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## PROBLEMS OF STUDYING UKRAINIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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**Key words:** *Ukrainian language, verbal factors, paraverbal factors, nonverbal factors, foreign students*

**Abstract.** *This research is done to identify, which factors cause most difficulties in studying Ukrainian language for foreign students. It has been found out that nonverbal and paraverbal factors are the most difficult for understanding and learning. That it is why it is not enough to learn only words and grammar to study Ukrainian language. Social and cultural education of foreigners seems to be also very important, as it helps to adapt theoretical knowledge and to upgrade their communicative competence. That's why studying Ukrainian culture, history and mentality should be included into educational program of foreign students.*

### Background

According to the modern requirements, medical universities of Ukraine teach their foreign students predominantly in English, as it is an official language in scientific world [7]. However, communication with patients, as well as everyday communication, can't be carried out in English, because the vast majority of ordinary Ukrainian citizens don't speak it. Therefore, mastering spoken Ukrainian is a significant problem for foreign students [5]. Several factors are playing role here. One of the main - is the lack of standardized curricula and textbooks and a small number of academic hours in the curriculum devoted to studying Ukrainian language [4]. Besides, more attention is paid to the teaching of the official, but not spoken Ukrainian language during classes [6].

There are more substantial reasons why foreign students have problems when studying Ukrainian: 1. Children tend to learn language much easily, than adults, but most foreign students arrive to us after the age of 18+, so it seems quite difficult for them to learn instantly [1]; 2. Language becomes much easier to learn, when a person speaks it frequently. As for local students - they we speak Ukrainian at home, in school, at кафі, in bars, with friends, while it is quite opposite for foreign students – their time for speaking Ukrainian is minimal - 2 hours at class and a little time in shops; 3. Few Ukrainian words just coincide in such a way that it makes confusion for a foreigner to use them, for example: a) Одужати (get well) - одружитися (get married); b) Деруни (food) - дурень (slang) [1, 4]; 4. The mentality of going back to their natives after 5-6 years makes the adaptation to Ukrainian language even more difficult; 5. Ukrainian grammar is very difficult as compared with English [4, 5]; 6. Ukrainian is the 9<sup>th</sup> most difficult language to learn [4-6].

As more and more foreign students enter to our University, it is important to find out the way to help them in learning Ukrainian.

### Goal

The aim of our research is to identify, which factors cause most difficulties in studying Ukrainian language for foreign students.

### Materials and methods

In the design of our research we used questionnaire with 7 most important factors, such as: 1) Verbal factors (learning words, pronunciation); 2) Nonverbal factors (gestures, mimics, facial expressions); 3) Paraverbal factors (intonation, rhythm, expressiveness); 4) Grammar (times, words ending); 5) Word order in the sentence; 6) Alphabet (Cyrillic); 7) Large number of specific words.

The responders where asked to evaluate each of these factors in 4-points scale, meaning 4 points - "Very Difficult", 3 points - "Difficult", 2 points - "Light Difficulties", 1 point - "Easy". In the passport part of the questionnaire we included information about gender, nationality, course of studying and age of responders. Total number of interweaved students was 138. Among them: 20 I<sup>st</sup> year students, 26 II<sup>nd</sup> year students, 27 III<sup>rd</sup> year students, 21 IV<sup>th</sup> year students, 23 V<sup>th</sup> year students and 21 VI<sup>th</sup> year students; 46 women and 92 men; 52 Africans and 86 Indians; average age was 23±5,5 years. The interviewing was anonymous. Summarising the total score we could indicate 4 groups of difficulties: 1) 28-22 points – very difficult; 2) 22-16 points – difficult; 3) 16-10 points – normal; 4) 10-0 points – easy.

Received data where analysed statistically by means of computer programme "STATISTICA.6".

### Results

As it was expected, the most difficulties experienced the I<sup>st</sup> year students (100%).

39,8% of responders experienced moderate difficulties in studying Ukrainian, 34,8% – found it

very difficult and only 24,6 % considered it normal. This percentage tightly correlates with nationality ( $r=0,675$ ) ( $p<0,05$ ), and it occurred, that Indian students cope with studying Ukrainian much easier than other nationalities – 74,4% of Indian responders belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> group of difficulty and only 4,6% - to the 1<sup>st</sup> one. This phenomenon could be explained with Sanskrit origin of Ukrainian language (as well as the most part of Indian languages), there are many evidences of it: the word “булава” is composed of two ancient Sanskrit basis’s — *bola* (strength, power, army) and *van* (possess, perceive something to be the owner) [2]. Words “гетьман”, “отаман” are also composed of two parts: *atha* — someone ahead, *man* — to know, to think, to believe, *hetu* — active, influential, weapons, push, shot. Unexpected value in Sanskrit has the word “*cih*”. It means “to study, to learn, to create something, to be obedient to charity, knowledge, learning skills [2].

It is interesting, that boys of all nationalities are tend to learn Ukrainian easier, than girls.

We couldn’t reveal some correlation between responder’s age and their ability to learn Ukrainian, because almost all of them where above 20 years old, and there was no big age difference in them.

The result of analysis of the most important factors, making Ukrainian difficult for studying, became a great surprise for us. It is strangely, but Cyrillic alphabet was not the most difficult factor for students of foreign countries, as we could expect – only 10% of responders evaluated it with 4 points.

It is also very interesting, that 84,8% (!) responders considered nonverbal and paraverbal factors as most difficult for understanding and learning. We can’t explain this factor anyhow, moreover, we would like to continue our research in this direction. It is needed to clarify, what better helps people to communicate – verbal or paraverbal factors. May be, we overestimate the importance of words in understanding each other.

The second most difficult factor in studying Ukrainian was, of course, grammar (64,5% responders) and a lot of specific words (42,8%). Verbal factors and word order in the sentence were coming next (34,8%).

### Conclusions

The result of this research found out, that it is not enough to learn only words and grammar to study Ukrainian language. Social and cultural education of foreigners seems also to be very important, as it helps to adapt theoretical knowledge and to upgrade their communicative competence. That’s why studying Ukrainian culture, history and mentality should be included into educational program of international students.

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### ПРОБЛЕМИ ВИВЧЕННЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ

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**Резюме.** Дане дослідження присвячене визначенню основних факторів, які є найважчими для іноземних студентів при вивченні української мови. Отримані дані свідчать, що невербальні та паравербальні фактори є одними із найважливіших для розуміння та запам’ятовування. Тому, крім вивчення слів та граматики, доцільно включати питання української культури та історії у програму підготовки іноземних студентів. Соціо-культурне спрямування освіти іноземців допоможе адаптувати їхні теоретичні знання до реальності та покращити розмовні навички.

**Ключові слова:** українська мова, вербальні фактори, паравербальні фактори, невербальні фактори, іноземні студенти.

### ПРОБЛЕМЫ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ УКРАИНСКОГО ЯЗЫКА КАК ИНОСТРАННОГО

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**Резюме.** Данное исследование посвящено определению основных факторов, которые являются самыми трудными для иностранных студентов при изучении украинского языка. Полученные данные свидетельствуют о том, что невербальные и паравербальные факторы являются одними из самых трудных для понимания и запоминания. Поэтому, кроме изучения слов и грамматики, целесообразно включать вопросы украинской культуры и истории в программу подготовки иностранных студентов. Социо-культурное направление образования иностранцев поможет адаптировать их теоретические знания к реальности и улучшит их разговорные навыки.

**Ключевые слова:** украинский язык, вербальные факторы, паравербальные факторы, невербальные факторы, иностранные студенты

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