

## EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN EUROPEAN AND UKRAINIAN HEIS

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Bilotserkovets M. A., Fomenko T. M.  
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### INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic, socio-political and cultural-informational factors in Ukraine, the gradual reorientation in the consciousness of society from the Eastern to the Western civilizational space, cultural transformation and the change in the paradigm of values has induced Ukrainian society' integration into the European Union. In 2022 Ukraine received the candidate status for the European Union membership in 2022. In addition to a number of political and economic reforms necessary to fulfill the criteria for EU membership, Ukraine faces the challenges of socio-cultural transformation of Ukrainian society, among which is the implementation of multilingual education practices<sup>1</sup>.

Multilingualism is a requirement of the time and an essential component of the modern labour market in general and the educational process in particular, as it provides academic and professional mobility, enables searching for the necessary information from different sources and in different languages, etc. Due to the development of multilingual education, participants of the learning process get a unique opportunity to communicate with colleagues and partners from different countries, exchange ideas and experiences, which contributes to the development of their intercultural competence and opens new horizons for personal and professional growth.

Currently, in Ukraine, multilingual education is being developed by improving the teaching methods of disciplines, making changes to curricula and course programmes due to the modernization of the system of teaching foreign languages. During the last decade, higher education in Ukraine was restructured with the purpose of integration into the European educational

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<sup>1</sup> Шапран Д., Мацнева Є. Університет як інституціональне середовище розвитку білінгвізму. Інтелект. Особистість. Цивілізація. 2017. Вип. 15. С. 26-36. URL: [http://elibrary.donnue.edu.ua/886/1/shapran\\_matsneva\\_article\\_15\\_10\\_2017-converted.pdf](http://elibrary.donnue.edu.ua/886/1/shapran_matsneva_article_15_10_2017-converted.pdf)

space in accordance with the principles of student-centered learning, quality assurance, accessibility and inclusion. In the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine until 2027, it is stated that one of the principles governing the education policy is European integration and globalization, aimed at educating individuals for participating in the globalized world, capable of intercultural communication, and this, in turn, requires the popularization of mastering foreign languages<sup>2</sup>.

Nowadays, the language concept of Ukrainian education, in particular higher education, needs changes and improvement, reorientation towards multilingual education. The aim of the study is to regard and update the fundamental aspects of the theory and methodology of multilingual education in the European Union, that can be extrapolated into the regulatory and legislative framework of Ukraine, as it is determined by the Law of Ukraine “On Education”<sup>3</sup> and is defined among the national tasks and targets for achieving by 2030 in “Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine”<sup>4</sup>.

### 1. Multilingual tendencies in European HEIs

Currently, one of the core values of the European Union is an avid vector to solving the problems of multilingualism. It is obvious, as the ethnocultural and linguistic diversity is a modern social phenomenon that affects politics, economics, culture and education of all countries of the world, enables overcoming barriers in the globalized society, in particular, cultural and linguistic, through the spread of international networks, academic mobility, internationalization in educational sphere, growth of migration and tourist flows, the formation of global economy and labour market<sup>5</sup>.

In the conditions of modern globalization and internationalization, it is a pivotal issue to study the European experience of introducing multilingual policies into agenda of higher educational institutions, since today, more than ever before, the importance of a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication is growing. Based on this, the aim of the paragraph is to analyze the problem of multilingualism in the European higher education system.

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<sup>2</sup> Міністерство освіти і науки України. Стратегічний план діяльності МОН до 2027 року «Освіта Переможців». 2024. URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/strategichnyi-plan-diyalnosti-mon-do-2027-roku>

<sup>3</sup> Про освіту: Закон України від 05.09.2017 № 2145-VIII. URL: <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2145-19>

<sup>4</sup> Про цілі сталого розвитку України на період до 2030 року: Указ Президента України від 30.09.2019 № 722/2019. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/722/2019#Text>

<sup>5</sup> Multilingual education: A key to quality and inclusive learning. Last update: 22 February 2024. URL: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/multilingual-education-key-quality-and-inclusive-learning>

European multilingualism is characterized by cultural and artistic values as an attempt to preserve the diversity of ethnic characteristics. The heritage of cultural diversity is regarded as a treasure that needs to be protected and developed. Language is more than an instrument for communication; it's a unique human cognitive facility and the basis of shared humanity. It ensures the transfer of experiences, knowledge, customs and traditions across generations.<sup>6</sup> Plurality of languages and cultures shapes a person's linguistic space, in which national and ethnic identity is expressed. The task of the state is to maintain and ensure a democratic balance between the multilingualism of different groups and the state language. Citizens, equal in rights and duties, are distinguished by their cultural identity, and therefore the problem of peaceful coexistence of all citizens of the European community is particularly acute today<sup>7</sup>.

Solely knowledge of modern European languages enables increasing opportunities for communication and interaction, thereby promoting mutual understanding. The paradigm of building national identity at the European level has been defined and outlined by numerous resolutions. The focus is on the modern education system, designed to create all the necessary conditions for the personal development of pupils and students<sup>8</sup>. Besides, the term "multilingual education" was used by UNESCO as early as 1999, which involved the implementation of educational programs aimed at learners' obtaining communicative competence in two or more languages, moreover, different languages, in addition to the state language, could be used as a medium of instruction<sup>9</sup>.

The term "multilingualism" belongs to those terms that do not have a clear interpretation, though a language is singled out as a core component of multilingualism. The most general definition of multilingualism as the use of two or more languages by an individual in everyday life<sup>10</sup> can be enhanced as "the use of several languages within a certain social community; the use by an individual (group of people) of several languages, each of them is chosen in accordance with a specific communicative situation". In this context, the terms "multilingualism" coexists with the term "plurilingualism", which was introduced by the Council of Europe, namely the Department for Language

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<sup>6</sup> Cenoz J, Gorter D. eds. *Multilingual Education: Between Language Learning and Translanguaging*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Committee on Culture and Education (2025). URL: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/cult/home/highlights>

<sup>8</sup> Multilingual education: A key to quality and inclusive learning. Last update: 22 February 2024 URL: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/multilingual-education-key-quality-and-inclusive-learning>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/multilingual-education-bet-preserve-indigenous-languages-and-justice>

<sup>10</sup> Grosjean F. *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010. 276 p.

Policy, to denote the ability of a person to communicate in several languages<sup>11</sup>. The European Charter on Plurilingualism notes that the concept of “plurilingualism” presupposes the mastering of several languages by one person, which differs from the concept of multilingualism, which means the coexistence of several languages in one territory within one social group. A plurilingual society is able to express itself in several languages at different levels of linguistic competence, while a multilingual society can consist of monolingual people who do not speak other languages<sup>12</sup>.

Today, Europe is a multilingual society, because many languages exist on its territory. The territory of EU is populated with 448 million citizens; it comprises 27 member states; 3 types of alphabets; 24 official languages; 60 regional and minority languages; 5 language groups (Baltic, Celtic, Germanic, Romance, Slavic), as well as Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Maltese and Basque<sup>13</sup>. The governments of many countries officially recognize only one or a few languages spoken by their citizens. However, the existence of several state languages in one state is quite common, since it is difficult to find a country that is completely monolingual, as for instance, Italy, Hungary, Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece, etc. There are both bilingual and multilingual countries, among them Luxembourg (the Luxembourgish, French and German languages), Belgium (the Dutch, French and German languages), Ireland (the English and Irish languages), Switzerland (the German, French, Italian, Romansh languages), etc. In these countries, the principles of language policy are reflected in their constitutions. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) is one of the fundamental documents that supports linguistic diversity in the European Union, protects and promotes the development of regional and minority languages<sup>14</sup>.

The study of foreign languages has constantly being promoted and encouraged in modern European HEIs. The European Commission’ 2004 Action Plan formulated this goal in terms of “one mother tongue and two foreign languages”. The 2008 report, approved by the Commission, set the goal: every European citizen should master at least one foreign language, other than English. In the educational sector, the Lifelong Learning Programme, which covered the period 2007–2013, became an important effective instrument of European policy. The results of the programme’s implementation have shown that:

- learning one language is not enough;

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<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe. From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education. Compendium, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Multilingualism and Creativity: Towards an Evidence base-Study on the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity. Compendium Part One, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Short Guide on EU. 2024. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/short-guide-eu/uk/>

<sup>14</sup> The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. URL: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/about-the-charter>

- knowledge of foreign languages, in addition to the mother tongue, should be developed, emphasizing the importance of communication skills;
- language learning should take place throughout life;
- linguistic diversity should be integrated into curricula.

The European Language Policy Program (2013)<sup>15</sup> was established within the framework of the European Cultural Convention, which was ratified by 49 states of the world. It was the Council of Europe that carried out activities to promote multilingualism, linguistic and cultural diversity, and lifelong language learning.

Education was assigned one of the main roles in this issue because the educational sector became the space, specially designed to ensure compliance with all laws and recommendations regarding teaching and learning of foreign languages, the place for a democratic approach to the implementation of the European language policy. It was essential, as no educational space was socially homogeneous, since different languages and various cultures were present in each.

Nevertheless, according to the European Strategy for Multilingualism (2016)<sup>16</sup>, it was revealed that multilingualism had ceased being a prerogative of the EU public and educational institutions and despite the previous attempts by the European Commission and purposefully created Centre for Modern Languages, there still remained a considerable number of EU citizens who lacked sufficient language skills, the fact that had a negative impact on their professional and personal fulfillment<sup>17</sup>. Although bilingualism with English was rapidly spreading in educational systems on the European continent, the more ambitious goal of trilingualism was far from being achieved and might prove unattainable in many European educational institutions. That is why, the European Commission issued recommendations for EU Member States to adopt a national action plan by setting clear objectives for language teaching at different stages of the educational process, namely:

- training highly qualified foreign language teachers;
- promoting early foreign language learning;
- teaching non-linguistic subjects through a foreign language (bilingual education);
- strengthening the role of higher education institutions in increasing language competences;

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[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/fiches\\_techniques/2013/051306/04A\\_FT\(2013\)051306\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/fiches_techniques/2013/051306/04A_FT(2013)051306_EN.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> European strategy for multilingualism. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/254f3ae4-bc4a-11e6-a237-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>17</sup> European Trade Union Committee for Education. URL: <https://www.csee-etu.org/en/news/1701-latest-studies-on-language-teaching-and-learning-in-the-eu-shows-the-current-lack-of-attention-towards-multilingualism>

– using innovative technologies to promote multilingualism.

Undoubtedly, a lot of initiative and enthusiasm were shown in the field of foreign language education through numerous strategies and training programs that were developed and worked out. The action plan included the promotion of language education within the framework of Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Media Plus programmes. To encourage innovative methods, a “European Label” for initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning was established<sup>18</sup>. The success of these educational programmes was largely determined by the consistency of the European Union’s language and cultural policy in building a multilingual and multicultural society. Later they were replaced by the European Union’s lifelong learning strategy, which ran until 2013, and which still funds school language projects based on the joint work of classes from different European countries on joint projects that promote exchange visits and meetings and create real opportunities for the use of linguistic and cultural knowledge through contacts with students of the same age<sup>19</sup>.

In accordance with the Mother Tongue +2 programme adopted at the Barcelona Summit, the European Commission has adopted a number of initiatives to improve foreign language teaching in higher education. Thus, the Alfa Fellowship international internship program provides an opportunity for young promising specialists from the USA, Great Britain and Germany to undergo internships in other countries.

The Erasmus + programme is the newest European Union program aimed at supporting cooperation in the fields of education, vocational training, youth and sport. Within the framework of cooperation in the field of higher education, the following main areas have been identified in Erasmus +: Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals – new opportunities for mobility for students and teachers; Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and good practice – cooperation to develop the potential of universities and exchange best practices; Jean Monnet Activities – broad opportunities for the development of European research within the framework of the Jean Monnet sub-programmes.

Nowadays, multilingualism for universities is a matter of prestige and quality assurance, contributing to the international image of the university. The language system that is represented in the curricula of multilingual universities is closely linked to historical and geographical features and the expectations and needs of the community or society for which the university

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<sup>18</sup> Council Conclusions on Moving Towards a Vision of a European Education Area. Council of the European Union. Official Journal. URL: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG0607\(01\)&rid=6](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG0607(01)&rid=6)

<sup>19</sup> Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). URL: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

provides its services. The support of national and minority languages in universities is seen as a real great European challenge<sup>20</sup>.

The experience of multilingual policy in the higher education system of leading European countries is unquestionably valuable. Most universities in Europe offer the state language as the main language of instruction. According to the latest statistics, English is the most widely used foreign language in Europe (48%), followed by German and French (23%). Teaching foreign languages, especially English, is included in university curricula. Many educational systems in European countries provide target language training of as French, German, and Spanish<sup>21</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is important to refrain that language policy and multilingualism in the education system are primarily related to the state structure of a particular society or a country. If a language has a high status in society, then it is likely to be the means of implementing educational programs. In Germany, for instance, is the official literary language is German. According to the traditions of German legislation, it is also the language of administration. More than 95% of the population in Germany speaks German as their native language. After all, more people in Europe speak German than English, French or Spanish. In addition to Germany, German is used as the official language in Austria, Switzerland, as well as in Belgium<sup>22</sup>.

In most German universities German is the main medium of instruction, but in some German universities, such as the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, the University of Flensburg and the Free University of Berlin, some courses are taught in both German and foreign languages. All universities offer websites and information on admission requirements in German and foreign languages. The University of Flensburg mentions the use of regional and minority languages, but in practice, this most likely means the use of Danish, the regional minority language in the region. Other foreign languages studied at the universities include Arabic, Basque, Chinese, English, French, Italian, Dutch, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Neuner-Anfindsen S., Meima E. MAGICC: A Project of the EU Lifelong Learning programme: Modularising Multilingual and Multicultural Academic Communication Competence. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 2016. 4(2). P. 341–347.

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe Language Policy Portal-Language Policy-[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int), Language Policy, n.d. URL: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/%20Division\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/%20Division_en.asp)

<sup>22</sup> Короткий посібник про ЄС (2024). URL: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/short-guide-eu/uk/>

<sup>23</sup> Seidenschnur, Tim & Götz, Nicolai & Krücken, Georg. (2024). Multiple roles of the state – federal states and their roles in how universities compete in Germany. *Studies in Higher Education*. 49. Doi:10.1080/03075079.2024.2392660

In France, the language of instruction, examinations and competitive exams, as well as scientific papers and dissertations in public and private institutions is French. Exceptions can be made due to the requirements of teaching regional and foreign languages and cultures or in a situation where the instructor is a foreign partner or guest teacher. The other languages of France are divided into dialects and immigrant languages. Recently, the French Ministry of Education has officially recognized that regional dialects in France, such as Alsatian, (spoken by 1.44% of the national population); Basque, a language isolate; Breton, (spoken by 0.61%); Corsican, and various other Gallo-Romance languages (Langues d'oïl, spoken by 1.25% national population, Occitan, spoken by 1.33% correspondently) have been in an oppressed position for a long time, and has declared that bilingual education is allowed in French schools and universities. However, this statement has met with both supporters and opponents<sup>24</sup>.

Spain is a multiethnic country, the official language for the entire state is Spanish, but there are various regions in the country that are considered to be historically peculiar, and have their own official languages. Catalan is the official language of Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands, Galician is the official language in Galicia, Basque is the official language in Basque Country, and Valencian is the official language in Valencia. Although most people speak Spanish and it is mostly spread as a language of instruction, in some regions, like, for example, Catalonia, students are taught in Catalan, though Castilian (official version of Spanish) is a compulsory subject in their curriculum<sup>25</sup>.

For Finns, who want to have a prestigious job, knowledge of two languages at the same high level is mandatory. In Finnish schools and universities, the Swedish language course is a compulsory discipline, and vice versa in Swedish educational institutions – the Finnish language is in the main curriculum<sup>26</sup>.

German is spoken by about 65% of the population in Switzerland, which makes it the most common native language and the language of business communication. At the same time, along with it, French, Italian and Romansh are used in government institutions, in production, at educational institutions, in the press, on radio and television. Romansh has a slight difference in status from the other three languages: it is considered official only within the

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<sup>24</sup> Durdas, Alla. (2018). The development of university education in France: the historical aspect. *The Pedagogical Process: Theory and Practice*. 10.28925/2078-1687.2018.1-2.3237.

<sup>25</sup> Addis, M. The Key Role of Universities in Sustainable Development: The Human Dimension Among the Goals of 2030 Agenda – A Comparison Between Italy and Spain. 2024. 10.1007/978-3-031-54026-4\_16.

<sup>26</sup> Hyrynsalmi, S. (2024). Challenges and Opportunities: Implementing Diversity and Inclusion in Software Engineering University Level Education in Finland. 10.48550/arXiv.2410.16288.



country. Depending on the canton, HEIs students study German, French or Italian, and as a “foreign” they can choose either one of the state languages, or English or Spanish. Usually, the Swiss themselves, in addition to their native language, speak quite well another official language (most often, respectively, German or French) and English, which they studied at school. In some regions, bilingualism (the possession of 2 languages as native speakers at once) is common<sup>27</sup>.

Belgium has three official languages: Dutch, French, and German. 39.1% of the population are French-speaking Walloons and 50.7% Dutch-speaking are Flemish. German is spoken in a small part of the province of Liège, which borders on Germany. The language issue in Belgium is a rather complex problem, since the reasons for such linguistic diversity are rooted in the country’s ancient history. As for schools and universities, in Flanders province of Belgium learners study in Flemish and English, in Wallonia – French predominates. Of course, for a career they need to know all three official languages.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, the advantage of multilingualism at the university level is to ensure greater access to professional opportunities for graduates as an additional economic asset in the labour market. However, with the advantages of multilingual tertiary education, problem areas remain, which can lead to a decrease in academic standards in case if it is not effectively planned by the university management.

According to the data from 69 of the largest European vocational education (VET) institutions in 67 participating cities, collected in the framework of the massive international research project “Language Rich Europe”<sup>29</sup>, the state language has a fairly high level of support, namely 30 out of 69 VET institutions offer a wide range of state language support programs, ranging from basic skills to advanced levels. 24 educational institutions offer a limited number of courses, while 15 do not offer any support.

62 out of 69 analyzed institutions offer foreign languages. Of these, 15 institutions teach more than four languages, 22 offer three or four languages, and 25 offer one or two languages. 41 higher education institutions offer a wide range of study programs, ranging from basic skills to advanced levels. At the same time, 18 offer only programs for the development of basic language skills. 26 institutions align their requirements with the Common

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<sup>27</sup> Clivaz, Stéphane & Clerc-Georgy, Anne & Oberthaler, Urs & Schmid, Silvia. (2024). Lesson study in Switzerland: from research to dissemination and back. *International Journal for Lesson & Learning Studies*. 10.1108/IJLLS-05-2024-0093.

<sup>28</sup> Brodtkom F., Pochet B. (2017). Promoting the Open Science culture in university libraries of developing countries: case studies of the French-speaking universities of Belgium cooperation programs in the Global South. *Septentrio Conference Series*. 10.7557/5.4242.

<sup>29</sup> Extra G. Language Rich Europe. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 2013. № 1. 174–178. 10.1515/eujal-2013-0009

European Recommendations. 25 institutions offer regional languages, but only 13 of them fully cover the costs. Countries offering regional language courses in all three VET institutions surveyed are Basque Country, Catalonia, Hungary, Northern Ireland, Wales.

Immigrant languages are only offered in four of the institutions surveyed, one each in Austria, England, Italy and Wales. As expected, English, French, German and Spanish are the leading foreign languages. Arabic is also offered in a number of VET institutions. The largest offer of regional languages is in countries and regions where there is more than one official language.

As expected, all targeted European universities in the cities of this sample offer the state language as the main language of instruction, since in most cases it is the main language of students and the official state language. Most of the surveyed institutions also use other languages. In accordance with the recommendations of European institutions, a very large number of universities offer language courses for non-philologists. 31 universities (almost half) offer students a choice of more than four languages. Among selected, only 8 universities do not offer non-philologists the opportunity to study other languages.

International mobility of students and teachers, the desire to attract a global and diverse student community, undoubtedly make English the second language in many European universities, and a large number of textbooks are also written in English. Almost all universities make special efforts to attract as many foreign students as possible. Half of them also report efforts to attract immigrant students. European universities financially support student mobility.

The introduction of multilingualism is taking place not only in higher education institutions, but also at all institutional levels, which implements the concept of “lifelong language learning”. It was stated that scientific and applied searches are ongoing in the European Union to develop a new effective program that would ensure the acquisition of foreign languages in the following aspects: as a means of national and regional communication; as a means of international communication; as a means of achieving public harmony; as a means of personal linguistic and communicative development. It was noted that the current trends in the transformation of the educational space of the European Union have led to a change in the requirements for education in Ukraine, which involves the introduction of foreign languages into educational priorities, into a mandatory competency component of the model of a modern personality, because the main task of educational institutions is the formation of basic multilingual competence, the preparation of the individual for interaction with a multilingual and multicultural world.

Thus, it was concluded that multilingual education in Europe has strong support at all levels of public life, and multilingualism is the basis for the

formation of linguistic competence of EU citizens, as the conditions for the development of multilingualism have been created at the legislative level, and the first successful steps have been taken, although there are certain problems in implementing such an initiative<sup>30</sup>. It is important to emphasize that educational institutions cannot be separated from the sociolinguistic context of the society to which they are linked, since educational programmes are based on the principles of multilingualism and multiculturalism of society as a whole<sup>31</sup>. The prospect of further research is the problem of multilingualism in the socio-cultural dimension of the Ukrainian educational space.

## 2. Opportunities for multilingual space creation in Ukrainian HEIs

Since 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has started the activities on the implementation of multilingual education. Foreign languages teachers of secondary education are guided by the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), the State Standard of Basic and Comprehensive Secondary Education (2011)<sup>32</sup>, the Concept of the New Ukrainian School (2016)<sup>33</sup>, in which communication in foreign languages is among key competencies, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages<sup>34</sup>, as well as typical educational programmes and curricula. However, the implementation of the model of multilingual education in Ukraine has a number of problems, the major of which is the insufficient practical orientation of the content of language education.

Language education system in Ukraine mainly focuses on teaching languages separately, with minimal or no collaboration among language teachers and an assessment system that evaluates students’ proficiency only in the target language. Such approach lacks integration and cooperation across languages. While in Ukrainian secondary schools L2 or L3 is introduced as a compulsory separate discipline to be studied in the curricula and programmes of the education institution, the experience of European countries proves that it is more effective to implement multilingual teaching of disciplines using

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<sup>30</sup> Bilotserkovets, M., Fomenko, T., & Lushchik, Y. (2024). Opportunities for Intercultural Environment Creation in Ukrainian Agrarian University. *Educational Challenges*, 29(1), 46-57. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.1.03>

<sup>31</sup> A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism. Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, Belgium. Accessed February 24, 2024. URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0596:FIN:en:PDF>

<sup>32</sup> Державний стандарт базової і повної середньої освіти: Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України від 23.11.2011 № 1392 URL: <http://mon.gov.ua/activity/education/zagalna-serednya/derj-stand.html>

<sup>33</sup> Концепція Нової української школи: ухвалена рішенням колегії МОН від 27.10.2016 URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/zagalna%20serednya/nova-ukrainska-shkola-compressed.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Загальноєвропейські Рекомендації з мовної освіти: вивчення, викладання, оцінювання. Відп. ред. С.Ю. Ніколаєва. Київ: Ленвіт, 2003. 273 с.

both English, the most widely used foreign language is L2, and another one is L3. Therefore, an urgent need in the education system of Ukraine has become a significant improvement of teaching disciplines, changes in curricula and programmes, and reform of the system of foreign languages teaching<sup>35</sup>.

According to the scholars, multilingual approaches in the classroom may serve two main goals: foster multilingualism via creating multilingual materials, transforming tasks, providing multilingual assessment, etc., and use the learners' multilingual repertoire to enhance language learning.

Among the tasks of multilingual education in Ukraine, the scientists single out the following: acquire communication skills in several languages; promote awareness of language as a phenomenon of culture; contribute to the formation of positive motivation for mastering non-native languages, etc.<sup>36</sup> Enhancing foreign languages teaching is a crucial direction of higher education and state policy, playing a pivotal role in the integration of Ukraine into European community. In 2019, the Ministry of education and science of Ukraine developed the "Concept of English Language Development in Universities"<sup>37</sup>. According to the Concept, all graduates are supposed to achieve B2 for English of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The state policy on the development of English in higher education institutions in Ukraine concerns teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP); teaching core disciplines in English (English as a medium of instruction for Ukrainian students); teaching educational programmes in English to the international students (English as a medium of instruction for international students).

In many higher educational institutions of Ukraine bilingual education (mainly in English) is being actively implemented in order to integrate universities and their graduates into the international scientific and educational space. The bilingual-based technology of professional training of future specialists (that is, teaching students of professional disciplines partially or completely in a foreign language) is currently being actively developed. But, as the scientists state<sup>38</sup>, a comprehensive concept of bilingual

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<sup>35</sup> Білозір О.С. Полілінгвальна освіта. Досвід країн світу та перспективи впровадження багатомовного навчання в Україні. Наукові записки. Серія: Педагогічні науки. 2020. № 191. С. 217-222. <https://doi.org/10.36550/2415-7988-2020-1-191-217-222>

<sup>36</sup> Алексєнко-Лемовська Л.В. Перспективи впровадження мультілінгвальної освіти в умовах євроінтеграційних процесів. Наука та інновації: сучасний вектор розвитку та світу: Збірник тез доповідей науково-практичних конференцій Міжнародного наукового форуму (25–26 травня 2023 року). С. 122-124.

<sup>37</sup> Міністерство освіти і науки України. Концепція розвитку англійської мови в університетах. 13 липня 2019 року. URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/news/mon-stvorilo-kontseptsiyu-rozvitku-angliyskoi-v-universitetakh-riven-v1-obov'yazkova-umova-vstupu-v2-vipusku-vkladannya-profilnikh-distiplin-inozemnoyu-ta-movni-skriningi>

<sup>38</sup> Сніжко Н.В. The theory of bilingual education: a retrospective of the conceptual apparatus. (Теорія білінгвальної освіти: ретроспектива понятійного апарату). In Modern educational

professional education in Ukraine has not been developed yet; so far, only certain aspects of bilingual learning in higher education have been defined.

However, as the other scholars argue<sup>39</sup>, to ensure effective intercultural communication, it is necessary to move from standard foreign language communication to multilingualism, which involves a full understanding of the context of communication, the ability to decipher information in various communicative situations. It creates personal and professional opportunities, promotes cultural awareness, mutual understanding and social cohesion.

Nowadays, the result of language learning should be personal multilingualism, which involves a conscious separation of language systems and a relatively free transition from one language to another, depending on the change in the situation and life needs. This is facilitated by studying two or three foreign languages<sup>40</sup>.

International programmes contribute to the implementation of the concept of teaching foreign languages, among which the project “Foreign Language Teacher Training Capacity Development as a Way to Ukraine’s Multilingual Education and European Integration” (MultiEd)<sup>41</sup> should be mentioned.

The project lasted three years (from November 15, 2019 to November 14, 2022). Higher education institutions from Estonia, Germany, Great Britain and Ukraine were involved in the project. Eight Ukrainian higher education institutions participated in the project, namely: Zaporizhzhia National University, V.O. Sukhomlynskyi National University of Mykolaiv, Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy, Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages, V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, and Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University.

The project goals were the following: development of curriculum of foreign languages teacher; education of in-service teachers (both school and university teachers, academic staff); internationalization of education via organizing CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) courses and

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strategies under the influence of the development of the information society and European integration: Scientific monograph. Riga, Latvia, 2024. P. 417-439. <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-405-4-22>

<sup>39</sup> Архипова В.О., Мануєнкова О.О. Мультилінгвізм як складова підготовки фахівців у технічних ЗВО. Матеріали Міжнародної науково-методичної конференції «Модернізація вищої освіти та забезпечення якості освітньої діяльності в умовах європейської інтеграції» (18 жовтня 2024 р., м. Харків). С. 31-34.

<sup>40</sup> Деркач Н., Турчин А. Мультилінгвізм у навчанні іноземних мов. Стратегії міжкультурної та іншомовної комунікації крізь призму лінгводидактичної парадигми: колективна монографія. Тернопіль: ТНПУ ім. В. Гнатюка, 2024. С. 123-160.

<sup>41</sup> Foreign Language Teacher Training Capacity Development as a Way to Ukraine’s Multilingual Education and European Integration (MultiEd). URL: <http://www.multied.com.ua/>

developing multilingual education strategies for Ukrainian HEIs and National Recommendations on multilingual higher education.

As the result of the project, each university – the beneficiary of the project – developed its own multilingual education strategy. For instance, the objectives of the Strategy of Multilingual Education (SME) in Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy (ChNU)<sup>42</sup> provide the following tasks to be completed: encourage of ChNU students of all educational levels as well as scientific and pedagogical staff, representatives of the administration of the university to improve the level mastery of the state language (oral and written); motivate international students of ChNU to master the Ukrainian language, form their interest in the history and culture of Ukraine; foster students' interest in learning foreign languages (primarily English) and the cultures of native speakers, motivate students to improve the level of foreign language competence in their professional activities; form a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other cultures, prevent all forms of discrimination (national, racial, gender, etc.); promote a foreign language acquisition and create opportunities for mastering a foreign language (primarily English) by students and scientific and pedagogical staff of the university on a level not lower than B2 in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Promotion of multilingualism in ChNU is also possible due to Erasmus+ educational programmes for students and professors. Various programmes on academic mobility motivate students to study abroad during one or two semesters and study a foreign language. The European credit transfer system (ECTS) simplifies the process of accumulating and transferring scores from one university to the other<sup>43</sup>.

According to the Multilingual Strategy of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (the other beneficiary of the project) the following main tasks were identified:

- create an open multilingual academic environment, using different languages in the educational process in the university and beyond;
- promote the use of different languages (Ukrainian, English and others) in all educational programs;
- update linguistic and non-linguistic educational programs in accordance with the goals of multilingual education;

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<sup>42</sup> Стратегія багатомовної освіти Черкаського національного університету імені Богдана Хмельницького на період 2023-2028 років. Черкаси, 2022. 10 с. URL: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/195eBOfaRytCjaE8JgrM2xSnrzdFCo0w6/view?usp=sharing>

<sup>43</sup> Tokarchuk V., Shuba Yu. Promoting multilingualism at Ukrainian HEIs (based on the experience of Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University in Cherkasy). Вісник науки та освіти. 2024. № 7(25). С. 80-91. [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6165-2024-7\(25\)-80-92](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6165-2024-7(25)-80-92)

- increase the specific weight of a foreign language, in particular English, in non-linguistic educational programmes by teaching other disciplines in a foreign language and implementing the CLIL methodology;
- provide language training for teachers in Ukrainian, English or another foreign language<sup>44</sup>.

Thus, CLIL orientation has become the part of the development strategy of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Among the advantages of such technology, the scientists emphasize: its flexibility regarding the amount of time for learning a second language; the ability to conduct a second language teaching from low to high intensity, including short-term intensive teaching; the possibility of variations from theme-based language modules to an approach where the discipline is taught in a foreign language<sup>45</sup>.

The use of the CLIL methodology contributes to a more motivated learning of a foreign language, since the language is used not only as a source of knowledge, but also as a way of communication between student-teacher and student-student. A foreign language is integrated into the discipline programme, thus the necessity of immersion in the language environment increases students' motivation. Students study the language for doing some tasks and apply it in their professional field. CLIL brings together language teachers and core disciplines teachers, helping students discover and develop multilingual skills.

Sumy National Agrarian University (SNAU) is an example of a higher education institution that provides students with foreign languages studying and integration into the European space. Among the priority tasks of the university are the development of bilateral and multilateral international contacts, educational and scientific projects; introduction of international experience into the process of teaching disciplines; ensuring academic mobility of students and teachers; improving the level of qualifications of teachers and students by obtaining scientific and pedagogical contacts with universities in other countries.

SNAU cooperates with many foreign higher education institutions. Currently, there are more than 150 concluded agreements (including more than 90 agreements with educational and scientific institutions) on cooperation with foreign partners from more than 25 countries<sup>46</sup>. Students, postgraduates and professors of SNAU participate in academic mobility

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<sup>44</sup> Стратегія багатомовності Харківського національного університету імені В.Н. Каразіна. URL: <https://karazin.ua/mizhnarodna-diialnist/strategiia-mizhnarodno-diialnosti/strategiia-bahatomovnosti/>

<sup>45</sup> Ткаля І., Черкашина Н., Огнівенко З. CLIL як глобальна тенденція сучасної світової педагогіки. Проблеми сучасної освіти. 2020. № 11. С. 59–62. URL: <https://periodicals.karazin.ua/issuesedu/article/view/17648>

<sup>46</sup> International policy of SNAU. URL: <https://international.snau.edu.ua/en/international-policy-of-snau/>

programmes, which provide them with the opportunity to gain up-to-date knowledge and practical experience, improve their communication skills, familiarize themselves with teaching methods and the specifics of the educational process in foreign institutions of higher education in Poland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Turkey, the People's Republic of China, etc.

Academics and students of the university are also actively taking part in the implementation of the European Union ERASMUS+ programme and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). In the framework of the DAAD project "Support of German-language Educational Courses," students and faculty intern and study at the University of Applied Sciences Weinstadt-Triesdorf, Germany.

Every year, the requirements for the level of foreign language training of future specialists of non-linguistic, in particular agricultural higher education institutions are increasing. Moreover, graduates of the universities must know a foreign language at the level which is not lower than B2. Additional requirements for foreign language proficiency are imposed on the students who participate in the practical training or internships abroad. So, the students, who speak the foreign language of the country in which the practice takes place, are allowed to participate in the competitive selection for international practical training programmes<sup>47</sup>.

Ukrainian students at SNAU study English, German, and French as foreign languages, while international students study also the Ukrainian language as a target one. Foreign language acquisition is performed through a number of disciplines, among them "English as a Foreign Language", "English for Specific Purposes", "Foreign language of professional use", "Business Foreign Language", "English for Scientists", etc. These disciplines provide preparation of students who master agrarian professions for modern socio-economic relations, since in accordance with the modern requirements of the labour market, a competitive specialist is able to maintain international contacts, achieve ambitious goals, orientate in the social norms of society and intercultural communication<sup>48</sup>.

Sumy NAU has the status of an international university. Besides Ukrainian students, international students obtain higher education at the university as well. Currently, students from China, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey

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<sup>47</sup> Про затвердження Положення про проходження практики студентів аграрних вищих навчальних закладів України за кордоном: наказ Міністерства аграрної політики України від 15.06.05 № 264 URL: <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0855-05>

<sup>48</sup> Bilotserkovets Marina. Benefits and challenges of digital technologies applied for teaching target languages in Ukrainian agrarian HEIs (2019-2022). In Marina Bilotserkovets (Ed.), *Tendencies and Challenges for Teaching Foreign Languages in a Multicultural Academic Environment: Scientific monograph*. The University of Technology in Katowice Press. 2023. pp. 18-29. <https://doi.org/10.54264/M025>



study at the university. One of the priority vectors of international activity of the Sumy National Agrarian University is cooperation with higher education institutions of the People's Republic of China. Joint training of bachelors, masters and PhD students in the field of agriculture, veterinary medicine, food technologies, engineering, management, economics and law is carried out, which contributes to the internationalization of the educational process. SNAU offers the English-language programmes for international students; they also have the opportunity to attend the Ukrainian language courses.

According to the recent conducted research<sup>49</sup>, while studying at Sumy National Agrarian University, international students meet some multifaceted problems, among which the major ones are communication problems. That's why, to overcome the language barrier and increase language proficiency, the students are engaged in special English-language programmes. They also attend courses of the Ukrainian language and culture.

Within the framework of the cooperation agreement between SNAU and Henan Institute of Science and Technology (HIST), People's Republic of China, the professors from 4 faculties of SNAU (Agricultural and Environmental Management Faculty, Veterinary Faculty, Faculty of Food Technology, and Economics and Management Faculty) as well as the EFL instructors teach disciplines in English to Chinese students at Sumy International College of HIST during 2 months per semester. This requires the professors of the core disciplines to be proficient in English.

So, Sumy NAU creates favorable conditions for students of all levels of the higher education to master and improve their knowledge of a foreign language, as well as encourages scientific and pedagogical staff of the university to study and use a foreign language in the educational process. Scientific and pedagogical staff of the Department of Foreign Languages provide teaching of English, German and French to the students of all levels of higher education at all faculties of SNAU of full-time and part-time forms of education.

Much attention is paid to the communicative and professional orientation of the entire educational process. The professors also prepare students for passing the unified entrance exam (EVI) in a foreign language for the Master's degree. The Department operates the Pearson Test of English Preparation Center, after completing the courses in which the students, as well as the instructors of core disciplines, have the opportunity to take the exam and receive the international PTE General B2 certificate<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Bilotserkovets, M., Fomenko, T., Gubina, O., Berestok, O., Shcherbyna, Y., Krekoten, O. Multifaceted Problems of Intercultural Adaptation: A Case Study of Chinese Students in Ukraine. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*. 2020. 11(1). 178-188. <https://doi.org/10.18662/brain/11.1/22>

<sup>50</sup> The Department of Foreign Languages of SNAU. URL: <https://btf.snau.edu.ua/kafedri/kafedra-inozemnix-mov/>

Every week, the foreign languages teachers also organize English Speaking Club, German Speaking Club, and French Speaking Club meetings. The clubs host meetings with native speakers from the USA, Great Britain, Austria, and France. Participating in language clubs or interacting with native speakers, students have the opportunity to practice using the language in real time and communicate with each other in a foreign language on various topics<sup>51</sup>.

In Sumy National Agrarian University bilingual education (mainly in English) is being actively implemented. For instance, the international master course Master of Business Administration in Agriculture (MBA) which was established in cooperation with University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf, Germany, can be viewed as a model of a bilingual education. This course has been successfully accredited by the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN) in 2022. The objective of such international accreditation is to confirm the full compliance of content and quality of SNAU educational process with European educational standards. The training on this course is conducted in Ukrainian, English and German by students' choice<sup>52</sup>.

According to the results of the selection, the students of the German-speaking group necessarily undergo a professional internship in farms in Germany or Switzerland, where they have the opportunity to master modern technologies, methods of organizing agricultural production abroad and gain practical skills and relevant experience. The students of the German-speaking group are also required to spend at least one semester at German partner university and after successful completion of studies, they receive a double degree. The Master's course includes visits by German professors to hold international seminars and lecture courses. Since the seminars are conducted in German and have a different thematic focus, it enables students to get to know the best teaching methods in Germany and improve their German language skills.

The multilingual education is being gradually implemented at SNAU as well. The students of the specialty "International Law" study two foreign languages – "Legal English" and "German as a Second Foreign Language". The students of the specialty "Tourism and Recreation" also study two foreign languages – "English for Specific Purposes" and "French as a Second Foreign Language". In addition to acquiring communication skills in several foreign languages, the students also develop professional foreign language

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<sup>51</sup> Тамаркіна О., Байдак Л., Березняк О. Застосування нетрадиційних технологій навчання іноземної мови студентів немовних ЗВО. Вісник науки та освіти. 2024. № 4 (22). [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6165-2024-4\(22\)-1482-1492](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6165-2024-4(22)-1482-1492)

<sup>52</sup> International Master Course "Administrative Management". URL: <https://snau.edu.ua/en/german-academic-exchange-service-daad/international-master-course-administrative-management/>

communicative competence, using bilingualism or multilingualism as a means of systematically replenishing their professional knowledge, professional communication and professional culture as a whole. It promotes the development of critical thinking skills, one of the key approaches of which is the analysis and comparison of information obtained from different authentic sources<sup>53</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, it was found out that the proficiency in two or more languages is becoming a requirement of the time. This approach is dictated by the challenges of the modern world. As the globalization process progresses, the number of multilinguals will inexorably increase, which further updates research in this area. Currently, the general theory of multilingualism is at the stage of formation, which implies the development of its own theoretical and methodological apparatus, the formulation of the main goals and objectives of research, as well as the accumulation of an experimental base.

Modern Europe, uniting, is forced to seek a balance between preservation and development of its cultural diversity, on the one hand, and the creation of a common communicative space on the other hand. It is obvious that European integration is directly related to language policy, which should promote the learning of several foreign languages throughout life, so that Europeans have the opportunity to participate in public debates about the future of Europe and the construction of democratic citizenship in Europe, according to the Council of Europe, that is why multilingualism (in the terminology of the EU) is a priority of the current European language policy.

Having considered the essence of multilingual education of the European model, taking into account the new goals and tasks that society sets for the professional training of future university graduates, having analyzed the language situation in Ukraine, we can draw the following conclusions: a modern university must provide the necessary conditions for the formation of plurilingual multicultural competence in the unity of all its components, as well as continue the search for technologies, methods and forms of successful multilingual education.

## SUMMARY

In the context of Ukraine's entry into the common European educational space, proficiency in several foreign languages is becoming a sign of general education and professional horizons. European multilingual education has

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<sup>53</sup> Архипова В.О., Мануєнкова О.О. Мультилінгвізм як складова підготовки фахівців у технічних ЗВО. Матеріали Міжнародної науково-методичної конференції «Модернізація вищої освіти та забезпечення якості освітньої діяльності в умовах європейської інтеграції» (18 жовтня 2024 р., м. Харків). С. 31-34.

become increasingly important, since language is not only a means of communication, but also a multifaceted marker of national and cultural identity. The introduction of multilingualism is taking place at all educational and institutional levels by means of EU strategies, policies and various programmes. The study of foreign languages is being promoted and encouraged in both European and Ukrainian universities, among them English, German, French, Spanish are the most popular. The need for close communication between Ukraine and other countries, between state and private structures, actualizes the issue of mastering foreign languages, their effective use in various spheres of life. Foreign language acquisition is performed through a number of disciplines, that provide preparation of students who master various professions for modern labour market. Ukrainian Universities policies and strategies vector for integration into the European space due to the development of bilateral and multilateral international contacts, educational and scientific projects; ensuring academic mobility of students and teachers, etc.

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#### **Information about the authors:**

##### **Bilotserkovets Marina Anatoliivna,**

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor,  
Associate Professor at the Theory and Practice of Roman-German  
Language Department

Sumy State Pedagogical University named after A. S. Makarenko  
87, Romenska str., Sumy 40002, Ukraine;

Associate Professor at the Foreign Language Department  
Sumy National Agrarian University  
160, Herasyma Kondratieva str., Sumy, 40000, Ukraine

##### **Fomenko Tetiana Mykolaivna,**

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor,  
Associate Professor at the Foreign Language Department  
Sumy National Agrarian University

160, Herasyma Kondratieva str., Sumy, 40000, Ukraine