

DYNAMICS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE CURRENT SOCIAL CONTEXT: THE LANGUAGE CHOICE IN MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

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Abstract. The study examines the preferences of communication in current in Republic of Moldova. It includes some of the references to a survey conducted online in September 2025, on Romanian-speaking professionals in multinational organizations, investigating how speakers navigate between Romanian linguistic structures and international terminology. The research employs quantitative survey methodology to analyze communication preferences, motivations for borrowing, and attitudes toward linguistic adaptation. Findings reveal that more than 40% of professionals prefer moderate hybridization, with the code-switching, maintaining Romanian structures, while incorporating English technical terminology. This change is driven primarily by “terminology gaps”, as mentioned in the survey. Some respondents declare incorporating English constructions being driven by the prestige and under the senior professionals’ influence. Workplace social networks exert stronger influence than external factors, supporting that socially accepted norms are the main change mechanisms. Domain-specific compartmentalization emerges as professionals accept hybridization professionally and transfer these linguist habits in the personal communication. Comparative analysis with Ukraine's post-2022 language shift illuminates distinct pathways: identity-driven rapid replacement versus necessity-driven stable hybridization. The study validates theoretical frameworks for digital-age contexts, demonstrating that professional language hybridization represents strategic adaptive competence rather than linguistic degradation, with implications for organizational communication policy and language education in globalized professional environments.

Keywords: *professional communication, code-switching, linguistic adaptation, multinational teams, organizational culture.*

Rezumat: Studiul examinează preferințele de comunicare actuale în Republica Moldova. Acesta include referințe la rezultatele unui sondaj realizat online în septembrie 2025 în rândul profesionistilor vorbitori de limba română din organizații multinaționale și avea drept scop investigarea modului în care vorbitorii navighează printre structurile lingvistice românești și terminologia internațională. S-a recurs la metodologia cantitativă prin sondaj pentru a analiza preferințele de comunicare, motivarea și atitudinea față de adaptarea

lingvistică. Am observat că peste 40% dintre profesioniști preferă hibridizarea moderată, prin schimbul de cod, menținând structurile stilistice românești cu termologie specifică engleză. Această schimbare de cod se datorează în special „lacunelor terminologice”. Unii respondenți au menționat că incorporarea construcțiilor engleze este determinată de prestigiul și sub influența profesioniștilor seniori. Rețelele sociale profesionale exercită o influență mai mare decât factorii externi. Specificul domeniului creează cadrul prin care profesioniștii acceptă hibridizarea la nivel profesional și transferă aceste obiceiuri lingvistice în comunicarea personală. Analiza comparativă cu schimbarea lingvistică după anul 2022 din Ucraina scoate în evidență forme distincte de hibridizare a limbajului: înlocuirea rapidă determinată de păstrare și promovare a identității versus hibridizarea stabilă determinată de necesitate. Studiul validează unele concepe teoretice, demonstrând că hibridizarea limbajului profesional reprezintă competență de adaptare strategică mai degrabă decât degradare lingvistică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare profesională, comutare de cod, adaptare lingvistică, echipe multinaționale, cultură organizațională*

1. Introduction

Multinational organizations operating in Moldova represent unique linguistic environments where professional communication requirements intersect with local language practices. These organizations typically function as linguistic contact zones where Romanian interacts intensively with English (as the dominant corporate lingua franca) and occasionally with other languages (Russian, French, German) depending on corporate ownership and partnership structures. The linguistic situation in Moldova shares historical parallels with other post-Soviet states navigating transitions from Russian-dominated linguistic environments to multilingual professional contexts. Understanding these parallels provides crucial context for analyzing contemporary Romanian language hybridization patterns. During the Soviet period, Russian functioned as the lingua franca across Soviet republics, including Moldova (then the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic). This created lasting linguistic effects: administrative language (Russian dominated government, education, and professional communication); prestige on a social level (Russian was associated with social mobility and professional advancement); intergenerational transmission (many families adopted Russian as their primary language at home); cultural dominance (Russian media, literature, and cultural products enjoyed privileged status). This legacy persists in contemporary Moldova, where a significant part of the population still uses Russian daily conversations, including in professional contexts, though the number of people speaking in Russian has decreased substantially since independence in 1991.

Recent developments in Ukraine provide instructive parallels for understanding language transitions on a larger scale. Following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Ukraine experienced an accelerated shift from Russian to Ukrainian language use across all domains, including professional communication. This increased the use of Surzyk, a mix between Russian and Ukrainian [1]. In research, conducted from 2020 to 2022, by Daniel Racek et al. [2] documented on social media posts that Ukrainian language use increased rapidly by December 2022, while online consumption of Ukrainian-language content increased after the Russian invasion. The authors conclude that the choice of language we speak is a “innately political”, and a vehicle for the cultural identity. Ukrainian linguist Volodymyr Kulyk [3], documented a “new phenomenon of the predominant reliance

on Ukrainian at work and in other public communication by many people who used to speak predominantly Russian and still keep it as the main language of family use", a pattern remarkably similar to domain-specific compartmentalization observed in our Romanian survey data, where respondents confirm that in a professional set-up, where English is the main language, Romanian is used for clarifications and for the informal communication [4].

The integration of Romania into the European Union and Moldova's subsequent orientation toward European structures have accelerated contact between Romanian and other European languages, particularly English as the lingua franca of international business and technology. This linguistic contact situation creates the language hybridization phenomenon, the systematic integration of elements from one language (typically English technical and professional terminology) into the grammatical and structural framework of another (Romanian). Unlike historical language contact situations that unfolded over centuries, contemporary professional language hybridization occurs at unprecedented speed, driven by technological innovation, digital communication platforms, and the operational requirements of multinational corporations.

2. Language Dynamics, Method of the Research

The study employed a mixed methods research design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of professional communication practices. By combining theoretical linguistic analysis with quantitative survey methodology, this study aimed to demonstrate an integrated approach to studying language change that bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and empirical observation of actual speaker behavior. It also included references to the survey that investigated language hybridization patterns among Romanian-speaking professionals in multinational organizations. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and distributed via targeted LinkedIn posts in September 2025, utilizing professional networking algorithms to reach Romanian-speaking professionals across Romania and Moldova (N=103, collected September 4-25, 2025) and has been published in a separate article fully dedicated to this empirical research [4]. The survey comprised sections that covered demographic characteristics, management style preferences, communication model preferences, motivations for borrowing, communication influences, attitudes toward anglicisms, and some open-ended qualitative responses. Besides that, the research integrated ethnographic observation of workplace communication in professional settings and digital discourse analysis of social media content from online professional communities.

3. Results of the Research on Language Dynamics in Moldova

The convergence of ethnographic observation, quantitative survey data (N=103), and comparative analysis with Ukraine's post-2022 language shift revealed a fundamental distinction between necessity-driven and identity-driven linguistic adaptation. While Ukrainian professionals rapidly abandoned Russian (in the first year of invasion) due to existential political pressures [3], Romanian speakers maintained stable moderate hybridization, driven primarily by terminology gaps (34%) rather than cultural rejection. Both cases confirmed workplace social networks as primary change mechanisms (77.7% Romanian; similar Ukrainian patterns), validating bottom-up rather than top-down transformation models [5]. Domain-specific compartmentalization persisted across contexts, Ukrainians preserved Russian privately while adopting Ukrainian professionally, mirroring Romanian professionals' cautious personal attitudes despite workplace acceptance, demonstrating

universal human capacity for maintaining multiple linguistic registers, using the native language constructions, that is adapted and changed with each generation, but keeping a solid ground of the native grammar, within Pinker's [6, pp. 244-245] innate language faculty framework.

4. Key Parallels Between Ukrainian and Romanian Language Attitudes

Just as Ukraine's 2014 Euromaidan and 2022 invasion accelerated linguistic shifts [3,7], Romania's EU accession (2007) and Moldova's European orientation have catalyzed transitions from Russian-influenced to Western European lingua franca (English) in professional contexts. The SCEEUS report [7] documents how 80% of Ukrainians agreed by December 2022 that "the Ukrainian language should be the main in all spheres of communication," up by 20 percentage points since 2017.

Ukrainian research found that language shift occurred more rapidly in public/professional spheres than in private communication, precisely matching our finding that about 40% of Romanian professionals maintain cautious attitudes toward anglicisms in daily communication while accepting them professionally. Darria Orobchuk's analysis of Ukrainian social media influencers revealed how media figures navigate this compartmentalization through "reflections in interactions with society, family, friends, and audiences" [8].

In Ukraine, language shift resulted primarily from "individual choices" rather than top-down mandates [7]. Our survey similarly reveals that about 70% of Romanian linguistic influence comes from workplace social networks rather than institutional policies, supporting "individual choice" change models. Other publications also emphasize the shift from a lingua franca to Ukrainian mostly of the political reasons, strengthening this way the cultural identity [9]. Some researchers refer to how "a lot of Ukrainians who would normally have used Russian as their first language started instead to speak only in Ukrainian" as part of voluntary cultural shift [10].

Ukrainian social media research by Racek et al. [2] documented that younger cohorts led linguistic transitions while older speakers showed gradual adaptation, paralleling our findings of modest generational effects mediated by professional experience. Their longitudinal analysis provided statistical validation for age-related patterns observed across post-Soviet linguistic transitions.

Ukraine developed "neo-surzhyk" Ukrainian-Russian hybrid serving as "a transitional step in linguistic conversion, an in-between stage in the process of crossing over to Ukrainian from Russian" [11]. This mirrored our finding that more than 40% [4, p. 705] of Romanian professionals prefer moderate hybridization as a stable adaptive strategy rather than complete linguistic replacement. The analysis of surzhyk as "an instrument of cultural and political protest" paralleled Romanian professionals' strategic deployment of hybrid forms for functional purposes. In professional communication, particularly in automotive industry, Russian was (and is still being used in some areas) the language that provided most of the terms.

There are some critical differences between the context of the language change in Moldova and Ukraine referring to the transition from Russian influence as lingua franca.

The nature of language contact in Ukraine: Russian represents "the language of the 'enemy' and a symbol of Russia's occupation", making language choice explicitly political and linked to national survival. As one Ukrainian quoted in the National Public Radio (NPR an American public broadcasting organization headquartered in Washington) report stated: "It is

a question of our existence...That's why everyone needs to put some effort into building a national foundation. And the language is that national foundation" [12].

From emotional perspective the language shift is described as "a question of our existence" with strong emotional associations linking Russian to trauma and threat [7].

For Moldovan citizens, especially for young generation, English represents an economic opportunity and professional advancement rather than colonial imposition, creating fundamentally different motivational structures, thus the acceptance of English as lingua franca outside professional life and the virtual set-up, was easier. According to our survey, the shift to an anglicized language was mentioned to happen out of pragmatic rather than emotional motivations, with more than 30% citing terminology gaps versus about 20% citing prestige, suggesting functional adaptation rather than identity crisis.

Between 2022 and 2023, 14% of Ukrainians abandoned Russian language, with 91% speaking Ukrainian daily by August 2023 [13], representing rapid near-complete transition. Our data showed gradual, partial adaptation maintaining Romanian grammatical structures while selectively incorporating English terminology, a sustainable equilibrium rather than wholesale replacement.

Ukrainian and Russian share substantial mutual intelligibility as related East Slavic languages, facilitating rapid switching. However, as Svidomi notes, "Ukrainians understand Poles, Bulgarians and Croats. However, average Russians from Russia often do not even understand Ukrainian", highlighting asymmetric mutual intelligibility [13].

Romanian (Romance language) and English (Germanic language) have minimal mutual intelligibility, creating structural barriers to complete code-switching and favoring moderate hybridization strategies, however, the Latin lexical heritage in both languages makes it easier for young generation of Romanian speakers to adapt to English rather than to Russian, particularly in the transition to a different writing, involving the Cyrillic alphabet.

Ukraine's 2019 law "On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language" mandated Ukrainian use across public spheres, creating legal framework for language shift. The law requires Ukrainian in education, science, culture, media, advertising and customer service [7]. No comparable top-down anglicization policies exist; hybridization emerges organically from professional requirements and global influence rather than legal mandates.

5. Implications for Understanding Romanian Language Hybridization

The Ukrainian comparison revealed several theoretical insights applicable to Romanian professional contexts. Language communities facing shifts from previous lingua francas can follow different trajectories:

- Rapid Replacement Model (Ukraine): Political crisis triggered swift, comprehensive shift to national language with transitional hybrid forms disappearing over time.
- Stable Hybridization Model (Moldova): Gradual, domain-specific adaptation maintained first language structural integrity while incorporating international terminology as sustainable equilibrium.

Our data suggested that Romanian professional contexts follow the stable hybridization model rather than replacement trajectory, with moderate hybridization representing equilibrium rather than transition phase.

Both Ukrainian and Moldovan cases demonstrated speaker agency in navigating linguistic choices despite structural constraints [15]. Ukrainian speakers consciously chose

Ukrainian over Russian despite decades of linguistic socialization [3]. Romanian speakers consciously develop hybrid competencies balancing efficiency with identity preservation.

5.1. The Specificity of Multinational Corporate Linguistic Environments

Beyond historical parallels, multinational corporations created unique linguistic environments characterized by several structural factors:

Organizational hierarchies where communication flows vertically (between management levels) and horizontally (among peers), with different linguistic expectations at each level. Senior management often operate in predominantly English environments due to international reporting requirements, while most of the staff may maintain more Romanian-centered communication, creating linguistic stratification within organizations.

Different corporate functions exhibited varying degrees of language hybridization. Technical departments (IT, engineering) showed high integration of English terminology due to the nature of their work, while human resources and legal departments may maintain more standardized Romanian due to regulatory requirements and local cultural sensitivity needs.

Professionals must code-switch between international communication (meetings with global teams, corporate reporting) and local communication (team coordination, client interactions), developing sophisticated domain-specific competencies, making the acceptance of English terms highly functional.

Corporate communication increasingly occurs through digital platforms (email, Microsoft Teams, video conferencing) that facilitate both real-time and asynchronous communication, often with AI-powered language assistance tools that influence linguistic choices in ways distinct from traditional face-to-face or written communication.

- "Am făcut un meeting cu stakeholder-ii pentru a discuta requirement-urile" (I had a meeting with the stakeholders to discuss the requirements)
- "Trebui să facem deploy la noua versiune după testing" (We need to deploy the new version after testing)
- "Am trimis un email cu update-ul la project timeline" (I sent an email with the update to the project timeline)

These examples demonstrate Romanian grammatical morphology (conjugations, case markings) applied to English lexical items, confirming moderate rather than intensive hybridization patterns.

5.2. Motivations for Language Borrowing

Survey data showed that over 30% of respondents cite absence of Romanian equivalents as their primary motivation for adopting foreign terms, also indicating that in the professional, especially in IT environment, Romanian speakers focused on the efficiency and language prestige [4].

These findings challenged assumptions that language hybridization in professional contexts primarily reflected status-seeking behavior or cultural imperialism. Instead, borrowing appeared driven by genuine functional needs, technical concepts lacking adequate Romanian terminology and practical requirements of multinational team coordination.

While Generation Y/Millennials showed greatest comfort with hybridization, generational differences were less pronounced than hypothesized. Generation X professionals demonstrated substantial flexibility, with about 40% preferring moderate hybridization versus 47% among Millennials and 55% among Generation Z [4]. Rather than a rigid generational divide, the data suggested a gradual continuum of adaptation to linguistic

innovation. All age groups demonstrated strategic approach to language use, with differences in the level of client-exposure. When controlling for years of experience in multinational contexts, age effects diminished substantially, suggesting that exposure to international professional environments matters more than generational membership per se.

6. Discussions

The findings of the research from Romanian-speaking professionals in multinational organizations provided support for the study's hypothesis, including language hybridization attitudes and generational code-switching, while revealing nuances requiring theoretical refinement.

First hypothesis referred to the moderate hybridization of the standard language in the current social environment, that is mostly driven by the professional communities, that go beyond the professional communication. More than 40% of respondents preferred moderate hybridization maintaining Romanian grammatical structures while incorporating English technical terminology, significantly exceeding random distribution. This validated Eugeniu Coșeriu's [14] theoretical prediction that speakers preserve systemic integrity while adapting usage patterns, extending his mid-20th century framework into 21st century digital professional contexts. The finding challenged David Crystal's [16] concern about wholesale linguistic convergence in digital environments, instead revealing sophisticated compartmentalization strategies.

The next hypothesis referred to necessity-driven hybridization, that also received empirical confirmation, with 71% of respondents cite multinational environment as primary motivation for borrowing, compared to only 32% citing prestige considerations. Due to the limitations of the survey, we didn't find enough support for Bambi Schieffelin's et al. finding [17] that emphasis on prestige as primary driver. Our finding suggested that professional environments operate under different sociolinguistic dynamics than broader community settings. The result aligned more closely with Uriel Weinreich's [18] functional borrowing models and supported Naomi Baron's [19] observations about pragmatic adaptation in digital communication contexts.

Hypothesis three about the generational acceptance, received partial confirmation, due to the focus on the professionals from multinational companies, who are in their adult years, this way the younger (Gen Z) and more advanced (Baby Boomers) generations were not represented enough in the study. Critically, when controlling for years of professional experience in multinational contexts, age effects diminished substantially. This finding suggested that William Labov's [5] community of practice framework better explains linguistic variation than simple generational cohort models, supporting recent sociolinguistic research emphasizing professional socialization over demographic determinism [20]. The result contradicted assumptions that digital natives inevitably drive wholesale linguistic innovation, instead revealing gradual adaptation across age cohorts mediated by community exposure.

The study's findings converged with and extend previous research in multiple domains. The moderate hybridization preference aligned with Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model [21] predictions that speakers maintain grammatical control in one language (Romanian) while embedding lexical items from another (English), rather than engaging in wholesale code-switching. However, our data revealed greater stability in this pattern than Myers-Scotton's model anticipated, moderate hybridization appeared to

represent equilibrium rather than transitional phase, suggesting revision of models treating hybrid forms as inherently unstable.

The Ukrainian comparison was particularly instructive when contextualized against broader post-Soviet linguistic transitions. Volodymyr Kulyk's [3] documentation of rapid Ukrainian adoption (91% daily use by 2023) following Russia's 2022 invasion, combined with Daniel Racek et al.'s [2] social media analysis showing dramatic shifts in online language use, revealed identity-driven replacement as distinct pathway from Romania's necessity-driven stable hybridization. Both cases, however, validate William Labov's [5] bottom-up change mechanisms and Joshua Fishman's [22] domain differentiation principles, suggesting these represented universal sociolinguistic patterns operative across diverse political-economic contexts. The comparison extended Jan Blommaert's [20] sociolinguistics of globalization framework by distinguishing colonial/post-conflict contexts (Ukraine) from economic integration contexts (Moldova).

7. Conclusions

This research conclusively demonstrated that language hybridization in professional context represents a strategic adaptive competence, rather than linguistic deterioration or cultural capitulation. Romanian-speaking professionals navigate between communication efficiency and identity preservation moderate hybridization strategies that maintain structural linguistic integrity while incorporating functional international terminology, evidencing sophisticated metalinguistic awareness and contextual code-switching abilities. The study made three principal theoretical contributions: first, extending Coșerian linguistic theory into digital-age contexts by demonstrating that norm-system-usage distinctions retain explanatory power for digital communication; second, empirically establishing that professional borrowing is necessity-driven rather than prestige-motivated, supporting functional-adaptive models over power-asymmetry frameworks.

The cross-national Ukrainian comparison revealed that linguistic communities facing lingua franca transitions followed context-dependent pathways, rapid replacement under political threat versus stable hybridization under economic integration, yet both validated bottom-up change mechanisms operating through workplace social networks and domain-specific compartmentalization as universal patterns. Both societies inherited Russian-dominated communicative environments, yet their contemporary language choices diverged based on socio-political contexts. Moldova's Romanian-speaking professionals demonstrated necessity-driven stable hybridization, resulting from terminology gaps as primary motivation for incorporating English terminology into professional communication. Once lack of technical terminology was filled in with Russian language, as a result of the soviet political language strategies. Now English acceptance is a result of economic strategies, alignment with a globalized market. This pathway maintained Romanian grammatical integrity while selectively expanding lexical resources to meet functional communicative demands. Conversely, Ukraine's post-2022 linguistic shift represented identity-driven replacement, language choice constituted explicit political resistance against the soviet legacy and affirmation of national survival under existential threat. Both societies demonstrated domain-specific compartmentalization, with speakers maintaining distinct linguistic strategies for a formal versus personal contexts. Paralleling Ukrainian patterns of speaking a Russian-influenced "neo-Surzhyk" privately while adopting Ukrainian formally, evidencing shared post-Soviet adaptive strategies operating within contrasting political-economic structures.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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