



INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY AND LANGUAGE NEEDS

International Conference ICT for Language
Learning

10th edition (Italy), 9 – 10 November 2017

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THE INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY



- Over the past twenty years, **international dimension of higher education** has grown considerably, and **internationalization of universities** has become a **strategic goal** of many countries.
- Numerous programs in the world and in Europe (eg. now Erasmus +) are aimed at **cross-border cooperation** in order to **help and increase international exchange**, enable the experience of **inter-and transcultural exchanges** and support a sense of equality, belonging and competitiveness in the modern world.

- Michael Byram sees the internationalization of the university as a **powerful movement** that will **spread beyond European borders** and will **influence the creation of a flexible employment sector** for highly educated citizens, **form their international identity** and question the pretense of national character as well as the meaning of a university education (Byram, 2008: 10).
- To have a **successful realization of academic mobility**, numerous **adjustments and norms** have been and are being made in order to **transfer the experience, knowledge and values** acquired in another academic environment into their own and to realize not only a great personal, cultural and life experience, but also as an academic achievement

LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF UNIVERSITIES



- In academic communication, **language** is understood as **the basic** means of acquiring knowledge, creation, research, production and reproduction of social functions, roles, relationships and practices.
- It is identified not only as a **basic means of communication** that expresses "**ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles**" (Gee, 1996, cit. In Hyland, 2009: 1), but also as a **means for mediating the specific educational goals** that are realized in the academic language as a specific instrument.



- Filipovic and Vuco (2015) confirm that "many European and other international institutions point out, **English as a lingua franca is not enough!**"
- The European Commission and the Council of Europe have long ago declared **plurilingualism and pluriculturalism as their primary goals for each and every citizen of the continent**, in which everyone should be able to use in all communication domains their **own L1, a lingua franca** and at least **another foreign / second language** (Baroso, J. et al., 2008).

- **"This goal is to be achieved** in different communities of practice, and **the academic ones** should of course be among them" (Filipović / Vučo, 2013: 136).
- **The success** of students **is** in direct relation with **the quality of the academic language** (Short & Spanos, 1989, Cummins 1991, DiPerna & Eliot 1999).
- As in other forms of communication among people, the ideological, epistemological and strategic orientations of speakers **are closely related to the language choices of academic discourse** (Filipovic & Vučo, 2013: 136).
- **During mobility**, whose actors are students, teachers and non-teaching staff, there are **at least three languages** that should be taken into consideration:



- ***the English language*** as tacitly adopted **lingua franca**, in which **general courses** for foreign students on mobility is taught and serves for **communication** among students , with non-teaching staff as well as its use **outside** the academic context;
- ***the second foreign language***, which can be used in **teaching or academic communication**, for example, teaching in special courses where the second foreign language is the usual language of the profession for a particular field (eg. music, tourism, philological studies, etc.);
- ***the local language***, which serves for **daily communication**, following news in the media, contact with non-teaching staff, colleagues and the local population, which may belong in the category of school languages (common in school systems, such as French, German, Spanish, Italian, etc.), but also smaller and/or less studied

- When speaking of the importance of academic exchange, Byram believes that **mobility experience is valuable** because it **"changes individuals and institutions in other, fundamental ways, host universities, university community of staff and students, ways in which staff and students understand the nature of university study, ways they may or may not integrate with a local community of students or the inhabitants of the university town."** (Byram, 2008: 10).



- Taking into account the challenges that mobility experience is facing in relation to **linguistic needs during the exchange**, universities have, over time, developed **linguistic conditions - standards** necessary for achieving mobility **based on the European Framework of Reference for Modern Languages**.
- Levels of **language competency** vary from university to university, but the range of language skills is **mostly between B1 to C1**.
- However, experience tells us that there is still **no clear commitment to accepting uniform standards and institutions** that verify linguistic knowledge of outgoing and incoming mobility.



- Knowledge of language is sometimes guaranteed by the **universities themselves**, ie. their foreign language centers, but also **other language schools**, while the most demanding universities require an **internationally recognized certificate**.
- The **local language** of the host university in preparation or during mobility is particularly important .
- The growing and actual need for the use of the **host language** contributes to the spreading of importance and the distribution of these, most often, small languages by **developing their didactics, forming special courses, producing didactic materials, creating instruments for digitized teaching, etc.**



- Languages in exchange are a means of mediating numerous scientific and cultural content and novelties from all domains of human activity, but above all by mastering and adopting those **basic skills** that enable contextualized communication: **understanding what is heard**, what is **written**, **speaking**, **producing written text**, etc.
- Special language needs lead to the establishment and strengthening of **University Language Centers** capable of meeting the linguistic needs of outgoing and incoming mobility, students, teachers and non-teaching staff.

EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE



- The University of Belgrade is one of the largest university centers in the Balkans.
- With 100,000 students and 31 faculties, scientific research institutes and centers, it is an academic community that is well positioned in the scientific world.
- Since 2012, the University of Belgrade occupies a high position (2017 from 300-200) in the Academic Ranking of World Universities, ARWU, released by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, Shanghai Jiao Tong University ([http://www.shanghairanking.com/World-University-Rankings / University-of-Belgrade.html](http://www.shanghairanking.com/World-University-Rankings/University-of-Belgrade.html)).



- **Establishing, strengthening and developing cooperation with universities in Serbia, the and the world, as well as with international organizations dealing with higher education, has always been an obligation of the University.**
- The University of Belgrade actively supports the strategy of internationalization (Strategy for the Internationalization of the University of Belgrade) <http://bg.ac.rs/files/en/international/Strategy-Internationalisation.pdf>) participates in international exchange programs with over 200 universities from all over (<http://bg.ac.rs/files/en/international/List-of-Cooperation-agreements.pdf>), as well as in European projects eg. (Erasmus +). About **500 outgoing and incoming** students, teachers and non-teaching staff take part in international exchanges

annually.



- The University of Belgrade is committed to following the trends of internationalization, constantly aiming to improve its activities.
- Previous experience in the language preparation of students for mobility indicates that it is possible to further improve this important segment of international exchange.
- One of the measures that should be taken is the **establishment of the University Center for Foreign Languages and Serbian as a foreign language**, integrated in the Faculty of Philology (<http://new.fil.bg.ac.rs>).



- In June 2017, with the aim of **better determine the needs and establish the root of a lack of language support**, a survey of students who were participating in international mobility programs was conducted.
- The extensive survey included questions about **knowledge and quality of language** (English, other foreign and local languages) **before, during and after mobility**, about **experiences** that involved language, and encouraged suggestions for improving language support.
- The invitation for the survey was sent digitally to 200 addresses, **72 students** responded with range of experiences of staying at 52 European universities.



PRIOR TO MOBILITY

- **Most students** (more than 50%) had **very good English skills** (B2 -19% and C1 32%), **German A1** (8%) and **C1** (20%) and **French A1** (8%) and **C1** 21%).
- **A third** of the students surveyed **did not know the local language of the host country**, while 25% of the students had knowledge at level **C1 of the local language**.
- **Most students** (66.7%) **did not have an official language certificate**, nor did they have **language preparation** (80.3%).



- Knowledge of the **language of the host country** had an **impact** on the choice of the destination for study in more than half of the respondents (64%).
- Mobility users **are motivated** to exchange and have the opportunity to improve their English language skills (50%).
- Most (64%) respondents primarily went to mobility to take advantage of the **opportunity to improve English or second foreign languages**.
- Most students **contacted and communicated** with the host university **in English** (74.2%).



DURING MOBILITY

- Students mostly used English (78.1%) permanently (64%), but also the host language (67.2%) and other languages (12.5%).
- Only 2% of students did not use English at all.
- **In administrative contact**, with which are mostly satisfied, English (68.8%) and the host language (50%) were mostly used.
- A similar proportion was also shown **in teaching** - English was used by 64.1%, and the host language was used by 56.3% of students.
- It is interesting that **in everyday communication**, students used English the most (76.6%), but also the host language (67.2%).



- The students are very satisfied (68.5%) in the forms of **language support at the host university**, who sit through language courses (73%) and consultations (15.9%).
- The students **did not have any difficulty in using the English language** and were mostly instantly attracted to the teaching (70.6%).
- The **language of the host** was used by 55.4% of respondents in teaching, in communication with administrative staff and colleagues and daily communication.
- The students **did not have difficulties not knowing the local language** either in communication or in teaching.



AFTER MOBILITY

- Students **greatly perceived the improvement in English** (51%), especially in **understanding and using professional terminology** (47%), **learning from everyday life situations** (42.9%), **teaching situations** (40.7%).
- Contacts with teachers (23.5%), **learning and exam preparation** (34.6%), and **extracurricular activities and socializing** (40%) all contributed to safer language skills.
- Knowledge of the **host language is almost equally better** (64.1%) in all examined segments: in the understanding of lectures (66.6%), reading of professional texts (62.7%), written expression (60.5%), tasks (54.5%), understanding of terminology (70.4%) and use of terminology (78.6%).



CONCLUSION

- The contemporary academic community is not strictly targeted at specific local groups and environments, but is **expanding, experiencing a global environment as a common educational space**, striving for different educational systems **to become harmonized, networking and equitable**.
- **The mobility** of students, teachers and non-teaching staff is understood as **one of the instruments of the academic internationalization strategy**.
- The **academic achievement** of students is **directly related to the quality of the academic language**, and therefore measures are taken to improve the quality of the **language in the exchange, English, second foreign languages and the host language**.



- From the research carried out among the students of the University of Belgrade, the mobility beneficiaries, two facts arise:
- an **undoubted advantage of their stay that has increased the quality of all languages used in the exchange**, as well as
- a clearly expressed **need for a decisive and standardized language preparation of the participants of mobility**.

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