

**Интеркултурна комуникация и образование**  
**Intercultural Communication and Education**

**English-Language Education at the Faculty of Theology  
of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University**

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**Abstract:** In the age of globalization, English-language education at theological faculties in Poland is playing an increasingly important role, especially in the context of international academic cooperation and the integration of foreign students. This paper presents an analysis of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW), taking into account the importance of English-language programs for the development of theology in an intercultural and interreligious context. The impact of these programs on the spiritual and academic training of students and on the promotion of intercultural dialogue is discussed. Special attention is paid to good teaching and organizational practices that facilitate the adaptation of international students and support their academic and spiritual development. The methodology encompasses descriptive methods, along with participant observation and external observation techniques. The article is both practical and methodological in nature, highlighting best practices within academic communities in Poland, particularly in the context of university education in English-language theology, and addressing the nuances of intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** English-language education, theology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, UKSW, education in Poland, foreign students, interculturalism, interreligious dialogue, English-language programs.

**Introduction**

English-language education at theological faculties in Poland is becoming increasingly important in an era of globalization and increasing numbers of foreign students migrating for academic and research purposes. Dynamic changes on the education market are causing Polish universities, including theological faculties, to adapt their offerings to the growing needs of the international academic community.

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW) is a state institution of higher education formed from the Academy of Catholic Theology. Although the

University may seem relatively young, it has a long tradition (over 200 years) of teaching theology and a very modern infrastructure that provides students with an excellent environment for learning and developing a range of skills. To fulfil its mission, the University bases its efforts on two pillars: faith and reason. The Faculty of Theology at UKSW offers English-language programs, which not only attract students from different parts of the world, but also enhance the international image of the University. Theological programs conducted in English allow students to deepen their theological and spiritual knowledge in a global context, broadening their horizons and contributing to their comprehensive development. Cooperation with foreign universities, student exchanges and participation in global research projects are elements that make UKSW an attractive choice for people from different parts of the world. Another important advantage is the opportunity to participate in numerous workshops and seminars led by international experts, which enriches the students' experience.

English-language education at theological faculties in Poland opens up opportunities for students to thrive in a globalized world while strengthening Polish academic and religious traditions.

The aim of this article is to analyse the importance of English-language education at theological faculties, with particular reference to UKSW. The article aims to present good practices applied in the educational process and to show how the Polish educational system adapts to the needs of foreign students. An important aspect is also to highlight the role of theological education in strengthening spiritual values and promoting intercultural dialogue.

### **The education system in Poland and foreign students**

The Polish education system has been developing over the years to increase its international attractiveness, attracting an increasing number of foreign students. One element that sets it apart is its diverse range of study programs in both Polish and English. Thanks to the growing number of programs delivered in English, universities are opening up to students from different countries, the aim of which is not only to increase the prestige of the university, but also to create an environment conducive to international academic cooperation. As a country with a rich academic tradition, Poland combines its strengths in science and education with modern standards, making it an attractive destination for foreign students.

The introduction of English-language study programs is a response to the growing demand for global education, and Polish universities, including theological faculties, are part of this process. For foreign students, the Polish educational system offers competitive conditions in the form of affordable tuition fees, a high level of teaching or wide access to modern academic infrastructure. Furthermore, Poland is committed to intensifying international cooperation, which is reflected in numerous exchange programs and partnerships with universities around the world. [1]

The administrative system of Polish higher education is geared towards supporting foreign students, which includes both administrative assistance and integration programs to help them adapt to their new academic environment. There are special student affairs offices that offer assistance in dealing with formalities related to enrolment, legalization of residence, as well as support in everyday matters such as finding accommodation or gaining access to health care. Language courses also play an important role, enabling foreign students to learn the Polish language, which makes it easier for them to function on a daily basis and integrate into the local community. [2] These programs are not only designed to facilitate adaptation, but also to build bonds between students of different nationalities, thus fostering a diverse and open academic environment.

Theological faculties, due to their specificity, play a special role in the integration of non-Polish students. Theological education, combining scientific and spiritual elements, becomes a space where different religious and cultural traditions meet. By offering English-language programs, these faculties create an environment conducive to intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Foreign students have the opportunity not only to acquire high-level theological knowledge, but also to participate in a variety of spiritual initiatives - retreats, prayer meetings or workshops led by international theological experts. This makes the process of theological education not only an intellectual challenge for them, but also a spiritual experience that strengthens their faith and opens them up to new perspectives.

### **English-language education at the Faculty of Theology, UKSW**

Progressive globalization and the increasing number of foreign students in Poland are phenomena that pose a number of challenges for universities, including UKSW. In the face of these challenges, the Faculty of Theology is focusing on the development of educational programs conducted in English. This contributes to increasing its attractiveness among the international community. The Faculty offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses and programs in English, which are accessible to students from different parts of the world. This makes the university a platform for intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which enriches the educational experience of both foreign and Polish students. [3]

Since 2015, the University has offered studies in English. Faculty classes are based on the principle of tutoring: lecturers remain in contact with their students and provide any necessary assistance. The courses are characterized by fidelity to the tradition and heritage of the Church in Poland and the world. That is why among the graduates of the Faculty of Theology of UKSW there are many recognized theologians, priests, bishops, consultants of the Polish Bishops' Conference, as well as persons working for Vatican congregations, tribunals and apostolic nunciatures. [4]

The theology course offered at UKSW in English is a modern way of conducting theological studies, based on the latest literature and in line with a solid traditional theological perspective. The courses last for three years. After two years of study, students can obtain an ecclesiastical Bachelor of Theology degree. The third (and in special cases also the fourth) year is for those who wish to pursue doctoral studies. Upon completion and successful defence of the dissertation, students are awarded the degree of Doctor of Theology. All lectures, classes and seminars are conducted in English. Aware of the diversity of educational systems outside Europe, the curriculum is individually tailored to the needs of each doctoral student. [5]

English-language teaching at the Faculty of Theology at UKSW covers a wide range of topics – from basic theology, through Church history, to philosophy of religion and ethics. Students have the opportunity to attend classes taught by eminent professors and experts, both from Poland and abroad. This approach allows students to acquire high-level theological knowledge and to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Theological education taught in English enables students to gain a solid theological foundation while teaching them how to navigate in a multicultural and multi-faith context.

The courses in English were created in response to requests from African bishops to create a suitable place in Poland to train priests from their countries. Poland's interesting culture, moving historical experience, vibrant religiosity and fidelity to tradition make it an ideal place for non-European Catholics to study theology. In addition to serious theological formation, students receive spiritual assistance, accommodation in the diocesan seminary or in religious houses in Warsaw. The project, which is carried out in cooperation with the Pontifical Foundation for Aid to the Church in Need [6] and the Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle, makes a significant contribution to the training of theologians in countries where acts of discrimination and persecution against Christians occur on a daily basis. By 2020, the first group of African students had acquired doctoral degrees. Many graduated as a Bachelor of Canonical Studies. [7]

Students who are priests or religious can stay (with accommodation and meals provided) in institutions run by the Church (community of priests, access to a chapel). Graduates can take the course 'Formation of educators' for educators in higher seminaries. The course is conducted according to the guidelines of the latest Church documents and includes three thematic modules: human, spiritual and pastoral formation. [8]

One of the pillars of the activities of the Faculty of Theology at UKSW is international cooperation, which takes various forms. The University actively participates in student exchange programs, including Erasmus+, enabling students to go to other countries to study or undertake placements. Thanks to this, students have the opportunity to learn about other educational systems, establish

contacts with peers from outside Poland and gain valuable experience which they can then use in their academic, professional or even private activities. The international cooperation of the Faculty of Theology also includes partnerships with other universities and scientific organizations around the world, which enables the exchange of knowledge and experience between academics and students.

The Faculty of Theology of UKSW also regularly organizes international conferences, symposia and seminars. These provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences and are an opportunity to establish scientific cooperation. Participation in such initiatives allows students to gain valuable contacts and to develop their careers in the scientific field. International cooperation is also important in the context of research conducted at the Faculty of Theology. Joint research projects with foreign partners contribute to broadening scientific horizons and introducing new perspectives and research methods.

The development of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology of UKSW and international cooperation are the pillars that provide the basis for building a positive image of the university internationally. As a result, it is becoming an increasingly recognizable academic centre in Europe and worldwide, attracting students from different countries who are interested in studying theology in a modern, dynamic academic environment.

An important element of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology of UKSW are workshops, lectures and conversation classes. Their aim is to develop both rhetorical and theological skills. Thanks to activities conducted in English, foreign students can fully participate in the academic life of the faculty while improving their language skills and developing their theological knowledge. Workshops, lectures and conversation classes focus on various aspects of theology, as well as on practical skills related to communication, rhetoric and the analysis of theological texts. An example of such activities are workshops on the interpretation of biblical texts, which allow students to explore difficult passages of Scripture and learn how to analyse them critically. Another example is conversation classes on theological ethics, which enable students to acquire argumentative skills on difficult moral issues. These types of classes allow students to develop rhetorical competence and acquire the ability to present complex theological issues in an accessible way.

These activities have a significant impact on the formation of theological knowledge and the improvement of public speaking skills and teach effective communication in an international academic environment. This is a very important issue, especially for students who are planning their future activities in an international environment, whether in church institutions or NGOs. The ability to express one's thoughts clearly and precisely in English is highly valued in the academic world today. [9] In a theological context, these workshops, lectures and conversation classes aim to develop a critical approach to theology and the ability

to analyse complex religious issues. Students learn how to carry out theological research and how to present their findings and arguments in a way that is clear and understandable, both to specialists and to a wider audience outside of academia.

In the course of English-language education, the Faculty of Theology at UKSW not only supports students' academic development, but also prepares them to meet the challenges facing the contemporary Church and the world. A number of practices are implemented here, which support the development of students from both theological and general perspectives. One example of such good practice is the pastoral theology workshops, which enable students to acquire practical pastoral skills. They are led by experienced clergy and focus on problems that priests face in their daily work. Their participants learn how to talk to the faithful, how to conduct pastoral talks or how to deal with difficult situations in the form of crises of faith or family problems. Such workshops allow students to apply theoretical theological knowledge in practice.

Another example is the moral theology classes, whose primary aim is to develop argumentative skills. They enable foreign students to participate in international seminars and debates on contemporary moral issues, covering, for example, bioethics, ecology, secularization, social problems, human rights and other weighty topics. Through such activities, students have the opportunity to compare the different approaches to these issues present in the different theological traditions and develop their critical thinking skills.

### **Creating spaces for the exchange of ideas and intercultural experiences**

In today's globalized world, the effective exchange of cross-cultural ideas and experiences has become a key element in enriching the educational and academic environment. In academic institutions in particular, striving to create a space conducive to dialogue between different cultures and traditions significantly affects the development of students and the quality of education. The Faculty of Theology at UKSW is committed to creating such spaces by organizing a variety of initiatives and activities that enable students and lecturers to exchange experiences and get to know each other. These programs are designed to integrate international and domestic students, promoting understanding and respect for different cultural perspectives. Such initiatives not only foster the personal development of participants but also build a strong and diverse academic environment.

An important aspect of these activities is the active involvement of students in decision-making and organizational processes. Through various forms of involvement – in the form of working groups, study circles, student organizations – young people have the opportunity to influence the shape of programs and the way intercultural events are implemented. This model of participation fosters a greater sense of belonging and an understanding of students' needs and expectations.

## **Evaluation of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology of UKSW – results of a student survey**

In order to assess the nature of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology at UKSW and the effectiveness of the activities undertaken to create space for the exchange of ideas and intercultural experiences, a survey was conducted among students. The aim of the survey was to gather opinions on satisfaction with the English-language educational offer and the development opportunities available at the university.

Student surveys indicate that 85% of participants rated English classes as very helpful in language acquisition and adaptation to a new environment. Participants perceived a significant improvement in their language skills, which translated into higher academic results. [10] Seminars on Polish culture, traditions and the educational system facilitated their participants' understanding of local norms and customs, which consequently contributed to a faster adaptation to the new environment. The study revealed that 78% of students perceived these activities as crucial to their adaptation.

Academic and personal counselling was also an issue that was asked about in the survey. Indeed, the university provides students with access to counsellors who help with administrative, academic or even personal issues. As many as 90% of the students surveyed considered counselling assistance to be important, indicating an improvement in dealing with various university challenges. However, at the same time, 30% of students indicated that additional resources in terms of psychological support and integration programs were needed to more accurately match these activities to their needs.

UKSW organizes numerous events aimed at integrating international students. Such events include festivals, thematic meetings, clubs and interest circles, and student organizations. The study showed that 70% of foreign students took part in these events in the past academic year, while at the same time they considered that this contributed to their social integration. On the other hand, 65% of international students declared that they felt more connected to the local academic community through these initiatives. [11]

Despite the general satisfaction with English-language education at the Faculty of Theology at UKSW, the results of the survey also revealed some areas for improvement. Some students (26%) pointed out the need for more practical classes and thematic workshops, which would allow them to put the knowledge they had acquired into practice. Another group of respondents, 22%, emphasized the need to intensify activities promoting diversity and cultural integration in everyday academic life.

Based on the research conducted, it can therefore be concluded that English-language initiatives and teaching in English at UKSW effectively support foreign students in their academic and social integration. Language courses and

cultural workshops are highly rated by participants as they contribute to improving their language skills and understanding of local customs. Counselling support and integration programs also have a positive impact on students, increasing their engagement and sense of belonging. The results of the survey confirmed that the Faculty of Theology at UKSW is successfully achieving its goals of creating a space for the exchange of ideas and intercultural experiences; however, there is also potential for further development and improvement of the educational offer. The university should continue its efforts to strengthen cultural integration and adapt its offerings to the needs of its students in order to provide the best possible conditions for their learning and development.

### **Perspectives**

In the future, in order to further improve the effectiveness of English-language teaching delivered at UKSW, it is worth considering extending the range of language courses on offer in order to respond all the more accurately to the individual needs of students. In addition, it is necessary to regularly update the content of the workshops to reflect changing socio-cultural realities in more detail. It will also be beneficial to organize more social events and create additional platforms for interaction between foreign students and the local academic community. It is also worth considering foreign students' needs in terms of counselling and psychological support, which can serve to integrate them more effectively into the local community and have a positive impact on their satisfaction with their studies. Continuing and developing existing programs, with an emphasis on thematic and practical diversity, will be helpful in adapting education to the needs and expectations of international students. With further analysis and improvement, the English-language programs at the UKSW Faculty of Theology can become even more effective in facilitating the integration of international students and supporting their academic and personal success. Regular student surveys and analysis of the results will allow the educational offer to be adapted to changing needs and expectations on an ongoing basis.

### **Completion**

This paper presents diverse aspects of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology at UKSW in Warsaw. The aspects analysed included training programs, workshops, student support and the results of a questionnaire survey focusing on the assessment of foreign students' satisfaction with English-language education at the Faculty. The article emphasizes the importance of the activities discussed and the nature of English-language education in the context of cultural and educational development and strengthening the image of the university as a place conducive to international cooperation.



An analysis of English-language education at the Faculty of Theology of UKSW in Warsaw reveals several important conclusions. The integration of foreign students into the system of theological education in Poland is important for the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The diversity of perspectives enriches the teaching process and opens up new research opportunities. Based on the results of the survey, it can be concluded that students from other countries appreciate not only the academic level of the courses, but also the support offered by the university in terms of cultural and linguistic adaptation.

The success of English-language teaching at the Faculty of Theology at UKSW is due to the skilful combination of high academic standards and adaptation to the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. Appropriately prepared classes, topics, programs, workshops, lectures and seminars for students and academic staff are the main elements of this success.

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