

## TEACHING UKRAINIAN AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TUKFL) AT PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY: INNOVATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

<sup>a</sup>RUSLANA SHRAMKO, <sup>b</sup>MYKOLA STEPANENKO,  
<sup>c</sup>SVITLANA PEDCHENKO, <sup>d</sup>LADA PRYIMA, <sup>e</sup>NATALIIA  
KOMLYK

<sup>a</sup>*Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University,  
2 Ostrohradskiy St., Poltava, Ukraine, 36000*

<sup>b</sup>*National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of  
Ukraine, 19 Horikhuvatskyi shliakh St., Kyiv, Ukraine, 03041*

<sup>c</sup>*Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University,  
2 Ostrohradskiy St., Poltava, Ukraine, 36000*

<sup>d</sup>*Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University,  
2 Ostrohradskiy St., Poltava, Ukraine, 36000*

<sup>e</sup>*National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic",  
24 Pershotravneva Avenue St., Poltava, Ukraine, 36011*

email: <sup>a</sup>*shramen1atk02006@gmail.com*, <sup>b</sup>*myk\_ivan@ukr.net*,  
<sup>c</sup>*svpedchenko@gmail.com*, <sup>d</sup>*lada993@gmail.com*,  
<sup>e</sup>*nataly.off1618@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** In this article, the authors have characterized the main directions of methodological search in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language at the present stage: the experience of teaching this course at some Ukrainian institutions of higher education has been analyzed. The potential of teaching Ukrainian on the basis of the methodological approach / language skills / lexical topics has been specified in this paper. The authors have elucidated the criteria offered as indicative for designing textbooks and guidelines for teaching non-native speakers or foreigners. Particular attention is paid to factors that cause significant public response to learning and teaching Ukrainian considering the current geopolitical situation in Europe and in the world. The paper describes current trends in teaching Ukrainian and offers prospects for creating further methodological support.

**Keywords:** teaching Ukrainian as foreign language (TUKFL), methodological principle, language skill, competence, competitiveness.

### 1 Introduction

The intensive integration of Ukraine to the academic, scientific, and cultural discourses of the European society, establishment and promotion of humanistic values, understanding of their utmost weight and significance for upkeeping stability in Europe and the world in general, for preserving and transferring the ethnolinguistic-cultural heritage between the generations led to the Ukrainians reframing and understanding the Ukrainian language as the foundation of the centuries-old history of the Ukrainian nation, defining its specific linguamental code and the sources of the folk wisdom. Teaching Ukrainian as the first and state language in Ukraine opens prospects of reaching to the European scientific accomplishments for the native Ukrainian speakers and the Ukrainian citizens. Moreover, it is going to strengthen both the Ukrainian language itself and the European intercultural links.

Updating the content of the Methodology of Teaching the Modern Ukrainian Literary Language course contributes to the systematization of the lingual material on the synchronic and diachronic levels allowing to review and overhaul the school and university-level teaching content in the Ukrainian literature, history of Ukraine, and world history according to the modern requirements. It has facilitated the deeper study of the literary material, starting from the first samples of folk songs and up to the most modern works dealing with poignant social issues. The content of the world literature course has been overhauled as well showing the common traits shared by the Ukrainian and European cultural development and strengthening the interlingual, intercultural, and international cooperation. Furthermore, it empowers the Ukrainian Euro-integration endeavors.

The immediate motive force of overhauling and "rebooting" the methodologies and technologies of teaching the modern Ukrainian literary language in Ukraine in the last decade is the accumulated database of neuro-psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and TEFL research. This approach is reflected in the increased intensity of comparative lingual country-study research.

Additionally, it allows to extrapolate from the leading pedagogical experience improving the quality of teaching the first language inside the country. It should be noted that the status of English as a language of international communication in Ukraine will be regulated by the Law of Ukraine "On Using the English Language in Ukraine" (Law of Ukraine, 2023), with the relevant bill considered in the first reading of the Supreme Council of Ukraine (Government portal, 2023). It will undoubtedly accelerate the adoption of the European methodological approaches in the national practice enriching the Ukrainian methodology. Even more importantly, higher proficiency in English is going to motivate the methodology theorists and in-service teachers to publish their research in the field of the Ukrainian methodology in the scientific journals of the world getting the other academicians acquainted with the specificity of teaching Ukrainian as the first language at the Ukrainian educational institutions.

### 1.1 The topicality of the research

The increasing interest towards studying the Ukrainian language, ethnic and lingual culture by non-native speakers inside the country has led to allocation of a separate area of the methodological science – the methodology of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language (Authors' note: hereinafter – TUKFL). Its emergence is caused by the modern challenges and the intensifying intercultural communication on the global level. Digitalization of the education process in general and the scientific discourse in particular has greatly increased the need for the existence of this academic discipline as the status of English as a language of international communication provides means for increasing the cooperation between methodologists in Ukraine and teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature in the world.

The war in Ukraine in 2022 and the forced migration of a considerable number of the Ukrainian school pupils / young people to the European countries have triggered the accelerated development and systematization of the methodological foundations of teaching Ukrainian both for native speakers and for speakers of other languages. Specific methodological approaches rely on 1) the official language of the country for relocation; 2) English as a language of international communication; 3) the local language typical for the location where the Ukrainian migrants may reside. A holistic methodological approach needs to be developed in order to organize the process of teaching the Ukrainian school students by the Ukrainian teachers abroad within the framework of «the Ukrainian school». Simultaneously, this course will serve as a roadmap for developing the methodological foundations of teaching Ukrainian as well as academic subjects in Ukrainian to speakers of other languages.

The above-mentioned factors can serve as a valid proof of the importance of establishing and developing the TUKFL course as it can safeguard the Ukrainian language from extinction, open its further linguistic potential and the literary heritage to the world, and highlight its longstanding links with the European humanitarian studies. That is why the issues of 1) "the survival" and further development of Ukrainian as the state language native for millions of citizens, and also 2) increasing its "attractiveness" for the foreigners studying Ukrainian have the unconventional priority in the national language policies which proves the topicality and novelty of these aspects of the research.

### 1.2 Problem stating and analysis of previous studies

Designing an integrated course of TUKFL as a separate academic subject relying on the methodology of teaching the modern Ukrainian literary language is going to be a response to the modern state of the Ukrainian education and a precondition for preserving Ukrainian for the next generations. Meanwhile, the

increase in the number of non-native speakers studying Ukrainian will result in broadening the linguistic repertoire and enriching the lexical stock. Cross-cultural communication and the resulting language interference, the introduction of innovative approaches to teaching different levels of the language all evoke a considerable interest of the Ukrainian methodologists during the last decade. Of no less importance is the need for adapting the techniques used in TEFL for teaching language skills towards the needs of TUKFL. Academics are worried of anglicisms permeating the lexical stock of the Ukrainian language, so effective techniques of working with the Ukrainian lexis are needed to preserve the authenticity of the language.

In the modern Ukrainian studies, Yuliia Laskava (Laskava, 2019) and Bohdana Puhach (Puhach, 2017) research the implementation of innovative techniques of teaching foreign languages. Liudmyla Bereza (Bereza et al., 2021) is exploring the specificity of non-native speakers studying Ukrainian. The interaction of linguistics and methodology in teaching the Ukrainian grammar is the focus of Zoriana Matsiuk studies. Lesia Nazarevych (Nazarevych et al., 2020) gives an insight into the theoretical background and practice of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language using the experience of her Ukrainian university.

The potential of distance learning platforms and methods of their usage at secondary schools and universities of Ukraine is being researched in depth in the recent years. Considering the spread of COVID-19 epidemic in the world and other security risks in Ukraine starting from 2022, detailed methodological recommendations for using ICT for language learning can be regarded as an immediate response for the current challenges: Mariia Bilianska (Bilianska et al., 2021), Lesia Nazarevych (Nazarevych & Nazarevych, 2018), Alla Kulichenko (Levchenko et al., 2022), and Mykhailo Rakhno (Rakhno & Shramko, 2021) research relevant mechanisms of distance learning. Hanna Onkovych (Onkovych et al., 2022) studies the didactic potential of webinars for raising the professional level of language methodology specialists.

Oksana Trumko (Trumko & Horda, 2022) and Iryna Dyrda (Dyrda, 2015) are developing productive approaches towards teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, while Mariia Tsurkan (Tsurkan, 2019) is using the genre approach to teaching languages at medical universities.

It should be noted that skill-based teaching of UkFL has not fully been elucidated in the academic discourse yet, but Halyna Matsiuk (Matsiuk, 2021) is working on some aspects in this area.

The logical outcome of this research should be the design of a complex textbook or methodological guidelines which include techniques and methods of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language. For instance, Halyna Temnyk and Olha Soroka (Temnyk & Soroka, 2020) have created a textbook based on the country-study approach, and Lesia Nazarevych and Natalia Havdyda (Nazarevych & Havdyda, 2017) are using the multi-level approach to teaching UkFL.

The aim of this paper is to outline the modern techniques and approaches to teaching Ukrainian at a pedagogical university and the critical analysis of their methodological potential for TUKFL. Full implementation of this aim requires solving a range of tasks including a) showing the most topical approaches to teaching Ukrainian at the Ukrainian universities; b) describing the use of different teaching techniques in the online mode required by the quarantine restrictions, and later – by the martial law (starting from 24.02.2022); c) offering prospective methods and techniques of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language using the achievements of TEFL methodology and considering the realities of life in Ukraine.

## 2 Materials and Methods

The research is based on the content monitoring method, which allowed to a) select and describe traditional methods of teaching Ukrainian at a pedagogical university; b) to research the competence approach as a background for training a professional linguist (teacher/translator/interpreter). The comparative method is used to highlight the upsides of techniques and technologies in active use at institutions of higher education and to study the range of ICT for teaching Ukrainian online. Content analysis has allowed choosing the selection criteria for the teaching material and types of tasks aimed at forming specific language skills according to TEFL guidelines. Content analysis also lets analyze the modern interactive methods of teaching Ukrainian. The psychological state of the speaker has been studied using the method of psychological experiment, which includes online poll and gradual scaling method of ranging the answers according to language levels, their pragmatic load, and communication skills. The poll conducted within the framework of the study has included 100 students of the first (Bachelor's), the second (Master's) and the third (Doctor of Philosophy) levels of higher education who study Ukrainian as the first language, and 10 foreign students at the pedagogical university. The active stage of the poll took place in 2022-2023, with the results processed from August till October, 2023.

## 3 Results and Discussions

The increasing demands to the quality of education and the level of professional training of the Ukrainian university graduate aimed at raising their competitiveness in the Ukrainian and international job market have led to overhauling the entire range of academic disciplines. Meanwhile, the demand to build the professional career in the multilingual and multicultural environment has caused the critical review and updates of the professional competences of the student – an intending linguist teacher within the framework of educational-professional and educational-scientific programs.

*Competence approach.* Nowadays, the competence approach is the basis for the modern humanitarian training of the student at the Ukrainian pedagogical university as it allows forming the deep theoretical background and teaching practical skills based on the ability of the student to react to changing learning conditions which can further help the student to adapt flexibly to challenges in the professional team. Among the range of important professional traits, the linguacultural competence possesses a special significance, and its development has become especially topical on the edge of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Learning the language is impossible without immersion to the national culture and acquaintance with the national conceptual and lingual worldview, self-identification, cultural icons, and lingual concepts. Improving this competence in the course of methodology of teaching Ukrainian as the state (first) language allows systematizing the nationally-marked structures already known from the childhood, ascertaining their connotation and cases of usage, while the work on this competence within the TUKFL course elucidates the unique nature of the nationally-specific language constructs explaining their etymology to non-native speaker of Ukrainian and foreigners from the perspective of the Ukrainian-European cultural and art interaction and facilitating barrier-free communication in a multicultural professional team.

The digital competence of the graduate of the pedagogical university (the language teacher) is also significant as it provides the possibility of selecting / creating author's multimedia content of country-study and sociocultural nature aimed at teaching the realia of the Ukrainian lingual culture in the distance / blended learning mode including distance learners studying UkFL from abroad. The digital competence of the student includes skills of using the already known information technology instruments and mastering new ones for using the language material on the basis of a) English as a medium; b) native language in case of the common background.

The communicative approach to teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language in close unity with the above-mentioned competences shows a high level of effectiveness. Their complex application allows the student to master the learning material at a deeper level, while simultaneously raising the motivation towards learning Ukrainian. The communicative approach “places the use of language and its functions at the centre of the theory and practice of teaching the second language”, and is subsequently oriented at “the functional criterion of selection and presentation of the language material, its situation- and topic-driven teaching, study of lexis and morphology on the syntactic basis” (Shelest, 2018). A set of communicative tasks with elements of comparative analysis (Ukrainian ↔ English / Ukrainian ↔ L<sub>1</sub>) allows to differentiate between and master the language structures and country-study units (the fund of paremies). As an example, we take this task (the beginner’s level, the lexical topic “Seasons. Weather”): choose 5–7 folk beliefs related to seasons (weather) in English (or the first language), analyze the present nationally-marked lexemes, and explain the semantic differences using the national traditions as a background. (The intermediate level, the lexical topic “Traits of character”): choose one or two traits of character and provide 3-5 synonymous adjectives for describing these traits in Ukrainian and English (the first language), explain the differences. (The proficiency level, the lexical topic “Traits of character”): find 5-7 proverbs / phraseological units to mark the traits of the human character (using the names of animals, plants, or inanimate objects if available) in Ukrainian and English (the first language), explain the differences in their interpretation; (the proficiency level, the lexical topic “National symbols and icons”): create a presentation based on the National list of elements of non-material cultural heritage of Ukraine / non-material heritage of UNESCO (3–5 elements of the student’s choice), provide a short historical background, present 3-5 cultural icons of the English culture (or the culture of the country of the first language), show their historical background, and explain similar and different features (if available); (the proficiency level, the lexical topic “Picturesque landscapes of the country”): create a presentation (if possible – a video review) of 5-7 iconic sites of Ukraine / the United Kingdom (or native locations of the student), characterize their cultural significance using nationally-marked lexical and syntactic units; (the proficiency level, the lexical topic “National Character / Linguacultural Types”): create a description of the Ukrainian national character (2-3 prominent linguacultural types) using the nationally-specific expressions and nationally-marked syntactic structures, outline their strong and weak points, compare them with the description of the national character of the English (first) language.

*Ukrainian for Professional Purposes.* Another topical issue within the framework of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language is teaching Ukrainian for professional purposes which correlates with the CLIL methodology in TEFL. The integration of essential language units with the subject content accelerates the process of learning Ukrainian as it allows the students to get acquainted with the Ukrainian professional terminology and ways of coining terms as well as to review the international equivalents using English and the first language. Thus, it provides knowledge and teaches skills needed for effective work in a multilingual team. Using the methodology of integrated content and language learning on the national Ukrainian background hones the student’s skills of critical analysis providing the interlinguistic parallels between word-building (the analysis of language material), lexical meaning of the terms (semantic features) and its syntactic valence / context (the analysis of the formal grammatical level of the sentence) in Ukrainian / English / the first language. The following lexical topics of the discipline have special significance: “Contributions of the leading figures of the Ukrainian language towards the development of the literary language” (Work of I. P. Kotliarevskyi, T. H. Shevchenko, I. Ya. Franko at establishing the language norms); “Communicative features of speaking / Communicative professiogramme of the speaker” (creating a portfolio of communicative traits of a speaker in a specific field, the analysis of types of dictionaries to be used in a multilingual team for zero-barrier communication); “Public

speaking” (the analysis of pragmatics of a specific discourse, mainly the academic, scientific, and publicist ones, learning the maxims and principles of communication, specific features of using them in the organization of public speaking, the review of the paradigm of the national language formulas, linguistic taboos, specificity of using euphemisms, jargon at the state “Ability to ask questions / ability to answer the questions relevant to the topic of the report”; studying the national communicative etiquette, the history of public speaking in Ukraine, the prominent speakers of the past); “Translation of professional terminology” (analyzing the relevant Ukrainian lexemes in a specific professional field and their contextual combinations, reviewing the most significant terminological dictionaries of Ukrainian). Successful internalization of this material provides a solid foundation for in-depth studies of literary Ukrainian as a foreign language.

*Lingual-ecological approach.* Intensive contacts of Ukrainian with English during the last two decades have resulted in a considerable influx of lexical units in Ukrainian from the topic fields “ICT”, “Food / Drinks”, “Art”, “Sport”, “Social Science”, “Medicine”, etc. Rapid integration of these lexemes to Ukrainian has been caused by a range of factors, the most important ones being a) the development of global tourism and, subsequently, the contacts with other languages and cultures, their “discovery” by the Ukrainians; b) the lack of available equivalents for certain life realia previously unknown to the wide audience in Ukraine; c) COVID-19 epidemic in Ukraine and the resulting acute need for implementation of the university online platforms, using Internet services for distance learning; d) the issue of “language fashion” and the youth slang among teenagers and subcultures when an anglicism, due to its novelty and “attractiveness” replaces its Ukrainian equivalent. The qualitative indicators of borrowings are on the increase, while “the expansion of anglicisms in Ukrainian during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century creates a negative language situation which we deem to be socially dangerous and one causing lingual-ecological disruption and contributing to the increasing verbal aggression” (Shynkar et al., 2022). Considering the above-mentioned trends, a well-balanced response to these dangers for preservation of the authentic lexical stock can be the use of lingual-ecological approach. This approach requires using the lexical fund of the language during the study of each structural level of Ukrainian. It is also topical for teaching language skills in Ukrainian. The following typical exercises can be offered for working with the lexis: (the beginner’s level, the lexical topic “Seasons. Weather”): choose 3-5 synonyms for weather conditions (for instance, *zaviriukha* ‘blizzard’, *vikhola* ‘snowstorm’, *khurdelytsia* ‘winter storm’) in Ukrainian, offer their equivalents in English (the first language) if such are available, explain the differences in semantics; (the beginner’s level, the lexical topic “Garden. Vegetables and Fruits”): choose 5-7 names of fruits and vegetables, name the Ukrainian dishes which can be cooked using them, find their equivalents in English (or the first language), provide the recipe for the favorite dish using these lexical units (if available); (the intermediate level, the lexical topics “Inspiring Fairy-Tale Characters”): describe 2-3 characters of the Ukrainian folk tales whose actions can serve as a role model, explain your motivation for the choice using the authentic lexemes in Ukrainian, find equivalent characters in the English fairy-tales (or fairy tales in the first language of the student), trace the parallels; (the proficiency level, the lexical topic “National Heroes”): offer 3-5 iconic names embodying Ukraine, its national spirit using the authentic lexis, provide their equivalents from the English (national) culture, compare them; (the proficiency level, the lexical topic “Professional Terminology”): select 5-7 professional terms in Ukrainian, find their equivalents in English (the first language), trace the cross-language parallels and the etymology of the units (if available).

*Neuro-linguistic programming.* In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the NLP methodology is one of innovative approaches which allows generating the internal psychological links and stable motivation towards studying Ukrainian by non-native speakers. The implementation of elements of this methodology in lessons allows focusing the attention on key words of the content block,

forming the positive attitude towards them while the analysis of cultural historical constants and the work with the axiological axis (within the framework of lexical topics “Inspiring Fairy-Tale Characters” and “National Heroes” it can be the axis “protagonist – antagonist”, the description of circumstances which made these characters into heroes; while working on the topic “Seasons. Weather” it can be the axis “Weather favorable for living / growing the harvest – weather dangerous for living”, etc.) can be useful for comparative analysis of life realia, the exchange of subjective experience by the participants of the learning process honing their soft skills and ensuring fruitful communication in the academic group or the professional team (Puhach, 2017). In particular, Maria Tsurkan (Tsurkan et al., 2020) studies the importance of the emotional approach in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language (Tsurkan et al., 2020).

*Methodology of synchronous and asynchronous learning.* During the last five years, the implementation of blended learning technologies at the Ukrainian institutions of higher education has opened the prospects of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language using ICT. The learning content can be studied at the time suitable for the student, while the communicative skills can be developed in the form of Zoom / GoogleMeet-conferences or colloquiums analyzing the personal content created by students (a video recording of a monologue on a specific topic, a video recording of public speaking – a report at a virtual / Internet conference with a presentation, etc.), project group work. Nowadays, the work with these online virtual services provides the most opportunities for the individual educational trajectory of the student ensuring the subjective approach in mastering the language material.

*Interactive technologies in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language.* Among the innovative technologies of teaching Ukrainian as L<sub>2</sub>, gamification has acquired a significant popularity as an instrument of properly engaging all the members of the academic group in doing tasks in a relaxed atmosphere or facilitating the exchange of experience during the academic interaction. Using gamification in mini-groups or in an academic group is a key to reducing stress caused by learning the new material and powerful means of forming the positive motivation towards communication with other participants (as an NLP component).

*Coaching* is a productive method of individual or mini-group learning of Ukrainian as a foreign language when the learning of content becomes a subjective responsibility of the student. The implementation of this technology at the Ukrainian universities is done through the completion of individual / creative tasks using the teacher as an adviser and doing a practical course of Ukrainian as a foreign language. This approach optimizes the learning process in terms of time and efforts contributed by the student.

In order to ascertain the potential difficulties in learning Ukrainian as a foreign language, the following questionnaire has been created (Figure 1), where the participants are offered the following questions:

- Which approach to learning Ukrainian is easier for you:
  - formal grammatical (learning the rule – practicing in communication);
  - communicative (communication in which you learn the rules indirectly);
  - immersion (language intensive; NLP, etc.);
  - other (provide your own answer).
- If you learned Ukrainian as a foreign language, which level of the language system would you consider the hardest to master?
  - phonetic;
  - word stress;
  - lexical;
  - morphological.

The following questions aim to detect the presence of positive motivation or to outline the lexical topics most favorable for communication:

3. What makes you feel that your level of language proficiency in Ukrainian (as a foreign language) is increasing?

- I understand audiovisual content better (songs, movies with / without subtitles, audio/video blogs);
- I can understand information content in the city (street signs, advertisement, billboards, etc.);
- I can speak more fluently (in academic and everyday situational environments): I choose synonyms quicker, can use phrasal expressions or idioms, can paraphrase);
- I start to understand the context and implicit information in speech / texts.

4. Which topic(s) is/are the easiest for you to communicate in Ukrainian?

- personal, hobbies, self-development;
- official and business communication, academic communication;
- culture;
- art and literature.

This question determines the probability of using the intermediary language in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language:

5. Do you use any other Slavonic / non-Slavonic language as an intermediate while learning Ukrainian?

- no;
- yes.

This question studies the proximity of teaching Ukrainian / English as a foreign language in language skills:

6. Do you deem it necessary to introduce formal levels of proficiency in Ukrainian as a foreign language (A<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>2</sub>) with detailed description of four language skills?

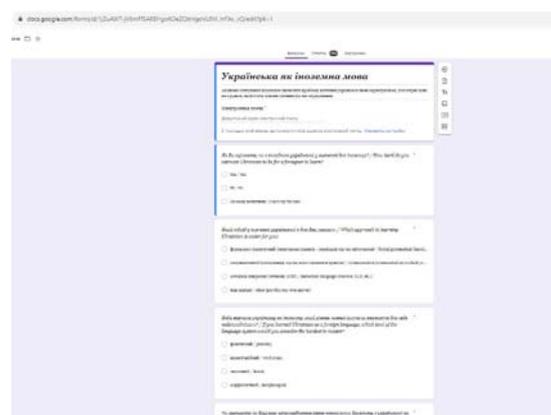
- yes, it would be useful for objective assessment of achievements;
- no, for Ukrainian it is not necessary;
- yes, foreign students should have clear levels of learning achievements presented to them;
- no, it is possible to use the already existing scale for English as a Foreign Language.

The issue of oversaturation of Ukrainian with borrowed lexemes and the attitudes to it are revealed by this question:

7. What is your attitude to words of foreign origin in Ukrainian (for instance, anglicisms)?

- positive, it makes communication with foreigners easier;
- negative, they encumber the Ukrainian language;
- positive, they enrich the language;
- negative, they are just a fleeting fad.

Figure 1 “Ukrainian as a foreign language”



Note: own questionnaire has been managed specifically for the research

The poll results show that 72,8% of the respondents studying Ukrainian as a state language regard it as difficult for non-native speakers. 61,2% of participants state that the communicative approach is the easiest one for a potential learner of Ukrainian as a foreign language. 36,9% of the respondents state that the morphological level of the Ukrainian language structure is difficult for learners, while 35% regard the phonetic level as difficult. 54,4% of participants believe that the introduction of levels of learning achievements (A<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>2</sub>) from the beginner to proficiency is going to be a positive development. 79,6% of the respondents use the oral form of Ukrainian most often, with 67% of them regarding personal, hobbies, and self-development as the easiest topics for communication. The attitude of the students towards the lexical borrowings (primarily, anglicisms) provides interesting results as 54,4% of the respondents regard the borrowings as a positive phenomenon enriching the lexical fund.

#### 4 Conclusions

The current situation in Ukraine and intensive digitalization of the learning process have caused the increase in interest towards teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to non-native speakers and foreigners which is going to contribute to the European integration aspirations of Ukraine and to provide strong links between the Ukrainian language and literary heritage and the European cultural and historical achievements. The need for updating the course of the methodology of teaching the modern literary Ukrainian language is currently caused by the necessity of ensuring effective teaching Ukrainian as the first (state, native) language to the Ukrainian children and youth forced to go abroad starting from 24.02.2022. Of no lesser importance is the search for optimal criteria of creating a textbook in methodology of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language at a pedagogical university in Ukraine.

To sum up, this paper does not cover the entire range of questions raised about the effective methods, methodologies, and techniques of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language opening further prospects for researching the interactive technologies for the TUKFL course.

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**Primary Paper Section: A**

**Secondary Paper Section: AM**