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A “LITTLE RUSSIAN” LANGUAGE? The use of prepositions as distinct expressions of Ukrainian sovereignty in the Russian language

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A “LITTLE RUSSIAN” LANGUAGE?

The use of prepositions as distinct expressions of Ukrainian sovereignty in the Russian language

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Summary

The role of the Russian language in the context of the Ukrainian national identity has become an increasingly relevant question in the wake of the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War. With a domestic linguistic environment that is becoming increasingly hostile to the use of the Russian language, its role in the Ukrainian nation-state and implications for its use among Ukrainian native speakers of the Russian language remain significant. The following paper argues that the Russian language can remain a salient medium of national expression for Ukrainians, due to grammatical differences typical of Ukrainian variants of the Russian language which allow speakers to distinguish themselves from Russian speakers of the Russian language. This is possible through the differential use of the prepositions “в” (v) and “на” (na) when used in reference to Ukraine as a distinct and sovereign political entity. This hypothesis is proved through a survey conducted among Russian speaking constituencies from Russia, Ukraine, and other states of the former Soviet Union, which demonstrated statistically significant differences in grammatical usage and constructions among these constituencies in regard to Ukraine. As a result, the use of the Russian language in Ukraine, at least within this context, can be considered distinct from that as is spoken in Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union.

Introduction

The Soviet Union constituted perhaps one of the most ambitious attempts at cultural assimilation in history. Though nominal provisions for the protection of the national languages of the fifteen Soviet republics and various other autonomous polities within it existed, the Russian language nonetheless served as the *lingua franca* of the Soviet Union, as well as an influential force on the languages with which it competed for dominance in its constituent national linguistic spaces. This linguistic colonization, in part, was a facet of larger colonizing processes meant to facilitate the centralization of political power in Moscow, a trend continued from the Imperial era; by subverting expressions of independent national identity - including language - centralized (and more importantly, Russified) power could be consolidated.

Just as the Russian language served a key role in the formation of the Soviet state, the importance of language in the formation of the nation-state in general likewise cannot be understated. While the nation-state can be most simply defined in political terms, Hobsbawm (1996) argues that socio-anthropological factors, such as how people relate themselves to the state, are what in fact solidify the nation-state's formation. In particular, a common language serves to homogenize and bond a national community, as it becomes the medium by which culture and other facets of national identity are expressed. In this sense, Carter & Sealey (2007) concur, noting a historical tradition requiring competency in a national language in order to be considered a member of the corresponding nation-state. The role of the Russian language in the Soviet Union was no exception to this rule. From the inception of the Soviet Union, the Russian language was seen as not only possessing a hegemonic character that could not be challenged by any other language spoken in the former Soviet Union, but furthermore was seen as the most efficient medium by which the Soviet state and its constituent national identity could be modernized and consolidated across an empire spanning from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean (Schiffman, 2007).

Despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union occurring over three decades ago, the Russian language remains an important medium of communication in post-Soviet states, especially for ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation. Ukraine is one such country in which the Russian language continues to serve an important role in the national linguistic landscape. This is primarily due to the fact that Ukraine has a significant minority of ethnic

Russians; the most recent census, conducted in 2001, listed ethnic Russians as comprising nearly 20% of the Ukrainian population (Constantin, 2022). Additionally, the overwhelming majority of non-Ukrainian ethnic groups in Ukraine other than Russians are Russian-speaking (Constantin, 2022). Furthermore, based on the same census, nearly 30% of ethnic Ukrainians speak Russian as a first language, with higher estimates existing (Ivanova, 2022). As a result, the Russian language demonstrably remains a significant force in the Ukrainian linguistic landscape, long after its use was no longer officially mandated by the state.

The implications for the continued use of the Russian language within the context of a relatively nascent and independent Ukrainian national identity are an extreme point of contention within Ukraine. Based on the preponderance of the Russian language in Ukraine, Mirimanova (2018) & Batta (2022) argue that as a result, the Russian language continues to serve as a sort of neutral *lingua franca* in post-Soviet Ukraine's heterogenous linguistic landscape, linking Ukraine's various national and ethnic groups under one overarching Ukrainian national identity. Others contend that the Russian language exists in Ukraine as a divisive factor which is monopolized by ethnic Russians, as has been argued by both pro- and anti-Kremlin forces within Ukraine (Matviyishyn, 2022). However, while both contentions possess merit and are supported by concrete evidence, contemporary politics and resulting changes to the Ukrainian linguistic landscape suggest that the latter contention has been demonstrably more popular in the past decade of Ukrainian history. It is important to note that the Russian state, which for the past decade has been active in (militarily) intervening on behalf of Russian speakers in Ukraine, views the promotion of the Russian language as both an intrinsic part of the greater Russian identity and an essential facet of soft power projection. This is due to the fact that general competence in the Russian language not only allows for the dissemination of opinions and "facts" deemed vital to Russian state interests, but furthermore serves to link Russian speakers as part of one cohesive linguistic identity that can be exploited for the Russian state's gain in other regards (Popova & De Bot, 2017). Likewise, the Euromaidan protests, the annexation of Crimea, and the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia have given impetus to the prevailing notion in Ukraine that the Russian language is that of the occupier and is increasingly incohesive with a mode of Ukrainian national identity which is considered to be inextricably linked with the Ukrainian language (Afanasiev et al., 2022). The politicization of the Russian and Ukrainian languages is further supported by Joseph (2022) and Gormezano (2022), who provide evidence in this regard as demonstrated by increased Ukrainian language acquisition among Russian-speaking Ukrainians following

the annexation of Crimea, as well as the closing of schools in which Ukrainian is the medium of education in the parts of Ukraine occupied by Russia. As a result of the increasing political significance of language use in Ukraine, the choice to use the Russian or Ukrainian languages in Ukraine can thereby be considered to possess an inherently socio-political dimension, especially as it relates to the role of language in forming a cohesive (or oppositional, in the case of Russian-occupied Ukraine) national identity.

While the past decade of Russian-Ukrainian interaction has provided much impetus to the increased politicization of the Russian and Ukrainian languages within the Ukrainian linguistic space, it would be wrong to say that contemporary tensions have been the sole source of this linguistic issue; rather, the role of the Ukrainian language, especially in opposition to the Russian language, has been a relevant question for much of the history of Russian-Ukrainian interaction.

Solchanyk (1985) argued as such in the waning days of the Soviet Union, claiming:

“The role and status of the native [Ukrainian] language (i.e., “the language question”) has been and continues to be a paramount issue in the quest for legitimization and authentication of the nation itself.”

To this, his contemporary Connor (1972) adds:

“Ukrainians, as a method of asserting their non-Russian identity, wage their campaign for national survival largely in terms of their right to employ the Ukrainian, rather than the Russian, tongue in all oral and written matters.”

As a result, this linguistic conflict, whose manifestation has been exacerbated by the invasion of Crimea and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War, is far more enduring than is initially apparent. Not only has the use of the Ukrainian language demonstrably been considered an integral part of the Ukrainian national identity for far longer than even the existence of an independent Ukraine, it furthermore has been considered key in distinguishing Ukraine as sovereign from Russia and its predecessor states, the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire, whose hegemonic rule over Ukraine encouraged the adoption of a Russified identity among its Ukrainian national constituency.

As a medium by which Ukrainian nationhood is articulated and maintained, the use of Ukrainian *vis-a-vis* Russian is increasingly being perceived as zero-sum, with Russian speakers finding it increasingly difficult to articulate their place within an evolving Ukrainian sociolinguistic space as the Russian language becomes progressively discerned as antithetical to Ukrainian nationhood (Stern, 2022; Gormezano, 2022). However, in defense of Mirimanova (2018) & Batta's (2022) contention of the Russian language as *lingua franca* in Ukraine, the fact that significant Russian-speaking minorities exist in Ukraine, including ethnic Ukrainians who speak Russian as a primary language, provides a source of contention against the argument for the inherent politicization of the Russian language and thereby incohesiveness with a Ukrainian national identity. If the use of the Russian language is to be considered inherently political and thereby demonstrable of affinity with a Russified identity, this would mean to say that all Ukrainian speakers of Russian count themselves as pro-Russia. Of course, this argumentation is illogical, especially in light of current political tensions, and disproven by contemporary evidence; support for Putin and the annexation is far from unanimous in the annexed territories. Skorkin (2022) estimates that only 4% of Ukrainians in Eastern Ukraine, a traditional stronghold of the Russian language in Ukraine, have a positive view of Russia. Furthermore, the significant presence of Russian-speaking volunteer fighters from Belarus and Russia in Ukraine further demonstrates that competency in the Russian language does not necessarily equate to support for Russia (Batta, 2022; Meduza, 2022; Coles & Trofimov, 2022). As a result, while the use of the Russian language *may* correlate with political leanings towards supporting Russia among some populations in Ukraine, it is not inherently so. This thereby begs the question, with respect to Connor (1972) and Carter & Sealey (2007), as to what extent it is possible for Ukrainians to articulate a distinct Ukrainian national identity in the Russian language, and furthermore, the extent to which the Russian language can cohere to a Ukrainian national identity - the latter query being especially relevant within a national linguistic environment which is becoming increasingly hostile to its use.

Fortunately for Ukrainian speakers of Russian, the Russian language possesses specific grammatical peculiarities and arguments regarding their use which in theory permit distinct expressions of Ukrainian national identity & sovereignty, distinguished from a Russified spoken and literary tradition. The prepositions *в* (*v*) and *на* (*na*) in the Russian language, when used in the prepositional case, reflect locational presence (i.e. in, on, or at something)

(Le Fleming & Kay, 2006). As a general rule, the former preposition is mostly limited to bordered objects, or objects that occupy a finite or enclosed space. For example, *в* is generally the preposition used to refer to sovereign (bordered) states, polities, and other political agglomerations, as well as to closed (i.e. roofed) places & structures (such as buildings) (Samuelson, 2017; Le Fleming & Kay, 2006). Conversely, the preposition *на* is generally used to refer to unbordered objects occupying a non-sovereign or non-defined space (Le Fleming & Kay, 2006). Examples would be regions, neighborhoods, islands and open-air constructions, such as stadiums, fields, etc. However, as in any language, there are exceptions to the rule; some sovereign and bordered states take on the form *на*, such as island states (including Cuba and the Maldives, for example). This is due to the prevailing grammatical notion in the Russian language that islands constitute a type of unbordered space, thereby demanding the use of the preposition *на*. However, in the case of Ukraine, a landed, bordered, and sovereign state, the choice of preposition consists of an inherently political dimension that does not have a clear grammatical resolution. In short summary, when used in reference to the country of Ukraine, *в Украине* reflects the notion of an independent and sovereign Ukraine, while *на Украине* reflects the notion that Ukraine remains politically subservient to Russia and its predecessor states, due to etymological origins that will be discussed forthwith. The former phraseology is thought to be generally favored by Ukrainian speakers of Russian, whereas the latter is generally preferred by Russian speakers of Russian as a result of the suggestion of the independence vs. dependence of Ukraine *vis-a-vis* Russia. Therefore, through the use of the prepositions *в* and *на*, Ukrainians not only have the ability to articulate their nationhood in the Russian language, but furthermore in theory should be able to distinguish themselves from Russian speakers of the Russian language who do not share similar opinions regarding Ukrainian sovereignty and nationhood via the use of these prepositions.

In order to investigate the significance of this phenomenon, the following research question will be addressed: *To what extent can the use of the prepositions “в” versus “на” be distinguished as unique to Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language?* In order to properly give historical context to these grammatical constructions and the trends which have led to the current politicization of the Russian language within the Ukrainian sociolinguistic space, a brief overview will be given regarding the historical role of the Russian language in what constitutes present-day Ukraine. This will be done in order to justify the existence of an enduring national linguistic environment in which the Russian

language continues to be spoken and thereby remains a salient medium of expression for Ukrainian nationhood and sovereignty. This will be followed by a historical, literary, and pedagogical overview of the use of the prepositions *в* and *на* in reference to Ukraine in order to discuss and demonstrate the extent to which the use of either preposition can and does serve to reflect notions of Ukrainian nationhood and sovereignty. These overviews will thereby give context to the hypotheses regarding the significance of the use of these prepositions in distinguishing Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language.

The Russian language in the Russian Empire and Soviet Ukraine

In order to ascertain the extent to which Ukrainians are empowered to articulate their own sovereignty & nationhood in the Russian language as reflected in the prepositions *в* & *на*, the historical relationship between the Ukrainian nation and Russian language must first be discussed. The following section will demonstrate that the Russian language in Ukraine was first and foremost a state-sanctioned imposition on a native Ukrainian-speaking populace. Furthermore, the Russian language was used as a tool to assimilate the native populace, serving to exclude non-speakers from social and economic gain within the Russian-speaking imperial system. This legacy was continued under the Soviets, which although slightly more permissive in regard to Ukrainian linguistic self-determination, nonetheless maintained the Russian language as a hegemonic force within the domestic linguistic environment.

Historical Russian attitudes towards the Ukrainian nation and its language can be arguably summarized by the following quote:

"There has not been, there is not, and there can not be any kind of separate Little Russian language."

Letter from Minister of Internal Affairs Petr Valuev to Minister of Education Aleksandr Golovnin, 1863 (Solchanyk, 1985)

As a result, the Russian-Ukrainian relationship as it existed under imperial rule can be considered to be that of a center-periphery relationship in which the center determined not only the role of Ukraine in the empire, but furthermore the extent to which Ukrainian nationalism could be articulated - especially through language. *Malorossiia*, as the territory

of modern-day Ukraine was known, historically challenged the Russian political center through concerted nationalist movements. Stripped of its autonomy and folded into the Russian Empire by Catherine the Great, Ukraine began what would be a long process of the Russification of its linguistic space in order to subvert nationalist expression which could serve to challenge imperial rule (Pavlenko, 2011). This was achieved in two primary manners, both utilizing strategies which served to promote the Russian language at the expense of the Ukrainian language. Firstly, the Russian language in particular was used as a tool to coopt Ukrainians through the opportunities that command of the Russian language offered, such as “career opportunities in imperial civil, military, and diplomatic services” (Pavlenko, 2011, p. 337). As a result, the adoption of and competency in the Russian language was socially and economically incentivized. Those seeking upwards mobility, especially in the Ukrainian upper and noble classes, were successfully integrated into the imperial bureaucracy and thereby a Russian linguistic tradition through such schemes. Secondly, the Russian language was disseminated through the Ukrainian territory by Russian and Russian-speaking noble and peasant emigrés from Russia proper whose assimilation into Ukrainian society assisted in its linguistic colonization (Pavlenko, 2011). The latter processes of emigration to Ukraine and the resultant Russian linguistic assimilation of Ukraine were greatly assisted by the Industrial Revolution. Because Russian industrialization was centrifugal in the sense that the impetus for industrialization came from the imperial center, the center was thereby responsible for managing or leasing industrial concerns (Koropeckyj, 1989). As a result, Russian industrialists in Ukraine preferred to import a Russian workforce which was already competent in both the necessary technologies and language, as opposed to training local Ukrainians to work and operate specialized equipment in the Russian language (Pavlenko, 2011). Therefore, urban areas became increasingly dominated by Russian speakers, whereas the Ukrainian language continued to persist in rural areas where industrialization did not have such an immediate and profound impact (Pavlenko, 2011). As a result, it can be said that social and economic incentivization as it existed in the imperial era supported the acquisition of the Russian language among Ukrainians. However, this is not to say that acquisition of the Russian was purely incentivized in the aforementioned manners; rather, parallel state policy simultaneously existed to disincentive the use of the Ukrainian language as well.

From 1798 to 1917, only 3,214 Ukrainian language titles were officially published within the Russian Empire (Liber, 1982). This relatively small quantity of Ukrainian language titles

published can directly be linked to official state policy with served to subvert the Ukrainian language. From 1863, Tsar Alexander II forbade the publication of all works in the Ukrainian language aside from a few specific categories in order to combat what was perceived as a growing sentiment of Ukrainian nationalism, articulated in the Ukrainian language, that could threaten imperial hegemony within the territory of Ukraine (Liber, 1982; Remy, 2017). This ban was only stopped in 1905, and repealed officially in 1906 as a result of the Revolution of 1905 (Remy, 2017). As a result, the (written) linguistic landscape of Ukraine up until the dissolution of the Russian Empire was markedly Russian-dominated. This is not to say that the Ukrainian language in its totality was suppressed; rather, not only did the Ukrainian language persist as as a spoken language during the time of the Tsars, but Remy (2017) further argues that the ban on Ukrainian literature was not completely stringent, with a significant number of titles in the Ukrainian language being published despite the ban. Therefore, the suppression of the Ukrainian language in the Russian Empire through limits on the distribution of Ukrainian-language cultural products can be considered as a concerted effort that, while ensuring the primacy of the Russian language in public matters, was not wholly effective in suppressing the Ukrainian language in all matters, especially in regard to private life.

While the imperial legacy on the Ukrainian language was markedly destructive, Ukrainian language promotion under Soviet rule left a somewhat more complicated legacy. Liber (1982) argues that early Bolshevik rule in Ukraine continued modes of Russian imperial suppression of a Ukrainian national identity, which in turn served to subvert domestic Ukrainian culture - including its language. This was the result of the perception of early Communist leaders that Ukrainian culture possessed a backwards and nationalist (and thereby counterrevolutionary) character. Yefimenko & Olynyk (2017-18) and Weinstein (1941) support this assertion, noting that both Lenin and early party leadership saw the promotion of national character in general and the promotion of the Ukrainian language in particular as antithetical to their goals concerning the assimilation of Ukraine into a uniform Marxist state. As a result, more Russified modes of culture and rule are considered to have been generally promoted since the earliest days of Soviet rule.

However, this is not to say that modes of Ukrainian linguistic expression were completely continuous nor equivalent between imperial and Soviet rule. Rather, it is important to distinguish modes of Ukrainian linguistic expression as being simultaneously more

permissive and varying under Soviet rule. Despite the prevailing notion that the Ukrainian language and its promotion within the territory of Ukraine possessed an anti-Soviet character, Liber (1982) nonetheless describes Ukrainization programs which were in fact supported by the Communist rule in Ukraine. Ukrainian language promotion, while in practice kept subservient to Russian, nonetheless required that certain state functions operate in the Ukrainian language (Liber, 1982). This was arguably done in order to legitimize Soviet rule by demonstrating its supposed anti-imperialist character *vis-a-vis* the ousted imperial rule (Liber, 1982). This was especially important in the early days of the Soviet Union as its nascent leadership sought to demonstrate its legitimacy in the wake of the violent dissolution of the Russian Empire. Early Soviet policy promoted the development of Ukrainian-speaking government functionaries, a Ukrainian-language press, and access to education in the Ukrainian language (Yefimenko & Olynyk, 2017-18). However, Yefimenko & Olynyk (2017-18) still recognize Ukrainian language policy in the early days of the Ukrainian SSR as concessionary in order to facilitate the “fusion of nations,” rather than a genuine attempt by the Soviet center at promoting Ukrainian language and culture. In this sense, Goodman (2009) concurs, labeling Soviet language policy as “predatory” rather than genuinely conciliatory. While the simultaneous existence of Ukrainian and Russian language promotion may seem antithetical, Goodman (2009) rather presents this as a negatively-correlated phenomenon, in which the Ukrainian language was promoted at times of state weakness, such as at the beginnings of the Ukrainian SSR, and the Russian language being promoted only when the state felt secure enough to withdraw such concessions.

Beginning in the 1930s, state organs began to promote the Russification of the Ukrainian linguistic space; consider the following editorial excerpt from *Kommunist*, a publication of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party in 1933 (Weinstein, 1941):

"The mistakes and perversions in realizing the Ukrainization of the schools led in a considerable number of places to neglecting and ignoring the interests of the national minorities and especially the needs and requirements of the Russian toiling masses living in the Ukraine... a significant part of the Russian toiling masses were deprived of schools in their native language and actually subjected to the forced Ukrainization which the Party had condemned in all of its directives."

The preceding editorial demonstrates what would become the prevailing perception that the Russian language was worthy of primacy within the Ukrainian linguistic space. Accordingly, with the strong consolidation of Soviet rule, significant orthological changes were introduced to the language to make it more similar to Russian, and Russian was introduced as a language of instruction in Ukrainian schools (Goodman, 2009). This was a state-wide process; Dietrich (2005) notes a marked decrease in foreign-derived vocabulary and an increase in Russian-derived vocabulary among the Central Asian languages of the Soviet Union within the same time period as well. As a result, it can be argued that the Ukrainian language as it existed in Ukraine under Soviet rule was permitted insofar that it provided the nascent and weakened Soviet state with the political capital to strengthen their dominant position vis-a-vis the Soviet periphery. Once this dominance was achieved, the Russian language was given deference and the assimilative linguistic practices as described by Perfecky (1987) and Marshall (1992) could take place. In summary, these authors contend that development of the Ukrainian language was tolerated within Soviet Ukraine insofar as it further promoted the spread of Soviet state ideology and fealty towards it. As a result of such policies, nationalist elements in Ukraine were appeased with a modicum of linguistic self-determination and Soviet rule was thereby solidified.

Furthermore, while it can be argued that the Ukrainian language under Soviet rule was not suppressed to the extent it was under the Tsar, it was still nonetheless made subservient to the Russified modes language & culture. It can additionally be argued that Soviet modes of Russification in many ways reflected other modes of assimilation employed during the Imperial era. Farmer (1978) proposes that in addition to mandatory instruction in Russian in primary schools, Soviet parents were incentivized to make sure that their children had a good command of the Russian language for the purpose of upwards mobility (as was the case during the imperial era). As most higher education was also conducted in the Russian language, it was in the best interest of Ukrainian parents to make sure that their children were competent enough in Russian that they would be able to attain a university degree and thereby be able to attain commensurate employment within the Soviet bureaucracy. Weinstein (1941) additionally notes that the Russian language in Ukraine was emphasized as serving to “[join] the Ukrainian people to the culture of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.” As a result, there was also a demonstrable cultural incentive and societal expectation to master the Russian language in the context of interethnic communication and culture in the Soviet Union.

In regard to the lasting legacy of Soviet language policy, it has demonstrably led to numerous key developments in the linguistic landscape of the (post-)Soviet space, especially in Ukraine. Firstly, Soviet language policy promoted bilingualism, if not the complete Russification, of non-Russian polities. Solchanyk (1982) reports that from the 1970s, Soviet leadership strived for complete bilingualism in the Soviet Union, based off what was considered promising census data demonstrating increasing adoption of the Russian language among non-Russian polities. In regard to the extent that this goal was realized, Marshall (1992) notes that a majority of non-Russian Soviet citizens in 1989 claimed to be bilingual, with the majority of those self-identifying as bilingual speaking Russian as their non-native language. The migration of ethnic Russians to peripheral Soviet republics such as Ukraine, a trend continued from imperial times, promoted the continued hegemony of the Russian language (Marshall, 1992). By the late 20th century, the Ukrainian nation, as were all the nations of the Soviet Union, was transformed into that which possessed significant command of the Russian language. Marshall (1992) reports that in 1989, 73% of ethnic Ukrainians reported Russian to be their mother tongue or their second language.¹ As a result, the Soviet state's attempts to promote Russian as the predominant language of "interethnic communication" led to various non-Russian nationalities such as Ukrainians possessing fluent competency in the language.

Furthermore, in regard to changes to the language itself, Perfecky (1987) notes that the Ukrainian language itself underwent a sustained campaign of Russification under Soviet rule. Native Ukrainian vocabulary was replaced with Russian loanwords, and where etymologically-similar synonyms existed, Russian-derived vocabulary was given preference over Ukrainian-derived vocabulary (Perfecky, 1987). In regard to the impact of these processes on the linguistic relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian languages, Farmer (1978) claims that the Russification of the Ukrainian language through the adoption of Russian loanwords and other "Russicisms," as he terms it, served to implicitly undermine the Ukrainian language by placing it in a subservient position to the Russian language.

Processes of Russification, especially within the Ukrainian linguistic space, did not go unnoticed in their time; consider this 1980 open letter from Yuri Badzo, Ukrainian human

¹ It is worth noting that this statistic refers to *ethnic* Ukrainians in general, and not necessarily Ukrainians residing within the territory of the Ukrainian SSR.

rights activist, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Solchanyk, 1982):

“The number of scientific publications in the Ukrainian language has dropped sharply and foreign classics for schools are now issued by Ukrainian publishing houses in the Russian language. The Ukrainian evening television programme 'Good Night Children' is now broadcast in Russian as well as in Ukrainian and the former predominates. The Kiev Operetta Theatre and the newspaper Vechirni Dnipro in Dnepropetrovsk have gone over to the Russian language. Even the Znanie Society already publishes part of its output in Russian. Graphic agitprop in the streets of Kiev has become even more Russified. We do not have Ukrainian-language cinema at all and this, after the Russification of the party-state apparatus, is one of the most important means of assimilationist pressure on Ukrainians. The same must be said about television and radio, which are also largely Russian.”

As a result, it can be argued that up until the waning decades of the Soviet Union, the Russian language possessed a significant role within the Ukrainian nation and was seen by the state as integral to monopolizing sovereign expressions of national culture.

Shortly before independence in 1989, the passing of the law “On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” in Soviet Ukraine demonstrated the cultural liberalization typical of many of the Soviet republics in the waning days of the Soviet Union. While the law acknowledges Russian as the language used for communication between the peoples (nations) of the Soviet Union, the law nonetheless decreed that administration of the state be conducted solely in Ukrainian, and provided for the legal protection of over 130 languages considered as minority languages within Ukraine as well (Csernicskó, 2016). Additionally, the law mandated that state officials be proficient in both Russian and Ukrainian; that Ukrainian language instruction be made mandatory in all Russian schools; that higher education eventually be conducted in the Ukrainian language; and that public signage may not be posted in Russian unless accompanied by a Ukrainian translation (Csernicskó, 2016; Goodman, 2009). Furthermore, Ukrainian was defined as the sole state language (Csernicskó, 2016). The introduction of this law in 1989, at a time where the Soviet center was quickly losing its hegemony over its periphery, supports the contention of Goodman (2009) that such linguistic liberalization was

only allowed to take place of times of relative weakness of the center vis-a-vis the periphery. Furthermore, while this law can be considered positive in the sense that it empowered the Ukrainian language within the Ukrainian sociolinguistic space, the Russian language remained preeminent in practice (Csernicskó, 2016).

The preceding literature regarding state linguistic policy of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union demonstrates two key consequences for the Ukrainian language. The first consequence is that for much of modern Ukrainian's history, its national language was effectively Russian due to the subversion of the indigenous national language by a Russian-speaking hegemonic government. Furthermore, at times when Ukrainization efforts were permitted at times of state weakness and liberalization, the Ukrainian language was nonetheless "Russified" through forced orthological and etymological changes to the Ukrainian language to create a variant of the language that reflected Russian language constructions. As a result, it can be argued that the Russian language not only had a significant impact on the Ukrainian linguistic space through constituting the predominant national language, but furthermore had a significant impact as a moderating force on the Ukrainian language and other linguistic modes by which Ukrainians could engage in expressions of nationhood and sovereignty, independent of the Russian language. Though nominally being a state of Ukrainian speakers, state policy in the imperial & Soviet era co-opted what they considered to be "Little Russians" into a Russian-dominated linguistic environment.

In regard to how Ukrainians chose and continue to choose to articulate nationhood and sovereignty, the preceding review was not meant to demonstrate an inability for such articulation to be conveyed in the Ukrainian language; rather, it was meant to demonstrate that there exists a salient basis by which an historically-wide general comprehension of the Russian language can serve as a medium by which Ukrainian sovereignty and nationhood can be both asserted and subverted. The permeation of the Russian language into Ukrainian literature, theater, culture, education, and governance may have served to subvert the Ukrainian nation under a centralized and Russified linguistic hegemony, but has also demonstrably served to create a nation largely competent in the Russian language, thereby providing the basis by which conceptions of Ukrainian sovereignty and nationhood can be properly expressed in the Russian language.

The Russian language in Ukraine since independence

Nominally, the Ukrainian population maintains relative bilingualism in the Ukrainian and Russian languages, demonstrated as such over a decade after independence (Shevchenko, 2015). In 2002, Russian was preferred by the majority of Ukrainians in both the home and the workplace as opposed to Ukrainian (Shevchenko, 2015). While this figure has certainly changed to an extent in the following two decades, it nonetheless demonstrates the endurance of the Russian language long after its use was no longer mandated by the state. This enduring legacy is reflected in the complicated and often contradictory Ukrainian political environment, especially in how it regards the use of the Russian and Ukrainian languages.

Ukrainian law regarding the use of the Russian and Ukrainian languages since independence to the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War can generally be characterized by giving primacy to the Ukrainian language, while recognizing the rights of linguistic minorities (such as Russian speakers). Article 10 of the Ukrainian constitution states that “the state language of Ukraine is the Ukrainian language.” Furthermore, article 10 states that “the free development, use and protection of Russian, and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine, is guaranteed.” As a result, there simultaneously exists a legal basis for the use of both languages in Ukrainian society, despite the national language ostensibly being Ukrainian.

However, while the national language as stated in the constitution is Ukrainian, its mandated use in the public sphere has been cause for consternation among the significant Russian-speaking minorities in Ukraine. In 2012, the law “On the Principles of State Language Policy in Ukraine” was introduced by the Party of Regions, a now-defunct pro-Russia Ukrainian political party. This law provided for state mechanisms to be conducted in Russian, based on its status as a “minority language,” a term with legal significance as per the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Azhniuk, 2017-18). However, this law did not promote bilingualism, as supported by article 10 of the Ukrainian constitution, but rather promoted what Azhniuk (2017-18) terms as “polarized bilingualism.” This refers to the fact that ethnic Russians in Ukraine are generally monolingual, whereas ethnic Ukrainians are generally bilingual in both Ukrainian and Russian. As a result, the promotion and use of the Russian language in official state mechanisms as proposed by this law would serve to subvert the Ukrainian language in favor of the Russian language by creating an environment

in which Ukrainian speakers were precluded from using their national language in important affairs of governance, contrary to the stated purposes of both the Constitution and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Azhniuk, 2017-18). In the wake of Euromaidan, the law was repealed, and the annexation of Crimea following soon after generally caused Russian language promotion to be increasingly seen as pro-Russia and thereby anti-Ukrainian (Azhniuk, 2017-18). Despite its short time in force as law, the “Principles of State Language Policy” law nonetheless served to demonstrate enduring conflict between those who felt more affinity to a Russian-speaking (as opposed to Ukrainian-speaking) national identity.

The sentiment that the Ukrainian language deserved primacy in Ukraine was reflected in succeeding legislation. On 25 April 2019, the law “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language” was signed into force. This law establishes the Ukrainian language as the sole state language to be used in the public sphere. What is more significant, however, are the justifications the Verkhovna Rada (2019) emphasized in the bill’s preamble:

“[in] regard to ... strategic priorities in overcoming deformations in the national language and cultural, linguistic and informational space caused by the centuries-old assimilation policies pursued by colonialists and occupants, and according to which the full-fledged functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of public life throughout the State is a guarantee of preserving the identity of the Ukrainian nation and strengthening the state unity of Ukraine[.]”

This part of the preamble is significant, because it recognizes the impact that Russified assimilationist policies have had on the Ukrainian language. Furthermore, the following quotation, also from the preamble, is significant insofar as it not only inextricably ties the Ukrainian language to Ukraine, but furthermore defines the language as being solely intrinsic to the Ukrainian people (as opposed to other languages, such as Russian):

“...[T]he Ukrainian language is a determining factor and the main feature of the identity of the Ukrainian nation, which was historically formed and for many centuries has continuously lived in its own ethnic territory, constitutes

the vast majority of the country's population and gave the official name to the state, and is also a basic systemic component of the Ukrainian civil nation..."

However, the law still permits certain concessions for Russian speakers; the law as it currently exists allows for education to take place in Russian within appropriate academic contexts (Kudriavtseva, 2019). Furthermore, the use of Russian is permissive as it relates to cultural contexts, such as performances and mass media, as long as they are equally supplemented by Ukrainian-language cultural events and media (Kudriavtseva, 2019).

Since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian War, the use of the Russian language in the Ukrainian public sphere, especially as it relates to cultural performances, has become significantly more restrictive. In June 2022, the Verkhovna Rada passed laws which prohibit the printing of books by Russian citizens, in addition to the import of books from Russia, Belarus, and the Russian-occupied territories (Hunder, 2022). Another law was passed which prohibits the performance or playing of post-1991 music by Russian artists on public transport or in public media (Hunder, 2022). Conversely, the law mandates an increase in the production of such cultural goods in the Ukrainian language (Burchenyuk, 2022). However, exceptions to the law exist for those Russian performers who make a public declaration against the war in support of the territorial integrity of Ukraine (Burchenyuk, 2022).

The legal history of post-independence Ukraine demonstrates clear support for the development and primacy of the Ukrainian language. However, the laws enumerated above demonstrate the continued coexistence and interaction with the Russian language within the Ukrainian linguistic space as well, providing a salient basis by which the Russian and Ukrainian languages can mutually persist and influence each other in present-day Ukraine.

Contemporary realities of the use of the Russian & Ukrainian languages in Ukraine

Post-independence, the Ukrainian and Russian languages have occupied different spheres of public life. Arel (2017-18) notes that the Ukrainian language was initially predominant in education, while Russian was predominant in media, professional, and civic life - the latter especially in Eastern Ukraine (Western Ukraine is generally predominately Ukrainian-speaking). Goodman (2009) offers a variation on this contention, agreeing that Ukrainian is a prominent facet of contemporary education in Ukraine; however, she notes that

the Russian language remains significant both within the primary education system, where it is often taught as a foreign language like English, as well as within the home setting for many primary students (Goodman, 2009).

As aforementioned, the Ukrainian linguistic environment prior even to the annexation of Crimea was politically charged. In their research of the use of the Ukrainian, Russian, and English languages, Bever (2011) notes that Ukrainian participants in her study generally perceived questions regarding the use of Ukrainian versus Russian language as pertaining to an explicitly political dimension. However, Bevar (2011) notes that the simultaneous use of Ukrainian, Russian, and English denoted a then-positive attitude towards multilingualism, with English serving to bridge the gap between political animosities relating to the use of Russian and Ukrainian. It is worth noting that this research took place in Southeastern Ukraine, which generally is Russian-speaking. Though the use of English among non-Ukrainian constituencies is not within the scope of this research, it is worth mentioning the contention of Goodman (2009), who proposes English as a contemporary external competitor with the Ukrainian language, not unlike the role the Russian language played during Soviet times. Essentially, however, this anecdote provides further evidence as to the role that language (including foreign languages) continues to serve as a point of contention within the Ukrainian linguistic landscape.

Post-annexation Ukraine is also characterized by the continued attempted state-driven Ukrainization of the Ukrainian linguistic landscape. L'nyavskiy-Ekelund (2016) found that state policy mandating the "Ukrainization" of the domestic linguistic sphere since independence was not successful in developing the national unity it sought to create; rather, it amplified already-existing sociolinguistic divisions among Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking polities. However, in regard to the extent that these divisions served to stoke conflict, especially in regard to separatism in eastern Ukraine, Laitan (2000) opines that in general, grievances relating to minority language do not act as a strong predictor of political violence. Despite this, the annexation of Crimea and the recent invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on behalf of a supposedly persecuted Russian-speaking populace has provided further impetus for the Ukrainization of the Ukrainian national linguistic space.

The promotion of Ukrainian language has not come without criticism, including from international observers, who hold the opinion that some laws mandating the use and

dissemination of the Ukrainian language come at the expense of Russian-language services, linguistic materials, and goods which constitute unjust oppression towards Russian speakers in Ukraine. Denber (2022) notes that the requirement for print media outlets to print in Ukrainian and that distributed media must consist of at least 50% Ukrainian language materials serves to limit an existing rich Russian-language press by which public discourse can be articulated. This, Denber (2022) argues, unfairly excludes Russian speakers from participation in Ukrainian civic life and discussion.

The extent to which language policy in Ukraine has served to actually advance the Ukrainian language at the expense of the Russian language is debatable. Stern (2022) notes that the Ukrainian language is becoming increasingly popular among Ukrainian youth; however, he notes that Russian remains a mainstay of the older generations and of village life. He furthermore notes that Russian has an enduring legacy in the form of *Surzhyk*, a Ukrainian-Russian sociolect borrowing elements such as vocabulary from both languages (Stern 2022). Furthermore, English is becoming an increasingly important linguistic influence and source of competition for both the Ukrainian and Russian languages (Bevar, 2011). As a result, it can be argued that while Russian remains as a competitor within the Ukrainian linguistic landscape, it does not measure up to its past significance in contemporary times.

***Ha* versus *B*: Which is correct?**

The preceding discussion served to demonstrate the historical precedent by which Ukrainians possess the ability to articulate themselves in the Russian language. A long tradition of Russified cultural assimilation bestowed the Ukrainian nation with the linguistic skills necessary to express themselves, including in matters of nationhood, in the Russian language. As aforementioned, the prepositions *на* and *в*, when used in reference to Ukraine, serve to demonstrate the dependence versus the independence of Ukraine *vis-a-vis* Russia, respectively. However, this grammatical notion is not necessarily a concrete rule; rather, there is much debate as to whether these constructions are genuinely signifiers of political identity, or rather linguistic relics of the Russian language as it has been spoken over the past centuries. In regard to what is considered “proper” and grammatically correct speech as it relates to these prepositions, various sources differ. Most Russian-language sources contend that the Russian language as spoken in Ukraine can be considered distinct in many regards; however, they furthermore contend that the use of the prepositions *на* & *в* remains both

similar and contested across national boundaries within the Russian-speaking world due to fragmented Russian spoken & literary traditions. The following discussion will give a general overview as to what contemporary scholars view as grammatically correct or otherwise relevant in regard to these prepositions.

Graudina et al. (2001) write that for (political) administrative units [*административные единицы*], such as states, *oblasts*, regions, cities, and villages, *в* is considered the proper preposition. Furthermore, Graudina et al. (2001) note Ukraine as being a *historical* exception to this rule until 1992. In 1993, the Government of Ukraine began promoting the use of *в* as opposed to *на* in reference to Ukraine. According to Graudina et al. (2001), this was due to the etymological similarity between the constructions *на Украине* (in Ukraine) and *на окраине* (on the outskirts/periphery). By promoting *в* as the preferred grammatical construction, the Government of Ukraine aims to evoke conceptions of sovereign nationhood as opposed to being within the Russian periphery. Nikitina (2012) supports this perspective, noting that *в Украине* is indicative of a post-Soviet modern Russian lexicon which emphasizes the state's sovereignty. In addition, Graudina et al. (2001) emphasize that while *в* may be the proper parlance in modern *spoken* language, they recognize a distinct Russian literary tradition that favors the use of *на* which, due to the enduring importance of literature in the Russian linguistic identity, bleeds into colloquial speech.

In more modern times, Koryagin (2014) presents the linguistic viewpoint of Dr. Yurii Prokhorov, former rector of the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute that *на Украине* is a “Russian-Russian” variant (“...*в русском русском*”), whereas *в Украине* is the “Ukrainian-Russian” variant (“...*в русском украинском*”) of this particular grammatical construction. The notion that *на* is the preferred preposition in *written* Russian is evidenced by the Russian National Corpus, which returns 3,345 instances of *на Украине* as opposed to 495 instances of *в Украине*.² Furthermore, Prokhorov opines that the debate regarding the use of *в* versus *на* are dialectal differences induced by political correctness rather than genuine discourse concerning grammatical correctness. Prokhorov supports the claim that *в украине* is simply a Ukrainian variation of the Russian language by comparing this deviation to American variations of the Russian language, in which the word *негр* (“black man,” pronounced *nʲegr*) is generally absent. This is due to the similarities in pronunciation with the

² Search queries were “в Украине” and “на Украине,” search issued on 11 October 2022.

English pejorative *nigger* (pronounced 'nɪgə). As a result, Prokhorov asserts that like the word *негр*, *на* is not used in contemporary times not due to grammatical incorrectness, but rather as a result of the perceived need for political correctness in modern-day speech that is reflective of the national linguistic environment. Furthermore, like Graudina et al. (2001), Prokhorov comments on the etymological similarities between *Украина* and *окраина*; however, he dissents from Graudina et al.'s (2001) position that the use of *на* is inappropriate as a result of this relationship, instead postulating that *на* is grammatically appropriate as a result of it (Koryagin, 2014).

Furthermore, while Guseynov (2004) concurs with Graudina et al. (2001) that *в* is generally used in reference to independent polities, he challenges the contention of Prokhorov that *в* is typical of Ukrainian variants of the Russian language and *на* of Russian, providing evidence of the interchangeability of *на* and *в*. A few historical examples he gives of the interchangeability of these propositions are contained in the writings of famed Russian-Ukrainian-Soviet geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky, who used both prepositions in his works:

*“[Полтава] Ужасно, что город вдет немцев как избавителей. Нет суда, полный произвол [...] А тут позорный мир, гибель России и ужасы убийства из-за угла. [...] Некоторые даже считают, что и сейчас борьба с немцами **в Украине** — сговор большевиков [...].”*

“[Poltava] It's terrible that the city calls the Germans as deliverers. There is no trial, complete arbitrariness [...] And here is a shameful world, the death of Russia and the horrors of murder from around the corner. [...] Some even believe that even now the fight against the Germans in [*в*] Ukraine is a conspiracy of the Bolsheviks [...].”

*“В сущности, дряблость в Москве, нет сил, нет подъема. Создание государственности **на Украине** признается и Струве.”*

“In essence, there is flabbiness in Moscow, there is no strength, there is no recovery. The creation of statehood in [*на*] Ukraine is also recognized by Struve.”

*“Заходил Илья Исаакович Шнзбург, оказия в Петроград. С ним разговор о необходимости оставаться **в Украине** местным людям с русской ориентацией.”*

“Ilya Isaakovich Schnzburg came in, an occasion in Petrograd. We talked with him about the need for local people with Russian orientation to stay in [в] Ukraine.”

(Guseynov, 2004)

It is worth noting that these quotations were sourced from material written circa 1918, a turbulent time in which Ukraine had just declared independence following the October Revolution. In this regard, it could be argued that perhaps the dual-use of both prepositions does not reflect the interchangeability of these prepositions, but rather reflects the political uncertainty of the time if the linguistic contention that the use of *в* is reserved for independent polities and *на* for non-independent polities is to be considered. Additionally, Guseynov (2004) provides more contemporary examples from the Russian Russian-language publication *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (published 1993) and the Ukrainian Russian-language publication *Odesskii Vestnik* (published 1994), respectively:

*“К нашим подписчикам **в Украине**. [...] подписку на «КП» **в Украине** с 10 октября принимают практически все отделения связи этого государства. [...] На все вопросы, касающиеся подписки на «Комсомолку» **в Украине**, вам ответят работники Донецкого агентства.”*

"To our subscribers in [в] Ukraine. [...] a subscription to KP in [в] Ukraine since October 10 is accepted by almost all communications offices of this state. [...] Employees of the Donetsk agency will answer all questions regarding a subscription to Komsomolskaya Pravda in [в] Ukraine.”

*“**На Украине** зафиксирован самый низкий за три года уровень инфляции. [...] **В Украине** назревает демографическая катастрофа.”*

“Ukraine has recorded the lowest inflation rate in three years. [...] A demographic catastrophe is brewing in [в] Ukraine.”

As demonstrated above, the Russian publication uses the preposition *в*, ostensibly demonstrating sovereignty, while the Ukrainian publication uses both prepositions interchangeably. The aforementioned examples of written Russian give credence to Graudina et al. (2001) and Prokhorov's contention that a degree of interchangeability between the two prepositions exists. Furthermore, Russian language corpora give further evidence to the extent of interchangeability in spoken Russian language. The spoken corpus of the Russian National Corpus returns 41 results for the phrase “в Украине” as opposed to 269 results for the phrase “на Украине.”³ In regard to L2 speakers of Russian, such as those that would be found in Ukraine, in Dobrushina et al.'s (2018) corpus of spoken Russian by L2 Russian speakers in Dagestan, queries returned 6 instances of *на* and its derivatives and 2 instances of *в* and its derivatives in reference to Ukraine.⁴ It should be noted that in regard to the aforementioned corpus, the choice of the speaker to use either preposition could have been influenced by the interviewers and their questions. Consider the following interview segment:

Interviewer 2: *Здравствуйте* [Hello].

Interviewer 1: *Привет, Оль. На Украине, да, служил?* [Hello, Ol'. You served in Ukraine, right?]

Interviewee: *На Украине служил.* [I served in Ukraine.]

In this case, the possibility arises that the interviewee chose to say *на* as opposed to *в* as a result of prompting or suggestion by the interviewer. However, this potential confounding variable is insignificant when compared with other sources supporting the contention of interchangeability.

In regard to further contemporary examples of the use of the prepositions *на* and *в*, Tolstoy (2017) gives further insight into the linguistic landscape of post-Annexation Ukraine by interviewing various cultural and academic stakeholders in Russian and Ukraine as to their opinion regarding the use of *в* versus *на*. In opposition to Prokhorov's contention regarding the use of *на* versus *в* as derivative of Ukrainian and Russian variants of the Russian language and Graudina et al.'s (2001) contention that *на Украине* remains valid due to Russian literary

³ Search executed on 30 October 2022

⁴ Search queries were word = “в/на” and lemma = “Украина”

tradition favoring the phraseology, Ukrainian professor Lidiya Starodubtseva argues the following:

И даже в подвижности и прозрачности норм русского языка были некие гибкие правила, которые меняли это произношение. И всем известны примеры из Пушкина, из "Полтавы": "...и перенес войну в Украину". И у Гоголя мы находим употребление предлога "в": "порядку нет в Украине." И у Толстого Багратион, между прочим, комплектовал свою армию "в Украине" а не "на Украине". И даже у Чехова: "итак, я еду в Украину..." Это все более чем известные примеры, которые говорят о том, что в "русском" русском языке предлоги "в" и "на" были равноценны.

And even in the mobility and transparency of the norms of the Russian language there were some flexible rules that changed this pronunciation. And everyone knows the examples from Pushkin, from [из] "Poltava": "... and moved the war to [в] Ukraine." And in Gogol we find the use of the preposition "[в]": "there is no order in [в] Ukraine." And Tolstoy's Bagration, by the way, recruited his army "in [в] Ukraine" and not "in [на] Ukraine." And even Chekhov: "So, I'm going to [в] Ukraine..." These are all more than well-known examples that say that in the "Russian" Russian language, the prepositions "in" [в] and "in/on" [на] were equivalent.

(Tolstoy, 2017)

The quotations Starodubtseva provides from the famed Russian and Ukrainian novelists Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, and Chekhov directly challenge both Prokhorov in Koryagin (2014) and Gradudina et al.'s assumptions regarding the preference for *на Украине* in Russian language literary tradition. Rather, it gives further credence to the assumption of either interchangeability of or preference for the preposition *в*.

The preceding discussion concerned Russian-language materials and publications. Similarly, English-language sources are also somewhat divided in support of the use of *в* as opposed to *на*. Devlin (2017) disagrees with Gradudina et al. (2001) and Prokhorov's contention that *в* and *на* are generally interchangeable, instead claiming that the use of both prepositions constitute a sociopolitical reflection of the writer's attitude towards Ukraine. Devlin (2017)

finds a significant correlation between the choice of preposition and political views of online commenters, finding that 67.5% of pro-Kremlin respondents prefer the preposition *на* and 75.4% of anti-Kremlin respondents preferring *в*. However, Devin's research analyzed anonymous user comments on Russian-language news websites, and was thereby not able to derive the nationality of commenters. As a result, while this gives credence to the idea that the use of *в* and *на* have inherent political connotations, it is not possible to draw a conclusion as to whether this is specifically applicable within the context of the Ukraine-Russia relationship as presented in Koryagin (2014). However, Topuria (2019) provides supplementary evidence in this regard; in his study of Russian disinformation efforts, Topuria (2019) claims that the use of *на Украине* as opposed to *в Украине* in Russian state news coverage served to intentionally subordinate Ukraine's sovereignty to its consumers due to the aforementioned politicized notion of the use of these prepositions. Therefore, the contention that there exists a political connotation in regard to the use of these prepositions has credence, at least in current times.

Lastly, Russian and Ukrainian language pedagogical materials published in Ukraine are firmly in favor of the construction *в Украине* as opposed to *на Украине*. Bondarchuk et al.'s (2015) *Russian Language for Beginners* prompts the reader with numerous phrases such as “Сейчас я живу **в Украине**” [Now I live in [в] Ukraine] (p. 27), “Раньше Николай Андреевич жил и работал **в Украине**, в городе Киеве” [In the past Nikolai Andreyevich lived and worked in [в] Ukraine] (p. 35), and “Он изучает русский язык, потому что хочет жить и работать **в России или в Украине**” [He studies Russian, because he wants to live and work in [в] Russia or in [в] Ukraine] (p. 62), among other examples. Furthermore, the following exercise from page 27 of the exercise book gives the following example for correctly referring to Ukraine in the prepositional case:

“Максим родился ... (Украина). – Максим родился **в Украине**.”

“Maksim was born ... (Ukraine)” - Maksim was born in [в] Ukraine.”

As a result, the correct preposition to be used with Ukraine is demonstrably given as *в*. Gerasimenko & Kovalyova (2015) give similar examples in their exercise book, such as:

Сборник «Кобзарь» стал известным и в Украине, и в России (p. 116)

“The album ‘Kobzar’ became well-known both in [в] Ukraine, and in [в] Russia.”

Furthermore, Ukraine as a subject is specifically defined as necessitating the preposition *в* as opposed to *на* on page 215 of the same textbook.

It is worth noting that many of the preceding examples include both Ukraine and Russia. While this could be coincidental, it could also very well be intentional in order to demonstrate the equivalent use of *в* as a demonstration of sovereignty of Ukraine *vis-a-vis* Russia. Furthermore, it may be of importance to note that the preceding two sources are exercise books meant for non-Ukrainians seeking admittance to Ukrainian universities which require command of the Russian language. However, pedagogical materials meant for domestic audiences do not differ in recommending the use of *в* as opposed to *на*. In a Grade 11 (ages 16-17) Russian language textbook for Ukrainian students by Balandina & Degtyareva (2018), the following examples are given, with *на Украине* as a distinct phrase not being present in the textbook except when directly quoting Soviet-Russian literature:

“Культура русской речи особенно актуальна в Украине.” (p. 8)

“The culture of Russian speech is especially relevant in [в] Ukraine.”

“В музее К. Паустовского в Одессе находится самая большая в Украине коллекция книг писателя, которые переведены на 74 языка мира.” (p. 112)

“In the Museum of K. Paustovsky in Odessa is the largest collection of the writer's books in [в] Ukraine, which have been translated into 74 languages of the world.”

“Русскоязычные украинские писатели, получившие известность и в Украине и за ее пределами, широко представлены в фантастике.” (p. 117)

“Russian-speaking Ukrainian writers, who have gained fame both in [в] Ukraine and abroad, are widely represented in fiction.”

Similarly, in a Grade 5 (ages 10-11) textbook by Korsakov (2018), the following examples are used:

“Он — представитель известной в Украине династии меценатов, на родовом гербе которой была надпись: «Стремление к общественной пользе»” (p. 88)

"He is a representative of a well—known dynasty of patrons in [в] Ukraine, on whose ancestral coat of arms there was an inscription: ‘Striving for public benefit.’"

“Интересно, что композитор работал над этой оперой в Украине, в знаменитом поместье Качановка” (p. 120).

“It is interesting that the composer worked on this opera in [в] Ukraine, in the famous Kachanivka estate.”

As a result, there is a clear preference for the preposition *в* in Ukrainian Russian-language pedagogical materials. English language pedagogical materials, however, are somewhat more reflective of the disagreements enumerated in the previous sections; in Andrews et al.’s (1994) *Leaping into Russian: A Systematic Introduction to Contemporary Grammar*, *на Украине* is determined to be the correct prepositional pairing, due to the fact that the word *Украина* etymologically derives from the compound *у край* (“near the border”), and the preposition *в* cannot be used with such compounds. Similarly, Wade (2002, p. 190; 2011, p. 424) notes in *The Oxford Russian Grammar and Verbs* that the proper prepositional phrase is *на Украине*, but that “*в Украине* [in Ukraine] is also found since the country’s independence.” Similarly, in the third edition of *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar*, he gives *на* as the preferred preposition, but notes that *в* “is becoming increasingly acceptable.” However, Dunn & Khairov (2009, p. 395) share the view given in Koryagin (2014) that *в Украине* is typical of Ukrainian variants of the Russian language and *на Украине* of Russian. They note that “both forms are possible: *в* is normally preferred in Ukraine, while *на* still tends to be used in Russia.” As a result, English-language modes of Russian pedagogy are more line with Russian notions of the use of this preposition as opposed to that of Ukrainian notions which argue for the inherent correctness of the use of the preposition *в*.

The preceding discussion demonstrates significant inconsistency in regard to perceptions of the grammatical correctness of the prepositions *в* & *на* when used in reference to Ukraine. Russian- and English-language sources identify either solely *в*, solely *на*, or both prepositions as being grammatically correct, depending on the locale in which the Russian language is spoken. Furthermore, although there is general congruence among both English- and Russian-language sources in regard to the claim that *в Украине* is the preferred form for Russian-language speakers and sources in Ukraine, primary sources present the contrary, demonstrating that even within Ukraine, the use of such prepositions can vary (Graudina et al., 2001; Koryagin, 2004; Dunn & Khairov, 2009; Guseynov, 2004). As a result, there is clear academic disagreement that forms the basis for the research question in regard to the extent that the use of *в* and *на* can be distinguished among Russian and Ukrainian Russian-speaking constituencies.

Hypotheses: A language (un)divided?

The preceding scholarship demonstrates firstly that there exists a historical basis by which the Ukrainian nation is empowered to use the Russian language as a medium of expression. Secondly, it has been demonstrated that a) the prepositions *в* and *на* have etymological implications in regard to referencing national sovereignty and b) that there is significant disagreement, both historically and in contemporary times, as to the proper usage of the prepositions *в* and *на*. Both native & non-native Russian and Ukrainian speakers of Russian differ on the acceptability of the use of *на* in contemporary times, with opinions generally being separable into four contentions based on the preceding scholarship:

Contention A: The use of *на* is perceived as an affront to modern understandings of Ukrainian sovereignty, as it inherently suggests that Ukraine does not exist as a distinct political entity, but rather as part of the periphery of the Russian-speaking center. Therefore, *в* is expected to be the preferred preposition to be used by Ukrainian speakers of Russian in reference to Ukraine. This contention is supported by Gradudina et al. (2001), Nikitina (2012), Devlin (2017), and Topuria (2019).

Contention B: Though the use of *на* possesses the historical political connotations described in contention A, it does not have actual relevance in everyday colloquial speech. As a result,

на and *в* may be considered interchangeable in practice by Ukrainian and Russian speakers of the Russian language. This contention is supported by Guseynov (2004).

Contention C: The use of *на* has long historical precedent in Russian literary and linguistic tradition. Because the Russian language exists isolated to an extent from nascent political trends, the continued use of *на* can continue to be considered grammatically-proper speech among Ukrainian and Russian speakers of the Russian language. This contention is supported by Graudina et al. (2001) and Koryagin (2014).

From the three preceding contentions, the following hypotheses can be derived:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the use of the prepositions в and на between Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language. There is no preference for a particular preposition based on national origin and their use is thereby interchangeable.

H₁: There is no significant difference in the use of the prepositions в and на between Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language. There is a clear preference for a particular preposition irregardless of national origin.

H₂: There is a significant difference in the use of the prepositions в and на between Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language. There is a clear preference for a particular preposition based on national origin.

The methods by which the preceding hypotheses will be evaluated are to be discussed in the following section.

Methodology

In order to analyze the aforementioned hypotheses and the extent to which the prepositions *на* and *в* manifest in colloquial speech, Ukrainian and Russian speakers of Russian are to be interviewed using a survey method - more specifically, a self-administered fill-in-the-blank questionnaire - in order to determine both what constitutes “grammatically correct” speech in Ukrainian and Russian variants of the Russian language, as well as several personal

characteristics which may influence their perception of what constitutes the “grammatically correct” usage of either preposition. A survey method was chosen as it is best equipped to capture factual, behavioral, and attitudinal characteristics (such as biographical information, personal history, and beliefs regarding what constitutes “correct” language, respectively) which could serve to influence grammar (Dörnyei, 2003). Furthermore, Larsen-Freeman (2009) supports the use of a survey research design in regard to the goals of this research, noting fill-in-the blank survey testing as a traditionally accepted method of assessing grammar.

However, there are some particular challenges in the use of such a research design. Dörnyei (2003) identifies illiteracy as a potential confounding variable in survey research. This factor is especially relevant for this research, as it assumes the participant is aware of what constitutes grammatically correct speech. In relation to this study, this issue could manifest itself through respondents listing a particular preposition not based on their personal belief of what constitutes “correct” language, but rather a lack of knowledge thereof. However, literacy as a potential confounding variable is expected to be moderated by factual and behavioral data collected within the survey which could nonetheless give insight as to the factors which motivate the use of a particular prepositional pairing over another regardless of the ability of the respondent to properly articulate the reason as to why. For example, the collection of education levels of participants can be used to infer the likelihood that a respondent is literate. A second issue which could arise is social desirability bias, in which respondents answer based on what they think the desirable/expected answer is, rather than how they would actually respond (Dörnyei, 2003). In regard to this study, this would manifest in respondents responding with a particular set of prepositions on the basis that one constitutes a “grammatically (i.e. politically) correct” pairing as opposed to a pairing that they would actually use in practice in colloquial speech and writing. Lastly, the survey design has the potential to suffer from acquiescence bias, in which respondents respond in an ambivalent and non-critical manner when they are unsure of a correct answer. The preceding biases are hoped to be moderated by a focus on not querying participants on the normative aspects and arguments of grammar, but rather simply on its natural use. Furthermore, by issuing respondents a query asking to “fill-in-the-blank” rather than presenting a binary choice (e.g. “Please select the correct prepositional pairing for this sentence”), it is hoped that respondents will be able to answer in a manner that is reflective of their own natural modes of speech and which is thereby not based on suggestion.

Furthermore, speakers will be asked to provide their nationality, birthplace, place of residence, education, native language(s), and spoken language(s). This information will be collected in order to ascertain the extent to which geography, nationality, etc. as it pertains to language dominance has an impact on perceptions of what constitutes grammatically correct speech in the Russian language. This is in reference to the postulations of the aforementioned authors, who argued that the extent to which *в* and *на* are different in terms of meaning and connotation are based on a speaker's personal (national) background, thereby impacting the interchangeability of prepositions in colloquial speech. Furthermore, the native and other spoken languages of participants will be assessed due to their potential to affect prepositional choice. Kemp (2007) notes that speakers of multiple languages generally possess better command of grammar due to their knowledge of various grammatical systems. If *в* is to be considered the “grammatically correct” variant, then multilingual individuals are expected to respond with the grammatically-correct convention. However, Hirosh & Degani (2018) question this correlation, arguing instead that the relationship is weak.

What may be of note is the fact that there is no question in the survey regarding political support of the respondent in regard to either Russia or Ukraine. This is due to multiple reasons. The first reason is that although the use of the prepositions may have a political context, for the sake of the research, inherently political questioning may serve to confound the results through suggestion. The second reason is that statistically, Ukrainians are overwhelmingly in support of their own state as opposed to Russia. In polling residents of southern and eastern Ukraine, where Russian speakers form the majority and most of Ukraine’s ethnic Russians are based, the Kiev Institute of Sociology found that in 2014 the overwhelming majority of respondents viewed Ukraine as inherently independent from Russia, with a small minority supporting the ascension of Russian-speaking Ukrainian regions with the Russian state (Paniotto & Hrushetsky, 2022). This divide increased following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine (Paniotto & Hrushetsky, 2022). Furthermore, additional polling by the same organization demonstrated increased affinity with a cohesive Ukrainian identity, with 85% of respondents in July 2022 claiming to identify as Ukrainian, rather than as a citizen of a particular region, ethnicity, or other identifier (Palikot, 2022). This is a significant increase from 65%, which was the evaluated figure from survey research conducted in early 2022 (Palikot, 2022). As a result, the assumption can be made that Ukrainians in general support Ukraine *vis-a-vis* Russia, and therefore, their answers should in

principle reflect affinity with the notion of an independent and sovereign Ukraine without expressly asking such a question.

Participants were openly solicited from a variety of Russian and Ukrainian online communities, such as Facebook and Reddit communities targeted at Russian and Ukrainian speakers. Additionally, the survey was directly distributed through anonymous academic contacts in Ukraine and Russia known by the author.

In order to discern the significance of the impact of national identity and other variables on the use of the aforementioned prepositions, the chi-square test of independence will be used. The chi-square test was selected due to the fact that it is considered the preeminent significance test for comparing nominal (categorical) variables (McHugh, 2013).

The full survey as issued to participants is available in the appendix (Appendix 2).

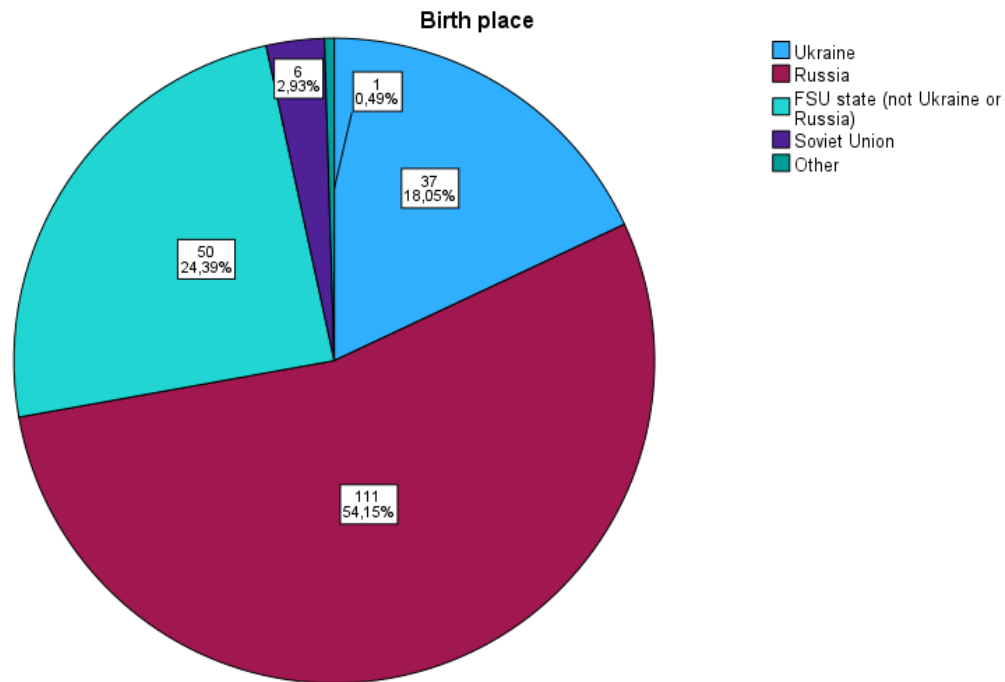
Results

In total, there were 220 respondents. Of those respondents, 205 completed the survey. The average age of respondents was 39 (born in 1983).

Biographical data

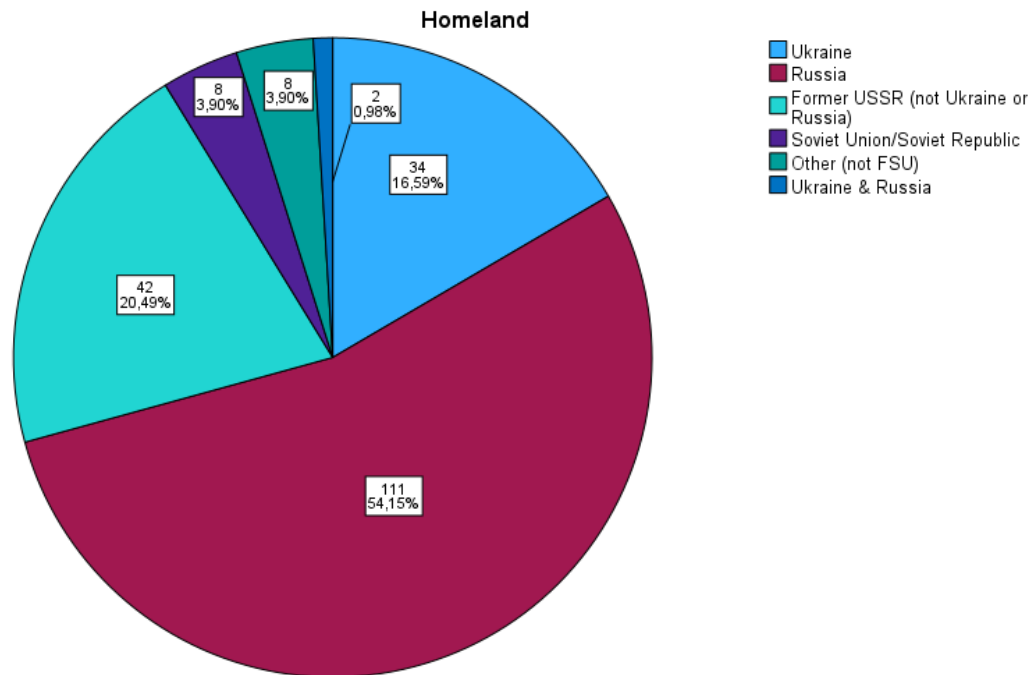
Of the 205 respondents, 37 (18.1%) were born in Ukraine, 111 (54.1%) in Russia, 50 (24.4%) in an FSU state that is not Russia or Ukraine, and 1 (0.5%) was born in a non-FSU state. Additionally, 6 respondents (2.9 %) self-reported as being born in the Soviet Union without specifying a specific Soviet Republic. In cases where respondents identified their birthplace as being a particular Soviet Socialist Republic, the response was recoded to correspond to its modern-day successor state (e.g. Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was recoded to Russia, Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic to FSU state that is not Ukraine or Russia, etc.)⁵

⁵ See appendix 1.1



In regard to which state they regarded as their homeland, 34 respondents (16.6%) regarded Ukraine as their homeland, 111 (54.1%) Russia, 42 (20.5%) an FSU state that is not Russia or Ukraine, 8 (3.9%) the Soviet Union or one its constituent republics, 8 (3.9%) a non-FSU state, and 2 (1%) respondents considered both Ukraine & Russia equally as their homeland.⁶ In cases where respondents identified a sub-national political/administrative unit as their homeland, such as a city or *oblast'* (region), the national unit was recorded in its place. While there is certainly academic merit in investigating how the issue of the use of prepositions may manifest itself in regional dialects, this question is nonetheless out of the scope of this research.

⁶ See appendix 1.2



Regarding other measured variables such as respondents' native language(s), multilingualism, and education level, they will be detailed below according to respondents' self-identified homeland:

UKRAINE

Native language: Among 34 respondents, 12 (35.3%) identified Ukrainian as their native language, 7 (20.6%) identified Russian, and 15 (44.1%) identified both Ukrainian and Russian (44.1%) (Appendix 1.3).

Multilingualism: Among 34 respondents, 4 (11.8%) did not speak a language in addition to their native one(s), and 30 (88.2%) did (Appendix 1.4).

Education level: Among 34 respondents, 6 (17.6%) completed or were in the process of completing secondary education, and 28 (82.4%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (Appendix 1.5).

RUSSIA

Native language: Among 111 respondents, 109 (98.2%) identified Russian as their native language, 1 identified both Ukrainian and Russian (0.9%), and 1 identified Armenian (0.9%) (Appendix 1.3).

Multilingualism: Among 111 respondents, 4 (3.6%) did not speak a language in addition to their native one(s), and 107 (96.4%) did

Education level: Among 111 respondents, 9 (8.1%) completed or were in the process of completing secondary education, and 102 (91.9%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (Appendix 1.5)

FSU STATE (NOT RUSSIA OR UKRAINE):

Native language: Among 42 respondents, 39 (92.8%) identified Russian as their native language, 1 (2.4%) identified Romanian, 1 (2.4%) identified Uzbek, and 1 (2.4%) identified Belarusian (Appendix 1.3).

Multilingualism: All 42 (100%) respondents speak a language in addition to their native one (Appendix 1.4).

Education level: Among 42 respondents, 8 (19%) completed or were in the process of completing secondary education, and 34 (81%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (Appendix 1.5).

SOVIET UNION

Native language: Among 8 respondents, 7 (87.5%) identified Russian as their native language, and 1 (12.5%) identified both Russian & Ukrainian as their native languages (Appendix 1.3).

Multilingualism: Among 8 respondents, 1 (12.5%) did not speak a language additional to their native one, and 7 (87.5%) did (Appendix 1.4).

Education level: Among 8 respondents, 1 (12.5%) completed or was in the process of completing secondary education, and 7 (87.5%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (Appendix 1.5).

NON-FSU STATE

Native language: All 8 (100%) respondents identified Russian as their native language (Appendix 1.3).

Multilingualism: All 8 (100%) respondents speak a language in addition to their native one (Appendix 1.4).

Education level: Among 8 respondents, 1 (12.5%) completed or was in the process of completing secondary education, and 7 (87.5%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (Appendix 1.5).

UKRAINE & RUSSIA

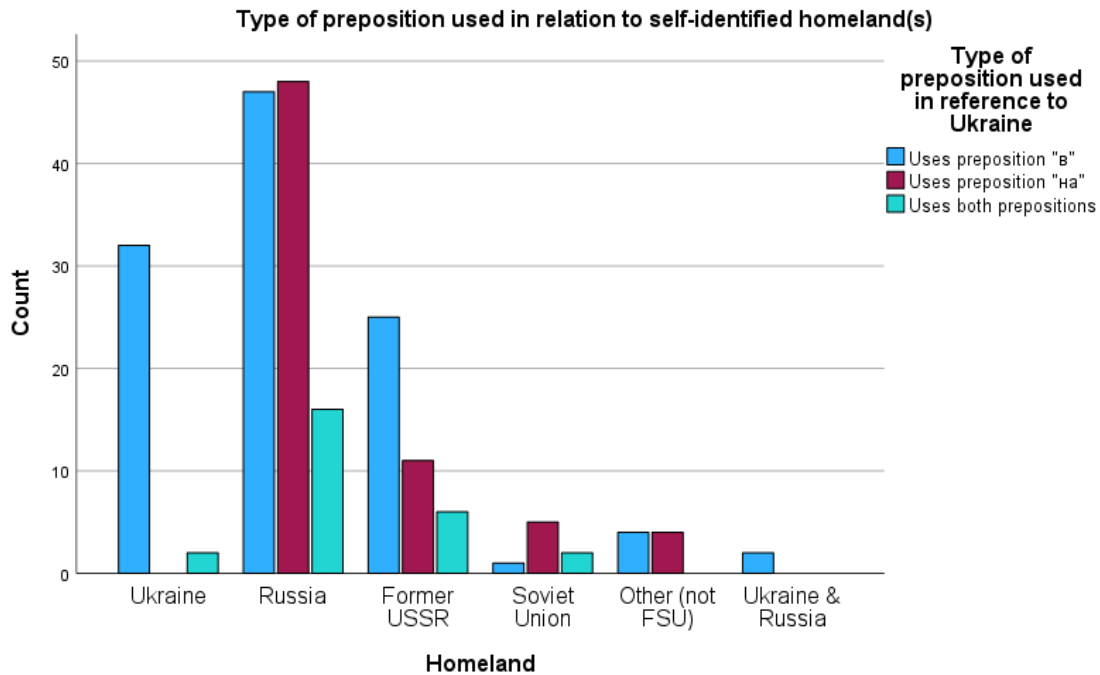
Native language: Among both respondents, 1 (50%) identified Russian as their native language, and 1 (50%) identified both Russian and Ukrainian (Appendix 1.3).

Multilingualism: Both respondents (100%) speak a language in addition to their native one (Appendix 1.4).

Education level: Both respondents (100%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (Appendix 1.4).

Prepositions

In regard to the prepositions used, when sorted by homeland, there are apparent and stark differences, especially between Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language and other Russian speakers. Among 34 respondents self-identifying as Ukrainian, 32 (94.1%) use exclusively the preposition *в*, and 2 (5.9%) use both prepositions (Appendix 1.6). None use the preposition *на* exclusively. Among 111 respondents self-identifying as Russian, 47 (42.3%) use exclusively the preposition *в*, 48 (43.2%) use exclusively the preposition *на*, and 16 (14.4%) use both prepositions (Appendix 1.6). Among 42 respondents self-identifying as from an FSU state that is not Russia or Ukraine, 25 (59.5%) use exclusively the preposition *в*, 11 (26.2%) use exclusively the preposition *на*, and 6 (14.3%) use both prepositions (Appendix 1.6). Among 8 respondents self-identifying as from the Soviet Union, 1 (12.5%) uses exclusively the preposition *в*, 5 (62.5%) use exclusively the preposition *на*, and 2 (25%) use both prepositions (Appendix 1.6). Among 8 respondents self-identifying as from a non-FSU state, 4 (50%) use exclusively the preposition *в* and 4 (50%) use exclusively the preposition *на* (Appendix 1.6). Lastly, among 2 respondents self-identifying as from both Ukraine and Russia, both (100%) exclusively use the preposition *в* (Appendix 1.6).



In the statistical analysis, respondents reporting their homeland as the Soviet Union, a non-FSU state, or as both Ukraine and Russia were excluded due to the low number of participants in the aforementioned categories. This is because meaningful statistical analysis with such low sample sizes is not possible. Therefore, in order to be able to discern the most statistically accurate results, these categories will be disregarded. Furthermore, while the study of the use of prepositions by Russian speakers identifying with the Soviet Union or the non-FSU abroad possesses academic merit, it does not possess much relevance to the research question, which more specifically questions these differences as they pertain to Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language. This left the valid number of cases at 187 (including Russian speakers from the former Soviet Union excluding Ukraine and Russia; excluding states other than Ukraine and Russia, $n = 145$).

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between national identity and the use of prepositions, including those self-identifying with a national identity in the former Soviet Union (not including Ukraine or Russia). The choice of grammatical prepositions were limited to *в*, *на*, and both. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 187) = 30.2, p < 0.001$ (Appendix 1.7). When excluding those identifying with a national identity in the former Soviet Union (not including Ukraine or Russia) and only comparing those self-identifying with Ukrainian or Russian national identities, the number of valid cases decreases to 145; however, the relationship remains

significant, $X^2(2, N = 145) = 28, p < 0.001$ (Appendix 1.8). Furthermore, when repeating the previous analysis but excluding participants who gave both *в* and *на* as grammatically correct variants, ($n = 127$), the relationship remains significant as well, $X^2(1, N = 127) = 26, p < 0.001$ (Appendix 1.9). Additionally, when comparing those self-identifying with an FSU state (not Ukraine or Russia) with those self-identifying as Ukrainian and excluding *both* as a choice, there remains a significant relationship, $X^2(1, N = 68) = 11.7, p < 0.001$ (Appendix 1.10). Lastly, when comparing those self-identifying with an FSU state (not Ukraine or Russia) with those self-identifying as Russian, there is significant relationship as well, $X^2(1, N = 131) = 4.2, p = 0.04$ (Appendix 1.11). In summary, there is a demonstrable significant statistical difference in type and frequency of prepositions used between each of the three analyzed groups.

Furthermore, in regard to other possible interceding variables, there is no apparent significant relationship between education level, $X^2(2, N = 205) = 3.8, p = 0.15$ (Appendix 1.12), nor between multilingualism ($p = 0.64$) (Appendix 1.13) and prepositional choice.

Discussion

The preceding analysis demonstrates a significant relationship between national identity and the type of preposition used in reference to Ukraine. Furthermore, there is a clear distinction between the use of prepositions used in regard to Ukraine by Ukrainians, and those prepositions used by Russians and other Russian speakers in the former Soviet Union. As a result, H_2 , which asserts that there is a significant difference in the use of the prepositions *в* and *на* among Russian and Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language, and more generally, that there is a clear preference for a particular preposition based on national origin, can be accepted. Likewise, the null hypothesis and H_1 can thereby be rejected. Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language demonstrably prefer the preposition *в* in reference to Ukraine, whereas Russian speakers of the Russian language tend to use both prepositions interchangeably. Furthermore, citizens of the former Soviet Union, not including Russia or Ukraine, also use both prepositions interchangeably, but more so prefer the preposition *в* over *на* compared to their Russian counterparts. These observed trends reflect Gradudina et al. (2001), Nikitina (2012), Devlin (2017), and Topuria's (2019) collective suggestion that *в* as opposed to *на* is

preferred by Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language. Furthermore, the simultaneous use of *в* and *на* by non-Ukrainian speakers of the Russian language supports Graudina et al. (2001) and Koryagin's (2014) contention that *на* is still considered grammatically correct by various Russian-speaking constituencies.

While the survey research was salient in regard to establishing the aforementioned trends in the use of these prepositions, there were nonetheless certain unexpected reactions to the survey that were not anticipated by the author and which serve to generate further evidence as to the controversy surrounding the use of these prepositions. As aforementioned in the methodology section, the subject of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war was avoided in order to prevent influencing participants' responses from reflecting political attitudes, or otherwise understanding the survey as possessing a particular political agenda. However, many participants implicitly understood the survey and research topic to have political undertones; consider the following comments left by participants solicited from online communities for Russian nationals:

Странный какой-то))))

(Something strange)))))⁷

Наверно, о предлогах в русском языке. Или это такой тонкий троллинг к вопросу о в/на Украине?

(It's probably about prepositions in the Russian language. Or it's some kind of subtle trolling regarding the question of *в/на Украине*?)

заполнила, но да, отдает троллингом.

(I filled it out, but yes, it seems like trolling)

These comments demonstrate that these particular respondents felt that the survey, though designed to obfuscate the true nature of the survey (in regard to the extent of the politicization of these prepositions) to avoid bias, instead may have served to trigger such biases. Furthermore, it is thought that the following questions included in the survey may have caused these accusations of "trolling:"

⁷ In reference to open solicitation to complete the survey

*Михаил Сергеевич является генсеком КП СССР и он родился _____
Украине.*

Mikhail Sergeyevich is the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR and he was born [in] Ukraine.

*И _____ России, и _____ Америке, и _____ Украине живет большое
количество русскоязычных.*

And [in] Russia, and [in] America, and [in] Ukraine live a large quantity of Russian speakers.

Firstly, the reference to Mikhail [Sergeyevich] Gorbachev in the same sentence referencing Ukraine may have served to trigger some participants, given Gorbachev's complicated and extremely controversial legacy in the former Soviet Union, especially in Russia. Furthermore, the second question asks the participant to consider the appropriate prepositions while directly comparing Russia and Ukraine in this regard. Though the given sentences were not intended to provoke a particular response, emotional or otherwise, in hindsight it is certainly possible that the selected subject matter served to convince certain participants that the survey was inflammatory or political in nature, which could in turn have impacted participants' responses. On the other hand, if Prokhorov's contention regarding the inherent politicization of the choice of preposition is to be accepted, then it can be reasonably argued that any attempt to compare the use of prepositions in regard to Ukraine and/or Russia in this manner would serve to evoke such a response (Koryagin, 2014).

Furthermore, consider this comment left by a participant solicited from an online community for Ukrainian nationals:

Ти помилився, хлопче, українці - не «рускоязычний [sic] народ»
You are mistaken, boy, Ukrainians are not a Russian speaking people.

The open solicitation for participation in the survey referred to the Ukrainians as a Russian-speaking people. Though the demographic evidence presented in this research demonstrates the indisputable fact that Russian remains a linguistic force in Ukraine, the politicization and rejection of the Russian language in Ukraine discussed gives credence to

the commenter's response as well. Trends of Ukrainization of the Ukrainian sociocultural and linguistic space as a result of increasing animosity between the Russian and Ukrainian states since the dissolution of the USSR has caused many Ukrainians to reject the Russian language as one that was imposed on the Ukrainian people as a result of Russian hegemony. Though the wording of the solicitation did not mean to suggest the Ukrainian nation as *exclusively* Russian speaking, this participant nonetheless perceived it as such. Similar to the accusations of "trolling" by Russian participants, it is certainly possible as well that this phraseology served to trigger Ukrainian participants, thereby impacting responses.

More importantly however, the aforementioned comments demonstrate not only that the issue of the use of these prepositions in reference to Ukraine is a salient and politicized topic for speakers of the Russian language, but furthermore that the issue itself provokes an emotional reaction among some. It is fair to assume that complaints of "trolling" stem from the current conflict in Ukraine, leading these participants to believe that the survey is in itself a statement regarding Ukrainian sovereignty vis-a-vis Russian nationals/speakers of Russian. These reactions give credence to the notion that these prepositions possess relevance for speakers of the Russian language and that the use of a particular preposition forms a distinct and significant choice for native speakers.

Participants were also allowed to submit comments at the end of the survey, providing them the opportunity to explain in their own words as to which situations they would use the given prepositions and how they understand the grammatical rules governing their use. Many respondents gave responses reflecting the historical justifications for the use of a given preposition as described by Graudina et al. (2001), Dunn & Khairov (2009), and Wade (2002). However, others provided reasoning more so based on emotional than on historical or grammatical convention (or rather, in opposition to established convention). Consider the following comments:

“Так как много вопросов было именно про использование предлогов именно с Украиной, то исторически (даже в стихах украинских поэтов 19 века) , использовался предлог "на," сейчас используют оба варианта, без какого-то злого умысла обидеть эту страну.”

Since there were a lot of questions about the use of prepositions with Ukraine, historically (even in the poems of Ukrainian poets of the 19th

century), the preposition "на" was used, now both options are used, without any malicious intent to offend this country.

“В языке сложилось исторически "на Украину", хотя и я сама честно ответила, что в другом контексте могла бы сказать "в Украину". Мне приходится контролировать себя, обязательно говорить "в", когда говорю с украинцами (и это даже до войны).”

It has historically been "на Украину," although I myself honestly answered that in another context I could say "в Украину.” I have to control myself, to be sure to say "в" when I talk to Ukrainians (and this is even before the war).

Впрочем, мне не сложно говорить «в Украине», если «на Украине» задевает чьи-то чувства.

However, it is not difficult for me to say "в Украине" if "на Украине" hurts someone's feelings.

“Почему украинцы обижаются на предлог, могу понять. Но когда кто-то заставляет тебя говорить иначе, бесит.”

I can understand why Ukrainians are offended by the preposition [на]. But when someone makes you talk differently, it pisses you off.

These respondents view the use of a particular preposition as demonstrative, whereby one's beliefs or tradition, as opposed to convention, serve to determine the use of a particular proposition. Furthermore, it is implied that the improper use of a particular preposition could cause a negative response from an opposing party if the “wrong” preposition is used. More specifically, these respondents not only clearly suggest that в is the preferred preposition when speaking to a Ukrainian, but furthermore that the use of prepositions varies, ostensibly based on audience, particularly as it relates to national origin. In this sense, Prokhorov's contention that there is a clear differentiation between Russian and Ukrainian variants of the Russian language in regard to the use of these prepositions is supported by these anecdotes (Koryagin, 2014). Furthermore, the first and last comments, which explicitly mention the notion that the use of a particular preposition is more so based on the potential to cause

offense rather than grammatical convention lends further credence to Prohorov's notion that the use of these prepositions is more so subjective than objective.

However, other respondents provide evidence to the contrary; to them, there is no significant motivator for using either prepositions. Consider the following comments which demonstrate this ambivalence:

“После 1991 года Украина стала независимым государством, поэтому, по правилам, хорошо бы говорить “в Украину, в Украине.” Однако, институт Русского языка норму пока не сменил. С этой точки зрения писать и говорить официально нужно “на Украине.” Это языковая норма. Именно поэтому в тесте я указала “на” Украине. Хотя в жизни скорее скажу “в” Украине.”

After 1991 Ukraine became an independent state, therefore, according to convention, it would be proper to say “в Украину, в Украине.” However, the Russian Language Institute has not yet changed the norm. From this point of view, one should officially write and say “на Украине.” This is a language norm. That is why in the test I indicated “на” Ukraine. Although in life I would rather say “в” Украине.”

“В польском тоже употребляют “на Украину,” кстати. И хотя некоторые истерят по этому поводу, язык нельзя изменить росчерком ручки политиков.”

In Polish, they also use “на Украину,” by the way. And while some will freak out about it, language cannot be changed with the stroke of a politician's pen.

“И да. Украинцы обижаются, когда кто-то говорит “на украине” и настаивают на “в Украине.” Но этимологически Украина-это окраина России... Поэтому русские так и привыкли говорить, на Украине на окраине.”

And yes. Ukrainians are offended when someone says “на украине” and insist on “в Украине”. But etymologically, Ukraine is the outskirts of Russia... Therefore, Russians are used to saying that “на Украине [in Ukraine]” “на окраине [on the outskirts].”

While recognizing that both variants have merit (or at least, that both variants have demonstrable use in the contemporary Russian language), these comments acknowledge that the choice of preposition is arbitrary, or otherwise that such a choice is motivated by larger (politicized) forces that do or should not impact the way that language is spoken.

In regard to the remaining potential shortcomings of the research, it is worth mentioning that the overwhelming majority of respondents (87.8%) completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education (e.g. university, college), and that all participants had at least attained some form of secondary education. As a result, it would be interesting to see if a more representative sample in terms of education levels would yield different results.

Secondly, the sub-group self-identifying as from the Soviet Union would have made for an interesting unit of analysis. With Soviet nostalgia being a concerted trend in the former Soviet states (and especially in Russia, where Putin famously called the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century), it would be interesting to see whether those aligning themselves with a Soviet identity would prefer the preposition *на* in reference to Ukraine, as was the grammatical norm at the time. However, with only eight respondents identifying as such, the number of respondents was thereby too small to draw any statistically meaningful conclusions.

Lastly, it may not be appropriate to generalize the results of this research to Ukrainian speakers of Russian in general. Academics such as Zeller (2019) emphasize sociocultural differences that exist between constituencies in southern, central, and western Ukraine. Even though Zeller (2019) concurs that there are demonstrable markers that distinguish Ukrainian variants of the Russian language, it would be interesting to see if and how this specific issue manifests itself among regional dialects of the Russian language in Ukraine.

In summary, while the responses demonstrate clear support of the hypothesis that there exists a clear differentiation between Ukrainian and Russian modes of speech in regard to Ukraine in the Russian language, the justification for such varies. Nonetheless, the Russian language appears to be a relevant mode by which Ukrainians can express notions of Ukrainian sovereignty and independence in a matter that distinguishes themselves from other speakers of the Russian language, despite a contemporary domestic linguistic environment which is

hostile to its use, and which furthermore considers its use as antithetical to the Ukrainian national identity.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the key issue of this research is not the choice of preposition used in regard to Ukraine in the Russian language, but rather the extent to which the Russian language remains or even has the potential to persist as a “Ukrainian” language. Recent events in Ukraine have made it so that despite possessing a significant Russian-speaking population, the Russian language has been inextricably linked with a hostile foreign power and thereby portrayed as antithetical to the notion of a distinct Ukrainian national identity. Furthermore, the past imposition of the Russian language in lieu of the Ukrainian language under what modern historians consider a hegemonic colonizing force has made it so that Russian-speaking Ukrainians, born of this legacy, are being increasingly presented with a zero-sum linguistic environment.

The preceding research demonstrated that for many, the Russian language remains a salient language for communication in Ukraine, including among younger constituencies (as demonstrated by the average age of survey respondents). This provides contrary evidence to the notion that the Russian language only remains truly relevant among older constituencies. Furthermore, in regard to the use of these particular prepositions, Ukrainians utilize the Russian language in a manner distinct from Russian constituencies which serves to both distinguish them and provide an avenue by which Ukrainian nationalist and patriotic sentiment can be articulated. This is made evident by the stark differences among the aforementioned constituencies in regard to the use of the prepositions *на* and *в* to implicitly convey the notion of the subservience or independence of Ukraine *vis-a-vis* Russia.

The future of the Russian language in Ukraine remains unclear. The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war serves to compound this uncertainty. However, no matter the symbolic connotations that the Russian language possesses in the Ukrainian linguistic space, it would be misguided to consider the Russian language as being monopolized by Russian constituencies; rather, despite the hundreds of years of linguistic imposition and assimilation, Ukrainians have managed to co-opt the language of historical occupiers and express

themselves in a manner that distinguishes them as a sovereign entity within the Russian-speaking world through the use of prepositions.

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Appendix

1.1: Frequency table of birthplaces of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ukraine	37	18,0	18,0	18,0
	Russia	111	54,1	54,1	72,2
	FSU state (not Ukraine or Russia)	50	24,4	24,4	96,6
	Soviet Union	6	2,9	2,9	99,5
	Other	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

1.2: Frequency table of homelands of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ukraine	34	16,6	16,6	16,6
	Russia	111	54,1	54,1	70,7
	Former USSR (not Ukraine or Russia)	42	20,5	20,5	91,2
	Soviet Union/Soviet Republic	8	3,9	3,9	95,1
	Other (not FSU)	8	3,9	3,9	99,0
	Ukraine & Russia	2	1,0	1,0	100,0
	Total	205	100,0	100,0	

1.3: Crosstabulation table of native language(s) sorted by homeland

		Native language				Total
		Ukrainian	Russian	Russian & Ukrainian	Other	
Homeland	Ukraine	12	7	15	0	34
	Russia	0	109	1	1	111
	Former USSR (not Ukraine or Russia)	0	39	0	3	42
	Soviet Union/Soviet Republic	0	7	1	0	8
	Other (not FSU)	0	8	0	0	8
	Ukraine & Russia	0	1	1	0	2
Total		12	171	18	4	205

1.4: Crosstabulation table of multilingualism sorted by homeland

		Speaking language other than native language(s)		Total
		No	Yes	
Homeland	Ukraine	4	30	34
	Russia	4	107	111
	Former USSR (not Ukraine or Russia)	0	42	42
	Soviet Union/Soviet Republic	1	7	8
	Other (not FSU)	0	8	8
	Ukraine & Russia	0	2	2
Total		9	196	205

1.5: Crosstabulation table of education level sorted by homeland

		Highest education level achieved		Total
		Secondary/Среднее	Tertiary/Высшее	
Homeland	Ukraine	6	28	34
	Russia	9	102	111
	Former USSR (not Ukraine or Russia)	8	34	42
	Soviet Union/Soviet Republic	1	7	8
	Other (not FSU)	1	7	8
	Ukraine & Russia	0	2	2
Total		25	180	205

1.6: Crosstabulation table of type of preposition used sorted by homeland

		Type of preposition used in reference to Ukraine			Total
		Uses preposition "в"	Uses preposition "на"	Uses both prepositions	
Homeland	Ukraine	32	0	2	34
	Russia	47	48	16	111
	Former USSR (not Ukraine or Russia)	25	11	6	42
	Soviet Union/Soviet Republic	1	5	2	8
	Other (not FSU)	4	4	0	8
	Ukraine & Russia	2	0	0	2
Total		111	68	26	205

1.7: Chi-square test of independence, comparing homeland with use of preposition, including former Soviet Union

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30,179 ^a	4	<,001
Likelihood Ratio	39,483	4	<,001
Linear-by-Linear Association	5,453	1	,020
N of Valid Cases	187		
a. 1 cells (11,1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4,36.			

1.8: Chi-square test of independence, comparing homeland with use of preposition, excluding former Soviet Union

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29,035 ^a	2	<,001
Likelihood Ratio	38,735	2	<,001
Linear-by-Linear Association	19,108	1	<,001
N of Valid Cases	145		
a. 1 cells (16,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4,22.			

1.9: Chi-square test of independence, comparing homeland with use of preposition, excluding former Soviet Union, limiting answers to one preposition

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25,992 ^a	1	<,001
Continuity Correction ^b	23,888	1	<,001
Likelihood Ratio	36,728	1	<,001

1.10: Chi-square test of independence, comparing respondents self-identifying as Ukrainian or from an FSU state (not Ukraine or Russia), limiting answers to one preposition

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11,665 ^a	1	<,001
Continuity Correction ^b	9,520	1	,002
Likelihood Ratio	15,876	1	<,001

1.11: Chi-square test of independence, comparing respondents self-identifying as Russian or from an FSU state (not Ukraine or Russia), limiting answers to one preposition

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4,206 ^a	1	,040
Continuity Correction ^b	3,438	1	,064
Likelihood Ratio	4,309	1	,038

1.12: Chi-square test of independence, comparing respondents' education level and their choice of preposition

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,787 ^a	2	,151
Likelihood Ratio	4,228	2	,121
Linear-by-Linear Association	,634	1	,426
N of Valid Cases	205		
a. 1 cells (16,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3,17.			

1.12: Chi-square test of independence, comparing multilingualism of respondents and their choice of preposition, limiting answers to one preposition

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,001 ^a	1	,977
Continuity Correction ^b	,000	1	1,000
Likelihood Ratio	,001	1	,977

2: Survey

Уважаемому участнику!

[Dear participant!]

Меня зовут Джонатан Кацман и я являюсь магистерским студентом русского языка и культуры в Лейденском университете в Лейдене, Нидерландах. Я сейчас пишу мой диплом об отношении между национальностями народов бывшего Советского Союза и их использованием грамматики и предлогов на русском языке. Ваши ответы и личность - конфиденциальны.

[My name is Jonathan Katzman and I am a master's student of Russian language and culture at Leiden University in Leiden, The Netherlands. I am now writing my thesis about the relationship between nationalities of the peoples of the former Soviet Union and their use of grammar and prepositions in the Russian language. Your answers and identity are confidential.]

Спасибо за участие!

[Thank you for your participation!]

Биографические данные

[Biographical information]

1. Откуда вы?

[Where are you from?]

2. Где вы родились?
[Where were you born]
3. В каком году вы родились?
[In which year were you born?]
4. Какую страну вы считаете родной?
[Which country do you consider your homeland?]
5. Какие языки вы считаете родными?
[What languages do you consider as “native?”]
6. Сколько языков вы знаете? Какие?
[How many languages do you know? Which ones?]
7. Какой ваш уровень образования?
[What level of education do you have?]

Вопросы по грамматике

[Questions about grammar]

Прочитайте, пожалуйста, следующих 10 предложений. Выбирайте и впишите предлог, который вы считаете как правильно.

[Please read the following 10 sentences. Select and fill in the appropriate preposition.]

1. Они с бабушкой ходят _____ магазин.
[They go with grandmother _____ the store.]
2. Футбольные команды играют _____ стадионе.
[The soccer team plays _____ the stadium.]
3. _____ островах тихоого океана находятся много курортов.
[_____ the islands of the Pacific Ocean are many resorts.]
4. Михаил Сергеевич является генсеком КП СССР и он родился _____ Украине.
[Mikhail Sergeyevich is the General Secretary of the CP of the USSR and he was born _____ Ukraine.]
5. И _____ России, и _____ Америке, и _____ Украине живет большое количество русскоязычных.
[And _____ Russia, and _____ America, and _____ Ukraine live a large quantity of Russian speakers.]

6. После защиты диплома, он переехал _____ Казахстан, где он женился и состарился.
[After his academic defense, her moved _____ Kazakhstan, where he married and grew old.]
7. _____ Филиппинах говорят более, чем на 180 языках.
[_____ the Philippines more than 180 languages are spoken.]
8. Совет Безопасности ООН позавчера собирался, чтобы обсудить ситуацию _____ Иране.
[The Security Council of the UN met the day before yesterday to discuss the situation _____ Iran.]
10. Рестораны _____ Москве дороже, чем _____ Омске.
[Restaurants _____ Moscow are more expensive than _____ Omsk.]

Пожалуйста, кратко опишите своими словами, с какими объектами следует использовать предлог "в" и с какими объектами следует использовать "на."

[Please shortly describe in your own words, with which objects you use the preposition "в" and with which objects you use the preposition "на."]

Спасибо за участие! Ваши ответы и личность - конфиденциальны.

[Thank you for your participation! Your answers and identity are confidential.]