

BILINGUAL EDUCATION OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN THE TIMEFRAME OF THEIR FORCED IMMIGRATION CAUSED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE: REALMS AND CHALLENGES

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The article is dedicated to the specifics and the role of the bilingual education of primary school pupils in the timeframe of their forced immigration caused by the war in Ukraine. The assessment and evaluation of the current realms in the educational system of the host countries in relation to the newcomers from Ukraine are undertaken. Additional emphasis is put on the challenges faced both by the primary school children, forced to get their education in foreign countries, and the encounters with the educational systems of the host countries.

The importance of bilingual education for primary school pupils in the context of the forced immigration caused by the war in Ukraine has been clarified.

Keywords: bilingual education, refugees, the war in Ukraine, forced immigration, primary school pupils.

Стаття присвячена специфіці та ролі білінгвального навчання учнів початкової школи в умовах їх вимушеної еміграції, спричиненої війною в Україні. Здійснюється оцінка поточних сфер у системі освіти приймаючих країн по відношенню до новоприбулих з України. Додатковий акцент робиться на викликах, з якими стикаються як молодші школярі, змушені здобувати освіту за кордоном, так і зіткненнях з освітніми системами приймаючих країн.

З'ясовано важливість двомовної освіти для учнів початкової школи в контексті вимушеної імміграції, спричиненої війною в Україні.

Ключові слова: двомовне навчання, біженці, війна в Україні, вимушена імміграція, учні початкових класів.

ДВОМОВНЕ НАВЧАННЯ УЧНІВ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ШКОЛИ В ПЕРІОД ЇХ ВИМУШЕНОЇ ІМІГРАЦІЇ ВНАСЛІДОК ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ: СФЕРИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ

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Introduction. While considering the role of the bilingual education of primary school pupils in the timeframe of their immigration caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is essential to define bilingual education. Experts explain bilingual education as the notion that refers to the schooling of the academic curriculum in the native language and the second language (García Ofelia, & Baker, 2007).

In the case faced by the children of the Ukrainian refugees, it is possible to make a statement that the contemporary situation is unprecedented both for the Ukrainian people and for the educational systems of the host countries, which need to adapt to the current social and psychological realms. Particular emphasis, in this case, is to be put on the unprecedented number and distinctive profile of Ukrainians escaping their country after the start of the Russian invasion, as almost 50% of the recent refugees are represented by children. The schools of the host countries (Poland, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, the USA, Canada, and others) face challenges in enhancing the capacity and satisfying the educational and psychological needs of the new refugee pupils. Remarkably, in contrast to the immigrants, who have come earlier to these countries, the refugees, escaping the war, have severe psychological concerns and need a delicate socio-psychological and pedagogical integration into the society and educational system of the host country.

Psychological, pedagogical, and social challenges faced by the Ukrainian refugees in the host countries. The children of Ukrainian refugees had faced with a situation when within the timeframe of several days, they needed to change their life radically: survive physically in the danger of missile attacks and occupation of their cities, get separated from their families, houses, schools, friends; being evacuated to the safe places – in the host countries; find their new dwellings; getting to the new schools and starting their integration into the new classroom, educational system, and definitely, language. The primary issue, in this case, pertains to the fact that these changes are unplanned, sudden, and supplemented by the stress and psychological trauma of war.

The experts in pedagogical science state that this challenge in the educational system needs to be addressed with a holistic approach since it is capable of satisfying the social, learning, and emotional needs of

Ukrainian pupils of primary school age (Wyse et al., 2016). Specifically, while the refugee pupils may stay in their host countries for moderate to extended periods, the education systems will need to advance their capacities in a prompt and effective manner – to integrate the potentially large quantities of Ukrainian refugee pupils in schools. To achieve this purpose, there is a need to ensure synchronized interactions with Ukrainian policymakers and provide sustainable options for the pupils to stay connected with the Ukrainian educational curriculum, home culture, and native language (Sell, 2017).

In turn, the importance of such interactions may be represented from the following perspective. On the one hand, it ensures the proper formation of individuals' self- and national identity that takes its place at the age of primary school (Safina et al., 2021). Furthermore, this national identity of the pupil will shape one's unique moral values, beliefs, and ideals, regardless of one's current country of stay (Gomis Chorro et al., 2017). On the other hand, interactions with the national culture via language are essential in the primary school age since, after the victory, a sufficient number of refugees would wish to return to Ukraine and continue their school education in their home country.

While considering the role of the second language in their education in the host country, it is possible to make a statement that their second language (which they have never been learning before entering this country – such as Polish, Italian, Spanish, German, etc.) becomes a 'language of life and survival.'

The primary argument for this statement pertains to the fact that all information needed to survive and live in the new country is provided in a foreign language, and the educational process is not an exception to this common tendency. The primary school pupils are taught in Polish, German, Spanish, English, etc., due to the following underlying reasons: national regulations of the host country, the lack of educators, who may teach them in Ukrainian, and the absence of classes for Ukrainian pupils only. Therefore, the second language becomes the only channel for getting education-related and organizational information while attending school in a foreign country.

Educational realms and challenges faced by the host countries in the process of teaching the children of Ukrainian refugees the second languages. While taking into account the fact that a significant part of the Ukrainian refugees has come to the European Union (EU) (about 5.3 million Ukrainians have escaped to European Countries after 24.02.2022), the article would be mainly dedicated to the representation

of the situation in the educational systems of EU countries (Frontex, 2022).

In compliance with the law of the EU, newcomer pupils are required to be registered in the host countries' schools within three months. Until recently, there was some flexibility concerning the registration of pupils in the schools of the host country; nonetheless, by the end of 2022, all Ukrainian pupils, who are still outside of Ukraine, will have to attend schools in the countries of their current residence.

One more issue to be taken into account in this context is that the situation with the Ukrainian refugees is unpredictable. Therefore, the prolonged stay of the Ukrainian refugees in the schools of the host countries is expected. Therefore, a set of corresponding language-learning measures has been undertaken to integrate primary school pupils into the educational process in foreign countries. While taking into account the specifics of the age, the primary school pupils were taught foreign languages in traditional lessons and via the organizational forms of games, sports, and entertainment.

The main underlying reason for preference of such learning organization pertains to the age specifics, as these means enable the educators to represent the information in an exciting and engaging manner, and the pupil in such cases is self-motivated for intensified learning of foreign language.

Therefore, the host countries' governments, commonly with international organizations – such as the UN- have elaborated the integration programs for Ukrainian refugee children to develop their knowledge of the host country's language. Remarkably, there were summer camps organized in different European countries where the children of Ukrainian refugees could interact with local pupils in an informal setting and, insofar, develop their subject knowledge.

As an evident example, it is possible to consider the experience of Estonia, which has organized summer camps for Ukrainian and Estonian children from 7 to 14 years, where they could learn the Estonian language, interact with peers, make the cross-cultural exchange, and endorse their physical and emotional well-being (BNS/TBT Staff, 2022).

While considering the challenges faced by the educators of the host countries, teaching the Ukrainian refugees, particularly in the context of their bilingual education, it is essential to note that while a sufficient number of these refugees would potentially return to Ukraine, the educators of the host countries are challenged with the need for development and practical implementation of the flexible pathways and compatible systems in education. Therefore, there is a need to ensure

coordinated interactions with Ukrainian policymakers and advanced approaches to make the education systems of Ukraine and the host country harmonious.

Such an approach would imply providing a set of corresponding options for learning the Ukrainian language, culture, and history alongside the other subjects in the Ukrainian program through Saturday or afternoon classes or online education without overwhelming individual pupils.

In practice, Finland, Estonia, Romania, and Poland have ensured the online availability of the learning material in Ukrainian. As an evident example, it is possible to refer to the fact that the Hub of the New Ukrainian School, which was developed in partnership with Ukraine, Finland, and the EU EdTech sector, integrates curriculum-based support materials, educational resources, and Ukrainian e-learning platforms and tools for the primary school pupils, which are all accessible in Ukrainian and English (SEG, 2022).

In this case, additional attention is paid to the exceptional importance of the flexible recognition of primary school pupil qualifications at all educational levels. Remarkably, the ministries of education should collaborate with accrediting agencies for further establishment of consistent and fair processes for appraising the refugees' credentials and determining further learning needs.

Social and emotional needs of refugee pupils of primary school age in host countries. While considering the social and emotional needs of refugee pupils of primary school age, it is possible to make a statement that these problems might be long-lasting. Consequently, the host countries would be faced with the need for the provision of additional options for psychotherapy either in schools or online. Particular emphasis, in this case, is to be put on the fact that these treatment sessions should be conducted either in the Ukrainian language or with an interpreter. It is essential to note that both the emotional and social support that the children of Ukrainian refugees need may differ because of the severity or type of their personal experiences caused by Russia's invasion.

Additional attention is to be paid to the fact that the counseling and/or other procedures of psychological support are also delivered as an integral part of the «reception», «bridging», or «adaptation» classes that are provided to the primary school pupils in the set of the European countries, such as Denmark, Belgium, Lithuania, France, Spain, and Slovakia and other countries.

Conclusion. To conclude, it is possible to make a statement that in order to maximize the efficiency of bilingual education for primary school pupils (children of Ukrainian refugees), the educational systems of the

host countries propose supplementary activities and additional opportunities in terms of pupils' engagement in social communications both with the host community and within the Ukrainian community. The importance of such support measures may be interpreted from the perspective of possible development of the sense of belonging to the contemporary community and the advanced academic success of the primary school pupils in the educational systems of the host countries.

Therefore, it is possible to make a statement that in the contemporary realms, the bilingual education of primary school pupils, escaping the war in Ukraine, becomes the only way to academic success due to the set of the following underlying reasons: the specifics of the educational systems of the host countries, the legislative regulations regarding the language of teaching, the lack of the educators who can teach the refugees in Ukrainian, and the need for integration into the society of the host country.

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