

UDC 37.04

DOI DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2522-4077-2023-204-9>

## GERMAN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND INTEGRATION POTENTIAL

Stepanenko A.V.,

*orcid.org/0000-0003-0609-1882**Ph.D., Associate Professor of the Department of Germanic Languages,  
Foreign Literature and their Teaching Methods  
Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State University*

Having found themselves in unpredictable and difficult life circumstances starting from the end of February 2022, Ukrainian refugees in Germany faced a barrier of a linguistic nature, and therefore of a social and cultural nature. In order to solve many urgent life tasks and meet the needs and maximum integrated functioning in the German-speaking environment, the question arose of learning not only the German language, but also culture through the language. The article outlines the current situation related to the study of the German language by Ukrainian refugees in Germany and outlines the difficulties of learning language collocations, fixed expressions and phraseological units at the initial stage of learning German as a foreign language in accordance with the conditionally level criterias of the European Language Standard in order to successfully understand and master the language in in the context of integration processes. The study contains survey and testing data of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, which relate to separate realities of the ethno-cultural level, fixed word combinations, collocations and idioms, phraseological expressions, reveal examples of difficulties in learning and acquisition the German language, which require transformations or switching language codes during the learning process.

The survey and its results direct attention to ethnolinguistic components in the form of idiomatic expressions that do not have counterparts in the native language, their meaning is figurative, implies the possession of ethnocultural information, and can also be understood thanks to linguistic guesswork and previous experience. Set expressions in the form of collocations contain typical word combinations of the German language, which are not characteristic for Ukrainian speakers. Understanding and acquisition the above mentioned language categories is the key to the successful formation of sociocultural competence for intercultural communication in the context of integration processes.

**Key words:** German, language acquisition, collocations, sociocultural competency, intercultural communication, integration.

Опинившись у непередбачуваних складних життєвих обставинах починаючи з кінця лютого 2022 р., українські біженці в Німеччині стикнулися з бар'єром мовного характеру, а отже, соціального і культурного. Для вирішення багатьох нагальних життєвих завдань та задоволення потреб і максимального інтегрованого функціонування в німецькомовному середовищі постало питання вивчення не лише німецької мови, а й культури через мову. Стаття розглядає актуальну ситуацію, пов'язану з вивченням німецької мови українськими біженцями в Німеччині, та окреслює труднощі вивчення на прикладі окремих мовних колокацій, сталих виразів та фразеологізмів на початковому етапі вивчення німецької мови як іноземної відповідно до рівневих критеріїв Європейського мовного стандарту з метою успішного розуміння та засвоєння німецької як іноземної мови в контексті інтеграційних процесів. Дослідження містить дані опитування та тестувань українських біженців у Німеччині, які стосуються окремих реалій етнокультурного рівня, сталих словосполучень, колокацій та ідеомагичних, фразеологічних виразів, виявляють приклади труднощів у вивченні та засвоєнні німецької мови, що потребують трансформацій або перемикання мовних кодів у процесі вивчення іноземної мови. Опитування та його результати спрямовують увагу на етнолінгвістичні компоненти у вигляді ідеомагичних виразів, які не мають відповідників у рідній мові, їх значення переносне, передбачає володіння етнокультурною інформацією та може також бути зрозумілим завдяки лінгвістичній здогадці та попередньому досвіду. Сталі вирази у вигляді колокацій містять типові поєднання в комбінаціях німецької мови, які не є не характерними для носіїв української. Розуміння та засвоєння вищезазначених категорій мови є запорукою успішного формування соціокультурної компетенції задля міжкультурної комунікації в контексті інтеграційних процесів.

**Ключові слова:** німецька мова, оволодіння мовою, колокації, соціокультурна компетенція, міжкультурна комунікація, інтеграція.

**Formulation of the focus problem.** The question of the intercultural communication of the Ukrainian refugees and their integration potential has become topical since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression. The topicality remains for a certain period and is important to support the quality of life, which also includes learning the German language. Taking into consideration the abruptness of setting goals for learning the German language, lack of or minimal linguistic preparation, different age, educational and social categories of refugees, it is considered important to identify difficulties in learning German as a foreign language in a socially communicative context.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** According to the preliminary results of a special migration statistics evaluation, around 33,000 immigrants from Ukraine were registered in Germany in November 2022. By the end of August, almost 180,000 refugees had arrived in the Free State of Bavaria. According to statistics from the government of Upper Franconia (region Bavaria) from December 5th, 2022, there are 12,428 Ukrainian refugees in Upper Franconia, 1,054 in the independent city of Bayreuth, and 1,083 in the district of Bayreuth.

At the end of 2022, the results of the research project "Refugees from Ukraine in Germany" were published, the four partner organizations establishing the first comprehensive, representative social science repeat survey on this group: the Institute for Labor Market and Occupational Research (IAB) of the Federal Agency for Labor (BA), the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) and the Family Demographic Panel FReDA, the Research Center of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin), highlight different socio-demographic information. This topic became a more actual point than earlier under the circumstances because of massive demographic migration as a result of sudden aggression. In this context foreign language communicative competence gets the priority as a mean of adaptation, integration and further personal development. This aspect of foreign language communicative competence was the study object of several Ukrainian and European scientists as N. Galskova, N. Guez, O. Pasichnyk, V. Redko, V. Safonova, S. J. Savignon, M. Bechtel, L. Bien-Miller, L. Bredella, Jan van Eck, A. Wildemann, etc.

**Setting objectives.** The aim of the article is to consider the current situation related to the study of the German language by Ukrainian refugees in Germany and to outline the difficulties of learning language collocations, set expressions and phraseological units at the initial stage of learning the German language as a foreign language in accordance with the level requirements of the European Language Standard in order to successful language acquisition, social and cultural communication in the context of integration processes. The review contains survey and testing data of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, which reveal examples of difficulties in learning and acquisition of the German language, which require switching language codes during the learning process.

**Presenting main material.** According to the study, at the time of the survey, 51% of the adult refugees had already attended or completed a German course. 36% used a free integration course or another (language) course offered by the BAMF. 18% of the refugees of working age (18 to 64 years) were already employed in Germany at the time of the survey, another 78% stated that they "definitely" (56%) or "probably" (22%) wanted to take up employment here. At the time of the survey, 74% of the unemployed refugees were registered as looking for work and were thus integrated into the job centre's funding and placement infrastructure.

The intentions of the Ukrainian refugees to stay and return are mixed: About a third of the refugees want to stay in Germany until the end of the war, but the majority would like to return to Ukraine afterwards (81%). A further 27% do not yet know whether and for how long they want to stay in Germany. In contrast, 26% would like to stay in Germany. Refugees say they need help, particularly in learning the German language, looking for work, health care and looking for a place to live.

Based on the socio-demographic information, conclusions can be drawn that the above categories of Ukrainians: inside with short-term or long-term plans, first of all, their basic needs should be provided by language skills and communication opportunities. According to the survey, 9% of the

respondents are already Ukrainians: inside the language course after 2 months, 33% after four months, 49% after six months of stay in Germany. Since majority is about elementary language level, not only the language itself is important, but also culture, communication and thereby integration would be of great importance and create potential.

To ensure the adaptability and integration is important to outline the goals and tasks aimed at solving the issues of forming a number of competencies as key points for the adaptation and integration of refugees into the new society. In the field of learning foreign languages, the goal of learning is the formation of foreign language communicative competence. Despite the fact that it is one of the key categories of pedagogy, there is no consensus among researchers regarding its component composition. One of the most widespread was the vision proposed by the European Council, which included the following three competencies: **linguistic**, which includes **phonetic, grammatical and lexical knowledge, skills and abilities**; **sociolinguistic** - oriented to the use of language in a social context and connects **communicative competence** with linguistic markers of social relations; **pragmatic** - includes general competencies and extralinguistic components that are necessary to ensure communication [1, 26].

The proposed provisions were extrapolated and adapted to the realities and needs of domestic methodological science and provided for such components that were consistent with the position of the Council of Europe, but somewhat expanded the toolkit proposed by it. Thus, in accordance with the requirements of the actual curriculum, the formation of the following competencies in students was foreseen: 1) speech and linguistic, 2) sociocultural and sociolinguistic, 3) discursive and 4) strategic [2, 4]. If the linguistic and pragmatic aspects are separated and the focus is concentrated on the fact that mastering a language is inextricably linked with the culture of the respective country, we can see that one of the key features was the inclusion of the sociocultural dimension in the structure of foreign language communicative competence.

Isolating the socio-cultural component is important, as it represents a wide range of information about the country whose language is being studied as country studies aspect, as well as the knowledge and skills that contribute to establishing contact with representatives of other cultures. However, such a component composition suggests that the process of mastering a foreign language is mainly focused on the adaptation of participants to a different socio-cultural reality and dialogue with representatives of other cultures exclusively according to the rules adopted in another country. At the same time, the fact that the participants themselves are representatives of another country and culture (which is characterized by other norms, customs and traditions) has to be considered, and, accordingly, can be the bearer of a different cultural consciousness and value system. Therefore, such a vision of foreign language communicative competence somewhat is to be focused on one of the basic principles of linguistic didactics, which stipulates that language learning should be carried out on the basis of "dialogue of cultures".

In the city of Bayreuth, the panel survey was conducted as a random sample among the Ukrainian refugees who came to Germany after February 2022. The aim of the survey was to examine the extent to which the refugees found their way around the administrative system in the initial phase, got to know German culture through customs and holidays, have the potential to perceive and understand nationally shaped German, and whether previous language experience influences this process.

The anonymous survey contained twenty closed questions in addition to personal data about age, previous knowledge of a foreign language, and duration of learning German. The closed questions had alternative answers to choose from and concerned five factual, five cultural and ten linguistic questions about Germany and German. The instructions for the task were formulated in Ukrainian, the alternative answers of cultural and ethnolinguistic character were presented in German and had closed questions with multiple answers. Factual questions had single-choice options. The linguistic questions included phraseologisms and standing idioms of a communicative and nominative character, which belong to ethnophrases and have no direct correspondence in the German and Ukrainian languages.

In addition, the survey made it possible for a wider group of respondents to take part, as there was motivation to test themselves, see correct answers and leave feedback.

50 refugees were surveyed who attend language and/or integration courses and have language levels A1 - A2. Since the language courses include the underage participants, they were also surveyed and their number is 8.8%. Respondents aged 19-30 make up 20.6%, from 31-49 - 50%, over 50 years old the figure is 20.6%. Among them, 3.5% of the respondents learned German earlier, 58.2% have been learning the language for 7-10 months and 38.3% have been learning it for less than 6 months. 55.9% of those surveyed have previous knowledge of English, 14.7% have previously learned a foreign language other than German and English, 29.4% have no previous knowledge of a foreign language. The survey contained the elementary facts about the number of states and administrative system. 85.3% of the respondents are familiar with the administrative structure of Germany, specifically Bavaria, and 73.5% of Germany's executive bodies in general.

The cultural and national aspects such as religious holidays (**Nikolaustag, Weihnachten, Ostern, Pfingsten**), 91% of those who responded recognize the similarities in Germany and Ukraine, and 57% of those asked identify New Year's Eve / **Silvester** as January 31/New Year's Day. 74.3% of Ukrainians know when German Unity Day is celebrated. But only 9% of those who responded know about public holidays such as Epiphany, Corpus Christi, All Saints' Day and the Day of Prayer and Penance (**Heilige drei Könige, Fronleichnam, Allerheiligen und Buß- und Betttag**).

National and regional specialties belong to the group of interests and gastronomy culture, where **Oktoberfest** is one of the best-known German folk festivals for 99.3% of those who responded. Pickled cabbage **Sauerkraut** is known to 51.4% of those surveyed, dumplings as **Klöße** and **Knödel** to 77.1%, and potato salad /**Kartoffelsalat** to 85.7%. fried sausage as **Bratwurst** takes the highest position with 94.3% and lentil soup /**Linsensuppe** the lowest with 5.7%.

The realia mentioned above as national aspects in the language also reflect the worldview and language image of the native speakers and are of influential value for intercultural interaction. This also includes phraseologisms that have an indirect meaning and their inaccurate or incorrect interpretation can cause misunderstanding. 10 phraseologisms were chosen for the survey, which at most correspond to the language level A2 and have no direct correspondence but certain semantic discrepancies in both languages. The phraseologisms chosen include somatisms, coloratives, phraseologisms with zoonymic and domestic components [6; 7].

1. 51.4% of those questioned understand the idiom "**schwarz fahren**" and 77.1% the combination "**schwarz arbeiten**" as "illegal acts", while coloratives illuminate the perception of color in the national world view and do not correspond completely possessing different connotations in the two languages.

2. The idiom "**Schwein haben**" was marked as "lucky" by 60% of respondents, but 37.1% found the phraseologism as "trouble/unlucky", which is characteristic of Ukrainian and corresponds with "підсунути свиню" in the meaning "to cause troubles for someone".

3. 82.9% understand the phrase „**die Daumen drücken**“ / "fingers crossed" correctly, although there is no direct equivalent in Ukrainian, but a similar movement or gesture is associated with fist.

4. The phrase "**einen Korb bekommen**" is understood by 65.7% of the respondents as "received a love proposal", which can be compared to the Ukrainian expression with the meaning of rejection "received a pumpkin" (отримати гарбуза).

5. "**Tomaten auf den Augen haben**" is semantically differentiated by 77.1% as "not noticing something obvious", although there is no direct component-conceptual equivalent in Ukrainian.

6. The expression "**die halbe Miete sein**" is seen by 80% of respondents as "a good start" or "partial success" and it can be explained by the similarity in Ukrainian "half the job" (половина справи).

7. The idiom "**nicht alle Tassen im Schrank haben**" is deciphered by 74.3% as characteristic of a crazy inadequate person, but in Ukrainian one finds the phraseologism "to be crazy / out of mind" (не всі вдома), which could be semantic equivalents.

8. The expression “**alle Hände voll zu tun haben**” is understood by 71.4% as “being very busy”, “working your neck out” (мати по горло роботи), semantic correspondences are expressed by different parts of the body in somatisms.

9. 60% understand the phrase „**echt unter die Haut gehen**“ (get under your skin) as "trigger strong feelings" which is associated with the **hurt soul, alive feelings** in Ukrainian (торкатися до глибини душі, брати за живе).

10. „**Eine Extrawurst bekommen**“ (getting an extra sausage treat) means 54.3% of respondents as having preferential treatment or advantages over others. Although no direct idiomatic equivalent is found in Ukrainian, the semantics of the idiom are transparent to be discovered through associated thinking.

59.4% of respondents found the phrases completely unknown, 3.1% thought they were familiar, and 37.5% knew some of them. The number of correct answers among interviewees with prior knowledge of a foreign language is 35% higher than among those who only speak their mother tongue. The survey shows the declarative knowledge in the German language and learning potential, which is based on associative thinking, linguistic guessing, personal language and life experience. For learning potential, declarative knowledge is not enough but is very important as step one, which leads to further didactic steps. This includes language structures and collocations with their structural and semantic peculiarities, which enable communication with certain linguistic transformations and decoding.

The second survey had the language-didactic goal of determining the difficulties associated with typical, frequently used word combinations in German and their application and which require code switching while learning German from Ukrainian. The survey was conducted as a personal test, containing 25 closed-ended questions with multiple answers, where the interviewee had to choose the right sentence or sentences. It was performed twice as an input and output test to follow the learning dynamic changes. The group of 15 people with an initial zero language level was tested in the interval from A1.1 to A1.2 and showed the following dynamics.

The structures that are typical and often used in German were chosen, which can cause certain difficulties in language learning and acquisition because they show structural differences in semantic correspondences and require interlinguistic transformations:

1) haben + noun/ adverb, **Hunger haben** (бути голодним); **Lust auf** (Akk.) **haben** (мати бажання до чогось);

2) **gern haben** (подобатися), gern + verb (робити охоче);

3) bekommen + noun, **Hunger** (**Angst/ Durst**) **bekommen** (зголодніти/ злякатися / захотіти пити);

4) machen + noun, **Ausbildung machen**, (здобувати освіту), **einen Termin machen** (запланувати зустріч) **Feierabend machen** (закінчувати робочий день);

5) verb + noun, **Rad fahren** (їздити на велосипеді), **Bescheid geben** (підтвердити), **Klavier spielen** (грати на піаніно);

6) nehmen + noun, **den Bus nehmen** (сісти в автобус);

7) einnehmen + noun, **die Arzneimittel einnehmen** (пити/приймати ліки);

8) Collocations with „sein“, **Jahre alt sein** (бути віком); **von Beruf sein** (бути по професії);

9) Collocations with „gehen“ having different meanings, **es geht** (справи йдуть), **der Fahrstuhl geht nicht** (ліфт не працює), **das geht nicht** (так не піде);

10) verb + akkusativ, **anrufen** (зателефонувати комусь+Dat.), **stören** (заважати комусь +Dat.);

11) verb + preposition (Akk. / Dat.), **bitten um** (просити про щось), **sich melden** (повідомити / звітувати), **sich kümmern um** (Akk.) (потурбуватися про щось), **sich interessieren für** (Akk.) (цікавитися чимось);

12) verb + prepositional object, **arbeiten + als/ an / bei / für; fahren + mit / an / in /zu**.

The input test was performed with A1.1 and the overall pass rate was 51%. The most frequent difficulties appeared with collocations requiring maximum transformations German = Ukrainian,

which made 86%: 1) haben + adverb liked = liked + verb; 2) years old = years without a copula verb; 3) verb + accusative = verb+ dativ - call / disturb = зателефонувати / заважати +dativ; 4) verb + preposition (Akk. / Dat.) = Verb + Preposition (Ablative), to be interested in (Akk.) = цікавитися ablative case.

Collocations with verbs **machen** and **bekommen** belong to the group of medium difficulty. Here are also results from 60% 1) verb + preposition (akk. / dativ), **bitten um (Akk.)** = просити про (Akk) (ask for someth.); 2) verb + prepositional objects; 3) collocations with the verb “**gehen**”; 4) verb + noun, **Rad fahren** (ride a bike) = їздити на велосипеді, **Klavier spielen** (play the piano) = грати на піаніно.

The output test with A1.2 showed the overall success rate 74%, with the frequency remaining corresponding to 72% and 45% of the typical difficulties and marking the clichés anchored in the mother tongue that need decoding from Ukrainian into German.

The dynamics show that collocations that require transformations from the mother tongue to the foreign language must be didactically examined so that the code switch mother tongue=foreign language reduces communicative difficulties. In any case, the analysis gives detailed results, which specifically concerns the native speaker, namely Ukrainians, and complements the typical possible solutions in language learning and language acquisition, the goal of which is autonomous sociolinguistic functioning and intercultural communication.

**Conclusions.** Intercultural communication takes place on an individual and group level. The personality as a human being in the sociocultural surrounding is the main topic of intercultural communication on both levels. Everyone's behaviour is determined by the norms and values of the culture to which they belong. Accordingly, each participant in intercultural interactions should use their own set of rules determined by their sociocultural affiliation. Therefore, in the process of direct communication, representatives of different cultures not only have to overcome language differences, but also ethnic and sociocultural ones. The awareness, understanding and foreign language acquisition insures the learning and integration process with in social communication as a cultural dialog.

The results show that the language issue is closely related to several specific points and is of great importance. It concerns the current situation with social functionality, psychological well-being of the refugees and the intention to stay for an indefinite period, so it also requires solutions that enable this social functionality. This means that social communication is definitely intercultural communication in almost all areas of human life, which can cause restrictions and barriers due to a lack of or little knowledge of the language.

Moreover, the survey reveals a number of issues related to the linguistic and communicative character and its potential tasks. The differences between the cultures that have developed during the formation of the respective ethnic culture are the objective basis for intercultural communication. Human relationships and life activities are subject to norms that regulate almost all areas of human behaviour and thinking. They influence interpersonal relationships, evaluations and the way of perception. Upbringing, education, customs, traditions, historical memory and language, these terms form a system of orientation that helps people to successfully master problems and life situations. Therefore, the issue of intercultural communication as a dialogue of cultures is urgent in this regard and requires adequate approaches to address it.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Загальноєвропейські рекомендації з мовної освіти: вивчення, викладання, оцінювання / за ред. С.Ю. Ніколаєвої. Київ : Ленвіт, 2003. 261 с.
2. Модельна навчальна програма «Іноземна мова 5–9 класи» для закладів загальної середньої освіти / В.Г. Редько та ін. ; Рекомендовано Міністерством освіти і науки України (Наказ Міністерства освіти і науки України від 12.07.2021 № 795).
3. Навчальні програми з іноземних мов для загальноосвітніх навчальних закладів і спеціалізованих шкіл із поглибленим вивченням іноземних мов, 10–11 класи. URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/>

media/zagalna%20serednya/programy-10-11-klas/2018-2019/inozemni-movi-10-11-19.09.2017.pdf (дата звернення: 20.02.2023).

4. Wildemann, A., Bien-Miller, L. & Akbulut, M. (2020). Mehrsprachigkeit und Sprachbewusstheit – empirische Befunde und Unterrichtskonzepte. In: Gogolin, I., Hansen, A., McMonagle, S. & Rauch, D. (Hrsg.): Handbuch Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildung, Springer VS, 119–123.

5. Bredella, Lothar (2010): Fremdverstehen und interkulturelles Verstehen. In: HALLET, Wolfgang / KÖNIGS, Frank (Hrsg.): Handbuch Fremdsprachendidaktik. Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer, Klett: S. 120–125.

6. Evans S., Pude A., Specht F. (2016) „MENSCHEN“, Deutsch als Fremdsprache, Kursbuch, A1, Hueber Verlag. 192 s.

7. Ruoff Arne: Häufigkeitwörterbuch gesprochener Sprache. Niemeyer, Tübingen 1981. 2. unveränderte Auflage 1990.

8. Umfrage unter Ukraine-Geflüchteten: Jeder Dritte will länger bleiben. *Tagesschau*. 15.12.22. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/fluechtlinge-ukraine-deutschland-105.html> (дата звернення: 20.02.2023).

9. Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine in Deutschland (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP-Befragung) Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine in Deutschland: Flucht, Ankunft und Leben. 18 s. URL: [https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2022/pdf/Gefluechtete-aus-der-Ukraine-in-Deutschland-Flucht-Ankunft-und-Leben.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=5](https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2022/pdf/Gefluechtete-aus-der-Ukraine-in-Deutschland-Flucht-Ankunft-und-Leben.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5) (дата звернення: 20.02.2023).

10. Regierung von Oberfranken. URL: [https://www.regierung.oberfranken.bayern.de/mam/service/migration\\_integration/asyl\\_ofr\\_statistik.pdf](https://www.regierung.oberfranken.bayern.de/mam/service/migration_integration/asyl_ofr_statistik.pdf) (дата звернення: 20.02.2023).