

Kryvonos I., Senior Lecturer

Dmytro Motorny Tavria State Agrotechnological University

THE IMPACT OF WAR AND MIGRATION ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

***Summary.** The article examines the impact of full-scale war and forced migration on the motivation, opportunities, and psychological aspects of foreign language learning by Ukrainian students. The transformations of language needs in the conditions of staying abroad, distance learning, and adaptation to new cultural environments are considered. The role of a foreign language as a tool for integration, self-preservation and academic development of Ukrainian youth in times of crisis is analysed.*

***Keywords:** war, migration, Ukrainian students, foreign language, adaptation, integration, motivation.*

The Russian-Ukrainian war, which has been going on since 2014 and escalated since 24 February 2022, has become a powerful factor of change in many areas of Ukrainian life. The education system is one of those spheres that felt the negative impact of military actions the most during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Millions of Ukrainian students were forced to leave their homes and educational institutions and seek refuge in other countries [1]. This experience has caused significant shifts in attitudes towards learning foreign languages, which has become not only an educational need, but also a means of social survival, integration and self-realisation.

Formulation of the problem. Millions of Ukrainian citizens have been forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge across various countries, while many others remain within Ukraine under drastically altered socio-political and educational conditions. These dramatic changes have not only disrupted traditional learning environments but also redefined the role and relevance of foreign language education for Ukrainian learners.

The need to adapt quickly to new cultural and linguistic settings has made foreign language acquisition and it is especially English and the national languages of host countries but it is not merely a desirable skill, but an essential tool for survival, communication, integration, and access to education and employment. Simultaneously, within Ukraine, the war has intensified interest

in foreign languages as a means of global engagement, professional development, and psychological resilience amid crisis. Despite the growing recognition of this phenomenon, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis regarding how war and migration affect the motivations, opportunities, and barriers associated with foreign language learning for Ukrainians. Existing studies tend to focus on either refugee integration or educational disruption in isolation, without fully exploring the broader educational and sociolinguistic transformations triggered by the war.

Analysis of recent studies. According to a 2023 report by the British Council, Ukrainian refugees in European countries have shown a marked rise in English language course enrolments, driven by both immediate communicative needs and long-term integration goals. Similarly, a survey conducted by the Goethe-Institute in 2023 indicates a spike in German language learning among Ukrainian migrants in Germany, with over 70% of respondents citing employment and education as primary reasons for studying the language [1].

Another important finding relates to digital and hybrid learning. Studies such as Lahutina S., Frankova I. and others show that online platforms and mobile applications became vital tools for displaced Ukrainians, who often faced disrupted educational trajectories [2].

Finally, the war has affected not only displaced populations but also those who remained in Ukraine. As highlighted by Ivanenko & Sydorenko, there has been a noticeable shift in the foreign language priorities of university students in Ukraine [3]. English, long seen as a valuable skill, is now increasingly regarded as essential for international collaboration, remote work, and accessing global information, it is especially in wartime conditions that emphasize the importance of digital literacy and cross-border communication.

Forming the goals of the article. The primary goal of this research is to analyse current studies related to the impact of war and forced migration on the motivations, strategies, and challenges associated with foreign language learning among Ukrainians.

By achieving these goals, the article intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving role of foreign language education in times of crisis and inform future research, policy-making, and educational practice.

Main part. For many Ukrainian students who found themselves in Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Canada, the Baltic States and other countries, knowledge of a foreign language (English, German, Polish, etc.) became crucial in accessing educational, medical and administrative services,

as well as in the process of socialisation [4]. Intensive language learning has become a spontaneous response to new life circumstances. Studies show that motivation to learn languages in such circumstances increases significantly due to the high value of language skills [5].

Along with the desire for integration, the war puts considerable psychological pressure on students: trauma, anxiety, separation from family, instability. All this affects the ability to concentrate and study steadily. Students who have witnessed hostilities, lost their homes or relatives often experience deep psychological trauma. Prolonged exposure to fear and threat contributes to the development of a disorder characterised by flashbacks, nightmares, emotional detachment and increased excitability [6]. This makes it difficult to learn, communicate, and plan for the future. Forced relocation, both abroad and within the country, leads to a breakdown in social ties. Students often find themselves without the support of family or friends, which is especially painful during the period of emotional formation.

On the other hand, language learning often has a therapeutic function - it creates a sense of control, perspective, and integrity. Language becomes a means not only of communication but also of personal recovery [6].

During the war, a significant part of the educational process moved to the online format, making foreign language learning more flexible and accessible, albeit with challenges such as limited attention, screen fatigue, and technical barriers. Nevertheless, online resources (Duolingo, Quizlet, Coursera, language tandem platforms, etc.) have become the main tools for self-study [7]. Platforms such as Duolingo or Quizlet allow students to learn a language at any time, from a mobile device or computer, at their own pace. This flexibility is critical in the face of frequent travel, connectivity issues, or psychological fatigue. Courses on Coursera, edX, FutureLearn and similar platforms provide access to programmes from leading universities around the world. They cover not only grammar but also professional vocabulary, academic writing, and intercultural communication. Students can not only learn the language but also receive certificates, which increases their competitiveness. Online tools are shaping a new educational landscape where students are responsible for their own progress. This develops skills of self-discipline, critical thinking, and planning. At the same time, there is a need for support like consultations, mentoring, psychological support to avoid the effect of ‘choice overload’ or loss of motivation.

Ukrainian students, especially young people, have begun to rethink their place in the world, forming a bilingual or multilingual identity. In the process

of intercultural interaction, a foreign language acts as a bridge between cultures and also strengthens the desire to represent Ukrainian culture in the international arena.

As noted in the work of Vasylenko O. V., the intercultural component of students' foreign language training contributes to the formation of their understanding of the dialogue of cultures as the only philosophy of existence possible in modern multicultural communities, which is characterised by ethnic, racial, social and religious tolerance towards representatives of other cultures. In practical terms, the skilfully used intercultural component of a foreign language contributes to the formation of a positive attitude of students towards representatives of other cultural groups and a willingness to non-violently resolve disputes, cooperation and mutual understanding [8].

Gaps in the learning process, changing teachers, lack of physical access to libraries, resources and interpersonal interaction significantly reduce the effectiveness of language learning, especially in the humanities [9], where discussions, presentations and language practice are important.

At the level of state educational policy, there has long been no coherent strategy to support language learning for displaced students, especially those who have continued their studies at foreign institutions or study online [6]. Some initiatives have been implemented at the level of volunteer projects, or universities themselves, but in general, there is no state coordination of language adaptation or reintegration.

Increasing migration flows, integration into the international educational and professional space, and the need for remote communication with foreign partners or employers have all led to an increased demand for knowledge of foreign languages, especially English. Many students and teachers are forced to adapt to new conditions where language is becoming not only a means of communication but also a tool for survival - for employment abroad, studying at foreign universities, receiving grants or scholarships.

Learning foreign languages is particularly difficult because it requires systematic approach, high cognitive activity and motivation, they are factors that can be significantly disrupted in times of crisis. Thus, the public demand for foreign language proficiency is growing, but the actual conditions in which learning takes place are often not conducive to effective knowledge acquisition [9]. This creates an imbalance between expectations and opportunities, which requires a comprehensive approach: adaptation of educational programmes, psychological support for students, flexible forms of learning, and the introduction of innovative methods of teaching languages in crisis conditions.

Conclusions. As the analysis of recent studies demonstrates, the need to acquire foreign languages, particularly English, German, and the official languages of host countries, has become a critical necessity rather than a supplementary educational goal. This shift is driven by urgent communicative demands, aspirations for integration, and the pursuit of academic and professional continuity in new environments.

War-related displacement has catalysed both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, learners often face psychological stress, interrupted education, and limited access to traditional instruction. On the other hand, these hardships have prompted increased motivation, the expansion of digital learning solutions, and the development of peer-supported educational communities. For many Ukrainians, learning a foreign language has become not only a practical response to crisis but also a form of empowerment and resilience.

Moreover, the war has influenced language priorities even among those who remained in Ukraine. The heightened awareness of global interconnectedness, access to international information, and opportunities for remote work have further elevated the importance of foreign language proficiency within Ukrainian society.

In summary, the intersection of war, migration, and education has revealed the adaptive potential of Ukrainian learners and underscored the vital role of foreign languages in times of upheaval. Continued research and targeted support from both national and international educational institutions are essential to ensure that language learning becomes a bridge but it is not a barrier during and after the crisis.

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Кривонос І.А. Вплив війни та міграції на вивчення іноземних мов серед здобувачів-українців

Анотація. У статті досліджується вплив повномасштабної війни та вимушеної міграції на мотивацію, можливості та психологічні аспекти вивчення іноземних мов українськими студентами. Розглянуто трансформації мовних потреб в умовах перебування за кордоном, дистанційного навчання та адаптації до нового культурного середовища. Проаналізовано роль іноземної мови як інструменту інтеграції, самозбереження та академічного розвитку української молоді в умовах кризи.

Ключові слова: війна, міграція, українські студенти, іноземна мова, адаптація, інтеграція, мотивація.