



Foreign Language of Work: New Challenges for Serbian as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Being an alien in a country where one lives and works is a common phenomenon at the beginning of the 21st century. Apart from English as the language of global communication, to learn and work in a foreign language becomes a necessity. It is a phenomenon that has long been happening in most countries of the world. Based on data from the European Commission, 57 million Europeans reside in countries in which they were not born. The need for knowledge and learning of the language of the host country, different from the mother tongue, is one of the requirements for successful inclusion in the working world or for a shorter, longer or lasting residency. It should be standardized and matched with measurable requirements and offered under the language support program for work needs.

In Serbia, as a result of migrant movements from east to west, migration of highly qualified population of Serbia towards developed countries of Europe and the world, demographic crisis, but also European and other integration and work needs, labor mobility and the ability to function in a universal or domestic work environment is a clear need, and it is becoming an increasingly common reality. Within working frameworks, communication can take place in different languages, depending on the needs of employers, in English as lingua franca, or in some other foreign language, but also in Serbian as a foreign language of the environment. Serbian is used as the language of the environment, as well as a language of efficient integration into the working and other domains of everyday life.

Different models of language support are defined in the paper and encourage the need to create the Serbian Framework as the language of the environment for the needs of work.

Keywords: *Language for work, Serbian L2, Serbian for work, framework of language support.*

1. Introduction

Dynamic and mass migrations have been one of the hallmarks of the modern age, and are closely connected to changes in the workplace for a number of reasons, from the search for better living conditions to satisfying the professional aspirations of the individual.

The migrant crisis that has also engulfed the territory of the Western Balkans since the spring of 2016, placing Serbia at the center of the transit migrant route at one point, has also brought a new attitude towards the temporary and lasting integration of migrants and the need to integrate them into the education system and the world of work.

Language learning issues are undoubtedly one of the decisive factors that enable successful integration of a migrant population. Greater stability in mastering the language of the environment, leads to self-fulfillment, developing self-awareness and security in its contribution, and as a consequence achieves social and economic balance, as it gives the individual the opportunity to fulfill personal ambitions in the field of education and work necessary for his integration into the new environment. Knowledge of language implies not only knowledge of linguistic signs, but also the adoption of the socio-cultural relationships that languages imply (Filipović, Vučo, 2018: 16), while in the field of education, language knowledge is directly related to the quality of the academic language spoken (Short & Spanos, 1989, Cummins 1991, DiPerna & Eliot 1999, Cummins 2008).

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) is starting point for all linguistic definitions in Europe, and thus for defining languages for work purposes. Bonvino defines this document as a descriptive and flexible, by no means prescriptive instrument describing the scales and levels of linguistic competence intended for linguistic educational policies of different European nations, linking the theoretical foundations of the plurilingual type, marking a clear break from traditional language teaching understood as a monolithic and centralized entity, a homogeneous system as measured against an imagined, ideal native speaker (Little, Bonvino et al., 2017: 2). This approach to language learning, teaching and use has become a reference in the 21st century in all domains of language education policies and language use in the world.



2. Foreign Language for Work

The quality of the language for work needs has the characteristics necessary for speakers to make a positive contribution in the work environment (Elaborated in the project of the European Center for Modern Languages Language for work-Tools for professional development, 2016-2019, <http://languageforwork.ecml.at>).

There are different ways to help migrants develop language skills relevant to work needs, from formal education, individual, guided assistance, group support to the production of adequate and accessible language support tools and resources, etc. There are a number of obstacles that commonly occur as a lack of confidence to interact in a foreign language, as a result of poor contact with native speakers, limited literacy, lack of time, lack of financial resources to learn; difficulty in engaging in appropriate language teaching for work needs, lack of support for on-the-job learning, or lack of meaningful or complete absence of learning strategies, as not all migrants are literate and educated in the same way. As a consequence of all these disadvantages, there is also low motivation to learn or to continue learning the language (Braddell, Grünhage-Monetti, et al., 2018a: 10).

Language skills required for all forms of language communication for work purposes can be defined as reflecting the requirement to first find suitable employment and, accordingly, master job search skills, writing a CV, applying for a job, interviewing for a job, etc. Also included are skills to perform work activities, knowledge of the language of the profession, i.e. appropriate communication models and terminology, as well as their functional applications that, in addition to those directly related to the subject matter, include the skills necessary to accomplish individual tasks, health and other insurance and entitlements, teamwork skills, leadership, labor law, responsibilities and obligations that the job requires. Language for work needs is necessary for career advancement in the field of vocational and formal education, non-formal learning and on-the-job training, vocational training through work practice and out of employment, etc. (Braddell, Grünhage-Monetti, et al., 2018a: 4).

3. Serbian as a Foreign Language for Work

The need to integrate the migrant population into the world of work and to enter the labor market in Serbia, in linguistic terms, poses a new challenge, on the one hand, for labor market actors (Latkovic, Grujicic, 2018: 5), but also for experts in the field of Serbian as a foreign language (detailing the measures taken and models of educational linguistic support for the migrant crisis in Serbia in Vučo, 2018; Vučo et al. 2018, whose experiences so far was mainly geared towards language for school purposes).

It is a fortunate circumstance that the new demands placed on the Serbian language come across existing solutions offered in responsible professional and political-administrative European circles gathered around the Council of Europe (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/adult-migrants>, <http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants>), as well as the legal provisions and guidelines of individual countries, e.g. Germany, Norway, Italy, Spain, etc. as well as those prepared in the Republic of Serbia for the inclusion of school-age migrants.

Support for learning Serbian as a foreign language for adults can be found in the documents and practices already mentioned. (Vučo et al. 2018), hereinafter referred to as “the Framework”.

The Framework has established three modules, based on the Common Languages Reference Descriptors for Level A1: Module 1 for ages 6-10, Module 2 for ages 10-15, and Module 3 for ages 15 and up (detailing the modules in Vučo et al, 2018: 40-41 and 43-96). It is this third module that can be used as a basis for defining language needs in order to meet the communicative needs of migrant adults in integrating into the labor market, to develop a Serbian language framework for work needs.

Such a linguistic instrument would be a basic document intended primarily for the teaching of Serbian language for adult foreigners for the needs of work, creation of integrative programs for adults, education and decisions related to the needs of the profession, adult education, needs related to staffing services for the selection of workers in appropriate jobs. , as well as all types of services and services related to labor market support.

In addition to the Serbian language classes, the Regulations governing this matter (Decree on the Method of Inclusion in the Social, Cultural and Economic Life of Persons Granted the Right to Asylum (“Official Gazette of RS” No. 101 of December 16, 2016, 56 of July 18, 2018 ”). Decree amending the Decree on the method of inclusion in the social, cultural and economic life of persons who have been granted the right to refuge (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 56/2018) provide a person who has been granted the right to asylum to participate in a program of learning about Serbian culture, history and constitutional order for 30 hours a year. The program is proposed by associations and approved and funded by the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia. When designing the program, associations must take into account the mandatory content of the program, established by the



commissioner in cooperation with the competent ministry for cultural affairs and the ministry responsible for public administration.

4. Conclusion

The learning and teaching of the host country's language and employment are basic conditions for the positive integration of adult aliens into the new environment. Particular attention is paid to the language of the work environment, which is imposed as a condition for successful integration into the work environment. As a consequence of the migrant crisis in Europe, which has also engulfed Serbia, legal and by-law documents have been adopted indicating the obligation to learn the Serbian language and culture, history and social order. Although the legislation is favorably evaluated, we have noticed that adequate implementation of the legal provisions is accompanied by a number of ambiguities and inaccuracies, inconsistencies related to content, teaching, teacher qualifications, evaluation, etc. The need for the establishment of a Framework for Serbian as the language of the work environment is also emphasized, which would contribute to the quality affirmation of foreigners in the work environment.

The legal provisions obliging asylum seekers and asylum seekers to attend and take two courses, Serbian and Culture, History, Social Order, remain unclear. The ambiguities relate to the authorship of the content of the program, its uniqueness in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the qualifications of the institutions of the contractor and the engaged teachers, teaching methods, evaluation problems, determining the level of competence, developing tests, defining certificates, etc. Each of these problems causes an uncertain and inconsistent quality of knowledge and results in an inadequate fit for the living and working environment.

Experts dealing with Serbian as a foreign language and the language of the environment should be included for the successful implementation of legal provisions relating to the development of teaching programs.

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