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SHAPING THE NATIONAL LINGUISTIC IDENTITY OF TODAY'S LEARNER: STRUGGLES DURING TIMES OF CONFLICT

MOLDANDO A IDENTIDADE LINGÜÍSTICA NACIONAL DO ALUNO DE HOJE: LUTAS EM TEMPOS DE CONFLITO

FORJANDO LA IDENTIDAD LINGÜÍSTICA NACIONAL DEL APRENDIZ ACTUAL: DESAFÍOS EN TIEMPOS DE CONFLICTO

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ABSTRACT: The article explores the effects of crises—such as war, migration, and digitalization—on the development of students' national linguistic identity. Through analysis of language policy documents, statistical data, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, the study finds that in wartime, the national language is reinforced as a symbol of resistance and social cohesion. However, migration and the limited integration of digital technologies pose threats to maintaining this identity. The research shows that students' strong attachment to their national language enhances both social inclusion and vulnerability. The study offers practical contributions to language policy formation during crises and recommends pedagogical strategies to support students in preserving their linguistic identity.

KEYWORDS: National language identity. Crisis conditions. Language policy. National consciousness. Linguistic personality.

RESUMO: O artigo investiga os efeitos das crises — como guerra, migração e digitalização — na construção da identidade linguística nacional de estudantes. Por meio da análise de documentos de política linguística, dados estatísticos e entrevistas com alunos e professores, o estudo conclui que, em tempos de guerra, a língua nacional se fortalece como símbolo de resistência e coesão social. No entanto, fatores como migração e dificuldades no uso de tecnologias digitais representam ameaças à preservação dessa identidade. A pesquisa também indica que uma forte ligação dos estudantes à sua língua nacional aumenta tanto sua inclusão social quanto sua vulnerabilidade. O trabalho oferece contribuições práticas para políticas linguísticas em contextos de crise e recomenda estratégias pedagógicas voltadas à valorização e manutenção da identidade linguística dos estudantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Identidade linguística nacional. Condições de crise. Política linguística. Consciência nacional. Personalidade linguística.

RESUMEN: El artículo analiza los efectos de las crisis —como la guerra, la migración y la digitalización— en la construcción de la identidad lingüística nacional de los estudiantes. A través del análisis de documentos de política lingüística, datos estadísticos y entrevistas semiestructuradas con alumnos y profesores, el estudio concluye que, en tiempos de guerra, la lengua nacional se fortalece como símbolo de resistencia y cohesión social. Sin embargo, la migración y la limitada integración de tecnologías digitales representan amenazas para la preservación de esta identidad. La investigación muestra que una fuerte conexión de los estudiantes con su lengua nacional incrementa tanto su inclusión social como su vulnerabilidad. El estudio aporta recomendaciones prácticas para la formulación de políticas lingüísticas en contextos de crisis y propone estrategias pedagógicas que favorezcan la valorización y el mantenimiento de la identidad lingüística de los estudiantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Identidad lingüística nacional. Condiciones de crisis. Política lingüística. Conciencia nacional. Personalidad lingüística.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the national linguistic identity of students is an essential part of cultural and societal integrity, especially in conditions of war and crisis. Language plays a pivotal role in this respect: in this setting, it is both a communication tool and a driving symbol of protest and national identity. The language practices of the younger generation are influenced highly by wartime experience and are usually forced to go far beyond the borders of their native linguistic landscape. The topicality of the research is predetermined by the changes in social and communicative behavior in the period of the crisis, which redefine the identity of the students and their relation to the mother tongue.

The aim of the proposed research is to study the issue of the formation of national linguistic identity of students during wartime conditions and define the challenges and possibilities of the process. To accomplish it, a mixed-methods research design is used, which combines a thorough literature review of existing research, analysis of language policy documents in countries that had to deal with crisis, a comparison of statistical data, and the use of semi-structured interviews of students and teachers. The methodological design of the study directly translates into the objectives of the research since it offers theoretical guidance along with practical guides to enlighten and guide people on how to comprehend and deal with the construction of linguistic identity in situations of social upheaval. On a theoretical level, the research adds to the overall knowledge concerning identity formation in a crisis setting. In practice, it presents practical suggestions that educational facilities can take to help students in preserving their national language identity using specific pedagogical tools.

Literature Review

The processes of formation of the national language personality of a modern student in connection with the wartime requirements are the focus of considerable interest of scholars. For example, the recent study of Batsurovska et al. (2021) highlights the role of the competence-based environment when it comes to linguistic and cultural competences. Helal (2023) includes language planning policies and their effects on the identity of individuals experiencing a crisis, and Fox et al. (2023) describe the historical background of ENL in a multilingual environment. Burns (2024) explains that active learning methods are integrated to form language competences. Virtually, Gadakhyan et al. (2023) also discuss the functions of media technologies in second language acquisition, in the process of which distance learning becomes essential. Mezentseva et al. (2023) analyse the language etiquette of technical students, demonstrating the need to integrate a cultural component into language training. Vîlcu (2023) draws attention to the change in language style during crises, particularly the language of protests.

Other authors, such as Auganbayeva et al. (2024), emphasize the cognitive and linguistic-cultural aspects of linguistic universals that contribute to identity preservation. Cheung (2023) examines the impact of language on cultural practices, and Prempeh (2024) looks at political communications shaped by crisis. Last, using OER, Batsurovska et al. (2024) showed the importance of the teachers' attitudes towards the students' national identity. The team seeks to investigate the primary social control aspect of national solidarity concerning the formation of students' civic identity in wartime. Issues associated with civic education and educational processes form the study's main subject, emphasising ways and means of enhancing cohesiveness in a society, especially during crises. Kokarieva and Pryshupa (2022) analyse the educational information environment as a condition for successfully forming a linguistic personality. The authors emphasise the importance of information technologies and digital platforms for creating a favourable educational space that effectively develops students' language and communication skills.

Chen (2023) addresses the structure of personality through an anthropological lens, emphasising the influence of language on the formation of cognitive models. Manakbayeva (2023) examines the role of moral values in complex social systems, which is related to maintaining the national language as the basis of identity in crisis conditions. Xu (2024) analyses the logic of language exchanges in the context of student mobility, emphasising the importance of investing in linguistic entrepreneurship, which emphasises the role of the national language in a global environment. Hovhannisyan (2022) explores the architecture of linguistic identity, focusing on individual and contextual factors that influence identity in the learning process. Hanada (2022) examines international higher education and its impact on diplomacy, emphasising the language component as a means of unification. Li (2024) emphasises the impact of big data on educational models that can stimulate language development in students. Wong (2024) focuses on the importance of complex discussions about race, which can be adapted to the analysis of linguistic identity. Zhukova et al. (2023) explore teachers' digital skills during the COVID-19 pandemic, which provides a context for using distance learning to support linguistic identity. Tsybuliak et al. (2024) examine anxiety among teachers during the war, which also affects the effectiveness of students' language identity formation. We examine undergraduate motivation during the war using the work of Kuchyn et al. (2024), who discuss the use of adaptive approaches to learning. In their work, Nehrey et al. (2023) emphasise the digitalisation of Ukraine, which is connected with the initiation of new approaches to language learning.

At the same time, researchers still lack sufficient investigation of the impact of military actions on the creation of students' linguistic identity in the long term. However, the assessment of the role of these technologies in the preservation of national language identity under the conditions of migration and globalisation is still relevant.

METHODS

The mixed-methods approach taken in the study combined the analysis of documents, statistical data comparison, and the use of semi-structured interviews to learn how the crisis situation influences the national linguistic identity of students. The research design was focused on addressing macro- as well as micro-level policy impacts and learner/educator experiences.

One of the methodology elements consisted of the analysis of official records of the language policy in countries where armed conflict was observed (Ukraine, Syria, Georgia, Lebanon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The criteria of selection of these documents were the following ones: (1) the relevance of the document to the national language policy and the preservation of identity in the conditions of crisis; (2) the fact that the document was published or adopted as official within the framework of 2014-2023 as this was necessary to confirm its relevance on the modern level; (3) the possibility to find the document in official sources by governmental or educational institutions, and (4) to include the elements of measured credible, or assessed activities regarding the usage of language, education, or migration under the conditions. These records also comprised of national education strategies, language policy frameworks, reports on each of the governments and policy briefs by international organisations at work in crisis zones.

To add to the document analysis, the statistical data of the period between 2018 and 2023 was gathered to analyze the tendency of students in their intentions to use the national language during wartime. Comparative visualisations were generated to bring out cross-national differences and time dynamics.

Moreover, students and teachers residing in the affected areas were administered semi-structured interviews, which would give qualitative information concerning life experiences, linguistic usage, and perceived difficulty of sustaining language identity. The interviews aimed at examining the emotional, educational, and cultural aspects of language use were explained with the existing dimensions and analysed in a thematic way.

This synthesis of document-based, quantitative, and qualitative data allowed for a comprehensive idea of such a complex interaction of conflict, language policy, and the identity of the students. The identified methodologies helped to consider all systemic impacts as well as personal perspectives in the analysis, making the results more solid and applicable.

RESULTS

Shaping students' national and linguistic identity is one of the important tasks in learning about culture and integration in society. Especially in war, such a process encounters specific difficulties owing to social, communicative, and psychological alterations. At this time,

it also turns into the language of interaction and the tool for strengthening, defence from assimilation, and cultural identity preservation. However, several factors, such as war stress, migration, and limited access to qualitative education, contribute to this process. Now, let us talk about the primary issues.

1. In the case of stress, this will arise from psychological factors, while social factors will lead to instability. These changes are attributed to the constant psychological pressure that has resulted from the war to influence students' perspectives and attitudes about national and linguistic identity in a negative way. Zeroing in on military issues or any loss of family members or friends, or the felt insecurity or lack of security about the future, then increases levels of anxiety, and this discourages someone from learning the language or studying. That is why, in such situations, the necessity of using the national language may be considered secondary to the basic needs of human beings;

2. Migration and the danger of language loss. Interstate or international mobility of students alters the language setting where the learners find themselves. Transition to linguistic regions with another language or learning abroad results in the non-use of the first language. This leads to a greater likelihood of linguistic acculturation, less identification with native culture, and, as a result, a decline in national linguistic identity;

3. The educational infrastructures of Ukraine are similarly affected by military aggression: 3,399 schools and educational institutions among them have been completely or partially ruined since 2022 (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023). This has compelled most of the institutions to move to distance learning on an emergency basis, with fluctuating internet connections and certainly no digital equipment. An example is that in the Kherson and the Zaporizhzhia regions, many schools and universities cannot deliver even rudimentary online education because of occupation or proximity to combat areas. Students in temporarily occupied or rural locations experience not only hurdles between them and education due to logistics, but also psychological obstacles, such as fear of monitoring or persecution when speaking the national language. Also, the cultural activities, e.g., language club, literature groups, or national holiday celebrations, are disabled or shifted to virtual, which lowers the emotional investment required to continue the development of intermediate stages of language identity. Through it, the structuring of the national linguistic identity among students is interfered with both internally and emotionally.

Studying the impact of war on the formation of students' linguistic identity is an important task of modern humanities research. The peculiarities of wartime change the communicative environment, increasing young people's linguistic identification challenges. Analysing

these changes requires an interdisciplinary approach that considers both sociocultural and psychological aspects. In this context, using quantitative and qualitative methods allows us to obtain a comprehensive picture of the impact of war on linguistic identity (Table 1).

Table 1. Methods of studying the impact of war on students' linguistic personality

Method	Description	Justification for use
Questionnaire survey	Surveying students to learn about changes in their language preferences, language use and identification.	It allows us to obtain quantitative data on trends in language behaviour during war.
Semi-structured interview	In-depth individual conversations to analyse students' personal experiences in language practice.	Provides a qualitative understanding of the impact of war on linguistic identity, emotional state and motivation.
Content analysis	Analysing students' written works (essays, blogs) to identify language style and thematic preferences changes.	Reveals latent changes in language practice related to the war.
Sociometric analysis	Studying students' communication networks to determine the role of language in social interaction.	Identifies how language use changes in group interactions.

Source: developed by the author based on (Batsurovska et al., 2021; Helal, 2023; Fox et al., 2023; Mezentsseva et al., 2023)

The mixed research methods enable a more extensive evaluation of the effects of war on students' linguistic identity. Quantitative research describes changes in specific language behaviour in overall terms, while qualitative research indicates specific Language experiences. It can be concluded that only an integrated approach would make it possible to design a suggested education management aimed at preserving linguistic identity in crises. Consequently, further research should differentiate the long-term influence of war on students' language culture.

It is now necessary to dwell on changes in the formation of students' national language personalities in wartime, enhancing the functions of language as a factor of unity within the given nation.

1. During the war, the values of the national language comprised the consolidation of the people and patriotism. Students increasingly identify their mother tongue as a means of communication, an important element of self-determination, and support for national identity. This is reflected in the increased motivation to learn Ukrainian among those who did not have it as their mother tongue;
2. Language use in the context of migration. Mass migration of students within or outside the country has led to changes in language practice. On the one hand, acquiring

other languages enriches the linguistic personality. On the other hand, students in forced diaspora face the risk of assimilation and reduced use of their mother tongue, which can weaken linguistic identity;

3. Integration of digital technologies into the learning process. The transition to distance learning has stimulated the use of digital platforms that provide new opportunities for developing a linguistic personality. However, the lack of live communication significantly limits the emotional aspect of interaction with language and culture, which affects its perception;

4. The psychological impact of war on language motivation. Constant stress, uncertainty about the future, and traumatic events affect students' cognitive processes, reducing their ability to concentrate on language learning. Instead, there is a growing interest in topics related to national history, culture, and literature for emotional support;

5. Changes in language behaviour and communication style. The use of language that reflects military and crisis themes is increasing in the student environment. This creates new language patterns that include war-related slang, patriotic vocabulary, and new forms of symbolism.

Thus, the war significantly transforms the processes of forming students' linguistic identity, activating its national component. However, simultaneously, it creates risks of losing linguistic connection in the context of globalisation and migration. Further research should aim to find a balance between preserving linguistic identity and adapting to new conditions.

Let us consider the recommendations for teachers and educational institutions regarding the support of students' linguistic identity in unstable conditions (Table 2).

Table 2. Recommendations for educators and educational institutions to support students' linguistic identity in times of instability

Recommendation	Description	Expected result
Implementation of interactive learning approaches	Games, discussions, and creative tasks deepen language and cultural knowledge.	Increasing interest in the language, improving language skills, and developing critical thinking.
Supporting the national and cultural context	Integration of national literature, art, and history elements into the educational process and organisation of thematic events dedicated to the native language.	Forming an emotional connection with the national culture increases motivation to learn the language.

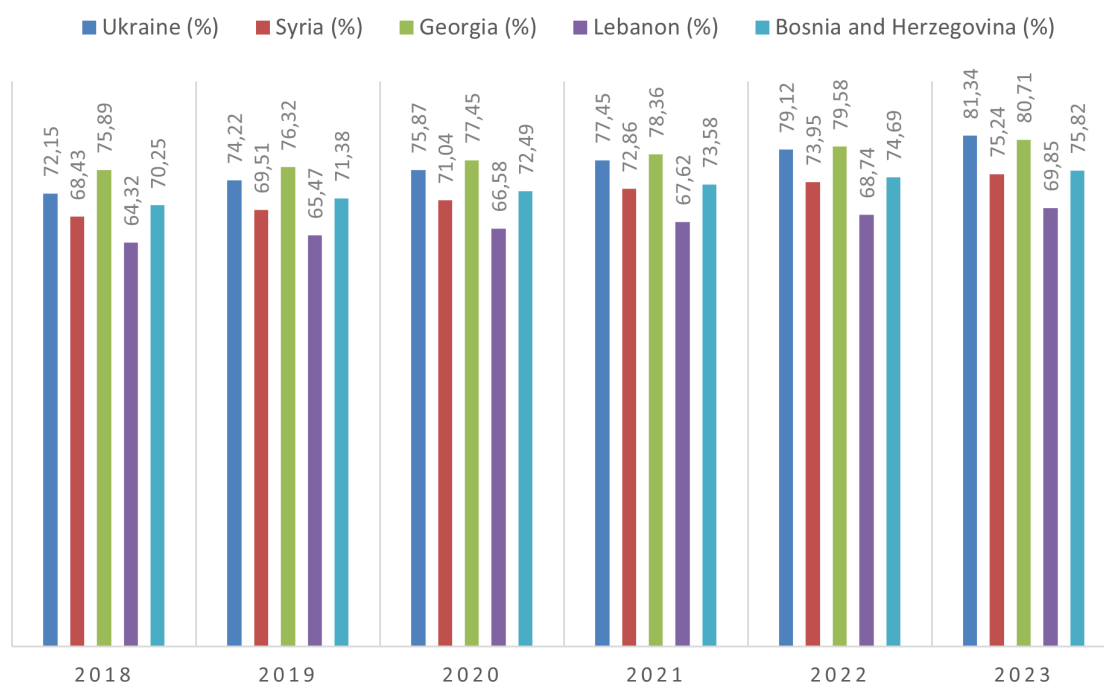
Psychological support for students	Providing stress management training and individual counselling, and creating a safe emotional environment.	Reducing anxiety and increasing students' confidence in their knowledge and skills.
Stimulating language use in real-life situations	Organising language clubs, debates, excursions, and practical tasks for using the language in real communication situations.	Improving language skills and developing confidence in communicating in your native language.
Integration of digital technologies	Using online platforms to create interactive learning materials, language tests, and virtual tours.	Increasing the accessibility of learning and developing an interest in language improvement through innovative solutions.
Supporting students in the diaspora	Providing access to educational materials in their native language, organising online courses, and supporting students abroad.	Preserving the linguistic identity of students who are outside their native language environment.

Source: developed by the author.

One of the key functions of the contemporary educational process is forming students' language identity in crises. Some of the challenges with wartime include the displacements of people, social deconstruction, and psychological coercion, all of which affect the linguistic identity of a given nation. The national language turns into a language with communicative values and a symbol of unity and cultural defiance. It is possible to identify typical and specific features of students' linguistic identity construction in a crisis context, based on an analysis of foreign experiences. This makes it possible to elaborate effective strategies for enhancing the linguistic identity of youths.

The comparative analysis of the formation of students' linguistic identity in the context of the crisis (2018–2023) is given in Figure 1. The data reflects the percentage of students who actively use the national language in times of crisis. The research methodology included an analysis of documents reflecting the language policy of countries in crisis. Semi-structured interviews with students and teachers allowed us to identify individual approaches to preserving linguistic identity. A comparative analysis of statistical data from Ukraine, Syria, Georgia, Lebanon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed common trends and specific differences. Data visualisation, as shown in the graphic, contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of change.

Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the formation of students' linguistic identity in the context of the crisis (2018–2023)



Note. The data reflects the percentage of students who actively use the national language in times of crisis.

Source: calculated by the author.

The dynamics of the percentage of students actively using the national language in times of crisis show a steady increase in all the countries under consideration. In 2018, the highest rate was observed in Georgia (75.89%), while the lowest was in Lebanon (64.32%). Ukraine ranked in the middle with 72.15%, demonstrating students' strong attachment to the national language even in times of instability. During 2019-2020, there was a gradual increase in the use of the national language in all countries. For example, in Syria, the increase over this period was 2.61% (from 68.43% to 71.04%), which may be attributed to the growing role of language in social cohesion amid military conflict. Ukraine showed an increase of 3.72% over the same period (from 72.15% to 75.87%), which is explained by the growing national identity of students. In 2021-2022, the trend towards growth continued, although the pace slowed slightly. The most significant increase was observed in Ukraine, where the indicator increased from 77.45% to 79.12% (+1.67%). This indicates the active work of educational institutions and society in maintaining linguistic identity amid the war. Lebanon also showed a steady increase (+1.12%), indicating efforts to preserve the national language among young people. In 2023, the highest rates were observed in all countries. Ukraine reached 81.34%, the highest result for the entire period. This reflects the effectiveness of the measures taken to support the national language in the face of the ongoing crisis. In Georgia, the increase for 2018-2023 was

4.82% (from 75.89% to 80.71%), demonstrating a stable focus on language policy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the indicator increased by 5.57% (from 70.25% to 75.82%), indicating students' active language integration.

In general, the data analysis shows a steady trend towards an increasing role of the national language among students in the countries under consideration. The growth, although varying in pace, indicates that the national language is becoming an important factor in maintaining young people's identity in times of crisis. The fastest growth was observed in Ukraine, underscoring the importance of the national language as a symbol of unity in wartime.

DISCUSSION

The study results demonstrate that the formation of a modern student's national language personality in wartime is a multidimensional process influenced by sociocultural, psychological, and educational factors. For example, the increase in motivation to learn the mother tongue noted in Burns' (2024) study is consistent with our conclusion that the role of the national language as a symbol of consolidation is growing. At the same time, Helal (2023) and Mezentseva et al. (2023) point to the risk of assimilation associated with migration, which is also supported by the findings of a decrease in the practical use of the mother tongue in the diaspora. However, data on the growing role of digital platforms in maintaining linguistic identity (Zhukova et al., 2023; Nehrey et al., 2023; Shkilna & Zhurba, 2023) show a mixed picture. On the one hand, digital tools increase the accessibility of learning, but on the other hand, the lack of live communication limits emotional engagement with language and culture. This creates a debate about the effectiveness of such platforms in a crisis.

Contrasting the results of our study with the opinions of other authors, such as Xu (2024) and Hovhannisyan (2022), who emphasise the importance of intercultural interaction for the development of linguistic identity, suggests that a multilingual environment can contribute to the enrichment of linguistic experience, but at the same time reduce the emphasis on the mother tongue. The findings partially confirm the hypothesis that wartime activates national linguistic identity, but the challenges associated with migration and digitalisation pose risks to its maintenance. Comparison with Cheung (2023) and Vîlcu (2023), who consider language a means of protest and cultural symbolism, shows similar trends in different crisis contexts.

One limitation of this study is the limited timeframe of the analysis, which does not allow for an assessment of the long-term effects. In addition, the study focuses mainly on the Ukrainian context, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. For further research, conducting a longer-term analysis and exploring the possibilities of integrating innovative approaches to maintaining national linguistic identity in the context of globalisation is

recommended. The study's practical significance lies in developing adaptive educational strategies to support linguistic identity in crises.

CONCLUSION

A complex problem of the development of the national language personality of the students in times of war should be resolved with the help of combining sociocultural, psychological, and technological solutions. The study has proven the fact that the situation of crisis strengthens the urge to maintain use of national language, but, at the same time, creates risks of linguistic assimilation because of migration processes, as well as spread of international languages in online environments. On this basis, our attitude to the improvements is done on the following recommendations to educational institutions, basing on the findings:

- 1) Language institutionisation: Educational policy should integrate national literature, narration, and student-based discussion of cultural memory into the curriculum to support stronger emotional connections to mother tongue and their national identity and especially in cases of displaced students;
- 2) Establish secure cyber language environments: Establish online moderated forums (e.g. virtual rooms, discussion boards, creative writing blogs) in which the application and use of the national language by the students is unrestricted and without the taint of political and cultural imposition;
- 3) Making teacher training on crisis pedagogy a priority: Prepare instructor to use trauma-informed teaching and strategies to combine national language teaching and psychological resilience building;
- 4) Work with the satellite language programs to support diaspora students: Introduce online courses of language maintenance, native language tutoring, and cultural mentorship projects aimed at Ukrainian students living abroad to avoid language loss in the diaspora;
- 5) Strengthen community-based learning paradigm: Promote relationships with cultural organisations, local libraries and NGOs to establish mobile language groups, participatory heritage work, and civil initiatives led by peers in the national language, most notably in conflict-prone areas;
- 6) Monitor and address the patterns of language identity: Assess and analyze the use of languages by students, their motivation, and emotional attachment to their native language regularly to adjust their teaching strategy and the way an institution addresses language identity.

These provisions go beyond responding to national retention of language within periods of instability and they can also give the students an ability to internalise language as a kind of cultural agency and strength. To achieve its long-term efficacy, studies need to be conducted in the future on the effects of these interventions in terms of an enhanced civic engagement, academic performance, and psychological well-being of students.

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