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## Multiple Impact of International Cooperation in the Language Education of Children in Ukraine after 1991

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**Abstract:** The article analyses the issue of international partnerships in plurilingual language education as a prerequisite for creating common grounds for productive communication in a pan-European area, of which Ukraine is a part. In this context, the past and present day practices in teaching and learning foreign languages in Ukraine have been described. The historical retrospection in the regular practice of language school education in the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries proves that, although plurilingualism was a constant trend of the individual existence of a multilingual and multicultural setting of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, it has never really been valued as a factor of personal, academic or professional development of an individual and the society as a whole. The new social and individual perspectives that opened up in Ukraine after independence in August 1991 inspired the demand for real-life communicative skills in foreign languages. The key intention of the paper is to show how significantly foreign language education has been facilitated by the initiation of active cooperation with Western educational and cultural institutions. The narration ends with conclusions that stress the necessity of reciprocal efforts on the part of Ukraine and her partners in order to obtain a synergetic effect of their collaboration.

**Key words:** language education, foreign languages, multilingual setting, plurilingualism, intercultural competence, international partnership.

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## Introduction

From a global social perspective, efficient language education is perceived today as a valuable tool of facilitating communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to support their mutual understanding and cooperation in creating a friendly social environment to live in.

The ability to communicate efficiently in a multilingual setting and for intercultural understanding has become a key competence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It frames both the content and the form of contemporary language education.

In a modern multilingual world, for communication to work, it is important to promote individual plurilingualism as an individual person's skill and experience through creating possibilities for the learning of other languages. As many authors emphasize (Little, 2007; Figueras, 2012; Hulstijn, 2014), the idea of diversifying and intensifying language learning has become the overall aim of the present Council of Europe language policy. Moreover, it is relevant not only for the member-states of the European Union but in a pan-European context, too.

This idea builds on the assumption of the synergetic correlation of languages that form a person's language repertoire. It is stressed in the conceptual policy-mediating document of the Council of Europe "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (CEFR) that an individual with a plurilingual repertoire "does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). It means that in situations of communication with speakers of other languages, a person should be able to use different parts of their communicative competence to deliver his/her message effectively to a particular interlocutor. He/she is supposed to employ the whole of their linguistic equipment, and to use different communicative strategies: switching from one language to another, appealing to words from a common international store, simplifying the language,

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paraphrasing what s/he wants to say, “foreignising” words from their first language, using mime, gesture or facial expression, etc.

Thus, the outcome of language education is no longer seen in today’s world as simply achieving a mastery in one or two, or even more languages, each kept in isolation. Instead, the synergetic cumulative effect of a plurilingual frame of mind of the speaker acquainted with more than one language and culture leads to the appearance of new attitudes, skills, abilities. Most of them form the language learner’s intercultural competence (Byram, 1997):

- cognitive attitudes, such as interest in discovering other languages and cultures, readiness to explore one’s native language and culture, willingness to compare communicative and cultural practices in one’s own and in other countries;
- different communicative strategies enabling a person to achieve mutual understanding in a cross-cultural interaction;
- ability to use transferable skills in language learning to make another language acquisition easier;
- interpreting skills that would allow a person to elicit significance and connotations in another language discourse;
- skills to identify similar and different features in the processes of verbal and non-verbal interaction in one’s own and other languages;
- ability of critical thinking and evaluation of practices, products, behaviour patterns in one’s own and other cultures and countries.

Since Europe is a multilingual and multicultural area, it faces a challenge of maintaining linguistic diversity together with creating common grounds for productive communication. “European communicative integration” has become the key-concept of the development of a civil society in Europe (Braidbach, 2003). It determines language education policies throughout the European continent. It presupposes an appreciation of plurilingualism, both as an individual competence and as a social value. An additional motivating factor appears to be learning other languages

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in order to be able to participate in a European personal, public, occupational communicative exchange. Learning languages becomes a person's life-long possibility. Achieving competence in several languages (at whatever level it may be) is recognized as an intrinsic component of personal and professional development.

Some authors (Guilherme 2002; Breidbach 2003; Byram 2008) regard plurilingual language education and the choice of the languages as a political action. One of the arguments is that competence in foreign languages gives people who inhabit the European continent the "opportunity and ability to participate in public discourse on the questions of a future Europe" (Breidbach, 2003, p.7). The position taken by the Council of Europe on plurilingual language awareness and education also has a number of political undercurrents (Council of Europe, 2007). It deals with the acceptance of other people's languages as a human right, openness to other communities and cultures, attitudes to minority languages, acceptable balance between the national language and other linguistic varieties, recognition of multilingualism as a state trend, ability of different languages users to interact in all aspects of their lives and live together in democratic citizenship, etc. The integration of the aims of modern language education and citizenship/political education results in appearance of the concept of intercultural citizenship as "the basis for dialogue among groups of different languages and cultures within and across nation-state boundaries" (Byram, 2011, p. 10).

The point made here is that teaching and learning other languages has nowadays become a central educational and social objective that calls for special attention of all those involved in it.

### **Historical retrospection of the language education of children in Ukraine**

A point of departure in this paper for an historical retrospection into the regular practice of teaching foreign languages to schoolchildren in the former Russian empire (which Ukraine was a part of) coincides with

the very beginning of the nineteenth century. In the newly-opened gymnasiums – 4-year general educational institutions of secondary level for boys preparing them to enter a university – foreign languages (Latin, German and French) constituted an extensive part of the curriculum in terms of volume and educational value. Without a knowledge of these languages, future university students would not be able to listen to and understand lectures in academic subjects delivered by professors invited from abroad. The new curriculum (1828) increased the period of schooling to 7 years and introduced the study of the Greek language, which together with Latin was proclaimed as one of the main means of education. Starting with the fourth year of study, gymnasiums were divided into streams: so-called “classical” (with one or two classical languages and two or one modern language correspondingly) and “real” (without classical languages but with obligatory study of two modern languages). The classics (Latin and Greek) were referred to as the major subjects (alongside mathematics) – the most reliable foundation of learning and the best way to raise and strengthen the moral virtues of young men. The learning of Latin started from the first form, and of Greek – from the fourth form. Both languages occupied 34% of the curriculum hours in the period of the 4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> forms. Intensive reading and translation of pieces from the literature and history of antiquity, beginning with legends and fables and then moving to more complicated texts of the most famous authors, provided the learners with cultural values of the ancient world, as well as historical and geographical knowledge. Of the two modern languages, German was taught since the first year of studying, French – from the fourth, the amount of academic hours for these languages in the 4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> forms being equal to 24%.

The new school regulations of the year 1864 introduced the policy of dualism into the school system by dividing all the gymnasiums into classical and real, mostly depending on the languages studied in them. The classical syllabus of gymnasiums reproduced the previous correlation of classical and modern languages, changes touched only the beginning year of studying this or that language. From their first day at school at the age of ten or eleven, boys started to learn four languages – Latin and

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one or two modern languages, Greek appeared in the third. The ratio of academic hours for foreign languages grew to 42% of the whole amount of the classical gymnasium curriculum. In real gymnasiums, only modern languages (French and German) were taught, both starting in the first year of schooling and comprising 25% of the real gymnasium curriculum. The prestige of the classical languages was raised so high that only leavers of the classical gymnasiums were granted the right to enter university. The study of modern languages in real gymnasiums was linked with the concept of preparation for life and was the basis for the direct inclusion of their leavers in practice or for further professional education.

From this time onwards, the emphasis on classics as the fundamental component of good and prestigious education as well as decent preparation for reliable citizenship was only growing. Their role exceeded even the role of the Russian language because the initial skills in Latin and the knowledge of Latin grammar were considered fundamental for studying other foreign languages. The so-called "school counter-reform" of 1871 stated that special care should be taken to ensure the greatest possible success in teaching ancient languages as the main subject of the gymnasium through which students mostly developed and matured for independent study of science. A revealing fact is that the number of school hours for learning Russian was much less than the time allotted for the study of any of the classical languages: 24 weekly hours for the whole school course of Russian as compared to 49 hours of Latin and 36 hours of Greek. The prioritised status of ancient languages in school education was confirmed, in addition to the relevant curriculum, also by a gradually growing tradition of appointing teachers of Latin and Greek to the most authoritative and influential positions of school directors, supervisors and mentors.

The worst side of it was that learning classics ceased to introduce pupils to the world of cultural achievements of antiquity. Instead, they were required to study grammar by heart and used to get bogged down in endless translations from Greek into Latin and back again. The educational idea behind it was to provide learners' brains with good exercise. No practical use besides translations and question-and-answer sets was

presupposed. Plurilingualism of this kind did not bring many positive results. In fact, very few children succeeded in this ordeal and, more often, they became demotivated to study languages and hated them.

A little light began to emerge at the end of the tunnel in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the rapid development of industries, production technologies, business and trade opened new perspectives in practical use of foreign languages. A drastic change occurred in the hierarchy of foreign languages in the school curriculum in favour of modern languages and their practical use. The Ministry of Education of the Russian Empire was forced to recognize the excessive overload of the system of classical education with ancient languages and incorrect methodology of their teaching because of what the goals of classical education were not achieved, despite the considerable number of academic hours. The Greek language was excluded from the curriculum, and in the teaching of Latin, grammar exercises gave way to reading and commenting on literary pieces. The introduction of direct methods in the teaching of modern languages made them more focused on oral use and more culturally oriented. Although learning languages for communication and use in the world outside education was not realized, the mechanism of treating foreign languages as a key to other worlds and cultures, not ancient as previously but modern, was reactivated. The demand for languages for commerce called for the introduction of the English language into curriculums of some types of schools, particularly gymnasiums for girls (which started to open in 1856) and commercial schools (which started to grow in 1890s).

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd and the following period of the struggle for independence in ethnically non-Russian parts of the Empire resulted in the creation of the Soviet state and radical educational paradigm shift. The Soviet government has set its efforts to building a mass labor school, which had to be radically different from the old pre-revolutionary school. Gymnasiums as a form of educational institution were closed. The attitude towards language education changed completely. The centuries-old tradition of learning and using foreign languages turned these languages in the eyes of the poorer people into



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a sign of belonging to the privileged strata of the society. That is why when state power passed into the hands of the proletariat and the peasantry, the classical languages were absolutely excluded from the school curriculum, and modern languages ceased to be a compulsory academic subject.

For a short time period (1923–1938) the priority in the linguistic education of schoolchildren was given to the many languages of national minorities in the territory of the Soviet state. For the political reason of winning the sympathy and support of national minorities, the Soviet authorities declared the so-called “policy of indigenization” to assist the development of the cultures and languages of all nationalities inhabiting the country. In line with this policy, schools teaching national languages and using them as the language of instruction began to open. The use of languages of big and small ethnic minorities in formal and informal communication, newspapers and radio broadcasting, literature and art, cultural and sports events was promoted. In fact, multilingualism was proclaimed the state policy and individual plurilingualism had possibilities to develop. In Ukraine, for example, speaking three languages – Ukrainian, Russian and the language of some minority – was quite natural; all three languages were taught at schools. A more detailed look at the real implementation of this policy is not so bright, however. It was carried out very formally, sometimes with ostentatious exaggeration, without proper provision of educational materials and without taking into account the real prospects of using national languages in further professional education and activities. However, such a situation did not last long. In April 1938 the Communist Party of Bolsheviks adopted a resolution “On the reorganization of schools in Ukraine”, in which schools with instruction in the languages of national minorities were defined as “plantation” of “bourgeois-nationalist influence on children” and their operation was considered “unnecessary and harmful” (Yefimenko, 2001). Pupils were transferred to schools with Ukrainian and Russian languages of instruction. The work on the reorganization of national schools in Ukraine and other republics of the USSR was carried out hastily and was planned to end by August 1938.



Meanwhile, some changes were happening in the sphere of modern languages education in the Soviet state. They were forced by the project to industrialise the country and make use of the western technical achievements. The need for people with knowledge of foreign languages and communicative skills in oral speech and reading technical literature was growing. It became necessary to change the public attitude to foreign languages, to strengthen their authority and position in the entire system of public education, to attract young people to the study of foreign languages. The whole-country campaign under the slogan "Foreign languages – to the masses" was launched in 1927. It started with different forms of teaching languages to adults and reached the level of school education in 1932 when the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party "On educational programs in primary and secondary schools" was adopted through which a foreign language was assigned again to the list of compulsory educational subjects.

The typical features of the next period of the foreign language school education in the Soviet Union were its closed character, absolute absence of exposure and possibilities to use the languages for communication with native speakers of these languages, receptive and reproductive mode of teaching languages, denial of the necessity to teach oral communication, isolation from authentic teaching materials, rejection of the necessity to teach the target languages cultures for ideological reasons. Teaching other cultures was replaced by patriotic and politics-focused texts about the Soviet realia, Communist Party leaders and policy, advantages and values of the Soviet lifestyle. The constant shortage of teachers and self-isolation of the country from the outer world led to the fact that a broad mass study of foreign languages was hampered.

The conclusions made after World War II proved that the system of studying foreign languages in the Soviet Union required major changes. Some absolutely new measures were taken in 1947: the network of pedagogical institutions for training foreign language teachers has been expanded; Spanish language teaching has been introduced; the role of English has increased; the following ratio of languages studied in urban schools has been established: 45% of schools with English language

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training, 25% with German, 20% – French, 10% – Spanish. For the first time, schools opened with the teaching of a number of subjects in foreign languages. By the end of the 1950s, the culture-study materials about the countries of the target languages has gradually started to return into the languages syllabus.

In the 1960s–1970s, the social order for the practical skills of using foreign languages increased together with the growing of international contacts. Measures were taken to create favorable conditions for the development of oral speech. For instance, school classes with more than 25 pupils began to be divided into two groups for the study of a foreign language. Domestic complexes of educational and audio-visual aids with intention to teach communicative skills began to be created. It was planned to create a unified system for teaching foreign languages from kindergarten to post-universities language courses.

The 1980's are well-known for the heated debate over the future prospects of learning foreign languages at school in connection with the general aspiration of the public to democratize and humanize society. However, the Soviet system continued to develop in conditions of confrontation of the group of socialist countries with the rest of the world and almost inaccessible contacts of the Soviet citizens with representatives of other countries and cultures.

The second half of the 80's was an era of so-called "perestroika" marked by great expectations. Foreign languages became academic subjects which were in demand in society. However, although the linguistic repertoire of the Soviet schoolchildren included several languages – Russian as a state language of international communication; the national language of the Soviet republic; one foreign language (English, German, French or Spanish) – the communicative function of the language for interchange with representatives of other countries was carried out in Russian. The Soviet people took it for granted that in case they happened to meet a foreigner inside or outside their country, it would be enough to talk to him in Russian to be understood. Moreover, there were real grounds for such an argument, as soon as Russian was taught at schools in all the countries belonging to the "socialist camp".

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To conclude the historical overview of the languages education on the territory of the former Soviet Union, it is necessary to stress that although plurilingualism has been a constant trend of the individual existence in this multilingual and multicultural country, it has never been really valued as a factor of personal, academic or professional development of an individual and the society as a whole.

### **Synergetic results of international cooperation in language education in Ukraine after 1991**

As the reforms and the transition to market economies began in Ukraine after gaining independence in August 1991, political, cultural, trading and other relationships began to develop on face-to-face basis, resulting in a boom in travel abroad for study, work and leisure, closer communication with the world of business, commerce, finance, public administration, etc. Exercising a release from the constraints of the past communist regime, Ukraine started to establish contacts with cultural organizations and funds abroad. All of these inspired the demand for foreign languages communicative skills.

Besides, in the situation of making a choice among the means of communication with the world, the decision was in favour of foreign languages. The previous role of Russian as a major language of international interchange was rejected to a greater degree because of the negative association of this language with the Soviet past and the artificially enforced domination of the language over native languages of other ethnic groups in the USSR. Thus, other world languages, particularly English, were welcomed as a counterbalance for the former negative experience with the Russian language.

Learning foreign languages in Ukraine was significantly facilitated by the initiation of active cooperation with Western educational and cultural institutions in the field of target language education. Different forms of collaboration were launched: opening of language resource centres; introduction of authentic language textbooks and instruction materials;

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initiation of language courses and summer language camps; promotion of information on the best teaching methods; exchange of secondary school and university students and language teachers; training programmes and internships; establishment of teacher-to-teacher links, etc.

The biggest of the organizations that have developed close partnership in Ukraine should be mentioned.

The first *British Council* office opened in Kyiv in 1992 as a result of the state agreement between the United Kingdom and Ukraine on cultural, educational and scientific co-operation. In 1993–1995 the British Council opened English Language Resource Centres in Lviv, Odessa, Kharkiv and Donetsk (in this order), offering access to the latest collections of books, videos and audio materials from the UK and to new communicative approaches of teaching English language. The first partnership relations with local educational institutions (schools and universities), and with younger audiences (pre-school kids) were developed by bringing experts in education and language teaching from the UK to them and by giving a possibility of professional internships in the British universities. Gradually, the British Council increased the audiences of English language teachers and students to the whole of Ukraine, by offering them access to English language methodology seminars, workshops, language learning and teaching materials, conferences and round tables. They provided language courses and exams services to wider audiences to support the language learning process. In 2006, the British Council started collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Ukraine on the development of English for Specific Purposes curriculum and national curriculum for the teachers' re-training courses. The British Council also influenced the improvement of English language teachers' professional skills and development of National qualifications framework. The English Language Resource Centres started teaching English to very young learners and corporate clients. More than 700 civil servants in Ukraine went through the English language courses offered to them.

More than 2,750 *United States Peace Corps* volunteers have served in Ukraine since the programme was established in 1992. Currently, there are 210 of them. Among other projects, Peace Corps volunteers concentrated

on teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) project in big and small towns and villages side by side with Ukrainian colleagues for two years sharing experiences and developing citizenship skills of critical thinking, leadership, cultural diversity that will support them in succeeding both in further education and in a future career. Volunteers teach English in secondary schools, universities and pedagogical colleges. They also help in teacher training at the In-Service Teacher Training Institutes bringing modern resources and methodologies to the Ukrainian educational system and fostering teacher-to-teacher links to promote the exchange of information on the best teaching methods. Volunteers also promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of Ukrainians and Ukrainians on the part of Americans.

In March 2002, the Public Affairs Section of *the U.S. Embassy* in Kyiv opened the Regional English Language Office to offer assistance and support to English language professionals in Ukraine, Armenia Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova, and to enhance mutual understanding between these countries and the United States of America. The Public Affairs Section provides in Ukraine a wide-ranging programme of academic and professional exchanges funded by the U.S. Department of State. These include the Fulbright Program and the International Visitor Program, as well as various exchange programs for students, teachers, university lecturers and younger professionals in a variety of fields. In addition, the Public Affairs Section supports 29 'Window on America' Centres, designed to provide up-to-date information on the United States to the public and to supply the English-language collections of books and periodicals to the host libraries. Educational advisers at Educational Advising and «Osvita» Centres throughout Ukraine conduct individual and group consultations. Besides, the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, through the Public Affairs Section, administers and funds specific assistance projects among which is the Pedagogical Innovations programme, which includes language education as well.

Under the authority of the French Embassy in Ukraine, *the French Institute of Ukraine* (*l'Institut Français d'Ukraine, IFU*) in Kyiv was established in 1994 based on an intergovernmental agreement. The IFU's mission is

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to ensure the promotion of French language and culture and to implement cooperation with the people of the cultural and artistic world in Ukraine. The activities of the IFU include French courses in a very comprehensive offer (children-adolescents-adults, intensive courses, specialized courses, courses for companies, etc.) that are aimed at a very large public. Different certifications (Delf, Dalp, TEF, TEFAQ etc.) are proposed by the IFU in order to give the possibility to each one to validate certain levels of knowledge of the French language. There is also a library that contains French-language books available to the public. Within the multimedia library, a special area is devoted to children. It is a unique space in Ukraine that aims to highlight the trends, places and events that are current in France. The cultural events present to the public and the Ukrainian professionals contemporary French art in its most varied forms: cinema, performing arts, visual arts, literature and debate of ideas.

The *Goethe-Institute Ukraine* started its activity in Kyiv in 1996. It provides information on current aspects of cultural, social and political life in Germany, offers extensive book and media stock as well as targeted information services for all who are interested in Germany or want to learn or teach German. It promotes the knowledge of the German language abroad and cultivates international cultural cooperation. The Goethe-Institute has opened the network of Goethe Centres, Cultural Organizations, Reading Rooms, and Language Centres in Ukraine. As part of the promotion of the German language in Ukraine, they offer seminars and a wide range of services for Ukrainian teachers of German. In cooperation with Ukrainian partners, they support national and European projects for the promotion of foreign languages. Within 9 educational centres and 4 reading rooms, the Goethe-Institute offers various differentiated language course programmes: general-language courses at A1–C2 levels for adult learners; courses for young learners between 8 and 15 years; preparatory courses for examinations in the German language; courses with special focus, for specific target groups or for training individual skills. The translation of German authors into Ukrainian is also encouraged. The German minority in Ukraine is promoted linguistically and culturally.



In connection with the language and cultural needs of various national minorities (Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, Greek, Bulgarian, etc.) that inhabit Ukraine, it is possible to say that they are promoted rather on a local than on the all-Ukrainian level through cultural centres (e.g. Dom Polski), language courses or different amateur groups.

Overall, we can observe the strengthening of partnerships in educational and cultural aspects of teaching and learning languages in Ukraine. Moreover, today it is obvious that this partnership has achieved not arithmetic but synergetic effect. If several people work together, and they care only about their own activity, then this group of people can hardly be called a synergy. This was the situation at the start of establishing ties with international organizations in the sphere of language education in my country. In contrast, if several people adjust their efforts, depending on the actions of others, or on how well the overall goal is achieved, then they do form a synergy. Today's collaboration of all the participants – Ukrainian and foreign organizations, official representatives and volunteers, students and teachers, teachers and teacher trainers – clearly and noticeably demonstrates features of synergy and enhances their capacity to achieve goals.

The effects of such synergetic partnership are manifold.

Primarily, it has opened the door to the wind of change in world-views, educational priorities, and cultural experiences of Ukrainians. Both teachers and language learners were exposed to much broader face-to-face and books-mediated contacts with experts and representatives of other languages and cultures. In turn, our partners and visitors, users of other languages, can develop a deeper awareness of Ukraine, its culture, historical challenges and achievements. The backwash effect of this reciprocal exchange is not reduced to a simple arithmetic sum of knowledge of unfamiliar phenomena and cultural practices but leads to a revision of attitudes and breakdown of stereotypes.

From the perspective of a very general view, the approach adopted in the last two decades towards language use and language learning has become action-oriented and competence-based. In its completed form, it was presented to the Ukrainian public through the Common European



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Framework of Reference for Languages in 2001. Its description in terms of competences and specification of learning objectives through descriptor scales provided comprehensive guidelines for the reform and development of language education as a life-long practice. In Ukraine, the competence-based approach caused a huge wave of scientific research and discussion. Today, it is used in different contexts and subject areas. In the field of language learning, it draws attention to a much broader range of abilities that language users need to be successful in communication. This view of language learning makes it more distinct for teachers that it is not a matter of a proper use of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar only. The awareness of other abilities of the language learners is reinforced. These are pragmatic abilities to organize, structure and arrange the message to produce the expected communicative effect; strategies of communication and learning; knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use; comprehension of the intercultural potential of a foreign language and relations between the learner's culture and the cultures of the target language users; general existential features such as motivations, attitudes, beliefs. This new vision of learning objectives has substantially changed the process of teaching languages in Ukraine in favour of it being more learner-centred, motivating and creative.

Besides, the concept of foreign language acquisition articulated in terms of the intercultural perspective gives prior prominence to the social nature of this process and cultural diversity of the "community of practice" (Young, 2009, p. 146) that uses the language. The focus on cultural difference and diversity that are introduced through the "language and culture learning" approach into the practice of schools highlights the importance of such values as tolerance, respect for otherness, critical thinking for the sake of understanding as vital in upbringing a child. As Byram puts it, "what is important here is the comparative analysis and critique of cultures, both the cultures (in the plural) of the learners and the cultures (in the plural) of speakers of the language being learnt" (Byram, 2013, p. 59). He positions an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other

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cultures and countries as an important component of citizenship education leading to action in the world. We cannot boast of the complete victory of these values so far, but their constant presence in the educational space of the languages learners gives more hope for positive outcomes than their deficiency.

Some changes can also be observed in the content of language teaching materials. Historically, because of ideological and political reasons, there was a decades-long tradition in the former Soviet Union of using exclusively school course-books designed by domestic authors. Today, more and more schools give preference to authentic teaching sets and materials published in the target language countries. It is not the aim of this paper to discuss all the “pros” and “cons” of publishing more country-specific textbooks or employing teaching materials universal for all users. The important thing concerning the effect of availability and variety of authentic teaching materials is that Ukrainian authors start to follow the trend of a multi-cultural view of the world, and include into the content of their textbooks materials not only about the target language culture but also introduce cross-cultural information about other countries of the world. Thus, they prevent the learners from identifying the target language and its use (especially English) exclusively with the country of its origin but, instead, highlight the possibility to make it work as a meaning-mediator for intercultural communication with non-native speakers.

Not of less importance is that the international partnership in language education has fostered the mass practice of early language education in Ukraine for the sake of the naturally motivated language development of a child. Today in Ukraine, bringing very young children into contact with foreign languages is fully recognized as a facilitating factor for faster language learning, the development of skills in mother tongue and better performance in other areas. Early language education in Ukraine is provided as an option for pre-schoolers in kindergartens and at different courses for early development of a child. Since 2012, children who have started compulsory schooling (at the age of 6–7 years) begin studying their first foreign language from the first form and the second foreign language – from the fifth form.

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Finally, the international partnership has radically changed the methodology of teaching and learning foreign languages for the purposes of real communication. Moreover, it has also decisively shuttered the outdated mode of studying the mother tongue in Ukraine as a knowledge-based system, and turned it into a dynamic process of acquiring communicative competences.

### **Conclusions**

It would be correct to end this overview of the synergetic potential of international collaboration in the field of language education in Ukraine by mentioning the possible challenges that accompany this process.

First and foremost, it is worth mentioning that Ukraine, having been a multicultural state since her early history, has a long tradition of plurilingual education and everyday communicative practice. The use of Ukrainian and Russian as first and second languages accompanied by the obligatory study of one or two foreign languages in the period of schooling creates favourable conditions for the successful integration into the European multilingual setting. But to keep in line with the common European objectives and achievement standards in language education, Ukrainian officials should promote a constant and sustainable policy of international partnership. This very simple truth, as recent events show, largely depends on the political preferences of the state power and may undergo quite unexpected changes.

Second, completing common goals depends on how well a partnership functions. In this respect, various aspects of partnership functioning are important: partner participation, partner relationships, staff support, sufficiency and flows of resources, leadership, management, communication, governance, partnership structure, sustainability of the partnership, changes in the community policies and practices, and the external environment.

Of no less importance is the distinguished feature of synergy indicated by Mark Latash that “cooperation among its elements [is] such that

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if one element does too little, another element does more" (Latash, 2008, p. 6). Hence, the Ukrainian participants in international synergetic cooperation should be ready to continue their hard work on sustainable integration into the modern multilingual and multicultural world even in case the resources or enthusiasms of the other element/elements of the partnership happen to stumble.

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