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**Olha SHEVCHUK-KLIUZHEVA,**

[orcid.org/0000-0003-2963-4720](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2963-4720)

PhD,

Doctoral Candidate at the Ukrainian Language Department

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University

(Kyiv, Ukraine) [o.shevchukkliuzheva.asp@kubg.edu.ua](mailto:o.shevchukkliuzheva.asp@kubg.edu.ua)

## TRANSFORMING FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY IN TIMES OF WAR AND DISPLACEMENT

*This theoretical article proposes a reconceptualization of family language policy (FLP) as a dynamic system responsive to crisis-induced sociolinguistic change, focusing on its transformation under the pressures of war and forced displacement. It explores the structural components of FLP – language ideologies, language practices, and language management – and examines how each of these elements is reconfigured in multilingual families confronted with instability, geopolitical rupture, and transnational mobility. Drawing on established sociolinguistic and policy-oriented frameworks, the article highlights the interplay between macro-level influences (such as wartime language delegitimization and migration regimes) and micro-level affective and strategic family responses.*

*Special attention is paid to the Ukrainian context, where the sociopolitical upheaval since 2014, culminating in the full-scale invasion of 2022, has triggered deep re-evaluation of language ideologies and domestic linguistic practices. The article analyzes how war, migration, and sociocultural dislocation reshape the internal logic and external expression of FLP, providing a rare insight into how family language policy evolves in real-time under conditions of sustained geopolitical crisis. It also discusses the increased symbolic load of language in wartime, which often results in intensified emotional attachment or rejection of specific codes, especially in bilingual and multilingual families.*

*The article aims to refine the theoretical model of FLP for use in contexts marked by instability and forced migration. It argues that transformations in FLP reflect both reactive and proactive family strategies, with families functioning as active agents in linguistic adaptation. This work contributes to FLP theory by proposing a multidimensional model relevant to disciplines concerned with language, identity, education, and crisis-driven displacement.*

**Key words:** family language policy, language ideologies, language practices, bilingualism, multilingualism, sociolinguistic transformation, identity and language.

**Ольга ШЕВЧУК-КЛЮЖЕВА,**

[orcid.org/0000-0003-2963-4720](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2963-4720)

кандидат філологічних наук,

докторант кафедри української мови

Київського столичного університету імені Бориса Грінченка

(Київ, Україна) [o.shevchukkliuzheva.asp@kubg.edu.ua](mailto:o.shevchukkliuzheva.asp@kubg.edu.ua)

## ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ СІМЕЙНОЇ МОВНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ В ЧАС ВІЙНИ ТА ПЕРЕСЕЛЕННЯ

*У статті пропонується переосмислення усталеного в світовій лінгвістиці поняття сімейної мовної політики як динамічної системи, що реагує на спричинені кризою зміни, зосереджуючись на трансформаціях під тиском війни та вимушеного міграції. Стаття досліджує структурні компоненти сімейної мовної політики – мовні ідеології, мовні практики та управління мовою – і розглядає, як кожен із цих елементів змінюється в багатомовних сім'ях, які стикаються з нестабільністю, геополітичним розривом і транснаціональною мобільністю. Спираючись на встановлені соціолінгвістичні та політично орієнтовані рамки, стаття підкреслює взаємодію між впливами на макрорівні та афективними та стратегічними реакціями сім'ї на мікрорівні.*

*Особливу увагу приділено українському контексту із суспільно-політичними потрясіннями 2014 року та повномасштабним вторгненням 2022 року, що спричинило глибоку переоцінку мовних ідеологій та мовних практик. У статті аналізується, як війна, міграція та соціокультурна дислокація змінюють внутрішню логіку та зовнішнє вираження сімейної мовної політики, пропонуючи розуміння того, як це поняття розвивається в реальному часі на рівні українських родин в умовах тривалої геополітичної кризи. Також у статті розглянуто, як збільшується символічне навантаження на мову в ситуації війни, що часто призводить до посилення емоційної прихильності або неприйняття певних мовних кодів, особливо в двомовних та багатомовних сім'ях.*

*Стаття спрямована на уточнення теоретичної моделі сімейної мовної політики для використання в контекстах, позначених нестабільністю та вимушеною міграцією. Трансформації в сімейній мовній політиці відображають як реактивні, так і проактивні сімейні стратегії, зокрема родини, які функціонують як активні учасники лінгвістичної адаптації. Ця робота робить внесок у теорію сімейної мовної політики, пропонуючи багатовимірну модель, актуальну для дисциплін, пов'язаних з мовою, ідентичністю, освітою та переміщенням.*

**Ключові слова:** сімейна мовна політика, мовні ідеології, мовні практики, двомовність, багатомовність, соціолінгвістична трансформація, ідентичність і мова.

**Problem Statement.** In recent decades, the concept of family language policy (FLP) has gained prominence in sociolinguistics as a framework for analyzing how families manage multilingualism and intergenerational language transmission. Traditionally, FLP has been understood as a construct comprising three interrelated components: language ideologies, language practices, and language management (Spolsky, 2004; King et al., 2008). These components interact to shape the linguistic environment of children, determine parental language choices, and influence the long-term vitality of heritage languages. Most studies in this area have focused on relatively stable sociocultural settings, where multilingualism is framed as either a resource to be preserved or a challenge to be negotiated in everyday life.

However, the increasing frequency of global crises – armed conflicts, displacement, and forced migration – has exposed significant gaps in the theoretical understanding of how FLP operates in unstable and high-pressure environments. Families in such contexts are not merely making routine decisions about language use; rather, they are engaging in urgent processes of identity negotiation, emotional coping, and symbolic repositioning through language. Under conditions of war and migration, the three core components of FLP may be reconfigured in unpredictable ways: language ideologies become politicized, practices shift under external constraints, and language management acquires survivalist or restorative functions.

While recent works (e.g., Smith-Christmas, 2016; Shevchuk-Kliuzheva & Blasiak-Tytula, 2022) have begun to explore family multilingualism in contexts of mobility and disruption, little has been done to systematically theorize the transformation of FLP components under prolonged geopolitical crisis. Moreover, existing models tend to marginalize affective, symbolic, and strategic dimensions of FLP, which are especially salient in conflict-affected families.

This article addresses these gaps by proposing a reconceptualization of FLP as a dynamic and context-sensitive system shaped by macro-level disruptions and micro-level emotional and ideological negotiations. Using the Ukrainian context – marked by the post-2014 rupture and the full-scale Russian invasion of 2022 – as a reference point, the article explores how war and displacement catalyze deep shifts in the ideological, practical, and managerial dimensions of family language life. There is a pressing need to rethink FLP not as a fixed model of transmission, but as a flexible, emotionally saturated and ideologically contested practice unfolding in times of instability and uncertainty.

**Literature Review.** The concept of family language policy (FLP) has gained substantial theoretic-

cal traction in the fields of sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and language policy studies. First systematized by Spolsky (2004) and further developed by King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry (2008), FLP is typically understood as comprising three interrelated components: language ideologies (beliefs about language), language practices (actual use), and language management (planning and regulation). This tripartite framework has served as the foundation for understanding how families influence children's linguistic repertoires and negotiate multilingual realities within the private sphere.

Over the past decade, researchers have deepened this model by exploring how FLP intersects with identity (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009), class and migration (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2009), language socialization (De Houwer, 2015), emotional attachment to languages (Pavlenko, 2005), and broader social structures (Piller, 2017). These studies have shown that family language ideologies are rarely stable or unified; rather, they are shaped by parents' values, educational aspirations, symbolic hierarchies, and institutional influences. In multilingual families, FLP emerges not only as a means of intergenerational language transmission but as a site of negotiation, contestation, and identity positioning (Smith-Christmas, 2016).

Nevertheless, much of this scholarship has centered on relatively stable contexts – immigrant families in Western countries, bilingual households in multilingual societies, or heritage language maintenance in the diaspora. Such environments allow for gradual language planning and long-term negotiation. In contrast, *conflict-affected and displacement-driven contexts* introduce instability, urgency, and emotional upheaval that are rarely accounted for in classical FLP models.

Recent studies have begun to address this gap. King and Carson (2021), Revis (2020), and others have explored language practices among refugee families, while Shevchuk-Kliuzheva and Blasiak-Tytula (2022) have examined the reconfiguration of FLP among displaced Ukrainian families in Poland. Their findings reveal how war, trauma, and resettlement transform not only the content of language ideologies but also the emotional and symbolic meanings attached to language use. These studies mark an important shift toward viewing FLP through the lens of crisis, yet they remain largely empirical and stop short of offering a comprehensive theoretical reconceptualization.

Furthermore, *language management*, as a component of FLP, remains under-theorized in contexts of instability. While ideological and emotional transformations are increasingly recognized, how families improvise or reorganize strategies for language teach-

ing, learning, and enforcement in emergency settings has yet to be fully explored. Additionally, the *affective dimension* – including shame, grief, pride, or symbolic rejection – has not been sufficiently integrated into core models of FLP, despite its evident salience in wartime and displacement-affected families.

To address these theoretical gaps, this article proposes a reconceptualization of FLP as a flexible, context-responsive, and emotionally saturated system. The Ukrainian case – shaped by the post-2014 sociopolitical rupture and the full-scale Russian invasion of 2022 – offers a critical lens through which to examine how war and forced migration disrupt and reshape the ideological, practical, and managerial dimensions of language in the family sphere. It also underscores the urgency of building a theoretical model that captures both the reactive and proactive strategies multilingual families employ under conditions of instability.

**Aim of the Article.** This article aims to advance a theoretical understanding of family language policy (FLP) by analyzing how its core components – language ideologies, language practices, and language management – are restructured in contexts of war and forced displacement. Moving beyond traditional models developed in relatively stable multilingual environments, the article proposes a context-sensitive perspective on FLP as a dynamic system shaped by sociopolitical disruption, emotional investment, and symbolic repositioning.

Special emphasis is placed on the Ukrainian context, which illustrates how families affected by large-scale crisis re-evaluate linguistic ideologies, adapt practices, and renegotiate management strategies in the face of uncertainty and trauma. Rather than treating FLP as a normative model of intergenerational transmission, the article conceptualizes it as a flexible framework, where linguistic decisions are simultaneously emotional, strategic, and ideologically charged.

Drawing on interdisciplinary insights from sociolinguistics, migration studies, and language policy research, the article contributes to the theoretical development of FLP by outlining a model of transformation that captures the fluid interplay between its components under extreme conditions. This approach provides a foundation for future research on family-based language strategies in crisis-affected, multilingual settings.

**Summary of the main material.** Family language policy (FLP), classically conceptualized as a framework composed of language ideologies, language practices, and language management (Spolsky, 2004; King et al., 2008), has traditionally been applied to relatively stable multilingual environments. However, the context of war and forced displacement, as

illustrated by the Ukrainian case, demonstrates how each of these components can be radically redefined. This section outlines the specific ways in which ideological, practical, and managerial aspects of FLP are transformed under crisis, and emphasizes how their interdependence becomes more visible and more volatile during periods of instability.

#### 1. Language Ideologies: From Transmission to Symbolic Repositioning

Language ideologies form the cognitive and affective foundation of FLP – they represent families' beliefs about the value, legitimacy, and appropriate use of languages. In pre-crisis settings, such ideologies may be inherited or passively sustained, often reflecting broader societal narratives about prestige, utility, or tradition. Yet in contexts shaped by war and geopolitical trauma, these beliefs are rapidly politicized and emotionally charged.

In Ukraine, the status of Russian as a domestic language has shifted significantly since 2014 and especially after the full-scale invasion of 2022. Previously positioned as a functional or culturally accepted choice in many bilingual households, Russian is now often viewed as ideologically incompatible with national belonging. In contrast, Ukrainian has been reimagined as a language of resistance, survival, and moral clarity. These reconfigurations are not imposed from above, but emerge within the intimate space of family life, where linguistic decisions become acts of cultural alignment or symbolic rejection.

Such shifts demonstrate that language ideologies are not stable reflections of heritage but rather dynamic responses to sociopolitical rupture. In war-affected families, the valuation of language is no longer neutral – it becomes saturated with affect, memory, and identity negotiation.

#### 2. Language Practices: Fragmentation, Adaptation, and Loss

While ideologies inform intention, language practices embody everyday reality. In stable multilingual families, language use is often patterned, habitual, and domain-specific. Under displacement, however, practices are rapidly destabilized by new linguistic ecologies, disrupted routines, and shifting communicative needs.

Ukrainian families forced to relocate across borders encounter host country languages – such as Polish or German – that quickly become dominant in children's educational and social spheres. At the same time, parents may struggle to maintain consistent use of Ukrainian at home, especially when family members are separated or exposed to divergent linguistic influences. Practices fragment across modalities (oral vs. digital), generations, and domains, producing



asymmetrical language competencies and unpredictable patterns of use.

What emerges is a form of linguistic adaptation driven not by long-term planning but by short-term coping. Language loss may occur, not through explicit rejection, but through attrition accelerated by stress, trauma, and context-driven assimilation. These transformations reveal that practices are not merely the implementation of ideology; they are contingent on access, power dynamics, and shifting affective investments.

### 3. Language Management: Improvising Policy under Pressure

Language management involves conscious or semi-conscious efforts to shape children's linguistic trajectories. In relatively predictable conditions, this includes strategies such as one-parent-one-language (OPOL), scheduled language use, or the integration of heritage language learning materials. But in the context of crisis, management often becomes fragmented, reactive, or even suspended.

In Ukrainian displaced families, decisions about language are made under emotional and existential pressure. Some parents intensify their use of Ukrainian as an assertion of cultural agency, while others prioritize host country language acquisition as a necessity for integration. Managing language becomes an improvisational process – less about planning and more about navigating emotional burden, survival priorities, and children's resistance or receptivity. Silence, too, becomes a form of policy: some parents avoid correcting children, stop using certain languages, or refrain from insisting on linguistic norms that once felt foundational.

These patterns suggest that management in crisis is deeply symbolic. It reflects not only what parents want to preserve, but also what they choose to let go – whether temporarily or permanently. Management, then, is not a separate component from ideology and practice but is embedded within them, especially under conditions of instability.

The interrelation of ideologies, practices, and management becomes intensified under crisis. Changes in one domain cascade into others: a shift in ideological stance may lead to altered practices, which in turn reshape management strategies. Conversely, failed attempts at managing language may generate ideological re-evaluation or trigger affective disinvestment. What this reveals is the need for a more nuanced model of FLP – one that acknowledges the interdependence of its components and the extent to which they are shaped by external disruption and internal affective negotiation. In wartime and migration contexts, family language policy ceases to be a neutral framework of choice; it becomes a space of symbolic struggle, emotional labor, and future-ori-

ented strategy. Rather than treating FLP as a static set of routines or beliefs, this crisis-responsive perspective frames it as an evolving ecosystem of meaning, deeply embedded in broader sociopolitical processes yet enacted in the intimate space of family life. The Ukrainian case, while contextually specific, illuminates broader dynamics applicable to displaced and multilingual families navigating instability, loss, and reconstruction.

**Conclusions.** This article has proposed a crisis-responsive conceptualization of family language policy (FLP), rethinking the classical tripartite model – language ideologies, language practices, and language management – within the context of war, forced displacement, and sociopolitical instability. Through a theoretically grounded analysis of the Ukrainian case, the study has shown that these components are not static categories but interdependent and fluid processes, deeply shaped by emotional, symbolic, and practical pressures.

Language ideologies, previously treated as inherited or backgrounded, emerge in crisis as politicized, affectively saturated, and morally charged. Language practices, typically viewed as routine enactments of ideology, become fragmented and adaptive, shaped by context, trauma, and external pressures. Language management, once associated with intentional planning, becomes a terrain of improvisation, emotional negotiation, and even strategic silence. These shifts reveal that FLP, in conditions of instability, functions not merely as a mechanism of intergenerational transmission but as a site of sociolinguistic reorientation and identity reconstruction.

The Ukrainian experience highlights how families respond to geopolitical rupture by redefining their linguistic repertoires, hierarchies, and priorities. While contextually specific, these dynamics offer generalizable insights into how FLP operates in crisis. The article contributes to the theoretical development of FLP by proposing a revised model – one that foregrounds three key dimensions:

- (1) *ideological realignment*,
- (2) *affective positioning*, and
- (3) *adaptive or symbolic management*.

This framework emphasizes the mutual influence of the three classical components and incorporates the emotional and political realities families face in times of war and forced migration. The findings suggest that multilingual families are not passive recipients of external forces but active agents of linguistic transformation. Their language choices become micro-political acts, strategies of resilience, and expressions of belonging or refusal. As such, FLP must be understood as a dynamic system of responses to instability, where symbolic, practical, and emotional factors converge in shaping children's linguistic futures.

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