

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	The political ideology in the clash of cultures
Author of the thesis:	Kateryna Oliynyk
Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):	Prof. Eva Eckert, Ph.D.

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings

Kateryna Oliynyk's thesis represents an excellent contribution to the field of language policy. Namely, she demonstrates how a political regime of Ukraine takes advantage of the power of language to nationalize its state.

1) Theoretical background:

KO demonstrates a superb knowledge of theoretical literature covering the fields of nation building, nationalism and nationalization; language ideology; and language and its power to manipulate the public. She competently applies her knowledge in the analysis of the ongoing power struggle in Ukraine. The forte of her study is that she managed to disclose the strategies of using language per se and Ukrainian language in particular as a tool of political manipulation as well as its target.

2) Contribution:

KO's analysis of the theoretical literature framing her thesis strikes me as solid. Kateryna speculates about relevance of the available theories defining what nations are and how they are constructed, and ponders the question whether the definitions and constructions continue to be relevant to particular political contexts of the 21st century Europe. She does not hesitate to cast doubt over certain theoretical interpretations, justly highlights others and links them to historical contexts and political situations. She also questions the actual role of language in contemporary processes of nation-building in light of theoretical evaluations and defends the role of language through the analysis of how Ukrainian language operates in the linguistic space of Ukraine where it is shared with Russian and numerous minority languages. In sum, she is superbly capable of interpreting, questioning and applying the theories to her case study detailing the pragmatics of today's re-constitution of the Ukrainian nation-state.

Kateryna answers her question whether language continues to form a nation's core by analyzing specific language behaviors of Ukrainian political leaders, i.e., their symbolic usage and knowledge of the Ukrainian language. Namely, she explains how Ukraine's leadership instrumentalized language to advance Ukrainian nationalism, to the disadvantage of its speakers and neglect of the country's multilingualism. Kateryna further identifies weaknesses of Ukraine's nation-building strategy based in the propaganda of nationhood and embeds her reasoning in Brubaker's theoretical writings.

What I see as a critical contribution is that Kateryna highlights two shortcomings in language politics of Ukraine. First, that the leadership considers the linguo-political space homogeneous culturally and linguistically, due to the incorrect but common presupposition that nation-states are "naturally" homogeneous and that such homogeneity is normal and normative. Although many European nation-states operate through the same presupposition, they don't have so much to gain and lose. Consequently, this presupposition exposes Ukraine to a major uncertainty and risks involved in the nation-building. Second, that the leadership underestimates the political potential of its minorities (last counted in the 2001 population census), counts them into the nation only on paper and does not use their numerical support to invigorate the Ukrainian national idea (cf. nation-building in Czechoslovakia in 1918). The reason for this "ignorance" is, as Kateryna emphasizes,

that they speak Russian, which is the natural outcome of the decades of sovietization. In the political climate of today's Ukraine Russian is ideologized as the non-national language, despite its vigorous presence and usage. As Kateryna summarizes the situation, the minorities in Ukraine may speak Russian but do not possess Russian "nationality" in the sense of shared mentality (cf. writings of the Russian historian Zubov) and historical awareness. The numerical data reveal that Ukraine forms a multilinguistic and multiethnic state where over ten different minorities reside (she properly refers to Brubaker's definition of national minority here). She points out low self-identity of the minorities who externalize their identity by speaking Russian although they may be ethnically Armenian, Hungarian or other. Blinded by their power struggle, Ukrainian leaders have failed to offer a Ukrainian identity to these minorities in exchange for their support and digital presence on the Ukrainian side of the political conflict. Kateryna further supports her finding through the data of a public opinion poll. In Conclusion Kateryna appropriately summarizes her discussion, ties all the strands of Ukrainian multilingualism cf. politics of identity together and offers sensible recommendations.

What I'd like to see added is an actual analysis of events and texts in which Ukrainian language was used as an instrument of state nationalization to which Kateryna refers throughout the thesis. I'd likewise consider an account of speakers' language choices across diverse domains of usage relevant and revealing of the language distribution in the Ukrainian cultural and political space. In my opinion, the thesis is suitable for publication in a relevant scholarly journal, once stylistically and theoretically adjusted to suit a particular readership and publication requirements.

3) Methods: Kateryna provided a qualitative analysis framed by relevant theories and drew on statistical and public opinion data to support her analysis.

4) Literature: Kateryna draws on reliable and relevant sources in her discussion of literature.

5) Manuscript form: The thesis is suitably organized. The language is appropriate in style but shows an occasional weakness in English fluency although the ideas intended are formulated properly most of the time.

Suggested question for the defense: In your opinion, do Ukrainian policy makers neglect the actual distribution of languages across the Ukrainian nation-state because of the ideology that nation-states need to be monolingual in order to form a cohesive community, or are the policy makers blinded by the doctrine of Ukrainian identity? In what specific ways is this doctrine evident in political speeches and behaviors? Should the relevant political speeches be subjected to a critical discourse analysis, in your estimate, and what findings would you expect to get?

I recommend the thesis for final defence. I recommend the following grade: "2+"

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	16
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	87
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	2+

DATE OF EVALUATION: 15 August 2016

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading	US grading
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	2	= good	= B
51 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	3	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	4	= fail	= not recommended for defence