Journal of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University
*http://journals.pnu.edu.ua*
Vol. 11, No. 3 (2024), 7-25

UDC 37.016:81'243:811.112.2]373.3.091.212.5=161.2-054.73
doi: 10.15330/jpnu.11.3.7-25

# METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: DISPLACED PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING GERMAN UPON TRANSITION TO THE TARGET LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

*OLENA ABRAMICHEVA*

**Abstract**. Drawing on international pedagogical discourse on the inclusion of ethnically diverse refugee groups in the educational systems of OECD countries as well as our previous research on the Ukrainian refugee perspectives on primary school in Switzerland, the author examines experiences of second language acquisition by displaced Ukrainian children in Swiss primary schools. The two-year research period allowed for the exploration of dynamics of German language acquisition by displaced children in conditions of full immersion in the target language environment and identification of the factors influencing their second language (German) learning and performance. The involvement of a Ukrainian researcher in the research project ensured accessibility of the target group and effective researcher-respondent communication in the course of longitudinal study carried out within the framework of a qualitative methodology with data collection through narrative inquiry and participant observations as research tools. The study identifies the effects of the two groups of factors: learner-internal (motivation, metacognitive skills, prior knowledge, and learning strategies) and learner-external ones (second language learning context, type of second language instruction available upon displacement, etc.). Metacognitive skills proved to be instrumental in second language learning in the context of the learners' unexpected transition to a new educational setting and full immersion in the target language environment. Effects of metacognitive skills on second language learning of the studied group of displaced children vary considerably depending on the student's age, prior knowledge and language learning experiences, and second language instruction available upon the displacement. The multidisciplinary character of the second language acquisition research undertaken by the author allows for diverse practical applications of its results in second language pedagogy, psychology of education, as well as in refugee and primary education.

**Keywords***:* primary education, second language learning, metacognitive awareness, metacognitive skills, Ukrainian children.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current research on 'Second language acquisition by displaced Ukrainian students in Swiss primary school' is based on the preceding research on the Ukrainian refugee perspectives on primary school in Switzerland (Abramicheva, 2023) and focuses on the initial stage of displaced learners' acquisition of the school language (German). The extended time frame of the research allowed for progressive participant observation to explore dynamics of German language acquisition and learning by displaced students in conditions of complete immersion in the target language environment. The research is guided by two questions: 1) What factors influence the learning of German as a second

language by displaced Ukrainian children in a Swiss primary school? and 2) How do immediate environmental contexts affect second language learning?

Second language (or L2) learning implies, according to Gass (Gass, 2020), that a nonnative language is learned in an environment in which that second language is spoken (i.e., German is learned by displaced Ukrainian children in German-speaking Switzerland) and that learners "need to participate in diverse speech communities and communicative contexts immediately" (Abrams, 2020, p. 3), thus being not only learners of the language but its immediate users.

The major feature related to the L2 learning context under study is the presence of a dialect (Swiss German) which is spoken in the surrounding social environment by the local Swiss population and, correspondingly, in all local primary schools, thus, being another nonnative language for the displaced learners to encounter in a regular Swiss classroom.

Features related to the studied group of displaced learners include the following: 1) rare cases of previous experience of learning German as a foreign language (further on referred to as FL) among displaced children; those who studied German prior to displacement studied it in a Ukrainian school as part of the primary school curriculum; 2) high frequency of learning English as an FL prior to displacement, which enabled displaced learners to use English as a lingua franca at the initial stage of their inclusion in Swiss primary schools; 3) the factor of forced displacement of Ukrainian learners resulting in a high degree of uncertainty about their future status, life prospects, and duration of placement in the host-country, and hence, low motivation for L2 learning in the early stages of inclusion in Swiss school.

Unexpected transition of displaced children to a nonnative-language(s)-speaking host country meant an abrupt transition to a new culture, a new school with a different curriculum, and a nonnative language of school instruction. 'Acquiring the language of schooling' was an absolute necessity to ensure the continuity of education and meaningful learning of displaced children in the host country schools (OECD, 2022; Cerna, 2019), for which EU Member States and OECD countries hosting Ukrainian refugees were to provide educational programs for "early immersion of displaced children within non-segregated mainstream classes and curricula, with additional support to accelerate social and academic learning" (EC Staff Working Document on Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education, 2022, p. 18). In conditions of forced transition to another educational environment, children were faced with the difficult task of transferring their knowledge and skills to a new reality, to which they had to adapt in order to have access to further education. It was natural to assume that children's functional literacy and prior knowledge would play an important role in the learning process in conditions of forced displacement. This assumption also applies to learning a second language and, although it was not made explicit in the research questions of the research project, it was confirmed by extensive evidence obtained from the children. The importance of metacognitive skills, metalinguistic awareness, and (meta)cognitive strategies, all of which are strongly related to functional literacy, emerged through interviews with displaced students as a group of factors positively influencing second language learning in the context of full immersion. "Functional literacy as the most basic foundational skill is crucial for cognitive progress across the curriculum and transcends the linguistic borders between different languages" (Council of Europe, 2015).

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Martinez, "metacognition is the monitoring and control of thought" and "serves many diverse functions, as does language" (Martinez, 2006). Commonly referred to as 'thinking about thinking', metacognition involves awareness of how people learn, evaluation of their learning needs, generating strategies to meet these needs, and then implementing the strategies (Hacker et al., 2009). Individual's awareness of their cognitive activities allows them to manage these activities (Hacker & Dunlosky, 2003). Researchers of metacognition (Flavell, 1979; Schraw & Moshman, 1995; Brown, 1987)

make a basic distinction between metacognitive knowledge (i.e., what one knows about cognition) and metacognitive control processes or regulation of cognition (i.e., how one uses that knowledge to regulate cognition) (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). Metacognitive knowledge includes "knowledge about oneself as a learner and about what factors influence one's performance" (Schraw & Moshman, 1995), as well as knowledge about strategies. Metacognitive regulation refers to metacognitive activities that help control one's thinking and learning. Among the regulatory skills, the most essential are planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Jacobs & Paris, 1987; Schraw & Moshman, 1995). Metacognition has been proved to be in a positive relationship with learners' literacy levels and functional literacy (Özenç & Dikici, 2016); it increases an individual's problem-solving skills (Özenç & Çarkıt, 2021). Although metacognitive knowledge is 'not necessarily statable' (Schraw & Moshman, 1995) and difficult to verbalize, studies on metacognition reveal that "children as young as six can reflect with accuracy on their own cognition, especially when asked to do so in a familiar domain" (Flavell, 1992 as cited by Schraw & Moshman, 1995).

Whereas *metacognitive awareness* pertains to "the ability of learners to reflect on the known and the unknown, understand how they learn in the context of learning and control themselves in learning" (Herlanti, 2015 as cited by Yorulmaz, 2023: p.3), *metalinguistic awareness* refers to "an individual's ability to focus attention on language as an object in and of itself, to reflect upon language, and to evaluate it" (Schönpflug, 2001). Applied linguists who study second language teaching and learning have referred to metalinguistic awareness as explicit or conscious knowledge about language (Ke et al., 2023; Roehr-Brackin, 2018). Both types of knowledge have been extensively researched in the context of second language learning (Bessy & Knouse, 2020; Ke et al., 2023; Gass, 2020; Thompson, 2012; Rivera-Mills & Plonsky, 2007, Krulatz & Christison, 2023) and are recognized as important prerequisites for successful language learning and performance. In their review of literature on metacognition and metalinguistic awareness, Bessy & Knouse (2020) conclude that enhancing learners' metacognitive knowledge as "knowledge about cognition in general and knowledge about one's own cognition" and their metalinguistic awareness as "the ability to think about and reflect upon the nature and functions of language" can result in significant gains for language learners.

Metacognitive strategies/regulatory skills refer to taking control of learning, planning, and selecting strategies, monitoring the progress of learning, correcting errors, analyzing the efficacy of learning strategies, and, if necessary, changing strategies (Özenç & Dikici, 2016, p. 2). Effective use of metacognitive strategies by successful students directly influences their success (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990, as cited by Yorulmaz, 2023, p. 3). Researchers assert that learners who have 'strategic knowledge of learning' are more successful in their language acquisition than those who do not (Tseng et al., 2006, p. 78-79 as cited in Bessy & Knouse, 2020). Developing students' metacognitive skills fosters student autonomy in the learning processes and moves students toward higher degrees of self-direction in their careers as language learners (Thompson, 2012, p. 450).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The given exploratory research was carried out within the framework of a qualitative methodology (Cohen et al., 2007; Berg, 1989; Gass et al., 2020). To address the objectives of the research, several sub-studies were conducted: semi-structured interviews with primary school children, a parent survey (conducted prior to interviews with children), and participant observations in the classroom setting. In their interviews, participants were encouraged to give a narrative involving their language-learning and language use experiences. Using narrative inquiry and verbal self-reports as research tools (Gass et al., 2020) enabled us to obtain information about learners' perspectives on L2 learning and use, identify factors affecting learners' progress in L2, linguistic self-concept, and dynamics of their motivation for L2 learning. To stimulate children's verbalization of the empirically inaccessible cognitive processes involved in second language learning, children were asked a number of questions, such as: "Which

activity is the easiest/most difficult for you to do: reading, writing, listening, or speaking, and why?", "When do you learn faster?", "How do you learn new words?", "What kinds of tools help you learn the German language?", "If you cannot understand the meaning of a word, how do you learn it?", "If you do not understand the teacher's instruction, what do you do?", "Which activity do you like most / find most effective in learning German?", "How can you assess your progress in German?", "Has anything changed in the way you learn German after a year of study in a Swiss school?", etc. Classroom observations of children were carried out over three days each, at intervals of one to three weeks, which enabled the researcher to observe the children in different lessons, participating in different activities, and performing different tasks in L2. The post-observation inquiry was conducted with each participant to obtain additional information about their attitudes toward various L2 activities encountered in the classroom. The follow-up exchange with the classroom teacher was also added to navigate the researcher's observation activities and obtain the teacher's feedback on the displaced student's performance and progress in second language learning. The latter was necessary to provide the objective assessment of the student's performance in L2 and validate the prior-to-observation interview data. Application of several data collection methods enabled us to measure both linguistic and nonlinguistic information related to second language acquisition by the target group. Additionally, data available from an earlier research project – with a data collection period of 2022-2023 – were integrated in database. Given that the first and second rounds of interviews with children were conducted at a one-year interval, longitudinally collected data enabled us to monitor dynamics of students' perception and self-assessment of their achievements in the second language as well as their motivation for leaning German during the first two years of their inclusion in Swiss primary school.

**Sample description.** In determining the sample of prospective respondents, we relied on a database of the 2022-2023 research and were guided by the necessity to ensure the variability of the sample for a longitudinal study. The sample of 10 displaced Ukrainian primary school students is varied in age (9 to 13); gender (5 girls and 5 boys); type of school attended in Ukraine (regular comprehensive, specializing in languages); period of inclusion in education in Switzerland by the moment of the second interview (13 to 19 months); type of the German language instruction in reception/integration class upon the displacement to Switzerland (bilingual, monolingual German, combined); time spent in reception/integration class(s) (1 to 14 months); German language competence prior to displacement (none to 4 years of learning German as a foreign language at school); English language competence prior to displacement (1 to 6 years of learning English as a foreign language at school); post-displacement involvement in extra-curricular activities; availability of additional German training (in a DaZ class, in a Ukrainian school via on-line instruction, in individual tutorials with a bilingual Ukrainian-German teacher); parents' social and educational background; parents' expectations about children's education; extent of parents' involvement in education process; parents' foreign language(s) proficiency as of the date of displacement; and parents' experience of learning German upon displacement.

All the participants had started primary school in Ukraine where they had been learning at least one foreign language for a minimum 1 and maximum 6 years prior to displacement and transition to the Swiss education system. Only two students of the sample had been learning German as a foreign language, while the other eight – had been learning English, in a Ukrainian primary school. Which means that most of the participants started to learn German only upon their placement in a Swiss school.

At the time of the 2023-2024 study, all participants were placed in regular Swiss classes in cantonal schools across the Canton of Zug, where they were assigned one Ukrainian student per class to ensure the complete immersion of the student in the environment of the target language and to exclude possible interference from the native language.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Effects of metalinguistic awareness

The conducted interviews show that most of the children rely on their prior linguistic knowledge gained in L1 in the early stage of learning L2. The children report that they rely on associations between the languages they learn(-ed), compare words and grammar of the languages they learn(-ed), approach some facts in L2 as logical/illogical through comparing them with corresponding or related facts in L1, assimilate L2 facts when they can understand what they mean and how they are used in speech. The more successful L2 learners demonstrate more developed metalinguistic awareness: when characterizing the most difficult phenomena in German to comprehend and learn, they referred to them as not typical of/not existing in their native language. For example, many students report that it is not difficult for them to learn parts of speech as they already have certain knowledge of functional differences of parts of speech and some of their grammatical categories (such as the Number, Case, and Gender of the Noun or Tense, Voice, Person of the Verb, etc.), but identified some categories, e.g., *Trenbaren Verben* that affect the syntax of a sentence, or German articles, as very difficult to learn since there are no similar phenomena in their native language.

*(1) "Yes, I compare things. There are many differences. Articles, gender of nouns. I thought Madchen was feminine, but in German it's kind of illogical that it's neuter. Other things too". (S7:Age:11:G6)*[1]

*(2) "There are some words that are similar. For example, дах [dah] is "roof" in Ukrainian, and Dach [dah] is "roof" in German, too. Туалет [tual'et] and Toilette are also similar, you can easily understand". (S4:Age10:G3).*

Also, children of different ages demonstrate different degrees of reliance on associations between words and syntax in the L1 and L2 in getting access to the meaning and speech construction. The older children (9-12 years old) show a higher degree of reliance on prior linguistic knowledge in learning L2. Those with more developed (meta)linguistic knowledge report higher L2 performance. With increased proficiency in L2, these learners become less sensitive to associations between linguistic phenomena in L1 and L2 and rely more on L2 knowledge. Still, to access concepts of content knowledge (e.g., to which the children are exposed in NMG[2] lessons), they need L1 intervention, e.g., in the form of translation, when dealing with varied terminology. The older children with insufficient (meta)linguistic knowledge developed prior to displacement report greater difficulties with assimilating L2 vocabulary and grammar as well as poorer performance in both L2 and non-linguistic content areas.

The younger kids (who were under 9 years old at the start of immersive learning) with less (meta)linguistic awareness developed prior to placement in Swiss school more frequently report either natural and impromptu language acquisition or rote learning of words and phrases, in both cases unrelated to their comparison in L1 and L2. Those children who report listening to the Swiss peers speak and adopting the speech input they hear around them assimilate L2 through both instructed and uninstructed learning and correspond to the group of children engaged in active social interactions with L2 users, whereas those who report rote learning correspond to the group of children engaged in social interactions with L1 rather than L2 speaking peers. The younger students with limited metacognitive awareness (see the study by Favell, 1979) and less developed (meta)linguistic knowledge were unable to clearly say how they learn L2 (e.g., grammar) or what tools help them learn the language; they seem to learn it more spontaneously than through directed conscious effort and, hence, with less conscious control, and no explicit strategies for learning.

---

[1] To ensure the confidentiality of personal information, all participants were anonymized for the data analysis and publications. The citation index contains only information about the child's age and primary school grade. All interview fragments cited in this paper are translated by the author.

[2] NMG (Natur-Mensch-Gesellschaft), stands for nature, people, & society, and is an important part of the Swiss primary school curriculum. The aim is to give students a comprehensive understanding of the world around them.

*(3) "I don't remember how it happened. I was just talking to my classmates, and it just happened. It became easy". (S4:Age10:G3)*

*(4) "I don't know how I learnt German. It just worked out on its own. It just happened. I don't know how I learnt it at all." (S5:Age11:G5)*

The older children report that in order to learn something they need structured and discernable instruction as well as conscious concentration of attention on the process of learning. They are able to point out the areas of underdeveloped knowledge and identify the strategies they use for L2 learning. All these evidence well-developed metacognition and metalinguistic awareness of the students including, according to Bialystock (as cited by Schönpflug, 2001), "analyses of knowledge and the control of cognitive operations involving language processing".

*(5) "You first have to memorize words with their articles, and then think about the case, and then think about the form of the article. That's how I learn words…" (S4:Age10:G3)*

*(6) Interviewer (I.) – Do you like learning German?*

*Student (S). – At first I liked it, yes. I began to understand and began to like it. Well, now it's quite good, when, say, the teacher tells some new rule that I didn't know … when I understand how it works, it's interesting to me. (S8:Age11:G5)*

*(7) I. – If you don't understand something, how do you learn it?*

*S. – I ask the teacher. If I don't understand something, some stuff I can't make sense of, I can't learn it. If I don't understand it, I can't learn it. (S2:Age13:G6)*

*(8) "I like learning something with my friend. My friend knows more words than I do, but I can explain grammar to him. And he can explain different words to me". (S2:Age13:G6)*

*(9) "I feel most confident in NMG lesson because there you can work in a group. It is in this lesson that we work incredibly well! With my friend … or sometimes the three of us. We can discuss the topic. I have some information, they have information that I don't have, and we exchange information with one another". (S2:Age13:G6)*

*(10) I. – What's the hardest thing about school?*

*S. – Learn German. … Learn the way we learned Ukrainian. First, I divide all words into groups, then learn them – the adjectives, then the verbs, and then the pronouns. Articles are already simple, other things are difficult. (S6:Age12:G6)*

It should be mentioned that the learning of L2 by displaced children is greatly complicated by the fact that, in addition to the second language (German), they are inevitably exposed to the third language (Swiss dialect), which is spoken by Swiss peers and is the main language of peer communication in a Swiss school. Moreover, displaced students are faced with the two more languages – English and French – which the Swiss schoolchildren[3] begin to learn as FL(s) in primary school. In fact, displaced Ukrainian children, starting from grade 3 of Swiss primary school, simultaneously learn three (or four, in the case of those who report learning the Swiss dialect as well) languages and are exposed to considerable multilinguistic input. Such unprecedented for displaced children experience of learning simultaneously multiple nonnative languages (never the case in Ukrainian regular school), along with certain social-psychological factors, account for great variation in L2 learning effects in the children of the studied group.

The interviews revealed that in learning L2, children rely mostly on their L1 knowledge, whereas in learning foreign languages unfamiliar to them, such as French, they rely on the prior knowledge of L2. The latter can be accounted for by the two factors: 1) the FL(s) instruction in a regular Swiss classroom is provided in the FL being taught and German, and 2) the point of reference in teaching an FL in a regular Swiss class is German, hence all linguistic associations and comparisons are made between a FL and German. According to (Gass et al. 2020), there are a number of variables that can impact the extent to which one of the languages involved (L2 or L1) will influence the acquisition of L3. Among the factors

[3] We are talking about children who go to primary school in German-speaking Switzerland, the canton of Zug, in particular.

affecting the possible impact are, inter alia, the context of acquisition and the amount of exposure to L2. The more exposure there is to L2, the greater the impact on L3 (Gass et al., 2020, p. 557).

*(11) "Yes, I see the difference. For example, I understand that the feminine and masculine genders are different in different languages. For example, when I learn French, I compare articles with those in German, I've realized that die/der is the same as la/le in French, die is la – feminine. And the words are similar. For example, the word 'sea' in German is Meer, but in French it is pronounced in a similar way, but is written Mer, with one e". (S1:Age11:G6)*

If, before their displacement, the child studied a foreign language through the L1-based instruction, and continues learning it upon their placement in Swiss school via L2-based instruction (as is the case with English that most displaced primary schoolers began to learn as a FL in Ukrainian school), then learning of this foreign language can involve prior linguistic knowledge obtained in both the first and second languages (depending on the years of previous instruction and the individual student's competence in that FL) and involves the strategies taught both in Ukrainian and Swiss school. The higher the student's competence in English at the time of transfer to a Swiss school, the more independently from other nonnative languages, including L2, they learn and use it.

Displaced children who studied German as an FL before the displacement continue learning it meaningfully as a second language from the very beginning of immersion. They rely on the prior knowledge of German taught as an FL in a Ukrainian school, better control German learning process, and more easily adopt new learning strategies. They were better at differentiating between Standard German and the Swiss dialect at the initial stage of immersion, which provided them with faster access to meaningful learning in the classroom, contributed to more successful acquisition of German (or both languages), and prevented the interference of the two languages. Such interference negatively impacted children who had not previously studied German. However, along with the obvious advantages of prior experience of learning German, we could ascertain that children with such experience tend to be more dependent on L1 in constructing speech in German.

*(12) "I make a sentence, well, construct what I want to say, first in Ukrainian, and only then in German." (S4:Age10:G3)*

Learning several foreign languages simultaneously requires more resources than learning one (Huang, 2022). As far as the learner's internal resources, or learner-based factors (de Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011), metalinguistic awareness and prior knowledge prove to be very favorable prerequisites for L2 learning. The children with stronger metalinguistic awareness obtained through learning first and nonnative language(s) and with more developed learning strategies report less difficulties and better achievements in L2 learning. Those with less experience in instructed language(s) learning, correspondingly, report more difficulties and slower progress in L2.

And finally, all the interviewed children report that they learn and remember what they learn faster/only if they comprehend what they are learning, and that comprehension of what they are learning depends largely on the form and the language of the teacher's instruction, at least at the initial stage of immersive learning. The interviews confirmed that outcomes of learning German, especially for those with no experience of learning it prior to displacement, are critically dependent on external resources such as the type of the German language instruction in a temporary reception class that preceded the child's placement in a regular Swiss class, as well as the language teacher. Both factors will be considered in the sections that follow, as they relate to the transfer of displaced learners' knowledge necessitated by the transition to a new education system.

### 4.2. Language of instruction factor

Data analysis shows that mother-tongue instruction is of key importance for activating the student's metalinguistic knowledge at the initial stage of second language learning. The older the child is (here we speak only about primary school age) and, hence, the more their metalinguistic knowledge has been developed through L1 acquisition and instructed learning, the more important role mother-tongue

instruction might play in their meaningful learning of L2, especially in acquiring grammar.

Data analysis shows that the cases of more successful L2 learners among displaced children correlate with a variable of L2 instruction provided by a bilingual (L1 + L2) teacher. Children who received bilingual L2 instruction either prior to displacement (in a Ukrainian school) or during initial placement in the reception/integration class (where a Ukrainian-speaking teacher was available) report it to be vital for their meaningful learning of L2. Some children admitted that they were able to understand certain L2 grammar only after they received corresponding instruction in L1 from a bilingual teacher or tutor. Many parents also report that their children need/take additional or parallel German lessons with a bilingual teacher since the instruction provided in L1 is necessary to ensure that children fully understand what they learn in L2 classroom in a regular Swiss class. The effectiveness of using mother-tongue instruction as a tool for learning/teaching a second language is also evidenced by the bilingual teachers who taught newly arrived displaced students in integration classes. The teachers say that mother-tongue instruction is necessary when teaching L2 grammar, since children must understand how to construct sentences and grammatical forms and see the differences between the native language and German. Whereas monolingual L2 instruction at the initial stage of L2 learning might limit students' perception and comprehension of second language phenomena (the latter concerns both *comprehensible* and *comprehended* input, as defined by (Gass et al. 2020), bilingual instruction serves to "promote students' metalinguistic awareness by focusing their attention on language as an object of study, by encouraging reflection upon language, and by prompting learners to draw on their home language to support further language development" (Krulatz & Christison, 2023).

The data analysis confirms that at the initial stage of learning German in conditions of total immersion into the target language environment, the availability of mother-tongue instruction in L2 learning was perceived by displaced learners not as an obstacle to learning the language, but, on the contrary, as a great support for its meaningful learning. A bilingual teacher can more quickly understand what a child already knows and how this knowledge can be effectively used in learning L2. The importance of linking between old and new knowledge was highlighted by vast research in education and second language learning (Hattie, 2012, p. 114; Gass, 2020, p. 583). If prior knowledge can be instrumental in learning L2 and requires intervention in the form of mother-tongue instruction for L2 knowledge to be effectively assimilated and further extended, this instruction proves to be valuable and beneficial for students. (Garcia & Vazquez 2012) indicate that the "development of metalinguistic awareness and literacy can be enhanced when a focus is given to the differences between the home language and the language used in school".

In addition to mother-tongue instruction, most students report the effectiveness of using translation into native language, especially in dealing with new vocabulary. In the first interviews (conducted in 2022), many children said that they had great difficulty memorizing words and they had not previously encountered the need to memorize simultaneously such a huge number of them. A year later, almost all the subjects still reported a big input of unfamiliar words as a serious impediment to comprehending the material taught and a strong challenge for their memory. Children learning their mother tongues receive massive vocabulary input from natural language environment that surrounds them progressively, step by step, from the first days of their life. Displaced children have to assimilate this missing input concurrently with the new content predetermined for their age by the school curriculum. And in this sense, the information that a child receives at school in the form of L2 intense and deliberate input, overloads their working memory. Given the variety of content and multitude of words the young immersive learner hears in one regular school day, it is not surprising that children turn to translation into native language to support their memory.

*(13) "It was better last year, when I studied in a Ukrainian class, where there were five children and the teacher explained well, sometimes she said something through a translator and showed us how it would be in Ukrainian. … Now it's a Swiss class, where no one is allowed to use a translator." (S7:Age11:G6)*

*(14) I. – If you don't understand a word, do you need a translation of the word in your native language?*

*S. – Yes. Even if the teacher herself cannot explain the word to me, she takes me to her computer and translates the word and I can see the translation. And sometimes I ask a classmate who speaks Ukrainian help me, he would tell me what it means. (S9:Age9:G3)*

From what the children reported, we can assume that both forms of mediation involving the child's first language – mother-tongue instruction and translation into native language – are perceived as instrumental and effective by displaced learners in getting access to meaningful learning.

### 4.3. Type of instruction factor

*(15) "If the teacher explains it well at the very beginning, then everything is easy. It used to be difficult; two months ago, I didn't like it [learning German]. I like it now. I understand it well after two last weeks. I learned some German and began to understand everything that I didn't understand before". (S2:Age13:G6)*

In German-speaking Switzerland, early immersion of displaced Ukrainian students within non-segregated mainstream classes and curricula went along with additional support to develop the language of schooling alongside subject-specific knowledge. Targeted language support was provided both in reception classes (with or without the aid of a teaching assistant that can speak the home language of the displaced children) organized for displaced Ukrainian students prior to their full immersion in a regular Swiss school, and *DaZ*, or *Deutsch als Zweitsprache* (German as a Second Language) classes, designed to support all children whose first language is not German in building up their German skills (Standard German) in such a way that they can learn successfully in regular lessons. Learning German in DaZ classes is parallel to learning in a mainstream Swiss class and lasts as long as it is necessary for the child to learn successfully in regular lessons. The given research shows that both types of reception classes have proved highly beneficial for displaced primary school children.

The perception displaced children have of German language learning is largely influenced by the type of learning setting that can either facilitate or impede the development of metacognitive skills. Many children report a valuable and motivating experience of learning German in a DaZ class and less motivating experience of learning it in a regular Swiss class setting:

*(16) "DaZ is very helpful! When we have DaZ Leherin, she explains German very well. In the beginning, when I came to her class, I didn't know what Pretaritum was; she explained everything to me, we performed different assignments. And then, when Pretaritum was discussed in German class, I already knew it well." (S6:Age12:G6)*

*(17) "I really like it when Frau L. takes us to the top floor while other children have other lessons, for example, music, and teaches us German there. There we are constructing questions and sentences." (S9:Age9:G3)*

*(18) "Now that I am in a regular Swiss class, I have extra German lessons every Tuesday and Friday in the DaZ class. I must go there, but I can do my homework, revise something, practice something. My teacher from the regular class told me to take my notebook and show it to the DaZ teacher so that I could work with her. Then my DaZ teacher saw that I was making mistakes, that I didn't understand a lot of things … because I didn't know the words, I didn't understand the sentences. And she explained all these to me. And then she realized that it was difficult for me and now she prints out some other tasks for me, also complex sentences, but easier, and I stopped doing what my classmates do". (S7:Age11:G6)*

*(19) I.- Do you like learning German?*

*S.- I did. I used to like learning German with the teachers I had before [the student means his teachers in DaZ class]. I did like it a lot, but now I don't. When I was in the class of Herr P., he explained the best, and I learned the language the fastest there. (S1:Age11:G6)*

It is obvious that children's perception of the L2 learning process and outcomes are related to the type of learning context and, consequently, the role of the teacher. In the context of the implemented immersion scheme, children learn L2 in both regular Swiss and DaZ classes where they are exposed to different approaches to the second language teaching and learning.

The type of linguistic input is different by class type: intended for native speakers, in regular Swiss classes, and remedial and supportive, in DaZ classes. The language learning objectives and principles

are different, along with assignments, didactic materials, and type of instruction provided. DaZ instruction focuses on deliberate acquisition of German as a second language, facilitates integration into schools, and aims to enhance language skills, enabling students to communicate effectively in German (DaZ, 2015).

The complexity and pace of instruction in a regular Swiss class outstretches the displaced student's ability to absorb new academic/linguistic knowledge, at least during the initial stage of learning the language. Some students report a slow progress in L2 and realize that they are continuously lagging behind the class and cannot cope with the German language curriculum taught in a regular class. For most of these students, DaZ class is associated with meaningful learning and therefore is reported to be a place where they *learn the language*. Attending DaZ classes and receiving remedial instruction strengthen students' motivation for L2 learning.

DaZ class is reported by many students as a place where they enlarge the vocabulary, learn nuances of meanings, broaden existing linguistic knowledge, and make and learn from errors. The latter is vitally important since the DaZ class instruction allows for the teacher's immediate feedback when the student makes errors. "Making errors is often a necessity for learning then to occur; students need safe environment in which they can know when they have erred" (Hattie, 2012, p. 114). The interviewed students say they do not receive sufficient linguistic feedback in a regular German-language classroom, which is to be expected since a regular-class teacher is a subject teacher who teachers various content, including German grammar and skills, in German targeted at local Swiss children whose level of L2 verbal ability hasn't been yet achieved by displaced learners. Which, in turn, means that a displaced child has a greater risk of misinterpretation of what they are taught, learning wrong information, just of practicing rote learning, etc. Misunderstanding can be prevented and "learning wrong information can be reduced when feedback is immediate" (Hattie, 2012, p. 114), and "feedback is most effective when students do not have proficiency or mastery, when there is incomplete knowing and understanding" (Hattie, 2012, p. 139). Critical importance of teacher constructive feedback and guidance in L2 learning was reported by most respondents, both children and parents.

Sixth graders who understand that their achievements in L2 will determine their opportunities for further secondary education heavily rely on the DaZ class teachers and instruction, and particularly appreciate DaZ teachers' feedback and guidance in using strategies for language learning. A DaZ class is a place where children, regardless of their age, can address possible difficulties in L2 learning, where they perceive themselves as active learners and learn the language consciously, which makes them feel aware of the progress they make and motivates for further improvement of their skills. Conversely, in a regular German-language classroom, many children remain excluded from the active and conscious process of formal language learning for a long time and feel disengaged. Early termination of parallel instruction in the DaZ class even led to a loss of motivation for language learning for some students.

*(20) "I do something in the notebook, but I understand almost nothing in German. The teacher tells me to ask my classmates. They usually explain something to me as best they can, I understand a little, but not completely. Now it's a regular Swiss class where no one is allowed to use a translator. The children all speak German, they understand everything well, except me". (S7:Age11:G6).*

The reasons why the younger students like the instruction in DaZ classes are varied and, according to students' reports, include: creative teaching methods including various educational games, using multimodal tools for memorizing words; stress-free and communication-targeted learning; small groups where they tend to feel included and safe; if the group is international and multilingual, they like it to be with other students who learn German as a second language since they feel more confident starting to use L2 through communication with non-native speakers; if the group is monolingual Ukrainian, 'slower' L2 learners like it because switching to L1 that can occur in a group during a lesson might be helpful to them in comprehending the instruction.

### 4.4. Teacher feedback factor

Most of the interviewed children reported that they associated their progress in the L2, both already achieved and future, with the teacher and teacher approach. Among the teacher-related factors influencing their progress in L2 learning, children named the following: teacher verbal ability and power to explain things (referred to as 'teacher clarity' by Hattie, 2023, p. 226), teacher resourcefulness, teacher immediacy/feedback/assessment. The younger the child, the greater the role in their L2 progress they attribute to the teacher. The older the child, the more aware and appreciative they are of their own contribution to learning as learners.

When asked which L2 teacher(s) they like best and why, all the interviewed children named those who explained things well and made difficult things clear and comprehensible. These teachers include a) bilingual teachers who relied on children's native language resources in L2 teaching in the reception/integration classes; b) Swiss teachers who teach German in international DaZ classes; c) regular Swiss class teachers with 'high verbal ability', as evaluated by the students. The latter presupposes the teacher's clear articulation, no 'codemeshing' (of Standard German with Swiss dialect) while providing classroom instruction, clarity of instructions, the ability to explain complex things in a simple manner and create examples to explain unfamiliar linguistic concepts. At the initial stage of learning L2, children tend to attach great importance to the quality of verbal instruction and characteristics of teacher speech: they learn the language from the teacher, particularly by listening to the teacher speak. Thus, it's not surprising that the linguistic personality of the teacher as well as teacher's linguistic sensitivity are important factors in shaping the student's perception of the language they are learning and the motivation for learning it. The more accessible the teacher's language to the student and the more meaningful and explicit the L2 instruction provided, the easier it is for the child to follow it and learn meaningfully.

Older children also frequently mentioned teacher immediacy (more on that concept in: Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Hattie, 2023) and teacher feedback. Students perceive teacher immediacy as evidence of the teacher's engagement and a way to prevent learning wrong information (about grammar, word meanings, connotations, etc.). Teacher immediacy increases students' motivation and 'commitment to the learning task' (Christophel & Gorham, 1995), and, in the case of displaced Ukrainian students, largely corresponds to the common perception of the role of a teacher in the classroom, who immediately draws a student's attention to errors made so that a student can learn from errors. "Errors can serve as important feedback information, indicating where the student's thinking and knowledge are not adequately developed" (Hattie, 2023, p. 329). Both the interviews with students and participant observations in varied L2 learning settings revealed that the most appropriate setting to ensure teacher immediacy in L2 learning is the DaZ class, where the "perceived distance between instructor and learners can be reduced" (Allen et al., 2006, as cited by Hattie, 2023, p. 368) and teacher influence on student learning – absolutely essential for the development of the student's metacognition, both metacognitive knowledge and regulation – reaches its maximum. Additionally, teacher immediacy is practicable in the DaZ classes due to the small number of learners per class (3 to 6 in those we observed), which enhances the student's opportunities 1) to be an active learner and receive more attention and feedback from the teacher in the classroom and 2) to develop strategies for self-correction and self-monitoring in further L2 learning and use. Conversely, in a regular class setting, students are more likely to feel that a teacher's linguistic feedback is lacking, which might reduce their confidence in the knowledge acquired and lead to adopting a more passive role as a language learner.

Teacher assessment is yet another factor influencing displaced students' metacognitive skills, or self-regulation. The importance of teacher assessment, particularly 'assessment *for* learning' (Hattie, 2012), which helps displaced students understand 'where they are going and what their goals are' as well as

'what progress they are making towards the goal',[4] was reported by upper-primary schoolers. All the interviewed 6th-grade respondents report being aware of the upcoming selection for lower-secondary school paths[5] according to their ability and express their deep concern over all the tests and assignments that will be included in their selection portfolio. These students show increased responsibility for directing their learning, talk about the strategies they use in L2 learning, such as self-testing, peer-testing, selective rereading texts arising confusion or misunderstanding, asking for the teacher's additional explanation, putting in extra efforts on self-study, taking additional tutor-assisted lessons, setting both small and strategic goals for learning, etc. All the interviewed 6th-graders say that they understand that German is one of the main criteria for their upcoming selection, along with math achievements, motivation and potential for development, attitude to learning, personal competence, and social skills (all assessed by the primary school teacher). Regardless of the L2 level achieved during the immersion period, displaced students report their L2 insufficiency to pursue studies at a Gymnasium and have reasonably accurate understandings that *Sekundarschule* is the one whose requirements they are likely to meet and whose curriculum they are likely to cope with. This group of students admit they need teacher feedback to be informed about the level of L2 performance desired and self-regulate their learning towards these targets, as well as perform self-assessment more accurately and efficiently. The teacher's transparent and well-expressed assessment in L2 helps the 6th-grade students build their self-concept of language ability and enhance their engagement in further language learning.

Given that for a long period of time displaced students' achievements in L2 were not assessed by the school (since learning in reception / integration classes does not involve assessment and the assessment in L2 in regular Swiss classes would inevitably mean a much lower score for many displaced students compared to that of L2 speaking peers and could negatively affect displaced children's self-concept of their language ability), many children grew to rely on social comparison and self-assessment of L2 performance. Regardless of the child's age and prior knowledge of the target language, placement in a regular Swiss class affects both the child's self-assessment of their L2 knowledge and their self-concept of language ability. Upon transition to a regular Swiss class, some children experience distorted self-concept of language ability and metacomprehension. This applies, first of all, to displaced children who have spent a long time (more than a year) in monolingual (Ukrainian) integration classes and often heard praise from their teachers. They developed a somewhat inaccurate, distorted self-concept as an L2 learner. Praise, which was necessary for displaced children at the initial stage of inclusion in the host country education as a means of psychological support and was welcomed by all displaced learners, might have been misinterpreted by some learners as a high assessment of their L2 knowledge. However, when placed in a regular Swiss class, they realized that their L2 knowledge was not sufficient to successfully cope with the mainstream primary school curriculum, including that in the German language. In this sense, a lengthy stay in a segregated monolingual integration class, especially for children with language aptitude[6], can inhibit both second language acquisition and development of metacognitive knowledge and skills.

*(21) "Most of all I'd like to get into Sekundar, but my German is not very good. … Last year it worked. Now I can manage only half of it. … Last year I was the best in German in the class, it was easy. But now it has become more difficult. (S1:Age11:G6)*

The case referred to in example 21 is characterized not only by a long-term placement in a

[4] Here, the author refers to the feedback questions regulating student's learning formulated and elaborated by John Hattie in his 'Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning' (Hattie, 2012, pp. 129-154).

[5] At the end of primary school, students face selection for lower-secondary school paths according to their ability and go to either *Realschule* or *Sekundarschule* or enter a six-year *Gymnasium*[5] (the most academically demanding school for high-achieving students) (Oertig, 2012, p. 116).

[6] SLA researchers are not often concerned with a general aptitude for learning but, rather, the domain-specific construct of language aptitude, which refers to one's ability to learn another language (see Gass, 2020, p. 514).

monolingual integration class, in which the child spent 15 months out of 18 months of his inclusion in Swiss school, but also by the teacher's frequent praise that was, on the one hand, a great source of motivation for the student at the initial stage of L2 learning, but, on the other hand, might have fostered the student's false awareness about where he is in his learning and how much effort is needed to pursue learning in a regular class. According to Hattie, praise usually contains little task-related information and is rarely converted into more engagement, commitment to the learning goals and enhanced self-efficacy, but often directs attention away from constructive feedback and does not contribute to the development of student's self-regulation skills (Hattie, 2012, p. 135).

Whereas the older students (aged 11-13) who are preparing themselves for the transition to secondary school report a particular need for teachers' feedback and assessment, the younger L2 learners (aged 8-9) don't talk about teacher assessment or grades as an important factor influencing their learning, but rather seek teacher praise as motivation for learning and recognition of their self-concept of language ability.

### 4.5. Metacomprehension skills

Data analysis shows that the more successful in L2 students demonstrate more accurate metacomprehension. Metacomprehension refers to an individual's own conscious knowledge of their level of comprehension and mainly pertains to a person's ability to judge their learning and/or comprehension of text materials (Dunlosky & Lipko, 2007, p. 1). However, in learning new languages, students acquire a great amount of new information via both reading text materials and exposure to spoken discourse (e.g., classroom presentations, discussions, conversations, teacher's classroom instruction, etc.), to further use it effectively in learning. Hence, metacomprehension accuracy (comprehension monitoring accuracy) is important for both reading and speech comprehension as part of the learning process.

Inaccurate metacomprehension judgements can be dangerously misleading for students and their parents. Some students feel absolutely sure that they understand the instruction/text materials correctly and do not realize that they might be learning slowly just because they are unable to direct and control their learning, have no effective strategies for learning, cannot correctly identify what to learn, reread, or focus on, etc. Parents of these children can be mistakenly confident that the child is coping with learning and progressing well in German. Going merely by their personal parental perception of the child's progress and the child's self-assessment in judging their success in L2 is a very unreliable and ineffective method followed by some parents. There is no doubt that after two years of immersive learning, all displaced children have learned the school language to one degree or another, can speak it in certain educational and social contexts and understand what the teacher says. But whether the child's knowledge of the language is sufficient for a meaningful and successful encounter with the current primary, and then, secondary, school language curriculum, can only be assessed by a teacher who observes the child's learning. In this regard, all the interviewed parents, especially those of children with low metacomprehension awareness, reported the enormous benefit of communicating with the classroom teacher who helped identify the child's strengths and weaknesses in L2 learning.

Student's inaccurate metacomprehension is a) evident for teachers who easily detect incongruency between the given instruction and the way this instruction is followed by the student; b) reflected in test results in L2 and other knowledge domains. Some cases of students with inaccurate metacomprehension were deducted by the researcher through classroom observations and confirmed in the follow-up conversations with the observed participants. The latter revealed that a student's inaccurate metacomprehension might lead to their incorrect interpretation of the teacher's assessment, perceiving it as biased and unfair. For example, in the interviews, some children said that they easily memorized texts, new words, terms, etc. and performed the given tasks/tests well, but did not receive the grade they had expected. Mistakenly taking memorizing for comprehension, the learners cannot understand what they did incorrectly and how to do well on tests. Good memory and ability to memorize texts are

undoubtedly a big asset in learning languages, but memorization without understanding the meaning, the student's inability to further effectively use the information received, inappropriate or unformed metacognitive strategies, etc. hinder effective language learning and exclude both accurate self-assessment and accurate interpretation of the teacher's assessment.

Researchers of metacomprehension accuracy (Dunlosky & Lipko, 2007; Yang et al., 2023) address such important aspect of learning as the extent to what learners can accurately understand their level of achievement, e.g., accurately discriminate well-learned texts from less well learned ones, etc. "Students' judgements of their learning, such as how they have learned something or their confidence that they would recall and use the learned knowledge, are often inaccurate" (Dunlosky & Lipko, 2007).

In a 2022 interview, nine-year-old Yana said that she liked the fairy tale that the teacher had read to the children in class. She said that she understood almost everything the teacher read. However, when asked what the fairy tale was about, the student could not say anything except for the name of the main character and a couple of verbs describing the actions of this character. Here we observe the student's inaccurate judgement as to her comprehension of the text she heard in the classroom. A year later, a conversation with ten-year-old Yana after observing an NMG lesson in her class revealed a completely different level of the student's metacomprehension. The lesson observed was devoted to the Swiss carnival (Fasnacht) traditions and the art of making carnival masks. Cultural content, unfamiliar to a non-local child, although supported by extensive visualization, was delivered in complex (for a nonnative speaker) language, rich in terms and realia from history, culture, religion, geography, and art. Students were encouraged to interact with the teacher, ask questions, share their knowledge of the topic and personal experience, and come up with the ideas about the meanings of some symbols embodied in the carnival masks. Yana listened attentively, followed the discussion in class, but did not participate in it. When later asked why she hadn't asked questions or attempted to answer the teacher's questions, she said, "It was hard to understand … I don't know much about it… I don't know many words. … I need more time to learn about these traditions". Whereas the first episode of the cited example recalls a study by Flavell, Friedrichs, and Hoyt, where the younger subjects incorrectly thought they had memorized and could recall the items (Flavell et al., 1970, as cited by Flavell, 1979, p. 906), the second episode demonstrates the student's higher metacomprehension accuracy enabling her to reasonably estimate her level of knowledge of the topic discussed and direct her learning in the future. Accurate self-assessment of content knowledge and language skills helps children control and self-organize their learning, avoid blaming the teacher for underestimating their knowledge, and set clear learning goals. Hattie concludes that "if there is false overconfidence, this can impair later learning (e.g., not studying topics they believe they have mastered), and students with poor metacognitive accuracy often make ineffective decisions about what to relearn and tend to overcalibrate on topics of high interest or that are novel" (Hattie, 2023, p. 85). Results such as the one referred above suggest that older children are better in monitoring of their comprehension and other cognitive processes.

### 4.6. Metacognitive strategies

The most frequently reported learning strategies used by displaced students in L2 learning are help-seeking, rehearsing, and memorizing (regardless of the age of subjects), verification, planning, and self-evaluation (verbalized mainly by upper primary students).

All interviewed children report using the *help-seeking strategy*. They report seeking help from either a peer, a teacher, a tutor (usually, bilingual), a parent (if a parent is proficient in L2 and can help), any available internet resources.

Seeking help from an L2 native speaker is already an interaction in L2, which is important both as a communicative act performed by the child in L2 and as a tool for obtaining the requested information. Seeking help from an L2 native speaker, and not, for example, from an L1-speaking tutor/peer/parent, is thus already a certain indicator of the child's readiness to enter communication in L2 and, most importantly, receive the requested information in the target language. Those children who choose to

seek help from a Swiss teacher (or another knowledgeable adult) or a Swiss peer demonstrate better communicative skills, stronger self-concept of L2 abilities, and a higher level of linguistic competence.

Additionally, choosing and seeking interaction with peers for language learning (examples 8 & 9), the child demonstrates their acknowledgement of the effectiveness of this cooperative learning strategy and reliability of this source of metacognitive knowledge and skills (Schraw & Moshman, 1995, p. 16). Peer interaction that involves a process of social construction, 'collective thinking' or 'collective reasoning', is proved to play an important role in the emergence of metacognitive theories viewed as an integrated system of metacognitive knowledge and regulation by (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). In conditions of full immersion, when the need for managing cognitive activities to facilitate language learning is increasingly felt and reported by the older displaced students, regulatory skills they acquire through cooperative learning may enhance their – learner-internal – influences on the effectiveness of learning.

During classroom observations, it became obvious that another indicator of a child's intended, meaningful, and, consequently, effective learning is their dialogue/interaction with the teacher. The following criteria were taken into account: the occurrence of interactions with the teacher during the lesson (or after the lesson); the frequency of interactions initiated by the student; and the content/purpose of interactions. Participant observations revealed that it was those children who, in their interviews, could identify the difficulties they have encountered in learning L2 and tried to explain the nature of these difficulties, were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses as L2 learners, demonstrated an understanding of what they need to make their learning more effective, who were also more engaged and active in lessons, more often initiated a dialogue with the teacher, asked some clarification/verification questions related to the topic of the lesson, could voice any doubts that arose on the topic or instructions to avoid miscomprehension, and were seeking the teacher's feedback. All these indicate active processing (organizing, interpreting, and integrating) of information by the students, their active thinking and learning, continuous self-monitoring, verification, and self-evaluation. Asking questions is instrumental for them to verify they comprehend things correctly.

The same group of students report, inter alia, that they consider essays and other creative writing assignments to be both the most difficult and the most useful in L2 learning. They say they do not avoid challenging tasks but choose them consciously for self-improvement. So, the students with better developed metacognitive skills tend to choose more active approach to learning and demonstrate higher levels of engagement with the content and higher levels of self-regulation in L2 learning, they prove capable of transferring their regulatory skills across languages learned (example 10).

Children who use passive learning strategies, are less engaged with both the content and process of learning and seek no interaction with the teacher in classroom to control their comprehension, experience more difficulties in L2 learning, tend to lose motivation for L2 learning and hold negative beliefs about their L2 'learning efficacy' (Bandura, 1993). These children do not remain unattended by the teacher, as more often it is the teacher who initiates interaction, relying on the child's non-verbal behavior while completing a task or test (for example, if the child does not write for a long time, looks at the task with an absent look, starts crying, etc.), and monitors, at some intervals, whether the child has understood the given instruction. Also, these children tend to avoid opportunities for practicing and prefer easier tasks to challenging ones.

*The memorizing strategy* is used by children when they a) learn new vocabulary; b) prepare for classroom presentations; c) cannot comprehend the meaning relying on the metalinguistic knowledge; d) when other strategies available to the student are not helpful; e) when other strategies (or self-regulatory skills) are inchoate or "remain inert and difficult to apply beyond the context in which they were initially learned" (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). In the latter case, a child with poorly developed regulatory skills is at risk of indiscriminate and ineffective learning.

*The rehearsing strategy* is utilized by students when they prepare for classroom presentations or tests; is helpful in memorizing things; is used by some upper primary school students in cooperation with

peers/friends to get peer-evaluation.

*The goal-setting and planning strategies* were reported mainly by older children with well-developed regulatory skills and stronger self-concept of L2 learning ability. By setting goals, these children control the effort they expend on various learning activities they need to perform, to achieve their strategic goals, e.g., to become proficient in German to pursue the desired and consciously chosen educational pathway.

Children with better developed learning strategies prior to displacement (correlate with older age group and upper primary school children) are more flexible in transferring or adapting these strategies to the new learning setting and goals and, alike, are more efficient in adopting new ones (e.g., peer-evaluation). They plan their learning and monitor their progress. Children with poorly or unformed language learning strategies report greater difficulties in learning L2, the need for supplementary instruction on what and how to learn, had difficulties in self-reporting on how they learn and when they learn better. The latter does not mean that these children do not use strategies at all, they might simply be unaware of using certain strategies; however, the fact that they are lacking in knowledge of their cognitive processes to manage them effectively in helping themselves learn second and other nonnative languages, is quite evident from the data collected over the period of this study.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Metacognitive skills and strategies are important learner-internal factors affecting second language learning. Along with other learner-internal factors, such as language aptitude, age, motivation, personality, etc., they have the power to influence student learning and performance. Metacognitive skills proved to be instrumental in second language learning in the context of the learners' unexpected transition to the new educational setting and full immersion in the target language environment. Effects of metacognitive skills on second language learning of the studied group of displaced children vary from marked to minimal depending on the student's age, prior knowledge and language learning experiences, the child's language repertoire, and second language instruction available upon the displacement. Data analysis shows that the stronger metacognitive skills and metalinguistic awareness, the stronger their effects on second language learning and performance.

Displaced students who are more successful in L2 learning: 1) demonstrate the ability to formulate what they are learning in both regular and DaZ German lesson classes; 2) prove to be aware of where they are in their second language learning and can more accurately estimate their comprehension level; 3) talk about learning strategies they use; 4) prove capable of transferring their regulatory skills across languages learned; 5) perceive themselves as active language learners and seek engagement in challenging tasks for self-improvement; 6) seek peer interaction and interaction with teachers to enhance their metacognitive knowledge and self-regulation and control their comprehension; 7) seek teacher feedback to regulate self-evaluation and direct learning strategies.

Metalinguistic awareness is a great advantage to second language learners since "they already have the idea of how language works" (Schönpflug, 2001) and can transfer their prior knowledge across languages learned.

**Acknowledgments:** The research was carried out as part of the research project "Refugee perspectives on primary school in Switzerland: Ukrainians' diverse experiences of integration and second language acquisition" (registration grant number IZSEZO_218159), financed by Swiss National Science Foundation and supported by the University of Teacher Education Zug. The author would like to express her deep sense of gratitude to the SNSF foundation, the Institute for International Cooperation in Education of the University of Teacher Education Zug, the Office for External School Evaluation of the Canton of Zug, the primary school principals and teachers of the cantonal schools of Zug, where our exploratory research was welcomed and supported, the Ukrainian parents and children for sharing their first-hand experiences with the researcher, and the entire supportive pedagogical community of the PH Zug.

## REFERENCES


[1] Abramicheva, O. (2023). Refugee Perspectives on Primary School in Switzerland: Ukrainians' diverse experiences of inclusion. Preschool and Primary Education in European Integration and National Dimensions: Scientific monograph. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing, 1-52. https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-335-4-1

[2] Abrams, Z. I. (2020). Intercultural Communication and Language Pedagogy: From Theory to Practice. Cambridge University Press.

[3] Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived Self-Efficacy in Cognitive Development and Functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3

[4] Berg, B. L. (1989). Qualitative research methods for the social science (3rd ed.). Toronto: Allyn & Bacon.

[5] Bessy, M., & Knouse, S. M. (2020). Metacognition, Metalinguistic Awareness, and Relevance in Language Learning: A Report on an Intervention Module Project. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 14(2), Article 9. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2020.140209

[6] Brown, A. (1987). Metacognition, executive control, self-regulation, and other more mysterious mechanisms. In F. Weinert and R. Kluwe (Eds.), *Metacognition, Motivation, and Understanding*. Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ, 65-116. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:147157394

[7] Cerna, L. (2019). Refugee education: Integration models and practices in OECD countries. OECD Education Working Papers, 203, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/a3251a00-en

[8] Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). Research Methods in Education. Sixth edition. London and New York: Routledge.

[9] Council of Europe (2015). The Language Dimension in all Subjects: A Handbook for Curriculum Development Teacher Training, Council of Europe, Strasbourg. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Handbook-Scol_final_EN.pdf

[10] Christophel, D. M., & Gorham, J. (1995). A test-retest analysis of student motivation, teacher immediacy, and perceived sources of motivation and demotivation in college classes. *Communication Education*, 44(4), 292-306. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529509379020

[11] De Bot, K., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (2011). Researching Second Language Development from a Dynamic System Theory Perspective. In M. Verspoor, K. de Bot, & W. Lowie (Eds.), A Dynamic Approach to Second Language Development. John Benjamins Publishers, 5-24. https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.29.01deb

[12] Dunlosky, J., & Lipko, A. R. (2007). Metacomprehension: A brief history and how to improve its accuracy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16(4), 228-232. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00509.x

[13] Deutsch als Zweitsprache, DaZ Ein Leitfaden zur Organisation des DaZ-Unterrichts und zur Integration von fremdsprachigen Kindern und Jugendlichen (2015). https://www.sprachenunterricht.ch/sites/default/files/bes_massnahmen_daz_leitfaden_d.pdf

[14] EC Staff Working Document on Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: considerations, key principles, and practices for the school year 2022-2023 (2022). Publications Office of the European Union. Register of Commission Documents – SWD(2022)185 (europa.eu)

[15] Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 906-911. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.906

[16] Garcia, M.C.M., & Vázquez, V. P. (2012). Investigating the coexistence of the mother tongue and the foreign language through teacher collaboration in CLIL: Perceptions and practice of the teachers involved in the plurilingual program in Andalusia. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15(5), 573-592. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.670195

[17] Gass, S. M., Behney, J., & Plonsky, L. (2020). Second Language Acquisition. An Introductory Course. 5th edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

[18] Hacker, D. J., Dunlosky, J., & Graesser, A. C. (2009). Handbook of Metacognition in Education. Routledge. New York. doi.org/10.4324/9780203876428

[19] Hacker, D. J., & Dunlosky, J. (2003). Not All Metacognition Is Equal. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 95, 73-79. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.116

[20] Hattie, J. (2012). Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning. London & New York: Routledge.

[21] Hattie, J. (2023). Visible Learning: The Sequel. First edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

[22] Huang, T., Steinkrauss, R., & Verspoor, M. (2022). Learning an L2 and L3 at the same time: help or hinder? *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 19(4), 566-582. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2020.1779726

[23] Jacobs, J. E., & Paris, S. G. (1987). Children's metacognition about reading: Issues in definition, measurement, and instruction. *Educational Psychologist*, 22(3-4), 255-278. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2203&4_4
[24] Ke, S. E., Zhang, D., & Koda, K. (2023). Metalinguistic Awareness in Second Language Reading Development. Elements in Applied Linguistics. Cambridge University Press and Assessment. 9781108969802_excerpt.pdf (cambridge.org)
[25] Krulatz, A., & Christison, M. (2023). Metacognition and Metalinguistic Awareness. In: Multilingual Approach to Diversity in Education (MADE): A Methodology for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classrooms. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17335-6_7
[26] Martinez, M. E. (2006). What is Metacognition? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(9), 696-699. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170608700916
[27] OECD (2022). Policy Responses: Ukraine. Tackling the Policy Challengies. The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis (oecd.org)
[28] Oertig, M. (2012). Going Local: your guide to Swiss schooling. Basel: Bergli Books.
[29] Özenç, M., & Çarkıt, C. (2021). The relationship between functional literacy and problem-solving skills: A study on 4th-grade students. *Participatory Educational Research (PER)*, 8(3), 372-384. http://www.perjournal.com
[30] Özenç, E. G., & Dikici, H. (2016). The Correlation Between the Fourth Grade Students' Level of Functional Literacy and Metacognitive Awareness. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(12), 108-117. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:54056734
[31] Roehr-Brackin, K. (2018). Metalinguistic Awareness and Second Language Acquisition. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315661001
[32] Schönpflug, U. (2001). Bilingualism: Cognitive Aspects. In Neil J. Smelser, Paul B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences. Pergamon*, pp. 1171-1175. https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/01528-X
[33] Schraw, G., & Moshman, D. (1995). Metacognitive theories. Educational Psychology Review. 7(4), 351-371. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02212307
[34] Thompson, D. R. (2012). Promoting Metacognitive Skills in Intermediate Spanish: Report of a classroom research project. *Foreign Language Annals*, 45(3), 447-462. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2012.01199.x
[35] Rivera-Mills, S. V., & Plonsky, L. (2007). Empowering students with language learning strategies: A critical review of current issues. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40(3), 535-548. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2007.tb02874.x
[36] Yang, C., Zhao, W., Yuan, B., Luo, L., & Shanks, D. R. (2023). Mind the Gap Between Comprehension and Metacomprehension: Meta-Analysis of Metacomprehension Accuracy and Intervention Effectiveness. *Review of Educational Research*, 93(2), 143-194. doi.org/10.3102/00346543221094083
[37] Yorulmaz, A., Altıner, E., & Çekirdekci, S. (2023). A study of Number Sense and Metacognitive Awareness of Primary School Fourth Grade Students. *Mathematics Teaching Research Journal*, 15(5), 1-29. EJ1412235.pdf (ed.gov)

**Olena Abramicheva**, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Researcher at the Institute for International Cooperation in Education, University of Teacher Education Zug, Switzerland;
**ORCID ID:** 0000-0003-4010-0949
**Address:** Olena Abramicheva, University of Teacher Education Zug, Zugerbergstrasse 3, 6303 Zug, Switzerland.
**E-mail:** helenn2018@gmail.com
**Received:** July 12, 2024; **revised:** September 23, 2024; **accepted:** September 27, 2024; **published:** September 30, 2024.

———————————

Абрамічева Олена. Метакогнітивне знання у вивченні другої мови: досвід вивчення німецької мови учнями початкової школи, вимушено переміщеними в середовище цільової мови. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, **11** (3) (2024), 7-25.

Спираючись на міжнародний педагогічний дискурс щодо включення етнічно різноманітних груп біженців до освітніх систем країн ОЕСР, а також на власне попереднє дослідження того, якою бачать систему початкової освіти Швейцарії біженці з України, автор аналізує досвід вивчення другої мови українськими дітьми у швейцарській початковій школі. Здійснюване протягом двох років дослідження дозволило простежити динаміку засвоєння німецької мови дітьми-переселенцями в умовах повного занурення в середовище цільової мови та виявити чинники, що впливають на успішність опанування другою мовою (німецькою). Завдяки залученню до проєкту дослідника з України вдалося віднайти підхід до цільової групи й побудувати ефективну комунікацію з респондентами під час лонгітюдного дослідження, що проводилося із застосуванням якісних методів дослідження. Збір даних проводився за допомогою таких дослідницьких інструментів, як інтерв'ю та спостереження за учасниками. У роботі визначено вплив двох груп чинників: внутрішніх (мотивація, метакогнітивні уміння, попередні знання та навчальні стратегії) та зовнішніх (контекст вивчення другої мови, форма навчання другої мови, доступна в новому шкільному середовищі тощо). Метакогнітивні уміння виявилися важливими у вивченні другої мови в ситуації незапланованого переходу учнів до нової освітньої системи та повного занурення в середовище цільової мови. Роль метакогнітивних знань і умінь у вивченні другої мови досліджуваною групою дітей-переселенців залежить від віку учнів, їхніх попередніх знань і досвіду вивчення мов, а також програми й форми навчання другої мови, доступних для переміщених учнів. Міждисциплінарний характер розвідки в галузі засвоєння другої мови уможливлює різноманітне практичне застосування її результатів у педагогіці другої мови, педагогічній психології, міграційній педагогіці, а також в педагогіці початкової освіти.

**Ключові слова:** початкова освіта, вивчення другої мови, метакогнітивне знання, метакогнітивні уміння, діти з України.