

*Dr.habil., Associate Prof.
Nataliia Lazebna
(Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Germany)
Kateryna Moiseenko, Olena Gural, Olena Voskova
(Ukrainian Free University, Munich, Germany)*

THE LANGUAGE OF HAPPINESS WITHOUT BORDERS: INFORMING STATE LANGUAGE POLICY AND FOSTERING MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The «Language of Happiness without Borders» project, developed at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich, Pedagogy Chair, by Kateryna Moiseenko, Olena Gural, and Olena Voskova as the final project for the course «Transcultural Mediation of the Multilingual Educational Environment» taught by Dr. habil. Nataliia Lazebna, represents a significant endeavour that profoundly contributes to both the ethnic and national aspects of state language, educational policy, and multicultural communication [1]. This transcultural multilingual digital initiative not only explores how language shapes identity, home, and happiness but also actively models practices that foster inclusivity and understanding in a globalised world.

Contribution to Ethnic and National Aspect of State Language and Educational Policy

The project's design and core principles offer substantial contributions to shaping more inclusive and effective state language and educational policies, particularly concerning ethnic minorities and national identity within diverse populations.

Firstly, the very creation of the project at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich implicitly underscores the importance of maintaining and supporting ethnic languages and cultural heritage within an international context. For Ukrainian students developing this project, it represents an assertion of their national identity and linguistic heritage while operating within a

broader European academic environment. This demonstrates how educational institutions can facilitate the preservation and promotion of ethnic languages, thereby influencing state policies to recognise and resource such efforts. The project's content being accessible in Ukrainian, German, and English further highlights a practical approach to multilingualism that can inform state language policies, advocating for the integration of multiple languages alongside the state language.

Secondly, «The Language of Happiness without Borders» foregrounds the cognitive and emotional benefits of bilingualism. By highlighting these advantages, the project provides an evidence base that can directly influence educational policy. Traditional state language policies often prioritise monolingualism or the assimilation of minority linguistic groups into the dominant language. However, this project advocates for an approach where bilingualism is seen as an asset, enhancing cognitive functions and emotional well-being. This perspective encourages state educational policies to support bilingual education programmes, mother-tongue instruction, and language maintenance initiatives for ethnic minority children. Recognising children as «natural translators of experience» who express «joy, resilience, and belonging through multiple languages and cultures» provides a powerful argument for educational systems to nurture these inherent linguistic abilities rather than suppress them.

Furthermore, the project directly addresses the needs of «displaced and marginalised learners» by «centering the voices of refugees and migrants». This focus validates their «lived experiences and empowers them to see their own stories as sources of strength». From a policy perspective, this is crucial. State educational policies need to acknowledge and respond to the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of refugee and migrant populations. By providing a platform for these voices, the project illustrates how educational settings can become spaces of empowerment, fostering resilience and belonging.

This contrasts with assimilationist policies that might disregard the cultural identity and linguistic heritage of newcomers. The project demonstrates how creative expression preserves cultural identity and emotional well-being, particularly for displaced communities. This insight is vital for educational policymakers designing curricula and support systems that cater to the holistic needs of diverse student bodies, ensuring that ethnic identities are not only tolerated but celebrated and integrated into the national fabric through education. The project's interdisciplinary nature, bridging «art, dance, philosophy, media studies, and cultural theory», also offers a model for broader educational reform that moves beyond traditional subject silos to embrace cultural understanding and personal development. This contributes to a vision of education that actively supports diverse ethnic identities and encourages critical reflection on the role of language and culture in society, thereby shaping more comprehensive and inclusive national educational policies.

Contribution to Multicultural Communication

«The Language of Happiness without Borders» is intrinsically designed to enhance multicultural communication by leveraging multilingualism and art as primary conduits for understanding and connection. As established in our previous conversation, multilingualism acts as «a bridge, a memory, and a source of strength», which is foundational to effective communication across diverse cultures.

At its core, the project is a «transcultural multilingual digital project that deeply explores how language shapes our fundamental sense of home, happiness, and identity». This exploration directly facilitates multicultural communication by fostering transcultural literacy and empathy. By delving into shared memories and linguistic experiences that connect people across «geographical and cultural divides», the project explicitly promotes understanding between different cultural groups. It helps individuals appreciate how others perceive the world

through their linguistic and cultural lenses, which is essential for meaningful dialogue. The project encourages «a deeper understanding of identity in a globalised world and fostering connection through shared experiences of war, adaptation, and belonging». These shared experiences form the basis of empathetic multicultural communication, allowing individuals from different backgrounds to relate to one another on a human level.

The accessibility of the project's content in Ukrainian, German, and English is a practical demonstration of its commitment to inclusive global dialogue. By providing content in multiple languages, it removes linguistic barriers that often impede multicultural communication. This approach ensures that the messages of resilience, adaptation, and belonging can reach and resonate with a broader audience, encouraging participation from various linguistic communities. This multilingual approach makes the project a model for how information and narratives can be shared effectively across cultural and national borders, fostering a sense of shared humanity rather than division.

Furthermore, the project's use of «creative multimedia tools – including visuals, video art, animation» plays a crucial role in enabling multicultural communication, especially in sensitive contexts. As noted in our previous discussion, the «non-verbal, multimedia format is especially accessible for individuals experiencing trauma or transition». This means that complex emotions and experiences, which might be difficult to articulate verbally or across language barriers, can be conveyed and understood through art. Art transcends linguistic boundaries, offering a universal language that allows for emotional expression and reception. This is vital for communicating across cultures where direct verbal exchanges might be challenging due to trauma, limited shared language, or cultural nuances. It provides a means for «self-reflection and emotional intelligence through personal narratives and artistic expression», which

are foundational elements for empathetic communication. By «centering the voices of refugees and migrants», the project actively facilitates communication from often-marginalised groups to host communities and the wider global audience. It offers a platform for their stories to be heard and understood, thus enabling a more balanced and authentic form of multicultural communication where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated. The exploration of happiness as an «evolving experience, found in healing, connection, and celebration through creative and multilingual storytelling» further nurtures a shared understanding of fundamental human experiences that cut across cultural differences.

In conclusion, «The Language of Happiness without Borders» functions as a holistic learning space that not only offers profound insights into the interplay of language, identity, and happiness but also provides tangible models for enhancing ethnic and national aspects of state language and educational policy and fostering multicultural communication. Through its celebration of multilingualism, its embrace of diverse ethnic narratives, and its innovative use of art as a universal communicator, the project actively contributes to shaping a more inclusive, empathetic, and harmoniously interconnected global society.

References

1. Without Borders. (n.d.). Homepage. Google Sites. <https://sites.google.com/view/without-borders/homepage>

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