How to Smooth International University Students' Adaptation in Ukraine

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Abstract: The article is devoted to an important problem of international students' adaptation in host countries. They face a lot of cross-cultural adaptation problems, especially in their first year of study. The problem concerns Ukraine, as well, for an increasing number of international students come to get higher education. Hence, the purpose of the research is to reveal major difficulties of international students in Ukraine and to design a programme of activities aimed at assisting them in their cross-cultural adaptation in this country. The research procedure involved 5 stages. In the first stage theoretical background for the research was prepared: international and national scientific literature review on the problem. The second stage included the identification of target groups, pedagogical observation and working out a self-designed questionnaire. The respondent group consisted of 60 international students of the first year of study in Ukraine, namely on the Bachelor's and Master's levels from 3 Kyiv universities. Next, after receiving the students' consent to participate in the research, they were handed the designed questionnaire. The fourth stage was aimed at collecting the quantitative data and their analyzing. It resulted in identification of challenges, problems and difficulties of the international students' cross-cultural adaptation in Ukraine. In the final stage a special programme of activities was worked out to make cross-cultural adaptation of international university students in Ukraine smoother and less stressful. This methodology allowed to identify, evaluate and systemize the most typical challenges, problems and difficulties. Thanks to the analysis, 3 categories of them were distinguished: linguistic, academic and socio-cultural. On their basis a special cross-cultural programme of activities and recommendations in different environments (linguistic, academic, socio-cultural) which correlate with the identified problems was designed for university staff (teachers and administration), campus staff, students' councils and host country students. It is planned to introduce the research results and the designed programme in the educational process of the universities. Their implementation is believed to facilitate cross-cultural adaptation process of international students and to make it less painful.

Keywords: *cross-cultural adaptation; linguistic; academic; socio-cultural; problems; recommendations.*

Introduction

Nowadays international relations are intensively developing in all spheres of human activities including education. Thanks to Ukraine's entry into the world and European educational markets and strengthening of the international educational cooperation, the amount of young people wishing to get higher education in Ukraine is increasing. They are called either foreign or international students. In this research we apply the term "international students" to students who are not citizens of Ukraine.

The statistics shows that in 2000 there were 18,000 international students in Ukraine, in 2007 - 37,000, in 2010 - over 44,000 students, in 2017 - 66,000. In 2020 Ukrainian educational institutions accepted 80,470 international students from 158 countries of the world (Ukrainian Centre, 2020).

The increasing number of international students studying in Ukrainian educational institutions is not only the image of the country, but also an important part of investments into the country's economy. For instance, it was calculated that an international student studying in a Ukrainian university spends at least 6-8 thousand US dollars yearly. Ukrainian Centre of International Education at Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine counted that in 2019 general expenditures of international students in Ukraine on studying, accommodation, catering, transport, insurance and other needs reached 570 million US dollars. If to take into account all years of their studying, the overall income of Ukraine from international students is about 3 billion US dollars (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2020).

The number of students is increasing despite the war in the eastern part of Ukraine and serious problems in the country's economy. It demonstrates the attractiveness of Ukrainian higher education. Interestingly, 43,5% respondents chose Ukrainian universities because of their high quality of education (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2020).

The President of Ukraine V. Zelensky issued the Order No 210/2020 (Order by the President of Ukraine, 2020) in which the ways of further improvement of the higher education system in Ukraine are declared. One of them is to facilitate and popularize the possibilities for foreigners to get higher education in Ukraine. In response to the President's Order, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine conducted the marketing research in June-August, 2020 to identify the problems connected with the international students' integration into higher educational environment of

Ukraine and to give national level recommendations of the activities. They aim at popularizing the Ukrainian higher education image and attracting more international students to study in Ukraine (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2020). The urgent task is to make international students' adaptation in socio-cultural and academic environment in Ukraine smooth and painless. Thus, the question of international students' adaptation in Ukrainian higher educational institutions has actualized.

In view of this, universities have to conduct more researches concerning international students in Ukraine and define cross-cultural challenges, difficulties and problems they face. This research is a part of the complex long-term research of international university students' adaptation process. The task of the initial stage is to identify cross-cultural challenges, difficulties and problems of international students in their first year of study in Ukraine. The researchers tend to investigate them in three major cross-cultural dimensions: linguistic, academic, and socio-cultural environments. Although Lewthwaite (1996) offers to approach the cross-cultural adaptation from four aspects: linguistic, social, cultural and academic, the researchers opine that in the first year of study in the host country, cross-cultural challenges, difficulties and problems students do not differentiate between social and cultural problems. However, they may consider that every challenge or difficulty outside the university a socio-cultural one.

On receiving the research results, it is planned to create a holistic programme of various activities to make the cross-cultural adaptation easier on the corresponding levels:

- linguistic environment;
- academic environment (communication with peers; tutors; other university staff);
- socio-cultural environment (life outside the university).

The next stage is to implement the programme into practice in the universities participating in the research and to test its effectiveness in a year.

In view of the above mentioned, **the purpose of the research** is to reveal major difficulties of international students who have come to Ukraine to get higher education, to evaluate and systemize them, and after their analysis to design a programme of activities that can assist international students in their cross-cultural adaptation in this country. The researchers believe that the introduction of this programme into educational process of international students will have a positive effect on their cross-cultural adaptation and hence, on their successful studying and its completion.

Literature Review

The problem of cross-cultural adaptation of international students in host countries has grown in its significance worldwide. Moreover, it has become a global challenge not only for the students but also for the hosts. There are numerous researches devoted to the problems of international students' adaptation in host countries and the ways of settling or minimizing them. Nevertheless, international students experience a variety of problems and challenges especially during their sojourn in a new country (Gallagher, 2013; Sherry et al., 2010).

It is acknowledged that the burdens of the cross-cultural adaptation are common to all international students who come to the host country to get education. At the same time, some problems may be unique (Najeemdeen, 2018, p. 14) and may depend on the traits of the character or other personal characteristics. Mostly, common problems are acculturative stress; language problems, social difficulties, accommodation problems, homesickness, loneliness, misunderstanding and misinterpretation, academic complications and a lot more (Bierwiaczonek & Waldzus, 2016; Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014; McKay-Semmler & Kim, 2014).

Different dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation are under the analysis either separately like the emergence of intercultural personhood (Kim, 2015), intercultural communication competence (Arasaratnam, 2006; Fantini 2007), linguistic acculturation (Gallagher, 2013; Perez, 2011) and others, or in complex. The latter are mostly based on Searle and Ward's (1990) and Berry's (2005) theories and investigate international students' adaptation from two aspects: psychological and social-cultural. Researchers may specify and combine these aspects in different variations. For instance, Zhang et al. (2017) survey international university students' cross-cultural adaptation from four aspects: reading and vocabulary, communication and exchange, adaptation of learning and teaching styles and knowledge of the host culture. Kim (2005, 2015), Schaetti (2002) apply an integrative approach of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Later, in cooperation McKay-Semmler and Kim (2014) analyzed the problems of cross-cultural students' adaptation from three aspects: communication patterns which included communication competence and host interpersonal communication patterns, functional fitness, and psychological health. Demographic factors, social support and sociocultural adjustment are under analysis in Abdullah et al. (2015).

The subjects of cross-cultural adaptation are various, as well: international students (Banjong, 2015; Can et al., 2021; Choi & Chung, 2014;

Maruyama, 1998), Hispanic youth (McKay-Semmler & Kim, 2014; Perez, 2011), expatriates, international students, and migrants (Bierwiaczonek & Waldzus, 2016), Chinese students (Ding, 2016; Yan & Berliner, 2011), Sri Lankan students (Zhang et al., 2017), American and Korean workers (Kim & Kim, 2007), African students (Akhtar et al., 2015).

Geographical frameworks are also diverse: Malaysia (Abdullah et al., 2015; Najeemdeen, 2018), Japan (Maruyama, 1998), the USA (Can et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2007; Yan & Berliner, 2011), China (Akhtar et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017), Australia (Nuraryo, 2016), South Korea (Choi & Chung, 2014), New Zealand (Ding, 2016), to name a few.

The success in studying in the host country depends directly on the general cross-cultural adaptation of international students. Thus, the question of effective international students' academic performance is also in the field of researchers' interests. Brunton and Jeffrey (2014) investigate factors that influence learner empowerment; Martinez et al. (2004) analyze the ways of achieving academic success among Latino youth. Banjong (2015) studies how campus resources can enhance international students' academic performance. Lee and Ciftci (2014) analyze academic self-efficacy in the context of socio-cultural adaptation of Asian international students along with the influence of multicultural personality, assertiveness and social support. Kurum and Erdemli (2021) examine the problems which academician staff encounter while teaching international students.

Yet, the researches on international students' adaptation in Ukraine are almost not presented in the world scientific literature. However, there are a few of them in Ukrainian language. The crucial problems they touch upon are similar to the above-mentioned. For instance, Bondarchuk et al. (2020) address the intercultural component in teaching foreign students in Ukraine on the example of teaching "Ukrainian as a foreign language" course at Kyiv National Economic University. The researchers identify the following adaptation problem aspects: physiological, geographic, cultural and educational, religious, social, psychological, legal and demonstrate what has been done to minimize them and how to facilitate the adaptation process.

The Ukrainian educator Lysak (2016) also focuses attention on the difficulties, international students can encounter in Ukraine. However, she also illustrates the advantages of getting higher education in Ukraine that international students can have, using the 7P educational marketing technique: place, product, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, process.

Ukrainian scholars Segeda and Osypenko (2014) identify the following major difficulties in international students' adaptation in Ukrainian

universities: psycho-physiological, socio-cultural, learning and cognitive ones. They substantiate the necessity of creating a special psychological support service at universities to assist international students in their adaptation process.

This research provides an in-depth exploration of the problem in question. Besides, it is planned to be a long-term research which will include several cycles. In the researchers' opinion, the designed cross-cultural adaptation programme will definitely smooth international students' adaptation in Ukraine. Moreover, it is expected to become a part of international experience in handling the problem of cross-cultural adaptation of different categories: students on exchange programmes, migrants, internally displaced people, expatriates, seasonal workers and others.

Methodology

Theoretical Background

In the initial stage of the research it is important to collect quantitative data for further analysis. Moreover, in education research quantitative methods can even be considered the main approach to research in this field (Neuman, 2014).

There are a number of tools assessing cross-cultural adaptability including inventories, questionnaires, tests, scales and ratings. In particular, Fantini (2007) enlists at least 115 different types of them. For conducting this research, the authors created their own questionnaire with questions focused on revealing the difficulties the international students face during their first year of study in Ukraine. The necessity of creating a new questionnaire was also caused by the following reasons. *Firstly,* ready and certified for validity inventories are mostly created in view of other cultures, not of those the researchers need. *Secondly,* although they are considered to be universal and easily adapted to other cultures, the researchers are sure that the translation of those inventories will not reflect the local cultural peculiarities. Scientists have to deal with them very carefully as a cultural barrier is even more dangerous than a linguistic one (Ter-Minasova, 2000, p. 23).

Participants

The target group of the research consisted of international students who were in their first year of study on the Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree levels.

International students from three well-known Ukrainian universities were asked to participate in the survey: Kyiv National Linguistic University, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport. The first-year students were chosen because "the greatest difficulties are experienced at the earliest stages of cross-cultural transition" (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 661). Thus, the first year of cross-cultural adaptation is the most challenging and the problems the students face are the most vivid.

A total of 57 international students took part in the survey, including 33 males and 24 females. They come from different countries: Turkey, China, Vietnam, South Korea, Algeria, Iran, the Emirates; European Union - France, Belgium; ex-Soviet republics (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan) and others. Mostly represented are Turkey (21 students that count for 36.8%), China (12 students - 21%), Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan (12 students - 21%). Thus, the geographical characteristics are rather diversified. The age limits are various, too. 18 respondents on the Bachelor's degree level are from under 18 to 21 years old. Those on the Master's degree level are 39 students of 22 years old and above. Their level of education before coming to Ukraine varies from secondary school (28%), college (10.5%) to university (61.5%).

The approval for the study was given by Institution Review Boards from the participating universities. In addition, all the respondents gave their consent to take part in the research.

Procedure

The research procedure consisted of five stages.

1) The research started with the assessment of international students' studying in Ukraine (examining statistical data, literature reviewing of the problem in question). 2) Then the purpose of questioning and target respondent groups were identified. In view of them, a special questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire was prepared in three languages - English, Ukrainian, Russian. It consists of two parts. The first part contains five questions to collect the qualitative characteristics of the respondents - their age, sex, country of origin, level of education, the available previous intercultural experience. The second part of the questionnaire contains 14 semi-structured and open-ended questions that reveal the participants' perceptions and views on the major difficulties in their cross-cultural adaptation in Ukraine. 3) Afterwards, the questionnaire was given to 60 first-year international students who study in three Kyiv universities. 4) The quantitative data were collected and analyzed. 57 fully completed

questionnaires out of 60 were received for the further analysis. The challenges, problems and difficulties of the international students in Ukraine were identified on the basis of the result analysis. 5) The final stage involved designing a special programme of activities in different environments (linguistic, academic, socio-cultural) to make cross-cultural adaptation of international university students in Ukraine smoother and less stressful.

Results and Discussion

Before identifying the difficulties international students have in their first year of study in Ukraine it was necessary to find out if they had any previous intercultural experience. It may be helpful for international students in their adaptation process. Firstly, because they have already known what is waiting for them: culture shock, homesickness, loneliness, etc., irrespective of the selected country for studying. Secondly, pre-departure learning of cultural customs, values, and communication patterns of the country they go to leads to more participation in communication with host nationals and thus better psychological health (Maruyama, 1998, p. 231).

29 respondents (50.8%) answered positively to the question concerning the availability of the prior intercultural experience. The other half of the respondents did not have any previous intercultural background. Interestingly, among the first group only 1 respondent had intercultural experience in Ukraine because he had been living in Kyiv for four years before entering the university. 5 respondents (8.7%) had it thanks to academic exchange programmes; 2 respondents (3.5%) worked in other countries; 21 respondents (36.8%) actively communicated with their mates either at school, college, university or during various extra-curricular activities. However, the second group that considered they have not had any previous intercultural experience, also mentioned that they had contacted the family members, friends or colleague from other countries. The major ways of this communication for both groups were: online (89.2%); on their travels within their country of residence (44.7%) and abroad (35.4%). Other ways of getting prior intercultural experience included communication within the family, at educational institutions or on the job place.

Major problems

The task was to rate the defined major problems: linguistic, academic, socio-cultural from the most to less significant ones. The greatest problem for the majority of respondents (37 participants) appeared to be the Ukrainian language acquisition (66%). 11 respondents (20%) thought the

academic problem to be the second important one. 8 students rated the socio-cultural problem to be in the third place (14%).

The next three questions from the questionnaire were to identify and specify the linguistic, academic, and socio-cultural problems. Logically, knowing the details, it is easier to outline the ways of overcoming the difficulties. These questions were built on a 5-point rating scale. The respondents were to evaluate the enlisted problems from the most significant (1) to the least disturbing (5). In addition, we offered the option "specify other problems, if any" to each of these questions.

Linguistic difficulties

It is generally known that the host language ability is the most important factor for successful international adaptation. Moreover, empirical studies prove that the greater command of the host country's language, the more stable the adaptation process is (Tomich et al., 2000; Yan & Berliner, 2011). This research also indicates that the greatest problem for international students is learning the Ukrainian language. The question was not oriented at revealing grammar, vocabulary difficulties or the like, international students can encounter in the educational process. Instead, five possible difficulties are offered for evaluating by the respondents, particularly: Ukrainian language proficiency level of the respondent, creation of adequate climate in the language lesson, self-study of the Ukrainian language learning, lack of communication with Ukrainian students in the informal setting, making oneself understood. As it is shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents (33.3% - 19 students) consider their Ukrainian language proficiency level to be moderately significant in their cross-cultural adaptation process, while for another large group (15 students - 26.3%) it is the main problem.

Obviously, the creation of the adequate learning climate in Ukrainian language lessons is not very crucial for the language learners. The index varies from 29.8% to 28%. It may be assumed that international students care not very much about the language learning environment in the lessons. Other things are more important for them in learning the Ukrainian language. 18 respondents (31.6%) think that self-study is moderately significant while other items are assessed almost equally from 15.7% to 19.2%.

Table 1. Ukrainian Language Learning Problems Evaluated by International Students

	1 (the most significant)		2 (significant)		3 (moderately significant)		4 (less significant)		5 (the least significant)		Deviation
	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	%
Ukrainian language proficiency level	15	26.3	7	12.3	19	33.3	9	15.7	7	12.3	0.1
Adequate climate at the language lessons	9	15.7	8	14	17	29.8	16	28.1	7	12.3	0.1
Self-study of Ukrainian	11	19.3	9	15.7	18	31.6	10	17.5	9	15.7	0.2
Lack of communication with Ukrainian students in the informal setting	15	26.3	10	17.5	13	22.8	9	15.7	10	17.5	0.2
Making oneself understood	10	17.5	8	14	14	24.5	8	14	17	29.8	0.2

The greatest problem is seen in the lack of communication with Ukrainian students in the informal setting by 26.3% (15 respondents). Surprisingly, the difficulty of mutual understanding appeared to be the least significant problem for almost one third of the students (17 persons - approximately 30%). One fourth (24.5%) considers it to be moderately significant.

Academic problems

The following difficulties international students can have in Ukrainian universities are offered to rating: pace of studying; understanding teachers in the lessons; understanding academic staff including the dean, tutors, librarians, laboratory staff and others who provide smooth functioning of the university; understanding evaluation system adopted in the university they study at; lack of confidence in learning; heavy academic workload; availability of educational resources (textbooks, guides, manuals, etc.).

In rating the first possible problem of the studying pace, the respondents showed that it is not a serious problem for them (Table 2). They rated the studying pace as significant, moderately significant (per 24.6%) and less significant (26.3%). The equal number of students accept it as the most significant problem and the least significant at the same time. Such equal opposites can be explained by intrinsic characteristics of the students.

The problem of understanding is one of the most crucial in cross-cultural adaption. However, the degree of its significance varies, depending on the person the communication is held with. The obtained results demonstrate that the problem of understanding teachers is less (28.1%) and the least (29.8%) significant for the majority of the respondents (together 33 students). While the problem of understanding the academic staff seems to be quite painful: 18 respondents (31.6%) rated it as a significant problem and 16 respondents (28.1%) as moderately significant. Assumingly, the situation can be explained by the fact that in the lessons teachers explain the material not only orally but they often use descriptive materials, whiteboards, and other audio-visual facilities. Besides, host groupmates are always on hand to help in communication. Hence, the language teachers can be more easily understood. The communication with the university academic staff is mostly performed verbally and without a peer's support.

Table 2. Academic Problems Evaluated by International Students

	1 (the most significant)		2 (significant)		3 (moderately significant)		4 (less significant)		5 (the least significant)		Deviation
	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	%
Pace of studying	7	12.3	14	24.6	14	24.6	15	26.3	7	12.3	-0.1
Understanding teachers	5	8.8	10	17.5	9	15.7	16	28.1	17	29.8	0.1
Understanding academic staff (dean, tutor, laboratory staff)	7	12.3	18	31.6	16	28.1	7	12.3	9	15.7	0
Understanding evaluation system	5	8.8	13	22.8	18	31.6	14	24.6	7	12.3	-0.1
Lack of confidence in learning	5	8.8	10	17.5	20	35.0	12	21.1	10	17.5	0.1

Academic work load	5	8.8	7	2.3	18	31.6	18	31.6	9	5.7	0
Availability of educational resources (books, guides, manuals, etc.)	5	8.8	18	31.6	19	33.3	8	4.0	7	2.3	0

Understanding the evaluation system in the educational process is moderately significant for the respondents varying from significant (22.8%), moderately significant (31.6%) to the less significant (24.6%).

Lack of confidence in the educational process is considered a moderate problem. 20 respondents (35%) marked it. For 5 respondents it is the most serious problem while twice more students (17.5%) are sure it is the least significant one.

Interestingly, in the respondents' opinion academic workload at the university is a minor problem in their cross-cultural adaptation. Equal groups (18 students) consider it both moderately significant or less significant.

Almost equal number of students (18-19 students) believe that the lack of educational resources prevents them significantly from their successful adaptation in educational process.

Socio-cultural challenges

Social and cultural challenges in the questionnaire imply the following: safety; students' accommodation; medical care; catering; transport; spending free time; interaction with native people; ignorance of Ukrainian customs and traditions. The first five items reflect how individuals perform daily tasks in a new culture. In Searle and Ward's opinion (1990), it is the terms in which socio-cultural adaptation can be measured. In addition, the other two items were included into the list as the most important ones that can prevent or impede students' cross-cultural adaptation in academic environment in Ukrainian universities. The results of evaluating these challenges are represented in Table 3.

Table 3. Rating of socio-cultural challenges in international students' cross-cultural adaptation

	1 (the most significant)		2 (significant)		3 (moderately significant)		4 (less significant)		5 (the least significant)		Deviation
	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	%
Safety	18	31.6	16	28.1	8	14.0	10	17.5	5	8.8	0
Students' accommodation	17	29.8	15	26.3	11	19.3	10	17.5	4	7.0	0.1
Medical care	16	28.1	14	24.5	15	26.3	7	12.3	5	8.8	0
Catering	6	10.5	10	17.5	10	17.5	14	24.5	17	29.8	0.2
Transport	5	8.8	6	10.5	14	24.5	15	26.3	17	29.8	0.1
Spending free time	6	10.5	5	8.8	15	26.3	7	12.3	24	42.1	0
Interaction with native people	5	8.8	6	10.5	24	42.1	8	14.0	14	24.5	0.1
Ignorance of Ukrainian customs and traditions	7	12.3	17	29.8	22	38.6	6	10.5	5	8.8	0

The first three items as the most significant problems for international students concern safety, students' accommodation and medical care - 31.6%, 29.8% and 28.1% respectively. The same situation is observed with the second scale rating item - significant (28.1%, 26.3% and 24.5%). No doubt, these difficulties are considered the most significant and significant as they reflect basic human needs in the safe environment, comfortable dwelling and good health.

Surprisingly, another human need in food in socio-cultural adaptation is considered the least significant for adapting to the host country life. 17 respondents (29.8%) consider it the least significant problem. Exactly the same result was obtained as for the transport in the host country.

The way how spending free time can facilitate students' adaptation is considered the least important problem by 42.1% of students, though free time assumes much interaction with locals. Moreover, communication with

host nationals can be conceptualized even as the main vehicle for cross-cultural adaptation (Maruyama, 1998, p. 227). This item "interaction with native people" is rated as significant for their socio-cultural adaptation by the same number of students (24 persons, 42.1%).

Obviously, the respondents understand the importance of knowing Ukrainian customs and traditions for their successful adaptation in the host country as this item is rated as significant by 17 respondents (29.8%) and moderately significant by 22 respondents (38.6%).

Other adaptation problems

In addition, the respondents mentioned a number of other problems that negatively influence their cross-cultural adaptation in Ukraine and impede their educational process. Among them there are: administrative problems which concern obtaining visa to Ukraine and preparing necessary documents; the fact that administration staff of Ukrainian universities do not know English language to communicate with international students; bureaucracy in universities; absence of possibilities to work part time and lack of opportunities to socialize with their university peers.

Not all respondents specified other problems. Hence, the quantitative data are not represented in the tables above. However, this information was useful for designing a holistic cross-cultural adaptation programme and it was taken into account.

Suggestions

On analyzing the obtained results, the researchers designed the cross-cultural programme of international students' adaptation in Ukrainian universities. It foresees the cycle of activities that is due to repeat with every new admission of international students. It includes the following steps: conducting an inquiry, response analysis 1, designing a programme, implementation of the programme, follow-up inquiry, response analysis 2. And the cycle repeats again on the next level. Response analyses assist to correct and update the programme of cross-cultural international students' adaptation.

Thus, response analysis 1 identified difficulties and problems that require their solution. On their basis the researchers worked out the programme of activities and recommendations for university staff (teachers and administration), campus staff, students' councils, and host country students. The recommendations were organized into three groups (linguistic environment, academic environment, socio-cultural environment).

Expectedly, their implementation can enhance adaptation of the first year study international students to the new linguistic, academic and socio-cultural environment, reduce different obstacles and impediments and make it less painful.

The programme concerning *linguistic environment* includes:

- arranging and functioning of the preliminary Ukrainian language course (role games, learning Ukrainian songs, discussions of travelling experience, telling jokes, fairy tales, dramatizing dialogues);

- setting up of the Ukrainian language speaking club where native students-volunteers are in charge of regular classes;

- delivering of interactive lectures in History of Ukraine, Ukrainian literature;

- arrangement of mentoring (pairing an international student with a native one);

- invitations of international students to native students' places and close, in depth interaction between international students and local people;

- on-line interactive language learning (reading: diversified texts by levels A1, A2, B.1; listening: diversified tasks by levels A1, A2, B1: linguistic simulator (exerciser): define the gender of the nouns, find synonyms, opposites: learning vocabulary from short videos (family members, months, colours, days of the week, parts of the face and body, food, animals and birds).

The following activities should be done to make international students' adaptation to *academic environment* easier:

- pre-entry material should contain substantial (solid, proper, up to date) socio-cultural information of the country;

- university representatives, admission counselors should be able to provide applicants with orientation program (orientation educational program);

- availability (elaboration and provision) of a variety of high quality international educational programs;

- delivery (provision) of English speaking course for administration staff;

- international students' office, counseling service should be available;

- university campus student counsel activity should be provided;

- qualified teaching (academic) staff should be cross-culturally educated (lectures: "Internationalization of education system", "Cross-cultural communication in the academic (educational) environment",

"Statutory and regulatory provision of international student education in Ukraine");

- introductory conducted excursions around the university, to the city centre, university campus area excursion should be arranged;

- exchange student programs, exchange introductory practical trainings should be provided;

- regular updating of a special column for international students in the university website should be available;

- well-equipped lecture theatres, classrooms, laboratories should be on hand;

- better supply of textbooks, dictionaries, reference materials should be offered.

Socio-cultural environment recommendations include:

- round-table discussions with supervisors of the halls of residence and   campus student council ("International students in socio-cultural environment of Ukraine", "Ethno-psychological and national cultural peculiarities of international students living in the hall of residence", "Domestic problems of international students and ways of solving them", "Meal arrangement and housekeeping in the hall of residence", "Interethnic and cross-cultural tolerance");

- celebrations of Ukrainian holidays: Christmas (January, 7), Easter (a movable day, May-April), Day of Ukrainian Written and Oral Language (November, 9), Students' Day in Ukraine (November, 17), anniversaries of famous Ukrainians;

- joint visiting Kyiv museums (Museum of Kyiv History; Ukrainian National Museum of Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster; National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War; Museum of Folk Architecture and Life of Ukraine): exhibitions, theatres, visiting red tourist attractions in and around Kyiv (27 museums of Pereiaslav-Khmelnitskii, National Historical and Cultural Reserve "Hetman Capital" in Baturin, National Arboretum "Sofiievka" in Uman);

- joint intercultural training ("Acquaintance", "Etiquette and table manners in Ukraine", "Ukrainian holidays", "Higher education system of Ukraine", "Laws and regulations for international students in Ukraine", "Medical care and health service for international students in Ukraine", "Ukrainian banking system";

- outdoor activities (hiking, cycling, day trips around the city);

- Cultural Resource Centre activities   (giving information about different multicultural and sport events in the university and outside it, supplying with fiction books, magazines, dictionaries, guidebooks and

reference materials; arrangement of fancy balls of national costumes, national music festivals, arrangement of Ukrainian embroidery course, Ukrainian dance course, Ukrainian cooking course; exhibitions of photographs "Ukraine I've seen", "The university I am studying at");

- international sport club activity (joint games sport and competitions, friendly matches).

The implementation of the proposed programme is planned for the fourth stage of the cross-cultural adaptation cycle of the first year study international students. The fifth and the sixth stages (follow-up inquiry, response analysis 2) will take place next year.

Conclusions

This study investigated cross-cultural adaptation of international students at Ukrainian universities. The collected research data allowed to identify the most typical challenges, problems and difficulties of international students faced in their first year of study in Ukraine. The researchers justified the existence of difficulties and problems of international students due to the difference of various cross-cultural aspects. Their analysis resulted in distinguishing 3 main groups: linguistic, academic, socio-cultural. The most crucial problems affecting their adaptation process were ignorance of the Ukrainian language and lack of the cultural competence of the host country. The academic and social problems were also considered to be significant factors for the cross-cultural adaptation. For settling the problem of smooth adaptation to a new cultural environment of international students a cross-cultural programme of activities and recommendations for the university administrative and academic staff, campus staff, students' councils, host country students was designed. The offered cross-cultural programme correlated with the 3 distinguished groups of adaptation problems. They were suggested in the following environments: linguistic, academic and socio-cultural. The programme foresees the cycle of various activities that is planned to take place every year. The new obtained data will allow to add, change and improve the suggested cross-cultural adaptation programme. Its effective implementation is expected to increase the number of international students' enrollment at universities.

Next year the program of adaptation is planned to be introduced. The implementation of the designed cross-cultural adaptation programme, its realization and successive stages of the follow-up inquiry and analysis of the collected information will definitely help international students to adapt to the new conditions of their lives and to study successfully in a new

academic and socio-cultural environment, to make Ukrainian friends, to master the Ukrainian language, to improve the quality of their education.

Limitations of the Research

The sample size of the research is relatively small though it is rather diversified. In a year monitoring should be applied to assess the level of the same group of international students' adaptation and to trace the dynamics of the adapting process. Thus, the obtained information may become the subject of the future research.

In addition with the increasing number of international students from Muslim countries, the researchers can examine the problem of adaptation with a larger sample size of international students from Muslim countries (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Algeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq), to reveal and take a closer look at their needs and difficulties, to interview the students, to learn their suggestions concerning the adaptation process to the new cross-cultural environment, to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information for their future study.

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