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DO YOU SPEAK DEUTSCH? OR, THE INTERACTION OF LANGUAGES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES IN A MULTILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

The aim of the study is to present the different forms of language interaction in a multilingual learning environment, specifically through the foreign language teaching practices of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education. In Transcarpathia, a western region of Ukraine, multilingualism and multilingual language use have become part of everyday life due to its geographical location and the changes of power in the 20th century. The linguistic diversity of the area, including the co-existence of Hungarian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Polish, Russian and Roma, provides a particularly fertile ground for the study of translanguaging and linguistic transfer and interference.

The empirical basis of the research is based on our own observations of the language use of Hungarian and/or Ukrainian native speakers majoring in English studying German as a second foreign language at the aforementioned higher educational establishment.

Our experience confirmed that in language classes in multilingual contexts, phenomena are often observed where students consciously or spontaneously mobilise multiple linguistic resources in the course of communication. Typical cases of translanguaging, for example in the processes of task comprehension, word search or meaning making, not only testify to the linguistic creativity of learners, but also require flexibility in teaching methods. Positive and negative forms of linguistic transfer (e.g. transfer of similar grammatical structures or phonetic interference) are also common and affect learning outcomes.

Our study shows that multilingualism presents not only challenges but also opportunities in foreign language teaching. The conscious integration of multilingual backgrounds and the pedagogical recognition of translanguaging can contribute to the development of linguistic competence and the enhancement of foreign language confidence. Our study stresses the importance of considering the local context in educational practice.

Keywords: multilingualism, translanguaging, language transfer, interference, foreign language teaching, translanguaging pedagogy, classroom language use.

Ілона Лехнер, Ілона Густі. Ви розмовляєте Deutsch? – Взаємодія мов на заняттях іноземної мови у закладі вищої освіти в багатомовному середовищі.

Метою даного дослідження є аналіз форм мовної взаємодії в умовах багатомовного навчального середовища на прикладі викладання іноземних мов у Закарпатському угорському інституті ім. Ференца Ракоці II. Закарпаття – західний регіон України, для якого характерне мовне розмаїття, зумовленого історичними обставинами та географічним розташуванням. Співіснування угорської, української, румунської, польської, російської та

ромської мов створює унікальне підґрунтя для дослідження явищ транслінгвізму, мовного трансферу та інтерференції.

Емпіричну базу дослідження становлять спостереження за мовною поведінкою здобувачів вищої освіти освітньої програми 014 Середня освіта (Англійська мова та література) першого (бакалаврського) рівня вищої освіти, які вивчають німецьку як другу іноземну мову.

У процесі дослідження виявлено, що в багатомовному контексті студенти у процесі комунікації свідомо або спонтанно активізують різні мовні ресурси. Типові приклади перекладу, зокрема при розумінні завдань, доборі лексики чи створенні висловлювання, свідчать про мовну креативність студентів і потребують гнучкого підходу до процесу викладання. Доведено, що мовний трансфер має як позитивні, так і негативні форми, наприклад, перенесення граматичних структур або фонетична інтерференція є поширеним явищем і суттєво впливають на результати навчання.

Наголошено, що багатомовність створює не лише виклики, а й значні можливості для вдосконалення процесу викладання іноземних мов. Свідомо інтеграція транслінгвального підходу та урахування місцевого мовленнєвого контексту можуть сприяти розвитку мовної компетентності та впевненості студентів у володінні іноземною мовою.

Ключові слова: багатомовність, транслінгвізм, мовний трансфер, інтерференція, викладання іноземних мов, педагогіка транслінгвізму, мововживання студентів у аудиторії.

Ilona Lechner, Ilona Husti. Do you speak Deutsch – Interakcja językowa na zajęciach z języka obcego w instytucji szkolnictwa wyższego w środowisku wielojęzycznym

Streszczenie. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest analiza form interakcji językowych w wielojęzycznym środowisku nauczania na przykładzie nauczania języków obcych w Zakarpacim Instytucie Węgierskim im. Ferencza Rakoczego II. Zakarpacie to zachodni region Ukrainy charakteryzujący się różnorodnością językową ze względu na uwarunkowania historyczne i położenie geograficzne. Współistnienie języków węgierskiego, ukraińskiego, rumuńskiego, polskiego, rosyjskiego i romskiego tworzy wyjątkową podstawę do badania zjawisk translingwistyki, transferu językowego i interferencji.

Empiryczna podstawa badania opiera się na obserwacjach zachowań językowych studentów studiów wyższych w ramach programu edukacyjnego 014 Szkolnictwo średnie (język angielski i literatura) na pierwszym (licencjackim) poziomie szkolnictwa wyższego, którzy uczą się języka niemieckiego jako drugiego języka obcego.

Badanie wykazało, że w wielojęzycznym kontekście uczniowie świadomie lub spontanicznie aktywują różne zasoby językowe w procesie komunikacji. Typowe przykłady tłumaczenia, takie jak rozumienie zadań, wybór słownictwa lub tworzenie wypowiedzi, pokazują kreatywność językową uczniów i wymagają elastycznego podejścia do procesu nauczania. Udowodniono, że transfer językowy ma zarówno pozytywne, jak i negatywne formy, na przykład transfer struktur gramatycznych lub interferencji fonetycznych jest powszechny i znacząco wpływa na wyniki nauczania.

Podkreśla się, że wielojęzyczność stwarza nie tylko wyzwania, ale także znaczące możliwości poprawy procesu nauczania języków obcych. Świadoma integracja podejścia translingwalnego i uwzględnienie lokalnego kontekstu językowego może przyczynić się do rozwoju kompetencji językowych uczniów i ich pewności siebie w posługiwaniu się językiem obcym.

Słowa kluczowe: wielojęzyczność, translingwalność, transfer językowy, interferencja, nauczanie języków obcych, pedagogika translingwalności, używanie języka przez uczniów w klasie.

Formulation of the problem. In a multilingual environment, it is natural for speakers to switch effortlessly between the languages they speak, i.e. to code-switch or translanguaging. It is also common for bilingual or multilingual speakers to have features of each other's language systems at different levels of language in their sentences, so that linguistic transfer and interference can be observed. Transcarpathia, a western region of Ukraine, is an excellent research area for investigating these linguistic phenomena, as several nationalities and linguistic and cultural

communities have lived together in the region for centuries [2]. Despite changes in power, cultural communities have generally coexisted peacefully and continue to do so.

The Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia, numbering approximately 135,000 individuals, resides in a region characterized by its rich linguistic and cultural diversity. This dynamic and ever-changing ethno-linguistic landscape exerts a significant influence not only on everyday communication but also on broader patterns of language use, for example in the educational system [17].

A wide array of languages coexists in Transcarpathia, including Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, German, Romani, Slovak, and Ruthenian. Hungarian is the third most widely spoken minority language in Ukraine, used by about 0.3% of the country's population. Notably, 98.2% of all Hungarian speakers in Ukraine live in the Transcarpathian region [3]. Approximately 60% of the Hungarian population in this area resides in settlements where they constitute an absolute majority. In such communities, educational institutions – including kindergartens and schools – typically offer instruction in Hungarian.

The region's multilingual environment fosters continuous and active interaction among speakers of different languages, leading to mutual linguistic influence and shaping local language practices.

In the multilingual environment outlined above, it is important to define precisely the status of the languages used. The notion of first language (mother tongue, L1) refers to the language (or languages) acquired by the child at an early age in a family environment. If a language (often an environmental language, L2) is acquired after the age of about three, it is referred to as second language acquisition; this can be either unguided in a target language environment or guided through learning. A foreign language, on the other hand, is a language that is learned later, usually in a non-target language environment, in school or out-of-school [16]. In the case of students in Transcarpathia, this means that most of them are native Hungarian/Ukrainian speakers or bilinguals who learn English as a first foreign language and German as a second foreign language in schools. In the course of their schooling, they come across at least four languages, which naturally interact with each other.

In this study, we focus on the forms in which translanguaging can/does appear in the communication of multilingual students in Transcarpathia during language classes. We will also discuss the linguistic levels (phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics) at which linguistic interference and transfer can be observed in students' speech and writing. Finally, the challenges faced by teachers in the language development of multilingual learners will be considered.

Analysis of previous research and publications. The phenomena of translanguaging and linguistic transfer and interference are thus observed in multilingual speakers. However, the question arises as to how one becomes bilingual or multilingual and what factors influence the language acquisition process. According to Aguado [1], language acquisition, whether it is the acquisition of a first (L1), second (L2) or third (L3) language, is based on the interaction of several factors. The process is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include the age of the learners, their existing language knowledge, and their knowledge of the world, the effort invested in language learning, the expected or ultimate attainment and individual differences. External factors include circumstances such as time spent learning, language input received, environmental influences and feedback received. Together, these factors determine the success of the language learning process in different languages and the level of multilingual proficiency attained by the speakers.

The process of language acquisition is shaped not only by these internal and external factors, but also by interlanguage mechanisms such as interlingual transfer and the emergence of interlanguage. During interlanguage transfer, language learners apply their existing declarative and procedural knowledge to new linguistic situations, i.e. they transfer elements from previously acquired language systems to new contexts with different content, time or situation, since «a bilingual is not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific configuration» [15, p. 467].

One of the defining phenomena of multilingual language learning is transfer and interference, which are closely related to the languages previously acquired by the learner. Transfer can also be a conscious strategy. Edmondson [11, p. 149], for example, draws attention to the fact that learners often consciously avoid transfer from their mother tongue (L1) and instead try to adopt elements from other, already learned foreign languages (e.g. L2). This can be motivated by several factors: the expectation that the foreign language must necessarily be different from the mother tongue; the deliberate distancing from the mother tongue identity, i.e. the attempt not to be identified by the accent or structures derived from the L1; or the fact that the use of the L1 was stigmatized in previous language lessons, so that learners avoid using it in the long term.

However, this type of language strategy can often lead to interference: elements can be introduced into the new language system that come either from the second language (L2) or from another non-native source, and these do not always conform to the norms of the target language. Transfer can therefore be positive (facilitating learning) or negative (causing interference), especially if the learner's linguistic identity and learning experiences influence which language sources he or she relies on most. Distinguishing between these two linguistic phenomena is not always straightforward [18].

Transfer and interference are linguistic phenomena that clearly demonstrate that the linguistic systems of multilingual individuals do not operate in isolation, but in interaction with each other. This dynamic is particularly evident during code-switching and translanguaging, when speakers move and combine not only individual structures or words, but entire linguistic repertoires according to the communicative situation. Stavans and Hoffmann [23] and Stavans and Porat [24] discuss in detail various phenomena of language contact, such as code-switching and translanguaging models [8; 13]. In order to understand these concepts, it is important to discuss their precise definitions. Regarding translanguaging, García [12, p. 140] puts it this way: «Translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential».

There is a difference between code-switching and translanguaging. According to García and Lin [14], code-switching assumes the existence of distinct linguistic systems that are associated with a named language, as if we were working with at least two monolingual systems in their analysis. In contrast, translanguaging assumes an integrated linguistic system in which «all ... languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning» [21, p. 1].

Furthermore, translanguaging is not phenomenologically but theoretically different from code-switching. While code-switching approaches bilingual speech or text from a mostly structural perspective, translanguaging focuses primarily on what speakers do and achieve in concrete situations by mobilising different elements of their linguistic repertoires [19, p. 49].

In summary, both code-switching and translanguaging seek to explain unique multilingual phenomena, but their starting perspective is different: code-switching interprets the characteristics of language systems structurally and at the system level within the framework of the monolingual linguistic paradigm.

According to Cenoz and Gorter [7], pedagogical translanguaging focuses on multilingualism, in line with new trends in multilingualism research. It is an educational and research approach to multilingual education that offers an alternative to the traditional approach based on the separation of languages, as presented in the video *Let's Make the Most of Multilingualism* [6]. The focus on multilingualism means that multilinguals cannot be considered simply as a collection of monolingual speakers, nor can they be expected to speak all their languages at the same level. This approach also challenges the ideal of the native monolingual speaker, which does not reflect the reality of multilingual and dynamic societies in the 21st century.

The focus on multilingualism goes against traditional views that advocate a sharp separation of linguistic boundaries and instead aims to blur the boundaries between languages in order to allow language users to exploit the benefits of their own multilingualism [5]. This approach is based on three main dimensions: the multilingual speaker, the multilingual repertoire, and the social context.

The purpose of the article. The aim of this study is to explore how the languages spoken or previously learned by students interact in foreign language classes, and at what linguistic levels (phonetic, lexical, syntactic, pragmatic) do these languages appear in their language use during their foreign language classes. The present study focuses on a single language learning context. We observed translanguaging and the phenomena of transfer and interference in a structured way in the education of multilingual students living in Transcarpathia.

Discussion and results. In multilingual communities, the school also naturally becomes a multilingual environment. In terms of language use, the school register, formal and informal language use, the language of instruction and the language of the environment are all present in the school. The teaching and learning of different languages also takes place in educational institutions. In schools where the language of instruction is different from the majority language, the school is a context in which the mother tongue, the official language of the state and foreign languages are taught and learned [25, p. 2].

The above statements are fully applicable to the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, where our observations were made. Located in a multilingual region, the college hosts a diverse student population, including native speakers of Ukrainian, Hungarian, and other languages, contributing to a rich and varied educational atmosphere. In recent years, particularly the past two to three, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of multilingual students whose first language is Ukrainian enrolling in the department's academic programs. Within the English Language and Literature Section of the Department of Philology, core English courses are primarily taught in English. Nevertheless, in recognition of the students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, instructors often provide supplementary explanations in Hungarian and/or Ukrainian – especially when tackling complex grammar topics or introducing new vocabulary. This multilingual teaching strategy is designed to improve understanding, promote active engagement, and ensure a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners [17].

The principles of multilingualism in the classroom include recognising and valuing the linguistic diversity of learners. All languages used by learners should be treated as a valuable resource, not as a barrier, as multilingualism has a positive impact on their cognitive and social development. One of the key ways of doing this is through translanguaging and code-switching, which allow learners to use their full linguistic repertoire to understand the material and express their ideas. The conscious inclusion of multiple languages helps the learning process and supports deeper understanding. In our foreign language classes, both translanguaging and code-switching are part of the natural language use. The teacher explains in English, while using Hungarian and/or Ukrainian as a mediating language. The picture is even more nuanced when teaching German as a second foreign language, where the teacher uses the existing knowledge of the English-major students to switch to English several times in a sentence. When learning a grammatical topic, the language that is always activated is the one whose linguistic system is either very similar or very different. The German «haben» and «sein» as notional verbs behave in the same way in sentences as their English counterparts. Thus, at a low level of language proficiency, it is particularly satisfying for the language learner to find a handle or help in their linguistic repertoire.

Following one of the basic principles of translanguaging pedagogy, we «let» all languages into the classroom and try to apply an inclusive and differentiated pedagogical approach. This is manifested, among other things, in the use of multilingual and often authentic educational materials, in the case of certain subjects we compile a multilingual (English, Hungarian, Ukrainian, German) glossary, and in pair or group work we pair students with different mother tongues. When solving such tasks, they have the opportunity to reflect on their own language and culture. The development

of multilingualism is closely related to intercultural sensitization, which promotes the growth of cultural awareness, as well as openness and respect for other languages and cultures [22].

Interlanguage transfer is a natural part of the language acquisition process of multilingual speakers [10]. According to his point of view, transfer phenomena should not be considered errors, but should be evaluated in a specifically positive and constructive way, contributing to the development of the previously discussed interlanguage. At different stages of language learning, transfer and interference phenomena appear in different ways. In this respect, the developmental process can be divided into three main stages [9].

The initial stage is called the «mixing» or interference stage. In this phase, learners often mix elements of their native language and the foreign language they are learning. In order to express themselves, they often fall back on familiar language structures. As a result, typical errors appear, for example, in word order, grammatical rules or the meaning of words taken from the native language. An example of such a sentence is: «Ich habe ein Buch gelesen und es war sehr interessant, weil ich habe es viele Mal gelesen», in which the influence of the native language on the sentence structure is noticeable.

The next stage is the «differentiation» or structuring stage. Here, learners are able to recognize the differences between their native language and the target language and apply the rules of the foreign language more consciously. For example, they recognize that in German the verb is always in the second position in the sentence and begin to avoid mistakes such as «Heute ich gehe zur Schule» and instead use the form «Heute gehe ich zur Schule». However, interferences can still occur, especially with more complex sentence structures or verbal nuances.

The most advanced phase is the 'isolation' or automation phase. At this stage, learners are now able to separate the foreign language from their mother tongue and use it correctly. An advanced language learner, for example, is able to formulate sentences spontaneously, without thinking in the mother tongue. The use of a foreign language becomes more intuitive and mistakes are less frequent.

It is important to note that these stages are not always sharply separated, often running in parallel or overlapping. The progress of learning depends to a large extent on the learning environment, the motivation and the intensity of the language input the learner receives. Given that, in our case, German is a language that English students mostly start learning in college, we accompany them through all these stages. In the case of English, we have less information in this area, as they are already enrolled as intermediate or advanced level English learners.

The question arises as to whether the frequency of transfer and interference phenomena may be relevant to whether the different languages of the speaker belong to the same or different language families. According to the contrastive theory developed by Lado [20], similarities between the mother tongue and the target language help and differences hinder language learning (p. 59). However, our observations suggest that in our case it was not the frequency but the quality and type of phenomena that was decisive. English and German, which come from the same language family, have many similar words (e.g. «house» – «Haus», «drink» – «trinken»). Their use is often a positive lexical transfer, but phonologically they often lead to pronunciation errors and interference (e.g. «stehen» – «stand», «Knie» – «knie»). It can be said, however, that similar vocabulary, word order and morphology help learning, but from time to time language learners should be alerted to so-called false friends, which are similar in word form but have different meanings (e.g. English «actual» ≠ German «aktuell»). When learning languages belonging to different language families (Ukrainian/Hungarian – English/German, Ukrainian – Hungarian, Hungarian – Ukrainian), negative transfer phenomena are more likely to occur at the structural, i.e. syntactic level. It is particularly difficult for German learners to use sentence structure, subordinate clause word order and sentence frames correctly, since none of the languages they speak has these grammatical structures.

It should also be noted that from a phonological point of view, it is more difficult for native Hungarian speakers to learn the correct use of stress, since Hungarian has a fixed stress on the first

syllable of the words. In contrast, in the other languages they learn, free stress is observed, which is flexible. This phenomenon is seldom encountered in German lessons, as by then they have already acquired the relevant knowledge from other languages, which makes it more natural and easier for them to accept.

As language teachers, our task is to strengthen the positive transfer in the classroom, while reducing and trying to eliminate the negative one. Berényi-Nagy and Molnár [4] have discussed in detail the steps that can be taken to facilitate the acquisition of grammar for students studying German as a second foreign language after English. They claim that in order to effectively learn German grammar, it is worth combining inductive rule-making with explicit and contrastive grammatical presentation. One well-established method is the three-phase S-O-S procedure (Suchen – Ordnen – Systematisieren), in which learners first search for linguistic patterns, then organise them and finally make them conscious as general rules. This approach encourages active language thinking and develops grammatical awareness.

Based on the principle of «enlightened multilingualism» in working on grammar in the language classroom, it is justified to discuss certain grammatical phenomena in the students' native language, for example Hungarian/Ukrainian. This not only helps understanding, but also provides an opportunity for the conscious introduction and practice of metalanguage, i.e. linguistic terminology.

Cognitive-contrastive learning as a conscious learning strategy is also given a prominent role in lessons of German as a second foreign language after English. The aim is to promote autonomous learning, i.e., students learn how to use conscious comparison between languages to guide their own learning. Such strategies (e.g., exploiting transfer opportunities or preventing interference) can be integrated into teaching as (meta) cognitive learning methods, contributing to the development of learners' linguistic autonomy.

In a multilingual learning environment, it is particularly important that learners not only encounter corrected errors, but also understand their causes and linguistic background. The aim is not only to learn the correct form, but also to recognize the patterns behind the errors and to become aware of the differences between the native language and the target language. This process is aided by contrastive linguistic analysis, in which learners can analyse the characteristic structural differences between their own language and the target language.

Analysing mistakes leads to conscious learning strategies. Rather than simply correcting mistakes, it is useful to interpret them together in conversations or example sentences, for example, when correcting and discussing incorrect sentence structures.

Meta-linguistic reflection also plays a key role: learners consciously reflect on grammatical structures and the differences between their own and the languages they learn. To this end, we can use interactive tasks such as incomplete texts based on typical mistakes, conversion exercises or sentence rewriting to help students learn correct word order and structures.

Authentic language situations, such as role-plays and simulated conversations, give learners the opportunity to practise correct language use in a natural context.

Inductive learning and targeted input management methods are also effective: learners encounter many correct language patterns in different texts, through which they gradually internalise the correct language structure.

Learning motivation and linguistic creativity are also strengthened by communicative and playful methods. It is recommended to use language games, quizzes and storytelling tasks that consciously build on the interferences between the given languages. In addition, social learning also plays an important role: students can evaluate and correct each other's work, which develops their self-monitoring ability.

Long-term error reduction is achieved through individualized strategies. For example, students can keep an error log in which they record their typical errors together with their correct versions. They should also learn how to self-check their written work, especially for interferences. Regular reflection sessions can also be used to review which types of errors have diminished over time.

Teaching languages in a multilingual classroom presents many challenges for teachers. Not only do they need to have a communicative command of the languages they share with students, but they also need to know their linguistic systems, their characteristics and the cultures of their speakers. Only then can they take advantage of their students' multilingualism. They need to be methodologically equipped to deal with classroom dynamics and to produce appropriate teaching material. However, it can be said that the teaching staff, being multilingual themselves, is uniquely positioned to effectively address the diverse linguistic needs of the student body. Moreover, they have established a commendable objective to equip and inspire future educators to effectively benefit from their own linguistic repertoire, thereby providing invaluable support to their students [17].

Conclusions and prospects for further study of the problem. Based on our observations, we can conclude that the basic elements of pedagogical translanguaging are successfully applied at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education. As a result, as the language learning experience and knowledge grows, a progressively higher level of meta-linguistic awareness is developing in our students. The result is that learners are increasingly able to make conscious and effective use of their full range of linguistic knowledge. The more positive experiences they gain by using all the resources (language, strategies, knowledge) at their disposal, the more confident they become in their own abilities and the more independent they become in their learning.

The language use of multilingual speakers is characterised by interlingual transfers in different directions, i.e. they not only transfer elements from their mother tongue into the language(s) they are learning, but also actively transfer between the languages they are learning. The psychotype of learners, i.e. their internal attitudes to language learning, can be positively influenced by an emphasis on linguistic similarities, in particular the potential for positive grammatical transfer between English and German. Recognition of similar structures can increase motivation and facilitate the absorption of new knowledge [4].

Modern language pedagogy supports multilingual competence. Students can consciously switch between languages (translanguaging) to recognize linguistic similarities and differences. Through intercultural sensitization, students can understand that linguistic interferences can often be traced back to cultural differences, for example in terms of politeness formulas, addresses or communication habits.

As a further research direction, we would like to focus on attitude and language use studies in the future. Accordingly, this will include research on the attitudes of multilingual speakers towards the languages they speak, their preferred language in different situations, and what motivates them to translanguage and code-switch.

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ЗМІСТ

ФІЛОЛОГІЧНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

3

- Андерсон Ірина.** Історія та етнографія в літературній спадщині Міхала Грабовського.....3
- Білявська Вікторія.** Мемуарна спадщина Габрієли Пузиніної та Єви Фелінської: порівняльний аналіз.....11
- Болотнікова Алла.** Вокатив як індикатор позитивної ввічливості (на прикладі польської та української мов).....19
- Гримашевич Галина.** Актуалізація підляського діалектного мовлення в прозовому дискурсі (На матеріалі антології україномовного письменства Підляшшя «Країна свого слова»).....28
- Денисюк Василь, Зелінська Оксана.** Українсько-польський дієслівний континуум у щоденниковому дискурсі XVIII ст.....41
- Нодь Юлія, Барань Єлизавета.** Польська мова як складова в мовному ландшафті міста Турка.....54
- Пlechko Антоніна.** Вірування про зимові опади в етнолінгвістичному аспекті: середньополісько-польські паралелі.....69
- Титаренко Валентина.** Польсько-українські мовні зв'язки: історія вивчення.....87
- Чаплінська Оксана.** «Був автор – на чужу не заздрив добру славу»: вплив просвітницької байки на українську літературу першої половини XIX ст.....101
- Шарманова Наталя.** Структурне моделювання польської афористики111

ФІЛОСОФСЬКІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

121

- Горбатенко Володимир.** Рідна мова як чинник утвердження національної ідентичності й самозбереження особистості: заповіт Чеслава Мілоша121
- Костюк Олександр.** Римо-католицька церква як суб'єкт впливу на зовнішню політику сучасної Польщі.....132
- Панчук Ірина.** Роль духовенства у процесах примирення та подолання наслідків колективної травми українсько-польського протистояння на Волині під час Другої світової війни142
- Sokolovskiy Oleh.** Teoretyczne i metodyczne problemy badań nad nowymi ruchami religijnymi w historiografii Polskiej151

ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

160

- Асаулюк Інна, Каплінський Василь, Тетерук Роман.** Розвиток педагогічної майстерності як важливий напрямок загальнопедагогічної підготовки і становлення майбутнього вчителя фізичної культури.....160
- Березюк Олена, Холодова Уляна.** Основи дослідницької спрямованості полікультурної підготовки майбутнього вчителя-філолога в умовах поліського регіону.....168
- Березюк Юлія, Мерзова Радана.** Педагогічні розвідки про Волинських чехів в Україні.....178
- Dubaseyuk Olexandra, Voznyuk Olexander.** Ukrainian-Polish cooperation in the context of an activity-based approach and modern challenges187

Lechner Iona, Huszti Iona. Do you speak deutsch? Or, the interaction of languages in foreign language classes in a multilingual environment	197
Мирончук Наталія. Зміст підготовки майбутнього вчителя початкової школи в Польщі.....	207
Павленко Віта. Компаративний аналіз зарубіжного досвіду впровадження домашньої роботи в навчальний процес.....	217
Фрицюк Валентина. Розвиток соціальної компетентності як одного з чинників професійного саморозвитку майбутніх фахівців.....	227
Наші автори	239