



SECTION: PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES.

SEKCJA: NAUKI PEDAGOGICZNE.

How to cite: Kiyko, S. (2024). The Framework Concept of the Module "Practical Ukrainian Language Course B1" at German Universities. *Horizons of Innovation: Conference on Multidisciplinary Trends in Science 2024*. (pp. 236-241). Futurity Research Publishing. <https://futuraity-publishing.com/horizons-of-innovation-conference-on-multidisciplinary-trends-in-science-2024-2/>

The Framework Concept of the Module "Practical Ukrainian Language Course B1" at German Universities

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Accepted: February 11, 2024 | **Published:** February 28, 2024 | **Language:** English

Abstract: The publication presents the framework concept of the module "Practical Ukrainian Language Course" at level B 1 for foreign students at German universities: studying the grammatical structures of the Ukrainian language, further development of practical skills in using basic vocabulary in everyday situations, and familiarisation with the culture, folk traditions and customs of Ukrainians. The study of the Ukrainian language can be offered in the form of interval language courses. The author points out the lack of didactic materials to meet the demand for Ukrainian language learning in Germany and the need to develop them as soon as possible.

Keywords: Ukrainian as a foreign language, framework concept, level B1, grammatical structures, practical communicative skills, cultural knowledge.

Introduction

Due to the current political situation in Europe, the increase in social contacts between the German-speaking countries and Ukraine and the incipient integration of Ukraine into the EU, the Ukrainian language will play a much greater role in Germany than before. The linguistic treatment of Ukrainian as a foreign language in the various areas (dictionaries, grammars, textbooks) does not currently take this into account. Textbooks on Ukrainian as a foreign language for German-speaking students are mostly intended for the initial stage (A1-A2) and implicitly take into account the information that Ukrainian is the second Slavic language for students, most often after Russian. The studied textbooks have heterogeneous qualitative language content and are based on the grammatical-translation method (Turkevych 2021: 219). Since high-quality modern educational sources that meet the needs of the widest possible range of people and can significantly motivate them to learn Ukrainian are available mainly for A 1 and A 2 levels, it is worth proposing a framework concept for the module "Practical Course of Ukrainian" at B 1 level. Such a module would prepare students for a certified assessment of their level of proficiency in Ukrainian as a foreign language and enable access to knowledge about modern Ukraine through the language.

The choice of Ukrainian as a means of professional growth or expanding one's multilingualism is usually very specifically targeted, e.g., Ukrainian is studied by representatives of diplomatic institutions, scholars researching various Ukrainian issues. Teaching Ukrainian is an important part of Ukrainian studies, and for a student, it can be, for example, a motivation to conduct a more thorough research of the history and culture of Ukraine in Ukrainian (Turkevych 2021: 221). In addition to such examples, of course, Ukrainian is also studied for many other reasons, whether personal or professional.

The subject of research by domestic scholars in the field of Ukrainian as a foreign language is the actual organisational and methodological issues of teaching foreign students Ukrainian: listening skills (Dehtyarova 2019; Klochko 2021), the use of interactive methods in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language Dyman at al. (2023), ways to activate the cognitive activity of foreign students in learning Ukrainian Fomenko (2015), game technologies in teaching Ukrainian Palinska (2015), differentiated organisation of teaching Ukrainian to foreigners Chystyakova at al. (2008) etc. A number of experts Bey, Trostynska (2008) emphasise the differentiation of the content and methods of the Ukrainian language course for foreigners and the need to create separate textbooks for foreign students, taking into account the characteristics of each category. In view of the above, the key issue of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language is to find effective framework concepts for advanced students that would facilitate understanding, sustainable acquisition of new knowledge and the ability to operate fluently with language material.

The purpose of the article is to present the framework concept of the module "Practical Course of Ukrainian" at level B 1: studying the grammatical structures of the Ukrainian language, further development of practical skills in using basic vocabulary in everyday situations, as well as acquaintance with the culture, folk traditions and customs of Ukrainians.

Research Results

Two groups of students at German universities can be identified as the target group for the framework concept of the module "Practical Course of Ukrainian" at level B 1: 1) Students in BA degree programmes from various subject areas who are taking the module as part of general career preparation; 2) Students in Ukraine-related Master's programmes, e.g. Eastern European Studies, who complete the module as part of the compulsory language elective. Previous knowledge should be at level A2 of the CEFR. The prerequisite for learning Ukrainian at level B 1 is successful completion of the basic module 2 or comparable knowledge, to be proven in the placement test. It means, that Module B 1 is aimed at students who have completed the beginners' course or already have a basic knowledge of the Ukrainian language and its grammar.

The aim of Module B 1 Ukrainian as a foreign language is for participants to deepen their grammar, expand their vocabulary and practise four language skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. In general, participants should acquire knowledge and skills in the Ukrainian language that are defined as language level B1 within the framework of the CEFR: 1) understand the main points in the skill "Listening comprehension" when clear standard language is used and when familiar topics are dealt with, 2) in the skill "Reading comprehension", understand texts in which common everyday language is used, 3) in the skills "Speaking" / "Interacting" express themselves simply and coherently on familiar topics and personal areas of interest and describe experiences and events, hopes and goals, give brief reasons or explanations for plans and opinions and participate without preparation in conversations on topics with which they are familiar, 4) in the skill "Writing", write simple, coherent texts on topics that are familiar to them or of personal interest to them. To summarise, students should move from elementary language use (comprehension in simple, routine situations, understanding of frequently used expressions, use of simple grammatical devices) to independent language use.

The transition from A2 to B1 level is characterised by the increasing independence with which course participants can express themselves on familiar topics. Knowledge and reflection on language also gradually take on an increasingly important role here. In addition to the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary required at this language level, this includes in particular the area of pragmatics, i.e. knowledge of the appropriateness of linguistic utterances in certain communication situations. The use of language can be analysed in three dimensions: a functional, a cultural and a critical dimension of language. The functional dimension refers to the linguistic aspects, i.e. the formal correctness of the language. In the context of Module B 1, this means that course participants can, for example, correctly understand the content of narratives or factual texts and produce written communication with a linear structure. The cultural dimension includes appropriate communication in various everyday situations, which refers to intercultural, gender-, age- and hierarchy-specific aspects of communication. The critical dimension includes an understanding of the spoken and unspoken rules within an everyday situation. The three dimensions of language should always be considered throughout the course of the lesson. The last two dimensions in particular involve the selection of appropriate linguistic registers to be used in different situations in everyday life.

Regional studies refer to the cultural characteristics of Ukraine and includes the presentation of regions and traditions. The course participants should get to know authentic texts, music and films, be able to analyse Ukrainian song lyrics and short films and thus promote their own intercultural competence. The language and communication skills at level B1 are taught using content that is relevant for the further integration of participants into the Ukrainian language and culture, such as work, profession, everyday life, lifestyle, leisure, shopping, food and eating habits, Ukrainian festivals and traditions, health, human body, Ukrainian education system, life in big cities, life in the countryside, language learning, global economy and standard of living, facts from Ukrainian history, UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Ukraine.

The topics of everyday life, leisure, shopping, eating, etc. are already covered in the integration course. These areas should be built upon as part of a cyclical learning process, i.e. these topics are taken up again and again and expanded and revisited in a more complex form. Example: In the beginners' course, the topic of "food" is introduced to such an extent that participants at level A2 can talk about their own eating habits using a template. In the B1 course, the topic is deepened to such an extent that participants can understand and edit more complicated texts about national Ukrainian cuisine with many real words and create recipes for national dishes.

The following grammatical topics can be focussed on repetition and consolidation of grammatical material, use of nouns, pronouns and adjectives in the correct case, use of prepositions with different cases, increasing adjectives and adverbs, cardinal and ordinal numbers, verb aspects and past, present and future tenses, the subjunctive and its rules of use, negative constructions and double negation, word formation (suffixes of nouns to express diminution), sentence sequence and sentence structure, use of conjunctions, subordinate clauses (object, attributive, temporal, causal, final, comparative, consecutive, concessive, modal clauses).

The fields of activity in B1 course serve to roughly localise communication situations in the target language country. In addition to the exam-relevant learning objectives, the following content should be covered: 1) learning to learn: dealing with new vocabulary, learning strategies (mnemonics, index cards, visualisation, mind maps, repetition, etc.), 2) familiarisation with different reading techniques and text development strategies (skimming, targeted, intensive vs. active reading; sociograms, brainstorming, word networks, key words, multiple choice tasks, fact sheets, etc.), 3) using and learning with digital media: learning software, platforms and apps. In order to take into account the different learning styles of inexperienced or slow learners and to organise lessons that are as varied and motivating as possible, it is necessary to change the social forms of teaching frequently, use different teaching techniques and different media, such as the scenario method, simulations and role plays (e.g. in the supermarket, in a restaurant, renting a flat, on holiday etc.), station learning, carousel discussions, interchangeable games, vocabulary exercises (mnemonics, flashcards), practising standard sentences, phrases and targeted grammar teaching in the form of (interchangeable) games and pattern drills should be given greater importance.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the framework concept of "Practical Course of Ukrainian" at level B1, provides a comprehensive and structured approach to language acquisition and cultural understanding. The primary objectives of the module encompass deepening grammatical understanding, expanding vocabulary, and honing language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The transition from A2 to B1 involves increasing independence and a focus on language pragmatics, where learners develop an understanding of linguistic appropriateness in various communication situations. The three dimensions of language – functional, cultural, and critical – are integrated into the curriculum, enriching the learning experience. The relevance of the content, covering aspects of work, lifestyle, and history, enhances participants' integration into Ukrainian language and culture. The cyclical learning process builds on everyday topics, ensuring a continuous and comprehensive understanding. Grammatical topics are systematically addressed for repetition and consolidation. The module extends beyond exam-relevant objectives to include essential skills such as learning strategies, reading techniques, and digital media usage. The incorporation of diverse teaching methods makes lessons motivating. In essence, the framework concept not only facilitates language proficiency but also nurtures a holistic understanding of Ukrainian culture, making it a valuable resource for students seeking a practical grasp of the language at the B1 level.

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