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STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN SCOTTISH AND BELARUSIAN UNIVERSITIES

Introduction. Teaching the issues of student lifestyle has gained significant attention in recent years due to the need for communication during student exchange programs. The necessity of researching student accommodation is determined by certain differences which are able to provoke culture shock among Belarusians who come to the UK to study.

This research is relevant because student exchange and educational programs are very popular nowadays but there are insufficient cross-cultural studies of life styles and value orientations of the Scots and Belarusians. It is marked that course books of English that are used in Belarusian schools contain texts about Scotland but they lack topics revealing everyday routines, in particular, about student accommodation. Meanwhile, such studies are becoming really important because students choose places for living based on their values which have crucial impact on different spheres of social life of an individual. This study will help to understand the reflection of young people's value systems in the way of living, and predict the intensity of the process of adjustment to a new culture. Also, the study will promote pre-service foreign language teacher facilitation of learning the target culture.

Main part. The goal of research is to compare dormitories in Scotland and Belarus, and get a better understanding of the ways to help learners of English to adjust for new cultural realia.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “a dormitory — original from the Latin word *dormitorium* — is a large building at a college or university where students live. It also may be called dorm, residence hall, hall, the house of residence” [1].

The objectives of the study include: (1) to find out the facts and opinions about Scottish and Belarusian student accommodation; (2) to do a comparative analysis of Scottish and Belarusian student common accommodation. These objectives determined the implementation of the following research methods:

- 1) observation of different sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) where information about student accommodation is located;
- 2) survey of Scottish and Belarusian students and comparative analysis of the data obtained.

It was hypothesized that besides a range of similarities as a ground for easier adjustment to a new culture, there will be certain differences in student accommodation in the two countries that are able to cause culture shock.

This research is based on the theory of intercultural communication. One of its positions is the need to minimize the negative effects of culture shock in order to adjust to a new culture. Culture shock is “a sense of disorientation or confusion from being immersed in a new culture, way of life, or set of attitudes” [3]. The symptoms of culture shock include: homesickness, irritability, and insomnia. During an exchange program and study at a university abroad, students can experience after the “honeymoon period” culture shock as part of their adjustment. In theory, its length depends on motivation, length of stay, language and cultural background, cultural knowledge, personality, relationships with others, financial situation, age, and degree of ethnocentrism [2].

Studying the theory of intercultural communication of two countries can be an effective tool of creating the mechanisms of cooperation between organizations and individuals and prevention any possible ethnic conflicts. Knowing this theory can help establish contacts and solve conflicts.

The present research was undertaken at six universities in Scotland and Belarus. The respondents of the survey were 10 Scottish students from University of the West of Scotland, University of Glasgow, and University of Stirling, and also 10 Belarusian students from Baranovichi State University, Belarusian State Pedagogic University named after Maxim Tank, and Francisk Skorina Gomel State University. The age of the respondents varied from 18 to 21; 70 % were females, and 30 % were males.

This study was organized in 3 stages. The goal of the first stage was to know the find out where students live, the advantages and disadvantages of their housing, and find out if there are any difficulties when living in a dorm. The goal of the second stage was to learn more about dorms in the two countries. The goal of the third stage was to find out about the availability and cost of the dorm. For this reason, we prepared the questionnaire which

included 10 questions. The survey was done in March 2020 via the social networks “Facebook” and “Instagram.” There were three groups of questions aimed at finding out: (1) the typical types of accommodation and students’ attitudes; (2) the common facilities, and (3) availability and costs. The list of questions is presented below.

1. Do students live mainly in a house of residence or rent a flat/house/room? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a dorm? What are the advantages and disadvantages of renting flat/house/room? Is it a challenge for students to live on themselves?

2. How many people usually live in a room in a student dorm? Are there any special rooms for studying in the dorm? What furniture and household items are there?

3. Is it easy to get a room in the student dorm? What is the price for renting a dorm (per week)? Are there any grants to cover the cost of living in the house of residence?

As a result, we found out the number of students living in dormitories and renting their accommodation do not differ very much in Belarus (30 % vs 70 %) and Scotland (50 % vs 50 %). So, more students in Belarus live in the dorm. Comparing the life in the dorm, the Scots singled out such advantages as: (1) make friends easily, (2) have people to help you, (3) 24 hour security, (4) live next to your friends, (5) close to the university, and disadvantages: (1) noise, (2) costliness. Among Belarusian students we singled out such advantages as: (1) low price, (2) good location in the city, (3) easier to make friends, and disadvantages: (1) noise, (2) curfew, (3) hypercontrol. It can be noted that security is more important for Scots, and good location is of great value for Belarusians. Having analyzed the data about renting a flat/house, we conclude that the main advantage for both Belarusian and Scottish students is personal space and silence, and the disadvantage is high rental cost. As for the challenges of living on themselves, Scottish students answered that “the first week is the most challenging because it’s such a shock and you feel like you’re on your own and have no solid friendships quite yet. It’s a real challenge being away from home if something happens within the family such as a bereavement, also if you get sick not having parents there to look after you it is quite difficult.” The Belarusian students wrote that “it is hard because you miss them and some people need to learn how to cook and clean, but it’s good because it forces you to be independent and you make new friends and get freedom.” It is clear that the first week at the University is the most complicated for students, since they are in a completely new and unknown environment. It is also a responsible step for them to start an independent life away from their parents. It came out that it is a more difficult period for Scottish students, as they have closer relationship with their parents.

At this stage, we can distinguish such a value as a family. After analyzing the answers of the first stage, we see that Scottish students are more difficult to experience the beginning of independent life because of close relationships with their family.

Having analyzed the second group of answers, we note a difference in the number of students living in a flat/house and a dorm. So, in Scotland, 6 students live in the same flat, but each of them has his/her own bedroom, while in Belarus 4—6 people can share a bedroom. This indicates such values as individualism in Scotland and collectivism in Belarus. Additionally, our survey revealed that Scottish and Belarusian dormitories are equipped with special rooms for studies and recreation, which greatly help students to work on themselves, to do projects without disturbing the neighbors. The facilities are basically similar in dormitories in two countries: bed, desk, chairs, wardrobe, bedside table, bookshelf, dining table, refrigerator, oven, microwave, kettle.

At this stage, we can distinguish such values as individualism for Scots and collectivism for Belarusians. After analyzing the answers of the second stage we see that these values are clearly reflected in the example of the number of students living in a room.

The third aspect for cross-cultural analysis constitutes availability and costs. In this respect we learnt that in Scotland the accommodation is provided only to first year students, later they have to find a private accommodation. Also, students from farther distances are given priority. As for Belarusian University policies, the accommodation is provided to all nonresident first-year students; for senior courses, they must have a high academic score, actively participate in social activities held, for example, in the hostel, be engaged in extracurricular activities.

Studying the cost of living in the two countries, we got the average price per week. It is from 2 to 8 pounds in Belarus, and 90—150 in Scotland. As a result, this aspect can become a reason for culture shock for Belarusian exchange students. Considering opportunities to get a grant to cover the cost of living, we obtained the information that in Scotland there are loans and grants that can be applied for through a company called SAAS, its amount depends on the household income of the family. Meanwhile in Belarus, students who study at the expense of the state can receive a scholarship. But there are also certain groups of residents such as orphans and disabled people who do not pay for accommodation at all.

At this stage, we can highlight such values as caring for young people. After analyzing the responses of the third stage, it can be noted that this value is clearly expressed in Belarus. Based on the analysis of data, it was found that in Belarus, unlike in Scotland, there is a great concern for young people in relation to pricing policy.

Conclusion. Summing up, we conclude that student accommodation in Scottish and Belarusian universities is pretty similar according to the following criteria: advantages and disadvantages of living in a dorm and advantages and disadvantages of renting an apartment; availability of special rooms in hostels for study or leisure; the availability of furniture and household items in the dorm; availability of the programs/scholarships that cover the cost of living in the house of residence.

Another conclusion of this research is the difference that can cause culture shock and significantly slow down and complicate the adaptation of Belarusian residents: the number of students living in the dormitory or rented apartment; the difficulty of adapting to a new place; the number of students living in a room; difficulties in getting a room in the student dorm; the price for living a week in a dorm.

Based on the results obtained, the following recommendations can be given to educational institutions, teachers and students:

1. To create a website for students to reveal student accommodation facilities, where students can find housing, neighbors; share their experience of living; give advice; share life hacks that will help improve and facilitate living in a hostel.

2. Initiate discussions in the foreign language classroom about culture shock due to the differences in the life style, and the ways to cope with it.

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