ATB”, the names of private institutions are more often in Russian – “Passazh”, “U kamina”, “Bayka”, “Putivl dvorik”, “Pliazh” (even if it is difficult to determine whether it is in Russian or Ukrainian, their websites and menus are in Russian). Quite a lot of Russian names are in Bilopillia. In Glukhiv, Krolevets, Konotop, Romny, Okhtyrka, Trostyanets, most of the names of shops, cafes and restaurants are in Ukrainian, but there are also some Russian names. Most reviews about these institutions are written in Russian. Ukrainian slightly predominate or equal in number to Russian only in a few districts (Romny, Konotop, Krolevets).

Instead, there is growing number of cafes and restaurants with claims to European brands, names and cuisine. The law of macroeconomics, that demand generates supply, also applies in this area. The reason for the mass establishments of European and Oriental cuisine is globalization in general and consumer demand for world cuisine or vice versa – for exotic one.

Based on the results of questionnaires and analysis of information flows and territorial markers, it is possible to draw the disappointing conclusion that in Sumy region Russian language predominates in many spheres of public life, especially in its informal public events -

Internet, informal performances, menus, family holidays, music in entertainment establishments, etc. At the same time, Ukrainian language is used in everyday life and in official communication and office work.

Recently, Russian-language content has returned to the screens and radio, displacing the achievements of modern Ukrainian culture. Many Ukrainian youth music groups perform their works in Russian, and Ukrainian feature films are also often translated into Russian. Russian language is quite popular among young people, especially urban. For them, this is an indicator of status. Analyzing social networks, it can be noted that rural youth also try to write posts in Russian or pidgin.

The efforts of only educational institutions in which teaching is conducted in Ukrainian are not enough for students to use literary Ukrainian language more actively in everyday life. This has a negative effect on the formation of national identity in the first place.

However, there are several positive changes. The percentage of Ukrainian music on the radio remains quite high. The number of books by Ukrainian authors and Ukrainian-language translations of world literature has grown significantly, their quality is constantly increasing. Book sites and e-bookstores are becoming more popular. The number of Ukrainian-language applications for smartphones is growing. This contributes to the popularization of the Ukrainian language. In addition, most young students do not understand Russian when reading even fiction, let alone educational or scientific.

In the light of the events of 2014-2015, which were marked by Russian aggression against Ukraine, certain conclusions can be drawn. Despite the significant spread of Russian language in communication between young people and citizens, the influence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, the compact location of Russians in some areas of the region, the neighborhood with Belgorod region (one of the richest regions in Russia), the northern neighbor could not “shake” the situation in order to create some any “Sumy National Republic”. This indicates that the population of the region does not show separatist sentiments and



demonstrates its pro-Ukrainian position. There is no doubt that before the well-known events, Russian specialists studied the situation in the border areas, and Sumy region was not of interest to them in terms of protecting “oppressed Russian language” [6].

There is a demand for Ukrainian language among

the residents of Sumy region. For many of them using it is important or very important (63% of respondents). But this figure, unfortunately, is not as large as in the central and western regions of Ukraine. Instead, those for whom the Ukrainian language is not important, in total is almost 40%.

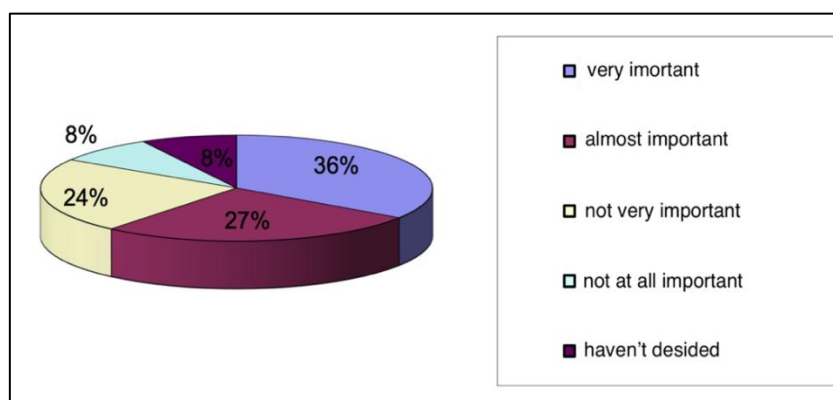


Fig. 4. The value of the Ukrainian language for respondents

This cannot help but worry, because such indifference to the state language does not contribute to the cohesion of society and may become a field for manipulation in the future. Such bilingualism can be used to form a negative regional identity with calls for separation or transition to another state.

Ukrainian society should continue making systematic and persistent efforts to Ukrainianize all spheres of life. This is possible primarily due to the promotion of Ukrainian content in the information space. Ukrainian must again become cool, fashionable, modern. As noted in previous articles [1, 2], we must first work on the formation and deepening of national identity, and then focus on regional.

Now Ukraine in general and Sumy region in particular need as much Ukrainian music, literature, radio and television content and social networks as possible. In our opinion, translating Ukrainian films and programs in Russian and showing them on Ukrainian channels is a wrong decision.

The Ukrainization of public life not related to the public sector (state and municipal enterprises, institutions and organizations in which the Ukrainian language is mandatory) should be mild and at the same time persistent. Local authorities, owners of private enterprises, may find resources to provide preferences to entrepreneurs and staff who will switch from Russian to Ukrainian. Currently, the legislation on Ukrainian language in the field of public services is insufficiently enforced, and the use of the Ukrainian language in some areas is more a manifestation of the civil position of the owner than the norm. The quality of service should also increase so that visitors want to continue to use the services of such institutions. Mass events at all levels should also be held in Ukrainian, and the hosts of family holidays, weddings and anniversaries should refocus on the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian music. And this transition should in no way demonstrate a decline in the quality of their services.

**Conclusions.** Regional identity of the population is not a permanent phenomenon, it is constantly transforming. Language plays a key role in the process of its formation. This is even more relevant in a situation where the real bilingualism of the region can serve as a formal reason for violating the territorial integrity of our state. The adoption of certain legislative acts on the state language is not enough. The literary Ukrainian language (as a standardized form of the national language) should serve all spheres of public life of the people. It should be the language of public administration, legislation, fiction, science, press, radio, cinema, television. But in a living spoken language, of course, can be found dialects (local dialects) and pidgin.

In modern geopolitics, information and information space are the main means of influencing the consciousness and behavior of the population. The phrase “information war” is often heard in the media. Control over space is the basis of world political relations. In today's world, the most effective forms of control are control over communications and various flows (information, in particular).

The modern world is full of social network communications, so any conflict receives psychological meaning. The emphasis is almost completely transferred to people's minds. Military action ceases to be the main thing, in fact it becomes only a consequence.

Language serves as a means of communication and transmission of various information, so it serves as an important differentiating factor. However, linguistic, and ethnic identities do not always coincide.

Unfortunately, Ukraine is losing the information war. But the state has real potential to offer worthy resistance in this war, and language is a powerful tool for shaping the national and regional identity of the population, especially in border areas. Language matters. Lina Kostenko's words do not lose their relevance: “Nations do not die of a heart attack, first they are deprived of their language...”

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