



International Mobility and Language Needs

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In recent years, universities play an increased international role in public life, and the internationalization of universities has become one of the most important goals of higher education. This phenomenon is reflected in the actions and attitudes of national and supranational institutions that plan and invest in a wide array of international exchange programs. The command of language is one of the fundamental problems of involving students, participants of the mobility programs in the teaching process in various environments. Languages in action are mostly English, a second foreign subject language and the local language of the host. On the one hand there is a need to achieve necessary English language skills for teaching or learning, sometimes knowledge of a second foreign language, both with an explicit need for academic language competence for teaching and learning, subject, scientific and professional needs and purposes. Languages of the host countries are also in the focus, the needs for rapid language development in order for the experience of study visits abroad to be successful both in the private and academic domain.

In this paper, results of research on the attitudes and needs of the functional quality of the language and intercultural skills of students of the University of Belgrade users of incoming and outgoing academic mobility are presented and analyzed.

Keywords: Internationalization of universities, Mobility, Language competences, Intercultural competences

1. 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 (e.g. 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.

2. 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 Vučo 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

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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, less studies. 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.

3. Experiences and views of the University of Belgrade about the importance of language after mobility

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>).

Establishing, strengthening and developing cooperation with universities in Serbia 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 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.

3.1 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%).

3.2 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.

3.3 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%).

4. 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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