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Dialects in the Current Sociolinguistic Situation in Ukraine

Abstract

The article attempts to consider Ukrainian dialects from a sociolinguistic perspective. In particular, the article describes the factors which influence attitudes to dialects and determine its level of prestige. The main factors described are Ukraine's language policy and teachers' approaches to students' language competence. The article gives examples of statements by scholars, writers, and dialect speakers about the place of dialect in literary language and in everyday communication, as well as the phenomenon of switching codes from dialect to literary language or from dialect to another language, which often causes discomfort for dialect speakers and provokes intolerance in their peers. Ways to form a positive image of dialects are proposed, which could help improve the image of the Ukrainian language. Important measures which could be taken to achieve this aim are an increase interest in the publication of dialect texts and the creation of literary works in dialect.

Keywords: dialect; literary language; sociolinguistic situation; code switching

1 Introduction

In recent years, Ukrainian linguistics has made significant progress in the study of various structural levels of Ukrainian dialects (Horof'ianiuk, 2020; Hrytsenko, 2017; IASTREMS'KA, 2021; Kobyrnka, 2020; Kolesnykov, 2015; Kovalenko, 2021; Rieger, 2017; Sabadosh, 2015; etc.). At the same time, there is a lack of works in which dialects are viewed as socially marked linguistic idioms. The study of dialect prestige and code switching, and assessments of dialect phenomena, can all expand understanding of the language situation in Ukraine, which includes 15 groups of dialects. Additionally, such study may bring us closer to solving problems related to the functioning of Ukrainian. It is noteworthy that discussions on such issues, particularly on the feasibility of using certain dialect forms and words and their further codification, repeatedly arise on the Internet. This fact indicates language consciousness and the attention to (or indifference to) dialect among Ukrainians. For example, the forms of duality which still exist in Ukrainian dialects evoke mostly positive associations in speakers, despite their non-normative nature. Consequently, speakers feel the need to preserve and use them (*Chy vzhывaïet'sia dvoïna*, 2017; *Dvi hryvni*, 2009; Luchenko-Syniavs'kyï, 2021).

It is also important to determine the factors that shape attitudes towards one's dialect and dialects in general. Such studies could explain why, according to the latest census, about 70% of Ukrainians in Ukraine consider Ukrainian to be their mother tongue, while Russian is still predominant in many cities. For example, data from the 2001 census show that 72.15% of Kyivans

consider Ukrainian to be their mother tongue (*Rozpodil naseleennia*, 2001) but at the same time, the results of a sociolinguistic study of Kyiv, conducted in 2000, showed that in everyday life 52.5% of those surveyed communicate mainly in Russian and only 14.8% communicate mostly in Ukrainian (Zalizniak & Masenko, 2001, p. 8). These data correlate with studies conducted within the INTAS project “Language policy in Ukraine: anthropological, linguistic and further perspectives” (2006–2008): the results of a nation-wide survey showed that almost half of the Ukrainian population say they prefer Russian in everyday communication (Besters-Dil’her, 2010, p. 5). More recent research has shown a positive trend in the use of Ukrainian, but it also confirms the previous conclusions about the dominance of the Russian language in the public sphere (Levchuk, 2017, p. 48).

V. Vitkovsky, one of the authors of the web platform UA.Modna, drew attention to this “strange phenomenon”: “From the time of the tsar to the present day, all censuses and polls testify to the quantitative predominance in Ukraine of persons who consider Ukrainian their native language. Why, then, are we often unable to find these numerous Ukrainian-speakers on the ground...? One of two: either local native speakers avoid appearing in public – or their Ukrainian language is exclusively ‘underground’...” (Vitkovs’kyi, 2017). The author suggested that since the question of native language did not include the question of its status, some Ukrainians may perceive the Ukrainian language “as a kind of dialect”: “an ambivalent, ‘dialect’ attitude to the Ukrainian word is traditional for the majority of Ukrainians!” (Vitkovs’kyi, 2017). To confirm or disprove this view, it is important to discover the reasons for this attitude. We can assume in advance that it may be partly due to attitudes to dialects in general. Therefore, increasing the prestige of dialects may contribute to increasing the prestige of the Ukrainian language.

2 Theoretical Basis

In Slavic linguistics, the study of the status, prestige and image of dialects and the role of language education is covered in the works of M. Krause (Krauze, 2011, p. 230), V. Podrushnyak (Krauze & Podrushniak, 2010, p. 312), L. Kalnyn (Kalnyn’, 2018, pp. 8–9), H. Krasowska (2020), H. Synowiec (2013). The shift of emphasis in dialectal issues towards the study of dialects in the sociolinguistic aspect (Kalnyn’ & Klepikova, 2004, p. 111) has led to an “expansion of methodological inventory in favour of sociolinguistic methods” (Krauze & Podrushniak, 2010, p. 353). The approaches used in sociolinguistic research can be transferred to the study of dialect versus literary language. These studies are to some extent in line with studies of the language of emigrants and issues related to language use, particularly the issue of migrants rapidly learning the language of the country of settlement on one hand while striving to preserve their native language on the other (Miodunka, 2014, p. 200). If we transfer this to the plane of dialect versus literary language, it is a question of successfully mastering the literary language on the one hand and preserving native dialects on the other. The question of whether speakers of both a dialect and a literary language are bilingual remains open to debate. The opposition of literary language and dialect is mostly considered through the model of diglossia (Krauze, 2011).

M. Krause, referring to P. Auer, cites signs of such opposition: speakers distinguish between literary language and dialect, literary language and dialect are genetically related, speakers differentiate language and dialect in terms of their functions and social prestige, etc. (Krauze, 2011, pp. 228–229). *The Encyclopaedia of the Ukrainian Language* states the opposite opinion: “Some authors wrongly expand the concept of diglossia, bringing under it the usual (for many developed languages) ratios of such language subsystems as literary, colloquial, dialectal, or two closely related languages” (Mel’nychuk, 2004, p. 141). L. Kalnyn’ makes an interesting remark when she writes that an author who includes dialect words in a literary text “from a psychological point of view manifests himself as a bilingual – in his mind one meaning corresponds to two sound images” (Kalnyn’, 1998, p. 60). H. Synowiec also writes about the dual language competence of students in dialect environments (Synowiec, 2013, p. 63).

It is important how native speakers characterize their speech. Speakers of Ukrainian dialects often call them languages (Arkushyn, 2019; Dyka, 2016; Kholod'on, 2020; Tkachuk, 2016). For example, a modern Hutsul poet Vasyl Shkurhan describes his first acquaintance with the word “dialect” in an interview: “I once heard the word ‘dialect’ in high school. I did not know, sorry, there was still a dialect. I knew it was our language...” (Vseosvita, 2020b). Speakers are aware of the difference between their dialect and literary language, as well as other languages. Accordingly, they switch codes depending on the communication situation.

It can be assumed that the guidelines of the dialect carrier when choosing a language of communication correlate with the guidelines described by sociolinguists for bilinguals. The prestige of a language is of great importance. As H. Krasowska notes, “the prestige of a language is crucial for whether it will be chosen as a means of communication... If one group willingly uses its language in another’s environment, it means that it has a high external prestige” (Krasowska, 2020, p. 17). However, it is not only the prestige of a language which determines the choice of communication. Describing the phenomenon of trilingualism among Ukrainians, P. Levchuk cites examples when speakers preserve their language and their identity: “L’s family has its own identity, it is not ashamed of its origin and its identity. The language and Polish culture did not make a significant impression on the respondents, which could lead them to change their national identity” (Levchuk, 2020, p. 204). A person chooses to use another language when the need arises (study, work, etc.), and not just because he/she recognizes another language to be more prestigious than his/her own.

This study will define dialect speakers as speakers with at least two language systems – dialectal and literary, or dialectal and colloquial Russian – who choose the language of communication depending on the situation.

The article considers the factors that have formed attitudes to dialects (language legislation, school education, etc.), situations in which dialect speakers switch to the language of the interlocutor, the psychological factors that encourage the switching of codes, and ways to promote dialects.

The research was based on interviews with scholars, writers and bloggers, and dialect records with autobiographical stories of dialect speakers. The method of autobiographical interviews is widely used in modern sociolinguistic research of Ukrainian (Levchuk, 2019, 2020; Sokolova, 2017).

3 Evaluation of Dialects and Language Legislation

The preservation of dialects largely depends on the assessment in the public consciousness of various forms of the national language. Depending on the country or historical period, this assessment may vary from viewing dialects as a phenomenon of national culture, to fighting against dialects (Kalnyn', 2018, pp. 9–10). Until recently, the latter prevailed in post-Soviet countries, and a negative attitude towards dialects was formed accordingly. In 1989 L. Kalnyn wrote: “in Russian society, territorially limited forms of language are traditionally assessed as lacking social prestige and being incompatible being educated”; “tolerance of dialects” was allowed only in the use of dialectisms in literary works on rural themes (Kalnyn', 1998, p. 58). However, in a 2018 article, the researcher stated: “The current Russian language situation is characterized by the fact that in Russian-speaking society... attitudes to dialectal forms of language are changing ... these forms of language in certain areas of communication are regarded not only as an acceptable but also as a necessary means of expression” (Kalnyn', 2018, p. 12). The main factors behind such positive changes are the use of dialectisms in literary texts, discussion of dialectal forms in the media, and so on. At the same time, the author warns against using only dialect and emphasizes that: “rural school education should focus on students’ mastery of the codified form of the Russian language.” As an alternative, L. Kalnyn cites the opinion of the prominent dialectologist L. Kasatkin: “The main goal of a teacher working in a dialect environment is to teach students the literary language. But the literary language should not displace the language they have known since childhood. The local dialect should be preserved in rural communication” (Kalnyn', 2018,

p. 12). According to L. Kalnyn, in this approach there is an attempt to create a situation which is common in German-speaking countries. Russia's language policy is aimed at maximizing the spread of the codified form of language. In particular, the Federal Law on the State Language of the Russian Federation provides for control over the use of words and expressions that do not meet the standards of the literary language (*Federal'nyi zakon*, 2005). Dialectal vocabulary not recorded in normative dictionaries may also fall under this interpretation.

In the Polish tradition, dialects are considered an important part of cultural heritage. Despite the fact that dialects have long been treated in Polish society as inferior, incorrect types of language, today researchers are witnessing an increase in the prestige of dialects (Krasowska, 2020, pp. 22–23; Synowiec, 2013, p. 51). This has been facilitated by a balanced language policy, in particular an understanding of the importance of language education, which determines how dialects will be perceived and valued by society (Synowiec, 2013). According to H. Synowiec's observations, Polish teacher training programs and textbooks of different times took into account the cultural specifics and language situations of the regions and provided basic information about Polish dialects, their relationship to the literary language, information about different dialect groups, and more. H. Synowiec cites an interesting example from a textbook of 1965, in which its author I. Bajerowa addresses students: "Do not be ashamed of your native language. Do not laugh at the rural language, but listen to it with interest and respect" (Synowiec, 2013, pp. 54–55). According to the researcher, the practice of dialectology lessons should be preserved today. There is also support for Polish dialects at the legislative level. The Act on the Polish Language contains an article on the protection of the Polish language, which includes maintaining respect for regionalisms and dialects and preventing their disappearance (*Ustawa*, 1999).

In Ukraine during the Soviet era, there were no bans on dialects in official documents, nor was there any encouragement to study them. The vision of the place of dialects in the system of the national language can be traced by the guidelines of academic publications, reference books and dictionaries. For example, in the introduction to the authoritative five-volume edition *Modern Ukrainian Literary Language* we read: "Stability, retention in language practice... of dialectal features are known to be a sign of insufficient development of general education and culture of the population"; "The great masters of the word have always opposed those narrow dialectal and slang elements that distorted literary language" (Bilodid, 1969, p. 8). The reluctance to use dialect words was intensified by normative dictionaries through a system of restrictive marks, which, as Yu. Shevelyov wrote, can easily replace each other, because "they mean nothing but that the word is not recommended" (Shevel'ov, 2008, p. 312).

Expressions such as "insufficient development of education and culture of the population", "distortion of literary language", "elements of deintellectualization" (Skopnenko & TSymbaliuk-Skopnenko, 2010, p. 376), which accompanied the assessment of dialectal phenomena, forced speakers to understand dialect as the language of uneducated and uncultured people.

In independent, post-Soviet Ukraine, dialects were talked about at the official level for the first time in the country's history. In February 2010, a decree of President Viktor Yushchenko approved the concept of a state language policy, which provided for "the research and promotion of ancient written monuments, and the preservation and study of dialects of the Ukrainian language for its development and enrichment" (*Ukaz*, 2010). This position was supported by the Law on Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language, which came into force in 2019. One of the tasks of the law is to promote "the popularization of dialects of the Ukrainian language and their preservation" (*Zakon*, 2019). Note that in the infamous Law on the Principles of State Language Policy of 2012, later recognized as unconstitutional (*Rishennia*, 2018), this rule is missing. The adoption of this law provoked mass protests throughout Ukraine over the possibility of granting official status to regional or minority languages. Indicative in this respect was the protest held in Ivano-Frankivsk entitled "Give the Hutsul dialect the status of a regional language." The protesters were outraged by the decision of the authorities and demanded that their language be recognized as an official regional language with corresponding rights. One protester said: "I want to hear the Hutsul language in Ivano-Frankivsk. Just as people in Kyiv want Russian to sound somewhere".

At the same time, the protesters are well aware that their language is a Hutsul dialect of the Ukrainian language (Telekanal NTK, 2012).

The demands for granting a dialect the status of a regional language can be seen as a warning to the authorities about the consequences of ill-considered steps in language policy. The well-known historian of language, dialectologist V. Nimchuk wrote about the inadmissibility of attempts to “create a separate norm, artificially detached from its Ukrainian roots”: “This fact prompted us to return to the problem of protecting not only our mother tongue from decline, distortion and degeneration, but also the preservation of the natural functioning and development of all Ukrainian dialects and to publish the draft statute of the Society of Admirers and Defenders of Ukrainian Dialects” (Nimchuk, 2017a, pp. 22–23). The society was registered on May 17, 2017; among its main tasks is “to warn against the creation of new literary languages on the basis of Ukrainian dialects as a threat to the unity of the nation” (Nimchuk, 2017b, p. 160).

4 The Dialect Component in Language Education

After graduating from school, Ukrainian students have almost no idea of the existence of Ukrainian dialects. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the “decline, distortion and degeneration” of dialects. According to researchers, “a negative attitude towards one’s own language is impossible in principle, but if such an assessment is formed, the language ceases to be used, i.e. it ceases to exist” (Kalnyn’, 2018, p. 9). This applies equally to dialects. Our experience of recording dialect material, as well as numerous records of students of the National University Kyiv–Mohyla Academy, confirm the thesis about the mostly positive assessment of their own speech by dialect speakers: “In our village we talked well”;¹ “Our women gather here – and you will hear their perfect dialect of Masheve” (Bidnoshyia & Dyka, 2003, p. 265). From this we can conclude that negative assessments of dialectal speech, as a rule, are formed from the outside, primarily through the school system. From this point of view, it is important to understand the requirements that guide teachers in shaping students’ language competence.

In textbooks and manuals for philology students, dialect language continues to be contrasted with literary language, emphasizing the role played by literary language – “it expresses the development of culture and civilization” (Hryshchenko et al., 2002, p. 6). This approach to some extent continues the tradition of Soviet academic publications. The Ukrainian language curriculum for secondary schools, on the basis of which school textbooks are written, does not acquaint students with Ukrainian dialects. According to the curriculum, as a result of studying the Ukrainian language, students should only be able to: distinguish between the concepts of literary language and dialects, vernacular, and jargon; “to explain the use of obsolete and dialectal words in scientific and artistic texts”; and to perceive “the use of non-standard vocabulary (Russianisms, vulgarisms, distorted words) as a manifestation of a low level of speech culture” (*Navchal’ni prohramy*, 2017). There is a danger that students, due to ignorance of dialectal features, will consider all forms other than literary language distorted. As a result, they will view their use as “a manifestation of a low level of speech culture.”

The failure to highlight the importance of preserving dialects in textbooks set teachers up to fight dialects. Hutsul poet V. Shkurhan recalls: “In elementary school the teacher, who was not from our places... said, ‘You all speak incorrectly’. And she corrected us at every step. And I brought home this information: ‘Dad, the teacher says we speak incorrectly. It is necessary to speak so and so...’ Dad got angry. He said: ‘How have we talked and understood each other without your teacher?’” (Vseosvita, 2020b). Such conflicts sometimes took on aggressive forms. O. Basyuk from the Chornobyl region described a non-local teacher who “almost whipped everyone with a pointer” so that everyone would speak Ukrainian (Bidnoshyia & Dyka, 2003, p. 369). We know of a case in which a teacher threatened a student, a speaker of the East Polesian dialect, with punishment

¹ From the record by the student of the National University “Kyiv–Mohyla Academy” Anastasia Kostenko in the village Lynovytisia, Chernihiv region.

if he said *vyn* one more time, instead of the literary *vin* ('he'). Such approaches have a negative effect, as they form in students a negative attitude towards the language of their parents. This may result in the rejection of local dialects and through association the Ukrainian language in general, as for a long time the literary language they studied at school had significant limitations in its functioning. When choosing between literary Ukrainian or Russian vernacular, preference was given to the latter.

Another important consequence of not taking dialects into account in language learning is the discomfort speakers feel when communicating with speakers from other territories. Professor V. Nimchuk mentioned this discomfort: "All my life I spoke Transcarpathian dialect with my countrymen – here, in Kyiv, Poltava or Moscow. People who are accustomed to their dialect but do not use it feel uncomfortable. In order to avoid this discomfort, something must be done" (Svitlyk, 2017). Feelings of discomfort may be exacerbated by the non-perception of speech by speakers of other idioms, including irony, laughter and the ridicule of different forms, mostly at the phonetic level. For example, speakers of the Masheve dialect in the Chornobyl district mentioned that they were laughed at by local residents when they visited neighbouring Belarusian villages. At the same time, the residents of Masheve laughed at the pronunciation of a teacher from the Poltava region, in whose speech "there was always, as we mimicked, *llykannia*" (Dyka, 2016, pp. 65–66).² To avoid awkward situations, dialect speakers in another dialectal or foreign language environment, switch to the language or dialect of the majority. An eloquent example is how girls from Chornobyl Polesia, having arrived in Kyiv in the 1950s, tried to adapt to the language of the "girls from Ukraine": "We had already learned a little to talk among the girls. There were girls from Ukraine; they said *tse* ("it"), so then we also said *tse*. But it was so funny... When I said *tse*, it wasn't funny, but when my friend from our village said *tse*, I was laughing, saying: 'You can't do it'. Funny..." (Bidnoshyia & Dyka, 2003, p. 307).

These examples indicate the need to change approaches to language education. In particular, it is necessary to provide a dialect component in school curricula.

A positive step taken towards resolving this issue is the approval of the Standard of Higher Education of Ukraine for the preparation of bachelors of philology, which provides for the "characterization of dialect and social varieties of language(s) studied, to describe the sociolinguistic situation" (*Standard*, 2019). This means that a course in dialectology is compulsory in all philology faculties. Obviously, the next step should be to make changes in school curricula, with at least the introduction of optional classes in dialectology in which students could get acquainted with the language features of their region. This would help the teachers themselves, especially in areas where dialects are significantly different from the literary language. For example, speakers of the Middle Polesian dialect noted that local teachers tried to speak standard Ukrainian in class, but spoke the local dialect during breaks. They addressed the students in "broken" Ukrainian, in which "the Polesian speech was heard" (Bidnoshyia & Dyka, 2003, p. 369). At the same time, practicing teachers warn against the forced introduction of such electives. Vasyl Zelenchuk, a dialectologist and former Ukrainian language teacher, said during a roundtable discussion on the study and promotion of the Hutsul dialect: "The introduction of electives should not be an additional burden for teachers. It must be a person who truly loves it" (Surovs'ka, 2011).

To understand the extent to which a dialect environment can influence student achievement, it is necessary to thoroughly investigate the results of the External Independent Testing in Ukrainian. According to statistics, there are significant differences between different regions. For example, regional data on the EIT results in Ukrainian language and literature obtained by graduates of general secondary education in 2021 show that the highest percentage of those who did not pass the required threshold live in the Zakarpattia (12.7%), Chernivtsi (8.1%) and Ivano-Frankivsk (7.7%) regions, compared to: Kyiv (2.6%), Sumy region (3.1%), Kharkiv region (3.6%) (*Ofitsiynyi zvit*, 2021, p. 203). We can assume that one of the reasons for such a striking discrepancy may be the strong influence of dialectal speech, as the Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Chernivtsi regions

² *Llykannia* – refers to the alveolar sound *l*, which is a characteristic feature of Poltava dialects.

have archaic dialects of that differ significantly from standard Ukrainian. This assumption could be confirmed by an error analysis of an open-ended task with a detailed written answer. Such mini-essays can most clearly show the typical mistakes that are specific to certain regions. A competent approach to teaching literary language, taking into account local language characteristics, will help improve student performance, which will in turn open up more opportunities for further study.

Emphasizing the importance of preserving dialectal diversity in teacher training programs, dialectology textbooks and school textbooks will shape positive attitudes towards dialects, which will come to be viewed as a national treasure. It will also promote tolerance and understanding of speakers from different dialect areas, and increase the prestige of both dialects and the Ukrainian language in general.

5 The Popularization of Dialects

To increase the prestige of dialects, their popularization is important. One of the most powerful factors in the popularization of dialects is the publication of works written in the dialect. L. Kalnyn wrote about the importance of dialectisms in a literary text: “Printed literary text is a constant value, the influence of which is not limited by time; it is likely that such a text will contribute to the inclusion in the linguistic experience of more and more readers the idea that dialectisms receive the status of acceptable components of literary language” (Kalnyn’, 1998, p. 67). The practice of using regionalisms and dialectisms to emphasize the colour of a particular area in the language of Ukrainian literature is quite common (Greshchuk & Greshchuk, 2015; IAvors’kyĭ, 2015; Pidkuĭmukha, 2020), but as noted by Hutsul poet V. Shkurhan, “those sprinkles are delicious, but there is no full taste” (Vseosvita, 2020b). Creative people especially feel the need to preserve their native language. The poet describes his experience of transitioning to his dialect: “It is easy to write poetry in a dialect. That is the way of thinking. I don’t just take words, I take expressions that are alive. Those expressions play, because it is a living vernacular... I consciously switched from literary language to dialectal in my time, because who if not me?” (Vseosvita, 2020b).

In recent decades, many books have appeared in Ukrainian dialects, both in Ukraine and abroad. These works can also serve as a reliable dialectological source (Hromyk & IAvors’kyĭ, 2019, p. 52). Several of the most noteworthy will now be described.

In 2007, the publication of a novel written in the Hutsul dialect became a sensation. The book in question is *Dido Yvanchik* by Petro Shekeryk-Donykiv (2020), a famous Hutsul public figure, collector of folklore and ethnographic materials, publicist and writer. The miraculously preserved manuscript of the novel, completed by the author on April 20 1940, three weeks before his arrest and exile in Siberia, fell into the hands of true patriots of the Hutsul region. They ensured that the novel became an event in the cultural life of the whole country. The work already has four editions. The last edition was published with parallel texts, the original Hutsul dialect text alongside its translation into literary Ukrainian (Shekeryk-Donykiv, 2020). Characteristically, the publishers initially advertised the publication as “bilingual”, but later abandoned the term because it does not contain two languages, but rather a dialect and literary form of one language (Vydavnytstvo, 2020). Vasyl Zelenchuk is a researcher of the language of the novel. He is a dialectologist and a speaker of the Hutsul dialect who was born and lives in the village of Kryvorivnya, not far from Shekeryk-Donykiv’s native village of Holovy, in the Verkhovyna district, Ivano-Frankivsk region) Zelenchuk told us that when compiling a glossary for the novel, he was faced with the fact that the meaning of several dozen tokens are not known by even the oldest speakers.

The novel *Dido Yvanchik* provides a deep insight into the worldview and way of life of Hutsuls and is a unique phenomenon not only in Ukrainian, but also in wider Slavic (and maybe European) culture. According to the Polish writer Stanisław Vincenz, P. Shekeryk-Donykiv “was a talented man, if not a genius, and created a work that would be the pride of native writing and a monument of the old language, which has no equal” (Pelypeiko, 2000–2001, p. 44). A real gift for connoisseurs of dialect language was a complete audiobook based on the text of the novel *Dido Yvanchik*, skillfully voiced by Vasyl Zelenchuk in 2018 (*Dido Yvanchik*, 2019).

In 2020, Olena Lototska's first prose collection *Nyni zozulia kuvala* was published in L'viv. The author organically uses the archaic Middle Polesian dialect of Dubrovyshchyna (Volyn region). In the preface, the writer explains her desire to introduce her native dialect into the literary text: "*Baten'ko, matyunka, sonen'ko, kun', plut, alye, moya lyalyen'ko, dal'bu prysyal'bu* – these are words and expressions that embroidered the history of my native land inside me. Clothes are for the body, and language is for the soul. I wanted to leave those words on paper and not as orderly columns in the dictionary of dialectisms, but to embed them in dialogues, to paint pictures of the life of fellow villagers, events" (Lotots'ka, 2020, p. 6).

Vasyl Zelenchuk agrees that fixing dialect words in dictionaries is not enough to preserve dialects: "Creating Hutsul dictionaries is like creating museums of the Hutsul dialect, and popularization should still be alive" (Surovs'ka, 2011).

A native of the Brest region, the famous dialectologist Fedir Klymchuk (1935–2018) in every way promoted his native West Polesian dialect of the village of Simonovichi. In addition to publishing lexicographic, folkloric and ethnolinguistic materials from Simonovichi, he also conducted a unique experiment in translating works of world classics into the native local dialect (excerpts from N. Gogol, L. Tolstoy, T. Shevchenko, M. Bahdanovich, R. Burns, Homer, Hilarion, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, etc.). M. Bulakhov wrote: "Emphasizing that 'folk dialects are gradually being destroyed', F. Klimchuk decided to preserve the memory of the language of his parents and ancestors by retelling the most outstanding poetic work of Ancient Rus – *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*" (Bulakhau, 2000, p. 79). In the native local dialect F. Klimchuk also wrote poetry and the novel *Ianis* (Klimchuk, 2013). He devoted about twenty years to translating the New Testament into the Simonovichi local dialect (Klimchuk, 2018).

F. Klimchuk wrote about the "peculiar healing properties of the translation" of the Gospel in his native dialect: "If at least one line was translated in the evening, then there was a wonderful productive sleep all night, a fresh head in the morning and a great mood. If I got sick, I would turn to the Gospel, translating one or two lines. The pain has passed" (Klimchuk, 2018, p. 210).

Today in the Ukrainian public space, a revival of interest in dialects can be observed: on YouTube channels dedicated to dialects (Kuznetsova, 2020; Vitkovs'kyi, 2020; Vseosvita, 2020a); on television, where songs in dialect can be heard (Holos kraïny, 2019); in feature films, which have begun to use not only individual dialectisms, but also have certain characters who speak completely in dialects (for example, the Transcarpathian border guards in Antonio Lukich's film *My Thoughts are Quiet* (Pershyi Kabel'nyi, 2019); in the tourism sector (Tanasiichuk, 2021; "Zakarpats'kyi slovnychok", 2020); and on popular video blogs, which are gaining popularity, (TSN, 2020), such as the *Baba Nyusya* project. In this, a young woman from the Ternopil region, Victoria Ilchuk, created the image of an eighty-year-old grandmother: "It becomes sad when you realize that this dialect can disappear. We understand that this generation, our grandmothers are also not eternal. If we forget, it will be lost. In my opinion, this dialect is very good" (Telekanal NTA, 2020). It is especially valuable that very young people are interested in dialects. A young blogger named Idea Oleksandrivna makes videos about dialects that are gaining thousands of views (Idea Oleksandrivna, 2021). The opinion of the writer and blogger E. Kuznetsova is correct in this regard: "It seems to me that in Ukraine this unregulated Ukrainian, which flowed into creativity and social networks, is still a certain act of liberation, freedom from this shame and humiliation... as you used to speak at home" (Kuznetsova, 2020).

6 Conclusion

In Ukraine's current language situation, an increase in the prestige of dialects can be observed. This is made evident by the great interest in Ukrainian dialects and the desire of Ukrainians to know their roots. Increasing the prestige of dialects is not related to practical needs. Knowledge of a dialect is not necessary for a future career. Instead, the growing prestige of dialects testifies to the growth of Ukrainian language consciousness and an understanding of the value of language and

its preservation. This is often associated with the preservation of the language of one's parents, or rather their dialect. This interest also refutes the erroneous conclusions of Soviet linguists that "dialectal features have lost or are losing their significance in the language practice of the middle and younger generations of Soviet people" (Bilodid, 1969, p. 8). Records of dialectal speech show that in the speech of modern Ukrainians, who are children and grandchildren of the "Soviet people", the defining features of dialects at all language levels are well preserved, which may indicate the strength of the Ukrainian language.

A review of the material confirmed that Ukrainians do not have negative attitudes towards dialect speech. Manifestations of discomfort and communication disorders occur in contact with non-speakers of dialects. This is explained by a lack of knowledge about dialects, which in turn is due to the lack of a relevant component in school curricula.

The next step in the study of dialects as a component of the sociolinguistic situation should be: to study the relationship between dialects and the standard literary language, situations of switching codes from dialect to standard Ukrainian, and from standard literary language to dialect (such cases have already been described by scholars (Chyrytsia, 2018); the question of to what extent the prestige of dialects depending on the region; emotional attitudes to dialects and how they affect the language behaviour of its speakers; and differences in language behaviour between speakers of different dialects. It is also important to determine whether speakers are aware of the difference between dialect and Surzhyk, a mixed Ukrainian–Russian sociolect (substitution of these concepts can often be observed in the eastern regions of Ukraine). Taking dialect information into account will give a more comprehensive picture of the current language situation in Ukraine.

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