

UKRAINIAN IN EDUCATION OF STUDENTS FROM UKRAINE: MODERN FEATURES

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Abstract. *The purpose of the research is to find out the modern features of studying the Ukrainian language by students from Ukraine and to propose ways and means to improve the effectiveness of this process.*

The following research methods were used: theoretical analysis of scientific literature on the issue; processing, analysis and comparison of statistical data; survey of headmasters of general secondary education institutions and students; classification and generalization of the survey results; graphic methods.

The dynamics of changes in the number of students from Ukraine who are studying (were studying) in the Ukrainian language and the number of relevant educational institutions in Ukraine were monitored. Particular attention is paid to the features of studying Ukrainian by students who, because of the war, are living abroad now. The article analyzes the features of studying the Ukrainian language as a state language, and the identified cases of changing the language of studying. The current study investigates the discrepancies between the teachers' assessment of the students' level of the Ukrainian language proficiency and the students' self-assessment. The authors propose the ways and means for improving the effectiveness of studying the Ukrainian language and raising the level of students' mastery of the state language are proposed.

Keywords: *features of studying the Ukrainian language, studying at school in Ukrainian, studying the Ukrainian language, teaching in Ukrainian, the Ukrainian language.*

Introduction

The research of the functioning of the Ukrainian language in the field of school education is important for the preservation of the self-identity of Ukrainians, the stability and prosperity of Ukraine, because a language has the main unifying role, “a national language is one of the most important factors for the consolidation of a population within a country” (Masenko, 2004, p. 102). In Ukrainian general secondary education institutions (Ukrainian schools), Ukrainian is studied as a subject. According to the current legislation, the Ukrainian language is the only state language in Ukraine. For most students,

Ukrainian is their native language. At the same time, Ukraine is characterized by the residence of school-age children of different nationalities, which affects the mastery of the Ukrainian language. Due to the Russian aggression, there was (and there is) a movement of Ukrainian students across the territory of Ukraine or abroad, which also had an effect on the study of the Ukrainian language. Studying it in the mentioned conditions requires the identification of features, their detailed consideration and the synthesis of relevant conclusions.

The purpose of the article is to find out the modern features of studying the Ukrainian language by students from Ukraine, to propose ways and means to improve the efficiency of the relevant process.

Research methodology

For a thorough study of the problem, an analysis of literature on the research problem was carried out in order to clarify the state of use of the Ukrainian language, the historical specificity of the corresponding language situation. The statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine were analyzed, the results of the study on ensuring the functioning of the state language in the educational process in general secondary education institutions and collected by the State Service of Education Quality of Ukraine through the survey that covered 3726 teachers, 16000 students, and 10558 parents (The State Education Quality Service of Ukraine, 2023).

To achieve the goal of the research, the questionnaires for each of two groups of respondents were developed: for headmasters of Ukrainian schools and students of grades 5-11. The questionnaires were developed with the help of Google forms, the links to which were sent to all education departments of Ukraine by the letter from the Institute of Pedagogy of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine with the aim of further distribution to all Ukrainian schools. Teachers and parents also helped organize the student survey.

The survey, which took place from September to October 2023, involved:

- 1) 1067 headmasters of the Ukrainian schools from Cherkasy, Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, and Volyn regions,
- 2) 14620 students of grades 5-11 from Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kherson, Khmelnytsky, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Luhansk, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Rivne, Sumy, Ternopil, Zakarpattia regions.

The results of the survey indicate that 96% of the respondents of the second group live in Ukraine, the rest live abroad.

The distribution of students by forms is presented on fig. 1.

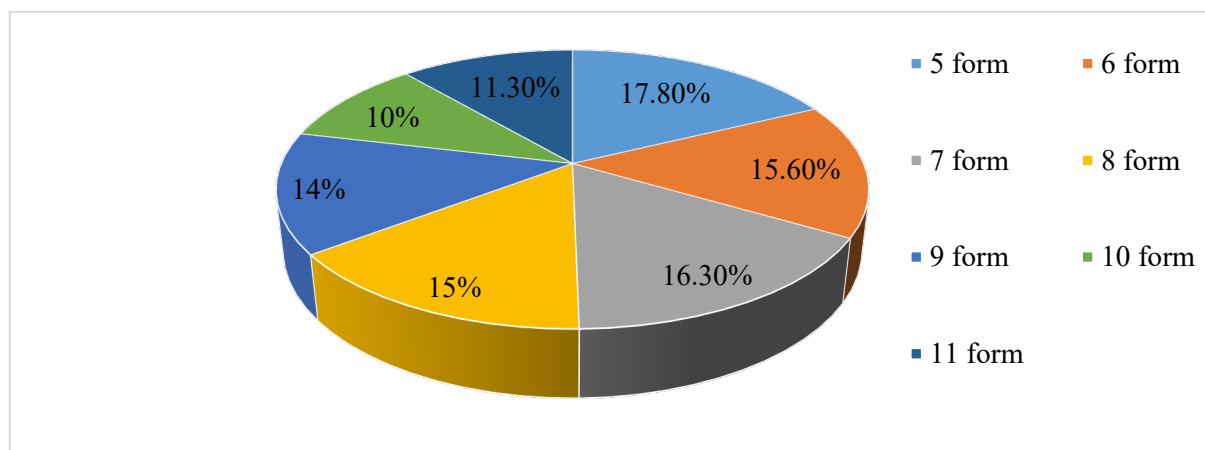


Figure 1 *Interviewed students by forms (made by Authors)*

Literature review

At the first stage of the research, an analysis of scientific and methodical sources on the relevant topic was carried out. In the analyzed sources (Makarets, 2019; Danylevska, 2019b; NAN Ukrainy, 2008) the thesis that Ukraine is a multinational state can be traced. therefore, when regulating the language regime in order to achieve linguistic balance, it is necessary to take into account national interests and strive to satisfy the linguistic needs of representatives of various ethnic groups. Thus, Y. Makarets (2019) emphasizes: “Ensuring the linguistic interests of society is one of the key issues of the national security of the state”. The author writes about the unique linguistic situation in Ukraine: a powerful policy of russification imposed on the population in Ukraine since the existence of the russian empire and the Soviet Union, as well as about Ukraine’s current presence in the sphere of russia’s political interests, and, at the same time, about Ukraine’s desire to adhere to standards of the Council of Europe through Ukraine’s aspirations to become a member of the European Union.

According to Maria Boiko, “Ukrainian identity is inextricably linked to the status of the mother tongue, the attitude of citizens towards it” (Boiko, 2020). In her publication, M. Boiko examines the language situation in secondary and higher education institutions of Eastern Ukraine, in particular the functioning of the Ukrainian language in the situation of Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism, the state of use of the Ukrainian language in the educational area, reveals the main reasons that encourage young people to use the Ukrainian language. The functioning of the Ukrainian language in the educational area of Donetsk region at the beginning of the 21th century is described more thoroughly and in detail in the Maria Boiko’s dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy degree “Functioning of the Ukrainian language in the educational area of Donetsk region at the beginning of the 21th century” (Boiko, 2023). In the mentioned works, M. Boiko describes the dynamics of language use in the educational area and defines

strategies and tactics for increasing the communicative power of the Ukrainian language among young people.

The features of the language situation in Ukraine are described in a number of publications. In particular, S. Yaremenko examines it in the historical context (Yaremenko, 2002), emphasizing development and normalization of the Ukrainian literary language, the struggle for its social status in the late XIX - early XX centuries. Svitlana Sokolova and Oksana Danylevska traced the dynamics of the use of the Ukrainian language and the attitude of the population to language policy measures in the school education system during 2008-2018 (Sokolova & Danylevska, 2018). O. Danylevska writes about the heterogeneity of the language area in educational institutions, the unevenness of the language situation by region, by type of settlement (Danylevska, 2019b). In addition, Oksana Danylevska analyzes the attitude of speakers of different age groups toward the language situation in school education in Ukraine (Danylevska, 2019a). Lesia Kovach analyzed the language situation and state language policy in Ukraine in the historical context and emphasises that “a nation can only be fully functional when its basic functional sphere - language - performs all its functions” (Kovach, 2010). The book “Language and Politics” (Masenko, 2004) talks about the negative consequences of prolonged russification and the obligation to use the Ukrainian language “in controlled spheres with the practice of protecting the Ukrainian language”. Larisa Masenko highlights the research of the state and functioning of the Ukrainian language in a bilingual society (Masenko, 2004).

The use of the Ukrainian language by Ukrainians living abroad (in Poland) is described by the Polish scientist Pavlo Levchuk (Levchuk, 2015, 2020). In particular, it is about Ukrainian-Polish-Russian trilingualism.

The facts of the genocide of the Ukrainian language are taking place in the temporarily occupied territories. The problem of linguicide is considered in detail by Amir Salimi (Salimi, 2019), who singles out the following method of language destruction as linguistic genocide, denial of the fact that a language is a language itself (for example, that it is only a dialect). A. Salimi writes about the imposition of monolingual education. In Ukraine, such an imposition of teaching in the Russian language takes place in the temporarily occupied territories. Alex Hanton (Hanton, 2010) emphasizes that “linguistic genocide has frequently been used throughout history to systematically eradicate languages, for one reason or another”. The examples of linguistic genocide are:

- repression of the Korean language from 1910 to 1945 during the occupation of Korea by Japan (then in Korea, Japanese was the language of teaching in schools; Korean was first studied by students as an optional course, and later it was completely banned);
- discrimination against Basque, Catalan and Galician languages during Franco’s rule from 1939 to 1975 in Spain;

- forced russification as the leading idea of the language policy of imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, which negatively affected a significant number of languages.

At the same time, as a result of the analysis of the literature (Pearce, 2022), a rapid increase in interest in learning the Ukrainian language was revealed after Russia began military aggression against Ukraine. This is confirmed by the facts published on March 30, 2022 in the online edition of the Los Angeles Times, cited by Matt Pearce (2022):

- from the end of February 2022 to March 20, 2022, the total number of users learning Ukrainian using the Duolingo language application increased by 577%; the number of users learning Ukrainian using Duolingo in Poland increased by 2677% (Pearce, 2022);
- the number of users learning Ukrainian using the Mondly language learning platform increased by 900% (Pearce, 2022).

Research results

The use of the Ukrainian language as a means of studying the content of educational subjects is a significant positive factor for increasing the level of language proficiency. Comparing modern and pre-war statistics, it was found that at the beginning of the 2021/2022 academic year, 13047 Ukrainian schools where teaching was in Ukrainian operated in Ukraine (IEA, 2022). This is a little more than 95% of the total number of Ukrainian schools. In the 2023/2024 academic year, there are 12155 Ukrainian schools where teaching is in the Ukrainian language (IEA, 2024). This is a little more than 98% of the total number of Ukrainian schools. That is, the share of Ukrainian schools with teaching in Ukrainian increased by 3%.

Comparing the percentage of students studying in Ukrainian, the following was found:

- at the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year, they accounted for 92.8% of the total number of students;
- in the 2023/2024 academic year, such students are 98.8% of the total number of students.

The study found out whether there were cases of students changing their language of studying to Ukrainian – 6% of the headmasters stated the fact that their students changed the language of studying from Russian to Ukrainian. When the headmasters were asked if they had any difficulties due to the change, 98% of them answered: “No”.

Ukraine is a multinational state in which more than 100 nationalities and ethnic groups live. This affects the language policy, which is implemented in accordance with international obligations, the Constitution of Ukraine and relevant legislative acts. The specified situation determines the expediency of

considering the features of mastering the Ukrainian language by students who are representatives of national minorities and indigenous people. In Ukraine, students study Ukrainian as their mother tongue or as the state language. The educational process in Ukrainian schools is carried out in the state language. The introduction of changes in the legislation of Ukraine in 2019 (Verhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2019) allowed to use the native language (except the language of the aggressor state) together with the state language in classes (groups) with teaching in the languages of national minorities, which are the official languages of the European Union, and in the education of students belonging to the indigenous peoples of Ukraine. Pupils who are representatives of other national minorities of Ukraine acquire basic and specialized secondary education in the Ukrainian language in the amount of at least 80% of the annual amount of study time. Students study Ukrainian as the state language in Ukraine in accordance with specially developed educational programs and textbooks.

A comparison of official statistical data showed that the number of students studying Ukrainian as a state language (as a second language) has decreased in recent years (fig. 2).

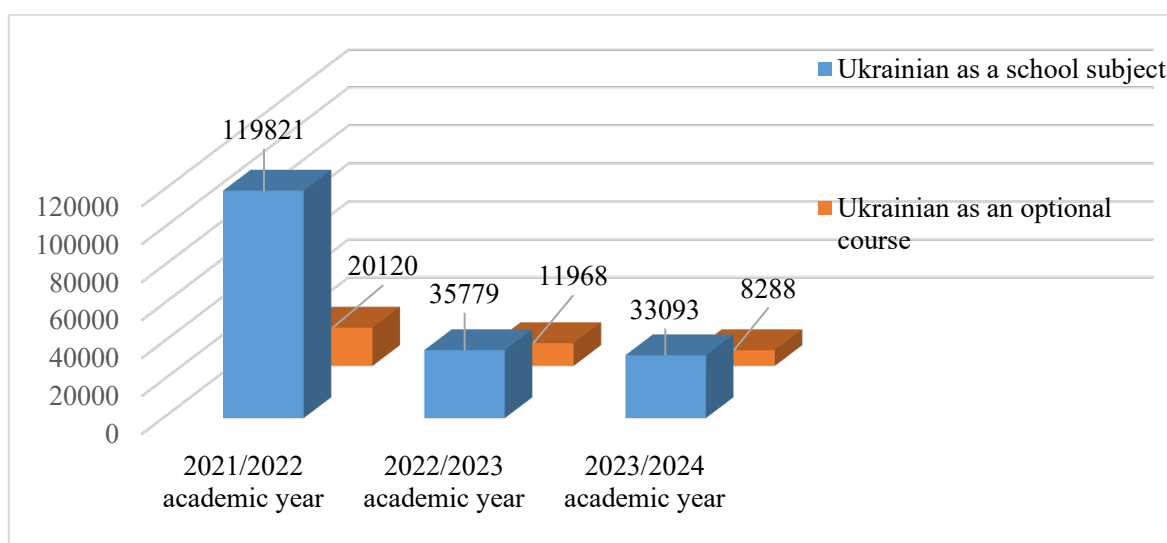


Figure 2 *The number of students studying the Ukrainian language as a school subject and as part of selective courses (optional courses or clubs) in 2021-2024 (compiled by authors, based on IEA, 2022, 2023, 2024).*

Among the surveyed respondents there were 4% of students who live abroad. These students, as a rule, study in school abroad and in Ukrainian school under one of the forms of education provided for by Ukrainian legislation (distance, family, external). Before the beginning of the 2023/2024 academic year, certain normative documents of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine were adopted (MON, 2023a; MON, 2023b), which makes it possible to simplify the education of Ukrainian children who are now forced to live abroad and study in

Ukrainian schools, by reducing the workload (studying only subjects of the Ukrainian studies component). The educational process for such students is organized in accordance with a specially developed Model educational program (MON, 2023c).

At the same time, it should be taken into account that students living abroad study offline in the language of the country they moved to due to the war, and in Ukrainian in Ukrainian schools, which makes studying the Ukrainian language bilingual and causes additional difficulties. That is, Ukrainian children abroad find themselves in an unfamiliar linguistic environment and are forced to study the language of the country in which they received shelter and assistance, which is unfamiliar. As Larisa Masenko notes, “the presence of an environment of monolinguals who would not be influenced by a second language is a necessary prerequisite for language preservation in a situation of mass bilingualism” (Masenko, 2004). This is an extremely important condition, if not mandatory one.

The surveyed students are taught abroad in different languages (fig. 3).

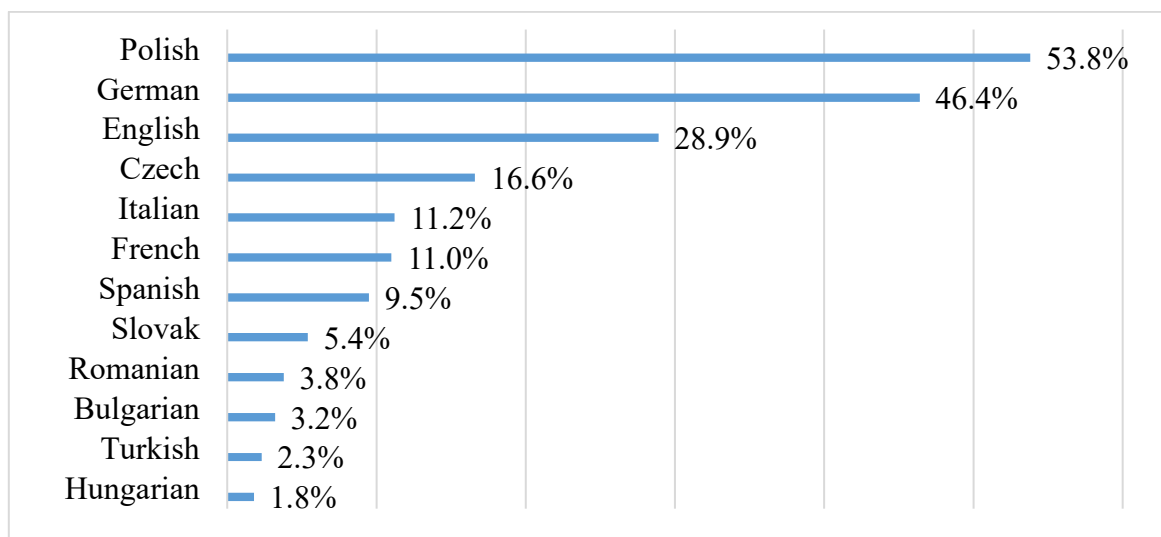


Figure 3 *Languages of studying of the surveyed students (made by authors)*

A small part of the respondents is taught in such languages as Finnish, Norwegian, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Korean, Albanian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Danish. The number of students taught in each of these languages is less than 1% of the total number.

Recently, there has been an increase in the level of students' proficiency in the Ukrainian language. This is confirmed by a study conducted by the State Service of Education Quality of Ukraine to study the state of use of the state language in the educational process in Ukrainian schools (Hurak, 2023).

The results obtained during the survey indicate that more than half of the surveyed students know the Ukrainian language at a sufficient level. Students were asked to assess their level of Ukrainian language proficiency. Due to a

possible error in the process of students' self-assessment, they were also asked to indicate how their level of the Ukrainian language is assessed by their Ukrainian teachers. The difference between these assessments is 3,6% (fig. 4, fig. 5).

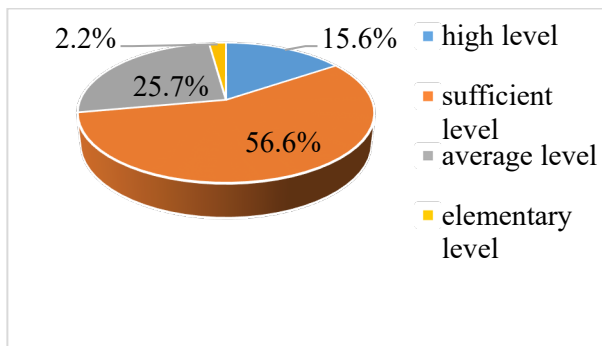


Figure 4 The students' level of Ukrainian language proficiency according to the teachers' assessment
(made by authors)

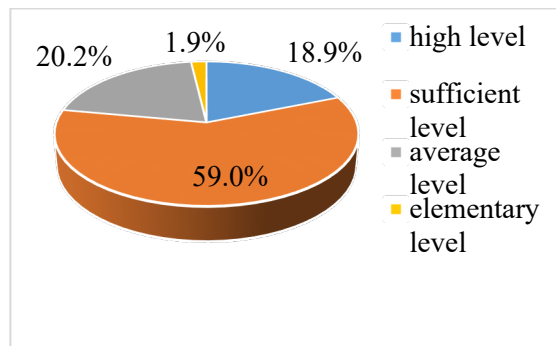


Figure 5 The students' level of Ukrainian language proficiency according to the students' self-assessment
(made by authors)

The identified features of students studying Ukrainian make it necessary to find ways and means to improve the effectiveness of the language study. The useful and important things are the work of speaking clubs for children and their family members in Ukraine and abroad, replenishment of library funds, creation of digital educational resources, educational platforms, quality content in the Ukrainian language (creation of fiction, documentaries and cartoons, publishing of books, etc.).

The authors argue that students' systematic work with texts will contribute to effective studying of the Ukrainian language. As a result of the students' questionnaire, their preferences regarding the stylistic specificity of the texts were identified: 55,6% of the surveyed students chose fiction; 44,4% – scientific and cognitive texts. Such results prove the expediency of using in the educational process texts that differ in style, genre, and volume. At the same time, it is important to provide students with the opportunity to choose texts. To ensure effective studying of the Ukrainian language, it is advisable to differentiate tasks for working with texts by degree of complexity.

Students were asked about the types of work with texts they prefer. The results show that 44,5% want to work with texts individually; 55,5% would choose joint work (32,3% of them – work in pairs, 23,2% – in groups). This determines the expediency of using different types and forms of working with texts to increase the effectiveness of studying the Ukrainian language.

Conclusions

Both positive and negative aspects are characteristic of teaching in the Ukrainian language and studying Ukrainian. Russia's full-scale invasion also had a significant impact on the language situation in Ukraine. The share of students studying in the Ukrainian language has increased (while the total number of students studying in Ukrainian schools has decreased). The study demonstrates that some of the students who studied in Russian are now studying in Ukrainian. This happened because some Ukrainian schools with teaching in the Russian language were located in the territories most affected by the war. Part of the schools were in the temporarily occupied territory, some of them were destroyed or damaged, so the students were forced to change their place of residence and school. At the same time, Russia's attack caused the growth of patriotic sentiments among children, teenagers, and adults who used to communicate in Russian, and the emergence of a desire to communicate in Ukrainian.

Some students went abroad and not all of them study online in a Ukrainian school. Children from Ukraine, who live abroad and speak Ukrainian with family members, find themselves outside the home in a foreign-language environment and are forced to switch to another language of communication.

Today, society needs a clear understanding of the need to support the Ukrainian language at the state level, because "a common language is one of the main factors that ensure the solidarity of the population and, accordingly, the stability of the state" (Masenko, 2004, p. 8). Therefore, it is advisable to improve language legislation in Ukraine, develop strategies and tactics for the widest possible use of the state language, mechanisms to strengthen its communicative power in society.

To improve the effectiveness of studying and using the Ukrainian language in school education, it is necessary to carry out systematic diagnostics and appropriate correction, optimization of the language environment and increase of methods and means of studying the Ukrainian language.

The prospect of further research is in the study of the problem of forming students' positive motivation to study the Ukrainian language, improving the mechanism for monitoring students' academic achievements in the Ukrainian language.

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