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## **ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN UKRAINE'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL SPACE**

Within the European educational space English functions as a universal medium of communication in academia, research, and professional life. It is the dominant language of scientific publications, international conferences, and educational programs. European universities widely offer courses and degrees in English, enabling cross-border cooperation and exchange. For closer integration with the European Union, mastering English is essential for full participation in academic and professional networks.

Higher education is perceived by Ukrainians as a way to achieve professional distinction, economic independence, and freedom. Current Ukrainian high school graduates frequently choose a university with a competitive field of study, affordable international outreach programs, quality international credentials, and strong international partnerships. The integration movement of Ukraine into the European Union is the strategic direction of Ukraine's development. The process of European integration is accompanied by the formation of joint educational and scientific spaces and by the development of joint criteria and standards shared throughout Europe [1].

In the context of Ukraine's active integration into the European community the role of the English language has become more significant. As the *lingua franca* of modern Europe, English serves as a connection between Ukrainian education, and science within wider European and global academic context. It facilitates international cooperation, academic mobility, and access to global knowledge, making it a key factor in Ukraine's educational modernization and European integration. Not only the changing political reality and the globalized economy, but also transformations within the academic environment itself have prompted European universities to abandon the monolingual approach and welcome other languages to their institutional structures. The increasingly dominant role of the English language in research has made it necessary to introduce it as a language of instruction. Moreover, the growing demand for international mobility among students and academic staff has made educational programs open linguistically and culturally to various target groups both in Ukraine and many European countries.

The importance of the English language for ensuring and expanding individuals' access to educational and professional opportunities is recognized by Ukraine and reflected in a number of national strategies and initiatives, where English proficiency plays a central role. These include recognition of the need to ensure the competitiveness of Ukrainian scholars and graduates at both national and international levels; the pursuit of the internationalization of higher education; academic and educational integration

programs within the EU; the mandatory study of English in primary and secondary education; the study and application of experience gained through the “English for Universities” project, which supported the introduction and dissemination of English for Specific Purposes and English-medium instruction in universities; the adoption of the National Curriculum Framework for English for Specific Purposes for use in Ukrainian universities; the dissemination of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for assessing English proficiency in Ukraine; and the identification of foreign language learning, particularly English, as a priority of domestic policy in Ukraine’s strategic documents [2].

Foreign language learning, English in particular, plays a crucial role in the process of European integration, which involves the integration of the European countries into a unified political and economic system. The following principles [3] of foreign language learning are influenced by the need for effective communication, intercultural understanding, and cooperation among member states: 1. communication focus (the primary goal of foreign language learning in the process of European integration is to develop effective communication skills); 2. cultural competence (to foster intercultural understanding and cooperation, foreign language learning emphasizes the exploration of the target culture. Learners are exposed to the customs, traditions, history, and values of the countries whose languages they are studying); 3. European dimension (it involves learning not only the official languages of the European Union, but also the languages of neighboring countries and regional minority languages); 4. practical application (learners are encouraged to apply their language skills in real-life situations, such as through immersion programs, study abroad opportunities, or internships in other European countries); 5. collaborative learning (foreign language learning encourages collaborative learning environments where learners can interact with each other and with native speakers of the target language) [ibid.]

Proficiency in English significantly increases Ukrainian students’ and researchers’ competitiveness on the European and global labor markets. It allows them to publish in international journals, participate in research collaborations, and engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue. Furthermore, English-language proficiency contributes to the development of soft skills such as critical thinking, global awareness, and cultural adaptability — qualities essential for success in the 21st-century knowledge economy.

At the next stage of Ukraine’s integration into European educational and cultural structures, the issue of training specialists capable of successfully implementing the process of cooperation between Ukraine, Europe, and the world at large becomes a top priority. One of the most important conditions for achieving this goal is the need to equip young professionals with the skills and abilities for professional communication in a foreign language—primarily, the ability to conduct business negotiations, both oral and written, in English [4].

English, as a lingua franca, plays a vital role in Ukraine’s integration into the European educational space. It opens doors to academic cooperation, professional development, and intercultural understanding. Ukraine must continue to invest in foreign language education, teacher training, and international cooperation. Encouraging

bilingual or multilingual learning environments will also help preserve national identity while embracing global engagement. By strengthening English language education and promoting international academic partnerships Ukraine not only moves closer to European standards but also reinforces its position as an active and equal participant in the global educational community.

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