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Ukraine as a field of conflict of linguistic and ethnic identities with didactic suggestions for German as a foreign or second language (DaF/DaZ)

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Abstract. In the first part of our contribution we present a brief overview of the history of Ukraine with a focus on national identity and the founding myth of Vladimir (claimed by Ukrainians and Russians) as well as a history of the Ukrainian and the Russian language in the territory of Ukraine. The second part consists of a mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) analysis of the answers to a questionnaire sent online to Ukrainians and answered by 160 respondents in 2023. The key complex are the questions concerning the use of Ukrainian and Russian as perceived by the Ukrainian population and the attitudes towards these two languages after the beginning of the war in 2023. In the third part we present didactic suggestions for classes in German as a foreign or second language on the basis of the answers to our questionnaire and a text on Wladimir/Volodymir. The tasks use ChatGPT, Google Forms, Mentimeter, LearningApps and Zumpad for the exercises.

Keywords: Ukraine, Ukrainian language, national identity of Ukraine, founding myth, didactic suggestions, German as a foreign / second language

1. Introduction

In the modern educational context, it is important to view the learning of foreign languages as a process that not only imparts linguistic skills but also influences personal development [2]. It is known that education is a component of the educational process, and the goal of teaching is, among other things, to give students the opportunity to express themselves as individuals, to achieve a harmonious and comprehensive development of their social status, and to improve their cognitive abilities. Particular attention should be paid to enabling learners to act independently and form their own opinions. Such an organisation of the educational process ensures the development of positive character traits, and working with diverse teaching materials allows learners to distinguish the true from the false and develops the communication culture and value orientations accepted in the modern civilised world.

The topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war is important in this context, both for Ukrainian students studying German as a foreign language in Ukraine and for international students studying German as a foreign or second language in other countries, because it offers the opportunity to reflect on one's own identity and national uniqueness, on the right to freedom and independence, on the role of the mother tongue in society, on the influence of propaganda on people's thinking and lives, and on human values that form a basis for educating active, responsible, peace-loving, courageous, honest, compassionate and caring citizens of the country in which they live.

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As for Ukrainians, the war reinforced in them such values and feelings as love of freedom and dignity, the existential right to a dignified life and personal decision, the ability to protect oneself, one's family, society, national identity and the interests of the state, the need to serve the people and the country, Ukraine, responsibility for one's own decisions, actions and deeds, charity, voluntary engagement, willingness to sacrifice, ideological maturity and the ability to resist foreign influence and hostile ideology.

The selection, didacticisation and use of materials that reflect the causes and consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine, research results on the perception of this war in different societies, on the historical background of the conflict, and on the reception of the war in literature and journalism is a very effective pedagogical tool in foreign language teaching.

2. Theoretical foundations. The history of Ukraine: an Overview

2.1. Political history

In the 9th century, the political association of Kyivan Rus' formed along the trade route from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.[1]. According to the Primary Chronicle (written in the 12th century), it was Rurik, a leader of the Varangians[2], who united the various tribes. Rurik's retainers soon intermingled in the territory of today's Ukraine with the Slavic inhabitants. In the 11th century, Rus' grew into a widely ramified multi-ethnic empire, which under Grand Prince Volodymyr stretched from the Carpathians in the west to the Volga in the east.

In the 13th century, this area was partially conquered by the Mongols. They established a rule lasting two centuries over the north and east, while the west and southwest came under the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland, respectively, and remained there for 300 and 450 years.

From the end of the 18th century, the Russian Empire, which had emerged in the east in the meantime with its centre in St. Petersburg, expanded to the Black Sea. A major territorial expansion for it in the west occurred through the partitions of Poland, whereby it became the direct neighbour of the Habsburg Empire, which had been expanded to include Galicia.

After World War I, Soviet rule prevailed. In 1922, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) officially became part of the newly founded Soviet Union.

2.2. Ukraine as a state

In 1991, Ukraine declared independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russian lost its status as an official language after Ukraine's declaration of independence. Although the tensions with Russia that arose in the first years of independence could initially be settled, the period after 2000, already during Vladimir Putin's presidency, brought a deterioration in relations. Russia began to act more offensively against Western states and the other post-Soviet states.

Resistance to Russian interference and paternalism led to the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and finally, after electoral manipulation in the presidential elections, to mass demonstrations on Kyiv's Maidan in the winter of 2013/20214. With the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in violation of international law in June 2014, Russia's war with Ukraine began, which soon expanded into a military struggle for Donbas.

On 24 February 2022, the Russian military attacked the entire territory of Ukraine with approximately 200,000 soldiers, tanks and the air force. Ukrainian President

[1]The term "Rus" probably originates from the Finnish words "Ruotsi" or "Roðr" for rowers.
[2]The Varangians were Vikings who had their original homeland in Scandinavia. See [3, p. 18].

Zelenskyy remained in Kyiv with his entire government. For the majority of Ukrainians, the aggressor Russia now became the enemy. The majority identify with Ukraine as a civic nation and behave loyally towards democratic institutions and the military.

2.3. Ukraine as a nation

Nations as cultural constructs emerged in Western Europe after the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. The supporting stratum of ideology formation was the middle class, especially intellectuals (historians, priests, artists, teachers) who put together historical territory, standardised high language and formative historical events as building blocks for the respective narrative of a nation [4]. The desire for their own nation-states also moved the ethnic groups in Eastern Europe living in the great empires of the Habsburg and Tsarist empires. For a long time, however, they were suppressed by the central powers.

A number of Western historians see both Russia and Ukraine as "belated nations" [6, chapter 5: "Zwei verspätete Nationen"]. The main reasons given for this are the different social developments in Western and Eastern Europe. The vast multi-ethnic state, the Russian Empire (Rossiyskaya Imperiya) and later the Soviet Union, hindered the emergence of a self-confident middle class and a democratic development carried by it through the authoritarian regimes of the tsars and the Soviets.

In Ukraine, a search for folk culture, national history and language began as early as 1800. However, the intertwining of history with Russia posed a task that was hardly solvable in the following two centuries. The turn to Ukrainian as a national language and medium of its own literature was difficult insofar as for a long time, over the state repression emanating from the centre of St. Petersburg and Moscow, respectively, there was a situation of diglossia where Russian as a standardised high language stood against the Ukrainian vernacular. An exception was Habsburg-ruled Galicia, where Ukrainian was recognised as an additional school and official language.

Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century could the project of the ethnic Ukrainian nation be taken up with that of the civic nation (with the inclusion of the Russian-speaking and other minorities) with the goal of integrating all social strata into a democratic state.

2.4. Founding myths and narratives of nation building

Countries and nations often proudly pass on their founding myths, which highlight their origin in the form of a particular narrative with religious and political elements.[3]. Aleida Assmann formulates the following thesis about its goal and purpose:

> "…under the current conditions of a particular present, the narrative selects this particular past for this group or institution and projects corresponding claims and expectations into the future, which give the group orientation and meaning. The narrative gives those who support it a sense of direction in time by linking a particular past with a motivating future." [1, p. 94]

Both present-day Ukraine and Russia claim the legacy of Kyivan Rus'. In the inheritance dispute among historians, the media and politics, it is about who can be considered its legitimate heir.

The national narrative of Russian history is based on the succession of the capital cities of Kyiv – Moscow – St. Petersburg – Moscow. In Ukrainian historiography, this Russian claim is rejected and the legacy of Kyivan Rus' is reclaimed for Ukraine.[4].

[3]Founding myths were already found in ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire, where they functioned as legitimation for the respective social and value system in connection with the ancient world of gods.

[4]The historian Andreas Kappeler considers this "inheritance dispute" to be scientifically unproductive, because national categories are projected back into the early Middle Ages from both sides when there could be no talk of Russians and Ukrainians [6, p. 24]

Ukraine therefore adopted parts of its state symbolism from the old Rus', such as in the coat of arms of the trident (tryzub) and in the name of the currency Hryvnia.

As a visible highlighting of a main figure from the narrative, monuments formed of stone or marble are often erected in central places and squares of the country. The selected figure for the monument is usually depicted larger than life and, to symbolise its significance, often stands in an elevated manner on pedestals.

Abstract ideas can also be represented within the founding myth of a country in a form that has become stone. Think of the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island in front of New York, which stands as an allegory for the central concept of "freedom" in the American Constitution. In Russia, the sculpture of "Mother Motherland" (Russian: Rodina-mat'), shaped similarly to the American Statue of Liberty, as "The Motherland Calls" in Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) is still meant to remind us today of the decisive battle in the "Great Patriotic War" (World War II) in the narrative of invincible Russia.

In this way, narratives can also convey a sense of chosenness, even a sense of mission. They can also legitimise power and privileges over minorities in one's own country or neighbouring countries.

Religious elements in the narratives are often found in Christian countries through a reference to a saint who brought a particular form of Christianity to the country.[5].

2.5. Volodymyr the Holy as the central figure of the founding myth of orthodox christianity in Ukraine and Russia and the monuments in Kyiv and Moscow

Vladimir I (978/80-1015) is revered in Ukraine (as Volodymyr) and recently again in Russia as a saint and founder of their own statehood. Numerous religious legends surround his baptism according to the Orthodox rite.

For example, the *Primary Chronicle*, which originated in Kyiv, reports on miracles that are said to have motivated Prince Vladimir to baptism. Based on more recent historical research, however, military support of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II (976-1025) by Vladimir's troops during a siege of the ancient city of Chersonesos on the Crimea was the probable starting point for the subsequent development. A connection of the two ruling houses of Kyiv and Constantinople took place through Vladimir's marriage to Basil's sister Anna. The condition for the marriage set by Byzantium was Vladimir's conversion to the Orthodox faith. After Vladimir's baptism in Chersonesos in 988, he is said to have ordered the overthrow of pagan idols in Kyiv, the construction of churches and the baptism of his subjects in the Dnieper River.

As early as 1833, Tsar Nicholas I commissioned the sculptor Vasily Demut-Malinovsky, who was of Ukrainian origin, to erect a monumental statue of Vladimir the Holy (Ukrainian: Pamiatnyk Volodymyru Velykomu) in Kyiv on the banks of the Dnieper. The monument has stood since then in Vladimir Park below St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery. It is a significant landmark of the city and represents an essential part of its founding myth within its historical narrative. After the collapse of the USSR, Saint Vladimir became one of the most important identity-forming symbolic figures in the now independent Ukraine.

A "portrait" of Volodymyr I also served as a motif for the design of the new one-hryvnia banknote, on the back of which an image of the city of Chersonesos in Crimea was shown as the site of his baptism.

As the Basel historian Schenk [10] showed, Vladimir had not played a significant

[5]For example, St. Wenceslas is found on the square named after him, Václavské náměstí in Prague. It is the central place of the country, which is concluded with the National Museum. In this way, the Czech nation created the local connection of the founding personality of Western Christianity, which was formative for it, with the museum, in which the testimonies of the historical tradition of the nation are exhibited.

Figure 1: Volodymyr monument in Kyiv.

role in recent Russian history of the 20th century, which was certainly due to the suppression of any religion during Soviet times. Even in the early 2000s, during Putin's presidency, Vladimir still did not make it into the "Top 50" of Russian history.

After the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia, however, a historical claim had to be found for this political takeover, and it emerged through a staging around the figure of St. Vladimir [10, p. 3]. Thus, in May 2014, Putin signed a presidential decree ordering a festive programme for the 1000th anniversary of Prince Vladimir's death the following year. As a visible sign, a statue of Vladimir was planned in the Russian capital. However, the initially planned size, which was to exceed that in Kyiv, failed due to UNESCO's objection. At its final inauguration in front of the Kremlin walls, the highest representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the state, Patriarch Kirill and Vladimir Putin, appeared.

A joint Ukrainian-Russian celebration to commemorate Prince Vladimir on the 1030th anniversary of Christianisation is no longer conceivable due to the undeclared war in eastern Ukraine and the "special operation" of the Russian military since February 2022.

2.6. Language policy in Ukraine

In Ukraine, two strands of language history can be found from the Middle Ages to the present day. On the one hand, a variety of spoken and written languages can be found in this area due to migration of different population groups. Over the centuries, linguistic diversity developed in Ukraine, especially in urban centres,

Figure 2: Vladimir monument in Moscow.

which produced literature, often of world standing, in various idioms[6], such as Polish, Russian, German and Yiddish, among others.

On the other hand, as early as the Middle Ages, many inhabitants of Kyivan Rus spoke East Slavic dialects. In this period, no clearly separated predecessors of the three East Slavic languages today (Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian) can be identified. Although there were clear differences between spatially distant dialects, there were fluid transitions between adjacent dialects. The means of communication of the broad rural population remained these dialects until the 20th century and still exist in historically developed form as supraregional colloquial languages today [13]. National aspirations, especially in Ukraine, found their expression in early literary writing in Ukrainian in the 19th century.[7]

Ukrainian became the official language of the republic for the first time in 1923 in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

In the 1970s, however, this recognition ended through the illiberal dictate of the Kremlin. Under Leonid Brezhnev, the party leader of the CPSU, all ethnic groups were to merge into a unified Soviet people. Thus, Ukrainian was again devalued as a "peasant language" and banned in science and business; Russian had to be spoken at all party congresses [3, p. 98].

In 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine declared independence. Its constitution defined it as a centralised unitary state and a civic nation.[8] Ukrainian was now established as the state language, but the constitution guaranteed minority protection, which enshrines the linguistic rights of ethnic Russians and other mi-

[6]Think not least of the German-writing authors such as Paul Celan, Rose Ausländer and Joseph Roth. See also: [12].

[7]Taras Shevchenko is still revered today as the first great writer in the Ukrainian language.

[8]In political practice, this project competed with that of the ethnic nation, which is based on a common language and history. Due to the long fragmentation and belonging to different empires, a unified ethnic nation was not given (as in most other European states, cf. [4].

norities. Russian remained the dominant language in large parts, especially in the east and southeast, with Russian-speakers being massively supported by the Moscow government in their continued disdain for Ukrainian as a subaltern language.

Poroshenko, the Ukrainian president (2014-2019), therefore placed a strong national accent in language policy at the end of his term with the law "On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language". The law secured the use of Ukrainian in administration, education, the service sector and print media. In response, Putin and the Russian state media, which became increasingly aligned during his time in government, complained about "an allegedly aggressive language policy" of the Ukrainian government, "which amounted to genocide against the "Russians" in Ukraine" [6, p. 226] and even served to legitimise the annexation of Crimea to Russia (Putin's speech to the nation on 18 March 2014, [6, p. 225]).

After the Russian attack in February 2022 on the entire territory of Ukraine, the open question remains: will the stronger acceptance of Ukrainian be seen as a form of resistance by Ukraine, in which all segments of the population assure themselves of their identity through the Ukrainian language? Or will Russian gain the upper hand again?

2.7. Studies on the use of Ukrainian after the outbreak of war (2022)

In the history of Ukraine, language has always been a politically relevant factor that the respective ruling politicians and interest groups sought to use in their own way. This did not always correspond to the wishes of the Ukrainian population.

Ukraine has been bilingual in its territory since the times of the Russian Tsarist Empire. When Ukrainian was not banned by the authorities, it was continuously used as a language of communication for everyday communication, especially in rural communities and by people with little schooling.

After independence, the number of Ukrainians using Ukrainian as their first language has increased significantly. This is evidenced by the results of scientific studies by Ukrainian and foreign scholars who have observed the development of political processes in Ukraine as well as the language behaviour of Ukrainians, especially in recent years. The research is based on surveys on citizens' approval of state language policy and their use of Ukrainian and/or Russian in everyday life, in educational institutions and on social networks.

Surveys of this kind have been conducted several times. Three stages can be distinguished:

In 2001 and 2006, the language situation was generally analysed in order to determine the changes after Ukraine's independence. In 2015 and 2017, it was important to understand the impact of the annexation of Crimea and the Russian invasion of Ukraine and their occupation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the use of the Russian language. After the open aggression and the beginning of the war in February 2022, attention to the language problem intensified even further and studies have been conducted every year since then.

Let us now take a closer look at the results of the individual studies. The first systematic analysis, conducted in 2001 on the basis of a census, is noteworthy. Figure 3 clearly shows that the majority of the population in the west and north of Ukraine (from 75.6% to 98.3%) spoke Ukrainian, while in the centre and south the numbers were lower (from 50.2% in Zaporizhzhia to 73.2% in Kherson and 88.9% to 90.0% in Vinnytsia and Poltava).

Since then, studies on the language situation in Ukraine have been conducted by the following institutions:

- KIIS – Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (https://www.kiis.com.ua)

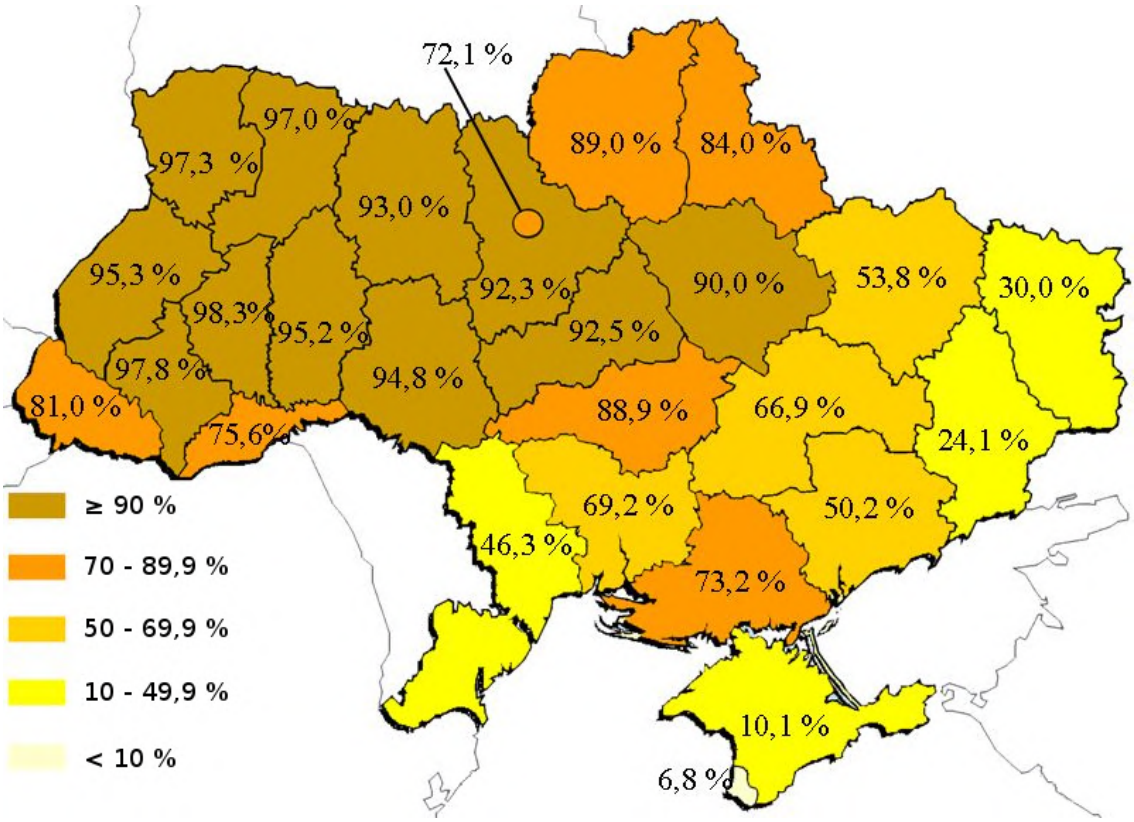


Figure 3: Native language Ukrainian (2001). Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/de/Ukr_lang_ukr_2001_int.png

- DIF – Ilko Kucheriv "Democratic Initiatives" foundation (https://dif.org.ua)
- Sociological Group "Rating" (https://ratinggroup.ua)

Since the surveys were not conducted simultaneously and also according to different methods, there are certain differences in the results. In general, however, certain unanimous tendencies can be found in the results.

In 2017, a nationwide survey was conducted – with the exception of the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk as well as Crimea. One of the questions related to which language the respondents recognised as their native language. Two-thirds (68%) said that their native language was Ukrainian, while 14% referred to Russian as their native language. Particularly revealing is the development of these values compared to similar surveys from 2006 and 2015.

According to sociological studies, in 2006 only 52% of respondents considered Ukrainian as their native language; in 2015 it was already 60%. At the same time, the proportion of those who indicated Russian as their native language decreased from 31% in 2006 to 15% in 2015 and further to 14% in 2017. A remarkable change is also shown in the group of bilingual respondents – i.e. those who indicated both Ukrainian and Russian as their native languages: Their share was about 16% in 2006, rose to 22% in 2015 and was 17.4% in 2017.

Particularly revealing are the results after the beginning of Russia's open aggression. The surveys were conducted every year, but especially the years 2021, 2022 and 2024 are considered trend-setting. DIF compared the results of the surveys on the use of languages in the private sphere as well as on the recognition of Ukrainian and Russian as the mother tongue in 2021 and 2022.

In 2021, 77.4% of respondents considered Ukrainian and 19.7% Russian as their native language. In the home environment, 64.1% spoke mainly Ukrainian and 32.6%

Russian. Already in 2022, these values changed significantly: 87.7% of respondents indicated Ukrainian as their native language, while the proportion of Russian-speaking native speakers fell to 9.9%. In everyday life, now 70.7% used mainly Ukrainian and only 23.2% Russian [5].

Based on data from various surveys in the period 2006 to 2024, the results are summarised in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Which languages have Ukrainians recognised as their native language.

Year	Ukrainian	Russian	Both languages
2006	52%	31%	16%
2015	60%	15%	22%
2017	68%	14%	17.4%
2022	76%	9.9%	
2024	78%	6%	13%

Table 2
Which languages do Ukrainians speak in the private sphere.

Year	Ukrainian	Russian	Both languages
2006	40%	38%	15%
2015	50%	24%	25%
2017	50%	25%	24%
2022	48%	18%	32%
2024	70.5%	11%	18%

The data show that during the war years, the number of Ukrainians who recognise Ukrainian as their native language has increased, while the number of those who indicate Russian or both languages as their native language has decreased. The group of bilingual Ukrainians is also shrinking – a trend that is due to the fact that many of them now indicate exclusively Ukrainian as their native language.

Similar developments can be observed in language use in the private sphere. This illustrates the influence of annexation, occupation and invasion on social moods and the linguistic identification of Ukrainians. These changes are also confirmed by scientific studies conducted by sociologists and linguists.

Among the researchers dealing with this topic from a sociological perspective is Masenko [9]. In her work, she analyses the language situation in Ukraine over the past 20 years, the question of national identification, language policy conflicts and other relevant topics.

Kulyk [8] summarises the results of recent surveys in one of his studies. He examines and compares quantitative sociological data from 2012 to 2022 using various criteria, allowing general trends to be derived.

Among linguists, Kudriavtseva [7] is particularly noteworthy for dealing primarily with qualitative aspects. In her research, she examines the reasons and motives that lead Ukrainians to choose Ukrainian as a language of communication, to learn it and to perceive it as an identity marker. In another study, she analyses measures to revive the Ukrainian language in independent Ukraine as well as language policy issues under war conditions [11].

The present research covers both quantitative and qualitative aspects of language use of Ukrainian by Ukrainians living both in Ukraine and as refugees. On this basis, ideas and recommendations for German language teaching are developed.

3. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the survey results

In our research, we wanted to find out how the Russian war of aggression has changed Ukrainians' attitudes towards language use. Since the protection of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine was declared by Putin as one of the reasons for the so-called "military special operation", it has led to the fact that in Ukraine, which was actually bilingual, more and more citizens are refraining from using Russian, which is seen as the language of the enemy, while Ukrainian has become the language of resistance. We wanted to statistically test our observations and conducted a survey with Google Forms, in which 163 people from different regions of Ukraine (Mariupol, Kryvyi Rih, Lutsk, Cherkasy, Kharkiv, Sumy, Dnipro, Chernivtsi, Odesa, Berdiansk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Kropyvnytskyi, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Khmelnytskyi, etc.) participated. These were both Ukrainians who were in the country at the time of the survey and those who had fled the country to various European countries (Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Ireland, Estonia, Greece, Finland, Italy, Great Britain, Switzerland).

3.1. Quantitative Evaluation of the Survey Results

As can be seen from the diagram, 163 people (figure 4) aged under 20 to 70 years took part in the survey, with the groups from 21 to 30, 31 to 40 and 41 to 50 represented in almost equal proportions, each accounting for about 20-25% of respondents.

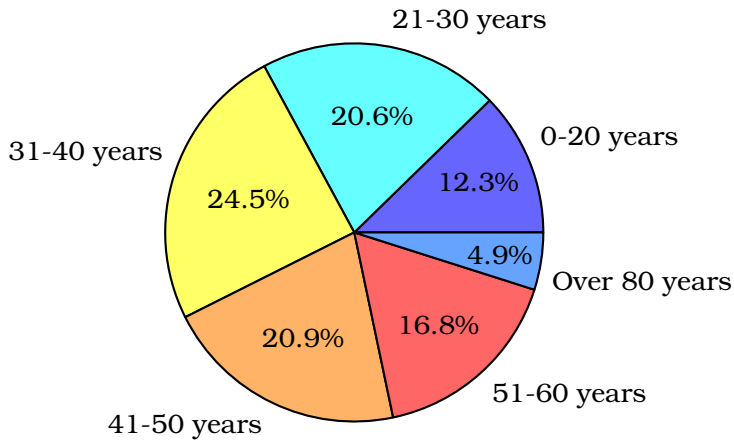


Figure 4: Age of respondents.

Regarding the mother tongue of the respondents (figure 5), the votes were divided into three equally sized groups of 33% each: with Russian as their mother tongue, with Ukrainian as their mother tongue, and bilingual with two mother tongues (Ukrainian and Russian).

It is noticeable that the proportion of Ukrainian citizens who speak Ukrainian in the family (figure 6) has grown since the outbreak of the war, as has the proportion of people who use both languages, Ukrainian and Russian, in everyday life. In contrast, the number of Ukrainians who use Russian as a language of communication has decreased by about 8%. The respondents give as reasons that they no longer wanted to speak the language of the enemy and that they wanted to cultivate and preserve their own mother tongue, because the mother tongue is very important for one's own self-perception, it is an identity marker.

The vast majority of respondents (almost 83%) speak Russian and Ukrainian at the same level (figure 7), which indicates that most Ukrainians are bilingual and proficient in both languages. This fact can be explained by the fact that the Russian language

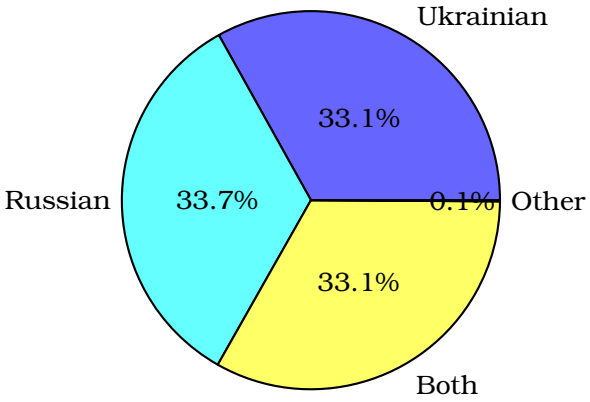


Figure 5: What was your mother tongue in childhood?

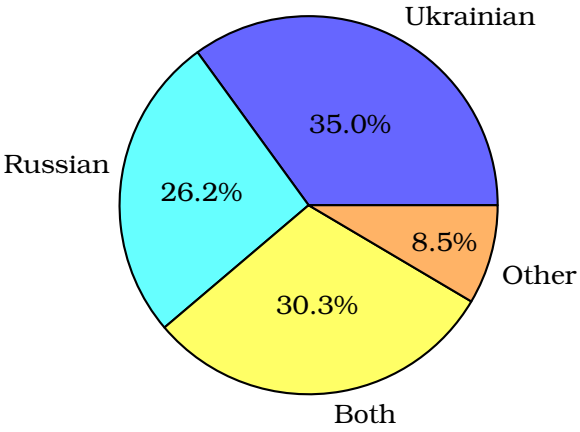


Figure 6: Which language is spoken in your family today?

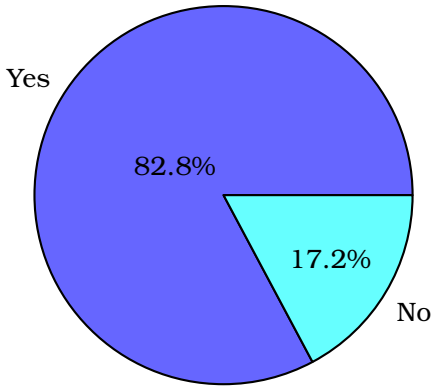


Figure 7: Do you speak Russian and Ukrainian at the same level?

was imposed in Ukraine at various stages of Ukrainian history (both in the Tsarist Empire and in the Soviet Union) and this Russification lasted for a very long time.

One of the questions was aimed at finding out the attitude of Ukrainians towards the Russian language (figure 8). The diagram shows that most have a neutral attitude, which surprised us somewhat.

On the other hand, more than 80% of respondents (figure 9) indicated that they have used Ukrainian more frequently since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. We have already mentioned the reasons for this above.

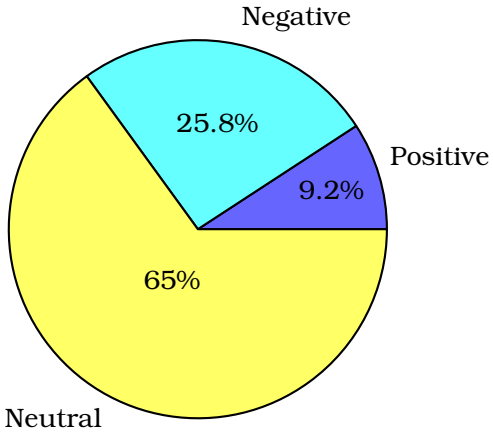


Figure 8: What is the attitude towards the Russian language among your friends/relatives in Ukraine?

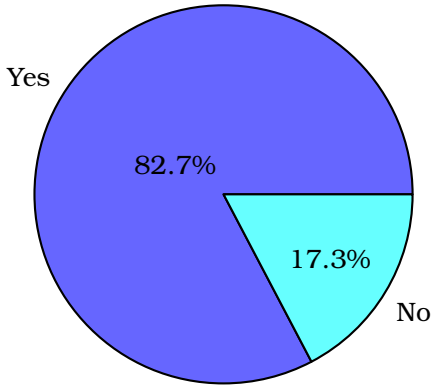


Figure 9: Have you started to use the Ukrainian language more strongly since the beginning of the war? (The question was optional and concerned those citizens of Ukraine who grew up with Russian as their mother tongue.)

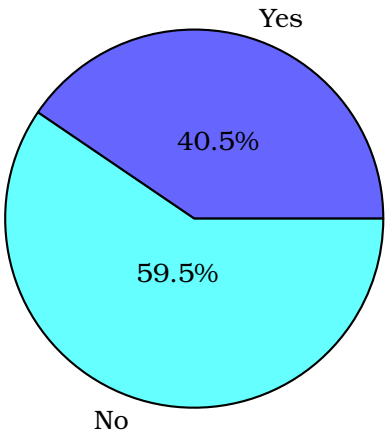


Figure 10: Do you communicate via messenger or telephone with acquaintances/friends/relatives in Russia or in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia?

More than half have no contact with friends or relatives in Russia or in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia (figure 10). In most cases, the reason for the break in contact is the false image of Russian citizens about what is happening, which is influenced by propaganda.

After the brief quantitative evaluation of the survey results, we want to take a closer

look at some questions that are particularly important for our article and evaluate them qualitatively.

3.2. Qualitative evaluation of the survey results

In the qualitative evaluation, the focus is on the answers to questions 15, 16 and 17, as these were where most of the detailed comments were given.[9]

Here (for reasons of space) we only reproduce some answers verbatim that seemed particularly meaningful to us.

> **Question 15. When you started using the Ukrainian language more frequently, what was your motivation?**

Decidedly political answers are found with the view of language as a "*factor of national security*", coupled with the desire to "*get rid of the colonial legacy and Soviet rule*" (84; Ulan-Bator – Kryvyi Rih) and "*The function of the Ukrainian language in difficult times is a means for 'nation-building'.*" (131; Mariupol – Vienna).

There are answers that show pride in one's own nation and national language:

> "*I am proud to be Ukrainian. That motivates me. I am very sorry that in Mariupol I spoke more Russian and very rarely Ukrainian. My motivation comes from our country, our people, our president, our soldiers who are currently in captivity, and those who protect us, our lives and our country. When I speak Ukrainian, I feel like a strong person. I feel all the pain that the Ukrainian language, culture and the Ukrainian country carry throughout its entire existence.*" (52; Mariupol – Donetsk Oblast).

The overwhelming number of responses show the trend towards greater use of Ukrainian as a central and unifying feature of the country's identity.

> "*Language is an identity marker*" (69; Rivne Oblast – Kryvyi Rih);
>
> "*Ukrainian is important for national self-identity*" (101; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

Even refugee Ukrainian women find Ukrainian identity so important that they represent it abroad and pass it on to the next generation there:

> "*I join the Ukrainian identity, teach the child Ukrainian*" (55; Zaporizhzhia Oblast – Norway);
>
> "*I support people from the occupied territories who start speaking Ukrainian, because it shows that people care about the situation in their country and that they, even if they live in the occupied territories, do not forget who they really are* (53; Mariupol – Great Britain).

The difference in mentalities between Ukrainians and Russians is often inferred to mean that the languages should also be different:

> "*People's language is their identification, which should not be forgotten. And Ukrainians and Russians are different. Therefore communication should be different*" (112; Ivanivka village, Kharkiv Oblast – Kryvyi Rih).

[9] Due to the requirement of anonymity, we do not use names in the quotations, but only give a count in our interview sequence instead, followed by the place of residence in childhood/youth and the current place of residence. If information was missing, this is indicated by 0.

The national self-image in combination with the Ukrainian language should be perceived everywhere in contrast to Russia's image of others with Russian as the language:

> "*I want to spread the Ukrainian language in everyday communication, especially abroad, so that people understand that Ukrainians and Russians are different peoples.*" (139; Donetsk, from 2015 Kharkiv; then Switzerland).

The reason given almost throughout for the personally stronger use of Ukrainian is the Russian army's attack on the whole of Ukraine. The rejection of Russian results from this attack. One's own concern is often put into words:

> "*Russian is the national language of the aggressor*" (20; Mariupol – Tallinn); (136; Kharkiv – Calau in Germany);
>
> "*I do not want to communicate in the language of the aggressor*" (Mykolaiv Oblast – Kryvyi Rih);
>
> "*I am trying to distance myself from the aggressor country, to have nothing in common*" (99; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih);
>
> "*I want to eliminate everything Russian from my life as much as possible, because it was the Russians who attacked us*" (24; Donetsk Oblast – Kyiv Oblast);
>
> "*I am concerned about the future of Ukraine as a state and therefore feel the impossibility of replacing the semantic load with words of a language other than Ukrainian*" (127; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

The turn to the Ukrainian language is not just an individual decision, it encompasses whole families:

> "*With the beginning of the war, my family changed from a neutral to an openly hostile attitude towards the Russian language*" (107; Dolynskyi Region, Pyshne village – Hurivka village);
>
> "*We don't discuss the attitude to the Russian language in the family. We switch to Ukrainian. In any case, Russian is alien to us.*" (117; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

An increase in the attribution of consistently negative qualities to Russians is found in the reaction to the murder of many Ukrainians as a perceived Russian war aim:

> "*After the occupation of Donetsk in 2014, most of my friends and relatives moved to the Kyiv or Kharkiv region. After the Russian invasion in 2022, these regions suffered from the incredible brutality of the Russian military. Therefore, the Russian language was associated among my relatives with torture, brutality and crimes of the Russian military, which led to a negative attitude.*" (77; Donetsk – Vinnytsia);
>
> "*Kill the occupier in you... Language is part of the soul. And the soul hurts because of the war. ...*" (66; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih);
>
> "*I don't want to speak the language of the country of terrorists*" (154; Chernihiv – Chernihiv);
>
> "*I don't want to communicate in the language of people who have come to our country to kill. For me, Russian has become the language of murder, violence and destruction*" (150; Horodnia, Chernihiv Oblast – Horodnia, Chernihiv Oblast).

This emotional concern and outrage results in the statement:

> "*I hate Russians*" (3; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

The demand for Ukrainian as the sole language in all public institutions follows from the reasons given:

> "*The language of the aggressor is also an aggression against the Ukrainian language – the official language must be Ukrainian*" (93; Chervonoye – Kryvyi Rih).

There is also talk of the hope that all citizens of Ukraine will communicate in Ukrainian in the future without decrees and laws:

> "*It will take some time and everyone will switch to Ukrainian, but there should be no violence and coercion*" (108; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

Occasionally there are also disappointments about the attitude of some people who see the issue of language use as unimportant:

> "*Partly people began to recognise the importance of the Ukrainian language. And some people around me have even switched to Ukrainian or at least support the conversation in Ukrainian when I talk to them like that. At the same time, many people are indifferent to this topic. I want the language to finally become the connecting factor. I encourage everyone around me to speak Ukrainian. I try to be a role model myself, but most people, at least in our city, don't think it's necessary. And it is very sad.*" (106, Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

Balanced and neutral attitudes towards Russian are found, but they are very rare. One respondent, who indicates exclusively Russian as his first language, complains about the official language policy of Ukraine, which in his opinion has a negative effect on the level of Russian in Ukraine. He himself therefore goes the opposite way and uses Russian more frequently as a sign of resistance.

> "*The Russian language is systematically being squeezed out of the sphere of public life and taking on the features of an exclusively domestic language with Ukrainian overtones in Ukraine, which leads to a loss of vocabulary even among native speakers. The low quality level in the processing of machine translations of Internet sources leads to a gradual departure of the Russian language from the literary norm. The tightening of the state's repressive policy towards the Russian language will probably promote its spread among Ukrainian youths aged 14 to 18 as a protest language, while the older age group (25 to 32) will be more likely to adapt to the ubiquitous Ukrainian. Due to the rejection of the "language pressure", I began to use the Russian language more often and more demonstratively.*" (62; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

There are individual voices, especially in the east of Ukraine, where Russian is indicated as the family language, and Ukrainian is only used when the speakers are addressed in Ukrainian:

> *"I only use Ukrainian when a person speaks to me in that language."* (25; Horlivka and Mariupol).

The reason given for this shows a certain distance to Ukrainian as a prescribed national language:

> "*But mostly I speak Ukrainian with a Ukrainian-speaking person because of Ukrainians' hatred of the Russian language and because of claims like 'Why not the state language?'*" (25; Horlivka and Mariupol).

The following answer shows a rejection of state language policy, although it is not stated whether this means the Russian (in the occupied territories) or Ukrainian legislation or both:

> "*It seems to me that the problem of the language question is exaggerated and only used as emotional manipulation of the social mass by political forces.*" (118; Dnipro Oblast – Dnipro Oblast).

Similarly distanced from the emphasis on language choice is the opinion of this respondent:

> "*There are no bad languages, every language is important and useful*" (137; Mariupol – Switzerland).

Answers to questions 16 and 17.

> **Do you communicate via messenger or telephone with acquaintances / friends / relatives in Russia or in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories?**
> **What is the attitude towards the Ukrainian language among acquaintances / friends / relatives in Russia or in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories?**

We reproduce the answers here together, as they are related in thought.

A high number of statements are found that contain very strong negative evaluations of Russian war supporters, for which reason any contact was broken off:

> "*I find communication with people who have nothing against us being killed pointless*" (31; Sumy Oblast – Kharkiv);
>
> "*I think that the attitude of all Russians and Ukrainians in Russia is negative, because they are either idiots or have been brainwashed by propaganda. I see no other explanation for their hysteria*" (162; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih);
>
> "*I stopped communicating with friends from Russia as early as 2012-2013, even then there was an increase in propaganda narratives and a hostile attitude towards Ukraine*" (133; Russia – Ukraine);
>
> "*I stopped communicating with my relatives from Russia in 2014.*" (32; Zaporizhzhia Oblast – Zaporizhzhia; also 84; Ulan Bator – Kryvyi Rih).

The break in relations with Russians is shown several times, sometimes without further details, sometimes due to Russian attributions of Ukrainians as National Socialists:

> "*I no longer talk to Russians, although I used to switch to Russian in communication. Before the invasion in 2022, Russians believed that they were similar languages, but in reality they did not even understand the connection and considered Ukrainian to be a surzhyk and there were cases where Ukrainian*

words were mocked (e.g. in the song by Okean Elzy – Sosny)" (17; Lutsk – Prague);

"*I have a sister and nieces in Russia. My sister stopped talking to me. They do not understand the Ukrainian language, they say they don't understand anything*" (94; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih);

"*Russians regard the Ukrainian language as a manifestation of National Socialism due to Russian information policy*" (99; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih);

"*... in any case, Russian is alien to us. ... There are those among Russian acquaintances who removed me from their circle of friends without discussion, probably (consider) as a neo-Nazi Bandera girl*" (117; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

There are also answers that show a certain understanding for Russian relatives and friends who – in the opinion of the respondents – have to hide their attitude in Russia:

"*Most of my relatives who live in Russia support Ukraine, all my friends from Russia support Ukraine, but they cannot say it out loud because they face a prison sentence. They find the (Ukrainian) language beautiful and like to listen to our artists. But only with headphones on.*" (11; Mariupol – Germany).

The political and linguistic Russian pressure on the population in the occupied territories of Ukraine is reproduced in detail:

"*I only have a sister left in Mariupol. She is 12 years old. She went to a Ukrainian class, there were never any problems or complaints. Now she is in the 5th grade there. Every Monday they have a lesson entitled: "Conversations about important things". After attending such events, she naturally began, like a child, to repeat everything that was said. Recently she wrote to me. "Russia has always been here, only Russian-speaking people live here. Ukrainian-speaking people live in Kyiv or Lviv, but not in Mariupol." I am very sad about this situation. She read Ukrainian books, watched cartoons and films in Ukrainian, and now she believes in something completely different*" (15; Snizhne – USA).

A further respondent who has remained in the country recounts similar experiences:

"*My sister is there (in the occupied territories) and cries every day that this has happened. She is there with her children. Her three children began to ignore the educational lessons at school, then adopted a neutral behaviour towards the parents of other children because they were bullied... I think this war will separate us forever*" (64; Kryvyi Rih – Kryvyi Rih).

There are also some answers that show understanding towards those in the occupied territories who have always spoken Russian and hardly came into contact with Ukrainian:

"I try to communicate and keep in touch only with people who have an appropriate attitude towards the language problem. In Ukraine, my friends understand that it is impossible to turn a person who has spoken Russian all his life into a Ukrainian. Because he will always think in Russian. In the occupied territories, people have not spoken or heard Ukrainian for a long time, so they consider it a foreign language. Moreover, Ukrainian was neither popular nor widespread in eastern Ukraine." (25; Horlivka – Horlivka).

There are also answers that do not necessarily link language to country:

> "*Most of my relatives and acquaintances do not believe that the Russian language and everything written and filmed in it should be abandoned because of the war. A tolerant attitude towards the language problem is the best expression of agreement with European values.*" (43; Kramatorsk – Kyiv);
>
> "*Many people continue to speak Russian without associating it with the language of the enemy, because they think in Russian. At the same time, they are (Ukrainian) patriots... None of my friends or relatives speak negatively about the Ukrainian language*" (46; Mariupol – Utrecht);
>
> "*I have relatives in Russia. That's why I communicate with them.*" (158; Mariupol – Uster, Switzerland);
>
> *Since my family, friends and I grew up in "a Russian-speaking region and environment, Russian was our mother tongue and we still speak it today. We communicate in Russian with relatives who have stayed there for good reasons.*" (51; Mariupol – Finland).

Summary: The open questions we posed at the end of the brief historical overview of the linguistic situation in Ukraine could be answered as follows based on the qualitative evaluation of 168 questionnaires from refugees and people who remained in the country:

- The stronger acceptance of Ukrainian as the state language is seen in 2023 as a form of Ukraine's resistance to Russia's brutal assault on the entire territory. The responses also show the increased self-perception of Ukrainian identity through the turn to Ukrainian as a family and contact language. The majority report a break in all communication with family members and friends in Russia, whose image of Ukraine is fed by Russian state propaganda.
- Individual respondents show understanding and tolerance towards Russian-speaking people in eastern Ukraine. This attitude is obviously a legacy of the time when bilingualism and multilingualism were the reality in this large country with its various ethnic groups.
- Based on our survey, it seems unlikely to us that in the future – after whatever dictatorial and military measures – Russian would again be accepted as the language binding Ukraine to Russia.

4. Reflections on the use of the research results in German language teaching

4.1. Didactic foundations

Statistical data play an increasingly important role in a world that is increasingly determined by global connections and data, and are an essential component of language competence. The integration of statistics and results of surveys and studies into teaching German as a foreign language contributes to improving learners' language skills and developing their intercultural competence, as well as promoting a deeper understanding of current contemporary issues. Statistics are an indispensable tool for analysing information, drawing conclusions and gaining scientific knowledge. In the context of teaching German as a foreign language, working with statistical data offers a valuable opportunity to prepare learners for the demands of modern society.

On the one hand, statistics enable a practice-oriented approach to expand vocabulary and grammar. Learners need to understand complex texts and interpret specific numbers and data, which improves their reading competence and text comprehension.

They learn how to draw conclusions and lead discussions about statistical results, which promotes oral expression.

But statistics not only provide linguistic challenges, they also open up insights into current issues for learners. Engaging with statistics enables learners to explore societal issues and develop critical thinking. They have to examine data sources, evaluate the credibility of results and draw logical conclusions. This strengthens their analytical skills and promotes the ability to make well-founded decisions and recognise fake news.

In addition, the use of statistics in the classroom enables learners to develop effective communication strategies. They learn how to present and discuss statistical information. This not only promotes their communicative skills, but also conveys the importance of factual argumentation and data validation.

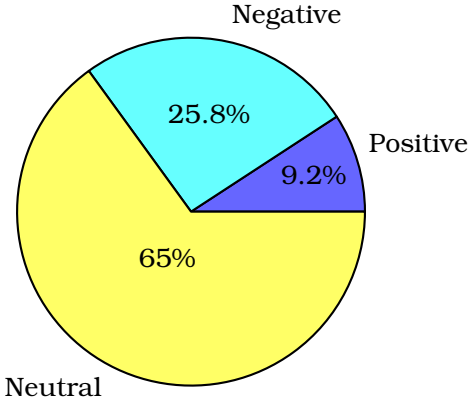
The aim of our survey was to find out the attitude of Ukrainians towards the use of Russian/Ukrainian language and to bring the results to the public, because this question is strongly manipulated by Russia. In order to effectively counter Russian propaganda, the public should be informed about propaganda techniques in order to recognise and critically question propaganda messages. And schools, universities and educational institutions can play a crucial role in promoting media literacy among young people. And international cooperation plays a very important role in this, because the fight against Russian propaganda requires close cooperation between countries and international organisations. Sharing information, best practices and common strategies can help increase the effectiveness of measures.

4.2. Examples from teaching practice

The tasks described here aim to present and discuss the results of the conducted survey in German lessons. In our opinion, it is very important to address the topic of the Russian war of aggression in teaching German as a foreign language in order to counteract Russian propaganda, which aims to spread disinformation, manipulate opinions and promote divisions in societies.

Task 1 Look at the results of the survey, in which 163 Ukrainians participated. Comment on the percentages. Did the results surprise you? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Question 13. What is the attitude towards the Russian language among your friends/relatives in Ukraine?

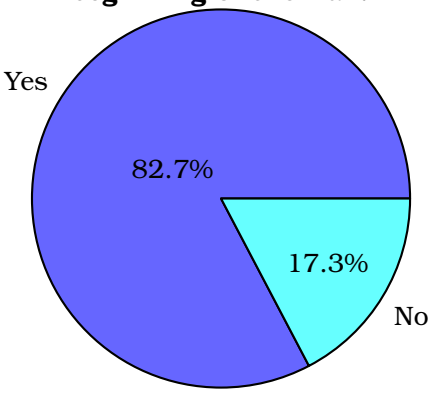


Task 2

1. Look at the answers to question 14 from the survey, in which about 160 Ukrainians participated, and make your assumptions as to why many people in Ukraine switched to Ukrainian after the start of the war.

Collect your assumptions in a mind map.

Question 14. Have you started to use the Ukrainian language more strongly since the beginning of the war?



2. Compare your assumptions with the respondents' answers and discuss the results in the plenum.

Task 3 Write a reflective essay on the importance of the Ukrainian language for national identity in Ukraine. Address the following points:

- what national identity means and how it can be linked to language.
- what role language plays in strengthening national identity and cohesion in Ukrainian society.
- how language can influence self-awareness, cultural belonging and understanding of one's own history and traditions

The essay should be approximately 800 to 1000 words. Make sure you substantiate your views and arguments with relevant examples and sources.

Task 4

1. Read some answers to the questions from the questionnaire and mark the keywords in the answers that reflect the attitude towards the language.
   Question 16: *Are you in telephone/chat contact with friends/relatives in Russia or Russian-occupied territories?*
   Question 17: *What is the attitude towards the Russian language among your friends/relatives in Ukraine?*
2. Discuss in small groups what you can understand from the respondents' answers and what you cannot. Discuss the issues of national identity through language in the group. Note down your ideas and then present them in the plenum.

   I have nothing to discuss with Russians. We are different. There is a mental gulf between us.

   I consider communication with people who have nothing against us being killed pointless.

   Most of my relatives who live in Russia support Ukraine, but there are also some who have changed their minds and have a negative attitude. Therefore I have no contact with them at all.

   I communicate with my friends who live in the regions currently under Russian occupation. It is not their fault that they are there now. They support Ukraine and are waiting for our victory.

   Relatives, friends, colleagues speak only Ukrainian, that is the personal attitude of each person. I have not spoken to my distant relatives in Russia for a long time, even before the war, so I cannot say anything about their attitude towards the Ukrainian language.

   Language is part of the soul. And the soul hurts because of the war. Therefore, the language of the occupier is perceived negatively and a negative attitude towards the language develops further.

   After the occupation of Donetsk in 2014, most of my friends and relatives moved to the Kyiv or Kharkiv regions. After Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, these regions suffered from the incredible brutality of the Russian military. Therefore, the Russian language is associated among my relatives with torture, brutality and crimes of the Russian military, which leads to a negative attitude.

   The Russian language is only associated with negativity and evil. Previously there was no such perception.

   My friends from Russia support Ukraine, but they cannot say it out loud because they face a prison sentence.

Most friends have switched to the Ukrainian language to support the Ukrainian nation, to show the world the unity of the nation against Russian aggression.

Task 5

Here we present our idea of how working on current authentic texts dealing with the topic of Russian aggression can be structured. In doing so, we follow the classic 3-phase model of text work: before reading, during reading and after reading.

Quelle "Die Ukraine. Eine Nation in Europa"
Hrsg: R. Nowak. Die Presse. Wien. 2023

In Russland wird auch mit Denkmälern Machtpolitik betrieben. Sie sind in Erz gegossene ideologische Waffen. Im Zentrum von Simferopol, der Hauptstadt der Krim, wurde 2016 eine bronzene Figurengruppe enthüllt, die an die russischen Sondereinheiten erinnern soll, die im Frühjahr 2014 die militärischen Kräfteverhältnisse auf der Krim massiv veränderten. Dass seit 1853 in Kiew am Ufer des Dnepr eine monumentale Statue von Wladimir, dem Großfürsten der Kiewer Rus, der das Reich christianisierte, stand, ließ die russische Föderation nicht ruhen. Fast zwei Jahre dauerte der Streit, wo ein Wladimir-Denkmal in Moskau errichtet werden sollte. 60.000 Bürger lehnten in einer Internet-Petition eine Versiegelung von Grünflächen, die für das Monument nötig gewesen wäre, ab. So entschied man sich für den Borowizkij-Platz in Sichtweite des Kreml. Dann kam die Unesco dazwischen und drohte angesichts der gewaltigen Dimension des Monuments (25 Meter hoch) dem Kreml den Status des Weltkulturerbes zu entziehen. Widerwillig lenkte Moskau ein, Wladimir wurde verkleinert, auf 17 Meter. Der Großfürst aus dem Mittelalter ist zumindest symbolisch von Kiew nach Moskau transferiert, die angebliche historische Kontinuität zum 11. Jahrhundert demonstriert worden. Die Neuverortung der Geschichte wurde durch eine kleine Ausstellung verfestigt. Durch Denkmalbauer wie Schtscherbakow wird die Macht des Faktischen propagiert: So war es! [10]

Before reading

1. **Brainstorming:** Please collect in group work all the information and prior knowledge you have about monuments and their significance in society. Then discuss your results in the plenum.

[10] *Source "Ukraine. A Nation in Europe" Ed: R. Nowak. Die Presse. Vienna. 2023*

In Russia, power politics is also pursued with monuments. They are ideological weapons cast in bronze. In the centre of Simferopol, the capital of Crimea, a bronze group of figures was unveiled in 2016 to commemorate the Russian special forces that massively changed the military balance of power on the Crimea in spring 2014. The fact that since 1853 a monumental statue of Vladimir, the Grand Prince of Kievan Rus, who Christianised the empire, had stood in Kiev on the banks of the Dnieper did not let the Russian Federation rest. The dispute over where a Vladimir monument should be erected in Moscow lasted almost two years. 60,000 citizens rejected the sealing of green spaces that would have been necessary for the monument in an online petition. So it was decided to use Borovitsky Square within sight of the Kremlin. Then UNESCO intervened and threatened, in view of the enormous dimensions of the monument (25 metres high), to withdraw the Kremlin's World Heritage status. Reluctantly, Moscow gave in, Vladimir was reduced to 17 metres. The Grand Prince from the Middle Ages has been symbolically transferred from Kiev to Moscow, the alleged historical continuity to the 11th century demonstrated. The relocation of history was solidified through a small exhibition. Through monument builders like Shcherbakov, the power of the factual is propagated: This is how it was!

During reading

2. **Vocabulary work:** Mark all unknown vocabulary in the text. Try to guess their meaning in context and note down your assumptions. Then compare your results with a dictionary and discuss the correct meanings in class.

   Possible vocabulary:

   - Denkmäler / monuments (n.): Monuments or statues erected to commemorate certain people or events.
   - Machtpolitik / power politics (f.): Political activities or strategies aimed at gaining or exercising power.
   - Erz / bronze (n.): A metal often used to make sculptures or statues.
   - ideologisch / ideological (adj.): Related to ideologies or political beliefs.
   - Hauptstadt / capital (f.): The most important city in a country, often the seat of government and other important institutions.
   - bronzene / bronze (adj.): Made of bronze.
   - Sondereinheiten / special forces (f.): Specially trained and equipped military or police units.
   - Kräfteverhältnisse / balance of power (n.): The balance or imbalance of power between different groups or countries.
   - massiv / massive (adj.): On a large scale or with considerable effect.
   - Christianisierung / Christianisation (f.): The spread of Christianity or the conversion of people to Christianity.
   - Föderation / federation (f.): An association or union of states or regions under a common government.
   - Streit / dispute (m.): A controversial discussion or debate.
   - Versiegelung / sealing (f.): Closing or covering a surface to make it inaccessible.
   - Grünflächen / green spaces (f.): Areas with grass, trees or plants, often used for recreational purposes.
   - Unesco / UNESCO: Abbreviation for “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization”.
   - Dimension / dimension (f.): The size or extent of an object.
   - Weltkulturerbe / World Heritage (n.): Sites or cultural assets of outstanding universal value recognised and protected by UNESCO.
   - Einweihung / inauguration (f.): The official opening or introduction of a new facility or monument.
   - Anwesenheit / presence (f.): The existence or participation at a particular place or event.
   - Symbol / symbol (n.): A sign or object that stands for or represents something else.
   - Kontinuität / continuity (f.): The continuation or persistence over a longer period of time.
   - Kontinuität / relocation (f.): Moving or relocating to a new location.
   - Geschichte / history (f.): The past of a person, place or nation.
   - Ausstellung / exhibition (f.): A public presentation of artworks, objects or information.
   - Macht des Faktischen / power of the factual: An expression that refers to the reality or effectiveness of certain circumstances or events.

3. **Find the right answer**

   1) Wo wurde die bronzene Figurengruppe enthüllt, die an die russischen Sondereinheiten erinnern soll?[11]
      a) Moskau
      b) Simferopol
      c) Kiew

   2) Welche Organisation drohte damit, dem Kreml den Status des Weltkulturerbes zu entziehen?
      a) NATO
      b) UNICEF
      c) UNESCO

   3) Wie hoch war das ursprünglich geplante Wladimir-Denkmal in Moskau?
      a) 25 Meter
      b) 17 Meter
      c) 11 Meter

After reading

4. **Discussion round:** The class is divided into two groups. One group should collect arguments as to why monuments are used for power politics, while the other group collects arguments against it. The arguments are then presented and a discussion on the role of monuments in politics is held.

5. **Writing exercise:** The learners are asked to write a short essay in which they present their opinion on monuments as a political instrument. They should use their arguments from the text and the discussion round and bring in their own perspective. The essays can then be read aloud or discussed in small groups.

Interactive exercises

To add variety and increase motivation, a few interactive exercises can also be offered as part of the text work, which can be created very quickly with tools such as *Wordwall* or *LearningApps.org*. Below are two exercises (drag & drop exercise (task 6, https://wordwall.net/de/resource/57361599) and gap fill (task 7, https://learningapps.org/watch?v=p9wjbkzqk23)) that aim at vocabulary work.

---

[11]

1) Where was the bronze group of figures unveiled to commemorate the Russian special forces?
   a) Moscow
   b) Simferopol
   c) Kiev

2) Which organisation threatened to withdraw the Kremlin's World Heritage status?
   a) NATO
   b) UNICEF
   c) UNESCO

3) How tall was the originally planned Vladimir monument in Moscow?
   a) 25 metres
   b) 17 metres
   c) 11 metres

Task 6

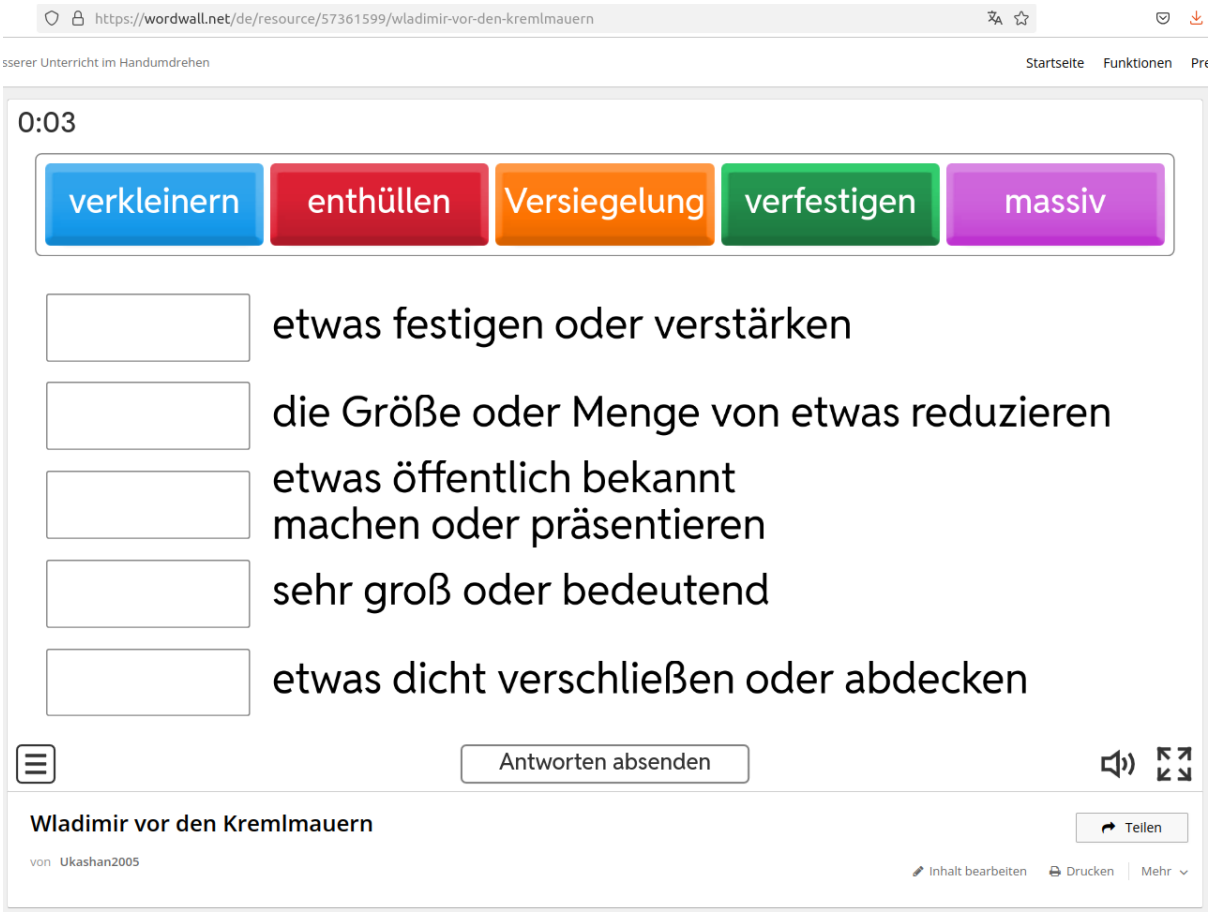


Figure 11: Interactive vocabulary exercise created with Wordwall.

Task 7

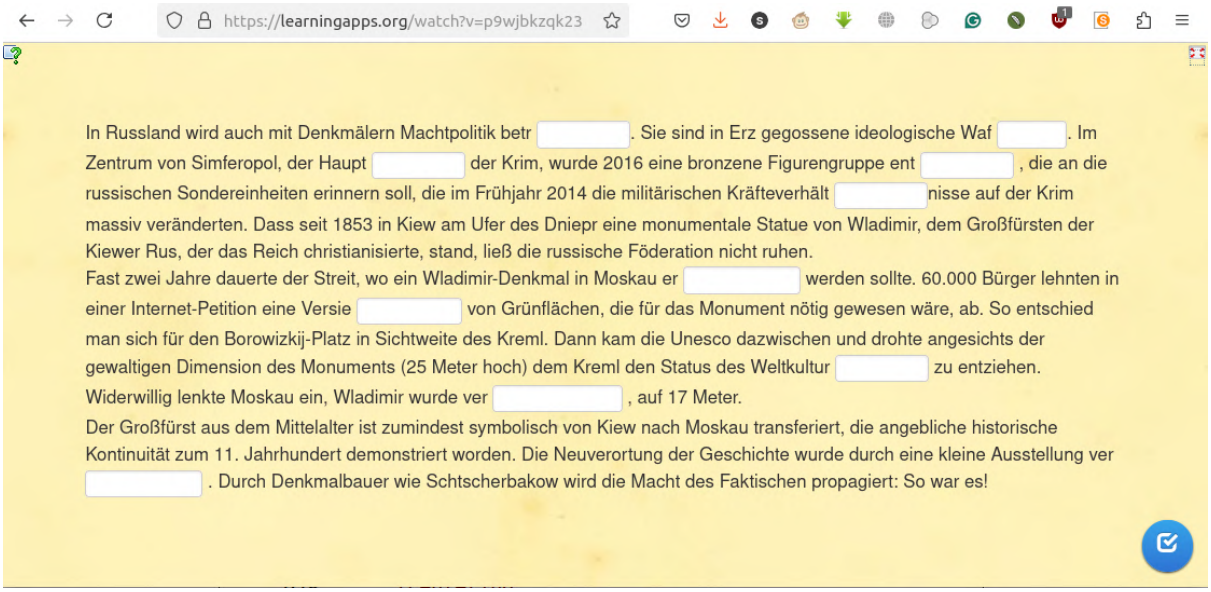


Figure 12: Gap fill exercise created with LearningApps.org.

5. Summary

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the perception of Ukrainian history and the Ukrainian language gains particular relevance especially for Ukrainian students, but also for international students learning German as a foreign language. Engaging with this conflict enables learners to reflect on their identity and national uniqueness as well as on the influence of propaganda. Especially for Ukrainians, the war has strengthened such values as national identity, love of freedom, the ability to protect home and family.

The fact that the topic of war can also find its place in foreign language teaching can be explained by the fact that foreign language teaching in the modern educational context extends beyond the mere imparting of language skills and significantly influences the personal development of learners. It is particularly important to enable learners to act independently and form their own opinions.

The use in the classroom of materials that reflect the causes and consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine represent effective pedagogical tools in foreign language teaching. This approach not only imparts language competence, but also creates a deeper understanding of social and cultural contexts.

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