

# Intercultural Component in Teaching Foreign Students in Ukraine

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## ABSTRACT

The main directions of adaptation of foreign students to study in Ukraine are analyzed, and the modern format of humanization of education of foreign students in economic universities is considered on the example of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman. Our experience shows that the study of foreign students at the Economic University is based on a typical scheme that is typical of all non-humanitarian institutions in Ukraine. The research work and cross-cultural component in the study of Ukrainian as a foreign language play an important role in the adaptation and training of economics students. The article analyzes the linguistic component of the professional education of foreign students in the course "Ukrainian as a foreign language." Identified problems, perspectives and given practical advice to improve the work with foreign students in an economic institution in the initial stage of language acquisition. The differentiated approach in the system of assessing the knowledge of CIS students is analyzed separately.

**Keywords:** *adaptation, intercultural, foreign language, education, Ukraine*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Solving the problems of improving the modern educational process, introducing innovative methods and technologies to the scientific and educational plans of Ukrainian universities, humanizing education in the context of European requirements for the practical accession of Ukraine to the European educational space are becoming increasingly important. Entry of Ukraine into the world market of educational services and governmental measures to develop mutually beneficial international cooperation in higher education require quality training of foreign specialists.

### 1.1. Main Aspects of Adaptation of Foreign Students to Study in Ukraine

The internationalization of modern higher education actualizes the problem of adaptation of foreign students to foreign realities of higher education of an unfamiliar country. Today about two out of a hundred students of high schools in the world are foreigners, and among them the citizens of developing countries traditionally dominate in quantitative terms. Since both humans and the environment are constantly changing, adaptation is the fundamental basis of existence. Despite the differences between social, physiological, psychological, biosocial, socio-cultural and other types of adaptation, in reality, they are intertwined and act as separate aspects of a single process [14].

Physiological adaptation. By physiological adaptation we mean the set of physiological reactions underlying the adaptation of the organism to changing surrounding conditions and aimed at preserving the relative stability of its internal environment. The process of physiological adaptation is the unity of the three phases – homeostasis disruption, the destruction of the old program, and the formation of a new program. Physiological adaptation has several main stages that students go through during their study at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, namely:

- introducing students to national Ukrainian cuisine (lecture);
- preparation of an optimal menu for students from some countries, taking into account the specifics of their national cuisine (together with a doctor-nutritionist at the polyclinic for students);
- a lecture on the quality of products in Ukraine, preservatives, food prices, features of market and street trade, semi-finished products, etc.;
- a lecture on the climatic conditions in Kyiv, features of the use of clothing at different times of the year and so on;
- introduction of foreign students to the system of polyclinics in Kyiv, excursion to the polyclinic for students of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman;
- determination of basic medical means in the treatment of various diseases (together with a therapist of the polyclinic for students);
- introduction of foreign students to organizing their homes (living in a hostel, living with roommates, etc.).

*Geographic adaptation.* The geographic adaptation is the adaptation of the organism to the features of a particular

locality, familiarization with the place of residence and study, etc., namely: getting acquainted with Kyiv, the location of the University, the map of Kyiv; a lecture on the features of transport in Kyiv, fare, determining the individual optimal route to the University for each student, etc.

*Cultural and educational adaptation.* The cultural and educational adaptation is the familiarization of students with the culture and traditions of their country of residence. It includes the activities of supervisors and teachers:

- introduction of foreign students to the history of Ukraine, its traditions, rituals, etc.;
- excursions around the University (special attention is paid to excursions to departments and faculties directly related to the specialization of individual students);
- participation of students in the University events;
- holding themed evenings;
- evenings, competitions, entertainment;
- measures of cultural and educational, international, local character;
- international relations with the youth of Kyiv;
- support of close contacts with the leaders of national fraternities, embassies, and joint organization and preparation of ceremonies for national holidays, evenings of international friendship, etc.

*Religious adaptation.* Depending on the religion of the students and on their will, a series of activities are conducted to familiarize themselves with religious centers, namely:

- introduction of foreign students to the religious historical monuments of Christianity in Kyiv (lecture or excursion);
- introduction of foreign students to different religious centers of Kyiv depending on students' beliefs (at the request of students).

*Social and psychological adaptation.* The psychological adaptation is defined by the activity of a person and acts as a unity of accommodation and assimilation. Today the benchmarks of adaptation are lack or low anxiety and high self-esteem. The whole concept of social and psychological adaptation has not been developed yet; most often it means personal adaptation, that is adaptation of a person to problematic social situations, habituation of an individual to new environmental conditions at the expense of some efforts, mutual adaptation of an individual and environment. Positive emotions in relationships with others, satisfactory well-being and sense of spiritual comfort are the benchmarks of adaptability. Supervisors and teachers conduct the following activities with students:

- introduction of foreign students to psychologists of the University (if necessary);
- introduction of foreign students to the supervisor, maintaining the image of the supervisor as a friend and assistant;
- organization of holidays for foreigners during vacations and extra-curricular hours during the school year.

*Legal adaptation.* The legal adaptation promotes the adaptation of students to the legal features of the country, it is one of the preventive measures in the behavior of

students in society. The following activities are implemented:

- introduction of foreign students to the generally accepted norms of behavior in our country;
- introduction of foreign students to the laws of Ukraine;
- introduction of foreign students to the provisions on - studying in Ukraine of citizens of foreign countries;
- introduction of foreign students to the rules of internal arrangement of the University, hostel, etc. [3].

A supervisory support system has been created to successfully solve the problems of the adaptation process of foreign students at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman. The activities of the foreign student supervisor are carried out in accordance with the principles and directions of education. The foreign students' supervisor performs the following tasks:

- helps students to adapt to the conditions of the educational process at the University;
- reveals diverse interests and abilities of students and facilitates their realization;
- facilitates the establishment of normal relations between - students and faculty members of the University;
- introduces students to the current normative documents that regulate the relations between the administration, teachers and students in the University;
- carries out individual educational work with students;
- examines the living conditions of students, especially those living in the hostel. Helps students who live in the hostel to solve problems related to hostel accommodation;
- uses other forms and methods of pedagogical influence on the students' environment, etc.

Therefore, the whole system of adaptation of foreign students in Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman is aimed primarily at ensuring that the adaptation process of foreigners is as optimal as possible.

For the efficiency of the process of adaptation of foreign students, it can be stated the conditions for optimization of this process should be created. The adaptation should be considered as a complex program, the success of which is determined by many parameters and criteria, which significantly improve the quality of study of foreign students and allow them to obtain appropriate professional qualifications.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### ***2.1. The Modern Format of Humanization of Education of Foreign Students in Economic Higher Education Institutions***

Today, there is an increasing demand for economic specialists with a good level of foreign language skills. Korol' S.V. points out that "in Europe, every fifth worker uses foreign language knowledge in professional activity, according to the German Institute for Economic Research" [13]. Well-known methodologist and teacher J. Berman

noted [2] that in a non-linguistic college, language is taught only as a means of communication, which is implemented in speech. Therefore, foreign students should fully acquire the basic skills of reading, writing and speaking the language that is official in the country where they study.

The humanization of education of foreign students is facilitated by linguistic and cultural work within the mandatory and special courses of the language department. According to the European Parliament's Recommendations on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, the competence in "communicating in foreign languages" implies the following: "knowledge of accepted norms and customs in society", "ability to understand, express and interpret the concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and judgments in an appropriate range of social and cultural contexts" [7]. Therefore, the knowledge of a foreign language (Ukrainian in our case) is extremely important for an economics student, because Ukrainian in this context is the language of international communication.

There are students from China, Vietnam, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Guinea, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova and other countries at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman. The main purpose of educational process of foreign citizens is the mastering by them Ukrainian, which will give them a basis in mastering professional knowledge and become a guarantee of quality vocational training of a modern qualified specialist-economist.

Already after the first year of studying Ukrainian at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, foreign students accumulate the necessary language skills which not only allow them to express their opinions and understand others, but also gain basic professional language skills for better assimilation of knowledge in the study of special disciplines and for a clear orientation in the realities of modern economics. The humanization of vocational education of foreign students is an important part of the complex educational work at different stages of teaching foreign students in an economic university.

The Department of Business Linguistics at Kiev National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman offers many textbooks and manuals for foreign students to help them study Ukrainian as a foreign language. These textbooks are aimed at mastering both the common language minimum level and the professional language. For example, the content and objectives of the course of modern Ukrainian literary language are reflected in the textbook "Ukrainian language for students-economists from CIS. Workbook", prepared by the staff of teachers of the Department of Business Linguistics of Kiev National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, which outlines the most general theoretical and practical provisions of the course of modern Ukrainian. The workshop focuses on developing the students' practical skills of pronunciation, adherence to the spelling, grammatical, lexical and stylistic norms of Ukrainian necessary for the free use of it in all spheres of activities of future graduates of economic higher education. The

workshop is intended for students on economics from CIS who are receiving higher education in Ukraine [16].

The linguistic component of professional education of foreign students in economic universities consists in writing course papers on specific issues in the field of economics and related fields, preparation of abstracts from almost all disciplines during all years of study, creation of oral, written and electronic presentations, writing and defense of bachelors and master's works in the final stages of their studies, etc., all this in Ukrainian as a language of foreign communication. This work requires a clear knowledge of scientific terms of different types, a perfect mastering of Ukrainian, peculiarities of the scientific style, specific linguistic features inherent in the professional language, since it affects the level of professional training of students, the success and effectiveness of their learning, prospects in searching work.

According to experts from non-linguistic universities, an important component in teaching Ukrainian to foreign students is the modern teaching methodology, namely innovative approaches to language learning, in particular, active and interactive learning. It is important to constantly provide feedback between the teacher and the students (explanation, verification of completed exercises and work on mistakes). This facilitates teacher's interaction and collaboration with the audience. Interactive learning allows to exchange the information between all participants in the learning process (when students work in pairs), which improves the formation of communicative competence. Teachers are trying to prepare students for independent work. In order to train foreign students to organize their own educational activities into solid practical skills, it is necessary to submit new material at an appropriate but at the same time accessible level [9].

Therefore, in an economic university the humanization of vocational education of foreign students is extremely important and necessary. For example, while studying the course "Ukrainian as a Foreign Language", foreign students not only study the basics of Ukrainian, but also gain professional knowledge offered in Ukrainian, study Ukrainian economic terminology, write scientific papers, essays, course works, presentations and so on in Ukrainian.

## **2.2. Research Work of Foreign Students**

Higher education in Ukraine is currently undergoing a serious phase of its development: there is a need to solve the problems of improving the modern educational process, to implement innovative methods and technologies in the scientific and educational space in the context of European requirements for practical joining of Ukraine to the Bologna process. In addition, Ukraine's entry into the world market of educational services and the implementation of measures on the development of mutually beneficial international cooperation in the field of higher education requires, above all, qualitative training of foreign specialists. As known, the law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" provides the assistance of the state in

international cooperation, the strategic task of which is to enter the world educational services market, so the problem of qualitative training of foreign specialists is of particular importance. Particularly urgent problem of high-quality education of foreign students arises in Ukrainian universities of economic profile, where, along with the knowledge of Ukrainian, students must also receive high-level vocational training.

Today, there is a growing demand for economic and technical specialists with a good level of foreign language skills. Korol' S.V. points out that "in Europe, every fifth worker uses foreign language proficiency in professional activity, according to the German Institute for Economic Research" [13].

At his time well-known methodologist and teacher J. Berman noted that in a non-linguistic college, language is taught only as a means of communication, which is implemented in speech [2]. Therefore, foreign students must fully master the basic skills of reading, writing and speaking while studying the course "Ukrainian as a Foreign Language". But at the present stage there are new requirements for studying a language in a non-linguistic (economic in our case) university – it is necessary to master the language of professional communication, to obtain such a language level that would form a student as a future qualified specialist. This problem is facilitated by conducting research (study) work with foreign students within the framework of the course "Ukrainian as a Foreign Language".

According to the well-known Ukrainian methodologist Knyazyan M.O., "students' educational and research activity is a kind of educational and cognitive work of creative nature, aimed at finding, studying and explaining the facts and phenomena of reality in order to acquire and systematize subjectively new knowledge of them" [5].

Successful study of foreign citizens depends, first of all, on their language training in the scientific field. Foreign students should learn how to build reasonable statements in the educational and professional field, initiatively and purposefully receive any information and be able to react accordingly, express their own opinions, etc.

Already after the first year of studying Ukrainian at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman foreign students accumulate the necessary luggage of language knowledge, which allows them not only to express their opinions and understand others, but also gain basic skills in writing their first scientific works. The research work of students at different stages of their studies at an economic university consists in writing course works on certain problematic issues in economics and related fields, writing essays and scientific articles in almost all disciplines during all years of study, making oral, written and electronic presentations, writing and defense of bachelor's and master's theses in the final stages of their studies, etc. All these scientific works require a clear knowledge of scientific terms of different types, a perfect mastering of Ukrainian, peculiarities of the scientific style, specific linguistic means of the professional language, since it affects the level of the

student's scientific work, the success and effectiveness of study.

During the second year of study of the course "Ukrainian as a foreign language" Russian-speaking students from near abroad begin to prepare their first scientific works in Ukrainian, namely:

- scientific essays (for example, on topics "Terminology of banking (exchange, financial) ", "The use of antonyms in legal practice");
- short papers in scientific style ("International Economic Cooperation of Ukraine and CIS countries", "Professional Communication");
- short messages of a popular science character ("Modern Dictionary Classification", "Modern Business Ethics");
- presentations with usage of economic terms ("Economic development strategies of Ukraine", "Business Creative"), etc.

This scientific practice contributes to a better understanding of the peculiarities of the functioning of scientific style in Ukrainian, mastering the skills of writing well-structured texts, the active use of terms and terminology from different sectors of economics.

Thus, while studying the course "Ukrainian as a Foreign Language" at an economic university, foreign students not only study the basics of Ukrainian, but also actively engage in scientific activities which are an integral part of working on language lessons in such a research institution as Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman. Systematic research work of foreign students promotes both professionalization of oral and written language classes and lays the foundations for the future scientific activity.

### ***2.3. Cross-Cultural Component in Teaching Foreign Students***

Today, the humanity faces the ways and methods of communication, as the communication has become an inevitable reality of today, when representatives of different cultures have to constantly communicate with each other to solve common issues. The process of globalization has erased borders, and all spheres of human activity have become mobile. Since we live in an age of interpenetration and interdependence, we cannot avoid cross-cultural contacts; this puts us at the need of building intercultural communication and acquiring cross-cultural competence for successful functioning in a multicultural environment.

Every society has its own cultural and social system, and at the same time it is in constant or temporary contact with other socio-cultural systems. These contacts can take place at the interstate, interpersonal and intercultural levels. The preparation of students of economic universities of various specialties is of great importance in such matters.

The term "communication" (from Latin *Communicatio* – I make it common, I connect) appeared in the scientific literature in the early XX century. Today it has at least three interpretations: 1) a means of communication of any

objects of material or spiritual world; 2) transfer of information from person to person; 3) the transfer and exchange of information in society for the purpose of influencing it.

The communication between representatives of different cultures has gained a particular importance in the current era of globalization, because the solution of any issues goes through communication and perception of the partner, as well as through orientation on the product (result) of communication.

The issue of intercultural communication has become urgent with enhancing processes of globalization which concern the socio-cultural aspect of life. The term "intercultural communication" is used to refer to a wide range of communication issues that naturally arise within an organization formed by people of different cultural, religious, social, ethnic and educational backgrounds. Sometimes this term is used synonymously with the term "cross-cultural communication", and in both cases these concepts are used to explain how people from different countries and cultures interact, communicate and perceive the outside world. Since the situations when people with different languages and cultures interact are considered, intercultural communication is a field of studies of such sciences as anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Along with the term "intercultural communications", the term "cross-cultural communications" is used, which is interpreted as communication of representatives of different cultures among themselves. The goal is to set principles and find ways and means for people of different cultures to communicate and interact effectively with each other.

There has long been a special field in psychology – cross-cultural psychology – which studies this kind of communication. Therefore, cross-cultural communication helps any person to become more aware of their partner in any communication process. People not only understand their partners better, they learn special techniques that can be applied in the communication process. This can be used for some benefits or a more profitable analysis of a conversation, lecture, or other communication act.

When we are confronted with a culture that is alien to us, we understand that it is based on other values and beliefs, other rules and norms, and people listen and communicate differently. Neither language nor intuition will reduce the intercultural gap. Incomprehension and misunderstandings occur, and communication is interrupted or worse, escalates into conflict or leads to disruption of business transactions. For example, in 2006 Walmart was forced to suspend operations in Germany. The company lost about \$1 billion because it hadn't learned in advance that German consumers don't like being greeted with a big smile at the store entrance. Therefore, in studying students for economics special attention should be paid to the cross-cultural features of contemporary world realities.

Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman holds classes in Ukrainian as a foreign language for students in economics, where the cross-cultural component is one of the most relevant and important, since

there are students from different countries, which requires from a teacher a profound knowledge of cultural characteristics of those countries to avoid incorrect situations. Particular attention is paid to the following directions of work with students in the cross-cultural aspect:

1. The course is taught in Ukrainian, and often parallels are made with the languages of the countries from which the students came. This allows to bring the situation in Ukrainian as a foreign language to the real life as close as possible and to develop the full range of skills necessary for communication in the language of the country where the students currently live.
2. Introducing students to the national characteristics of Ukrainians, specifics of their life, traditions, literature, etc. At the same time, foreign students compare the Ukrainian realities with the traditions of their people, that promotes better assimilation of studied material and a deeper understanding of the culture of Ukrainians.
3. Practical tasks are oriented so that students could choose the most understandable and acceptable for both cultures (native and Ukrainian) expressions, texts, communicative topics, etc., and to clearly express their thoughts.

#### ***2.4. A Differentiated Approach to a System of Assessment of Close Abroad Students' Knowledge***

The differentiated approach to learning is a variant of individualization – a way of realizing an individual approach to students. Differentiation in learning means a system of study in which each student has right and possibility to work in the areas of study that are most relevant to his or her abilities.

The differentiation in education has level and profile (specialized) gradations. The *level differentiation* means that studying in one group, by the same program and textbook, students can learn the material at different levels. The crucial factor is the level of mandatory training. The *profile (specialized) differentiation* allows the study of different groups of students by programs that differ in depth of teaching material, the amount of information and even the nomenclature of the studied subjects. Both types of differentiation, level and profile, exist and complement each other at all levels of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language.

The differentiated approach to assessing the knowledge of Ukrainian as a foreign language among students from CIS, which is actively used by teachers of the Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, corresponds to both variants of differentiation. Regarding the study of Ukrainian, foreign students from CIS are mostly *a priori* divided into three groups:

- Russian-speaking students;
- Turkic-speaking students who are fluent in Russian;
- Turkic-speaking students with a low level of Russian.

According to this differentiation, the program of the Ukrainian course as a foreign language is adapted to the practical needs of students.

It is clear that the assessment system in these groups of students should be differentiated. If the ECTS points will remain unchanged according to the discipline program and students' self-study cards, then the completion of the course for individual small groups of international students will be different. Russian-speaking students already have an idea of the Slavic language system, phonetics, morphology, vocabulary, whose phraseology is largely similar, whereas Turkic-speaking students, especially those who do not speak any Slavic language, should learn it from scratch. Here we assess the complex tasks performed by Russian-speaking students on the same scale by which we evaluate the elementary tasks performed by students with a weak knowledge of Russian. Teaching methods also change depending on the level of students' knowledge of Russian. In Russian-speaking small groups, a comparative technique is very often used with drawing parallels between the linguistic phenomena in the two Slavic languages, that promotes intensive assimilation of

the material. In small groups where students have a low level of Russian, Ukrainian is learned almost from scratch. The teacher performs a very difficult task – combining during the study of one discipline in one group two and sometimes three methodical approaches. It is the differentiated approach, both directly in the language classes and in the system of assessment of knowledge of foreign students, is the most effective and promotes the individualization of educational process.

Thus, differentiation of teaching is achieved by providing each student with workloads according to his/her individual abilities, that is practiced in different ways: differentiated homework, optional tasks, additional individual tasks.

The educational process and system of assessment in the groups of foreign students not only are adapt to the level of knowledge and skills of students by changing the content and methods of the discipline, but also are focused on achieving maximum results in the study of Ukrainian for individual foreign students.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Thus, the whole system of adaptation of foreign students in Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman is aimed primarily at ensuring that the adaptation process of foreigners is as optimal as possible. The humanization of education of foreign students facilitates the linguistic and cultural work in the framework of mandatory and special courses of the language department in an economic university. The assessment system in the groups of foreign students not only adapts to the level of their knowledge and skills, but also focuses on achieving maximum results in humanitarian studies.

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