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Research articles

Learning how to speak truth to power – comparing Ukrainian and Swiss foreign language curricula

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Abstract

Human Rights Education strives to empower learners to participate meaningfully in a democratic and sustainable society in which human rights are guaranteed for all. Foreign language education enables students to transcend borders, gives them an opportunity to share their views, ideas, and beliefs, and contributes to the development of critical thinking skills. It can thus endow students with a 'voice' to claim and defend their rights and learn to 'speak truth to power'. This article explores *if* and *how* the intended foreign language curricula for lower secondary schools in Switzerland and Ukraine integrate human rights education. Drawing on the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training as an analytical framework, the analysis reveals that 'education for human rights' is the best represented dimension in both contexts. Our results may serve as a springboard for exploring further opportunities to integrate human rights education and foreign language education.

Keywords

Foreign language education, human rights education, lower secondary school, participation, inclusion

Introduction

In 1993, at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali famously called human rights a 'common language of humanity' (Ghali, 1993). It can be argued that human rights education, through its aim of fostering a culture of human rights, intends to nurture this understanding.

In the context of migration, language learning is of particular relevance, as migrants arriving in a new country experience a need 'to accommodate linguistically to their new environment' (Ronan & Ziegler, 2022, p. 5). Foreign language learning can also have an integrating effect, as the newly arrived learners are not disadvantaged, as compared to other students, in terms of communicative competencies. This is important for human rights education, which presupposes participatory and collaborative learning processes.

Against this background, we aspire to explore the nexus between human rights education and foreign language education, using the examples of Switzerland and Ukraine. Specifically, we analyse if and how human rights education is intended to be integrated in foreign language education in lower secondary schools in both contexts. The widely acknowledged framework for human rights education as education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights will be used as a basis for the analysis.

Studying the contexts within which human rights education is integrated in the intended foreign language curricula in Switzerland and Ukraine can help to bridge the gap in understanding human rights education in both countries, provide continuity in human rights education as well as foreign language learning for migrant students, and lead to a better understanding of the nexus between human rights and foreign language learning for stakeholders in both contexts and beyond.

Research background

Over the last few decades, human rights education has been promoted at the global, regional, and national levels through a myriad of conventions, guidelines, curricula, training workshops, and other initiatives. In the Agenda 2030 (UN General Assembly, 2015), human rights are prominently mentioned as an educational goal (Sustainable Development Goal no. 4.7), alongside other aims such as global citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UN General Assembly, 2011) defines human rights education as

> all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, inter alia, to the prevention of human

> rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights. (Article 2(1))

The Declaration mentions the term ‘language’ only once, in the context of the use of target-oriented language. In the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (Council of Europe, 2010), language is not mentioned at all. Nonetheless, both the United Nations and the Council of Europe have reiterated the importance of language for human rights education on several occasions. UNESCO (2003), for instance, acknowledges that ‘respect for the languages of persons belonging to different linguistic communities [...] is essential to peaceful cohabitation’ (p. 216). In its guidelines for the development and promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture, the Council of Europe (2022) stresses that ‘[t]he efficient functioning of democracies depends on social inclusion and societal integration, which in turn depend on an understanding of, respect for and engagement with linguistic and cultural diversity’ (p. 5).

Human rights education has often been conceptualized as education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights (UN General Assembly, 2011, Article 2(2)). In this article, this framework will be used to analyse the intended foreign language curricula in Switzerland and Ukraine and to discuss the nexus between foreign language education and human rights education. For the purpose of this article, foreign language education is understood as ‘the academic discipline which deals with the teaching and learning of foreign/second language(s) (L2) in institutional, primarily school-based contexts’ (Doff, 2018, p. 10). In Ukraine, intended foreign language curricula prescribe learning a language that is neither the language of the country nor the language of instruction, while second foreign language curricula refer to the additional foreign language to be studied (Zymomria et al., 2021; Redko et al., 2021a). In Switzerland, the intended curriculum for lower secondary schools in the German-speaking region, Lehrplan 21, uses the term ‘foreign language’ to denote both the official national languages that are not the language of instruction (e.g., French, Italian, Romansh) and all other foreign languages (D-EDK, 2014).

Language education and education about human rights

> Education about human rights […] includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection. (UN General Assembly, 2011, Article 2(2)(a))

Although a literal reading of Article 2(2)(a) suggests it is quite limited in its scope, both further United Nations documents and literature on human rights education indicate that the dimension ‘knowledge and understanding' can be broadly interpreted (Struthers, 2015); it

encompasses the history of human rights and a broad range of human rights issues across the globe, as well as controversies around the very idea of human rights and its (legal) implementation.

Whereas the UNDHRET is very explicit in its use of human rights terminology, a distinction between explicit and implicit human rights education has emerged in human rights education literature. Explicit human rights education means education with direct reference to the human rights canon, whereas implicit human rights education encompasses education that addresses human rights issues and values, without necessarily using human rights terminology (Müller, 2009). Several studies have shown that this distinction is indeed important for pedagogical practice, as both educational policy frameworks and teachers do not necessarily couch rights education in human rights language (Quennerstedt, 2019; Rinaldi, 2018; Struthers, 2015).

Kukovec (2017) argues that foreign language teaching is predestined for education *about* human rights, for instance by reading texts, discussing, or doing role-plays about human rights issues. Language teachers participating in a focus group study on the implementation of human rights education in upper secondary schools in Switzerland (Rinaldi, 2018) confirm that they contribute to human rights education mainly through literature, films, or essays. A study conducted in six Swedish classes indicates that language learning can also contribute to human rights education by extending students' human rights vocabulary and understanding thereof. It can also render students' language more precise. However, as the author of this study points out, the lack of explicit use of human rights terminology might impede the establishment of a generic relation between topics such as forced migration or life conditions and human rights (Quennerstedt, 2019).

Language learning through human rights

> Education through human rights […] includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners. (UN General Assembly, 2011, Article 2(2)(b))

Education *through* human rights is concerned with human rights-based approaches to education. It is nowadays widely accepted that education *about* and *for* human rights cannot take place in an environment that violates the rights of anyone involved in the educational process. Osler and Starkey (2015; see also Starkey, 1996) argue that human rights should be explicitly used as a frame of reference for language learning in the context of education for cosmopolitan citizenship. In the absence of such a rights-based approach there is a risk for the reinforcement of stereotypes and remarks that contradict the very spirit of human rights. Furthermore, a human rights-based approach 'sees students as individuals with agency, who are willing and able to be engaged in struggles for justice in their local contexts' (Porto, 2014,

p. 285). It ensures that students' experiences, identities, and realities are respected and valued.

It is worth pointing out that, again, the UNDHRET has a rather limited scope. Its exclusive mention of 'learning and teaching' ignores the wider learning environment, which encompasses the school yard, the way to school, and questions of availability of and accessibility to education (Rinaldi, 2018). It also bears the risk that important aspects of human rights-based approaches to education, such as language rights in education, are ignored. Despite the broad acceptance of the principle of non-discrimination, discrimination based on language or dialect is still broadly met in practice and measures should be taken to eliminate it (Trudgill, 2000).

The right to use one's own language is enshrined in numerous legal documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948, Article 2) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989, Article 3). In the literature, different but closely related concepts such as Language Human Rights, language rights or linguistic rights are discussed (see, Davari, 2017; Freeland & Patrick, 2004; Hornberger, 1998; Ronan & Melles, 2022; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002). Freeland & Patrick (2004) argue that the very concept of language rights is 'embedded in a legal discourse that starts from a politics of the state' (p. 5). It is essential to note that 'claims for linguistic rights range from the official and legal status of the minority and indigenous language to language teaching and use in schools and other institutions, as well as in the media' (UNESCO, 2003, p. 15). While some scholars view the three terms—Language Human Rights, language rights, and linguistic rights—as synonymous (Bratt Paulston, 1997; Hornberger, 1998), Bratt Paulston (1997) specifies that the concept of Language Human Rights 'derives from the attempt to link language to human rights, i.e., to reframe to issues of language rights in terms of human rights' (p. 76).

Issues of language rights are often discussed on a global scale when questions of language dominance are raised. Skutnabb-Kangas (2002) claims that formal education often turns so-called dominant languages such as English, Russian, or Chinese into 'killer languages' and is 'genocidal' (p. 181) in its nature. A similar point is also expressed by DePalma et al. (2015), who claim that dominant languages are in constant competition with each other as languages of international relations, business, and globalisation in general. They bring up the notion of 'linguistic geopolitics' (p. 12) to describe these languages' race for dominance. This, according to the authors, inevitably results in discrimination and near disappearance of minority languages. It is also for this reason that the European Commission recommends investing in the development of language education curricula, so as to reflect the multi-linguistic reality of European states (Staring, Day, & Meierkord, 2018). Freeland and Patrick (2004), however, warn about the institutionalisation of language rights, especially those that are connected to

formal education. The authors argue that it can 'push minorities into the contradictory position of mobilising to gain rights around one language variety and turning this into a new form of dominant language, often at the expense of other local varieties and registers' (p. 3). The question of how linguistic rights should be dealt with in migrant societies is thus in need of further debate.

In the human rights education discourse, a similar debate has emerged over the last few decades. Some authors have claimed that 'the languages of human rights [have] sought to supplant all other ethical languages' (Baxi, 2008, p. 1), as is mirrored in Boutros-Boutros Ghali's classification of human rights as a common language of humanity. The language of human rights might thus lead to new forms of exclusion, be it because some forms of human violation are not addressed by the languages of human rights, or because some violated people do not have equal access to these languages (Baxi, 2008). For this reason, myriad scholars call for a decolonial and more pluriversal form of human rights education (Adami, 2021; Becker, 2021; Williams & Bermeo, 2020; Zembylas, 2017). In the context of language teaching, it has also been suggested that the question of universality be discussed to ensure that cultural, linguistic and religious contexts are given due attention (Porto et al., 2018). Taking these calls seriously is particularly important if human rights education strives to, as it claims, empower learners to speak truth to power.

Language learning for human rights

> Education for human rights […] includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. (UN General Assembly, 2011, Article 2(2)(a))

This dimension refers to the empowerment of learners to translate knowledge and understanding of human rights into practice. It is devoted to the development of attitudes and skills that empower learners to contribute to a human rights culture (Rinaldi, 2018). Other instruments such as the World Programme for Human Rights Education (UN General Assembly, 2005) are much more activist in their wording, in that it encourages learners to take action 'to defend and promote human rights' (Paragraph 4(c); see also Struthers, 2015). It is this latter conceptualisation of education *for* human rights that is discussed controversially in formal education, as it blurs the boundaries between empowerment and overpowering of learners (Rinaldi, 2023).

Looking at the specific skills to be developed in formal education, the 2012 OSCE Guidelines on Human Rights Education for Secondary School Systems provide a useful framework. Among the skills to be acquired it lists the evaluation of information sources, participation in discussions and debates, and the identification and application of strategies for opposing discrimination and bullying (OSCE, 2012).

It is somewhat surprising that critical reflection is not explicitly mentioned, although it is usually considered to be an integral part of human rights education (Tibbitts & Katz, 2017). Quennerstedt (2019) points out that critical thinking is one of the areas where language learning can make an important contribution whereby education through communication (Freire, 1972/1993) is key to the acquisition of this skill. Further skills that might be developed in the language classroom are dialoguing, expression of views, producing arguments, and changing perspectives (Osler & Starkey, 2015), to mention but a few. Our premise is that foreign language education provides ample opportunities to bring human rights issues into the classroom and make them the object of discussion.

Byram's (2014) conception of education for intercultural citizenship in the foreign language classroom also builds upon intercultural communicative competence as an integral task of foreign language education, and social action, to be encouraged by citizenship education (Porto et al., 2018). Language is viewed not only as 'a tool for communication and knowledge', but also as 'a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group' (UNESCO, 2003, p. 16). With regard to migrant populations, Sharkey (2018) emphasises the need to reflect on factors that determine who participates and who is excluded from participation: learning the dominant language while maintaining one's native language can contribute to the former prevailing.

State of human rights education in Ukraine and Switzerland

Both Ukraine and Switzerland are Member States of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and thus are called to implement the legal and policy documents adopted by different international organisations.

The boost of interest in human rights and civil education in Ukraine was prompted by the declaration of the country's independence in 1991. Civic education as an integral part of democratic development of the country was emphasised in the 'On General Secondary Education' law, adopted in 1999. However, the military conflict of 2014 and, later on, the war that started on February 24, 2022, resulted in partial disruption in the development of human rights and increased the need to strengthen the state's policy in the field of human rights education. Human rights-related topics are reflected in various obligatory and optional courses that include the History of Ukraine, Fundamentals of Law, European Choice of Ukraine, and Human Rights (Huddleston, 2017). Besides, the major school reform in the country, The New Ukrainian School, that is to be implemented in several steps from 2016 until 2029, mentions 'social and civic competencies' among 10 basic competences that include:

> All forms of behaviour that are needed for effective and constructive participation in society, in the family, and at work. The ability to work with others to achieve results, to prevent and resolve conflicts and reach compromises. Respect for the law, human

> rights and support for social and cultural diversity. (Elkin et al., 2016, p. 12)

The implementation of The New Ukrainian School reform is already reflected in the so-called 'model curricula'. As an example, Section 6 of the model curriculum 'Vstup do istorii Ukrainy ta hromadianskoi osvity. 5 klas' [Introduction to the history of Ukraine and civic education. Grade 5] (Hisem & Martyniuk, 2021) is dedicated to the rights of a person and citizen as well as to democracy.

In Switzerland, an analysis of the three intended curricula for primary and lower secondary education shows that the concept of human rights education is not mentioned as such, but addressed under umbrella concepts such as Education for Sustainable Development or Citizenship Education. Furthermore, only rare references to the affective and action-oriented dimension of human rights education were found (Rinaldi, Moody, & Darbellay, 2020). Nevertheless, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021) commended Switzerland for its effort to integrate human rights into its intended curricula. At the same time, it called upon Switzerland to focus more on practical implementation and on measures to strengthen teacher training. Regarding practice, language teachers participating in a focus group study on the implementation of human rights education in upper secondary schools in Switzerland (Rinaldi, 2018) stressed that they had mostly engaged in implicit human rights education. In many cases, the teachers stated that human rights education was something that happened incidentally (Rinaldi, 2017).

In this short theoretical overview, we have tried to show that the nexus between (foreign) language education and human rights education merits further exploration. Against this background, the present study addresses the following research question: How is human rights education implemented in the intended curricula for foreign language education in lower secondary school (ISCED level 2) in Ukraine and the German-speaking part of Switzerland?

Materials and methods

In Ukraine, model curricula for the New Ukrainian School (a major reform of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine) are being introduced sequentially, from 2022. The model curriculum 'Inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy' [Foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Redko et al., 2021b) consists of an explanatory note and a description of the competence potential of the field of 'Foreign Languages'. It also lists expected general results of the educational and cognitive activities of students, concrete expected results by the end of grades 6 and 9, an orientational language vocabulary and grammar inventory in English, Spanish, German, French, and New Greek, as well as a section on thematic planning. The model curriculum 'Druha inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy.' [Second foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Redko et al., 2021a) contains a

number of items: an explanatory note; a listing of the competence potentials of the 'Foreign Languages' field; expected results of students' educational and cognitive activities by the end of grade 9; vocabulary and grammar inventories in the English, German, French, Spanish, Polish, and New Greek languages; and orientational assessment parameters of students' educational and cognitive achievements. Finally, the model curriculum 'Inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy' [Foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Zymomria et al., 2021) contains an explanatory note, a description of expected results, content (vocabulary and grammar inventory), types of educational activities and benchmarks for evaluation in each grade, and orientational parameters of the assessment of student' educational and cognitive achievements. All three curricula were recommended by the ordinance №795 of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine from 12 July 2021.

Switzerland is a federal and multilingual state and each of its 26 cantons is in charge of educational matters. Over the last decade, three harmonised formal curricula were introduced, one for each of the three big linguistic regions. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland the 'Lehrplan 21' (D-EDK, 2014) was adopted in 2014. It sets out the competencies to be acquired during compulsory education. It is split into three cycles, whereby the third cycle corresponds to lower secondary education (ISCED level 2). For the present study, the chapters on the three foreign languages of English, French, and Italian will be analysed alongside the introductory chapters to the language learning section, and the overarching 'general foundations' chapter. This choice is explained by the fact that the introductory chapters to the language curricula address commonalities and differences across all languages, foreign and German, and thus provide the guidelines for fostering the competencies outlined in the parts addressing the individual languages. The overarching 'general foundations' chapter lays the foundations for all subject curricula and must thus be implemented in all subject teaching, including foreign languages.

Methodologically, our comparative analysis is underpinned by elements of concept analysis and qualitative content analysis. Cognitive linguistics claims that products of human perception of reality are represented in thinking in the form of certain mental structures. Concepts represent such basic (elementary) structures (Bondarenko, 2017, p. 75). Concepts are constituent parts of the conceptual construal of the world which, in turn, can be defined as the 'basic form of representation of ideas about the world in human thinking' (Bondarenko, 2017, p. 62). Therefore, elements of the method of concept analysis (e.g., cognitive semantic analysis) allow us to reveal specificities of the mental world of a certain ethos as well as structures of human knowledge. The combination of the methods applied in the article allows us to identify relevant sections in the different documents by means of a lexical search for key words, followed by a categorisation of the identified excerpts in line with the framework presented above.

For the purpose of this article, the study of the concept of *human rights* is limited to the analysis of its cognitive-semantic aspect (Evans, 2007; Popova & Sternin, 1979). The analysis was conducted on the basis of the eight English online thesauruses (Macmillan Dictionary, Encyclopedia Britannica, Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, Cambridge Dictionary, Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Thesaurus.com, and American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language) and two legal documents defining human rights and their main principles: Human Rights Principles (UNFPA, 2005) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948).

Our analysis revealed that verbal denominations of the concept *human rights* are mostly represented by nouns (*freedom, equality, liberty, participation, tolerance, inclusion, non-discrimination, etc.*), followed by adjectives (*diverse, universal, basic, inalienable, fundamental, civil, indivisible etc.*), verbs (*protect, enhance, participate, express, enjoy, discriminate etc.*), and adverbs (*equally, fairly etc.*).

In the context of our research, the choice of the key words for analysis was predetermined by the relevance of the field – education. The keywords for the search (see Table 1) were selected on the basis of the main semes that constitute the meaning of the concept of *human rights*. In the table below, due to the language-specific grammar categories of Ukrainian and German, we use the following forms: nouns - nominative case, singular; adjectives – male gender, singular; verbs – infinitive. However, the search was conducted by considering all possible grammar word forms and categories.

Table 1

Keywords in English, German and Ukrainian

Key words	**'Lehrplan 2021' (Switzerland)**	**Model curriculum 'Foreign language 5-9 grades' (Ukraine)**
Right	Recht	право
equality	Gleichheit	рівність, рівноправність
equal	gleich	рівний, рівноправний
respect	Respekt	повага
to respect	respektieren	поважати
respectful	respektvoll	той, що поважає
freedom/liberty	Freiheit	свобода/воля

Key words	**'Lehrplan 2021' (Switzerland)**	**Model curriculum 'Foreign language 5-9 grades' (Ukraine)**
free	frei	вільний
tolerance	Toleranz	толерантність
to tolerate		терпіти
tolerant		толерантний
justice	Gerechtigkeit	справедливість
just		справедливий
discrimination	Diskriminierung	дискримінація
to discriminate	diskriminieren	дискримінувати,принижувати
discriminatory	diskriminieren	принизливий
participation	Partizipation, teilhabe	участь
to participate	teilnehmen; eilhaben	брати участь
universality	Universalität	універсальний
universal	universell	
peace	Frieden	мир
peaceful	friedlich	мирний
protection	Schutz	захист
to protect	(be)schützen	захищати

For the qualitative content analysis based on Kuckartz and Rädiker (2019), we used the 'keyword-in-context' function of MAXQDA. The purpose of this analysis was to organise the data and elicit meaning from it to compare the two contexts and draw corresponding conclusions. First, we did a keyword search for each set of documents (Ukrainian and Swiss curricula). The results that were not relevant for our context were eliminated. For instance, the search for the keyword 'gleich' (equal) contains results for 'gleichmässig' (even). The search for the stem of the word 'право(а)' (right(s) - 'прав' - led to results for both 'права' (rights) and '**прав**ильності'(correctedness), '**прав**доподібність' (credibility), '**прав**ило' (rule). As a result, there were 67 hits in total for Ukraine and 47 hits for Switzerland. We proceeded with the analysis of the excerpts resulting from this search. It allowed us to interpret the data

in context. Based on the analytical framework discussed above, we coded the excerpts with the three codes *about*, *through* and *for* by means of consensual coding. The coded segments vary in length, depending on the unit of meaning (usually one paragraph). Finally, we analysed the results of this coding process by exploring the segments within each of the three codes for both contexts individually, before comparing them qualitatively across the two cases. The quotes from both the Swiss and Ukrainian curricula are provided in English (authors' translations).

A limitation of this approach is the lack of quantitative analysis. As the comparability between the two cases is limited due to challenges regarding translation and important differences between the two curricula, we focused on the qualitative comparison. Furthermore, the curricula for different foreign languages often contain similar wording, and this may be a reason why quantitative results could be misleading.

Findings

Foreign language curriculum: a Ukrainian perspective

In the analysed model curricula: 'Inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy' [Foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Redko et al., 2021b), 'Druha inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy' [Second foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Redko et al., 2021a), and 'Inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy' [Foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Zymomria et al., 2021) few references were made to education *about* human rights. However, the lexeme 'right' was detected in the 'human rights' word combination. The reference stresses the importance of students understanding universal human problems. In particular, it deals with 'the student's ability to determine, discuss, understand a range of universal issues related to health, human rights, environment as well as realize the impact of his/her actions in the context of the outlined issues' (Zymomria et al., 2021).

The lexeme 'right' also occurs in a word combination 'violation of human rights' within the context of development of students' social responsibility. Violation of human rights is mentioned along with other global problems: migration, global warming, and pandemics. 'Rights and responsibilities of an individual in society at the local and national levels' (Zymomria et al., 2021) are mentioned in the discussion of types of learning activities for the development of students' social responsibility.

As regards the dimension *through*, the search detected the lexemes 'participation', and 'rights'. The Ukrainian curriculum addresses this dimension through the creation of a learning environment that fosters a participatory approach to human rights education and emphasises a teacher's ability to involve students in various types of communicative activities, to give them a choice, to allow to use their imagination and non-standard thinking. The latter also finds manifestation in the excerpts containing the lexeme 'participation', which is mentioned

as participation in group projects and participation in the establishment of collective rights and responsibilities.

As for the dimension *for*, the search resulted in the lexemes 'tolerance', 'peace', 'participation', 'right', 'respect', 'discrimination'. This dimension is the most common one, and it mainly focuses on the formation of attitudes and skills. In the explanatory note to the 'Druha inozemna mova. 5-9 klasy' [Second foreign language. Grades 5-9] (Redko et al., 2021a) it is mentioned that the content of the second foreign language curriculum should 'foster a tolerant attitude to and respect for the culture, customs, and ways of life of other peoples'. Tolerance is also explicitly indicated as an attitude in the description of social and civic competence (Redko et al., 2021a).

The findings regarding the lexemes 'respect' and 'discrimination' follow a similar pattern. Skills formed within the foreign language curricula that are relevant for human rights education include the ability to listen to others with respect, to respect cultural variety without prejudices or discriminatory views, and to respect richness and variety of cultures.

The lexeme 'peaceful' is mentioned only once in the three foreign languages curricula and is mentioned as the skill 'to peacefully coexist in a multinational environment' (Redko et al., 2021a).

The research findings indicate numerous references to the lexeme 'participation', which refer not only to engagement in foreign language learning activities and in-class interaction, but also to 'participation in common activities of a school or community / the creation of social educational projects (e.g., volunteer activity)' (Zymomria et al., 2021).

Finally, the lexeme 'right' is used once, in reference to 'copyright.' The foreign language curriculum (Redko et al., 2021a) also explicitly refers to the skill 'to convince by means of a foreign language of the importance to adhere to human rights', which indicates a strong connection between language and human rights education.

Foreign language curricula: a Swiss perspective

For the dimension *about*, no segments were found in either the introductory chapters to the language learning section of the Lehrplan 21 or the sections addressing the competencies to be acquired in the individual languages. In the 'general foundations' section of the Lehrplan 21, the lexemes 'equality', 'right', 'participation', 'respect', 'discrimination', 'justice', and 'peace' were found in the chapter on 'transversal topics under the umbrella concept of sustainable development'. According to this chapter, topics such as 'politics, democracy, and human rights', 'gender and equality', 'cultural identities and intercultural comprehension', and 'global development and peace' should be addressed in all subjects, including foreign

language education. One criterion for the selection of specific questions within these themes should be the opportunity they provide to address questions of inequality and power.

For the dimension *through*, again no segments have been identified in the analysed documents devoted to foreign language learning. In the general foundations section, however, there are several references that are relevant for education *through* human rights. The lexemes 'participation', 'respect', and 'right' were identified as relevant for this dimension. On the one hand, fundamental rights are mentioned as a foundation for schooling. The learning environment should be underpinned by a respectful culture. On the other hand, participation is mentioned as a guiding principle for all teaching and learning processes as well as the teaching linked to the transversal topics under the umbrella concept of sustainable development. Participation is understood as the co-design of the entire school environment:

> Pupils learn to contribute to the school environment according to their age. The school is a place of social and participatory learning, and it fosters interpersonal and cooperative skills, and encourages students to take over responsibility for the community. (D-EDK, 2014, p. 21)

The fundamental role of teachers in the teaching and learning process is mentioned; the importance of child-centred approaches and caring, respectful relationships between teachers and students are stressed.

The dimension *for* is the most prominent in the language section of the Lehrplan 21. The following lexemes were found as relevant for this dimension: 'participation', 'discrimination', 'equality', 'justice', 'respect', 'rights', 'tolerance', and 'peace'. The curricula for all the three languages (English, Italian, French) mention that pupils are intended to learn how to participate in different conversations. The common introduction to all languages stresses the importance of language for linguistic and cultural diversity:

> Language has a key function in expressing mutual understanding, respect and tolerance. Mutual linguistic understanding thus serves as a basis for peaceful coexistence. Consequently, linguistic and intercultural competencies are part of language education. (D-EDK, 2014, p. 55)

Furthermore, the relevance of gender-sensitive language is stressed.

When it comes to the general foundations section, numerous explicit and implicit references are made to education *for* human rights. All the topics under the umbrella concept of sustainable development are framed not only in terms of education *about*, but also in terms of education *for*. The very idea of this umbrella concept is to contribute to a 'solidary society' and aims to empower individuals to participate in decision-making processes and the

implementation of these decisions (D-EDK, 2014, p. 34). Importantly, the educational aims guiding the entire Lehrplan 21 also make various references to human rights related issues, stating that education must be based on specific values such as equality of opportunities, gender equality, and non-discrimination. Further, education is intended to 'foster the understanding for social justice, democracy and the preservation of the natural environment' (D-EDK, 2014, p. 20) and to 'promote mutual respect in cohabiting with other individuals, in particular relating to cultures, religions, and ways of life' (D-EDK, 2014, p. 21).

Discussion

In comparing the two curricula analysed in this study, several relevant observations can be made in the light of the theoretical framework discussed above. Regarding education *about* human rights, there are major differences in the way the two states approach human rights as a topic in language education. In the Ukrainian model curricula, there is a strong emphasis on the placement of human rights among other global issues, such as migration, pandemics, etc. However, regardless of the explicit reference to human rights, the Ukrainian curriculum does not contain clear explanations or instructions on how to interpret, understand and critically analyse human rights in the context of foreign language education. This, in our view, could be strengthened.

The Swiss curriculum does not make any explicit mention of human rights in its language section. It rather addresses the dimension *about* in the general foundation section, with its umbrella concept of sustainable development. One possible explanation for this is that the Lehrplan 21 is competence-based and generally makes little reference to specific topics in the language education section. Furthermore, as the above-mentioned study by Rinaldi et al. (2020) shows, human rights as a topic is often delegated to specific subjects such as 'space, time, society' (history, geography, citizenship education), because the corresponding subject curriculum contains specific competencies related to human and child rights. From a human rights education perspective, this tendency is regrettable. Firstly, human rights education is considered to be a holistic concept which cannot be delegated to a single subject. Secondly, it also contradicts Lehrplan 21's intention to integrate the transversal topics under the umbrella concept of sustainable development into all subjects. There is thus an inherent tension in the Lehrplan 21: On the one hand, all subjects are called upon to contribute to the implementation of the transversal topics, on the other hand, some subject-specific curricula like the foreign language learning curricula lack references to these topics. For instance, the introductory chapters to the language learning curriculum do not provide any guidance on how to integrate the topic 'politics, democracy, and human rights' described in the general foundations section.

Regarding the dimension *through*, both curricula focus on participatory approaches in foreign

language education, namely, the involvement of various forms of study and cooperative learning, students' active engagement in social processes based on mutual respect, and the ability to collaborate and appreciate each other, and to promote the principle of tolerance.

Besides, both language curricula put a strong emphasis on the dimension *for*. This confirms that language learning is often assigned a supportive or instrumental function in human rights education, as was discussed in the theoretical framework. Communication skills are prominently stressed as a tool to participate in society. Ukrainian intended foreign language curricula mention tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence as well as active participation in various activities and make an explicit reference to language as a tool to foster human rights. Despite the fact that there is no explicit reference to human rights in the Swiss curriculum, communication skills are discussed in the human rights education literature as an important skill enabling individuals to claim their own rights and the rights of others, as was outlined above.

The study discussed in this article has some limitations. Due to the selection of keywords, some relevant excerpts were not identified. For example, keywords related more closely to citizenship education such as 'citizen' and 'politics' were not searched for, although it could be argued that these are also relevant for human rights education. Also, a more comprehensive analysis of the entire curricula and other relevant policy documents would certainly yield more substantive results. Furthermore, a quantitative-comparative analysis could provide some interesting results. The reasons why such an analysis was not conducted are outlined in our 'materials and methods' section.

Conclusions

In this study, we did not aim to make a comprehensive and all-encompassing analysis of the foreign language curricula in Switzerland and Ukraine, but rather strived to identify commonalities and differences in them, as well as the potential they offer to integrate and foster human rights education. The curricula in both countries demonstrate the presence of explicit and implicit references to human rights education. However, we see the need for a holistic approach to human rights education as education *about, through* and *for* human rights, in line with policy documents adopted by international organisations and human rights education scholarships.

The nexus between foreign language education and human rights education could certainly be strengthened in the intended curricula analysed above. How far this would have a direct impact on practice remains an open question. There is always a certain danger that such commitments only remain on paper if they are not complemented with the relevant content in foreign language textbooks and other materials, as well as targeted teacher education

measures. Also, further research on the use of language as a hegemonial tool and language rights in education is needed. In particular, engagement with literature on critical theory and new materialisms could prove to be valuable sources for thinking critically about the use of a human rights language as a means of oppression and exclusion.

In conclusion, it is our conviction that foreign language education can serve as an important engine for human rights education, participation, and inclusion. In foreign language education, pupils with minority languages are not in a position of disadvantage as compared to pupils belonging to the majority language group, thus facilitating an engagement with human rights-related topics at an 'eye-level'. There is thus a strong potential to strengthen inclusion by joining forces between human rights education as a means of empowerment and emancipation on the one hand, and foreign language education as a means to reveal oneself to the world on the other. Thus, we strongly believe that the synergies of fostering foreign language education and human rights education at an early age empowers students to learn 'to speak truth to power' in any context and situation.

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Declaration of interest statement

This work has not previously been published and is not being considered for publication elsewhere. The research presented in this paper meets the ethical guidelines, including adherence to Swiss legal requirements. There are no conflicts of interest.

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