JAKUB NIEWIŃSKI[1]
University of Zielona Góra, Poland
ORCID 0000-0002-8791-9882

'CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH GUNS': STRENGTHENING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN POLISH AND UKRAINIAN STUDENTS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

„DZIECIOM REWOLWERÓW SIĘ NIE DAJE". WZMOCNIENIE KOMUNIKACJI MIĘDZYKULTUROWEJ MIĘDZY UCZNIAMI POLSKIMI I UKRAIŃSKIMI – PODEJŚCIE HOLISTYCZNE

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje praktyczną implementację założeń komunikacji międzykulturowej opartej na filozofii spotkania Martina Bubera, filozofii międzykulturowej Rama Adhara Malla oraz wrażliwości międzykulturowej według koncepcji Guo-Ming Chena oraz Williama J. Starosty, którzy uważają ją za afektywną strategię budowania zrozumienia i zaufania pomiędzy ludźmi. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie możliwości skutecznej komunikacji międzykulturowej, wzmacniającej poczucie przynależności i bezpieczeństwa. Autor, opisując dobre praktyki akulturacyjne w polskiej przestrzeni edukacyjnej po 24 lutego 2022 roku, przywołuje najważniejsze koncepcje Johna W. Berry'ego oraz Wolfganga Welscha opisujące przejście od marginalizacji mniejszości do postaw transkulturowych. Rozważania wpisują się w ideę humanistyki integralnej oraz podejścia holistycznego w edukacji promowanych przez amerykańską etyczkę Marthę C. Nussbaum.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja międzykulturowa, dialog międzykulturowy, zaufanie, akulturacja

Abstract: This article presents the practical implementation of the assumptions of intercultural communication based on the philosophy of encounter by Martin Buber, the intercultural

---

1 **Jakub Niewiński**, MA, is a doctoral student at the Doctoral School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zielona Góra and holds a Master's degree in Polish Philology from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. His research interests encompass intercultural pedagogy, interreligious dialogue, the philosophy of encounter, Jewish history and culture, and interdisciplinary pedagogical innovations in educational practice. Email address: j.niewinski@ip.uz.zgora.pl

philosophy of Ram Adhar Mall and intercultural sensitivity according to the concept of Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta, who consider it an effective strategy for building understanding and trust between people. The aim of the article is to indicate the possibilities of effective intercultural communication, strengthening the sense of belonging and security. The author, describing good acculturation practices in the Polish educational space after February 24, 2022, refers to the most important concepts of John W. Berry and Wolfgang Welsch describing the transition from the marginalization of minorities to transcultural attitudes. The reflections align with the idea of integral humanities and a holistic approach to education promoted by the American ethicist Martha C. Nussbaum.

Keywords: intercultural communication, intercultural dialogue, trust, acculturation

Introduction

Weapons, particularly guns, represent a distinct form of lethal force, irrespective of the prevailing political or historical context. Throughout centuries, humanity has developed various tools, but when wielded by irresponsible individuals indifferent to human life, these tools become perilous. Such indifference poses a threat to global peace and the harmony between different national, ethnic, and religious groups. History attests to countries that, through their educational policies, have groomed children for combat and weapon usage, as exemplified by Nazi Germany's *Hitlerjugend* and *Bund Deutscher Mädel* ideologies in the past century.

Disturbingly, the ease with which toy guns, rifles, and pistol-shaped water sprays can be obtained underscores the casual attitude towards weaponry. For instance, during *śmigus-dyngus*[2], people engage in water fights using pistol-shaped sprays. One toy wholesaler, active in the Polish market for over 20 years, offers a "small water gun" for less than PLN 6, marketed as suitable for both boys and girls. "A small water gun is a toy for both boys and girls. It allows you to fight a real water fight and will work great as a water gun for *śmigus-dyngus*" (web 1). This raises critical questions about what we expose children to during their formative years and how we can foster holistic psychophysical development, ensuring their safety and harmonious axiological growth.

On this issue, insights from Janusz Korczak's pedagogical philosophy prove invaluable. Barbara Smolińska-Theiss, considering Korczak among the most eminent figures of the twentieth century, describes him as a moral authority transcending his time and place (Barbara Smolińska-Theiss 2018). Dariusz Stola highlights Korczak's contributions to democratic societies by providing children with tools such as a newspaper, self-government, and a court of their peers. Korczak instilled in them a sense of engagement and responsibility for the community, fostering belief in their own capabilities. Stola emphasizes that although challenges

---

2 *Śmigus-dyngus*, also known as *lany poniedziałek* (*wet Monday*), is a Polish Easter Monday tradition which, in short, involves people throwing copious amounts of water at each other.

faced by societies organized in such a manner are numerous, they can be overcome (Stola 2018).

Intercultural Communication and Dialogue

Traditionally, the concept of intercultural dialogue refers to a constructive and positive interaction between persons and/or groups which are culturally different from each other. Linguistically, the term – intercultural – calls attention to the communication that occurs between persons or cultures, while the term – dialogue – refers to a transforming discourse between parties holding differing views. Michael H. Prosser says: "We have no choice about whether or not we wish to communicate. When we interact with other humans, we communicate [...]. It is a given fact that all humans possess a similar potential for complementary communicative and cultural development. These developments are always affected by many factors. Culture transcends time and space. The age in which a person lives, the locality, the climate, the geography, and many others factors deeply influence that way he or she communicates as a cultural being" (Prosser 1978). The contemporary challenge lies in constructing a society that respects the dignity of every cultural being. Additional factors influencing our communication with others include the ability to engage in dialogue with intercultural awareness and sensitivity, as well as an understanding and appreciation of differences. These skills are increasingly recognized as key competencies in everyday interpersonal relations, with intercultural education serving as a means to cultivate them.

A valuable field of intercultural reflection incorporates the insights of thinkers such as Martin Buber, and Ram Adhar Malla. Buber's philosophy of dialogue focuses on the authentic and personal relationship that occurs between communicating participants, distinguishing between the I-Thou and I-It modes of relating. This perspective underscores the twofold nature of human interaction and relationship. Buber suggests that dialogue involves an oscillation between nearness and distance – which means that intercultural dialogue is something radically different than to use the otherness of the other in favor of an egocentric formation process. Instead, intercultural dialogue is formation in the sense that the dialogical encounter presupposes openness and the willingness to explore other patterns of thought, ideas and perspectives for the purpose of learning more about oneself and the other. Buber reminds us that intercultural dialogue is a qualitative, vibrant and dynamic encounter. Dialogical relationships develop in the tension between closeness and distance. Intercultural dialogue is a formative encounter with the other and cannot be reduced to a method (Buber 2004).

Ram Adhar Mall emphasizes the necessity of intensive and mutual dialogue among different cultures, philosophies, and religions, cautioning against making a priori, metaphysical, or ideological decisions that hinder true understanding. He writes: "The fortuitous meeting of different cultures, philosophies and religions in

the aftermath of modernity (with all its global technological formations) requires intensive and mutual dialogue on the part of all concerned. In the light of this situation, it would be shortsighted to solve problems of mutual understanding by considering the truth and falsity of a particular culture, religion or philosophy in metaphysical terms. The spirit of an intercultural orientation requires a deep commitment to tolerance in intercultural understanding and communication. For a peaceful and fruitful cultural encounter, there are two strategies to be put into practice. First, we should be prepared to fight back theoretical forms of absolutism by offering arguments against exclusive ideologies and by arguing for pluralistic approaches in epistemology, methodology, ethics, and morals. Secondly, we must find out practical ways and means of confronting the violent practice of absolutism. We often, but not always, underrate the dangerous consequences of theoretical fanaticism and wait, sometimes too long, before it becomes practically far too powerful. In the name and for the sake of a peaceful cultural encounter there is no other way than protesting, in differing ways, against any exclusive ideology, as is seen in many reactions to human rights violations" (Mall 2000, 75).

The imperative of dialogue and intercultural communication becomes even more pronounced in a world moving towards global integration. Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta emphasize that studying intercultural communication is vital for developing a global mindset, essential for success in the future world. They say: "The study of intercultural communication will identify the knowledge and skills that enable people to develop a global mind-set and succeed in the future world, it is important to examine the future direction and application of intercultural communication study from three perspectives: education, research, and business" (Chen & Starosta 1998, 299). Chen and Starosta agree that we need and intercultural communication competences that comprise three aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral abilities; the cognitive ability is represented by intercultural awareness, the affective ability by intercultural sensitivity, and the behavioral ability by intercultural effectiveness or adroitness. Intercultural sensitivity can be defined as "an individual's ability to develop emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication" (Chen & Starosta, 1997, 5).

Concepts of acculturation

Hanna Mamzer highlights that "People usually have strong sense of belonging to the society and to the culture from which they come. This implies that we cannot ignore it. We must construct such conditions of life in which people will be able to preserve it. This is not easy at all, especially, if we notice that it may cause a lot of divisions and many difficulties in introducing globalization" (Mamzer 2010).

John W. Berry discusses inclusion leading to acculturation. The inclusion of the larger society and their expectations is rooted in the original

anthropological definition of acculturation, which clearly established that both groups in contact would become acculturated. His concept of multicultural ideology includes the views that cultural diversity is beneficial for a society and its individual members, and that such diversity should be shared and accommodated in an equitable way. Berry explains. "This combination of the acceptance of both cultural diversity and equity among groups and individuals constitutes the basis of the integration and multiculturalism strategies. In addition, the notion of multicultural ideology incorporates a third element: acceptance that the dominant society and its members should be prepared, themselves, to change in order to accommodate others in the larger society" (Berry 2017, 20).

One of the best-known concepts is Lysgaard's theory – the so-called acculturation curve. It represents the relationship between the length of contact with a culturally foreign environment and the level of perceived stress. According to Lysgaard, a stay in a foreign country begins with the so-called honeymoon period. This is when we enjoy all aspects of life in the new place – especially those previously unknown to us. Everything fascinates and delights us. The next stage is culture shock. We start to notice many irritating elements of the foreign culture. We are not sure if we really want to live in this awful, foreign place. Culture shock is followed by acculturation – we slowly learn how to function in the reality around us, we acquire skills to cope with the new environment. The final stage in the model presented is stable adaptation while maintaining one's individuality: culture, customs and language (Boski 2010).

The authors of the theory of intercultural adaptation (William Gudykunst, Young Yun Kim and M.R. Hammer) claim that it is the human ability to reduce uncertainty and anxiety (which is a prerequisite for cultural adaptation), which is directly linked to the with the ability to communicate effectively between representatives of different cultures (Pisarek, 2006).

Acculturation Strategies

There are significant variations in how people seek to relate to each other; not all groups and individuals seek to engage in intercultural relations in the same way. John W. Berry referred to these strategies and expectations because they consist of both attitudes and behaviors that are exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters. Berry says: "when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the Assimilation strategy is defined. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the Separation alternative is defined. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while engaging in daily interactions with other groups, Integration is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking, as a member of an ethnocultural

group, to participate as an integral part of the larger society. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often due enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often due to exclusion and discrimination), then Marginalization is defined" (Berry 2017, 16).

As can be seen from the strategies cited above, integration is an approach that all countries receiving foreigners should care about. Multiculturality and interculturality open up new and uncharted horizons, but they are also challenging. Additionally, according to Welsch and others, it is necessary to rethink the relationship between culture and community. The conventional concept is no longer valid. In light of this criticism Welsch has developed an alternative concept, arguing for a transcultural shift in understanding, both at the macro and micro level. Modernity increases internal social differentiation, which in turn gives rise to various life beliefs, lifestyles and backgrounds. However. as Welsch points out, hybridization also affects the micro level. He argues that neither individual nor cultural identity can be understood as static and categorically determined. The individual cultural identity is dynamic and embedded in an ongoing process of cultural negotiation and exchange (Welsch 1999, 197-198).

Education based on Intercultural Sensitivity

Education, in particular, holds the potential to reshape students' cultural self-perception and enhance emotional and cognitive development. By fostering intercultural sensitivity, education becomes a key tool in equipping individuals to communicate effectively in a world often marked by verbal violence, misinformation, and distorted values.

The Polish school, over the years, has evolved into a dynamic laboratory of experimentation, embodying diverse pedagogies. This environment presents an opportunity for a paradigm shift from a homogeneous institution to an inclusive school that welcomes individuals from various cultures, traditions, and identities. Bogusław Śliwerski emphasizes that "people of different cultures and nationalities who meet each other are more likely to break down existing prejudices, while at the same time they themselves seek a better understanding of the foreign culture, preserving their own national and cultural identity" (Śliwerski 2022, 45).

Since the end of February 2022, Polish schools have faced the challenge of integrating new students from Ukraine into their classrooms. This sudden influx has placed teachers in unfamiliar territory, as they grapple with the responsibility of educating students with migrant experiences, often without adequate preparation. Successfully building a unified school community and fostering positive relations between Polish and Ukrainian children require efforts beyond the traditional teaching process, extending into extracurricular activities. Martha Nussbaum urges educators to showcase the beauty and commitment to a life open to the world, emphasizing reflective citizenship over blind compliance. In her words, "It is up

to us, as educators, to show students that there is greater joy in learning about human beings in their true diversity and complexity than in the passionate pursuit of superficial stereotypes" (Nussbaum 2008, 94-95).

When devising solutions for integrating Ukrainian children into Polish schools in daily work with this often heavily traumatized group of students, it is crucial to adopt an asset-based approach, focusing on opportunities and existing potential rather than deficits. Effective communication with Ukrainian children requires a basic understanding of the Ukrainian education system, including the core curriculum and grading system.

Inclusive Measures and Positive Relationships

Young migrants undergo distinct stages when leaving their home country, as outlined by Kubitsky (2012) and Pollock & Van Reken (2009). These stages encompass engagement, leaving, transition, entering, and re-engagement. Acknowledging and supporting children through each stage is crucial for their emotional development and successful adaptation to a new environment.

Franciszek Szlosek identifies practical challenges related to the adaptation of Ukrainian students, such as curricular differences language proficiency, and the need for Polish students to collaborate effectively with their Ukrainian peers. For instance, even a cursory comparative analysis in mathematics or the broader STEM[3] subjects reveal that Ukrainian students have a wider range of knowledge and skills than their Polish peers. Szlosek emphasizes prioritizing goals derived from basic needs, as identified by Abraham Maslow: security, emotional belonging (Szlosek 2022). Lidia Bugiera during the *Cohesion Forum* that held on January 2023 at the University of Zielona Góra, highlighted the importance of creating space for promoting multicultural acceptance and developing relationships between Polish and Ukrainian children, preventing alienation (web 2). The Center for Citizenship Education recommends involving Ukrainian students in student initiatives, volunteer clubs, and other activities that transcend nationality, focusing on shared interests.

Efforts to integrate students will be incomplete without active involvement from parents. The Transatlantic Future Leaders Foundation stresses the importance of building relationships with parents, especially with refugee families. Transparent communication, parental involvement in school activities, and creating Polish-Ukrainian parent pairs are suggested strategies to strengthen ties and address concerns about children's education. Polish parents would be responsible for supporting the Ukrainian parent in the functioning of the school, maintaining

---

3 *STEM* (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) is usually used to refer to educational policies and curriculum choices in schools to increase competitiveness in science and technology development.

contacts with the school, and the establishment of a council of parents of temporarily relocated students with direct access to local educational authorities to exist at the municipality or city level (CCE 2022, 13, 18). Paul Gorski of the University of Virginia, who has been researching multicultural education for nearly 25 years, points out that parents become an important support for education especially when they feel that they, along with teachers, are consistently concerned about their children's well-being, rather than being called upon only when educators face challenges (Gorski 2013).

School with Class emphasizes that activities that go beyond nationality and focus on establishing relationships on other levels: hobbies, interests, strengths, are particularly welcome. It is worth building these positive relationships, despite the sense of temporariness (School with Class 2022, 44). The Center for Citizenship Education (CCE) introduces the concept of a "peer mentor" for newly admitted students and points out that they should be prepared for this role and then supervised (CCE 2022, 13).

Identity and Cultural Values

The Center for Citizenship Education advocates for introducing classes that enable the preservation of Ukrainian identity, allowing students to express their cultural values during various school activities: e.g. during history or homeroom lessons (CCE 2022, 17). The authors of the School with Class report stress that special care should be taken during such activities. "The recall by children and adolescents of information about their own city, family home can be highly traumatic by arousing painful memories and contributing to increased post-traumatic stress" (School of Class 2022, 48).

It may be a good idea to invite willing students from both countries to discuss not "their" culture, but rather topics such as home customs or family recipes. With such a pedagogical solution, schools will naturally develop intercultural education. One should agree with Martha C. Nussbaum – an American ethicist, points out the necessity of multicultural education. She states: "Education must be multicultural, which I understand as familiarizing students with the basics of the history and cultures of many different groups. It should take into account the religious and cultural peculiarities of groups coming from every part of the world, as well as the problems of ethnic, racial, social and sexual minorities within one's own nation. In implementing such a model of education, learning about history, language, religion and philosophy is particularly important. Most important for promoting respect for another is awareness of cultural differences, which is an inalienable basis for dialogue. There are no more certain sources of disrespect for others than ignorance and a feeling of the natural superiority of one's own way. No amount of general education will provide students with the confidence that they fully understand the world. Nevertheless, an insightful

understanding of one foreign tradition, together with knowledge of some others, will allow one to achieve a Socratic knowledge of one's own limitations" (Nussbaum 2008, 79).

Successfully integrating Ukrainian students into Polish schools demands a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving educators, students, and parents. By focusing on opportunities, understanding the stages of migration, setting inclusive goals, and promoting positive relationships, schools can create an environment that fosters multicultural acceptance and mutual understanding. Ongoing efforts, both in and outside the classroom, are essential for the successful integration of Ukrainian students and the building of a harmonious school community.

Intercultural Communication in Practice

How are teachers expected to realize dialogue in their teaching? To meet the variety of needs of a diverse student group, pre-service teachers first and foremost must possess professional knowledge skills. Prospective teachers must develop knowledge of what is cultural unique and what is common among various traditions, in order words how cultural and religious traditions generate specific motivations and perspectives, as well as how cultural interaction take shape on a macro and micro level. While knowledge is important, we must not forget soft competences, especially empathy and intercultural sensitivity. Practicing empathy and attentiveness to each student as an individual is fundamental to being a teacher and educator. Teachers need content support in the form of recommendations and good practices.

The Migration Museum in Gdynia offers recommendations for schools and teachers, including the Living Library method and language exchange points, which are cited as effective measures. Cross-regional activities, the establishment of an intercultural assistant network, and additional support for parents further contribute to systemic recommendations (Otrębska & Radacka-Majek 2019).

Systemic recommendations, on the other hand, focus on cross-regional activities. These include, for example, the creation of a network of specialists working with people with experience of migration, such as the role of intercultural assistants. For example, Aleksandra Chrzanowska of the Association for Legal Intervention discusses this in her text "Cultural assistant – an innovative model of work in schools accepting the children of foreigners" (2009). Additionally, the Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialization at the University of Warsaw offers the postgraduate course "Intercultural Assistantship at School", and Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań offers the course "Roma. Knowledge and Institutional Practices" both of which aim to increase the availability of specialized education for this purpose. Other recommendations include increasing access to materials for teaching Polish as a foreign language, training and postgraduate studies in glottodidactics, increasing the possibility of individualized approach to students with migration

experience (additional hours of Polish language teaching, adaptation of examination requirements and worksheets), appointment of a coordinator for working with student with migration experience, support for parents of children with migration experience (a brochure prepared as part of the implementation of the "Wroclaw Intercultural Dialogue Strategy 2018-2022" free of charge downloadable in three languages: Polish, English and Russian, and a brochure published by the Office of Education of the City of Warsaw downloadable in eight languages: Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, English, Vietnamese, Belarusian, Chechen, Arabic).

Language as an essential tool of intercultural communication

"For many reasons, I consider language to be the most fundamental cultural fact. First, language is a part of culture, one of those skills or habits that we receive from external tradition. Second, language is an essential instrument, a privileged means by which we assimilate the culture of our group. A child learns culture because it is spoken to: it is chastised, admonished and all through words. Finally, and above all, language is the most perfect of all manifestations of the cultural order, forming systems on one principle or another. And if we want to understand what art, religion, law, and perhaps even cuisine or rules of politeness are, they must be understood as codes formed by the articulation of signs, according to the linguistic model of communication" (Lévi-Strauss 2003, 22).

Claude Lévi-Strauss points out to the key function of language, which is an essential instrument we assimilate the culture of our group – or, I would add, the culture of the group of which we are becoming a part. Practices from Western Europe emphasize organizing lessons in students' native languages to maintain their primary identity. Language support is a fundamental aspect of fostering successful integration among students, providing them with the confidence to navigate their academic journey and adapt to a new environment. Research consistently highlights the significance of language as a vital tool for social inclusion. A study from the Jakub Paradyż Academy underscores the pivotal role of language in the inclusion processes of students with refugee experience (Orłowska & Budzyński 2022). To facilitate integration, several countries, including Belgium, France, Lithuania, Denmark, Norway, Latvia, Greece, Canada, and Australia, offer specialized language courses ranging from one to four years. The CCE recommends adjusting the number of Polish language classes based on the actual needs of students, encompassing both Polish as a foreign language and the language of school education (Szymańska 2018).

Today it is important to develop a multilingual and multicultural linguistic personality, as well as to substantiate the linguo-didactic of the category "multilingual and multicultural competence". The main provisions of intercultural learning consist in the following: participants of the intercultural dialogue are intercultural personalities; each of them "brings his/her communicative (cultural) style into the situation using language tools: their vision and understanding

of the surrounding reality, including knowledge about the interlocutor's country (geography, political situation, etc.), as well as knowledge about one's own country, which introduce a social sense to the situation and are crucial for mutual understanding.

Intercultural Learning in Practice

Intercultural learning revolves around the concept that participants in dialogue bring their communicative styles, visions, and understandings of the surrounding reality, contributing to mutual understanding. This holistic approach is based on an intercultural competence, linked to communicative competence, plays a crucial role in forming a personality of young people. It provides their involves understanding the worldview of another socio-culture, recognizing semantic orientations of different ethnolinguistic communities, and applying this knowledge in intercultural communication. In the era of intercultural dialogue, developing a multilingual and multicultural linguistic personality is essential, emphasizing the need for multilingual, multicultural, and intercultural competence.

An interesting methodological material is the methodological package "Towards the integration of Polish and Ukrainian students", published by *Open Education Foundation* from Białystok, which presents verified by practice, ideas for activities aimed at children and adolescents of different ages from culturally diverse groups (with particular emphasis on Polish-Ukrainian teams). Important lesson plans on how to take care of the different emotions of children in connection with the war were proposed by *Amnesty International*: for the younger ones "How to talk about the war" and for the older ones "The war in Ukraine and human rights". In turn, the School of Education of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation prepared guides "Ukrainian students in our classroom" for teachers of Polish language, mathematics, history, biology and parenting lessons.

Many schools have developed their own ideas for cooperation and integration of students and students from Poland and Ukraine. At my school, Karol Marcinkowski's Primary School No. 1, Ukrainian students have offered to teach Ukrainian to their Polish peers. This shows the true proficiency and participation of young people. Moms of Ukrainian students who came to Murowana Goślina a few years before the war (cooperation with the Municipal Office in Murowana Goślina – adequate funding) became the teachers' help. In turn, the Gen. Hieronim Dekutowski "Zapor" High School from Lublin, within the framework of the annual festival "Ukraine in the center of Lublin", organizes a knowledge and skills competition for Ukrainian and Polish students entitled "Ukraine – terra (in) cognita" [this year will be the 16th edition – the originator is a geography teacher – Ms. Iwona Kryczka, who is also a leader organizing the work of teachers with students with migration experience – within the framework of the nationwide

ORE program "Student with migration experience at school"]. The goals of the competition are: to encourage joint Polish-Ukrainian projects, to prepare for future cooperation between people from both sides of the border and to build intercultural dialogue, to overcome stereotypes about neighbors, to strive for mutual cognition, understanding, reconciliation of both nations, to learn about the cultural heritage of Ukraine (literature, architecture, music, sports, cinema, cuisine, theater, etc.).

The Forum for Dialogue has implemented two editions of the program "Together we discover Jewish history and culture". The overarching idea of the program is to enable the integration and joint education of groups of Polish and Ukrainian schoolchildren. They believe that a common trip to one of the cultural institutions can strengthen mutual relations, and that discovery of Jewish history and culture (which, after all, also unites two countries) will make the students and pupils more open to learning about other cultures, religions and the world around them" (there were following places Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN, Galicia Jewish Museum and Grodzka Gate in Lublin to choose within this Program). This March saw the launch of an interesting initiative for older youth and young adults (18-26 years old) not only from Ukraine and Poland, but also from Belarus. Beyond Borders Academy is a joint initiative of the Kosciuszko Foundation, Borderland Foundation, Folkowisko Association and School of Leaders Foundation. Its goal is to prepare an active community of young people from Ukraine, Belarus and Poland to build new relations and cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. The initiators of the Academy are creating a space for young people who, despite the difficult situation in their homelands, want to actively work for the benefit of others. Activities will continue until December this year.

The Bialystok Program for the Development of Sensitivity to Otherness has been now in existence for more than ten years. The scientific community centered around Jerzy Nikitorowicz has created an excellent resource for working in a multicultural environment – "Adventures of the Other. Fairy tales in intercultural education". The basis of this program is a series of lessons using intercultural stories. Working with stories allows to form sensitivity to otherness in various aspects and contact with the diversity of the world, give it value and develop cognitive curiosity and a desire to interact with the stranger. Intercultural stories create a space for preparing the child for contact with the Other. Additionally, they influence the process of the child's identity development by explaining his own belonging to a specific (national, ethnic, religious) group and the values it represents (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, Potoniec & Szostak-Król 2011).

The "Ambassadors of Dialogue" program is being implemented as part of the Wrocław Multicultural Strategy, which I mentioned earlier. This is a city project, implemented by the Wroclaw Center for Social Development, aimed at raising the intercultural competence of teachers, educators, caretakers of day-care centers, libraries, etc. interested in the subject of openness, counteracting

discrimination, developing an atmosphere of dialogue in their environment. A Dialogue Ambassador acts as a representative of their institution and has the opportunity to participate in cyclical meetings and workshops organized by the Wroclaw Center for Social Development, during which they can exchange knowledge and good practices with other Dialogue Ambassadors. In mid-September of this year, a series of meetings „Intercultural Wroclaw is a matter for all of us" was initiated. It was attended by representatives of more than 30 NGOs and representatives of institutions and departments of the City Hall of Wroclaw working in the field of intercultural dialogue. In October 2023, the first meeting of Wroclaw's national and ethnic minorities was held at the Dialogue Passage. The event was organized by the Wroclaw Center for Social Development in cooperation with the Kaleidoscope of Cultures Foundation, the Union of Ukrainians in Poland and the Union of Polish Karaites. The Dialogue Passage was attended by representatives of statutory minorities (Ukrainian, Karaim, Tatar, Jewish, Roma representation) and Greeks, as well as representatives of migrant groups (Belarusian, Ukrainian) and people involved in cooperation with these minorities.

The School with Class Foundation and the Center for Citizenship Education emphasize to the need to prepare teachers to work in a multicultural group by providing them with professional training and courses, equipping them with appropriate tools and materials to work with students experienced in migration. Significant efforts are also being undertaken by the Teacher Training Center in Zielona Góra. They organized the "Educational Forum: Migration – Integration – Identity", during which good practices in working with children with migration experience were discussed and experience was shared in planning and implementing educational activities aimed at integrating children – refugees from Ukraine into local and regional level. In June 2022, weekly activities were organized for over 300 students (7-9 years old) from preparatory classes of primary schools in Zielona Góra as part of a program facilitating the adaptation of children from Ukraine in the local environment entitled "A Mosaic of Varieties".

Conclusion

We are changing as a nation, as citizens and as inhabitants of both our larger and smaller homeland where we live and work every day alongside and together with new members of our communities. We learn from each other, strengthen each other, but also seek non-violent understanding by using 'giraffe language' – the language of the heart – instead of the 'jackal language'. Speaking from the heart is a gesture of love, giving other people an opportunity to contribute to our well-being and to exercise generosity. Empathetically receiving what is going on in others is a reciprocal gesture. Giraffes experience love as openness and sensitivity, with no demands, criticism, or requirements to fulfil requests at either side of the dispute. The outcome of any dialogue guided by love is harmony. Marshall Rosenberg's

concept can serve as a good guide for us in building mutual trust and understanding without using any weapon that hurts another person. Nonviolent communication instead of guns shall be the goal of all educational activities from kindergarten to university (Rosenberg 2016).

We are still in the process of developing intercultural dialogue process. We need more trust among each other. According to Piotr Sztompka (1999), the notion of trust can be understood as the characteristics of an individual, as the characteristics of certain relations and as a characteristic of a given culture. Sztompka argues that it is possible to create a culture of trust, which can be based on historical values and experiences or individual epistemological assumptions made by specific subjects. In Sztompka's opinion, both trust and distrust have the functional meaning that is important in everyday relations, but what is crucial is that they are rooted in solid epistemological bases. Sztompka's approach shifts the main focus of interest from individually created and expressed trust, towards social and cultural aspects of trust (Sztompka 1999).

As dialogue is at heart a communicative process. All teachers, myself included, are continuously challenged to critically reflect on how classroom interactions are shaped by power; who is given authority and who is not, which voices are heard and which are not, how the classroom participants position themselves in space, etc. This critical reflection can prevent the idea of intercultural dialogue from becoming empty rhetoric.

Yuri, my student from Ukraine, highlights the importance of courage and change in pursuing dreams. In his essay he wrote: „In my opinion, it is worth being brave and making changes, because thanks to this we can make our dreams come true". Today, he is a student at one of the best high technical schools in Poznań, with plans to become a train driver in Poland. His personal journey exemplifies the positive impact of embracing change and pursuing aspirations. Yuri has placed trust in himself, teachers, friends, and parents. In the evolving landscape of cultural dynamics, fostering trust and embracing change are crucial elements in building a harmonious and inclusive society.

References

Berry W.J. (2017). *Introduction to Mutual Intercultural Relations*. In: W.J. Berry (Ed.) *Mutual Intercultural Relation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boski P. (2010). *The cultural framework of social behaviour. Handbook of intercultural psychology*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Buber M. (2004). *I and Thou*. London: Continuum.

CCE, Center for Citizenship Education. (2022). *A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL. Challenges and needs related to the influx of students from Ukraine*. Available at: https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CEO_Szkola-zroznicowana-kulturowo_raport_sierpien22.pdf (Accessed: 1.01.2024).

Chen G. & Starosta W.J. (1997). *A review of the concept of intercultural sensitivity.* "Human Communication", no. 1, pp. 1-16.

Chen G. & Starosta W.J. (1998). *Foundations of intercultural communication.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gorski P. (2013). *Building a pedagogy of engagement for students in poverty.* "Phi Delta Kappan", no. 95 (1), pp. 48-52. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171309500109.

Korczak J. (1986). *King Matt the First*, translated by Richard Lourie. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.

Kubitsky J. (2012). *Psychology migration.* Warszawa: Difin.

Mall R.A. (2016). *Intercultural Philosophy: A Conceptual Clarification.* Available at: https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/confluence/article/view/514 (Accessed: 28.12.2023).

Mamzer H. (2010). *The role of trust in multicultural world.* "Człowiek i społeczeństwo", XXXI, pp. 7- 20.

Młynarczuk-Sokołowska A., Potoniec K. & Szostak-Król K. (2016). *Adventures* of the *Other*: *Tales* in *Intercultural Education.* Białystok: Dialog Foundation, University of Białystok Foundation.

Nussbaum M. (2008). *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education.* Wrocław: Scientific Papers of Silesian University of Technology.

Orłowska B., Budzyński Ł., Lubimow J. (2022). *Inclusion processes of Ukrainian students with refugee experience on the example of primary schools in Gorzów Wielkopolski.* Available at: http://lib.pnu.edu.ua:8080/bitstream/123456789/15146/1/ilovepdf_merged.pdf (Accessed: 28.12.2023).

Otrębska M. & Radacka-Majek L. (2019). *Working with learning with migration experience in a Polish school.* Available at: https://www.pcen.gda.pl/files/userfiles/2020-04/3390.pdf (Accessed: 28.12.2023).

Pollock D.C. & Van Reken R.E. (2009). *Third culture kids. Growing up among worlds.* London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Pisarek W. (Ed.) (2006). *Słownik terminologii medialnej.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas.

Prosser H.M. (1978). *The Cultural Dialogue. An Introduction to Intercultural Communication.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia.

Rosenberg M.B. (2016). *Nonviolent Communication: A language of Life.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca.

School of Class Foundation. (2022). *Together in the classroom. Children from Ukraine in Polish schools. Research report.* Available at: https://www.szkolazklasa.org.pl/materialy/razem-w-klasie-dzieci-z-ukrainy-w-polskich-szkolach/ Accessed: 1.01.2024).

Smolińska-Theiss B. (2018). *Janusz Korczak: The Pedagogical Imprint.* In: *In King Matt's Poland. The 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence.* Warszawa: Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN.

Stola D. (2018). *In King Matt's Poland. The 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence,* 11. Warszawa: Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN.

Szlosek F. (2022). *From systemic visions to wartime realities, or the fate of Ukrainian education.* In: M. Paluch (Ed.) *Lessons of peace in (post) war time.* Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls".

Sztompka P. (1999). *Trust: A Sociological Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Szymańska M. (2018). *JES-PL method Teaching the language of school education to students with migration experience.* Available at: https://jows.pl/artykuly/metoda-jes-pl--nauczanie-jezyka-edukacji-szkolnej-uczniow-z-doswiadczeniem-migracji (Accessed: 1.01.2024).

Śliwerski B. (2022). *Dimensions of educational Polish-Ukrainian arousal in the face of war and post-war.* In: M. Paluch (Ed.) *Lessons of peace in (after) war time.* Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls".

Welsch W. (1999). *Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today.* In: M. Featherstoend & S. Lasch (Eds.) *Spaces of Culture. City. Nation. World.* London: Sage Publications.

Web 1. Demi zabawki. Available at: https://damizabawki.pl/product-pol-44355-Mala-Psikawka-Pistolet-Na-Wode.html (Accessed: 28.12.2023).

Web 2. *Cohesion Forum* entitled "Education of Ukrainians in Poland. Opportunities and Threats" organized by the Social Cohesion Laboratory at the University of Zielona Gora. Available at: https://fb.watch/i55eZtCAAA/ (Accessed: 1.01 2024).