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## THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN BELARUS AND THE UK

**Introduction.** Globally, the foreign language (FL) acquisition encourages respect for other peoples: it fosters an understanding of the interrelation of language and human nature, because foreign languages expand one's view of the world, liberalize one's experiences, and make people more flexible and tolerant. Thus, the relevance of this theme cannot be underestimated. Besides, the necessity of research is proved by the fact that it can help the foreign language teachers to become more professionally competent as the research reveals the attitudes toward learning FL. Discovering students' attitudes about language learning will help both teachers and students in the teaching-learning process. The data obtained in the study can be useful for cross-cultural educators and anyone who is interested in foreign language teaching and investigation. The goal of the study is to explore the students' attitudes to learning FL in Belarus and the UK.

**Main part.** The research is based on the theory of attitudes towards the otherness. As we know there are three types of attitudes towards the otherness: attitudes of superiority, equality and genuine exploration [cit: 1, p. 73]. Our hypothesis is that genuine exploration attitude is the least frequent among the FL learners. We suggest that even if the majority of people think that learning it is important, not everyone is ready to change attitudes and are eager to spend extra time doing it. To have such attitude of exploration, the person should possess such qualities as curiosity, flexibility, openness and ambiguity. But first of all, such an individual should seek to explore other cultures and make efforts to do it.

This study was undertaken by questioning the responders from two countries: Belarus and the UK. 15 people from each country took part in the survey which was done in March 2022.

The study was organized in two stages. The aim of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage is to design the questionnaire and obtain the data by questioning the responders via social media. The responders were asked the following questions:

1. How important is to learn foreign languages for you?
  - A. Very important.
  - B. Quite important.

- C. Not very important.
  - D. Not important at all.
  - E. Don't know.
2. How much time do you spend doing home tasks for foreign language classes?
- A. Too much.
  - B. Too little.
  - C. About the right.
  - D. Unsure.
3. Complete the sentence "Learning foreign language is necessary to...".

The aim of the second stage is to interpret the data and make recommendations. We presented the responses in graphics which illustrate students' attitudes to FL learning in theory, and the actual attitudes to studies in the classroom.

Having compared the data obtained after the analysis of the responses on the first question, it is seen that there is some difference between attitudes of the representatives of Belarus and the UK (Figure 1). Though, people from both parties think that learning foreign languages is very important (30 % and 33 %) and quite important (41 % and 25 %) — that is 74 % and 55 % of the responders — 30 % of the British and 18 % of the Belarusians think that FL learning is not very important, moreover 10 % of the British, and 4 % of the Belarusians find them as not important at all. It is 40 % of the British, and 22 % of the Belarusians: thus the difference of 18 % proves that the Belarusians have a little bit more positive attitude towards FL learning.

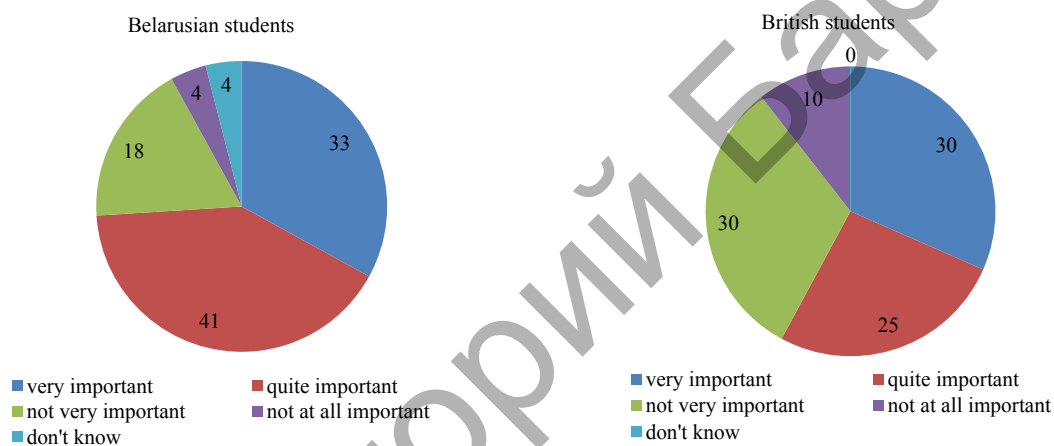


Figure 1 — Importance of FL learning in Belarus and the UK

The analysis of the responses on the second question helps us create the picture of real learners' motives and attitudes to do their homework (Figure 2).

Doing the analysis, we paid special attention to the word "too" which illustrates the learners' attitudes to FL acquisition. So, the statistics show that 60 % of Belarusians and only 16 % of the British consider that they spend "too much time" learning a FL — the difference is 44 % which means that the Belarusians' attitude is much worse. At the same time 0 % of Belarusians think they spend "too little time" on it in comparison with 16 % of the British responders — this fact confirms the idea that the actual attitudes of the British are much more positive to learn the target language.

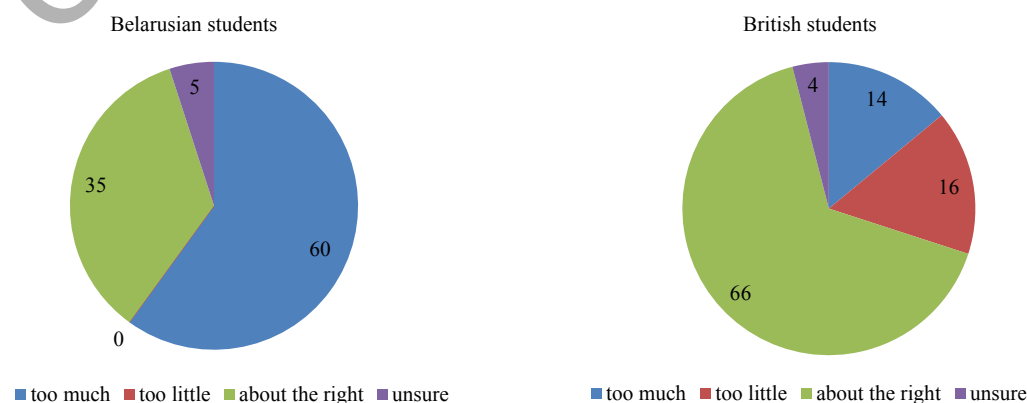


Figure 2 — Attitudes to the time spent on doing home assignments in Belarus and the UK

As for the third task — Complete the sentence “Learning foreign language is necessary to...” — the results were quite similar in both countries: to find a prestigious job, to go abroad, and for self-development. All these responses demonstrate pragmatic, practical oriented goals which have nothing in common with curiosity, flexibility, openness and ambiguity — the character traits that characterize a learner who is eager to explore the target language and culture.

**Conclusion.** Research results prove the hypothesis, that the attitude of genuine exploration of another language which is an essential part of culture, is the least frequent among the FL learners both in Belarus and the UK. However, the British responders — who in general underestimate the significance of learning a FL — demonstrated a better attitude towards its actual learning. In fact, not many people show readiness towards the exploration of another language and the adequate attitude. Though the study has a number of limitations — a small amount of the interviewees and their profilisation (some people’s occupation may be connected with linguistics or foreign language teaching) — the results could be useful for students, educators and researchers. Summarizing the results, we can give the following recommendation: the intrinsic motivation should be increased and one of the ways is to develop the learners’ attitude of genuine exploration of the language. Finally, students will make more efforts and achieve progress.

#### References

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