

LANGUAGE AS A KEY FACTOR IN THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN UKRAINE

Introduction. As cross-border interactions strengthen, more students are moving abroad, benefiting from academic and cultural exchange. A special place is occupied by the language environment, which serves as a foundation for the successful integration of international students into the host society. Ukraine, rich in linguistic traditions and cultural diversity, offers unique conditions for adapting to international students. However, the effectiveness of this process largely depends on the quality of the language environment - both in academic institutions and everyday life.

The work deals with the key characteristics of the language environment in Ukraine, its impact on the adaptation of international students, the main challenges, and possible ways to improve integration processes.

Characteristics of the language environment in Ukraine

1. State language and its importance

Ukrainian is the official language and occupies a central place in all spheres of public life. Its active use in educational institutions, state institutions, and the media contributes to forming a national identity and ensures cultural unity.

2. Language polyphony

Other languages function in parallel on the territory of Ukraine: Russian, English, and languages of national minorities. This linguistic richness creates a unique polyphony that can be both an advantage and a challenge for international students, depending on their level of preparation and language skills [4, c. 352].

3. Modern language policy

Government initiatives aim to promote and develop the Ukrainian language, which requires foreigners to master basic knowledge for comfortable adaptation in Ukrainian society. The policy promotes a positive attitude towards the state language among all population segments.

The role of the language environment in the integration process

The linguistic environment plays a key role in integrating a person into a new society, affecting social adaptation, professional growth, and personal comfort. Knowledge of the language helps to communicate effectively with locals, build relationships, understand cultural peculiarities, and navigate everyday life more efficiently, for example, when shopping, using transport, or accessing medical and administrative institutions [1 c. 289].

In the professional sphere, language competence provides an opportunity to find a better job, interact with colleagues and clients, and develop a career. Educational integration is also highly dependent on language proficiency, as it provides access to quality education, training, courses, and vocational training and the ability to consume more information, including books, news, and scientific materials.

The language environment also facilitates cultural integration by helping to understand local traditions, customs, and rules of behaviour, which reduces culture shock and promotes a sense of belonging. In addition, language fluency positively affects psychological well-being, reduces stress and isolation, and helps one feel more confident in a new environment. Thus, the language environment is not just a means of communication but a fundamental factor of successful integration, which opens up new opportunities and contributes to a comfortable life [1, c. 271].

Challenges and suggestions for improving language integration

One of the main barriers to integration is insufficient knowledge of the host country's language. It complicates communication, access to education, employment, and social interaction. Many migrants face the problem of limited access to language courses, especially if they are paid, have strict requirements,

or are held at inconvenient times [2, c. 57].

Another challenge is insufficient language practice. Even if a person attends a course, they may not have enough opportunities to use the language in real-life situations. Because of this, progress in language learning can be slow [3].

Another problem is psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes, shyness, or lack of confidence, which hinder communication. In some cases, there is also a factor of linguistic isolation, when a person mainly communicates with his or her community members and does not need to use a new language [2, c. 58].

To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to provide broader access to free or affordable language courses, including online formats that can be taken conveniently.

Conversation clubs and language tandem programmes should be created where native speakers can help migrants practice the language in an informal environment. It is also important to encourage the use of language in everyday life, for example, by integrating language training into the workplace or organising cultural events for communication.

To overcome psychological barriers, it is important to create a friendly learning environment where people are not afraid to make mistakes and conduct motivational training and individual consultations with teachers.

Conclusion. The linguistic environment in Ukraine is a key factor that determines the successful integration of international students into society. Ensuring favourable conditions for learning and using the Ukrainian language creates the basis for academic, social, and professional growth. Government initiatives, active work of educational institutions, and support of NGOs together form a positive image of the country and contribute to the practical adaptation of students.

However, to achieve a high level of integration, several issues related to overcoming language barriers and cultural differences must be addressed.

Developing specialised curricula, organising intercultural events, and adapting the state language policy are the main steps that will help create the conditions for successful integration. Thus, ensuring a high-quality language environment becomes the key to developing international students' academic potential and forming a harmonious multicultural society in Ukraine.

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