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UDC:

BRIDGING THE EDUCATIONAL GAP: INTEGRATING UKRAINIAN SCHOOLCHILDREN INTO GERMANY'S ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Oleksandr Paliy

PhD, Associate Professor,

Ukrainina Humanitarian Institute, Bucha, Ukraine

ORCID: 0009-0003-0989-9569, e-mail: alexbrandstifter67@gmail.com

Tetiana Speckbacher

student of the Faculty of Philosophy,

University of Passau, Passau, Germany

ORCID: 0009-0003-5813-1011, e-mail: tanya.speckbacher@gmx.de

Schools in countries experiencing high levels of migration, such as Germany, serve as unique settings where diverse cultures and languages converge. The linguistic heterogeneity within primary schools is continuously expanding, further catalyzed by the ongoing war in Ukraine. As a result, the prevailing monolingual language culture in today's schools necessitates critical examination. This raises the pressing question of identifying approaches that facilitate the inclusion of children from migrant backgrounds, while simultaneously recognizing and harnessing the multilingualism of pupils as a valuable learning resource.

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of notable experiences centered on the integration of Ukrainian students into the German academic environment. Notably, educational welcome groups and the implementation of the revolving door model have emerged as prominent initiatives in this context. These initiatives demonstrate the commitment of schools towards acknowledging the linguistic diversity of their student body and actively promoting their multilingual capabilities.

Moreover, this article undertakes an in-depth examination of the specific requirements imposed on teachers engaged in fostering inclusive education practices. It also addresses the challenges that educators may encounter when employing translanguaging methods within their pedagogical practices. Translanguaging, a pedagogical approach that encourages the flexible and strategic use of multiple



languages, has garnered considerable attention as a means to promote multilingualism and facilitate the academic integration of linguistically diverse students.

By shedding light on the experiences of integrating Ukrainian students and exploring the implications for inclusive education, this article contributes to the broader discourse on addressing the needs of linguistically diverse student populations. It underscores the importance of adopting inclusive practices that embrace students' languages and cultures, while equipping teachers with the necessary skills and support to effectively implement translanguaging strategies in their classrooms.

Keywords: translanguaging, multilingualism, linguistic heterogeneity, linguistic inclusion, war in Ukraine, migrants, German schools.

Школи в країнах з високим рівнем міграції, таких як Німеччина, слугують унікальним середовищем, де сходяться різні культури та мови. Мовна гетерогенність у початкових школах постійно розширюється, що додатково каталізується війною, яка триває в Україні. Як наслідок, монолінгвальна мовна культура, що переважає в сучасних школах, потребує критичного розгляду. Це піднімає нагальне питання визначення підходів, які сприятимуть інклюзії дітей з мігрантських родин, одночасно визнаючи і використовуючи багатомовність учнів як цінний навчальний ресурс.

У статті представлено всебічний аналіз досвіду інтеграції українських школярів у німецьке академічне середовище. Зокрема, освітні вітальні групи та реалізація моделі "дверей, що обертаються" стали помітними ініціативами в цьому контексті. Ці ініціативи демонструють готовність шкіл визнавати мовне розмаїття своїх учнів та активно сприяти розвитку їхніх багатомовних здібностей.

Крім того, у цій статті поглиблено розглядаються конкретні вимоги, що висувуються до вчителів, які беруть участь у впровадженні інклюзивних освітніх практик. У ній також аналізуються виклики, з якими педагоги можуть зіткнутися, застосовуючи методи транслінгвізму у своїй педагогічній практиці.

Проливаючи світло на досвід інтеграції українських студентів та досліджуючи наслідки для інклюзивної освіти, ця стаття робить внесок у ширший дискурс щодо задоволення потреб лінгвістично різноманітних студентських груп. Вона підкреслює важливість впровадження інклюзивних практик, які охоплюють мови і культури учнів, а також надання вчителям необхідних навичок і підтримки для ефективного впровадження стратегій перекладу у своїх класах.

Ключові слова: транслінгвізм, багатомовність, мовна гетерогенність, мовна інклюзія, війна в Україні, мігранти, німецькі школи.

Introduction

It is hard to find a school class in Germany today where all the pupils speak only one language and represent only one culture. School has become a multicultural



and multilingual place, which pupils change, challenge and enrich every day with their individual personalities. The current course of education policy is to accommodate this heterogeneity and use it as an opportunity. An inclusive education system is the goal Germany has been striving for since 2009. This means that schools must constantly adapt and reflect on existing pedagogical concepts and strategies in order to create optimal learning conditions for each child and to meet his or her needs.

One facet of this school heterogeneity is language. Language is the primary means of communication and participation in the globally interconnected world. It is an inseparable part of the human personality.

We live in a multilingual world. People use different languages for different things; it is their normal way of life. Yet most education systems ignore this multilingual reality. Equitable, quality education and lifelong learning for all is only possible if education responds to and reflects the multilingualism of society. Children, young people and adults need learning opportunities that are relevant to their lives and needs, in and through their own languages (Wisbey, 2017).

Inclusive education, which also includes children's family languages, is on the daily agenda in Germany. However, school is still perceived as a monolingual place. This contradicts the multilingual reality of schools. Around 200 languages are spoken in Germany and the number is constantly increasing (Gogolin et al, 2020, cited in Hopf, 2011, p. 14). According to the Mercator Institute for Language Promotion and German as a Second Language (2022), more than a third of all pupils in Germany speak more than one language. One of the reasons for this linguistic diversity is the migration process. The number of children with a migration background is constantly increasing. According to the microcensus of 2021, around 39 per cent of pupils at general and vocational schools have a migration background (DESTATIS / Federal Statistical Office, 2022). In this context, a person with a migrant background is defined as a person whose parents or at least one of them was not born with German citizenship. The above figures make it clear that the monolingual offer of schools needs to be reconsidered. "As long as multilingual communication remains invisible, multilingualism cannot be used as an educational resource" (Chilla & Niebuhr-Siebert, 2017, p. 98).

Literature review and research background

On 24 February 2022, Europe was shaken by terrible news. A war of aggression against an independent country, Ukraine, changed the lives of everyone on Earth in one fell swoop. Tens of millions of Ukrainian women and children were forced to leave their homes in fear for their lives. Many sought protection in European countries. Thus, began a new wave of migration that brought many changes and forced many countries to act quickly. With a large number of children among the refugees, the education sector in particular had to make quick decisions. On 16 July, Germany counted 909,740 refugees from Ukraine (Mediendienst Integration, 2022). The president of the KMK, Karin Prien, reports that the German government is expecting one million refugees from Ukraine, 40 per cent of whom may be of school age (Peter, 2022).

Compulsory schooling in Germany begins after three months of residence at the latest. Meanwhile, 150,000 Ukrainian children and young people in German schools



have been contacted. At the end of July, schools in Bavaria counted around 27,000 refugee pupils from Ukraine, more than in any other federal state (KMK, 2022).

Multilingualism

Multilingualism is a very controversial concept in linguistics. Often, multilingual persons are described as those who can act in several languages (Gogolin et al., 2020, p. 14). Nevertheless, it remains unclear at what level one should master these languages and what partial competences one must have in order to describe oneself as multilingual. In linguistics, there are therefore other concepts that define and specify the language acquisition of multilingual speakers more narrowly.

When one wants to characterise a person's multilingualism, the questions of when a person learns a language and in what context often serve as starting points. The mother tongue or L1 is referred to as the one in which one gives the first utterances as a young child. If the child grows up with more than one language, this is called dual or simultaneous language acquisition. When the child learns another language between the ages of about two and four, it is called early or successive second language acquisition (L2). Late second language acquisition occurs at a later age (Uçan, 2022, p. 71).

However, the dichotomy "monolingual" and "multilingual" is very questionable, because multilingualism is also distinguished within the framework of a language.

When one consciously uses different dialects, sociolects and technical languages contextually, it is called internal multilingualism (Uçan, 2022, p. 73). "We all speak several languages because we live in several, often very different human communities whose languages we learn in the course of our lives (Wandruszka, 1979, p. 13). The same opinion is held by Montanari and Panagiotopoulou, who claim that all people can be considered "potential or aspiring multilinguals" if we take into account all the languages they acquire in the course of their educational biography (2019, p. 22).

Nowadays, in times of globalisation and digitalisation, language acquisition is very complex and can no longer be thought of in additive terms. Children do not acquire languages in parallel or sequentially, but dynamically and in a jumbled way. According to Panagiotopoulou, children today grow up in an environment where one has to act cross-linguistically in order to cope with everyday life and consequently acquire languages in everyday use "acting mono- and translingually" (Uçan, 2022, p. 73). In addition, concepts have become established in linguistics that dispense with the designation of languages as closed systems. Such concepts are, for example, "heteroglossia" (Bakhtin) and "translanguaging" (García).

Multilingualism from an educational policy perspective

Until the 1970s, multilingualism was considered critical and detrimental. For one thing, the mindset prevailed that if you learn several languages, you mix them in use. Language mixing was seen as a deviation from the norm. In particular, it was said to be problematic with regard to children with a migrant background. Such children were diagnosed with 'semilinguism' or 'dual hemilingualism' (Panagiotopoulou, 2016, p. 14). Another contributing factor was the findings that children growing up multilingual start speaking later compared to monolingual children. This position led



to strict language segregation in school to avoid possible interference and to promote each language extra explicitly (Gogolin et al., 2020, p. 75).

It was not until ten years later that the benefits of learning more than one language were discussed and multilingualism was seen as the normal case in society (Gogolin et al., 2020, p.75). According to Cenoz (2013), multilinguals have high metalinguistic awareness. They have an extensive linguistic repertoire, which enables them to acquire other languages more easily. Other advantages identified are the ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant, increased creativity and good visual-spatial skills (Gogolin et al., 2012, p. 4).

These positive effects have made the promotion of multilingualism a goal in education policy. In 2002, the European Council decided to promote multilingualism among EU citizens: "The EU considers multilingualism as an important element of European competitiveness. One of the objectives of EU language policy is therefore that every EU citizen should be proficient in two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue" (Iskra, 2022, p. 1).

Objectives and research question

From the initial situation described above, two challenges can be drawn out, and described in the article. Firstly, several thousand Ukrainian pupils are currently being admitted to German schools. In primary schools, most of them are placed in regular classes. In addition, the participation of these pupils in regular classes must be supported and ensured. Currently, there are few recommendations that focus on how to deal with Ukrainian children in a whole class. This challenge adds to the second - the ever-increasing linguistic heterogeneity of pupils.

In terms of inclusive education, the school is committed to taking into account students' languages and promoting their multilingualism. Yet the school positions itself as a monolingual place where children's linguistic resources are often neglected. Gogolin (2008) calls this phenomenon the "monolingual habitus" in the German education system. Kropp, for his part, speaks of the "school language effect", that pupils' languages of origin are "hidden and suppressed" (2015, p. 167). Nevertheless, the languages with higher prestige are more often included in lessons. "The implicit hierarchisation of languages, where English and French take the first places while Polish, Turkish or Arabic end up at the bottom of the ranking, is related to educational policy decisions, which consequently also co-determine the language policy of the respective educational institutions (Panagiotopoulou, 2016, p. 19).

It is impossible to predict how long the war will last and what number of Ukrainian children in primary schools will change. What can be said for sure with a view to development is that linguistic heterogeneity will remain and increase. According to Panagiotopoulou (2016, p. 64), in order to cope with the increasing heterogeneous access, educational institutions need to move away from monolingual pedagogical strategies. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the peculiarities and best practices in support and inclusion of migrant (in particular Ukrainian) school children in a situation of crisis with accommodating linguistic heterogeneity and promoting multilingualism among all students.



Method and results

The research methodology used in this paper involved the analysis of available secondary data as a fundamental approach to the study of the topic at hand. In order to gather relevant information, surveys conducted by the prestigious Robert Bosch Foundation were used as the primary source of data. These surveys were specifically designed to explore and assess the integration of Ukrainian students into the German educational system.

By using the existing secondary data, we were able to gain valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by Ukrainian pupils during their integration process. The data collected through the Robert Bosch Stiftung surveys provided a comprehensive overview of the various aspects related to the integration of Ukrainian students, including their linguistic diversity, cultural backgrounds and educational trajectories. The use of this existing data allowed for an in-depth examination of the topic and facilitated a more nuanced understanding of the different approaches and strategies implemented to promote the successful integration of Ukrainian students into the German academic environment.

"After almost two years of working in the Corona pandemic, many teachers are exhausted and at the limit of their strength," this is how the Minister of Education Karin Prien describes the current situation at the conference in Lübeck (DPA, 2022). No sooner have German schools got used to the new reality in times of the pandemic than new challenges were added. According to a survey by Robert Bosch Stiftung (2022), every second teacher in Germany already works with Ukrainian children and young people at school. Teacher shortages, inadequate space and poorly equipped schools still exist. Teachers are faced with many questions: Are the children traumatised? Is special care needed? Besides, there are the communication problems because of different script of both languages. It remains clear that each child has its own individual entry requirements and differs from others. Nevertheless, they are all required to achieve the same learning goals in the same amount of time.

The current surveys present school practice differently than it is promoted by politicians. Udo Beckerman, Chairman of the Association for Education and Training, reports about "discrepancy between political wishful thinking and the real situation at schools" (Spiegel Panorama, 2022). In the following work, the results of a Forsa survey "Das deutsche Schulbarometer Spezial" (The German School Special Barometer) are intended to make this representative.

Within the framework of a nationwide survey by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, around one thousand teachers were interviewed from the beginning to the middle of April 2022. The focus was on the approach of schools to the education of refugee children and young people from Ukraine (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2022, p. 3). The following results emerged from the survey. 60 percent of pupils at German primary schools are taught exclusively in regular classes without additional support in German as the language of education. Only 9 per cent of newcomers learn in welcome or preparatory classes and 32 per cent experience a combination of both (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2022, p. 10). This suggests that despite the recommended integrative models that foresee teaching in special classes, attending mainstream classes is the norm in most cases.



The situation with professionals speaking the Ukrainian language can be described as critical. In terms of schools that have already taken in Ukrainian children, only 9 per cent report about having Ukrainian translators and 7 per cent have Ukrainian teachers. 80 percent have neither translators nor Ukrainian teachers (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2022, p. 15).

The results for the concepts of teaching children with little or no knowledge of German are also surprising. Not even every second school seems to have such a concept. The regional differences, on the other hand, are great. While 56 per cent of the respondents from North Rhine-Westphalia report a corresponding concept, in Bavaria it is only 41 per cent (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2022, p. 16).

Discussion

Multilingualism in German Educational Settings

One of the examples of good practice of multilingualism in education is the Bavarian CurriculumPLUS. It emphasises the importance of promoting multilingualism. Chapter 1.3 of the curriculum reflects the aforementioned findings on multilingualism: "In the class and school community, picking up and comparing elements of different languages, dialects and scripts creates an interest in language, increases language awareness, expands the personal learning horizon and the world knowledge of all children" (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 2014, p. 20). With regard to multilingual pupils, the role of multilingualism in identity formation is underlined: "By including the family language, if necessary also sign language and Braille, in lessons and school life, children experience an appreciation of their diverse linguistic resources and support in their linguistic education and personality development" (p. 20).

Since 2009, Germany has committed itself to providing an inclusive education system. "Inclusion in education means that all people have equal opportunities to participate in quality education and to develop their potential, regardless of special learning needs, gender, social and economic conditions" (German UNE SCO Commission, 2009, p. 9). With regard to inclusive education, the admission of all languages is necessary and must be realised.

Accordingly, the Bavarian CurriculumPLUS recognises linguistic heterogeneity and emphasises the importance of taking into account the individual linguistic prerequisites of the pupils. "Living and learning together is oriented towards the individual interests, strengths and learning and development needs of the pupils and takes into account their respective cultural, religious, linguistic or social backgrounds" (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 2014, p. 20).

The modern approaches of linguistics as well as pedagogy address the existing course of educational policy. Multilingual concepts have been considered more often in order to promote equal use of languages in the school environment.

Requirements for teachers and parents

Teachers often report that they are overwhelmed by linguistic heterogeneity and feel ill-prepared (Knappik, 2020, p. 166). For the teacher, it is a challenging task to include languages in the classroom that they do not speak and know little about.



According to Celic and Seltzer, both monolingual and multilingual teachers can use translanguaging methods in their pedagogical practice.

The only prerequisites are the recognition of all students' languages as a resource and the willingness to include them in shared learning (2013, p. 5). Garcia and Wei claim that all teachers in the 21st century need to learn to observe children closely, differentiate learning activities, be aware of language diversity and have critical sociopolitical awareness (2014, p. 122).

The family is the first social institution. Values, norms, ideas about things and the world as well as language skills are first formed at home before children bring them to school. This formation should not be broken off when children start school. Home and school should function like a unified organism to ensure the optimal development of children. "All voices should be included and juxtaposed" (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 10). Translanguaging is only meant to strengthen this connection with home. Joint work is meant to bring to life ideas for joint action. Parents and school are also seen as partners in the Bavarian CurriculumPLUS:

A trusting cooperation between parents and school supports the personal development of the pupils and enriches lessons and school life. The primary school shows an appreciative attitude towards all parents and recognises the diversity of families and their life plans. In regular conversations and various forms of dialogue, information is exchanged and mutual suggestions and impulses are taken up (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 2014, p. 27).

Dealing with Ukrainian children at German primary schools

As with the migration wave in 2015, schools are challenged to act quickly. The decision on how to teach Ukrainian children is not only up to each federal state individually, but even up to each school. Many schools use experiences from the last migration wave and fall back on models that have already been tried out. In the meantime, every federal state has published a general recommendation for action. Federal states such as Baden-Württemberg and Hamburg report that Ukrainian pupils should first be taught in preparatory classes if possible. The aim of such classes is the fastest possible language acquisition. Eventually, the children should be placed in mainstream classes (Kuhn, 2022). In Bavaria, a special concept called "Pädagogische Willkommensgruppen" (pedagogical welcome groups) has been developed, while many schools in North Rhine-Westphalia use an already well-known concept from gifted education, the "revolving door model".

Educational welcome groups

In Bavaria, special "pedagogical welcome groups" have been set up for Ukrainian pupils. In this way, 30% of the accepted pupils are taught. The offer is interdisciplinary. It is particularly important to ensure a good arrival in these groups and to guarantee safety, security and continuity. At the same time, the children should get to know everyday life at German schools and learn the German language. These goals are to be achieved in the following ways:

- The pedagogical welcome groups should be open and flexible. The design and duration of the offer depend on local conditions as well as the individual needs and prerequisites of the children. Thus, participation in regular classes is not excluded.



• The pedagogical welcome groups should be supervised by the permanent reference persons. Here, the pedagogical staff, such as third party staff, student teachers, retired teachers as well as Ukrainian teachers, is deployed. According to the KMK, 1700 teachers have already been recruited, 500 of whom speak Ukrainian or Russian.

• A variety of meetings is made to be possible. The Ukrainian children are to take advantage of support and creative offers. These should not only take place in the school environment.

• The Ukrainian pupils should maintain contact with their homeland. This means the offers from the Ukrainian teachers as well as spending time together with other children from Ukraine (Bavarian State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2022).

Revolving door model

The revolving door model is a concept from gifted education. The central idea is that the children can leave the regular lessons for a few hours to deal with the desired learning content. The missed lessons are made up independently or worked on together with the learning mentors. In this way, individual learning paths are supported through external differentiation.

The Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Bertelsmann Stiftung propose this concept with regard to the work with Ukrainian pupils. By leaving the classroom for a few hours, they could engage with the content of the Ukrainian learning plan or even participate in online lessons. In this way, the children are integrated into the German school system and can continue the familiar lessons from home and prepare for graduation. According to Dirk Zorn, division director of the Robert Bosch Foundation, many schools in Nordrhein-Westfalen are already implementing this model (Herm, 2022).

The above-mentioned examples demonstrate efforts to promote multilingualism and support the integration of Ukrainian children in German educational settings. They recognize the value of linguistic diversity and aim to provide inclusive education that meets the needs of all students. By incorporating translanguaging practices, involving parents, and implementing specialized programs, schools strive to create an environment where all voices are heard and valued.

Conclusion

Since 2009, Germany's education system has been evolving to accommodate the diverse and multicultural nature of its students, aiming for an inclusive education system. However, most education systems ignore the multilingual reality, limiting the provision of equitable, high quality education and lifelong learning for all. Around 200 languages are spoken in Germany, with more than a third of pupils speaking more than one language. The recent war in Ukraine has exacerbated the situation, with teacher shortages, insufficient space and poorly equipped schools posing challenges.

One of the key issues in migrant student integration is multilingualism, which can be generally defined as the ability to speak several languages. Modern approaches in linguistics and pedagogy address the existing course of educational policy by promoting the equal use of languages in the school environment. Teachers often



struggle with linguistic heterogeneity and feel ill-prepared to integrate languages in the classroom.

The wave of migration in 2015 has forced German schools to quickly adapt to the situation with migration and inclusion of Ukrainian children. Federal states have recommended that Ukrainian pupils should first be taught in preparatory classes, while Bavaria has set up special "pedagogical welcome groups" for Ukrainian pupils. The "revolving door" model proposed by the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Bertelsmann Stiftung allows children to leave regular classes for a few hours to focus on the desired learning content. Another example of good practice in dealing with multilingualism among migrant students in German settings is the Bavarian CurriculumPLUS and relevant supporting materials and resources that further enhance its implementation and support teachers in addressing multilingualism among migrant students.

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