
FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CULTURAL SECURITY AND RESILIENCE UNDER HYBRID THREATS

Tetiana Shmidt

Lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages, e-mail: shmitanya@gmail.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5930-5540>

Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

Received: September 02, 2025 | Revised: September 30, 2025 | Accepted: October 31, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33445/psssj.2025.6.3.2>

Abstract

The article explores the role of foreign language education as a strategic instrument of cultural security and resilience in conditions of hybrid warfare. It aims to determine how integrating linguistic and intercultural components into professional military education strengthens the ability to counter informational and cultural aggression.

The study applies a combination of theoretical and empirical approaches, including analysis and systematization of Ukrainian and international research on cultural security, comparative analysis of educational practices, and abstraction, induction, and deduction to formulate conceptual and practical conclusions.

The research establishes that foreign language learning, particularly through intercultural and practice-oriented methods such as role-playing games and simulations, enhances students' critical thinking, media literacy, and intercultural competence. The experience of teaching Turkish in Ukrainian military institutions demonstrates that combining linguistic and cultural training improves officers' readiness for communication and decision-making under hybrid conditions.

The study substantiates the theoretical link between language acquisition and cultural security, expanding the understanding of language as both a communicative and strategic component of national resilience.

The proposed methodology offers a framework for integrating intercultural modules into language curricula for military and higher education institutions, promoting adaptability and resilience under hybrid threats.

The article provides an innovative conceptualization of foreign language learning as a tool of cultural defense, illustrating how linguistic education contributes to safeguarding national identity and resilience in the face of hybrid aggression.

Key words: foreign language, cultural security, intercultural competence, military education, Turkish language, hybrid threats, role-playing games.

Introduction

In the contemporary world, national security is increasingly understood not only through its military and political dimensions but also through its cultural, informational, and linguistic components. One of the key pillars of cultural security is the preservation of national identity, along with the capacity to resist external informational and cultural influences that may distort historical memory, impose alien values, and construct manipulative narratives.

Within this context, foreign languages function not merely as instruments of communication but as strategic tools for strengthening cultural resilience, as they provide access to authentic sources of information, broaden intellectual horizons, and foster critical thinking in the face of growing informational threats.

The hybrid war waged by Russia against Ukraine, which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the onset of hostilities in the Donbas region, has integrated military, informational, economic, and cultural dimensions. Since 24 February 2022, this confrontation has escalated into

a full-scale armed aggression that continues to employ hybrid methods, including information warfare, propaganda, and cyberattacks. Such a complex combination of instruments generates new challenges for both the state and society, necessitating the enhancement of linguistic and media literacy, as well as the development of critical information analysis skills and intercultural competence among citizens.

Under the ongoing conditions of war, foreign language proficiency becomes not only an educational priority but also a crucial component of national cultural security. It ensures access to international sources of reliable information, facilitates an informed understanding of global processes and cultural contexts, and enables the formation of partnerships in the spheres of defense, education, science, and culture.

Accordingly, the integration of foreign language education with the cultivation of cultural and informational resilience emerges as a vital objective of contemporary educational and security policy.

Theoretical background

Recent research confirms that foreign language acquisition plays a crucial role in ensuring cultural security and fostering societal resilience under hybrid threats. Verbytska, Babii, Botvyn, Konivitska, and Khlypavka (2023) emphasize that proficiency in foreign languages is essential for countering informational and cultural aggression, as it provides access to reliable information and contributes to the formation of national identity. Pasichnyk, Redko, and Shkoliar (2024) demonstrate that the ongoing war has led to significant changes in approaches to foreign language teaching, particularly by integrating intercultural competence and the critical analysis of cultural narratives. Bilotserkovets, Fomenko, and Lushchik (2024) point out that the development of students' ability to engage in intercultural dialogue substantially enhances their cultural resilience and capacity to resist external informational influences.

Thus, contemporary scholarly works highlight the necessity of combining foreign language learning with the development of intercultural competence and critical information analysis as key factors in strengthening the cultural security and resilience of the state.

Research question

This study seeks to answer the question: How can foreign language learning function as an instrument of cultural security and contribute to the development of societal resilience under hybrid threats?

It further examines how modern approaches to integrating language education and intercultural competence – particularly in the training of future military specialists – can be applied to counter informational and cultural aggression.

Data and methods

To reach the goal the following methods were used: analysis of the researched problem in the field of cultural security and foreign language education; systematization and generalization of the information obtained from Ukrainian and international theoretical sources; methods of comparative analysis of educational practices; as well as abstraction, induction, and deduction to formulate theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations.

Results and Discussion

The historical development of the role of foreign languages demonstrates that their significance has shifted in accordance with changing social and political conditions. In the 19th century, language learning was the prerogative of the educated elite, primarily oriented towards literary and diplomatic purposes. In the 20th century, influenced by mass migration, globalization, and the

growth of international trade, languages acquired a more instrumental function, serving as a means of information exchange and professional communication. In the 21st century, the emphasis has shifted towards intercultural competence and socio-cultural understanding, with languages becoming “socio-cultural mediators” enabling effective functioning in a globalized world (Byram & Wagner, 2018).

Language performs numerous functions within culture, which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The communicative function ensures the transmission of cultural meanings; for instance, in Japanese, politeness formulas reflect the hierarchical nature of society; in Turkish, “Merhaba, nasılsınız?” (“Good day, how are you?”) serves as a standard greeting rather than a literal inquiry about health; in Ukrainian, the use of forms “ти” (“you” informal) or “ви” (“you” formal) regulates social relations and the level of formality in communication.

The cognitive function of language shapes and structures knowledge about the world, as illustrated by examples from Eskimo languages, which contain dozens of words to describe snow (Boroditsky, 2017). For example, in Ukrainian, the word “смерть” (“death”) is feminine and is sometimes associated with female figures in folk tales or poetry - tragic yet noble, or symbolically inevitable. In French (“*la mort*”, feminine), despite sharing the same grammatical gender as in Ukrainian, the concept is often imbued with a more lyrical or even romanticized connotation, highlighting the beauty and poetic nature of the inevitable. In German (“*der Tod*”, masculine), it is more frequently portrayed as a stern, ruthless, or martial figure. As Boroditsky’s (2017, pp. 63–64) research demonstrates, in Mandarin Chinese, speakers conceptualize time vertically: “earlier” is located above and “later” below, whereas English speakers perceive time horizontally (past to the left, future to the right). In English, there is also no obligatory specification of the direction of movement, so one can simply say He is going, while in Spanish or Greek it is necessary to indicate whether the action is completed or ongoing.

The informational function of language lies in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage through oral and written traditions, for example, through proverbs and sayings that convey the life experience of generations, as explored in the context of linguistic preservation of cultural codes (Byram, 2020). The symbolic function is reflected in the use of symbols and codes carrying cultural meanings; for instance, the colour white in Europe symbolizes purity, while in China it signifies mourning, similarly to how different forms of address and greeting in Turkish convey social status and cultural norms.

The axiological function demonstrates the value orientations of a society, manifested in linguistic means of expressing freedom, justice, and civil rights in various cultural discourses (Fairclough, 2010). The normative function regulates social interactions through linguistic and communicative norms; for example, in Turkish, the choice between *sen* and *siz* is primarily determined by the age, social status, and hierarchy between interlocutors, whereas in Ukrainian, the use of *mu* or *bu* is mainly defined by the level of formality and distance in communication.

Thus, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as an instrument for transmitting cultural meanings, values, and social norms – an aspect of particular importance in the contemporary context of intercultural interaction and globalization.

Modern pedagogical approaches to foreign language teaching increasingly integrate cultural components into the learning process. The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology (Coyle, 2010) combines the study of subject-specific content with language acquisition, thereby enhancing intercultural competence. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (East, 2021) focuses on learning through the completion of tasks set within real or simulated cultural contexts. Particularly promising are studies on the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) (Parmaxi, 2023) to immerse students in the cultural environment of the target language, which contributes to the formation of sustainable intercultural competences.

In Ukraine, there is a growing recognition of the importance of intercultural competence. National higher education standards provide for the integration of cultural modules into language courses, while teacher training programmes emphasise the ability to work effectively in multicultural classrooms (Matviienko & Zhang, 2025). These principles are particularly relevant in military and diplomatic educational institutions, where proficiency in a foreign language combined with cultural understanding ensures effective communication and cultural security under hybrid threats.

The experience of teaching Turkish in Ukrainian military higher education institutions illustrates how modern pedagogical approaches can be adapted to the specific needs of military training. This approach integrates linguistic and cultural instruction, combining grammar and vocabulary study with practical tasks that simulate diplomatic and military-administrative situations. Such activities include the analysis of media environments and information influences, as well as the development of intercultural skills such as interpreting cultural codes, recognising non-verbal signals, assessing social contexts, and adapting communication strategies to diplomatic protocol. This demonstrates that the integration of intercultural modules into the curricula of military HEIs significantly enhances the effectiveness of preparing future officers for complex international and hybrid environments.

Diplomatic contacts and international cooperation are integral components of the contemporary activities of Ukrainian military officers, particularly in the context of multilateral operations and hybrid conflicts. Therefore, the development of skills traditionally associated with diplomats constitutes an essential part of the professional training of future military specialists.

The experience of teaching the Turkish language in Ukrainian military higher education institutions demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating a linguo-cultural approach in developing a high level of intercultural competence. In this context, language serves not only a communicative function but also acts as a tool for fostering strategic thinking, cultural awareness, and resilience under complex international and hybrid conditions.

The learning process combines the study of grammar and vocabulary with practical tasks simulating diplomatic and military-administrative situations, including the analysis of media landscapes and information influence. Particular attention is paid to developing intercultural skills: students learn to interpret the cultural codes of the Turkish language, recognise non-verbal signals, assess social contexts, and adapt communication strategies in accordance with diplomatic protocol. For this purpose, they analyse negotiation scenarios with representatives of Turkish military and civilian structures, practise politeness formulas, stylistic nuances of address, and cultural markers that affect the success of communication.

Additionally, translation and adaptation exercises involving official documents, news materials, and media analysis are conducted, enabling students to quickly and accurately convey information while accounting for cultural context.

This experience demonstrates that integrating intercultural modules into the curricula of military higher education institutions significantly enhances the effectiveness of training future military specialists. Students not only achieve a high level of proficiency in the Turkish language but also acquire competences essential for ensuring the state's informational and cultural security. Such an approach develops resilience to informational influences, fosters critical thinking about cultural and media messages, and builds the ability to engage in constructive communication under complex international relations and hybrid threats.

Role-playing simulations of diplomats are among the key methods for developing both linguistic and intercultural competence in the context of military education. These simulations replicate real-life diplomatic situations, enabling students to apply their knowledge of the Turkish

language in practical communicative scenarios while simultaneously analysing the cultural and social context.

In such simulations, students are assigned specific roles—as representatives of Turkish and Ukrainian diplomatic and military institutions, international organisations, or other stakeholders. The tasks involve preparing speeches, formulating well-argued positions, conducting negotiations, and responding to unpredictable situations that mimic real diplomatic processes. For instance, students may engage in negotiations concerning joint military exercises or responses to crisis information releases in a hybrid environment.

Key elements of role-playing exercises include:

Communicative accuracy – the use of Turkish vocabulary and grammar at a high level, with strict adherence to diplomatic protocol.

Intercultural awareness – understanding Turkish communicative and cultural norms, features of non-verbal behaviour, forms of address, and speech tonality.

Analytical thinking – assessing incoming information, anticipating opponents' reactions, and making strategic decisions during negotiations.

Critical thinking and adaptability – responding swiftly to unpredictable scenarios, shifts in interlocutors' positions, and emerging informational challenges.

For example, one exercise involves simulating negotiations on the exchange of military information. Students develop their positions, justify their decisions in Turkish, while the instructor introduces unexpected messages or diplomatic manoeuvres requiring immediate response.

Such role-playing activities not only improve language competence but also build resilience to informational pressure and hybrid influences, preparing future military professionals for effective performance in international and crisis contexts. Experience shows that integrating role-playing games into the educational process increases students' motivation and promotes deeper acquisition of both linguistic and cultural material.

Conclusions

The analysis confirmed that a foreign language is not only a means of communication but also an important instrument of cultural security and resilience in the current conditions of hybrid threats. Language shapes cultural codes, value orientations, and social norms, thereby fostering intercultural competence and the ability to adapt in an international environment. Particular importance is attached to the cognitive, communicative, and axiological functions of language, which ensure effective information transfer and the understanding of cultural nuances in intercultural contacts.

The experience of teaching Turkish in Ukrainian military higher education institutions demonstrates the practical significance of integrating linguistic and cultural training. The use of role-playing games, diplomatic scenarios, and intercultural discussions allows students not only to master professional vocabulary but also to develop decision-making skills in crisis and hybrid situations, including during informational influence and diplomatic negotiations.

Thus, foreign language teaching in the context of intercultural training contributes to the formation of high-level strategic thinking, linguistic flexibility, and the ability to interact effectively in international coalitions among future military specialists. This confirms that a foreign language is a key resource for ensuring cultural security and resilience in the context of hybrid warfare, while comprehensive training that employs practice-oriented teaching methods is an effective mechanism for achieving these objectives.

Funding

This study received no specific financial support.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

- Verbytska, L., Babii, I., Botvyn, T., Konivitska, T., & Khlypavka, H. (2023). The language education and the language component as an element of countering hybrid threats in Ukraine. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2023ss0504>
- Pasichnyk, O., Redko, V., & Shkoliar, N. (2024). Reconsidering the intercultural component of foreign language learning as a result of the Russia–Ukraine war (Ukrainian perspective). *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională*, 16(1), 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/16.1/812>
- Bilotserkovets, M., Fomenko, T., & Lushchuk, Y. (2024). Opportunities for creating an intercultural environment in a Ukrainian agrarian university. *Educational Challenges*, 29(1), 46–57. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.1.03>
- Byram, M., & Wagner, M. (2018). Making a difference: Language teaching for intercultural and international dialogue. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 140–151. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12319>
- Boroditsky, L. (2017). How language shapes thought. *Scientific American*, 316(6), 63–65.
- Byram, M. (2020). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: Revisited* (2nd ed.). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and language integrated learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- East, M. (2021). *Foundational principles of task-based language teaching*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003039709>
- Parmaxi, A. (2023). Virtual reality in language learning: A systematic review and implications for research and practice. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 31(1), 172–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1765392>
- Matviienko, O. V., & Zhang, J. (2025). Peculiarities of intercultural competence formation in future foreign language teachers in the context of transformations in modern pedagogical education. *Educational and Scientific Space*, 8(1), 92–103. [https://doi.org/10.31392/ONP.2786-6890.8\(1\)/2.2025.08](https://doi.org/10.31392/ONP.2786-6890.8(1)/2.2025.08)