

## **Abstract**

The work presents competing discourses around bilingualism that surround fluctuating national identity in Ukraine. The use of Ukrainian and Russian languages has been for a long time a highly sensitive issue, repeatedly taking shape as an instrument of political campaigns and overt propaganda, and continues to be a subject of debates and tensions. Crimean crisis and the war in the East of Ukraine are not merely clearly-cut results of Russian military strategy and aggression. Other poignant factors are: long-lasting unresolved language issues, artificially imposed linguistic monism, and conflicted national identity that constituted a conflicted form of life characteristic to Ukraine. They are attributable to centuries of particular historical development and bewildering post-Soviet heritage but constructed through Russian political propaganda and forced Ukrainian policies toward exclusion. This work explores national identity through the language situation in Ukraine to gain a holistic grasp of how exclusive Ukrainian language legislation influences the nation's cultural-linguistic settings.

The given study claims that the development of the linguistic landscape in Ukraine climaxed in a setting of de jure monolingual, yet de facto bilingual country: the new language legislation requires all Ukrainians to switch to Ukrainian. The solution was deemed effective as of the date the Crimean crisis began in March 2014, to become a cornerstone of the new Ukrainian national identity. The given study argues that the stated approach fails in the face of the number of Russian speakers in Ukraine and specifics of Ukrainian bilingualism, i.e., dominant bilinguality with prevailing mastery of one language in the circumstances of diglossia: Russian-speaking Ukrainians who are fluent in one language, communicate professionally and socially in their native language even though being bilinguals. To remain Ukrainian, those bilinguals face language attrition and the hazard of staying in the state of interlanguage as a consequence of subtractive bilinguality. Diglossic bilingualism, as long as it is a percept of traumatic events of the past enacted in the present (the case of post-Soviet republics), requires mitigation. But such abrupt mitigation as witnessed in Ukraine nowadays inflicts cognitive and cultural damage onto the already divided society.

**Key words:** bilingualism, bilinguality, national identity, Ukraine, Russia, Crimea, form of life, language.