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**THE ROLE OF MIGRANT ASSOCIATIONS IN LANGUAGE  
EDUCATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN WITH  
MIGRANT BACKGROUND IN PORTUGAL**

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*The article analyses the role the migrant associations play in language education of children with migrant background. The presented research assumes language education of migrants as the process of learning language of host country and other foreign languages as well as mastering the language of the country of origin. It is stated that in Portugal mother tongue tuition is usually offered outside the state school framework and the Ukrainian language education is organised and funded by voluntary and private initiatives, one of which is migrant communities themselves. Different migrant associations and their centres in Portugal have been described. Protecting the rights and interests of immigrants and their descendants, strengthening positive attitude to Ukrainians and Ukrainian state, supporting and developing Ukrainian national identity, spirit, language, culture and heritage of Ukrainians who reside or stay in Portugal were proved to be among the main tasks of their creation. The associations of Ukrainians were said to contribute to non-formal education of Ukrainian children as Saturday schools founded by these organizations provide organized educational activity outside the established formal system. The article is based on the mixed research conducted at Ukrainian Saturday school to find out the possible achievements in the process of Ukrainian language acquisition among Ukrainian students in Portugal. The presented results show that the children have profit from functioning such public associations as they have the opportunity to overcome the feelings of rejection to tuition given outside the standard curriculum and school hours, to be motivated to study native language and develop their knowledge by means of mother tongue, to preserve their identity and language in the society of the host country.*

*Key words: migrant association, children with migrant background, host country, integration, language education, native language, identity, mother tongue tuition, non-formal education.*

**Introduction**

Ukrainians are a relatively recent wave of economic immigrants in Portugal who started to arrive 20–25 years ago. Firstly, highly educated professionals came there as they were seeking opportunities to realize their potential in the chosen country. Social and political processes in Ukraine related with the development of young independent state, difficult economic situation largely contributed to mass migration of Ukrainians to this country. Although most of them entered Portugal on short-term tourist visas and illegally overstayed, they benefited from the campaign



for the regularisation of undocumented labour migrants that took place in Portugal in 2001. Subsequently, children were brought to Portugal under the family reunification law [8, p. 15]. By 2016, Ukrainians had formed one of the largest immigrant communities in the country with 35,779 members (the first are only Brazilians) [15]. The social structure of the Ukrainian community in Portugal is represented by peasants, workers, engineers, doctors, musicians, former military officers, teachers [5] etc.

The article is based on the review of works by Ukrainian and Portuguese as well as foreign authors. Two specific flows in Portugal – postdecolonisation immigration (mid 1970s onwards) from the former Portuguese African colonies, and more recent flows of Brazilian immigrants and Eastern European (initiating in the late 1990s) – were characterized by João Sardinha [16]. The influence of migrant flows from Ukraine on Portugal society is outlined in the works of A. Esteves [9], S. Pereira, T Sivak [17], M. L. Fonseca and others. The approaches to education of migrant children, their social and educational identities were the object of the research in the articles of A. Tereshchenko and H. C. Araújo [19, 20]. Some peculiarities of social self-definition by ethnical national group of the present-day Ukrainian labour migrants in the EU were investigated by I. Markov [3], O. Godovanska [2] and others. The issues connected with language education and native language acquisition by migrants are presented in several recent papers: Modelling linguistic diversity at school: the excluding impact of inclusive multilingualism by J. Jaspers [11], The effect of speaking a minority language at home on foreign language learning by J. T. Maluch [13], Early education for dual language learners: promoting school readiness and early school success by L. M. Espinosa [7], Visualizing intercultural literacy: engaging critically with diversity and migration in the classroom through an image-based approach by E. Arizpe [6], Language support for youth with a migrant background: policies that effectively promote inclusion by H. Siarova and M. À. Essomba [12] etc.

The *research objectives of this article* are to track the role of migrant associations in children's language education and find out the possible achievements in the process of Ukrainian language acquisition among Ukrainian students in Portugal.

The majority of research works contributing to understanding language education concentrate on learning or teaching the language of the host country, i.e. «language education refers to the process and practice of acquiring a second or foreign language» [14, p. 266]. The author of the article assume language education of migrants as the process of learning language of host country and other foreign languages as well as mastering the language of the country of origin. It can be presented as the complex of activities realized at three levels: formal, non-formal and informal.

The European Union recognizes the proficiency in language of origin to be of great importance for immigrant pupils [10, p. 15]. Proficiency can make it easier for these pupils to learn the language of instruction and thus stimulate their development in all areas. In addition, the manner in which their mother tongue is viewed in the host community helps secure the self-esteem and identity of immigrant children and their families.

In most European countries, educational support measures exist to enable immigrant pupils to learn their mother tongue. Such EU countries as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden have already issued



regulations or recommendations on the school-based provision of mother tongue tuition for immigrant pupils, others (Estonia, France, Slovenia) have recently taken steps to enable the range of foreign languages taught to correspond more closely to the mother tongues of immigrant pupils [10, pp. 19–20].

In Portugal mother tongue tuition is usually offered outside the state school framework and the Ukrainian language education is organised and funded by voluntary and private initiatives, one of which is migrant communities themselves. Initially they are created to provide integrative and supportive environment for new arrivals, allowing new migrants to enter into ready-made social networks on their arrival in Portugal. They also served as friendship networks within which migrants spent much of their time, and also received support for personal, family and other problems [16, p. 61]. The members are encouraged to show pride in their culture by expressing, promoting, and preserving their traditional songs, dances, clothes, food as well as language.

In Portugal the number of immigrant associations working as information or welfare providers has grown in recent years. The activity of migrant associations contribute to non-formal education of Ukrainian children as provide organized educational activity outside the established formal system that are intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives [18].

Nowadays there are six public organizations of Ukrainian migrants here: Association of Ukrainians in Portugal, Association of Ukrainians in Algarve, Association of Ukrainians «Sobor (Cathedral)», Association «Christian Movement of Ukrainians in Portugal», Association «Dzerelo Svit (Spring of the World)», Association of Culture and Social Solidarity «Ukrainskyi Dim (Ukrainian House)». Among all these non-profit public organizations Association of Ukrainians in Portugal is considered to be of national importance as it combines the biggest number of members [1]. The Association was established on a voluntary basis in June 2003 and registered by the Ministry of Justice of Portugal in 2003. It is a non-governmental organization and operates in strict compliance with its Statute, the Portuguese Law and the International Declaration of Human Rights. Besides, it is a full member of the World Congress of Ukrainian, European Congress of Ukrainians, Ukrainian World Coordinating Council, and Portuguese High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue. Protecting the rights and interests of immigrants and their descendants, strengthening positive attitude to Ukrainians and Ukrainian state, supporting and developing Ukrainian national identity, spirit, language, culture and heritage of Ukrainians who reside or stay in Portugal are among the main tasks of its creation.

Throughout Portugal, including the island of Madeira, the Association members founded 14 Ukrainian centres in such cities as Abrantes, Agueda, Braga, Caldas da Rainha, Funchal, Lagos, Leiria, Lisboa, Marinha Grande, Santarem, Santiago do Cacem, Vila Nova de Gaia, Viseu. The purpose for their functioning is defined in the Association Statute: to facilitate Ukrainians integration into Portuguese society and the labour market; to improve the living conditions of Ukrainian migrants and their children; to prevent all forms of ethnic discrimination, to exchanging cultural, social and economic information between Ukraine and Portugal; to provide all necessary resources to clarify the Portuguese legislation among Ukrainians; to realize social



and cooperative projects to contribute to the preservation of the Ukrainian culture, traditions and language [1].

To realize the rights of the Ukrainian citizens living abroad to obtain secondary education several Saturday educational institutions have been opened since 2005: Ukrainian cultural and educational centres «Dyvosvit (Marvellous World)» in Lisbon, «Soniashnyk (Sunflower)» in Agueda, «Veselka (Rainbow)» in Santarem, «Prosvita (Education)» in Funchal, others in Lagos and Caldas da Rainha; Centres for children and youth «Sonechko (Sun)» in Leiria, «Barvinok (Periwinkle)» in Vila Nova de Gaia. The Ukrainian cultural and educational centre «Dyvosvit (Marvellous World)» in Lisbon has now the biggest Ukrainian Saturday school in Portugal including about 20 teachers and 187 students [4]. The school program consists of such subjects as Ukrainian Language and Literature, History, Geography, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, English Language and is designed for children from 5 to 17 years. The system of educational and extracurricular work is aimed at the Ukrainian educational environment. The great achievement of the school is that the children are also admitted to International Ukrainian School founded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on the base of the Centre and as the result they have the opportunity to get a national certificate of secondary education and continue their further studying in the higher educational institutions of Ukraine.

As the analysis of the school web-pages illustrate the main purpose of such educational centres abroad is to preserve the national identity of newly coming children and promote Ukrainian culture for those who are born in Portugal. The Ukrainian language is one of the means to form own language world as well as to get the information about Ukraine from the original sources.

This article presents the research study conducted within Ukrainian Saturday school located in Vila Nova de Gaiato find out the possible achievements in the process of Ukrainian language acquisition among Ukrainian students. The information was collected through school visits, document analysing, informal interviews with teachers, observations of school life and proving questionnaire for pupils.

The study was centred on one mixed class of 12 children (10 girls and two boys) at the ages of 9–12 years who are the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of migrants as all of them were born in Portugal. Language education for them begins in their families (where they speak the Ukrainian language) and continues at the institutions of formal education (where they start to master the Portuguese language). These children are admitted to the classes together with Portuguese students and must adapt quickly to new environment where the main language for communication is Portuguese.

Consequently, the first part of the questions was constructed to display the sense of belonging to the host country for such children. The survey shows that when communicating with their friends (even Ukrainian ones) the student usually use the Portuguese language. Reflecting on the difficulties in learning the Portuguese language 74.7% of respondents agreed that it is not difficult for studying (comparing with the Ukrainian language), and only some children should attend additional classes or study with parents at home to master the language better. The fact that these children have a good command of the Portuguese language can be proved by their participation in afterschool activities together with their Portuguese peers.



At Saturday schools native language education is realized through learning such subjects as Ukrainian language and literature, Ukrainian culture and history, singing and dancing. All the teachers are the native speakers and the subjects are taught by their mother tongue. The school day usually consists of 4 lessons and some extracurricular activities as the children are always engaged in organizing events connected with Ukrainian culture and traditions (e.g. celebrating St. Nicolas Day, singing Christmas carols, dancing Ukrainian traditional dances etc.). As a result the children are involved in the Ukrainian speaking environment the whole day at least once a week. The results of such work can be seen through the answers of the pupils. Consequently, the main aim of the second group of questions was to investigate the level of importance of native language education for such pupils. Most respondents (83%) study material in Ukrainian with pleasure as this broadens their knowledge in other subjects, and only 17% state it difficult to do, at the same time all the responses give the evidence that the children spend less than two hours a week to develop their knowledge in Ukrainian individually. Children learn the peculiarities of the Ukrainian syntax, vocabulary and phraseology at the formal lessons and then can demonstrate their knowledge by reciting Ukrainian poems and singing Ukrainian songs at the concerts and events organized by the Centre. The fact that all the questions for them to answer were written in Ukrainian gives good evidence that they understand the language of their community at satisfactory level. The children are well-informed about Ukrainian political historical issues, easily name their favourite Ukrainian fairy-tales and dishes. Attention can be drawn to the fact that 91.5% of respondents express their willingness to continue to master the Ukrainian language independently and see it as an important language for developing their identity, and only 8.5% have never thought about it.

Although migrant integration is a task by individual migrants, increasingly, the role of migrant associations is becoming important. They are functioning not only for the legal, economic assistance and the protection of migrant workers' rights but also to provide cultural, educational and informative activities. To preserve their identity and language the Ukrainian migrant children have several options to be involved in. Together with family, church and self-study they can have profit from functioning public associations of migrants. Organization and development of such public structures, their regular activities are the most effective way of forming Ukrainian diaspora community abroad.

As the results of the research implies, in Portugal native language education of the Ukrainian children is usually provided at non-formal level and depends on voluntary and private initiatives, the resources of associations, support of central and local authorities. The migrant associations contribute to this process by helping Ukrainian children to overcome the feelings of rejection to tuition given outside the standard curriculum and school hours, increasing the motivation in studying native language and developing their knowledge by means of mother tongue, maintaining Ukrainian cultural identity and passing it on to future generations.

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