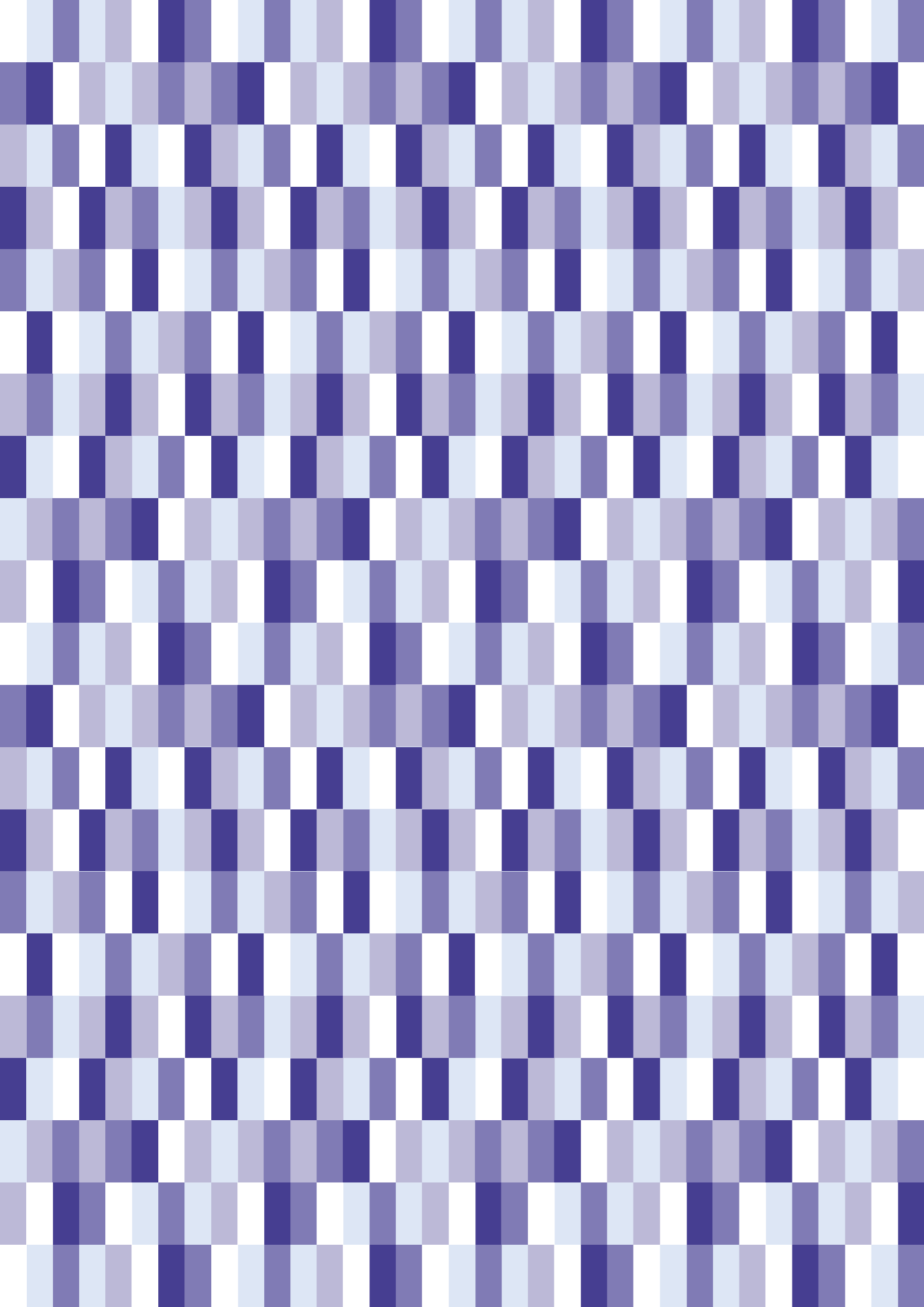




Far from the war

Working with refugee children in English classes as part of the Teaching English in Poland program



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Warsaw 2023
ISBN 978-83-954635-3-2

Not for sale

Authors: Prof. Grażyna Czetwertyńska, Prof. Alicja Gałązka, Urszula Legawiec,
Anna Machocka, Ulyana Buzenko, Aleksandra Kujawska

Editor-in-chief: Anna Grabowska PhD
Editing: Anna Grabowska PhD
Editor Consultant: Małgorzata Janaszek-Bazanek

English Translation by Tymoteusz O'Neill
Proofreading and Revision: Rafał Bazanek

Design, Type-setting & Illustrations: Paweł Kłudkiewicz

Photographs: The Kosciuszko Foundation – Fundacja Kościuszkowska Polska

Publisher & Program Organiser:
The Kosciuszko Foundation Poland – Fundacja Kościuszkowska Polska
ul. Kopernika 11/8, 00-359 Warszawa
email: teip.pl@thekf.pl
www.kfpoland.org

This publication has been possible thanks to the grant received in 2022 from the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE) under the Project of „Language education as an important part of developing the key competencies of the TEIP program participants in the context of educational challenges in Poland 2022.”

The publication reflects only the standpoint of authors. FRSE waives all responsibility for the contents.

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Introduction

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Kosciuszko Foundation invited children from Ukraine to the Teaching English in Poland program's summer language camps. These were both children from families who had left the country engulfed in war, as well as students living in the western part of Ukraine, relatively close to the border, coming to Poland for a short vacation away from the war. In fact, they were not far from that war. That's why the title of this publication seems to be an overstatement, but it is meant to emphasize the intentions of the organizers and American teachers, who wanted to help the students to forget about the war, at least for a while.

The experience of the TEIP camps in working with children with special educational needs gave hope that we succeed in completing this difficult task. The teachers were not alone in their search for ways to provide children with a good, peaceful, and, in addition, useful vacation. They were supported by psychologists and educators from Poland and the US. From the beginning, we knew that the atmosphere of kindness, openness, and tolerance, long practiced and nurtured in the TEIP program, would be immensely helpful.

Ulyana Buzenko, who has contributed one of the articles, accompanied Ukrainian teenagers on two editions of the program. She writes about the search for joy, friendship, and peace. Many participants in the camps had witnessed the war; many had lost contact with friends; many had to wake up to telephone warnings of bombing even during the camp. It was difficult to move away from the topic of war, which is why Ukrainian participants appreciated even a temporary sense of security through the opportunity to participate in attractive activities and by playing games.

The participation of students from Ukraine was a challenge for both the Polish and American staff, but also an important experience for Polish students. Openness to another culture and the ability to cooperate, establish good relationships, and learn from each other are key skills that are also listed among the TEIP goals. In addition, these experiences can be applied during a normal school year, with more Polish schools having to deal with migrant students.

In Urszula Majcher-Legawiec's article, we find the theoretical background for working with children in crisis, with the experience of migration. Some of them are particularly applicable to TEIP camps. This is the case, for example, with the pedagogy of adventure and the possibility of 'switching' from survival mode to personal development mode. Personal development and the opportunity to succeed are a daily feature of vacations with TEIP, as are kindness, smiles, and a willingness to help each other during joint activities. Evidence and examples of how much has been achieved can be found in the comments of participants and videos from the 2023 edition of TEIP, which I encourage you to watch.

Grażyna Czetwertyńska

President of The Kościuszko Foundation Poland



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About the Teaching English in Poland program

Aleksandra Kujawska

The Teaching English in Poland (TEIP) program implemented by the Kosciuszko Foundation is a form of English language promotion among Polish youth. It combines leisure with improving English language skills and learning about the elements of US culture. The formula of the summer or residential camp has basically remained unmodified for 30 years: we offer an opportunity to improve English under the supervision of experienced American teachers during a two-week vacation camp. In the mornings, there are usually classes in groups formed according to language proficiency level and age, while the afternoon consists of workshops in groups that bring together young people with similar interests and talents. American teachers and their assistants conduct interactive classes in English that allow Polish students to enrich their vocabulary related to US culture, history, geography, customs, and traditions. It's a time when young people learn to talk about their emotions, express their opinions, and discuss a song or movie. They can talk about basically any topic. There is only one condition: you have to speak English. American teachers are recruited by the Kosciuszko Foundation team in New York. It's an open-ended process, with the idea of teaching English as an essential component. In language classes, the emphasis is on developing and improving communication skills and, above all, on breaking down barriers that can prevent pupils from speaking English. "The biggest benefit of participating in the TEIP program is learning without the pressure imposed by school. Students learn so much in two weeks. Without even realizing they are gaining knowledge. We focus

on the practical use of English," says Kristin Miller, TEIP volunteer leader, about our method of work. We strive to ensure that camps conducted as part of the TEIP program are the result of close cooperation between Polish and American staff members. This allows us to introduce qualitative changes both in the methodology of language teaching and in the preparation of Polish and American staff to work together at the camp. This yields better educational results and greater student and parent. We hope that this will result in increased interest from other centers in joining the TEIP program and that the camps will become an attractive offer for volunteers, who will be able to improve their inter-cultural dialogue, linguistic, and so-called soft skills. For each language camp, a team of more than a dozen teachers and assistants from the US arrives in Poland. Its leader is responsible for the preparation of the language curriculum and its smooth implementation. The Polish camp manager is responsible for all activities carried out at the camp. The staff consisting of Polish tutors and teachers also reports to the Polish head. Since 2018, TEIP has been undergoing major changes. First of all, we are adapting it to the dynamic social and economic situation in Poland. We hope to spread our offer primarily to students from outside of metropolitan areas, where opportunities for meeting a native English speaker are significantly limited. The Kosciuszko Foundation Poland team not only seeks to establish cooperation with more schools and community organizations but also systematically standardizes TEIP's curricula, evaluation methods, and the conditions of participation for students and volunteers. One could conclude that the TEIP program

is in a constant process of change, which is obvious if we consider that we are teaching about two countries (Poland and the US) whose society, culture, and economic situation are also constantly evolving.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE TEIP PROGRAM

Cultural exchange:

- Enabling financially disadvantaged children and young people from Poland to immerse themselves in the English language and American culture;
- Familiarizing Polish children and young people with various aspects of American life and culture;
- Acquainting American teachers with Poland and its culture, history, and traditions in the hope that their knowledge and impressions will be passed on to their students, families, friends, and communities in the United States;
- Encouraging local communities in Poland to host American volunteers and share their own experiences with them;
- Promoting an open approach to cultural and social diversity among both the Polish and American communities.

Developing the social skills of camp participants:

- Formation of civic attitudes and intercultural competencies, including diplomacy, social and cultural awareness and expression, as well as responsibility and commitment;
- Developing key competencies of the future, such as cooperation, problem solving, creativity, innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, agency, and autonomy

Developing language skills:

- Providing Polish children and young people with a variety of experiences with the English language in the American cultural context;
- Improving and developing the communication skills of camp participants;
- Engaging all language skills to ensure interactive communication in the English language;
- Providing interdisciplinary learning opportunities that utilize the English language as a tool to develop Polish campers' skills in math, science, technology, sports, music, literature, and art;
- Developing students' confidence in using English on a daily basis.



Professional development of teachers:

- Improving the teaching and methodological competence of Polish and American staff of the language camps;
- Mutual learning and observation of the teaching methods used;
- Establishing contacts between Polish and American educators to develop the cooperation and intercultural competence of both educators and campers;
- Enabling Polish teachers and assistants to enhance their English proficiency;
- Creating, updating and developing teaching resources that can be used and adapted by TEIP camp staff and other English teachers.

The main principles of cooperation in the TEIP program

1. Provide adequate infrastructure for teaching groups of up to 20.
2. Provide the residential camps with accommodation, adequate sanitary facilities, and a canteen for Polish and American students and staff.
3. Supply educational materials, teaching aids and art tools that were agreed upon by both parties in advance.
4. Provide transportation for a group of volunteers from the United States from the airport and to the airport on their return flight.
5. Ensure members of the American personnel have liability insurance.
6. Organize a 3-day trip for American volunteers after the language classes and pay all costs of the trip.
7. Ensure there are Polish educators, preferably English language teachers.
8. Appoint a Polish teacher to serve as the head of the Polish staff, and allow the head of the American staff to contact this person. •

7
camps in 2023

79
days of having fun together in 2023

210
Ukrainian children participated in the camps in 2023

400
Polish children participated in the camps 2023

66
American volunteers taught during the TEIP camps in 2023

TEACHING ENGLISH IN POLAND – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

American staff leaders

Experienced volunteers, managing the American staff on their respective camps. They are responsible for communication with Polish organisers, working alongside with the Kosciuszko Foundation during the camp preparation phase as well as supervising the organization and teaching activities.

Volunteers

American volunteers from all walks of life and of many different professions. They come to Poland to teach English to Polish students, as well as actively spend time with them. Among our volunteers there's of course a lot of teachers, but also professional pastry chefs, yoga teachers or former FBI agents. During TEIP camps they not only teach English as a foreign language in a classroom, but also give cooking lessons, play sports, do arts and crafts but also provide children with knowledge on how to collect... fingerprints.

Polish organizers

A school/local government body/NGO responsible for the organization of TEIP camp in Poland as well as contacts with the Kosciuszko Foundation.

Polish Staff

Polish teachers working hand in hand with the American volunteers during camps. Experienced and enthusiastic educators, they teach classes, organize sport lessons and events, do arts and crafts and take the participants out for trips and themed events.

TEIP summer camp

Almost two weeks of good fun and learning English from American volunteers and Polish teachers. Active recreation and immersive English learning all day long, even during the meals, playtime and free time.

Task based learning

Its main focus is to „submerge” the student in the language by using it not only during class, but also extracurricular activities! Students go over their fear of speaking by simple everyday interactions. By talking to the volunteers about their hobbies and interests, the schedule or simply by asking them to pass the salt during lunch – they're practicing without even knowing it!

Teacher assistant

Teacher assistants are younger volunteers working alongside their more experienced colleagues.

Post TEIP camp trip for American volunteers

After the TEIP camp is over, American volunteers get some well-deserved rest as they go on a trip around Poland for a few days. They get to see more of Poland's beautiful scenery, historic sites as well as lively cities.

“

There is no subject more difficult than the process of true integration, creating community, making friends in a linguistically, culturally, religiously diverse environment. [...] Integration must be a multi-track process: I know who I am, I know who we are, I know who you are. It's not about someone fitting in with others, but finding their place.

Anna Machocka
'Spring' project coordinator



Teaching and learning in the face of conflict

Alicja Gałązka

Teachers need to know how to behave in a crisis situation, such as war, how to support the students who suddenly joined their classes, and how to integrate them with the group.

After three years of bouncing from one COVID-19 variant to another, the Ukraine situation put people on the edge and left many across the world feeling stressed and anxious. The global pandemic had already taken a devastating toll on mental health, and the news of the war has only compounded the feelings of fear and uncertainty, which led to increased anxiety.

People far from the conflict in Ukraine may be wondering why their mental health is suffering as a result of the news and images they're seeing. Part of this can be explained by the fact that our brains are designed to scan for threats to protect us from potential danger. This can lead to an almost unstoppable, constant scouring of the news to help us prepare for the worst – a phenomenon many might know better as “doom scrolling”.

Wars obviously alter the psychological health of populations directly exposed to their violence. People suffer from depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia (according to the report prepared by the WHO). The outbreak of war in Ukraine has affected us all and will affect us for a long time to come. It is understandable to experience different feelings, worries, and fears. Fear is a natural feeling that warns people of dangers and threats (Jüttemann, 2013).

The feeling of anxiety alerts the body and causes a stress reaction, which increases adrenaline excretion. The affected person starts assessing the danger of a situation and their options for action in order to be able to take appropriate defensive mea-

asures. These typically consist of reactions such as flight, waiting, or attack. There are physical and emotional symptoms of anxiety that can cause panic attacks. The physical and somatic manifestations of anxiety can include the following: breathlessness, feelings of panic, chest pain, an increased or irregular heart rate, stomach aches, indigestion, headaches, insomnia, and many more. Psychologically, it can cause dissociative disorders such as depersonalization and emotional hibernation – the experience of feeling unreal, detached, and often unable to feel emotions.

Compared to the shocking events in Ukraine, the states of mind of people living in different countries seem of little significance, and it is difficult not to feel guilty when our daily lives remain unchanged. However, this can cause a very dangerous syndrome called the syndrome of the privileged, which often leads to neglecting one's own needs and not taking care of one's own resources. Being trapped in guilt also prevents us from acting.

The war in Ukraine is having a devastating impact on families, especially children of different ages. As the people are desperate for safety, many of them have managed to flee, and there are more and more Ukrainian students in different schools across Europe.

Teachers need to know how to behave in this crisis situation, how to support the students who suddenly appeared in the classroom, and how to integrate them with the group. It is not an easy task as each student is different and has a different situ-

ation, and teachers have to show empathy, pedagogical intuition, and tact.

So, what can you do as a teacher?

It is worth thinking about how to communicate in the classroom without using words, as Ukrainian kids might not understand neither the teacher nor their peers. It is good to rely on non-verbal communication strategies first, such as drawing or miming.

- You may ask your students to share and discuss a color, a symbol, or an image that represents how they are feeling.
- Students can mime what they feel using cards or gestures.
- You can create a box of fears where everybody can put a slip of paper with a written or drawn fear they are experiencing.
- You can use picture and story books to help children understand relevant concepts and think about their treatment of others.
- You can use drama, roleplays, metaphors and symbols to talk about difficult issues.
- You can make a gratitude jar where students and teachers can insert their statements of what they are grateful for (little things that they experience every day).

It is important to find time and listen when a child wants to talk, without pushing it. Sometimes pupils will not want to talk; they might be in the hibernation state, or they have copied the stress and do not want to come back to it. Avoid making assumptions about students' experiences and let them know that you are available to talk if needed. Developing a class contract

with clear rules that can be applied in crisis situations in the classroom can be useful, as can trying to be flexible and tolerant as much as possible. As with all difficult topics, teachers should be aware of the emotional impact the events have on students, so they need to pay close attention to students who may have family members in the conflict regions, and who might be worried about how this crisis might impact them here. Teachers need to provide a safe venue for students to process their emotions, ask questions, and be given context to understand current events as they happen. Noticing students' strengths, their pride in their culture, their resilience, and the contributions they make to the school community seems to also be very beneficial.

It is a very demanding situation for all of us, and nobody, especially teachers, will be able to handle the diversity of problems they have been facing without taking care of their own personal resources. In stressful situations, we need a lot of good energy to support our system and our emotions. It is extremely important to learn how to build emotional resilience, sometimes called emotional agility, which is the ability to bounce back emotionally from stressful situations. First of all, accept the feelings and thoughts that come up; all of them are important, even the difficult ones. Acceptance helps to deal with difficult matters.

Avoid cognitive traps such as catastrophic thinking or tunnelling. Stop hanging in your thoughts, live in the moment, appreciate little things, and control things you can control. It will give you a sense of agency.

It is essential to remember that there is no helping others without self-care and self-compassion. Allow yourself to ask for help and believe in goodness. •

Professor Alicja Gałązka Psychologist, linguist, licensed coach, trainer and educator. Academic employee of the University of Silesia. Expert in drama – a method used in education, interpersonal training, management and therapy. Founder and director of the FUTURE Education Center. Coordinator of two sections of Psychology in ELT and Drama in ELT at IATEFL Poland.

The above article was written by the author for OUP Global following a February 2022 webinar organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Ukraine for teachers from British schools that had begun to receive an influx of Ukrainian students: <https://teachingenglishwithoxford.oup.com/2022/06/27/teaching-learning-in-the-face-of-conflict/>



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TEIP program is not just about imparting language skills; but fostering cultural exchange, personal growth, and global awareness. My empathy, understanding, and love grew even stronger for teachers, underserved children, and most importantly, the humans of Ukraine. It showed me a greater side of love for strangers and the capacity for kindness to heal the hearts of many, including yourself.

Angelique Marya Bolding
TEIP camp volunteer
in Baszonia Dolna

I'm here because I can't be at home

Urszula Majcher – Legawiec

Understanding the situation of a child/person/family/community with refugee experience requires empathy, on the one hand, and knowledge, on the other.

The biography of a child with refugee experience is the biography of a sudden turn. An unexpected turn, responsible for new emotions, which are disproportionate in their strength and vector to the child's psyche, and which threaten their health. The way children perceive the situation corresponds to their respective experiences and cognitive abilities. The situation itself does not.

The gap between what a refugee child can handle and what he or she must handle would be a challenge for any adult. In the case of a child who ends up in school, that adult is a teacher, educator, or, in many schools, an intercultural assistant. Their role can be all the more important, the greater the crisis a refugee family is going through.

Understanding the situation of a child/person/family/community with refugee experience requires empathy, on the one hand, and knowledge, on the other. For the latter reason, it is useful to learn about the concept of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Crisis Situations, or MHPSS. MHPSS is the term used in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Crisis, which refers to all support shown to people to protect and promote well-being, prevention, and treatment of mental illness. The MHPSS' concept is represented by the pyramid of interventions below.

The concept of mental health support developed by the IASC applies to, primarily, crisis situations, but the concept can also be successfully used in non- or pre-crisis

settings, especially if working in an environment of people/children with migration experience. The experience of migration is often mentioned as a risk context, and migrants, refugees, and people on the move are identified as a group at risk of marginalization¹. Activities, including mental health support, still seem insufficient in Polish schools. The consequences of a lack of support can be particularly severe for children and adolescents, as it disrupts cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development and can have an adverse impact on their future, including their educational biography. This applies equally to the so-called 'host environment,' i.e. Polish students in a Polish school, as well as students with migration or refugee experience. The school is an entity that can effectively undertake support activities in accordance with their cultural, social, and educational needs. It is obliged to this support by the provisions of law² and should differentiate and carry out this support systematically (not incidentally). Methods of establishing and communicating these support processes are discussed, for example, in the Key Concepts and Best Practices in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)³.

Given the tasks carried out in the education system, the school's activities completed by teachers, school psychologists, intercultural assistants, and parent committees) should focus on the second and possibly third levels of intervention: social and family support and targeted, non-specialized support conducted by professionals. Support in these areas will foster the

building of children's and adolescents' resilience, i.e. the ability to adapt positively, build social ties, and deal effectively with adversity and high-stress⁴.

Resilience is a skill that provides an individual with a sense of stability - it supports functioning, and well-being. At the same time, it provides an opportunity for development, especially with social support, despite external difficulties. Careful and thoughtful psychosocial support and integration can lead to trusting relationships. We assign a key role in this concept to adults, who must build their credibility in the eyes of the participants: intercultural assistants, that is, people who know the language and culture of the child's country of origin and the language and culture of the country of residence/education, and teachers. A sense of security, trust, and credibility can facilitate an in-depth diagnosis of the child's needs. Group activities, carried out together in a linguistically and culturally diverse environment, can improve the well-being of each participant through involvement in tasks adapted in degree of difficulty to their intellectual and psycho-physical abilities. A sense of inclusion and belonging will help participants rebuild a sense of agency, strengthen social ties, and provide a sense of collective identity.

The balance between the basic processes carried out in school: teaching, education, and care is not insignificant in this case. The common denominator for all three can effectively be play, implemented in the spirit of adventure pedagogy.

Adventure pedagogy, outdoor pedagogy, experiential pedagogy, or experiential learning are terms that can be seen as synonyms for a method that had its origins in the 1930s. Considered the father of this method, German pedagogue Kurt Hahn (1886-1974) addressed teachers with, among other things, the following demands:

1. Give young people the opportunity to discover themselves;
2. Ensure that young people experience failure and success;
3. Create/give time for silence and a place to gather;
4. Exercise the power of imagination, foresight and planning skills⁵.

The realization of these demands requires appropriate methods, including games, activities, and experiments, through which the individual's personal and social competencies are developed, such as communication, cooperation, assuming roles in a group, and analyzing and adjusting action strategies to suit the intended goal. Personal development occurs in and through the group, which is why it is so important that these activities are designed as team activities and outside the school walls. Adventure pedagogy and outdoor education are methods of teaching students informally, with a plan regarding the direction, but without providing particular solutions for accomplishing the task. They shape life attitudes, foster relationship building and openness, and provide opportunities to learn social-emotional competencies. Among the most important goals achievable through adventure pedagogy are:

1. confronting a problem, a conflict,
2. help in understanding yourself and your situation,
3. acquiring initiative and responsibility,
4. self-esteem, a sense of dignity,
5. making one's own self-assessment more realistic,
6. acquiring awareness of one's own body and physical capabilities,
7. working on values,
8. realizing their role and importance in the group,
9. personality development, maturity⁶.

Part of the pedagogy of adventure is the 'chance for success', even if one has to experience failure along the way. Success is defined and experienced individually and, if responsibly designed, can be decisive for the 'switch' from survival mode, characteristic of a crisis situation (migration, refugeeism), and into the development mode. Success boosts self-esteem, security and – which is highly important for newbies – the feeling of belonging to a particular group. Therefore, sharing adventures, joint problem-solving, and the search for solutions promote the integration process and have a team-forming character. The integration process implemented on the basis of the principles of adventure pedagogy can bring other benefits, including,

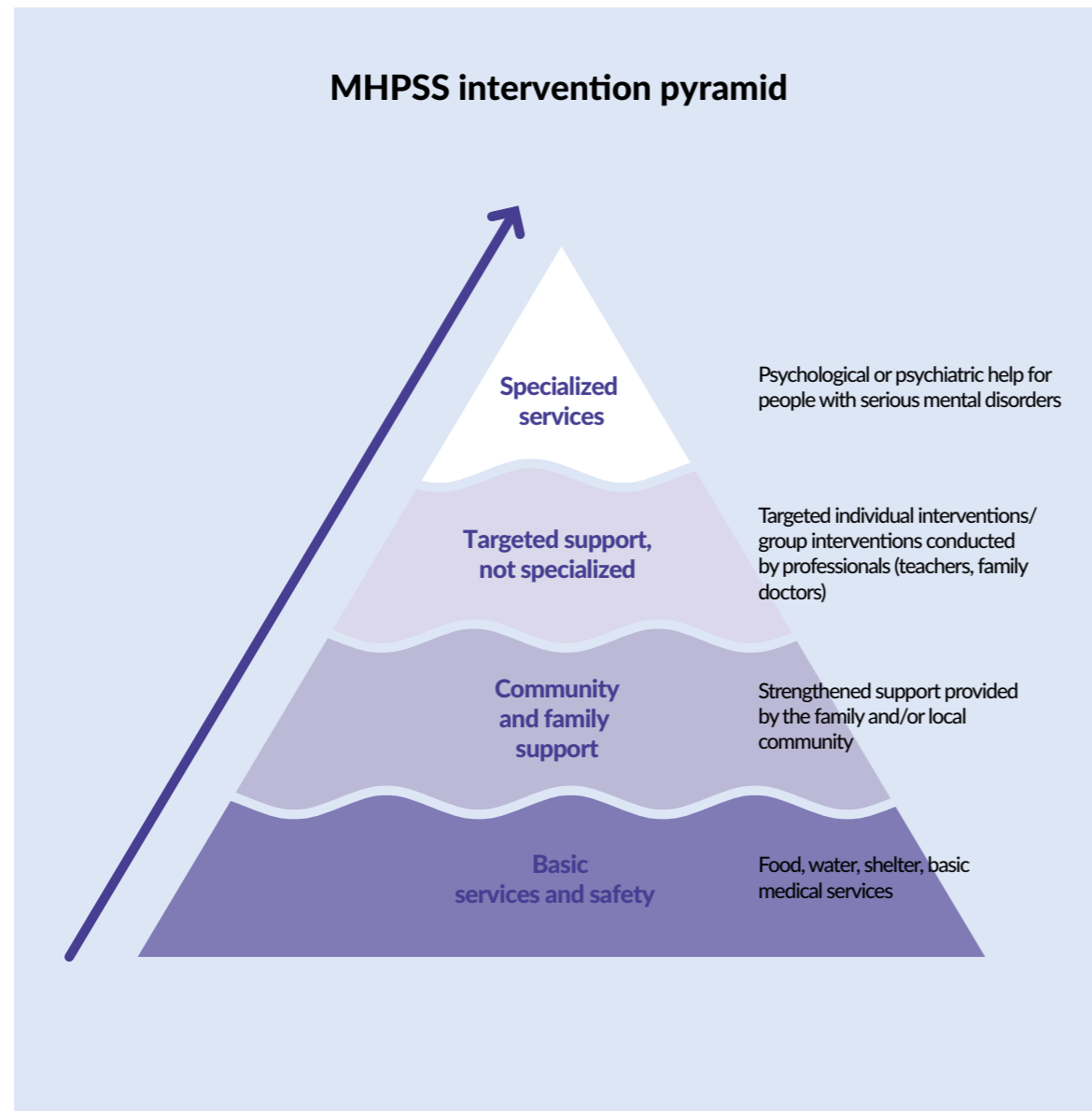


Figure 1: MHPSS intervention pyramid. Source: Key concepts and best practices in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92937>

for example, reducing tensions and stress (in any child, not only that caused by migration or refugeeism), speeding up the return to normality, and reducing the gap between what a refugee child can cope with and what he has to cope with. •

Urszula Majcher – Legawiec Teacher, lecturer of Polish as a foreign/second language. Doctoral student at the Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw. In Krakow, she implements training courses on intercultural education. President of the M. Rej Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language. Author of many programs and publications in the field of integration of foreigners.



“

Children seek support especially during wartime. They want to feel that someone can give advice, praise their success. And they still remain children, eager to explore something new and interesting. Therefore, participation in such a project can be considered a kind of therapy for them.

Ulyana Buzenko
Ukrainian teacher at TEIP
camp in Olsztynek

The integration process in practice. Selected tools and concepts for supporting foreign children

Urszula Majcher – Legawiec

Many NGOs, including the Kosciuszko Foundation as part of its Teaching English in Poland program, have taken steps to equip teachers, educators, instructors with the intercultural competencies necessary to work in a multilingual and multicultural classroom.

Introduction

In June 2020, the Supreme Audit Office published the report *Education of Children of Returning Parents and Children of Foreigners*, which is the result of inspections carried out by the Ministry of National Education and in twenty-four elementary schools in Poland over a period of three years, starting from 2017. The findings presented in the report show the unpreparedness of the Polish education system to accommodate students who experienced migration, including the lack of intercultural integration tools. Three years after the publication of the aforementioned report, and over the year after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Polish teachers speak bluntly: we have no preparation for working in a multilingual classroom, we have difficulties in assessing and preparing students with migration experience for exams, difficulties in communicating with foreign students and their families, and we don't know how to integrate students with experience of war trauma.

Many NGOs, including the Kosciuszko Foundation as part of its Teaching English in Poland program, have taken steps to equip teachers, educators, instructors with

the intercultural competencies necessary to work in a multilingual and multicultural classroom. Below are some examples of materials and programs that offer teachers tools to support the education of refugee children, during both school and after-school activities.

In the footsteps of words and cultures. An urban guide. A linguistic and cultural portfolio

The publication *In the footsteps of words and cultures. An urban guide. A linguistic and cultural portfolio* by Urszula Majcher-Legawiec is addressed to teachers who are looking for an inspiration to work in multicultural and multilingual classrooms with children and adolescents. The walkthrough was created as part of the project titled: *New ABC - Networking the Educational World: Accross the Boundaries for Community Building* and is available on the freely licensed website: www.interkulturalni.pl/publikacje/.

The guide contains forty-three cards designed by the authors and fifteen blank cards, which can be developed by the participants of the integration process in any way they like. They refer to universal values

and places common to many cultures. They are meant to be engaging and inspiring. The cards can be used freely to create a personalized individual or group linguistic and cultural portfolio. Each card performs several functions at the same time, and among them a primordial one, for example:

- emphasizing the presence of all cultural groups in the school environment – special care was taken for those for whom Polish is not their native language and Polish culture is not their first culture;
- allowing each participant to present his or her activities, culture, religion or identity in any language, including non-verbally;
- strengthening the linguistic/communicative, cultural and civic competence of each participant, regardless of his/her background, language or culture;
- taking into account the perspectives of multiple participants, learning about their needs and mapping the journey (migration experience) of participants (some cards have diagnostic potential);
- introducing elements of local and/or regional education, developing civic competence and social awareness;
- overcoming taboos and difficult emotions and memories;
- presenting an inclusive approach in education.

Model of educational integration of migrant students

The model was developed at the Centre for Civic Education on the basis of an analysis of the results of a research conducted in Polish schools as well as examples of good practices and school experiences. It responds to the need to structure the process of integrating immigrant students in schools. It takes into account the vital need for educational success for every student. The impetus for its development was the appearance of a large number of Ukrainian students in schools, but in principle it supports educators in diagnosing the challenges of building a multicultural school environment, planning activities to facilitate the work of teachers and developing procedures that enable each student, both Polish and foreign, to have good educational achievements. The universality of

the model is based on the assumption that the key to integration is to respond to the basic emotional, social and learning needs of students - independent of their nationality, culture, country of origin. The model developed by the CEO can be used:

- by educational experts to plan support for schools;
- by principals to diagnose the situation and plan the organization's activities;
- by teachers in analysing classroom work and planning their own development⁷.

The theory of anchors and anchoring (oneself) – inspiration in integration

An interesting inspiration for the process of intercultural integration of foreign students is the theory of anchors and anchoring (oneself) formulated by Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska (2013). It does not provide any ready-made answers, but for the teacher/reflective practitioner it will be a very important point of reference in planning the process of integrating students.

An anchor is a metaphor for the process of defining oneself and one's identity in society and culture, and social anchoring is understood as "an individual's search for meaningful points of reference and support that allow him to achieve relative psychosocial stability in the reality around him."⁸ The fact that we use familiar anchors allows us to find our "place in the world." Grzymała-Kazłowska distinguishes several types of anchors.

The anchoring process is multidimensional. It involves, among other things, identity, culture, emotions, and even aesthetic choices. Change triggers the need to adapt, which in turn requires action, stabilization, and the establishment of new social ties. Migrants and refugees rely on personal and family resources, as well as existing and available social and institutional structures. For a student, naturally, such a resource is the school. If the teachers working there consciously and consistently implement integration activities, they can play a huge role in the process of integrating children and adolescents into the school, but also the local and broader community.

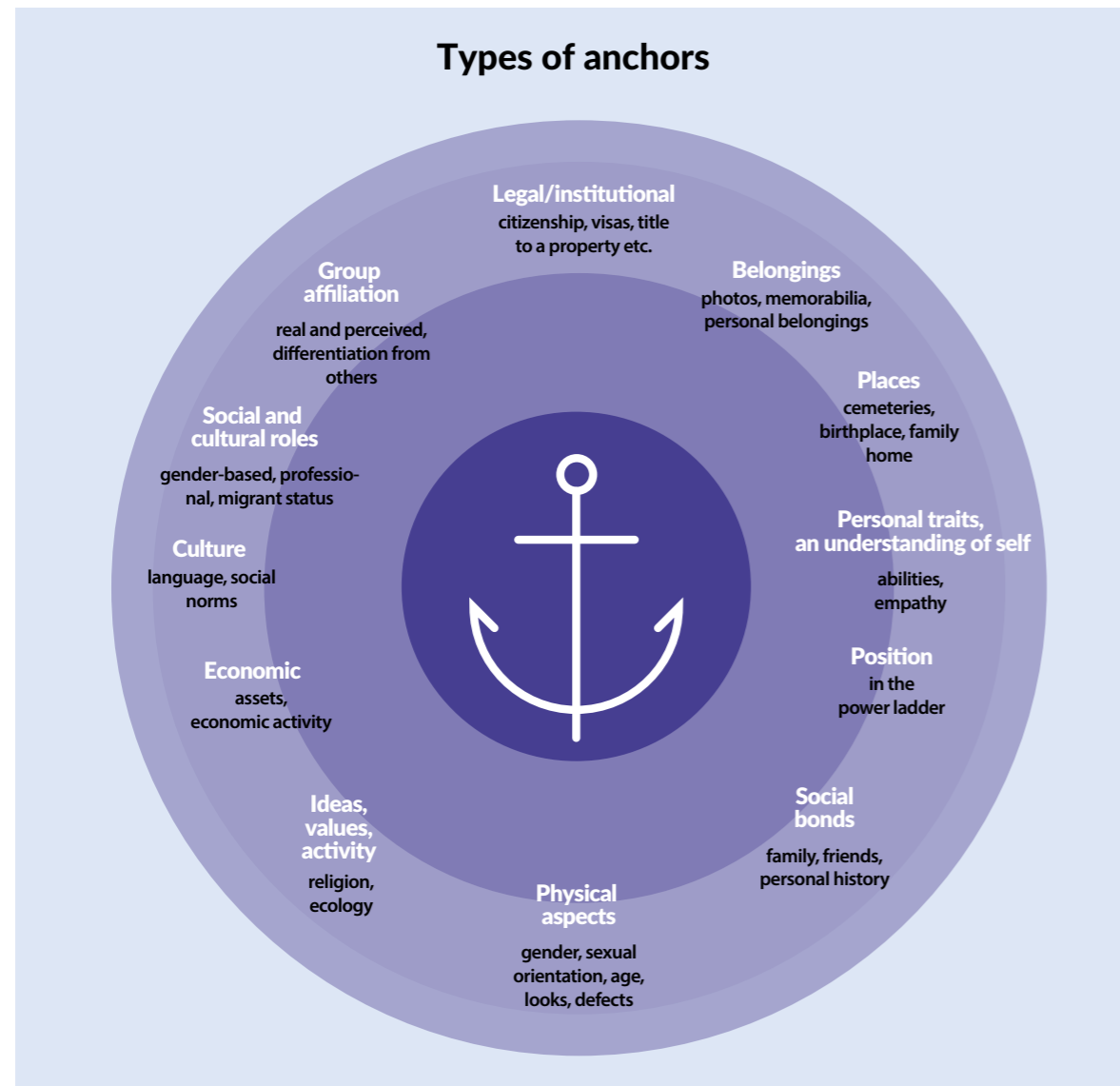


Figure 1: Types of anchors. Source: Aleksandra Grzymala-Kazłowska, From identity and integration to social anchoring - a proposal for a new theoretical concept [in:] CMR Working Papers, No. 64/122, May 2013, p. 12.

Resilience and its importance for the integration process

Resilience is a skill that gives an individual protection when it supports their functioning and well-being. At the same time, it provides an opportunity for development, especially with social support and despite external difficulties. Integration and thoughtful psychosocial support can help build more trusting relationships. We assign a key role in this concept to adults, who must build their credibility in the eyes of the participants. In a multicultural school, this can include teachers, but also intercultural assistants (who are familiar with the language and culture of the child's country of origin and the language and culture of the child's country of residence/education). Group activities, carried

out together in a linguistically and culturally diverse environment, can improve the well-being of each participant through involvement in tasks adapted in degree of difficulty to intellectual and psycho-physical abilities. A sense of inclusion and belonging helps participants rebuild a sense of agency, strengthen social ties and provide a sense of collective identity. Building resilience, however, begins at home. Therefore, family relations are so important for the integration process. It is thus worth paying attention to programs that support parents and family and popularize them at school. Below are some examples of projects implemented by the Understanding Foundation:

- School well-being - a project that developed methods and educational

tools on mental resilience for teachers and students (including a mental resilience guide and a multimedia training package for teachers). Materials available at: www.understanding.pl/fundusze-eog/dobrostan-w-szkole/

- Communication that builds understanding - a project aimed at providing teachers with tools to make a cultural and social change in their approach to conflict, including intercultural conflict. Materials available at: www.understanding.pl/fundusze-eog/mediacje-w-szkole/¹⁰

- Mental Resilience for Parents - a project to strengthen the resilience of parents and children. The manual and exercises and tools for families are available at: www.psychologicalresilience.eu¹¹

Plenty of useful resources (available in several languages) can be found on the Mental Health and Psychological Support organization's website: <https://www.mhpssmsp.org/en/activity/relevant-guidelines-standards-and-tools-support-implementation-10#page-1>

Summary

The proposed tools and concepts for supporting the integration process are a suggestion for teachers who aim to lower the anxiety in children and adolescents with war trauma and support their psychosocial well-being. In the recommended publications, teachers can find answers to some of the following questions: how to work with difficult emotions, how to help traumatized children step by step so as to facilitate their functioning and learning in a new reality, how to build general proficiency in

children, including students with migration and refugee experience. A key figure in the integration process is the facilitator. This can be a teacher /or intercultural assistant, or in the case of the Teaching English in Poland program, an American volunteer or tutor. They are the people responsible for creating good relationships and trust and meeting the social-emotional needs of the participants in the class or lesson. In building relationships, they must keep in mind several important principles that guarantee a good integration process:

1. be kind, relaxed, and keep a smile;
2. address participants by name (remember their names!), be open, listen carefully to others;
3. find areas of common interest to establish a relationship with the participants (children like to talk about themselves, and the more sincere the interest you're showing them, the more likely they are to open up and begin to trust you);
4. ask open-ended questions;
5. enable new shared experiences that will allow to create a bond between the children;
6. be empathetic, try to understand others and try to look at things from their perspective and recognize their emotions;
7. try to recognize the uniqueness of each person, appreciation of the participant has an impact on their commitment to the activities;
8. do not force involvement, as it is important to allow children to be less involved at times, to relax;
9. remember that the journey is often more important than the destination and that, as the Americans say: *sharing is caring.*•

The SPRING project, or support for young people with migrant and refugee experience in a Polish school



Anna Machocka

The Polish educational system has never been, and still is not, adapted to accommodate students who do not speak Polish to a degree that allows them to study in that language. The answer to this gap is the Spring program, which supports the education of non-Polish-speaking youth at the 1st Non-public High School “Bednarska”.

Spring program at I SLO

The idea for the Spring program was born in 2010. Over time, it developed into an in-school system for adapting the high school curriculum to the Polish language proficiency level of foreign youth. Very quickly, it began to include issues of integration, identity building (searching for one's place between different cultures), and creating a linguistically, culturally, and nationally diverse community. Starting with individual classes, we arrived at a system of collective activities and groups, while not losing sight of the individual approach to each student. Adapting the system must be based on a sound assessment of difficulties and problems, language skills, as well as gathering knowledge about the family and the personal situation of the child or teenager. Initially, the support was for a few people: two students from Tibet, two students from Chechnya, and a student from Belarus. In the 2023–24 school year, the school's international community includes more than 70 people from all over the

world: Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Georgia, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, French Guinea, Zimbabwe, China, and the USA. Ninety-five percent of the young people are taught in so-called principal's seats, free of charge. The school's idea is to engage them socially, which aims to fulfill one of its statutory goals: to provide educational support for people with migration and refugee experience.

Two ideas: non-Polish-speaking youth in Polish classrooms and international classes

In the first years of the program we pushed hard for the integration of non-Polish-speaking youth into Polish classrooms. We noticed that integration problems were not only due to language or cultural barriers. We observed a situation in which even a well-integrated class doing various things together in school activities (projects, events, excursions) did not create bonds and friendships among people coming from different parts of the world.

The exceptions were those raised by Polish foster families. Young people with migrant and refugee experience were most likely to have interclass friendships with themselves.

The watershed moment came with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school's transition to online mode and a hybrid teaching system. Non-Polish-speaking students in our school, as in virtually all of Poland, were dropping out of the educational system en masse. We decided that, in response to requests from aid organizations and volunteers, we needed to accept more people into the program and create an international class. After four years of teaching in this way, we saw the huge benefits that came from that decision. Facing the hardships of working with such diverse groups of young people, we are pleased to see friendships emerging and a sense of belonging. The confidence that they are at home, they are not just guests, they are not exceptions, and they are part of the community has strengthened in the young participants of the Spring project.

We are seeing more active classes in the life of the school and the formation of a real bond between the beneficiaries of the program.

Community integration

There is no subject more difficult than the process of true integration, creating a community, and making friends in a linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse environment. Young people are very quick to create We-They divisions.

- We - those who speak Russian,
- We - those who speak English,
- We - those experienced by waiting for refugee status,
- We - those arriving after the outbreak of war,
- We - Muslims,
- We - those wearing hijab,
- We - those not wearing hijab,
- We - meaning not Poles.

Even in a community that is so open to diversity, where democratic and equality values are part of everyday functioning, there is no way that these and other divisions won't surface before we enter classrooms and begin work. Integration in such groups

cannot take place naturally for those who become leaders of the group (for a linguistically or culturally dominant group), because very quickly it will turn out that part of the group is excluded or excludes itself¹². It quickly becomes apparent — on the second or third of September — that we are not starting from an equal level, and no matter how nice the atmosphere in the classroom is, the differences are already strongly outlined, and those who are culturally or linguistically foreign are in a subset. Adults' avoidance of this topic and pretending that the integration of a culturally diverse class looks the same as in Polish classes can end in an integration fiasco. Spring's ways of dealing with integration problems are based on three simple steps:

1. building a coherent story about what our school is and what it means that we are in it together;
2. supporting students in their competence, building self-confidence and proficiency;
3. focusing on group processes.

What do we succeed in doing?

Each year, we manage to involve the school community in the story of these unique and diverse people. The intercultural competencies we teach at our school are some of the most important competencies of the future — preparation for college, work, and life in an international environment. We are here together to learn from each other. This narrative requires constant interaction (teacher-student, students among themselves), but also preparation beforehand: if you enter this community, starting at our school, you know that you will be welcomed, but also that you will be received. Integration must be a multi-track process: I know who I am, I know who we are, and I know who you are. It's not about fitting someone in with others, but about finding your place. We support the emergence of a leadership person among the international group. Such a person amplifies the voice of those who do not feel confident enough to be heard.

There are successful exchanges of skills: I can't speak Polish well, but I know English, Arabic, and Ukrainian; I can teach you to play soccer, embroider, or speak another language; and you can help me with Polish or biology homework. The same

process of equal exchange, instead of accepting help, can apply to adults and staff: I teach you the Polish school system, and you explain to me what it was like at your place, so that I can better understand you and the students from your country. I help you with Polish, and you help me with Russian/Ukrainian, pronunciation of names, and how to deal with forms of politeness or idioms. This approach to mutual learning should not be based on individuals but should be part of a system. There is no better way to be together than through reciprocity.

Our trips are successful due to the responsibility of each person. The class is divided into groups based on academic interests. The groups have their own responsibilities: fetching water from the well, washing the dishes, cooking, and preparing firewood. Everyone is equally tired, equally responsible, and equally important. Practical skills and life matters are not determined by the level of language proficiency. What's more, very often it turns out that people blocked by language, school walls, educational situation, or teacher-student hierarchy can demonstrate skill, character, or endurance. Projects carried out in mixed groups, conceived in such a way that non-Polish-speaking students are indispensable and that their cultural and linguistic competence is noticed by the group, are successful¹³. Projects that are based on as diverse a view of an issue as possible. The success of such a project depends on the involvement of those who stand out most in the group¹⁴.

As for sports, the formation of international and cross-cultural teams – succeeds even without a common language. Our observations show that more often such activity involves boys, but volleyball can also strongly activate girls. The key is to identify talents.

Eating at a common table, talking about food, and cooking together is always an integrative success; the more diverse the

group, the better. For some people who don't know anything about cooking, it's also an opportunity to talk to their families or cultural assistants. Flavors from childhood, grandma's house, vacations. The worst meals in kindergarten were favorite sweets. There is a lot of excitement, curiosity, and openness around the topic of food. We happened to do a barbecue during an April snowstorm. On trips, we cook and roast together over a campfire. At every possible opportunity, we organize the InterFood fair, the proceeds of which the class donates to charity.

What goes wrong?

In our experience, anything that assumes that non-Polish-speaking young people among a Polish peer group will take the initiative, show energy, and go beyond what is certain and agreed upon will not succeed. School is about lessons. This order provides a sense of security and a pattern that makes possible the strategy we most often observe: if I'm not seen, nothing bad will happen. Young people who come to the Spring program from public schools are used to this way of surviving in the system. This also applies to young people and teaching staff from Ukraine. Approaching a school or a course as a shared space requires courage, confidence, and openness. In most school systems from which the Spring program students come, there is no shared responsibility for the process. The path is determined by the decisions of political (or religious) authorities, school management, teachers, and students. The responsibility of the latter is to follow the rules and not challenge the decisions. People coming out of such a system need a lot of support for the transformation we expect. Very often, this change does not occur at all. The overall effect of the efforts made, however, is great. •

Anna Machocka Teacher of Polish as a foreign language, literature teacher, educator, world changer at the 1st "Bednarska" High School. Creator and coordinator of the Spring program supporting the education of non-Polish speakers. Expert in building a culturally diverse, open and supportive community. A sensitive school is possible.



My adaptation was initially very difficult. I was in denial. In a new city, there's a different culture, traditions, and mentality. It's not easy to get used to. So, at first, I only communicated online with my friends from Mariupol. But over time, I realized that the internet is, of course, good, but sitting constantly at home within four walls is difficult; a person needs to move forward. Thanks to the project, my emotional state became more stable.

Maria
Ukrainian participant
of TEIP camp in Olsztynek

Finding joy. Participation of Ukrainian students in TEIP camps

Ulyana Buzenko

The TEIP courses that took place this summer with the support of the Kosciuszko Foundation have become an example of how the choice of teaching methods and forms of foreign language instruction influences the effectiveness of learning that language.

Traditionally, the course consisted of thematic sections covering various aspects of American life. Despite the changes in the format of classes this year, they remained just as interesting, effective, and sometimes even more impressive! Undoubtedly, the teachers in this project played a significant role. Creative, passionate about their work, they managed to present their own experiences and various aspects of life in the form of engaging lessons for camp participants. This approach significantly improves the results of learning a foreign language because language describes life, and that's how the learning mechanism works.

Moreover, empirical approaches to language learning are much more interesting than mere memorization of

grammatical forms and categories without practical application.

This year, within the framework of TEIP sessions, the most popular lessons were those related to visual arts. Not only did participants learn the language, but they also mastered various artistic techniques they might never have discovered otherwise. And, of course, they practiced their English within the subject – learning artistic terminology alongside everyday tasks needed for communication with teachers. Discussing lessons with other students, I heard the same sentiment – everyone was thrilled with learning and participating in the sessions, practicing their English. Other groups had subjects like business, New York history, crime prevention, and more.

Overall, it was a fantastic opportunity for personal development and meeting new people, an experience none of us would have gained otherwise. I feel I can speak for most, if not all, of the camp when I say it was incredible. We are very grateful for this!

It is worth noting separately the role of the camp for children from Ukraine. Home, friends, school, and favorite clubs – these are the things they lost due to the war.

Many of them witnessed combat actions with their own eyes. Internally displaced persons try to rebuild their lives in new cities. Children and teenagers return to studying, meet peers, and search for activities they enjoy. It's not always easy. Here's what one of the camp participants said about that: "My adaptation was initially very difficult. I was in denial. In a new city, there's a different culture, traditions, and mentality. It's not easy to get used to. So, at first, I only communicated online with my friends from Mariupol. But over time, I realized that the internet is, of course, good, but sitting constantly at home within four walls is difficult; a person needs to move forward," 15-year-old Maria shares.

"Thanks to the project, my emotional state became more stable".

Teenagers who choose to stay in Ukraine today do so consciously. They experience this difficult situation on par with adults and are ready to take responsibility for their future. Children seek support especially during wartime. They want to feel that someone can give advice, praise their success. And they still remain children, eager to explore something new and interesting. Therefore, participation in such a project can be considered a kind of therapy for them. As for what should be changed, in my opinion, to improve the effectiveness of the language camp, it is worth reviewing the criteria for selecting the language level of participants, as this time it was quite heterogeneous. Additionally, perhaps increasing the actual gaming part of the sessions could be beneficial •

Ulyana Buzenko Teacher and researcher. At EFC Foundation she uses her experience in administrative work. She enjoys helping others, traveling and reading. She is interested in psychology and child development.

Footnotes



¹ Mental Health and Psychosocial Support MINIMUM SERVICE PACKAGE (MSP), September 2021, <https://mhpssmsp.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/MHPSS%20MSP%20Field%20Test%20Version%2015.06.22%20-%20POL.pdf>, p. 12.

² Such an obligation is introduced, among others, by the DECREE OF THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION of August 9, 2017 on the principles of organization and provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1280 and of 2022, item 1594).

³ file:///C:/Users/Ula/Downloads/MHPSS_Essentials_UKR_polishv2-1.pdf

⁴ Latin resiliere – to bounce back, spring back.

⁵ R. Ryszka, Erlebnispädagogik – pedagogy of experience: the German experience. A German perspective [in:] Adventure Education. Outdoor and Adventure Education in Poland. Theory, Examples, Contexts, edited by E. Palamer-Kabacińska, A. Leśny, Pracownia Nauki i Przygody Foundation Publishing House, Warsaw 2012, pp. 165-166.

⁶ Ibid, p. 166.

⁷ Model integracji edukacyjnej w szkołach przyjmujących uczniów-migrantów, online: http://bm.amu.edu.pl/resources/2022_model_integracji_edukacyjnej_w_polskiej_szkole_CEO.pdf, s. 1.

⁸ Aleksandra Grzymała-Każłowska, Od tożsamości i integracji do społecznego zakotwiczenia – propozycja nowej koncepcji teoretycznej [w:] „CMR Working Papers”, nr 64/122, maj 2013, online: https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/WP_64122_2.pdf, s. 1.

⁹ Materials to be published soon on the website: edu.understanding.pl;

more: <https://understanding.pl/fundusze-eog/dobrostan-w-szkole/>

¹⁰ Materials to be published soon on the website: edu.understanding.pl;

more: <https://understanding.pl/fundusze-eog/mediacje-w-szkole/>

¹¹ <https://psychologicalresilience.eu>

¹² An example: if young people decide to get to know each other by going out together to a party or meeting “out on the town” – it is certain that people with refugee experience will not come to the meeting. Insecurity makes families less likely to let children/youth out of the house.

¹³ The simplest way is the need to use information sources available in languages other than Polish, English, and known to non-Polish speakers in the group.

¹⁴ For groups of children and younger adolescents (elementary school), I recommend a webinar titled: “The WISE model of intercultural education-a practical tool for enhancing integration in a multicultural classroom”; access: www.forummigracyjne.org.

The Kosciuszko Foundation Inc.

The Foundation was established in 1925 in New York. For nearly 100 years of its history, it has been awarding grants to students and researchers in Poland and the United States. It works to popularize and spread knowledge about the history of culture and science in Poland by holding exhibitions, concerts and competitions, as well as promotes Polish art overseas. The Foundation is dedicated to commemorate Thaddeus Kosciuszko, an outstanding general, insurgent, leader and a Polish émigré in America.

The Kosciuszko Foundation Poland

Initiated in 2010, the Foundation has been supporting intellectual, scientific and cultural exchanges between Poland and the United States. It organizes cultural events, participates in organizing scholarship abroad for researchers and artists and hosts American students as well. The Foundation holds competitions and participates in the selection of laureates of The Kosciuszko Foundation awards for exceptional physicians (The Bohdan and Zygmunt Janczewski award) and researchers (FamLab). It makes efforts to cultivate our mutual Polish and American history. Teaching English in Poland is the flagship program of the Foundation.

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