

ABSTRACT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Research reveals that many international students, that is, individuals who are not residents of their country of study, do not fully benefit from their international experience. Studying abroad poses numerous challenges, causing anxiety and stress. The language barrier is one such challenge affecting students' cultural adaptation, which refers to the degree to which they fit into the host country's environment. Nonetheless, the literature reports inconsistent results regarding the effects of foreign-language skills and communication patterns on international students' cultural adaptation.

This project, titled *Language and communication in the experience of international students: Advancing intercultural communication and adaptation theory*, aims to address this gap by investigating the effects of the local/host language and English as a lingua franca (ELF), as well as communication patterns, on various adaptation domains of international students studying in a non-anglophone country (Poland). Additionally, the project seeks to understand the influence of students' social networks and individual factors (cultural background, cultural intelligence, among others) on the language-adaptation relationship.

Our research team will collect data from international students through focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires at the University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw (UEHS). As the most highly internationalized university in Poland with a large population of international students, UEHS is the ideal setting for this research. Furthermore, we will collect focus group and interview data from domestic students and teachers to build a comprehensive multi-perspective picture of international students' experiences. By collecting data at three points in time over 18 months, we will be able to track changes in students' experiences over time, which will help us identify patterns of adaptation and the factors that influence them. The data will be analyzed using innovative techniques such as necessary condition analysis (NCA), qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), and social network analysis (SNA). These techniques will allow us to precisely determine the effects of foreign-language skills, as well as configurations of a range of factors leading to students' adaptation.

The project holds significant potential to contribute to the fields of applied linguistics and intercultural communication and adaptation. By integrating diverse theoretical perspectives to address inconsistent empirical results and utilizing innovative research methods to unravel the complex relationship between language, communication, and adaptation, the findings will make substantial theoretical contributions to the field. The findings will also provide insights that can inform language education programs, curriculum development, and language policy to better serve the academic community. Additionally, the research will offer valuable insights into the adaptation experiences of international students in Poland, which is particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing global crises and the increasing number of students from Ukraine seeking refuge from the war.