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LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY

Language education is one of the leading factors in national upbringing. Its goal is to form a linguistic personality capable of communicative activity, self-awareness as a member of the Ukrainian people, and as a bearer of its culture, customs, and traditions. In this context, language education serves as an important instrument of national self-identification, since it is through language that the spiritual and cultural heritage of the people is acquired.

The study of the historical stages of language education development in Ukraine reveals a complex path that includes periods of prohibition, Russification, and restrictions on the functioning of the Ukrainian language in education, science, and culture. The policy of Russification implemented by the Soviet authorities was systemic and encompassed all levels of education – from primary to higher school. This led to the displacement of the Ukrainian language from official use, the marginalization of Ukrainian cultural traditions, and the distortion of the nation's historical memory [2].

During the Soviet period, the Russian language was elevated to the level of the “language of interethnic communication,” while Ukrainian was regarded as a “dialect” or an “ethnographic peculiarity.” The educational policy of the USSR promoted the establishment of a Russian-speaking societal model, where the Ukrainian language played a secondary role, limited mainly to domestic or folkloric domains [3].

After gaining independence, Ukraine faced the challenge of restoring the status of the Ukrainian language as the state language and reintegrating it into all spheres of public life. The development of a comprehensive system of language education became one of the priority directions of state policy, aimed at shaping Ukrainian national identity, fostering patriotic upbringing, and strengthening the spiritual unity of society.

However, certain difficulties persist to this day, related to the inertia of the past, the influence of globalization, and regional linguistic specificities. Therefore, there arises the problem of overcoming the residual effects of Russification, stereotypes of linguistic inferiority, and indifference toward the national language

as a key element of identity. Contemporary language policy must be directed not only toward ensuring the legislative status of the Ukrainian language but also toward genuinely enhancing its prestige in society, expanding its areas of use, and creating motivational conditions for young people and citizens from various regions [4].

It is necessary to cultivate a linguistic environment in which knowledge and active use of the Ukrainian language are perceived as indicators of social success, civic maturity, and cultural competence. In this context, language education acquires particular significance – it should combine the nurturing of love for the native word with the development of communicative abilities, intercultural competence, and the ability to use the language effectively in professional, academic, and civic activities [1].

Ensuring a high level of language education is a strategic task of the state, for it serves as the foundation for the spiritual revival of the nation, the formation of civic consciousness, and the strengthening of national dignity [2]. Language education not only provides mastery of the state language as a means of communication but also fulfills the role of a cultural and value-based reference point through which attitudes toward history, traditions, and the spiritual heritage of the people are formed.

A developed system of language education fosters a sense of national identity, social integration, patriotism, and responsibility for the future of the state. It cultivates in the younger generation the ability to make conscious linguistic choices, develops linguistic tolerance, and encourages readiness for intercultural dialogue within the European and global contexts.

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