

Наталя Гут,
кандидат філологічних наук,
доцент кафедри іноземних мов,
Уманський державний педагогічний
університет імені Павла Тичини

PRESERVING LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN IN PORTUGAL

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Ukrainians came to Portugal 20-25 years ago seeking opportunities to realize their potential in the chosen 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 [1, p.15].

The issues connected with immigration from Eastern European countries in general and the influence of migrant flows from Ukraine on Portuguese society in particular were considered in works of J. Sardinha, M. L. Fonseca, S. Pereira, A. Esteves, and T. Sivak. Language education and native language acquisition by migrants are presented in several recent papers of H. C. Araújo, L. M. Espinosa, J. Jaspers, J. T. Maluch, A. Tereshchenko and others.

The abstract concentrates on second generation migrants who have the sense of belonging to the host country, fluently speak the Portuguese language. They are children of Ukrainian immigrants who influenced by the culture of the host culture want their children to know the language and the culture of their native country. The aim of the abstract is to show how cultural and language identity of Ukrainians is preserved at formal, non-formal and informal levels in Portugal.

The European Union recognizes the proficiency in language of origin to be of great importance for immigrant pupils [2, 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 [2, pp. 19-20]. Although nowadays in Portugal Ukrainians formed the community with 35,779 members (third in number after Brazilians and immigrants from Cabo Verde) [3], at formal level language education of such children consists of studying Portuguese, English, French / German / Spanish languages.

As the results of the research conducted within Ukrainian Saturday school located in Vila Nova de Gaia [4] show, the national education for Ukrainian children begins at informal level. They are involved in the Ukrainian speaking environment at their homes (as their parents were born and raised in Ukraine), at the church or during their self-studies. The children are usually well-informed about Ukrainian political historical issues, easily name their favourite Ukrainian fairy-tales and dishes because their parents' culture can be passed on in every day communication. Although most of such children fluently speak the Portuguese language they respect Ukrainian and see it as an important language for developing their identity.

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 [5, 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 this country the number of immigrant associations working as information or welfare providers has grown in recent years. Among 6 non-profit public organizations of Ukrainian migrants here Association of Ukrainians in Portugal is considered to be of national importance as it combines the biggest number of members [6]. Throughout this country, including the island of Madeira, its members founded 14 Ukrainian centres in Abrantes, Agueda, Braga, Caldas da Rainha, Funchal, Lagos, Leiria, Lisboa, Marinha Grande, Santarem, Santiago do Cacem, Vila Nova de Gaia, and Viseu. Among the main tasks are 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 [6].

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 school program usually consists of such subjects as Ukrainian Language and Literature, History and Ethnography, Geography, Mathematics, English Language and is designed for children of different ages. The system of educational and extracurricular work is aimed at the Ukrainian educational environment. So, 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.

So, to preserve their identity and language the Ukrainian migrant children have several options to be involved in, mostly on informal or non-formal levels. Together with family, church and self-study they can have profit from functioning public associations of migrants providing organized educational activity outside the established formal system. 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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