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## **Foreign Language Learning Practices and Attitudes among Ukrainian University Students**

### **Особливості вивчення іноземних мов та ставлення до них серед українських студентів**

*This research investigates foreign language learning among tertiary students in Ukraine, emphasizing its relevance to improving language education in diverse contexts. The study aimed to identify key factors influencing students' foreign language learning outcomes and practices. A specially designed questionnaire was administered to 643 students at Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, focusing on their attitudes, motivation, perceived necessity of foreign languages for future goals, and learning practices. The research employed a quantitative methodology, using descriptive and inferential statistics. Data analysis included correlation and regression analyses to determine predictors of foreign language learning success. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents perceive their foreign language knowledge as satisfactory or poor. Despite this, students generally exhibit a positive attitude toward foreign language learning, with many expressing a desire to improve and recognizing the importance of foreign languages for their future. Results revealed that the students' positive attitudes toward foreign language learning are driven by the instrumental form of extrinsic motivation, which align foreign language learning with career and educational aspirations. However, a notable gap between positive attitudes and actual learning practices emerged, as only a small proportion of participants consistently dedicated time to improving their foreign language skills. The analyses highlighted satisfaction with foreign language knowledge, engagement in foreign language practice, and positive attitudes toward foreign languages as compulsory subjects as significant predictors of success. In contrast, factors such as gender, year of study, and perceived necessity of foreign languages for daily use or further education did not significantly impact outcomes. The study underscores the importance of aligning foreign language instruction with students' real-world aspirations to sustain motivation and improve outcomes. Additionally, findings emphasize the value of personalized and interactive learning experiences, suggesting adjustments to curricula and educational policies to better meet learners' needs.*

**Keywords:** *attitude; foreign languages; language learning practices; motivation; tertiary students.*

*Дослідження присвячене виявленню факторів, що впливають на процес і результати вивчення іноземних мов студентами українських вишів. У дослідженні взяли участь 643*

студенти Ніжинського державного університету імені Миколи Гоголя, які відповіли на запитання анкети щодо їхніх ставлень, мотивації, занять іноземною мовою та усвідомлення її важливості для цілей, пов'язаних із майбутнім. Результати обробки отриманих даних методами кореляційного та регресійного аналізу засвідчили загалом позитивне ставлення до іноземної мови. Дослідження показало, що таке ставлення зумовлене інструментальною формою зовнішньої мотивації, що пов'язує вивчення іноземної мови з кар'єрними та освітніми прагненнями. Однак виявлено суттєвий розрив між позитивним ставленням до іноземної мови і фактичними заняттями нею, оскільки лише невелика частина опитаних регулярно приділяє час вдосконаленню своїх мовних навичок. Визначено, що значущими предикторами успішності є задоволеність своїми знаннями, залученість до занять іноземною мовою і позитивне ставлення до іноземної мови як до обов'язкової дисципліни. Дослідження підкреслює потребу індивідуального й інтерактивного підходів до навчання.

**Ключові слова:** іноземні мови; вивчення мов; ставлення; мотивація; студенти університету.

**Introduction / Вступ.** Foreign languages (FL) play an undeniable role in today's globalised world. Learning and teaching FL are regarded as issues of primary significance in many countries, including Ukraine. The Ukrainian government is trying to promote the knowledge of FL, especially English, which has become a lingua franca on the global level. English is taught as a compulsory subject beginning with the first grade of primary school in all public schools, i.e., learners are exposed to a minimum of eleven years of formal FL education at the school level. Universities in Ukraine provide FL instruction, predominantly English, for a minimum of two semesters. Entrance exam in FL serves as key to further education opportunities (graduate and post-graduate courses). However, as the practice indicates, the situation with the FL proficiency is far from optimistic. A vast majority of Ukrainians, including tertiary students, do not attain a good mastery of FL. Low performance in English and other FL in Ukraine has been reported on multiple occasions (Bolitho & West, 2017, p. 31; Education First, 2022; Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2023). Therefore, almost all the stakeholders are very much concerned about improving students' FL proficiency (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2003, p. 37).

The situation with FL learning in Ukraine is not unique. Low levels of the English language performance have been reported in many countries, so, teachers, researchers and educational administrators have long been conducting studies in the field of foreign and second language learning to discover the factors that lie behind the problem and ways to solve it. Research papers have mentioned a whole range of factors (such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitudes, intelligence, age, and personalities) that impact on the learning process (Burstall, 1975; Khasinah, 2014; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Yuefang, 2019). However, there is a general agreement about the crucial role of attitudes and motivation in FL learning (Brown, 2007; Dornyei, 2005; Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

A whole breadth of studies have been carried out to explore the attitudes and motivation of learners to learning FL (as a rule, English) at tertiary level in different parts of the world: in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Arslan & Akbarov, 2012), Burundi (Nduwimana, 2019), Iran (Kashefian-Naeeni et al., 2018), Saudi Arabia (Alkaff, 2013), Turkey (Gömlüksiz, 2010; Karahan, 2007), UAE (Al Noursi, 2013) and many other countries.

Some studies have been undertaken to investigate the attitudes and the motivational orientations of tertiary students learning FL in the Ukrainian context as well. Thus, Moskalenko et al. (2019) researched the underlying factors which influence the development of motivation of Ukrainian student pilots to learn aviation English. The research by Hromova (2019) aimed at studying first year students' perceptions and motivation for learning FL. Zadorozhna and Datskiv (2022) explored the motivation of pre-service English teachers to learn English as a FL in challenging situations. Neither of these research papers, however, was aimed to reveal Ukrainian university students' attitudes to and motivation for learning FL in a broader context. Besides, there are hardly any studies focused on learners' practices and preferences in FL learning.

**Aim and tasks / Мета й завдання.** Therefore, the aim of this paper is to bridge the gap by comprehensively examining the attitudes, motivational orientations, learning practices, and preferences of Ukrainian university students in FL. The study aims to provide valuable data and insights that can inform the development of educational policies and the design of effective teaching practices. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to discern the potential factors that impact the learning, achievement, and performance of Ukrainian tertiary students in FL. In pursuit of this objective, the study addresses the following research tasks:

1. Find out the students' attitudes to and their motivation orientations for learning FL.

2. Discover the students' practices and preferences in learning FL.

3. Reveal any significant correlations between the variables related to FL learning.

**Literature Review / Огляд літератури.** Attitude is considered as an important concept to understand human behavior. According to Brown (2007), attitudes «form a part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture we are living in» (p. 193). In social psychology attitude is defined as «a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavour» (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993 as cited in Haddock & Maio, 2008, p. 114). Cook (2016) referred to attitudes as the development of mental aspects and feelings of a human being and states that the development of attitude begins early and is affected by many factors, such as attitudes of parents, peers, and interactive activities with others. According to Wenden (1991), attitude has three different components: cognitive (involves beliefs and perceptions about a particular object or a situation), affective (comprises feelings and emotions towards an object or a situation) and behavioural (refers to the tendency to adopt particular learning behaviours based on a situation or an object).

«The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching» gives the following definition of language attitudes: «the attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. Language attitudes may have an effect on second language or foreign language learning. The measurement of language attitudes provides information which is useful in language teaching and language learning.» (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 297)

Baker (1992), emphasizing the importance of conducting attitudinal research in the field of language learning, stated that, «In the life of a language, attitudes to that language appear to be important in language restoration, preservation, decay or death» (p. 9). However, attitudes are not the only factors that influence linguistic attainment.

When discussing the influence of attitudes on language learning, we cannot but address motivation as these two phenomena are closely interconnected. The study of motivation as a determiner for successful language learning began with sociolinguistic study of English-speaking students studying French by Gardner and Lambert in 1959 (as cited in Kashefian-Naeeni, 2018). Since then, a considerable number of research works have been carried out to explore the role of motivation in language learning. There are various definitions of motivation. According to Gardner (1985), motivation is «the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity» (p. 10). Dörnyei (2001) stated that motivation explains why people select a particular activity, how long they are willing to persist in it and what effort they invest in it. Harmer (2011, p. 98) defined motivation as an internal energy that leads someone to pursue a goal.

In terms of language learning researchers make a clear difference between integrative and instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) clarified that integrative motivation is learning a language for personal sakes and cultural enrichment, while instrumental motivation is learning a language to gain more direct and practical goals. Research has shown that both of these types of motivation are related to success in second language learning (Cook, 2016), i.e. FL can be successfully learned with either of them, or indeed with both, though Crookes and Schmidt (1991) claimed that integrative motivation is more important in sustaining long-term success in language learning.

The research into the role of attitudes and motivation in foreign/second language learning has shown that positive attitudes and motivation are related to performance in language learning (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner, 1985; Katesi, 1993; Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). Thus, Dörnyei (1998) argued that motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the second language and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Karahan (2007) stated that «a positive language attitude let the learners have a positive orientation towards learning English» (p. 84). Similarly, Gardner (2006) claimed that learners with a high motivation will perform better than learners with a low level of motivation. He added that «if one is motivated she/he has reason (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows desire to achieve the goal and enjoy the activities» (p. 246). Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) argued that negative attitude and lack of motivation can lead to obstacles in learning a language. It is important, however, that students' negative attitudes can be changed and turned into positive ones and facilitate getting a positive result.

Therefore, researchers have been unanimous in their opinion about the crucial role of attitudes and motivation in language learning. De Bot et al. (2005) asserted that language teachers, researchers and students should acknowledge that learners' high motivation and positive attitude facilitate

second/foreign language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) pointed out that a better understanding of learners' attitudes, motivations, and preferred practices will provide FL instructors with information needed in designing courses that would cater for students' needs and help foster positive attitudes and high motivation thus leading to learners' better achievement.

**Methods / Методи.** The study encompassed a diverse group of university students, comprising a random sample of 643 individuals enrolled in various undergraduate and graduate programs at Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University in Ukraine. All of them were majoring in a field other than foreign languages. Of all the participants, 71.85% (n=464) were female and the rest 28.15% (n=181) – male. The respondents were selected in a manner that ensured a relatively equal representation across all years of study. Specifically, 23.79% (n=153) of the participants were first-year students, 27.84% (n=179) were second-year students, 20.37% (n=131) were third-year students, 18.51% (n=119) were fourth-year students, and 9.49% (n=61) were students enrolled in graduate programs. This distribution allowed for a comprehensive examination of the perspectives and experiences of students at various stages of their academic journey. According to the survey data 87.25% of the respondents (n=561) studied English as a FL, while the rest studied other FL (German, Spanish, Polish, etc.).

The present study utilised a quantitative approach to research and employed a descriptive research design. To address the research questions a questionnaire, as one of the most common methods of data collection on attitudes and opinions from large groups, was employed. The questionnaire was carefully developed by the researchers based on the synthesis of literature investigating learner attitude to FL learning (Al Noursi, 2013; Khalid, 2016; Nduwimana, 2019), following basic guidelines for questionnaire construction (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

To ensure clarity and eliminate any potential language barriers, the authors initially developed the questionnaire in Ukrainian, the native language of the participating students. This approach aimed to facilitate comprehension and enhance the accuracy of responses, enabling all respondents to effectively engage with the survey instrument. After refinement and revision of the items, the researchers sought input from their colleagues to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness. Their feedback was carefully considered to get to the final version of the questionnaire. Additionally, prior to running the questionnaire with the students, a pilot study was conducted on a small scale to confirm the clarity and validate the ability to elicit appropriate responses.

The questionnaire consisted of 19 multiple-choice questions. Among them, one item, question #18, gave the choice of open-ended answers also. The first three questions referred to the learners' profile (year at the university, gender, the FL learned by them). The rest of the questions were related to the respondents' attitude towards FL, their motivation to study it, experience and practices in FL learning as well as the reasons for not learning FL.

The survey was conducted during the second term of the academic year 2023/2024. A total of 700 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among the students of the university via deans' offices. The respondents were provided with assurance that the objective of the study was to improve language teaching and learning in the university and were encouraged to answer all questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Furthermore, they were informed that all answers would be completely anonymous and confidential. The valid completed copies obtained after administration added up to a total number of 643.

To analyse the obtained data, the researchers first assigned (where it was possible) scores for the responses obtained, e.g. 0 for negative answers (*no, disagree, etc.*), 1 for affirmative answers (*yes, agree, etc.*), 0.5 for neutral answers (*not sure, do not know*). The survey responses were entered into Excel spreadsheets to ensure accurate data organization. Subsequently, the data were analysed using the statistical package SPSS version 25. Correlational analysis was used to determine the relationship between different variables.

**Results / Результати.** The first research question was aimed at finding out tertiary students' attitudes to and their motivation orientations for learning FL. Several items in the questionnaire supplied us with the necessary data to answer this question.

Thus, the respondents were requested to self-assess their level of proficiency in the FL. Due to the existing tendency among students to overestimate their language proficiency owing to their ignorance of concrete descriptors which they could use for realistic self-assessment (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2003, p.71), we can hardly expect to obtain any objective information in this respect. But as we aimed to find out the learners' perception of their knowledge, the obtained data can be considered quite a reliable source. The findings indicated that 10.11% of the respondents (n=65) thought their knowledge of FL to be good, 59.41% (n=382) found it satisfactory, while 30.48% (n=196) considered it to be poor. The figures are not very optimistic, but they seem to reflect the real situation with the knowledge of FL among Ukrainians (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2023). It was also found out that just 11.04% (n=71) are definitely satisfied, 59.56% (n=383) are not quite satisfied, 29.39%

(n=189) are not satisfied at all with their knowledge of FL.

Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that the respondents did not exhibit a generally positive attitude towards FL learning. However, the vast majority – 75.89% (n=488) – characterise their attitude to FL learning as «positive» and only a few participants (2.80%, n=18) have a negative attitude to FL learning while the rest 21.31% (n=137) characterise their attitude as neutral. The general positive attitude to FL learning mentioned above is supported by the fact that 79.94% (n=514) of the learners indicated that they would like to improve their knowledge, 14.46% (n=93) were not sure whether they would like to do it, and just 5.60% (n=36) did not want to do it.

The students were subsequently questioned regarding the perceived role of FL in their future. The majority of the respondents – 64.07% (n=412) – indicated that they were sure that the knowledge of FL was very necessary to them in the future, 32.04% (n=206) were in two minds about it and just 3.89% (n=25) considered FL unnecessary for their future. While answering the question about the role of FL in getting a job most respondents (62.36%, n=401) demonstrated understanding that the knowledge of FL would be beneficial for finding a job. A third of the participants (33.59%, n=216) were not certain about that, and just 4.04% (n=26) did not think they needed the knowledge of FL for that matter.

In addition, the students were requested to articulate why they personally needed the knowledge of FL in the future. They could choose from four options (for career purposes, for further education, for everyday use, useless) selecting more than one. As the data analysis shows, more than a half of the respondents (51.17%, n=329) believed that they needed FL for career purposes. The option «for further education» chosen by 21.15% (n=136) of the students in the long run is also connected with making a career. These answers are clearly related to instrumental motivation. More than a third of the participants (36.39%, n=234) are likely to have integrative motivation for language learning as they indicated that they needed the knowledge of FL for everyday use. And just 8.86% (n=57) found the knowledge of FL useless thus demonstrating absence of any motivation.

The second research question delved into the practices and preferences of tertiary students regarding FL learning. The obtained data about learners' preferred mode of learning FL demonstrate that about a half of the respondents (48.99%, n=315) considered individual lessons with a private tutor to be the most effective. The option «group lessons» came second with a percentage of 39.97% (n=257) while the option «self-directed learning» elicited 19.60% (n=126) of the responses.

The students also indicated acceptable variants of FL learning: a third of the participants (33.90%, n=218) thought compulsory classes to be sufficient, 19.75% (n=127) chose «optional (extracurricular) classes», 28.77% (n=185) opted for «language courses», 12.60% (n=81) selected different combinations of these three options, 4.98% (n=32) found neither of them acceptable.

Learners' perspectives on the inclusion of FL as a component of university curriculum were also collected. Based on the obtained data, it was found that a significant part of the respondents, 56.45% (n=363), expressed support for the idea of FL being a compulsory subject throughout their entire university education, 17.57% (n=113) answered the question negatively, and the rest 25.97% (n=167) were hesitant. Nevertheless, when asked to specify their answer concerning the length of FL course, only 20.22% (n=130) chose the option «throughout the undergraduate and graduate courses», while more than a third 37.48% (n=241) held the view that FL must be compulsory solely during the graduate course. Just about one fifth of the students (21.46%, n=138) supported the idea of prolonged FL course at the university, i.e. that FL should be taught throughout the whole undergraduate course or even throughout both the undergraduate and graduate courses. On the other hand, twice as many respondents held the view that FL should be taught only during the first or the first two years of studying at the university (16.64%, n=107 and 24.42%, n=157 respectively).

Students' answers to a few items of the questionnaire provided us with the information concerning their vision of FL teaching at the university. Thus, the distribution of opinions about the number of FL classes demonstrated that a third of the respondents (33.28%, n=214) found the number of compulsory FL classes offered by the university curriculum insufficient, a quarter of all the participants (25.51%, n=164) were absolutely satisfied with it, 33.28%, n=257 were in two minds, while 1.24% (n=8) did not think it was necessary to study FL at the university. Also, it was found out that less than a third of the students (29.08%, n=187) expressed enthusiasm towards taking a selective course or pursuing minor in FL while roughly the same number (30.64%, n=197) did not want to do so and the rest 40.28% (n=259) were uncertain.

The results of the questionnaire also provided us with the data concerning student FL learning practices. The findings demonstrated that only a small number of students (8.71%, n=56) practised their FL skills on a regular basis, about a half of the respondents (50.08%, n=322) did it occasionally and alarming 41.21% (n=265) never practised their FL skills. When respondents were asked about additional possibilities for studying FL, a significant majority of 68.12% (n=438) identified «watching films and videos in the foreign language» as an effective approach. This finding is not surprising, as it

reflects the notion that learning can be combined with entertainment, especially when the content is personally interesting to the student. The second most popular choice was «free Internet resources» opted for by 44.48% (n=286). This is not astonishing either, considering the easy access to the Internet and the huge amount of sites and applications dedicated to learning FL. Almost a third of the respondents (30.17%, n=194) reported engagement in self-directed learning using a course book. «Communication in FL on the Internet» was mentioned as an additional possibility for practicing FL by 22.08% (n=142), 15.71% (n=101) indicated attending optional courses at the university; 10.26% (n=66) – having classes with a private tutor, 6.22% (n=40) – attending language courses. A few people (3.89%, n=25) also mentioned their own variants (among those – live communication with foreigners and fellow students; computer games; listening to podcasts, audiobooks, music; reading fiction and technical books, parallel text translation). At the same time 22.55% of the respondents reported that they never used any additional possibilities of FL learning.

As for the reasons that prevented them from learning FL 41.93% (n=226) of the students pointed to the lack of time as the main factor. The second important reason indicated by 37.85% (n=204) was that they «do not know what to begin with». Quite a few (about 17.25%, n=93) were afraid of the challenges they might face while studying FL. The rest 9.83% (n=58) explained that they did not wish to change anything.

The third research question aimed to explore potential correlations among various variables, including students' attitude to learning FL, level of FL knowledge and satisfaction with it, desire to improve FL knowledge, perceived necessity of FL in the future, attitude towards FL as a compulsory subject, engagement in practicing FL, gender and year at the university, etc. To describe the strength of the relationship between the variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 1. Traditionally in social sciences correlation coefficients with absolute meanings lower than .300 are believed to demonstrate low level of correlation, so they are not considered in this study. Correlation coefficients with absolute meanings lying in the range between .300 and .499 describe a moderate level of correlation (these are highlighted yellow in the table), while those with absolute meanings higher than .500 refer to a high level of correlation (highlighted green).

*Table 1*

**Correlation between Some of the Variables in the Questionnaire**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Attitude to learning FL	–												
2. Level of FL knowledge	.223	–											
3. Level of satisfaction with FL knowledge	-.016	.399	–										
4. Desire to improve FL knowledge	.540	.137	-.169	–									
5. Necessity of FL in the future	.517	.151	-.058	.572	–								
6. Necessity of FL for employment	.295	.101	-.072	.314	.409	–							
7. Necessity of FL for future education	.043	-.007	-.086	.046	.032	-.163	–						
8. Necessity of FL for everyday usage	.105	.085	.039	.112	.0114	-.348	-.238	–					
9. Absence of necessity of FL in the future	-.485	-.153	.091	-.542	-.420	-.323	-.163	-.231	–				
10. Attitude to FL as a compulsory subject	.475	.193	-.088	.447	.506	.348	.054	-.009	-.348	–			
11. Real FL practice	.227	.348	.091	.193	.303	.232	.065	.008	-.183	.287	–		
12. Gender	-.190	.009	.069	-.184	-.167	-.098	.162	-.008	.162	-.117	.016	–	
13. Year at the university	.042	-.067	-.135	.044	.0775	-.003	-.052	.021	-.052	.064	.017	-.005	–

There are several figures in the table which are worth paying attention to. Thus, positive attitude to learning FL has a high positive correlation with the desire to improve FL knowledge (.540) and necessity of FL in the future (.517), and a moderate positive correlation with the attitude to FL as a compulsory subject (.475) which means that a positive attitude towards learning FL is associated with a greater desire to improve and put some effort in FL learning and a higher perceived necessity of FL in the future. Attitude to learning FL also has moderate negative correlation with absence of necessity of FL in the future (–.485) and high negative correlation with desire to improve FL knowledge (–.542), suggesting that perceived absence of necessity of FL in the future is associated with a less positive attitude towards learning FL.

The data also indicate that higher level of FL knowledge is positively correlated with the level of satisfaction with this knowledge (.399) as well as practicing FL skills (.348). Although the levels of correlation are but moderate, the findings prove that better knowledge of FL is associated with engaging in real FL practice.

Desire to improve FL knowledge has positive correlations with necessity of FL in the future (.572), in particular – with employment (.314) as well as the attitude to FL as a compulsory subject (.447), indicating that a stronger desire to improve FL knowledge is associated with a higher perceived necessity of FL in the future and positive attitude towards FL as a compulsory subject. The high negative correlation between the desire to improve FL knowledge and the absence of necessity of FL in the future (–.542) is only natural as it means that learners who do not perceive FL knowledge as an important part of their future self naturally will not have any desire to improve this knowledge.

Figures also demonstrate that necessity of FL in the future has a high positive correlation with attitude to FL as a compulsory subject (.506) and a moderate positive correlation (.303) with real FL practice which means that learners with instrumental orientation are prepared to put more effort in learning FL. A positive correlation (.409) between necessity of FL in the future and necessity of FL for employment only supports the conclusion that students are mostly instrumentally motivated. Necessity of FL for employment and absence of necessity of FL are mutually exclusive that is why the correlation between them is negative (–.420).

The moderate positive correlation (.348) between necessity of FL for employment and attitude towards FL as a compulsory subject also indicates prevailing instrumental motivational orientations among students. The same conclusion can be made concerning moderate negative correlation (–.348) between necessity of FL for employment and necessity of FL for everyday usage. As the data demonstrate for most respondents these variables are mutually exclusive, they do not find it possible to combine them.

Absence of necessity of FL in the future has moderate negative correlation with attitude to FL as a compulsory subject (–.348), suggesting that perceived absence of necessity of FL in the future is associated with a less positive attitude towards learning FL as a compulsory subject.

No statistically significant correlation was found between the students' gender and the other variables. However, it is worth mentioning that negative correlations of the «gender» variable with attitude to learning FL (–.190) and desire to improve FL knowledge (–.184), indicate that females, represented by a positive value, tend to have a slightly more positive attitude towards learning FL and a stronger desire to improve FL knowledge compared to males. Other variables which do not seem to have any significant correlation with FL learning are year at the university, necessity of FL for further education, necessity of FL for everyday usage.

It should be noted that we do not consider correlations between some variables although their absolute meanings belong to the range related to moderate and high levels of correlations as the variables are mutually exclusive (necessity of FL for employment/education/everyday usage and absence of necessity of FL).

**Discussion / Обговорення.** Based on the aforementioned results, it can be stated that the majority of respondents at Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University perceive their knowledge of FL to be satisfactory or poor. Despite this self-perception, the students generally exhibit a positive attitude towards FL learning, with a significant proportion expressing a desire to enhance their knowledge of FL and recognizing the importance of FL for their future. Such findings are similar to the results found by Arslan and Akbarov (2012) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or by Abolfazli and Sadeghi (2019) and Abdollahi-Guilani and Nazari (2015) in Iran, Abdullah and Shah (2014) in Malaysia, Alkaff (2013) in Saudi Arabia where it was also observed that tertiary students had positive attitudes towards FL learning. The study also highlights that only a small proportion of university respondents have a negative attitude towards learning FL, one of possible reasons for which can be the fact that they do not see any relevance of FL to their future life.

Regarding motivation orientations for learning FL, findings from this quantitative research manifest that future career development, ability to communicate in FL in everyday life, and learning

FL for pursuing further education are significant for Ukrainian students, thus suggesting that they have both integrative and instrumental motivation for learning FL, with the latter dominating. This is in line with the findings of other researchers (Abdullah & Shah, 2014; Viet, 2017). The perceived necessity of FL for future purposes underscores the importance of incorporating real-world contexts and career-oriented aspects in FL instruction, as well as offering majors where FL is a medium of instruction.

As previously highlighted, the research underlines the recognition among students of the significance of FL in their studies and future career development. However, it is important to acknowledge the existence of a discrepancy between students' awareness, attitude and their actions: the results reveal that though most respondents express dissatisfaction with their knowledge of FL and express the desire to improve it, a significant proportion do not engage in regular FL practice, thus demonstrating lack of motivation to learn it. Ukrainian learners are not unique from this point of view as researchers from other countries (Abdullah & Shah, 2014; Karahan, 2007; Viet, 2017) also found out that their tertiary students were aware of the importance of English language for their future but put little effort into the improvement of language learning. This situation is concerning, as regular practice is essential for language proficiency development. Lack of time, uncertainty about where to start, fear of challenges, and resistance to change are identified as the main factors preventing students from learning FL. These barriers highlight the need for effective time management strategies, guidance in starting the language learning journey, and support in overcoming challenges, as well as further research to understand the reasons which prevent learners from putting more effort into FL learning.

In terms of preferences in FL learning, the results indicate that individual lessons with a private tutor are considered the most effective mode of learning by almost half of the students. Group lessons and self-directed learning are also popular choices. This finding suggests that personalised and interactive learning experiences are valued by the learners. Additionally, though the majority of respondents support the idea of FL being a compulsory part of the curriculum, they demonstrate a diversity of opinions concerning the duration of FL course. This prompts educators that providing a variety of flexible and diverse learning opportunities can cater for different learner preferences and needs and might lead to improved FL performance.

The research findings also uncover some intriguing relationships between various factors related to learning FL. Thus, the findings showed that there was no statistically significant correlation between such variables as attitudes towards FL, desire to improve FL knowledge and the factors of gender and year at the university, which actually contradicts the existing research by Shoaib and Dornyei (2005), as well as Gömleksiz (2010), who found different attitudes towards English in terms of gender and grade level variables among their language learners. Moreover, no statistically significant correlation was found to exist between students' attitudes towards FL, desire to improve FL knowledge and such variables as level of FL proficiency, level of satisfaction with FL knowledge, which implies that learners' attitudes and desires to improve their FL knowledge do not necessarily depend on their actual language proficiency or their level of satisfaction with their language skills. Other factors might be influencing students' attitudes and desires that are not directly related to their language abilities or satisfaction with their knowledge.

On the other hand, the correlation analysis supports the link between learners' attitudes, motivation, and practices in FL learning. Positive attitudes towards learning FL are positively correlated with a greater desire to improve FL knowledge and a higher perceived necessity of FL in the future. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of attitudes and motivation in language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Mustafa et al., 2015; Viet, 2017). It suggests that students with a positive attitude are more likely to have a stronger drive to enhance their FL skills.

An additional noteworthy finding is the positive correlations between perceived necessity of FL in the future and other various factors, including attitude to learning FL, desire to improve FL knowledge, and attitude to FL as a compulsory subject. These findings are in line with previous research highlighting the influence of instrumental motivation and the perceived utility of FL on learners' attitudes and motivation (Brown, 2007; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Martinović & Poljaković, 2010). This implies that students who perceive FL as necessary for their future endeavours are more likely to have a positive attitude towards learning FL, a stronger desire to improve their language proficiency.

**Conclusions / Висновки.** The research results presented in the study offer empirical evidence and insights concerning FL learning of tertiary students. The findings reveal aspects related to the learners' perception of their FL proficiency level, attitudes, motivation orientations, perceived necessity of FL for future purposes, preferred modes and practices of FL learning.

The research results indicate that Ukrainian university students generally have a positive attitude towards learning FL, which is but good as learners' motivations and positive attitude towards learning

FL are the leading predictors of their success in learning the language. It was found out that instrumental motivation is more dominant among Ukrainian students than integrative.

Furthermore, the study revealed a notable disparity between learners' attitudes and their actual practices in FL learning as only a small proportion of participants dedicate time and effort to improving their FL skills on a regular basis and support the opinion that FL should be a compulsory subject throughout entire university study. This implies that there are other factors besides attitudes and motivation which impact on FL achievement.

Learners' preference for individual lessons with a private tutor suggests the value of personalised and interactive learning experiences, as well as a necessity to improve FL teaching practices. FL instructors should take into consideration their students' perceptions about learning FL while designing FL curricula and syllabi. It should be highlighted that language and education policies should be in sync with learners' needs to ensure better FL education in the country.

Finally, the correlation analysis results demonstrate several trends. Thus, positive attitudes towards learning FL correlate with a desire to improve FL knowledge, the perceived necessity of FL in the future, and a positive attitude towards FL as a compulsory subject. Better FL knowledge correlates with engagement in FL practice. The desire to improve FL knowledge is associated with the perceived necessity of FL in the future and a positive attitude towards FL as a compulsory subject. No statistically significant correlations were found between gender, year at the university, necessity of FL for further education, necessity of FL for everyday usage and other variables. In general, the complexity of the relationship between different variables in FL learning suggests the presence of other influential factors that may impact on students' FL achievement.

Despite the contributions discussed above, there are several limitations that should be noted. Firstly, the study was conducted only at one university based in a small town, so the research findings provide only partial pictures about the students' attitudes towards learning FL as a non-major subject. Secondly, the attitudes to and motivation for FL learning were self-rated with the help of just a few items.

In addition to the perceptions and attitudes of FL learners, which are the focus of this research, many other factors associated with FL learning can contribute to pedagogical decision-making in the field of FL learning. Therefore, future research could delve into other factors that influence language learning such as students' identities, their multiple intelligences, learning strategies, FL classroom practices, in particular trauma-informed, social and emotional learning techniques and activities and their perceptions by learners. Besides, the focus of further studies can be shifted from learners to instructors to explore their beliefs and attitudes in terms of their influence on learners' language learning.

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