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## Lexical interference between Ukrainian and Russian in the speech of Sevastopol residents

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### Abstract

This article examines the persistence and functions of Ukrainian lexical elements in the Russian-language speech of Sevastopol residents against the backdrop of shifting language policies and political transformations. The research problem arises from an observable paradox: although Ukrainian was widely resisted as a language of everyday communication during the period when Sevastopol belonged to Ukraine, elements of Ukrainian vocabulary nevertheless became embedded in local speech through prolonged exposure to media, education, and bureaucratic discourse. After 2014, when Ukrainian disappeared from official domains, some of these lexical elements continued to be used in everyday interaction. Over time, however, these traces have begun to fade, making it important to document them as residual linguistic phenomena. The aim of this study is to systematize the Ukrainian lexical elements present in the Russian speech of Sevastopol residents and to identify their sociolinguistic functions. The data were obtained through surveys and interviews, on the base of which a corpus of approximately 150 Ukrainian words and expressions was compiled. The corpus was analyzed using the methods of thematic classification, and functional-pragmatic analysis in order to determine patterns of distribution and communicative motivation. The results demonstrate that even language policies that fail to produce large-scale language shift can leave lexical residues in everyday speech. Ukrainian expressions persisted as tools of communicative efficiency, emotional expression, quotation, irony, and group identity. The study contributes to sociolinguistic theory by emphasizing that language policy outcomes must be evaluated not only through institutional indicators but also through everyday linguistic practices, where ideology, habit, and memory intersect.

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian language, Russian language, language policy, language ideology, lexical persistence, identity*




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## Украинско-русская лексическая интерференция в речи жителей Севастополя

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**Аннотация**

В данной статье исследуются устойчивость и функции украинских лексических элементов в русскоязычной речи жителей Севастополя на фоне смены языковой политики и политических трансформаций. Исследовательская проблема возникает из рассматриваемого парадокса: несмотря на то, что повседневное общение на украинском языке в период, когда Севастополь входил в состав Украины, вызывало широкое сопротивление, элементы украинской лексики все же укоренились в местной речи благодаря длительному воздействию медиа, образования и бюрократического дискурса. После 2014 г., когда украинский язык полностью исчез из официальных сфер, некоторые из этих лексических элементов продолжали автоматически использоваться в повседневной коммуникации. Однако со временем эти следы начали исчезать, поэтому важно зафиксировать данные остаточные языковые явления. Цель настоящего исследования — выявить и систематизировать украинские вкрапления в русской речи севастопольцев, а также описать их социолингвистические функции. На основе анализа данных, полученных с помощью опросов и интервью, был составлен корпус из 150 украинских слов и выражений. Для анализа корпуса и определения моделей употребления и коммуникативной мотивации использованы методы тематической классификации и функционально-прагматического анализа. Результаты демонстрируют тот факт, что даже языковая политика, которая не приводит к масштабному сдвигу в языке, может оставлять лексические следы в повседневной речи. Украинские выражения сохранились как инструменты коммуникативной емкости, эмоциональности, цитирования, иронии и групповой идентичности. Исследование вносит вклад в социолингвистическую теорию, подчеркивая, что результаты языковой политики должны оцениваться не только через институциональные показатели, но и через повседневные речевые практики, где пересекаются идеология, привычка и историческая память.

**Ключевые слова:** украинский язык, русский язык, языковая политика, языковая идеология, лексическая устойчивость, идентичность

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## 1. Introduction

The study of language functional and regional characteristics has become a central concern across sociolinguistics, anthropology, and political science. Language variability in a given historical moment is no longer seen merely as surface change; rather, it is treated as evidence of a language's cognitive vitality, adaptive potential, and social reach across strata and space. Contemporary scholars argue that shifts in vocabulary, distribution and function reflect not only internal linguistic dynamics but also changing socio-cultural environments and political projects that redefine what counts as legitimate speech.

Two closely intertwined concepts organize much of the recent works on the politics of language: language policy and language ideology. Although often used together, these concepts highlight distinct levels of analysis. *Language policy* refers to institutionalized decisions and measures (legal, administrative, educational) that regulate the status, domains, and uses of one or more languages in a territory (Barakos 2016, Shmidt 2006, Spolsky 2019). *Language ideology* designates the system of beliefs, values, and representations about languages shared by social groups, which shape perceptions of prestige, authenticity, and belonging (Sergeant 2009, Silverstein 1979, Woolard 1998, 2021). Crucially, a third phenomenon — *language activity* (or grassroots language activism) — links the two: bottom-up practices and campaigns that transform ideological commitments into social pressures and, potentially, into policy change (Combs & Penfield 2012, De Korne 2021, Du Plessis 2006, Nurutdinova, Khanova & Mustafina 2022).

One of the most striking recent examples of language policy failure is the attempt to impose Ukrainian in Sevastopol during the first decade of the 21st century (prior to 2014). The city's response illustrates how historical identity, local ideology, and deliberate forms of language activity can render top-down language engineering ineffective. Sevastopol's particular trajectory helps explain this resistance. Founded in 1783 as a naval base by Catherine the Great, the city developed a distinctive political and cultural orientation. As one of the key southern Russian ports, it inevitably attracted communities of different ethnic groups and a variety of linguistic influences. During the Soviet period, however, Sevastopol preserved the special administrative status of a closed military base, with Russian as the sole official language. Although Crimea as a whole was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954 due to Khrushchev's territorial reorganization, Sevastopol maintained a unique civic profile and a population whose everyday linguistic behavior remained predominantly Russian. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimea became part of independent Ukraine, and the new state began enforcing its language policy.

Throughout stable historical connections mixed varieties of Russian and Ukrainian appeared in some regions. Well known "*surzhyk*", commonly defined as a hybrid or mixed speech combining elements of Ukrainian and Russian, has been stigmatized in both Ukraine and Russia: in Ukraine, as a "chaotic, destructive hybrid" undermining the literary norm of the state language, and in Russia, as

evidence of incomplete assimilation or linguistic interference (Del Gaudio 2015: 216). However, Sevastopol's residents broadly rejected Ukrainian in daily speech, preserving Russian as the language of communal life. The state's attempts at imposed language change therefore produced limited behavioural change and, importantly, became one of the grievances that fed political realignment in 2014. Since that year, the Ukrainian language has almost completely disappeared from Sevastopol's public sphere (television, advertising, signs, documentation), however, some Ukrainian words continue to be used in colloquial speech by the city residents.

The case shows how policy, when unanchored in local ideology and practice, can fail — and how such failure can have deep political consequences. At the same time, traces of such policies can reshape local language ideology and yield unpredictable outcomes. The relevance of this research stems from Sevastopol's position under constant political and scholarly scrutiny, yet with insufficient coverage of its internal linguistic dynamics. Because the city is perceived internationally as a contested territory, accounts of its language situation are often framed through geopolitical narratives rather than empirical observation. This study addresses that gap by tracing how, despite resistance to imposed Ukrainization, certain Ukrainian words became embedded in everyday communication, and how in the post-2014 period these remnants tend to disappear. Sevastopol thus emerges as a unique case where linguistic processes are better understood not as instruments of politics, but as consequences of geopolitical transformations. The immediate aim is to identify frequent lexical items of Ukrainian origin in the everyday speech of Sevastopol residents and to analyze the historical, social, and ideological motives behind their continued use.

#### Research questions

Which Ukrainian lexical elements persist in the everyday Russian-language speech of Sevastopol residents?

Which thematic domains show the highest degree of lexical retention?

What communicative and pragmatic functions do Ukrainian-origin lexical items perform in everyday speech?

What sociocultural factors contribute to the persistence of these lexical elements despite changes in language policy?

## 2. Theoretical framework

Definitions of language policy vary depending on disciplinary approach, yet they generally converge on two central claims. At its core, language policy can be understood as a system of state regulation in the sphere of language and education, encompassing a set of principles, practices, and institutional mechanisms designed to address language-related issues within a society (Sokolovskiy & Filippova 2018). In this sense, language policy is not limited to abstract declarations but involves deliberate planning aimed at organizing the functional distribution of languages across social domains. Such planning typically includes the allocation of languages

to specific spheres of communication — public administration, education, political activity, and social institutions — reflecting broader patterns of social organization (Kanevskiy 2015, Spolsky 2019).

A further important theoretical dimension concerns the relationship between formal regulation and lived linguistic practice. Language policy operates not only through administrative decisions but also through the interaction between language use, cultural expectations, and institutional authority. As a result, policy outcomes depend on how official norms are interpreted and enacted within everyday communicative environments rather than on legal prescriptions alone (Combs & Penfield 2012). This complexity is reinforced by the multilevel nature of governance: language policy is shaped simultaneously by central, regional, and local authorities, whose interests and priorities may diverge significantly (Borisova 2021). Consequently, language policy also includes decisions concerning the symbolic and functional status of languages, the maintenance of dominant codes in key public domains, and the management of linguistic diversity through the regulation of minority or regional languages (Barakos 2016, Shmidt 2006).

Beyond its formal definition, language policy is not purely a technocratic endeavor. It intersects with broader projects of nation-building, socio-economic agendas, and political struggles (Blommaert 2010, Shmidt 2006, Spolsky 2019). Consequently, policy involves not only the state but also a plurality of actors, including parliamentary elites, administrative bodies, educational institutions, expert communities, civil society organizations, and grassroots groups. This multiplicity of participants reflects the complex nature of policy implementation, where formal decisions are interpreted and negotiated across different institutional and social levels (Spolsky 2019). In the Russian scholarly tradition, this diversity of actors has been emphasized as a key factor shaping policy outcomes, particularly through the role of non-state participants such as journalists, migrants, and non-governmental organizations, who influence how official measures are practically used (Sokolovskiy & Filippova 2018).

Scholars have also conceptualized language policy outcomes as ranging along a continuum from constructive to destructive models. Constructive measures are designed to expand the domains of minority or regional languages, for example through bilingual schooling, official recognition, or targeted media support. Switzerland provides a paradigmatic example: the recognition of German, French, and Italian as equal official languages, supported by federal institutional arrangements, has enabled the maintenance of linguistic pluralism under stable political conditions (Tyuleneva 2023). By contrast, destructive measures aim at linguistic unification and the reduction of diversity. The historical French project of linguistic standardization, initiated in the early modern period and intensified in the nineteenth century, marginalized regional languages such as Breton and Occitan, demonstrating how legislation and education can be mobilized for national consolidation with long-term sociolinguistic consequences (Gulinov 2011).

Ukraine's post-1991 trajectory provides a more recent example. The adoption of Ukrainian as the sole state language was intended to consolidate national identity, but in predominantly Russian-speaking regions the policy often provoked resistance. In Sevastopol, for instance, schools were formally required to shift to Ukrainian, yet in practice they struggled: there were too few competent teachers, and parents resisted reorienting children's education. As a result, what emerged was not full Ukrainianization but a situation of receptive bilingualism: residents passively understood Ukrainian, partly due to its presence on television and in print, but continued to use Russian as their active, communal language. This mismatch between state instruments and local practices illustrates how policy without adequate social grounding may lead to unintended outcomes (Csernicskó 2011).

Language ideologies constitute another crucial component of the theoretical framework, complementing the institutional dimension of language policy. They refer to systems of belief, value, and representation that communities hold about languages and their speakers. In sociolinguistic theory, ideologies are commonly understood as interpretive frameworks through which speakers rationalize and justify language use. These function as a bridge between linguistic practices and structures of political and economic power, shaping how people perceive prestige, legitimacy, and social hierarchy (Blommaert 1999, Seargeant 2009, Silverstein 1979, Woolard 1998). Ideologies also tie closely to historical memory, identity narratives, and geopolitical affiliations. Together, these factors influence where particular languages end up within public discourse and collective consciousness (Barakos 2016, Shmidt 2006, Tyuleneva 2023).

One needs to distinguish language ideology from language attitudes, though the two are related. Language ideology refers to broad, often institutionalized systems of belief about language. Attitudes, by contrast, involve more immediate cognitive-affective dispositions — that is, knowledge, evaluation, and behavioral intention (Seargeant 2009). This distinction helps explain why language behavior varies from one community to another. Research on language attitudes identifies three interrelated components: the cognitive (awareness and knowledge of a language), the affective (emotional evaluation and perceived prestige), and the conative (intention or willingness to use a language in communication) (Khilkhanova 2022). Both ideology and attitudes play a decisive role in shaping policy outcomes, since formal regulations become effective only when they resonate with speakers' perceptions and motivations.

This distinction helps explain situations in which formal policy measures do not result in observable shifts in language use (Seargeant 2009). For example, in Sevastopol many residents had a good passive knowledge of Ukrainian, acquired through schooling and regular exposure to television and public communication. At the same time, emotional attitudes and everyday language habits were largely oriented toward Russian, which was closely tied to daily interaction and local identity. As a result, Ukrainian words occasionally appeared in colloquial Russian, most often as ironic insertions, expressive elements, or memorable phrases, rather

than as a basis for a broader shift in language use. This situation shows that lexical borrowing can occur without deeper changes in overall language behavior.

Instead of viewing language processes as a simple linear chain (policy → practice), recent research tends to describe them as a dynamic interaction between institutional regulation and social perception. Language ideologies provide the normative and perceptual background through which policy initiatives are interpreted, contested, or reinterpreted, while policy itself contributes to the reshaping of ideological repertoires through education, administrative procedures, and media discourse (Barakos 2016, Woolard 2021). Within this framework, models linking language prestige, domains of use, and policy regimes become particularly relevant. Where a language is perceived as prestigious and widely used in public domains, policy tends to reinforce its position. Conversely, where prestige is limited and use is restricted to symbolic or private contexts, policy interventions are less likely to achieve sustained behavioral change (Tyuleneva 2023).

This model can be applied to the current case. Formally, Ukrainian occupied the official status of the state language, yet in Sevastopol, the ideology clashed with its instruments. The city's residents could passively follow Ukrainian-language news or films, but when cinema screenings were mandated exclusively in Ukrainian, audiences simply stopped attending. Here, the issue was not comprehension (understanding was high), but hearing familiar films dubbed into Ukrainian provoked irony or even ridicule. Another example lies in bureaucratic practice. Official documents in Sevastopol were issued in Ukrainian, and residents became adept at navigating Ukrainian terminology in paperwork, often with a dose of humor, while maintaining Russian as their everyday language. Such cases illustrate how policy instruments may persist on paper while being reinterpreted through local ideological frames.

The practical channel through which ideology exerts pressure on policy is commonly conceptualized as language activism. It has been defined as purposeful action aimed at influencing language practices and institutional arrangements (Combs & Penfield 2012). Researchers describe activism as encompassing diverse forms, including the production of educational materials, public advocacy, media initiatives, and institutional lobbying (De Korne 2021, Du Plessis 2006). In many international contexts, activism has supported the revitalization of minority languages, as seen in regions such as Wales or Catalonia, where sustained social engagement led to significant policy adjustments. In the Russian Federation, initiatives related to Tatar and other minority languages have similarly combined grassroots activity with legal advocacy (Nurutdinova et al. 2022).

In Sevastopol, however, activism assumed a markedly different form. Rather than organized campaigns aimed at promoting a particular language, local responses were primarily expressed through everyday communicative choices. This pattern can be described as negative activism — a form of implicit resistance in which speakers do not openly challenge policy but gradually neutralize its practical effects by continuing to use their preferred language in daily interaction. Such

behavior did not abolish policy formally, yet it limited its effectiveness by preventing its full reproduction in routine communicative practice.

Comparative research identifies different regime logics of language policy. Ethnic-federal pluralism, exemplified by Switzerland, recognizes multiple official languages tied to territorial units and sustains them through federal guarantees. Unitary monolingualism privileges a single national tongue, as in the French case, where centuries of state standardization marginalized regional varieties. Mixed or incremental regimes fall in between: the United Kingdom's gradual accommodation of Welsh after centuries of marginalization demonstrates how activism and shifting ideology can transform policy over time (Tyuleneva 2023). Ukraine attempted to shift from a *de facto* bilingual reality toward a unitary monolingual regime. In Sevastopol, this abrupt transition clashed with entrenched local ideology, producing not integration but polarization. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives offer a framework for analyzing the Sevastopol case. They illuminate how policy instruments, ideological commitments, and everyday practices interact to shape linguistic outcomes. They also clarify why official Ukrainization measures failed to produce sustained language shift, leaving behind instead a stratum of Ukrainian lexical borrowings embedded in Russian speech.

### 3. Data and methods

The study uses a corpus-based approach to examine how Ukrainian lexical elements persist in everyday Russian speech among Sevastopol residents. The methodology combines quantitative processing, thematic classification, and functional-pragmatic analysis — in order to identify distribution patterns of Ukrainian-origin items and the communicative factors behind their use. This setup makes it possible not just to list specific lexical units, but to interpret them within actual everyday communication practices. The empirical material comes from semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey conducted via Yandex Forms. The interviews collected information on individual language biographies, attitudes toward Ukrainian lexical elements, and perceived communicative functions.

Yandex Forms ensured broad survey accessibility and anonymity across different demographic groups. This qualitative component allowed the study to capture personal experiences, intergenerational transmission patterns, and the emotional or symbolic meanings that speakers attach to Ukrainian expressions. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions, providing a basis for quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation alike. Lexical material was processed by compiling a corpus of Ukrainian-origin words and expressions reported by respondents. Frequency of occurrence was calculated for each item, resulting in a structured inventory of the most recurrent borrowings in the everyday Russian speech of Sevastopol residents. Statistical processing was carried out using the analytical tools built into the Yandex platform.

The study involved 157 respondents with varying demographic characteristics: age groups (18–23, 24–35, 36–45, 46–60, and over 60), education levels (secondary, vocational, higher, and postgraduate), and a balanced gender distribution. Importantly, the study did not directly measure levels of bilingualism or multilingual competence of the respondents. However, according to historical and sociolinguistic context of Sevastopol, it can be assumed that the respondents are Russian-speaking with passive familiarity with Ukrainian. This can be explained by the general linguistic situation of Sevastopol, which is characterized by a predominantly Russian-speaking environment. The population is ethnically diverse, with Russians forming the majority (70–80%). As a result, Russian functions as the primary language of everyday communication, while Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar are present only in limited and regionally specific contexts (Kashirina 2019).

The main stratifying variable was length of residence in Sevastopol. Respondents indicated whether they had lived in the city for less than ten years or more than ten years. This criterion was used to distinguish long-term residents from those who moved to Sevastopol after its reintegration into the Russian Federation in 2014. Given the city's significant demographic transformation (its population increasing from approximately 380,000 before 2014 to around 550,000 by 2024) this variable was essential for differing linguistic environments. The final analytical sample consisted of 109 long-term residents, while responses from 48 newcomers were excluded from the core analysis to ensure focus on the stable linguistic environment of the city. This decision was motivated by the need to focus on one relatively stable language community and the fact that more recent arrivals are likely to have been socialized in different linguistic environments, which could affect the presence and functions of Ukrainian lexical elements in their speech.

The questionnaire contained the following components:

1. Sociodemographic information (age, gender, education).
2. Length of residence in Sevastopol (less/more than 10 years).
3. Language behavior: whether respondents use Ukrainian words or expressions in everyday Russian speech.
4. Most frequently used Ukrainian word or phrase (open-ended).
5. Other Ukrainian words or expressions that respondents recall using.
6. Attitudinal questions: personal reflections on the role of Ukrainian lexical items in communication, whether they are used deliberately or unconsciously, and emotional associations with these borrowings.

All lexical material obtained from the survey and interviews was compiled into a corpus of approximately 150 Ukrainian-origin words and expressions. These ranged from single lexical items such as *дякую* ('thank you'), *гарно* ('nice, beautiful'), and *мряка* ('drizzle, mist') to more elaborate idiomatic utterances such as *Душа бажає свята* ('The soul longs for celebration'), and *Ці руки нічого не крали* ('These hands have not stolen anything'). Such expressions were not isolated borrowings but represented a relatively stable stratum within the local speech

community's linguistic repertoire. The construction of the corpus involved normalization of spelling and functional variants. For example, *що* and *що* were counted as variants of the same lexical item ('what'), while context-dependent uses of *до побачення* (neutral 'farewell' versus sarcastic dismissal) were categorized as one lexical unit with multiple pragmatic functions. This normalization ensured that the corpus reflects both the variety and functional range of Ukrainian lexical elements in Sevastopol speech. It should be noted that the corpus cannot be reduced to a simple list of 'loanwords'.

Thematic classification was used to group lexical items into semantic domains based on their communicative function and lexical meaning. The biggest thematic groups identified is 'etiquette formulas', which includes several subcategories, such as greetings, farewells, expressions of gratitude, and forms of address. Their inclusion within a single category is explained by their shared role as standardized units of interaction rather than lexemes with independent semantic development. Functional-pragmatic analysis was then applied to examine the operation of these units in actual communicative contexts. The focus at this stage was on their pragmatic functions, including the maintenance of social contact, expression of emotional attitude, evaluation, ironic usage, and the marking of group affiliation. The combination of thematic and functional analysis made it possible to identify not only patterns of lexical distribution, but also the communicative factors underlying their use.

At the same time, certain limitations of the study should be taken into account. The relatively small sample size constrains the extent to which the results can be generalized, while self-reported linguistic data may be affected by recall bias and limited awareness of actual speech practices. In addition, the heterogeneity of migrant groups within the respondent pool introduces additional variability, complicating the identification of strictly local usage patterns. Nevertheless, the integrated use of corpus compilation, thematic classification, and functional-pragmatic analysis provides a coherent methodological basis for studying the persistence of Ukrainian lexical elements in Sevastopol speech. This approach allows for the description not only of the lexical items themselves, but also of their functional role and the mechanisms supporting their continued use in everyday communication.

#### 4. Results

The obtained corpus provides an insight into how language policy, sociocultural change, and everyday communicative practice interact. A key observation emerging from the data is that lexical persistence does not depend on linguistic similarity between Russian and Ukrainian. Instead, it reflects a combination of habitual usage, communicative convenience, media exposure, and shared cultural memory. Some expressions survive because they perform essential communicative functions, while others persist due to their expressive force or symbolic associations. As a result, the corpus reveals not only which Ukrainian-

origin items remain in circulation, but also how they are hierarchically organized within everyday speech. The analysis presented below focuses on several interconnected dimensions of lexical persistence, beginning with frequency patterns that identify the most stable elements of the corpus and continuing with subgroup, thematic, and functional analyses that illuminate the social and pragmatic conditions supporting their continued use.

#### 4.1. Frequency analysis

Frequency analysis was used to identify the lexical items that demonstrated the greatest stability within everyday speech. The results showed that a relatively small group of expressions accounted for a disproportionately large number of occurrences across survey responses. These highly recurrent items function as routine communicative formulas that speakers often produce automatically, without deliberate attention to their linguistic origin or stylistic value. However, the analysis also revealed that even the most routine expressions are not pragmatically fixed. The same lexical item may function as a neutral formula in one context and as an emotionally or evaluatively marked utterance in another.

The frequency distribution of expressions revealed a clear hierarchy of use (see Table 1). Three items dominated across demographic groups: *Що це таке?* / *Що* ('what is this?'), *Дякую* ('thank you'), and *До побачення* ('goodbye'). Together, they accounted for nearly 60% of all mentions in the survey, confirming their centrality to the communicative repertoire.

Table 1. Top 10 most frequent expressions

Rank	Expression	Frequency	Share, %
1	<i>Що це таке?</i> / <i>Що</i> ('what is this?')	38	35
2	<i>Дякую!</i> ('thank you')	32	29
3	<i>До побачення!</i> ('goodbye')	18	17
4	<i>Це занадто!</i> ('that's too much')	11	10
5	<i>Хай буде</i> / <i>Нехай буде</i> ('let it be')	9	8
6	<i>Указівка</i> ('instruction, directive')	7	6
7	<i>Будь ласка</i> ('you're welcome')	6	6
8	<i>Нема за що</i> ('don't mention it')	6	6
9	<i>Мряка</i> ('drizzle, mist')	3	3
10	<i>На добраніч</i> ('good night')	3	3

These expressions occupy different pragmatic niches. *Що це таке?* ('what is this?') is used not only as a literal question but also as a versatile exclamation expressing surprise, irritation, or playful irony.

- (1) *Скажи мне, пожалуйста, що це таке? Ты что натворил?* ('Tell me please, what this is. What have you done?')

*Дякую* ('thank you') served as the default form of gratitude, often used automatically in routine interactions,

- (2) — *Я принес то что ты просил* ('I've brought what you asked for').  
— *О, дякую* (Well, thank you).

*До побачення* ('goodbye') retained both its neutral and sarcastic functions.

- (3) — *Разрешите рассказать вам о нашей новой акции* ('Let me tell you about our new promotional offer').  
— *До побачення* ('Goodbye').

The dominance of these three items indicates that Ukrainian lexical traces have been naturalized into the most basic communicative acts of questioning, thanking, and leave-taking.

Items such as *Це занадто* ('that's too much') and *Хай буде / Нехай буде* ('let it be') held important stylistic and identity functions. While less frequent, they were used with marked expressive intent. They were often used to dramatize a situation or underscore its significance.

- (4) — *Пять тысяч рублей за эту сумку?! Це занадто!* ('Five thousand roubles for this bag? That's too much!')  
(5) — *Посмотри, что ты здесь написал! Но хай уже буде так!* (Look what you've written here, but let it be like this')

Words like *вказівка* ('instruction, directive'), *зрада* ('betrayal'), *перемога* ('victory'), used ironically, were less frequent overall but strongly loaded in terms of social meaning.

- (6) — *У нас очередная зрада* ('We're having another failure).

At the margins there were rare lexemes such as *палляниця* ('a kind of bread that became a shibboleth of Ukrainian identity'), *автівка* ('car', colloquial), and *горілка* ('vodka') occurred only once or twice. The use of *палляниця* is notably symbolic, because its correct pronunciation served as a quick and often decisive test to identify someone as Ukrainian. The ability to say it correctly distinguished Ukrainians from others. The presence of these items in the corpus demonstrates the symbolic dimension of Ukrainian lexicon.

#### 4.2. Subgroup analysis

A closer look at demographic subgroups revealed important patterns. Age emerged as a strong factor. Younger respondents (18–23 years old) frequently used humorous or meme-like expressions such as *що воно гоне?* ('what nonsense is this?') or words with a playful sound pattern, such *пацюк* ('rat'). These lexical units circulate as stylistic play. Middle-aged respondents (36–45 years old) were more likely to employ ironic bureaucratic terms such as *вказівка*, reflecting their lived experience under Ukrainian state administration. Older respondents (above 60) often reproduced quotations from television or public signage, such as *Душа бажєє свята* ('The soul longs for celebration') or *Як я вас розумію* ('I know how you feel'), demonstrating the long-term impact of media exposure.

Gender differences were less pronounced but still observable (see Table 2). Among all respondents, women constituted approximately 65% (71 out of 109), while men accounted for about 35% (38 out of 109). Female respondents tended to use more terms of politeness, endearment and emotional reaction: *на добраніч* ('good night'), *ти мій малісінкий* ('you are my tiny one'), *ти моє сонечко* ('you are my sunshine'), *моя радість* ('my honey') as well as humorous and exasperated phrases like *погода сплюндрилась* ('the weather has worsened') or *щоб тебе підняло та гепнуло* ('May you be lifted and dropped'), while male respondents were slightly more represented in ironic or dismissive categories: *сказився* ('lost his mind'), *дурень* ('fool'), *непотріб* ('scoundrel/villain').

- (7) — *Назначили нового начальника отдела, но он совершенный непотріб* ('The new manager was appointed, but he is absolutely incompetent').

Table 2. Ukrainian words/phrases mentioned by the respondents of one gender

Gender	Ukrainian word/phrase
Female only	<i>Моя радість</i> ('My joy'), <i>Коханочка</i> ('Sweetheart'), <i>Ти моє сонечко</i> ('You are my sunshine'), <i>Яка несподіванка</i> ('What a surprise'), <i>Так отож</i> ('Same here'), <i>Мряка</i> ('Dreary weather'), <i>Хай вам щастить</i> ('Good luck to you'), <i>Щоб тебе підняло та гепнуло</i> ('May you be lifted and dropped'), <i>Смачного</i> ('Enjoy your meal'), <i>На добраніч</i> ('Good night'), <i>Ні за що</i> ('It's nothing'), <i>Прошу</i> ('Please'), <i>Погода сплюндрилась</i> ('The weather has gone bad'), <i>Гарбуз</i> ('Pumpkin'), <i>Ти мій малесенький</i> ('You are my tiny one'), <i>Свара</i> ('Quarrel'), <i>Маємо, що маємо</i> ('We have what we have')
Male only	<i>Дурень</i> ('Fool'), <i>Непотріб</i> ('Scoundrel'), <i>Сказився</i> ('Lost his mind'), <i>Що воно гоне?</i> ('What nonsense is it?'), <i>Не хай</i> ('Let it be'), <i>Отака фігня, малята</i> ('That's how it is, kids'), <i>Зачекайте, Тримайте</i> ('Wait, hold this'), <i>Майбутнє</i> ('Future'), <i>Картопля</i> ('Potato')

These patterns suggest that female respondents appear to favour expressions associated with interpersonal warmth and politeness, whereas male respondents more frequently employ evaluative or ironic vocabulary, indicating differing communicative styles within the same linguistic repertoire.

#### 4.3. Thematic classification

The 150 items were organized into twelve thematic groups (see Table 3). This classification demonstrates the breadth of semantic fields.

The distribution of lexical items across thematic groups shows that etiquette formulas including *дякую* ('thank you'), *нема за що* ('don't mention it'), *будь ласка* ('you're welcome'), *привіт* ('hello'), and *до побачення* ('goodbye') reflect the conventionalized dimension of everyday communication. The predominance of this group indicates that Ukrainian lexical elements are most strongly preserved in routine communicative contexts that require standardized interactional responses. Because such formulas are repeated daily and often used automatically, they tend to remain stable across generations. Many respondents associated their persistence with the influence of television and advertising slogans of the 1990s–2000s, when Ukrainian-language expressions were widely present in mass media.

Table 3. Thematic classification of corpus items

№	Thematic group	Examples	Number of items
1	Etiquette formulas (greetings, farewells, gratitude, requests, apologies)	<i>До побачення</i> ('Goodbye'), <i>Бувай</i> ('Bye / take care'), <i>Доброго дня</i> ('Good afternoon'), <i>Доброго ранку</i> ('Good morning'), <i>На добраніч</i> ('Good night'), <i>До зустрічі</i> ('See you'), <i>Побачимо</i> ('See you later'), <i>Па-па</i> ('Bye-bye'), <i>Привіт</i> ('Hello'), <i>Бувайте</i> ('Goodbye' — polite/plural), <i>Гарного дня</i> ('Have a nice day'), <i>Гарного вечора</i> ('Have a nice evening'), <i>Хай вам щастить</i> ('Good luck to you'), <i>Побачимось</i> ('See you'), <i>Будь ласка</i> ('Please / you're welcome'), <i>Нема за що</i> ('Don't mention it'), <i>Прошу</i> ('Please'), <i>Смачного</i> ('Enjoy your meal'), <i>Дякую</i> ('Thank you'), <i>Ні за що</i> ('Not at all'), <i>Немає за що</i> ('Don't mention it'), <i>Дякую вам</i> ('Thank you' — formal), <i>Перепрошую</i> ('Excuse me / sorry'), <i>Прошу дуже</i> ('You're very welcome'), <i>Зрозуміло</i> ('I see'), <i>Слухаю уважно</i> ('I'm listening carefully'), <i>Люди добрі</i> ('Good people'), <i>Пан / Пані</i> ('Sir / Madam'), <i>Друзі мої</i> ('My friends'), <i>Ти моя радість</i> ('You are my joy'), <i>Моє сонечко</i> ('My sunshine'), <i>Мій малесенький</i> ('my little one')	32
2	Interrogative expressions	<i>Що це таке?</i> ('What is this?'), <i>Що?</i> ('What?'), <i>Що це було?</i> ('What was that?'), <i>Що воно гоне?</i> ('What nonsense is this?'), <i>Ну й що?</i> ('So what?'), <i>Та що ти кажеш?</i> ('Really?'), <i>Що трапилось?</i> ('What happened?'), <i>Що ти робиш?</i> ('What are you doing?'), <i>Чи що?</i> ('or what?')	9
3	Emotional expressions	<i>То таке</i> ('It is what it is'), <i>Хто зна що</i> ('Who knows'), <i>Отака фігня, малята</i> ('That's how it is, kids'), <i>А пахне як</i> ('What a smell!'), <i>Любов — це таке почуття</i> ('Love is such a feeling'), <i>Це занадто</i> ('That's too much'), <i>Це спокуса</i> ('This is tempting'), <i>Так отож</i> ('Exactly'), <i>Хай буде</i> ('Let it be'), <i>Нехай буде</i> ('Let it be'), <i>Не хай</i> ('Let it be'), <i>Як я вас розумію</i> ('I understand you so well!'), <i>Душа бажає свята</i> ('The soul longs for celebration'), <i>Оце так</i> ('Wow!'), <i>Шкода</i> ('What a pity!'), <i>Щоб тебе підняло та гепнуло</i> ('May you be lifted and dropped'), <i>Хай вам щастить</i> ('Good luck to you!')	16
4	Evaluative expressions	<i>Гарно</i> ('Nice'), <i>Дуже гарно</i> ('Very nice'), <i>Файно</i> ('Great'), <i>Погано</i> ('Bad'), <i>Несперечливий</i> ('Indisputable'), <i>Непотріб</i> ('Worthless person'), <i>Несерйозливий</i> ('Not serious'), <i>Потихеньку</i> ('Slowly'), <i>Обережно</i> ('Carefully'), <i>Добре</i> ('Good'), <i>Смачний</i> ('Tasty'), <i>Смачненький</i> ('Tasty' — diminutive), <i>Невдобно</i> ('Inconvenient'), <i>Цікаво</i> ('Interesting'), <i>Сказився</i> ('Lost his mind'), <i>Серйозно</i> ('Seriously'), <i>Набридло</i> ('Fed up'), <i>М'якенька</i> ('Soft' — diminutive), <i>Дурень</i> ('Fool'), <i>Гарний хлопець</i> ('Handsome boy'), <i>Гарна дівчина</i> ('Pretty girl'), <i>Батьківська фігура</i> ('Father's copy'), <i>Маємо що маємо</i> ('We have what we have') <i>Мертві бджоли не гудуть</i> ('Dead bees don't buzz'),	24
5	People	<i>Хлопець</i> ('Boy / young man'), <i>Друзі</i> ('Friends'), <i>Батько</i> ('Father'), <i>Дитина</i> ('Child'), <i>Коханочка</i> ('Darling'), <i>Малюк</i> ('Baby'), <i>Підлітки</i> ('Teenagers')	7
6	Time and quantity	<i>Цілодобово</i> ('24 hours'), <i>Декілька</i> ('Several'), <i>Листопад</i> ('November'), <i>Жовтень</i> ('October'), <i>Зараз</i> ('Now'), <i>Вчора</i> ('Yesterday'), <i>Сьогодні</i> ('Today'), <i>Іншим разом</i> ('Another time'), <i>Наступного разу</i> ('Next time'), <i>Спробуй ще</i> ('Try again')	10
7	Objects, food, household items	<i>Цукерки</i> ('Sweets'), <i>Автівка</i> ('Car'), <i>Паляниця</i> ('Traditional bread'), <i>Горілка</i> ('Vodka'), <i>Буряк</i> ('Beetroot'), <i>Цигарки</i> ('Cigarettes'), <i>Картопля</i> ('Potato'), <i>Огірочки з пухирцями</i> ('Bumpy cucumbers'), <i>Гарбуз</i> ('Pumpkin'), <i>Пацюк</i> ('Rat'), <i>Хлібчик</i> ('Bread' — diminutive), <i>Ковзанка</i> ('Skating rink'), <i>Хата</i> ('House'), <i>Сорочка</i> ('shirt'), <i>Вишиванка</i> ('Embroidered shirt'), <i>Глечик</i> ('Jug'), <i>Тарілка</i> ('Plate'), <i>Рахунок</i> ('Bill')	18

End of Table 3

№	Thematic group	Examples	Number of items
8	Actions and processes	<i>Підрахуй</i> ('Count'), <i>Не розумію</i> ('I don't understand'), <i>Указівка</i> ('Instruction'), <i>Зачекай / Зачекайте</i> ('Wait'), <i>Йдемо до дому</i> ('Let's go home'), <i>Тримайте / Тримай</i> ('Take it'), <i>Дзвони</i> ('Call'), <i>Заходь</i> ('Come in'), <i>Слухаєм уважно</i> ('Listen carefully'), <i>Пошукай</i> ('Look for it'), <i>Не біжи так швидко</i> ('Don't run so fast'), <i>Пишатися</i> ('Be proud')	12
9	Nature and phenomena	<i>Мряка</i> ('Drizzle'), <i>Погода сплюндрилась</i> ('The weather has worsened'), <i>Розвиднилось</i> ('It cleared up'), <i>Дощик</i> ('Rain' — diminutive), <i>Хмарка</i> ('Cloud' — diminutive)	5
10	Politics and public life	<i>Зрада</i> ('Betrayal'), <i>Перемога</i> ('Victory'), <i>Прапор</i> ('Flag'), <i>Указівка</i> ('Directive'), <i>Ці руки нічого не крали</i> ('These hands have not stolen anything'), <i>Підпис / Дата</i> ('Signature / date'), <i>Незалежність</i> ('Independence'), <i>Потужними рядами та колоннами</i> ('In powerful rows and columns'), <i>Маємо що маємо</i> ('We have what we have'), <i>Українська мова</i> ('Ukrainian language'), <i>Влада</i> ('Authority / power'), <i>Голосування</i> ('Voting')	12

The second-largest group consists of evaluative expressions, including *гарно* ('nice'), *файно* ('great'), *погано* ('bad'), *добре* ('good'), and *набрідло* ('fed up'). These lexical items are often preferred due to their brevity and perceived expressiveness. Respondents frequently indicated that such words are easier to pronounce and, in their perception, 'sound softer' or, in some cases, 'more expressive' than their Russian equivalents. This perceived phonetic and stylistic advantage contributes to their continued use in everyday speech, particularly in emotionally marked or evaluative contexts. Emotional expressions, including *це занадто* ('that's too much'), *шкода* ('what a pity'), *оце так* ('wow'), represent another important group. These units add humour and irony to everyday speech.

A substantial portion of the corpus consists of lexical units related to everyday life and expressive communication. Names of food products and household items, such as *цукерки* ('sweets'), *картопля* ('potato'), *буряк* ('beetroot'), and *паляниця* (a type of traditional bread), illustrate how Ukrainian vocabulary has become integrated into daily domestic routines. Some of these, like *буряк*, are common in southern regions as a result of long-term language contact, which accounts for their established place in local speech. Others, such as *паляниця*, carry added symbolic weight and can function as markers of cultural identity. Interrogative forms like *що це таке?* ('what is this?'), *що?* ('what?'), and *що трапилось?* ('what happened?') form a stable part of spontaneous spoken interaction. Though interrogative in form, these expressions often serve pragmatic purposes, functioning as emotional or rhetorical responses rather than requests for information.

Several thematic groups reflect intermediate levels of lexical entrenchment. Action- and process-related words, including *підрахуй* ('count'), *зачекай* ('wait'), *тримайте* ('take it'), as well as terms of time and quantity such as *жовтень* ('October'), *декілька* ('several'), and *цілodobово* ('24 hours'), show how Ukrainian vocabulary has taken root in bureaucratic and institutional settings, especially through official documentation and administrative communication.

Political and public-life units, such as *зрада* ('betrayal'), *перемога* ('victory'), *прапор* ('flag'), and *незалежність* ('independence') reflect the continued influence of political discourse and media narratives. These words are often used ironically or evaluatively, suggesting that their function frequently goes beyond literal meaning and enters the realm of social commentary. The smallest thematic groups consist of references to people, nature, and natural phenomena. Such vocabulary appears to survive mostly in specific contexts rather than as part of routine interaction.

Overall, this thematic classification demonstrates that Ukrainian lexical elements penetrate multiple layers of everyday communication, from intimate family interactions to public slogans, from consumer vocabulary to political critique. The predominance of etiquette formulas and evaluative expressions indicates that the most stable elements are those associated with frequent social interaction and the expression of personal stance. In contrast, smaller thematic domains suggest more limited but still meaningful areas of lexical persistence. This distribution supports the broader observation that the survival of Ukrainian lexical items in Sevastopol speech is closely connected to their communicative usefulness, frequency of repetition, and emotional or symbolic resonance within everyday discourse.

#### **4.4. Functional categorization**

While thematic classification mapped the semantic fields of the corpus, functional categorization provided insight into the pragmatic motivations behind lexical choice. Five overlapping categories were identified: capacity of utterance, negative assessment, emotional impact, quotations, and self-identification.

##### *4.4.1. Capacity of utterance*

The first category highlighted the communicative efficiency of Ukrainian words. Many were shorter, phonetically lighter, or stylistically more natural than their Russian equivalents. For example, *добре* ('good/well') competes with Russian *хорошо* but offers a more compact form and is perceived as easier to articulate in rapid speech. The same refers to *гарно* ('nice, beautiful'), which is simpler than *красиво*; *смачного* ('bon appétit') is far more idiomatic than the cumbersome Russian formula *приятного аппетита*. Similarly, beverage descriptors *газована/негазована вода* ('carbonated/non-carbonated water') are more practical than *с газом/без газа*. Another noteworthy example is the expression *це спокуса* ('this is temptation'). On the one hand, it is shorter and phonetically smoother than the Russian *это искушение*; on the other hand, in comparison with the Russian variant it often carries a subtle negative shade, suggesting not only temptation in a neutral sense but temptation with a malicious undertone.

These examples demonstrate that speakers frequently prioritize economy and convenience of expression, integrating Ukrainian words not out of ideological

loyalty but out of pragmatic calculation. In fast-paced oral exchanges, a single-syllable saving or a more idiomatic phrase becomes a powerful factor in lexical choice. Such items persist because they fit seamlessly into spontaneous conversation and routine interaction, illustrating how the principle of communicative efficiency can drive outcomes in situations of language contact.

#### 4.4.2. *Negative assessment*

The second category demonstrated how Ukrainian lexicon is mobilized for irony, criticism, or dismissive evaluation. A prominent example is *указівка*, used not in its neutral sense of ‘instruction’ but specifically to mock absurd or authoritarian orders.

- (8) *Нам спустили очередные указівки* (‘We’ve received another set of instructions from above’)

Choosing the Ukrainian form, speakers add a layer of irony that Russian *инструкция* lacks. Other items, such as *дурень* (‘fool’) or *кішка* (‘cat’), serve as euphemistic substitutes for stronger insults, allowing speakers to vent frustration without crossing into obscenity.

- (9) *Ну сколько можно тебе говорить, что предложение начинается с большой буквы! Ты у меня дурень?!* (‘How many times do I have to tell you that a sentence begins with a capital letter! Are you a fool or what?!’)

The farewell *до побачення* (‘good bye’) enters this category when deployed sarcastically as a dismissal equivalent to ‘get lost’ (see example 3). Political terms such as *незалежність* (‘independence’) and *пишатися* (‘to be proud’) can also be used ironically to critique exaggerated nationalism.

- (10) *Они просто пишатся своими достижениями! Мне кажется, это уже выходит за нормы приличия.* (‘They just boast about their achievements. It seems to me this goes beyond the limits of propriety’)

An additional subgroup in this category includes words in which Ukrainian phonetic form resembles Russian obscene or near-obscene vocabulary. These are expressions like *підпис, дата* (‘signature and date’), *спізнився* (‘came late’). In such cases, even neutral words may trigger sarcasm, ridicule, or dismissive reactions because of unintended associations. Respondents emphasized that this phonetic overlap reinforced negative connotations and contributed to the ironic flavor of Ukrainian borrowings in Russian speech. Thus, negative assessment illustrates how Ukrainian words function as stylistic tools of distancing and resistance, enabling speakers to critique authority, mock pretension, or express disapproval. Their persistence reflects not communicative necessity but the symbolic potential of language play, where sound associations and cultural stereotypes amplify irony.

#### 4.4.3. Emotional impact

The largest category revealed the affective power of Ukrainian language. Respondents frequently emphasized that certain words ‘sound stronger’, ‘carry more warmth’, or ‘feel more heartfelt’ than Russian equivalents. This perception was especially strong for terms of emotion, intimacy, or elevated style. Core examples include *Що це таке?* (‘what is this?’), whose intonation may convey surprise, irritation, or playful teasing, and *слухаю уважно* (‘I’m all ears’), often used ironically to dramatize concentration. Words such as *надхнення* (‘inspiration’), *бажання* (‘desire’), and *майбутнє* (‘future’) were valued for their poetic resonance and perceived stylistic richness. Terms of endearment like *сонечко* (‘my sunshine’), *моя радість* (‘honey’), and *мій малесенький* (‘my little baby’) offered affective nuance not easily captured by Russian alternatives, which were often judged as colder or more prosaic.

- (11) *У мене сьогодні було надхнення и я убрала всю квартиру.*  
(‘I’ve been highly inspired to clean the entire flat’)

For many speakers, these items evoked childhood, family warmth, or cultural intimacy, strengthening their emotional weight in daily interaction. This category shows that Ukrainian words are not merely historical residues but active resources for emotional expression. Their continued use reflects not only linguistic habit but also the symbolic and stylistic depth they add to speech, serving as markers of sincerity, intimacy, or playfulness depending on context.

#### 4.4.4. Quotations

The fourth category traced the influence of Ukrainian media and public signage. During the 1990s and 2000s, Ukrainian-language commercials, transport announcements, and television programs flooded the Crimean linguistic landscape. Many phrases from these sources entered everyday speech as quotable references. A specific feature of this process was the ubiquity of translated international advertising. The same commercial for global brands was broadcast across different countries in multiple languages, yet for Sevastopol residents the Ukrainian versions became the ones entrenched in memory. Similarly, many Russian products were advertised in Ukrainian, creating parallel advertising environments: identical imagery but different linguistic codes. As a result, Sevastopol audiences internalized the Ukrainian wording, and even when Russian equivalents were available, the Ukrainian phrases often sounded more familiar and more ‘authentic’ in local usage.

In addition to commercial slogans, the corpus recorded quotations from Ukrainian political discourse. Iconic statements by politicians, often perceived as pompous or implausible, became the object of irony. By repeating them in everyday conversation, speakers highlighted their distance from official rhetoric while simultaneously demonstrating shared cultural memory.

Examples include advertising expressions like

- (12) *Душа бажає свята* ('The soul longs for celebration') = *Душа жєлаєт праздника.*
- (13) *Як я вас розумію!* ('I know how you feel') = *Как я вас понимаю!*
- (14) *А пахне як!* ('What a smell!') = *А запах!*

as well as the well-known quotation from a Ukrainian politician

- (15) *Ці руки нічого не крали* ('These hands have not stolen anything')

These phrases persist as humorous or nostalgic allusions. For many respondents, reproducing such quotations was less about Ukrainian identity than about playful intertextuality, irony, and the evocation of collective memory. Their persistence demonstrates how media saturation can leave lasting linguistic imprints even in contexts where the promoted language is not the dominant medium of daily life.

#### 4.4.5. *Self-Identification*

The final category highlighted the symbolic role of Ukrainian lexicon in marking group boundaries. After 2014, Sevastopol saw a large influx of newcomers from mainland Russia who, from the point of view of the locals, demonstrated their superiority to the residents. Long-term residents often distinguished themselves from these migrants, sometimes perceiving them as “colonists.” Using Ukrainian expressions in general became a way to signal belonging to “old Sevastopol.” Ukrainian words thus functioned as identity markers, reinforcing in-group solidarity and contrasting long-term residents with outsiders. Furthermore, in some cases, respondents noted that such self-identification could be directed towards Sevastopol residents who, holding negative attitudes towards Ukraine and its government, transferred this sentiment to the language. After the reunification with Russia, these individuals deliberately avoid using Ukrainian words to distance themselves from their past. Thus, Ukrainian lexicon transformed into a symbolic code of authenticity, illustrating how language ideologies shape and sustain lexical practice.

### 5. Discussion

The results of this study provide a comprehensive picture of how Ukrainian lexical items continue to circulate in the speech of Sevastopol residents despite profound shifts in language policy and political affiliation. At the core of this finding lies the recognition that language contact and lexical borrowing are not mechanical processes imposed from above, but deeply social practices, shaped by ideology, identity, memory, and everyday pragmatics. Ukrainian words and expressions, though stripped of their former institutional support after 2014, persist as part of the communicative repertoire of Sevastopol. They survive in functions

ranging from the pragmatic to the symbolic, proving that language policy is never the sole determinant of linguistic outcomes.

As can be seen, Ukrainian lexical items among Russian speakers in Sevastopol can no longer be reduced to the legacy of Ukrainization policies. Instead, they have developed into multifunctional resources serving diverse communicative goals. For some speakers, they offer a capacity of utterance — shorter, simpler, or more idiomatic forms that ease conversation. For others, they are vehicles of negative assessment, providing irony and critique where Russian alternatives would sound flat or overly neutral. Many respondents highlighted the emotional resonance of Ukrainian words, suggesting that they carry an affective charge that enriches discourse. Still others drew on Ukrainian expressions as quotations, recycling slogans and media fragments from the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Finally, a significant subset of expressions has been re-contextualized as tools of self-identification, marking belonging to “old Sevastopol” and distinguishing residents from newcomers after 2014.

The persistence of Ukrainian words in Sevastopol also points to the role of language in regional differentiation. Even in the absence of official support — or in the presence of overt rejection — Ukrainian expressions have become part of the city’s local identity. This phenomenon resonates with observations from other peripheral or historically contested regions. Research on North-East Scots, for example, has shown that speakers of this regional variety regard it as ‘a significant part of an insignificant identity’ (Loester 2017: 344). The same formulation aptly captures the situation in Sevastopol; despite the region’s marginality within the Ukrainian state before 2014 and its contested status thereafter, Ukrainian lexical elements have become emblematic of local belonging, distinguishing long-term residents from newcomers who arrived after the political shift.

The present findings also contribute to a broader theoretical discussion concerning how identities are discursively constructed through language. A key theoretical insight in this field is that identity is produced, reproduced, transformed, and even dismantled through linguistic means. One influential framework distinguishes between the content level (what speakers talk about), the communicative level (how they speak), and the metalinguistic level (how they evaluate language itself) (Dubrovskaya 2015). This framework proves highly applicable to the Sevastopol case. At the content level, what is said — the semantic fields covered by identity-relevant vocabulary — provides the raw material for self-definition. At the communicative level, code-switching into Ukrainian signals a mixed cultural identity. At the metalinguistic level, our respondents explicitly evaluated Ukrainian words as ‘softer,’ ‘easier to pronounce,’ or ‘more heartfelt’ than their Russian equivalents. In other words, what was once a political index became an icon of private affect (Gal 2016).

The findings of this research contribute to ongoing debates in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and language policy studies. First, they challenge the notion that language policy alone determines linguistic outcomes. Instead, policies

interact with ideologies, activism, and identities, producing results that may diverge dramatically from official intentions (Gumperz 2008, Malinowski 2018). Second, they demonstrate the importance of examining not just structural changes (such as shifts in official language use) but also the micro-level practices of everyday speech. It is at this level that language ideologies are most visibly enacted and reinterpreted (Combs & Penfield 2012, Woolard 2021).

Third, the Sevastopol case illustrates how regional differences can emerge within a broader national framework. Even when Ukrainian language policy failed at the institutional level, it succeeded in shaping the linguistic environment in ways that produced lasting traces. These traces now differentiate Sevastopol residents from newcomers, embedding Ukrainian elements within the city's linguistic identity. Such processes highlight the dynamic interplay of language, identity, and politics in contested regions (Volvach 2019). Finally, the research underscores the multifunctionality of language itself. Words and expressions are not static symbols but flexible tools that speakers adapt to shifting circumstances. A single Ukrainian phrase can be pragmatic, affective, ironic, or symbolic depending on its use. This adaptability explains why Ukrainian lexicon persists in Sevastopol: it offers speakers not only communicative efficiency but also expressive versatility and identity signaling.

## 6. Conclusion

In sum, the corpus of 150 Ukrainian expressions documented in this study was examined to address the main objective of the research, namely to identify the persistence, thematic distribution, and communicative functions of Ukrainian lexical elements in the everyday Russian-language speech of Sevastopol residents. These items have survived beyond the reach of official policy, repurposed by speakers to meet practical needs, express emotions, critique authority, recall cultural references, and mark local belonging. The overlap of thematic domains and functional motivations reveals the complexity of linguistic persistence: what begins as policy residue becomes an active resource in everyday life.

The results also provide answers to the research questions formulated in the study. First, the analysis identified a stable core of frequently used lexical items that function as routine communicative formulas. Second, thematic classification revealed that the most extensive domains include etiquette formulas, evaluative expressions, and emotional expressions, indicating that Ukrainian-origin elements are concentrated primarily in areas of everyday interpersonal communication. Third, functional-pragmatic analysis demonstrated that these lexical items persist not only because of historical exposure but also because of their communicative efficiency, emotional resonance, and stylistic flexibility. Success or failure of language policy cannot be measured solely by institutional compliance. Instead, it must be assessed in terms of the lived experiences of speakers, whose practices reveal the enduring power of language to adapt, persist, and signify in ways that escape official control. Sevastopol's linguistic landscape exemplifies this paradox:

Ukrainian as a state project failed, but Ukrainian as a layer of everyday speech continues to thrive in altered, multifunctional forms.

At the same time, the study highlights the transitional nature of the current linguistic situation. Considering the facts that the population has now doubled due to Russian-speaking arrivals from the mainland, and the new generation is growing up in a monolingual environment, the phenomenon described in this work will soon cease to be registered in the speech of Sevastopol residents. Therefore, it is important for it to be documented to understand significant sociolinguistic processes. Such documentation contributes to a better understanding of ongoing sociolinguistic transformation and the long-term consequences of language contact and policy change. Thus, the study contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics by demonstrating that lexical persistence is shaped not only by institutional forces but also by communicative routine, cultural memory, and emotional practice, providing a framework for future research on language retention in post-policy multilingual environments.

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