

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2020.24.4.37>**ПРЕДПОСЫЛКИ ДИСКРИМИНАЦИИ ПО АКЦЕНТНОМУ ПРИЗНАКУ В ВОПРОСАХ
ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРНОЙ АДАПТАЦИИ РУССКОЯЗЫЧНЫХ ИММИГРАНТОВ В ГЕРМАНИИ**

Научная статья

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Аннотация

В статье представлены результаты исследования, посвященного изучению влияния русского акцента на перспективы интеграции в принимающее немецкое сообщество. В качестве респондентов выступили русскоязычные иммигранты, проживающие на территории Германии. По результатам опроса было установлено, что более 50% респондентов сталкивались с дискриминацией по акцентному признаку, в связи с чем дальнейший анализ данных проводился в рамках двух групп – респондентов с опытом дискриминации (группа Б) и без опыта дискриминации (группа А) на материале ответов, касающихся причин иммиграции, продолжительности пребывания на территории ФРГ, специфики изучения и частотности практики немецкого языка. Анализ полученных ответов свидетельствует о том, дискриминации в большей степени подвержены иммигранты, не изучавшие немецкий язык как профильный предмет в рамках программ высшего образования или в немецких школах, редко использующие немецкий язык в повседневном общении, и не имеющие мотивации интегрироваться в принимающее сообщество. Следует отметить, что фактор продолжительности пребывания на территории немецкоязычного государства не оказывает значительного влияния на акцентную выраженность. На основании полученных результатов делается вывод о том, что для успешной интеграции иммигранта в принимающий социум необходимо формирование фонетико-фонологической компетенции.

Ключевые слова: иноязычный акцент, иммиграция, Германия, лингвокультурная адаптация, дискриминация по акцентному признаку.

**BACKGROUND OF ACCENT-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN THE ISSUES OF LINGUOCULTURAL
ADAPTATION OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKING IMMIGRANTS IN GERMANY**

Research article

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a study on the impact of the Russian accent on the prospects for integration into the host German community. The respondents were Russian-speaking immigrants living in Germany. According to the results of the survey, it was found that more than 50% of respondents faced accent-based discrimination. Therefore, further analysis of the data was carried out within two groups respondents with experience of discrimination (Group B) and without such experience (Group A) on the material of answers concerning the reasons for immigration, the duration of stay in the Federal Republic of Germany, the specifics of studying and the frequency of use of the German language. The analysis of the responses received indicates that immigrants who have not studied German as a specialized subject in higher education programs or in German schools, rarely use German in everyday communication, and have no motivation to integrate into the host community are more susceptible to discrimination. It should be noted that the factor of the duration of stay on the territory of the German-speaking state does not significantly affect the accent expression. Based on the results obtained, it is concluded that for the successful integration of an immigrant into the host society it is necessary to form phonological and phonetic competence.

Keywords: foreign accent, immigration, Germany, linguocultural adaptation, accent-based discrimination.

Introduction

In the times of globalization and migration crisis in Europe the success of the immigrants' integration is becoming increasingly important. It is worth mentioning that due to the accent-based discrimination, immigrants often have difficulty in finding housing, acquiring a job or a particular position, and communicating with native speakers successfully [1], [2], [3], [7], [10]. The Russian-speaking community in Germany is the third largest group of immigrants after immigrants from Poland and Turkey and numbers over 2 million people [9], therefore, it is of interest to study the extent to which the Russian-speaking community in Germany is subject to discrimination on the basis of a foreign accent, and to establish the factors that influence the severity of the Russian accent. For the study of these issues, a survey was conducted, the purpose of which was to determine the role of a foreign accent in the socio- and linguocultural integration of Russian immigrants in Germany. It should be noted that in this study, the accent is understood as a way of pronouncing the words of a language that shows which country, area or social class a person comes from.

Methods

Within the framework of the research an online survey based on Google Forms was conducted among Russian immigrants in Germany, including Russian Germans - citizens of the Russian Federation, the USSR and the Russian Empire with German genealogical roots, as well as awareness about it. A place of birth and a mother tongue were the main criteria for selecting respondents. However, a variation of other criteria, such as attitude towards the German language or duration of residence in Germany, was necessary for the completeness of the results obtained.

Results

The survey involved 145 respondents (90 women and 55 men) aged 18 to 65, currently living in the 10 federal states of Germany, such as Berlin, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, Hamburg, Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony, Brandenburg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Schleswig-Holstein, and Hessen. It is important to note that the age group 25 – 34 is the most representative.

According to the research, more than a half of respondents, namely 53%, have faced accent-based discrimination in Germany. For the ease of interpretation of the results this group was designed as «Group B» in contrast to 47% of respondents who have never faced accent-based discrimination («Group A»). Further, a comparative analysis of the results was carried out taking into account the division into groups within the framework of several questions, such as the place of the German language study, the level of proficiency in it, the reason for immigration and the frequency of use of the German language in everyday life.

It is worth mentioning, that 95% of respondents in Group A studied German before moving to Germany, among them 80% - at linguistic universities. Four respondents defended their PhD in Germany, and three respondents attended German schools. Fig. 1 introduces a comparative analysis of how both respondent groups learned the German language.

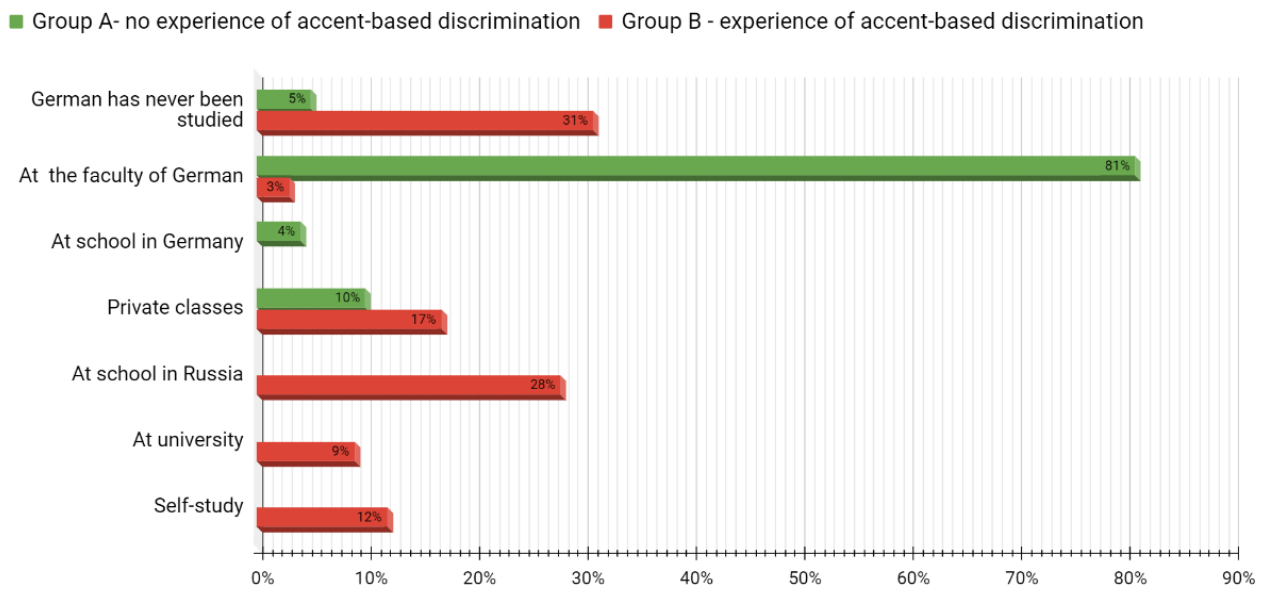


Fig.1 — Comparative characteristic of ways to learn German

With regard to the reason for immigration, the survey results indicate that for the respondents in Group A the main motives were work and studies or family with 59% and 38% respectively, whereas in Group B work and study were the decisive factor only for 42% of the respondents, 24% of them moved for family reasons, and 25% returned to their ethnic homeland. About 9% of the respondents in Group B mentioned another reason. The data is presented in Figure 2.

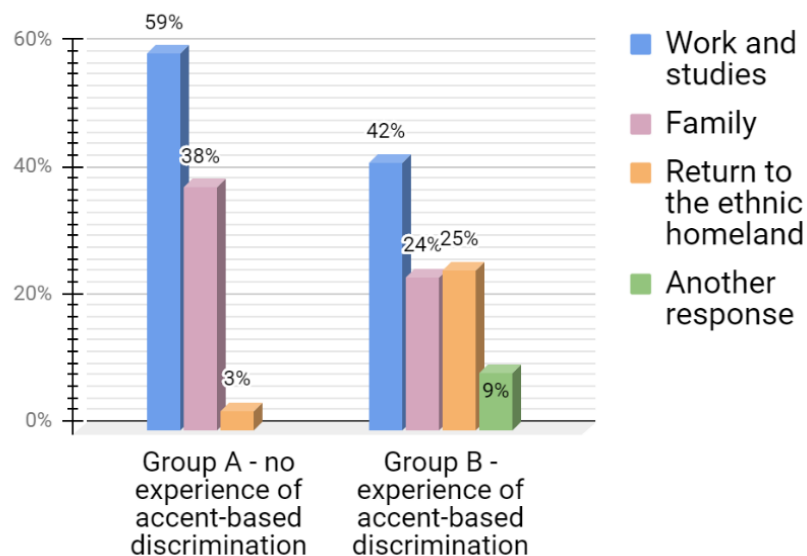


Fig.2 — Comparative characteristic of purposes of immigration to Germany

The answers of the respondents regarding the frequency of use of the German language are also of a high interest for the research. In Group A, more than 60% of the respondents noted that they regularly speak German, just over a third of the respondents answered that they often use German in everyday life, but speak Russian at home, 4% of the respondents rarely speak German. Unlike Group A, the majority of respondents in group B prefer speaking their mother tongue (Russian) at home, slightly more than one fifth of the respondents constantly practice German, and about the same number of respondents rarely switch to German in everyday communication. It should be noted that among the respondents in Group B, 7% said that they hardly ever speak German. The data described is introduced in Figure 3.

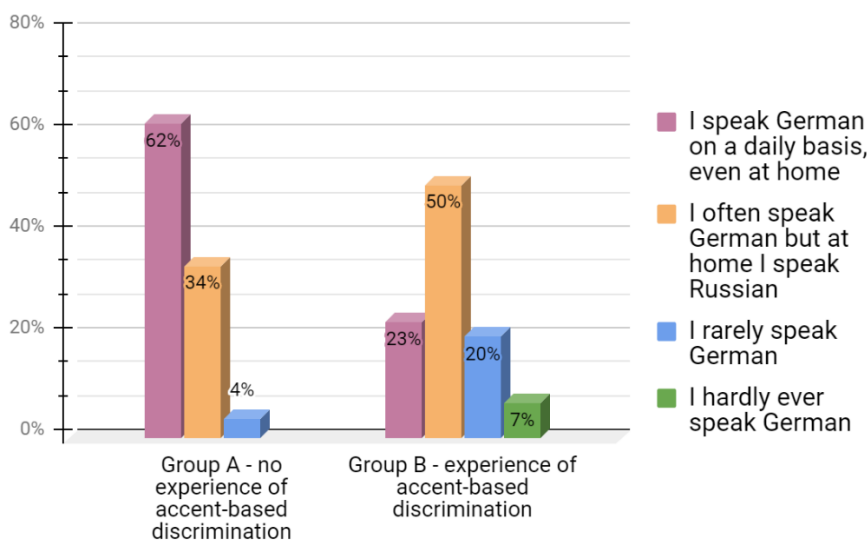


Fig. 3 — Comparative characteristic of German use frequency

Considering the duration of residence in Germany, the survey results depict that 62% the respondents from Group A have been living in Germany for less than two years and only 17% have been living in Germany for about five years. Turning to a longer period of living in Germany we can note that in this regard the number of respondents from Group A is rather low. However, the respondents from Group B are represented in each category. A quarter of them have been living in Germany for about five years and slightly less than 30% have been living there for more than two years. The same number of respondents settled in Germany more than 20 years ago. The data described is introduced in Figure 4.

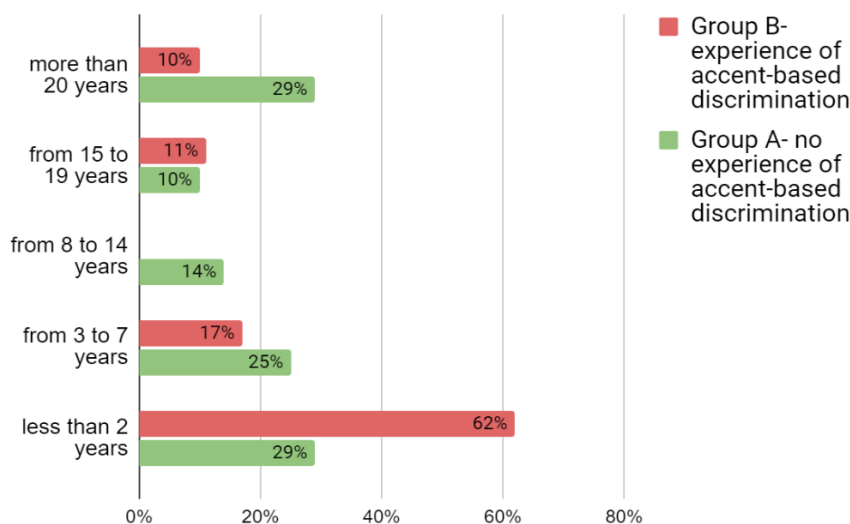


Fig. 4 — Comparative characteristic of duration of residence in Germany

Discussion

Based on the results obtained, we can conclude that there is a high probability that Russian immigrants often face prejudice in Germany due to their heavy Russian accent. The results of the survey show that the respondents who have not experience any accent-based discrimination have high level of proficiency in German. More than 80% of the respondents in Group A studied at linguistic universities at the faculty of the German language, where special attention is paid to phonetics. The respondents who defended their PhD thesis in Germany and went to German schools are highly likely to have only slight foreign accent, since they have been in the German-speaking environment for a long time and have been using the language actively both in the academic field, at work, and in everyday life. This also explains the high percentage of respondents among

the Russian Germans who faced accent-based discrimination, since returning to the ethnic homeland automatically made them German citizens, thus eliminating the need to make efforts to improve their German language skills.

Considering the purpose of moving to Germany, it is worth mentioning that the group of immigrants who have not face any prejudice has a strong motivation due to the purpose of moving to Germany. Thus, we can assume that motivation is a crucial factor, as studies and work require not only language skills, but also good pronunciation, especially for particular positions [4], [5], [6], [8].

With regard to another important factor namely the frequency of the use of the German language in everyday life, it should be emphasized that there is a significant difference between Group A and Group B. In Group A there are not any respondents who hardly ever speak German in contrast to the respondents from Group B. Furthermore, the majority of respondents from Group A use German as the main language for communication both at home and at work. It means that respondents from this group constantly or often communicate with native speakers. It allows them to acquire all the benefits which accompany life in a language environment such as active interaction with native speakers and chances to use and master German. It should be also stressed that some of the respondents noted that they had never studied German or hardly ever speak it, which does not allow an unambiguous interpretation of the answers received, since the lack of experience of accent-based discrimination can be explained by both near-native or even native pronunciation due to bilingualism, and the lack of experience of communicating with Germans in German.

As far as duration of residence in Germany is concerned it should be noted that this factor has proven to be insignificant in terms of its influence on successful linguocultural integration of immigrants. The survey results indicate that even those respondents who have been living in Germany for over 20 years face accent-based discrimination in contrast to those ones who settled in Germany less than two years ago. Such results can be evidence for the hypothesis that duration of residence doesn't have a significant impact on linguocultural adaptation of immigrants.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that such factors as specificity of studying the German language, the frequency of its use and motivation are of great importance in the context of linguocultural adaptation of immigrants whereas duration of residence doesn't have a significant influence.

It is well-known, that knowledge of the language of a host society is one of the determining factors for the success of integration. Despite the fact that many researchers believe that immersion in the language environment is one of the most important catalysts for language development, the results obtained indicate that in the absence of the need to use the language, a person can fully coexist with foreign-speaking citizens of the host state, provided they live within their ethnic community. However, even those who immigrate to Germany for the purpose of finding a job or getting education often face accent-based discrimination due to insufficiently developed phonological and phonetic competence.

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that further research is needed on the factors that influence the degree of expression of a foreign language accent and the role of a foreign accent in the linguocultural adaptation of immigrants.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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