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Оригинални
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Students as Co-Creators in Shaping the Future of Higher Education²

Abstract: *Based on broad empirical research on multilingualism done by members of the Circle U. University Alliance, this paper presents a comparative analysis between the responses of 906 students from Serbia and 976 students from the other eight universities of the Alliance. By completing a comprehensive questionnaire, the students presented their experience, opinions, attitudes, motivation and obstacles related to gaining knowledge and skills in foreign languages. The focus of this paper is on students' needs related to learning foreign languages on the one hand, and their experience with it through formal education on the other. According to the survey results, despite students' needs, the practice of foreign language learning, especially at the university level, is not in line with the goal of the EU language policy and European Commission's recommendations that each citizen should learn at least two foreign languages. Additionally, as the survey shows, students from Serbia are at a disadvantage in comparison to their colleagues from the other universities due to the ever-growing disappearance of multilingualism from their academic circles. A particularly negative trend is visible in the status of languages for specific purposes at Serbian universities. One of the main conclusions of this research is that students' voices need to be heard and their needs taken into consideration when shaping the future of higher education.*

Keywords: *learning foreign languages, multilingualism, university education, languages for general purposes, languages for specific purposes*

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Introduction

Universities have always been places of shared wisdom, knowledge and experience. Known as *communities of teachers and scholars*³ (*Encyclopedia Britannica*), universities do not regard students as mere recipients of knowledge but as social agents who “draw upon all sorts of resources in their linguistic and cultural repertoires”, and who are expected to further develop these resources in today’s plurilingual and pluricultural world (Council of Europe, 2023). In such a dynamic world characterised by mobility across countries and universities, there is a much greater “focus on interconnectedness of different languages and cultures rather than on their differences” (*ibid.*).

Perceiving linguistic diversity not only as a reality, but also as a value and powerful resource, EU sets learning languages as a main priority. For that reason, an important objective of EU language policy⁴ is that each citizen learns at least two foreign languages. Advocating for language equality, EU promotes the principle that there is no national language that is formally superior to others (Ringe, 2022: 81). It does not surprise then that “some European countries have rethought the strong emphasis they have been placing on English to the exclusion of other languages of wider communication such as German, French, Spanish, and Russian”, and that schools are (re)introducing languages such as German, French or Spanish, and considering other languages, such as Arabic and Turkish as alternatives (Clyne, 2004: 19).

3 “The word *universitas* originally applied only to the scholastic guild (or guilds) – that is, the corporation of students and masters [...] or *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*. In the course of time, however, probably toward the latter part of the 14th century, the term began to be used by itself, with the exclusive meaning of a self-regulating community of teachers and scholars [...]”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/Thomist-philosophy>>. Accessed on 7 August 2023.

4 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/multilingualism/about-multilingualism-policy>

Taking foreign language competences as a basic skill, EU provides for its citizens numerous educational and mobility programmes aimed at learning languages. Apart from direct educational benefits, it is also a way to address the question of employment and support personal well-being of every citizen through additional employment opportunities and industries of each member country. According to House and Rehbein, “multilingual communication has thus become an ubiquitous phenomenon and there can be no denying the fact that the omnipresence of multilingual communication must be reflected in intensified research activities” (House & Rehbein, 2004: 1).

After the European Parliament requested from the Commission to focus on concrete measures related to the promotion of multilingualism, the *Policy Recommendations for the Promotion of Multilingualism in the European Union*⁵ was published in 2011. Apart from focus on education, the document recognises research in the sphere of multilingualism as a key support to reaching the goals in this area. This is why many scientific and practice-based educational projects have been supported by the Commission in previous decades. Apart from professors’ and administrators’ opinions on the important developments at universities, students’ voices need to be, and are being heard.

European University Alliance Circle U. is one of the projects supported by the Commission, which among its priorities also has promoting multilingualism at partner universities. Gathering nine universities (Aarhus Universitet, Универзитет у Београду / Univerzitet u Beogradu, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, King’s College London, Université catholique de Louvain, Universitetet i Oslo, Université Paris Cité, Università di Pisa and Universität Wien), the Alliance sets various goals which support the mission of cooperation and improvement of university education. Some of the priori-

5 https://ecspm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CSPM-Policy-Recommendations_2011.pdf

ties are: (1) to increase the international exposure of students and staff substantially; (2) to improve the social and academic integration of students; (3) to co-develop and implement challenge-based courses and programmes across universities and disciplines. In order to reach these goals, the project management recognised promotion of multilingualism as one of the key prerequisites. Therefore, Circle U. academics from one of its work package (WP6) teams decided to gain a deeper insight into the linguistic background and multilingual practices within its international community. This paper presents such research, which includes 1,882 students from the nine universities of the Circle U. European University Alliance.

Research context

Nowadays, language learning is no longer perceived as a study of an enclosed system of linguistic elements. It is recognised as introduction into an open system of communication, cooperation and interaction in the dynamic and largely changing world. Social interaction is an inevitable part of our lives as we are permanently immersed in the social world (Buđevac, Arcidiacono & Baucal, 2011: 11), no matter whether the language we are using when interacting is our first or second language. According to a study conducted with learners of Italian as a foreign language (FL), it is as early as in primary education that students recognise the need for a larger degree of applicability of FL knowledge and skills in real-life situations (Đorović & Lalić-Vučetić, 2010: 150). Therefore, “attention is increasingly being paid to the functional knowledge and use of foreign languages in the academic and professional development of the individual” as well (Đorović & Janković, 2018: 119).

According to Vygotsky’s theory of human development, the spontaneous child’s activity which is supported and meaningfully expanded by the competent other (e.g. teacher) is the key tool of chil-

dren’s development (Vigotski, in: Buđevac, 2018: 29). Many competent teachers provide a lot of support to their students in language learning with the aim of enabling them to use it spontaneously and with ease. Although “the ability to read and write a second or foreign language does not necessarily imply a degree of bilingualism” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 54), a higher degree of functionality of FLs can be achieved in the classroom.

The importance of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural dimension of language learning for personal development and acquiring a cultural and professional identity is highlighted as well (Đorović and Lalić-Vučetić, 2010: 150). Students also show a positive attitude and high expectations related to their learning, especially in the area of foreign languages for specific purposes (Marković et al., 2015; Radojković Ilić, 2018). Besides cognitive and metacognitive strategies for making the use of vocabulary more adequate and purposeful (Stanojević & Petrović, 2020: 119), teachers of foreign languages for specific purposes can apply innovative approaches to motivate students, such as the use of comic strips to teach geoforensics (Beko and Mićović, 2022: 156), various forms of collaborative blended learning (Tanasijević and Janković, 2021: 180) or integrative courses (Janković and Ristić, 2018) based on a FL as a medium of instruction.

In terms of personal and professional identity development, a very important problem for analysis in the education system of Serbia in general, and at universities in particular, is the rapid and evergrowing disappearance of multilingualism (Janković, 2022; Lazić et al: 2022; Janković & Vujović, 2017; Vujović, 2015), which seriously contradicts the recommendations and expectations of the European Commission related to language policies. Despite students’ positive attitude and expectations, what most of the a.m. authors particularly warn of is a negative trend visible in the status and position of languages for specific purposes at Serbian universities, which are in opposition with the needs of future

generations of professionals. That is why additional research on this topic was necessary.

A comprehensive and detailed study designed to investigate the attitudes of both students and academic staff towards the importance of learning foreign languages for general and specific purposes was previously conducted in 2019 (Janković et al., 2019; Janković & Savić Nenadović, 2021). It included both qualitative and quantitative analyses of data obtained from a sample of 1,590 students and 92 foreign language teachers at the University of Belgrade and other state and private universities in the country.

According to that study, 81.5% students agree that educated people should be able to use at least two foreign languages and most of them (64.9%) believe that they should be learning two, or more than two foreign languages at the university level. Additionally, 93.3% students want to learn a language for specific purposes well during their academic education. University professors share these opinions, as the first question was supported by 93.5% of the teaching staff, while 78.3% teachers confirm students' high interest in the courses of languages for specific purposes.

The mentioned study was the basis for the research which is the subject of this paper, and served as a model for designing a similar double survey for university staff and students of the Circle U. community.

Research problem

With reference to the described EU recommendations, the regular meetings of the Circle U's Multilingualism Task Force, as well as round tables and panel discussions jointly organised by WP6 within our mutual gatherings (Janković, 2022: 23) have raised certain concerns that refer to both local and international contexts, some of which are:

- Not all our students are given the opportunity to “learn at least two foreign lan-

guages”, as requested by the European Parliament and recommended by its Commission.

- There is a lack of continuity in learning some foreign languages, which does not provide young people with sufficient linguistic resources to benefit from a variety of modern approaches to learning (blended learning, using open resources, attending scientific events, following educational podcasts, blogs, etc.).
- Without clearly specified language policies, in some education systems, foreign languages seem to be “taken for granted” and are easily being excluded from school or academic curricula, instead of systematic institutional support to and recognition of students' language knowledge and abilities, to the detriment of their personal and professional progress.
- Lack of linguistic skills of academically educated workforce does not support societal progress, diplomacy, international businesses⁶ or the ever-growing need for interculturalisation.

With multilingualism being a topical issue of Circle U's WP6 Task Force, we decided to research this problem into detail. Our goal was Mapping Multilingualism within the Circle U. community.

Methodology

In order to explore the abovementioned problems and substantiate our research with evidence, the WP6 Multilingualism Task Force relied on the

⁶ “With a variety of foreign companies in our countries, young professionals should be educated and enabled to use different languages, particularly in specialised business domains. Apart from the financial aspect, planning their education should also address the quality of future professionals' training. Not investing in their multilingual [...] education can turn out to be detrimental for businesses in the long run” (Janković, 2022: 23).

scientific principle of triangulation, taking into account: a) the results of the panel discussions and round tables conducted with language and other specialists in our international gatherings;⁷ b) comparative analysis of other model frameworks for establishing language policies (e.g. EPICUR); and c) empirical research in two stages, based on different surveys – one administered to academic staff, and the other to students:⁸

- Stage 1, titled “How languages and cultures travel”, was conducted in 2021 among academics and administrative university staff. Its aim was to look into the linguistic diversity and language opportunities offered to students of the Alliance, the position of languages and the general international scope of our universities. Based on the recognised common strengths and mutual differences, we suggested solutions and planned further steps in order to overcome the challenges and improve the status and position of our own languages (L1) and other modern, i.e. foreign languages (L2) within the Alliance.⁹
- Stage 2, titled “Students Have a Say: Circle U. Survey on Multilingualism and Language Learning in Higher Education”, was conducted from November 2022 to February 2023 among students of the Circle U. member states. Its aim was to gain insight into students’ attitudes, opportunities, motivation and obstacles related to foreign language learning, their favourite ways of

developing language skills, as well as the importance they attribute to multilingualism in terms of their general, professional and socio-cultural well-being. The final part of the survey relies on the qualitative analysis of one part of the survey, that is, students’ answers to a final, open-ended question.

Since the subject of this paper is students’ role in shaping the future of higher education, we shall further focus on Stage 2 and elaborate only that part of our empirical research, as it is very complex itself and includes different levels of analysis. The complete results of the student survey are available in the Report titled: “Circle U. Research on Multilingualism. Students Have a Say: Circle U. Survey on Multilingualism and Language Learning in Higher Education” (Janković et al., 2023), which was published and posted on the Alliance’s website on 31st August, 2023.¹⁰

As the initiators and authors of this survey and the Report itself, we are particularly glad to say that in the massive response it yielded, the dominant population consisted of students from Serbia. While the a.m. published Report presents the entire international population through all the 8 groups of questions, this paper focuses on a comparison between the responses of students from Serbia on the one hand, and joint responses of students from the other eight universities on the other hand, through the three central groups of questions.

Research aims and methods

As stated above, the aim of Stage 2 of our empirical research was to explore students’ views and experience related to multilingualism, i.e. how they perceive the importance of developing foreign language skills in general (related to communication with others), and

7 <https://www.circle-u.eu/events/2022/policy-roundtable-on-multilingualism-in-higher-edu.html>

8 The two phases of scientific research were conducted at the initiative of the task force members from the University of Belgrade, which is represented by three members: the authors of this paper, who are professors of applied linguistics and psychology at the Faculty of Education, as well as Branka Vukelić, Head of the Rectorate Office for Education and Research.

9 <https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2021/mapping-multilingualism.html>

10 The background of and highlights from the survey can be seen in: “The Voice of Circle U. students”. (Circle U., 2023). <https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2023/the-voice-of-circle-u-students-multilingualism.html>. Accessed on 8 September 2023.

in particular (related to their personal and professional progress). Most importantly, the aim was to conduct a needs analysis in order to further build on the found strengths and/or recommend potential improvements in the language practices at our universities.

The empirical method was applied based on an internationally administered electronic survey, which will be elaborated on in the next section. The paper relies on a comparative analysis between the responses of students from Serbian universities (presented in graphs and tables as UnS) and non-Serbian (or 'other') universities (presented in graphs and tables as UnO). In order to analyse data and compare the distribution of categories of answers in the two university groups, we used descriptive statistics and hi-square tests.

Instrument

The survey was initially composed in the Serbian language and translated into English by its authors from the University of Belgrade. After a long process of WP6-teamwork on its content, numerous reviews and revisions, and with all the relevant topics included, the final version of the questionnaire contained 54 questions. These were then translated into the other languages of the Alliance (French, German, Danish, Norwegian and Italian) so that students could opt to complete it in a language of their preference.

The questions (Qs) were grouped in the following way:

I Demographic data (Qs 1 – 7)

II *Previous experience with language learning*
(Qs 8 – 25)

III *Opinions about language learning* (Qs 26 – 36)

IV *Attitudes towards the value of knowing foreign languages* (Qs 37 – 45)

V The way students have learnt or learn foreign languages (Qs 46 – 49)

VI Motivation to learn other languages (Q 50)

VII Obstacles to learning other languages (Q 51)

VIII Participation in other Circle U. surveys (Qs 52 – 54)

This paper puts in focus questions from groups II – IV. Most questions offer multiple-choice answers, with some of them allowing multiple markings, and others offering a Likert scale of responses. The final one is an open-ended question for students' comments. The questionnaire was then transferred into an electronic form through the system of WP6 Headquarters based in Université Paris Cité, which then collected students' answers.

Research sample

The research sample consisted of 1,882 students in total. It was not balanced in terms of the distribution of respondents from each university, as almost half of the students are from Serbian Universities (906 students) and 976 students come from the other eight universities. Although this imbalance could seem to be an obstacle for making conclusions about each university within the Circle U alliance separately, it is completely adequate for making comparisons between Serbian students on one side and other (non-Serbian) universities on the other.

A deeper analysis of the sample of Serbian students shows that the vast majority of them (95%) come from the University of Belgrade, while the others (5%) come from the University of Arts, University of Kragujevac, University of Novi Sad, University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica, and two private academies – Belgrade Banking Academy and Union University. As the experience of foreign language learning is equally important to all students across the country, we take them all to be a unique sample representing Serbia.¹¹

¹¹ We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the management of the University of Belgrade and all our colleagues and students who shared the invitation through the University channels and social networks, and especially to those students who completed the survey.

Research results, comparative analysis and discussion

In this part of the paper we will draw comparisons between the experience, opinions and attitudes of students from Serbia (UnS) and joint responses of students from the other universities (UnO) primarily referring to the II, III and IV groups of questions. As the quantity of data is large, we will restrict their graphic representation and interpretation to the most relevant examples, while our description and conclusions will cover most of the survey questions, including a short reference to the other groups of questions as well. The table with all results is given in the Appendix.

Demographic data (I)

The 1,882 respondents now studying at some of the Circle U. universities come from more than 50 countries, with some of them currently studying at another university for mobility reasons. Almost 70% of the Circle U. respondents are at the undergraduate/Bachelor level of studies, with about 30% of respondents being 17-20 years old, while the majority

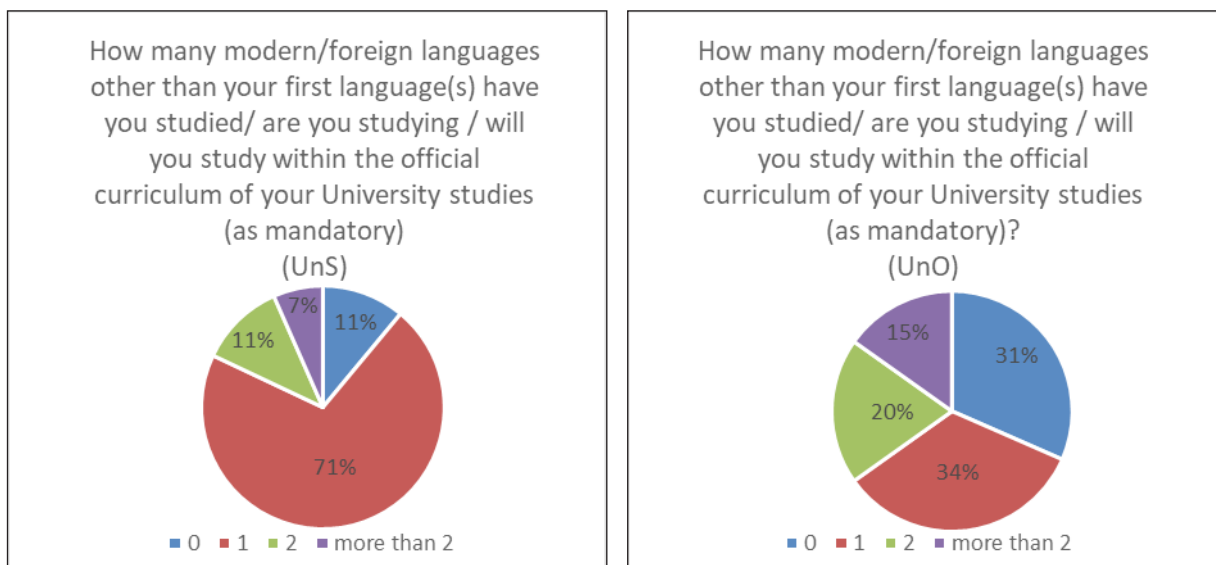
(ca. 70%) are 21-25+ years old. Some students may have presented themselves as the students of the University of Belgrade although they actually study at the University of Arts in Belgrade or some other (private) university, since not all of them entered the names of their faculties in the same way.

Previous experience with language learning (II)

The second group of questions provides answers related to students' linguistic background and experience with language learning. This group of responses is of particular interest to us, as it is important to compare the situation in different parts of Europe.

In terms of their pre-university linguistic background, Serbian students initially seem to be at a great advantage over the other students of the Circle U. community, as the ratio between UnS and UnO respondents who learnt 2 FLs in primary education is 94% : 24%. However, as the level of education increases, our students' FL learning experience decreases, so in secondary education the ratio between UnS and UnO students who learnt 2 FLs changes to 64% :

Picture 1. Foreign language learning at the university level.



54% , also with more UnO than UnS students (24% : 11%) learning more than 2 foreign languages.

The discrepancy becomes even greater, to the detriment of our students, at the university level. Picture 1 shows this difference most obviously. The difference between distributions of answers of two groups of students is statistically significant ($\chi^2=270.079$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$). The number of students of the other universities who learn 2 or more FLs at university level is twice as large as that of Serbian students, which makes students of other European universities closer to the fulfilment of EU recommendations than students studying in Serbia.

In the order of frequency, the FLs that both groups of respondents have mostly learnt during their regular education so far are: English, German, French, Russian, Italian and Spanish (UnS), that is: French, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian, English, and other languages (UnO).

However, a lot of students on both sides (62% UnS and 52% UnO) have already been taking additional FL lessons outside the regular education system and intend to get an official language proficiency certificate (71% UnS and 39% UnO) outside their university. This proves that a more systematic approach should be taken to meeting students' needs to present their linguistic qualifications, especially in terms of their future employment in the ever growing number of multicultural societies and international companies.

In terms of EU recommendations related to general language proficiency, both sides could benefit from increased active language practice and passive language use, but students in Serbia even more so, as this is how they rate their active language use:

- UnO: active language use: 2 FLs – 37% students; more than 2 FLs – 32% students;
- UnS: active language use: 2 FLs – 31% students; more than 2 FLs – 11% students.

Additionally, they were asked to rate their passive use of languages, and the results show:

- UnO: passive language use: 2 FLs – 28% students; more than 2 FLs – 48% students;
- UnS: passive language use: 2 FLs – 39% students; more than 2 FLs – 31% students.

These results reveal that students from Serbia are at a disadvantage in multiple language use, which is also statistically confirmed. As it is visible from Tables 1 and 2, there is a statistically significant difference among distributions related to both their active and passive foreign language use.

In order to help students improve their multilingual skills, universities on both sides mostly offer English (60% UnS and 30% UnO), other widely used foreign languages like French, German, Russian, Spanish or Italian (ca. 10% for both UnS and UnO students), or no language at all (24% UnS and 46% UnO). With 676 students (out of 1,882) who are currently not learning any foreign language at all within

Table 1. Students' FL proficiency in terms of active foreign language use.

	two groups of students		Total	hi square (df) / p
	UnS	UnO		
You can actively use _____ modern/foreign languages (in spoken and written communication).	0	51	15	66
	1	468	295	763
	2	285	357	642
	more than 2	102	309	411
	Total	906	976	1882

Table 2. Students' FL proficiency in terms of passive foreign language use.

	two groups of students		Total	hi square (df) / p
	UnS	UnO		
	0	34	34	68
	1	232	203	435
You can passively use _____ modern/foreign languages (in spoken and written communication).	2	356	274	630
	more than 2	284	465	749
	Total	906	976	1882

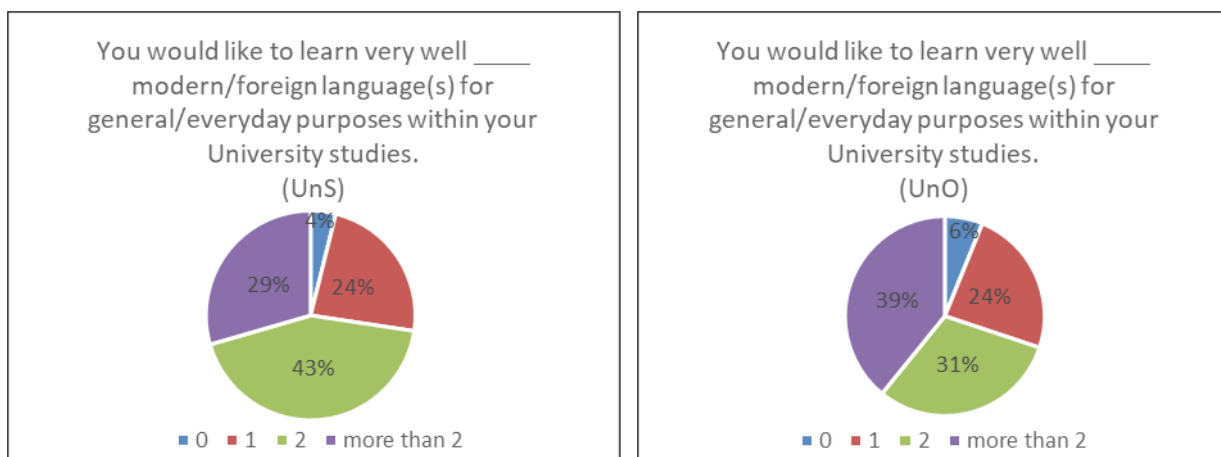
their curriculum, and too few of them learning the other widely taught languages, universities might do well to reconsider the way of supporting their students' multilingual skills.

Opposite to the previous facts (hardly visible in graph bars except for the categories *English* or *none*), are students' wishes to learn other languages as part of the regular curriculum, or as extracurricular courses. These are mostly (in different orders of frequency): Spanish, German, French, Italian, Russian and English, but Arabic, Turkish, Japanese, Mandarin, Norwegian and other languages as well.

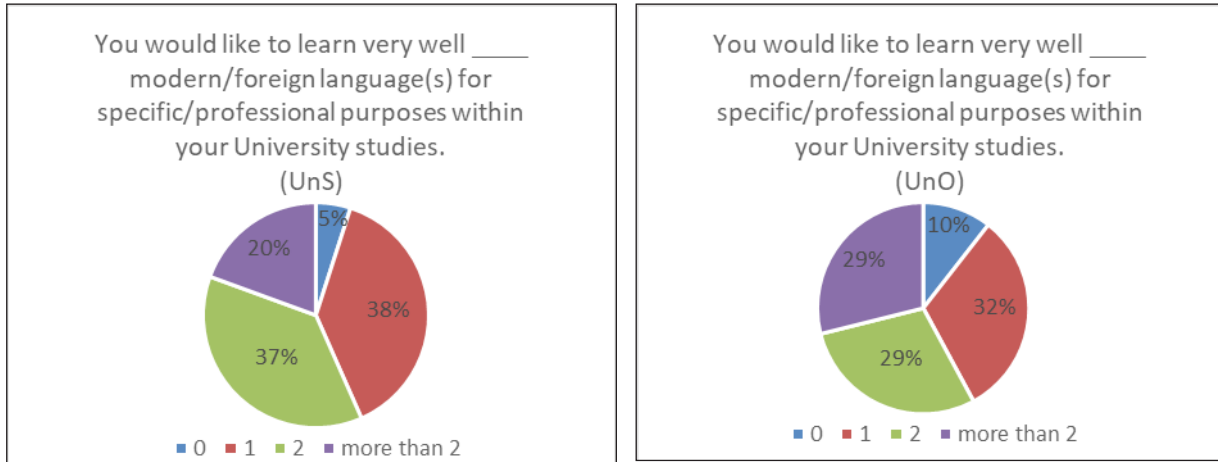
The following three questions are of special importance for universities in Serbia, and they yield interesting comparisons with the foreign universities.

Aiming to develop multilingually, most students (ca. 70% UnS and UnO respondents) agree that 2 or more than 2 foreign languages for *general* purposes should be part of their university curriculum, and they also agree (ca. 60% UnS and UnO respondents) that 2 or more than 2 foreign languages for *specific* purposes should be part of their study. Hi-square analysis proves that there is statistically significant difference between answers of students from Serbia and students from other countries related both to learning languages for general ($\chi^2=37.375$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$) and for specific purposes ($\chi^2=51.873$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$). In the case of learning languages for everyday purposes, this difference comes from their different answers in the categories: "two" and "more than two". As we can see in Pictures 2 and 3, the percentage of stu-

Picture 2. Most students want to learn 2 and more foreign languages for general purposes.



Picture 3. Most students want to learn 2 and more foreign languages for specific purposes.



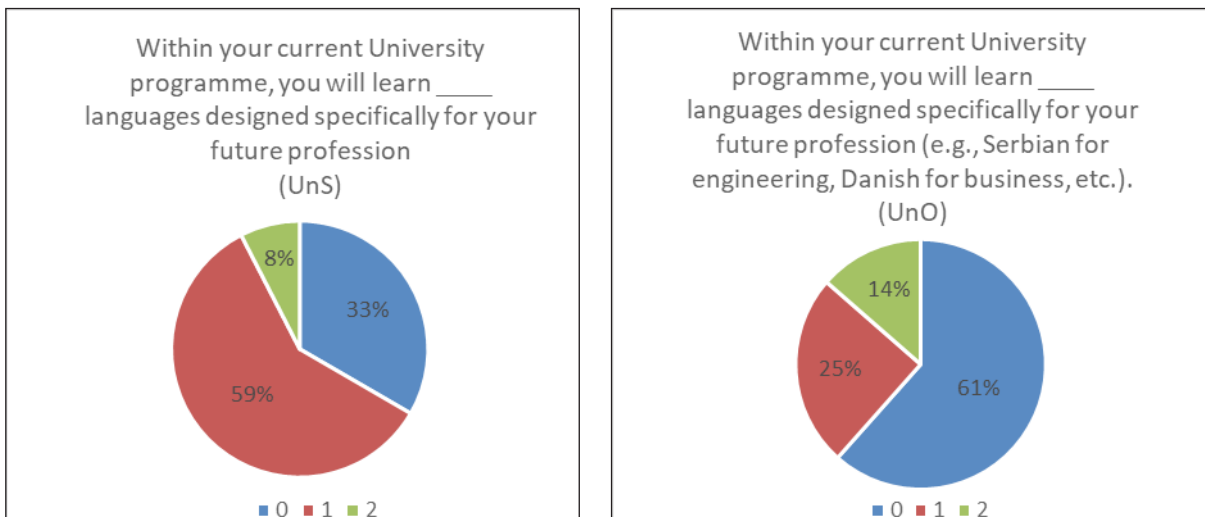
dents choosing one of these two categories is similar in total, but in the case of Serbian students (UnS), category “two” prevails, and in the case of other students (UnO), the dominant category is “more than two”.

Contrary to the students’ language needs and aspirations related to future careers, the image of their prospects for multilingual professional development shows a negative trend, as ca. 60% of UnS students learn one language for specific purposes only, while ca. 60% of UnO students learn no such language as part of the curriculum at all. The differ-

ence between the two groups of students’ answers is statistically significant here as well ($\chi^2=217.629$; $df=2$; $p<0.01$).

With reference to the languages for specific purposes they would like to learn or improve in, both groups of respondents gave very similar answers. The most preferable languages for all of the respondents are: German, English and French for UnS students, and in exactly reverse order of preference for UnO students. The next two favourites of all respondents are Spanish and Italian, which are then

Picture 4. The number of languages for specific purposes students now learn at Universities.



followed by Russian, Norwegian, Japanese, Turkish, Swedish, Mandarin, Danish, etc.

Categories like *none* or *other* in the lists of students' language choices were never the predominant ones, except in the proposal of additional languages for general purposes in one instance, rather seen as optional than as obligatory courses by foreign university students. Otherwise, most students of both sample groups quite agree in their needs for foreign language improvement. As universities are those who mostly shape students' future, they would do well to include additional language courses following their students' needs.

Opinions about language learning (III)

The aim behind the third group of questions was to investigate how students value language learning related to one's general, cultural and professional development. The Task Force reviewing the draft questionnaire defined the following scale of answers, not so typical of research at University of Belgrade: 1 = disagree, 2 = undecided, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree, with an additional *I don't know* option, applied in most of the questions in this group.

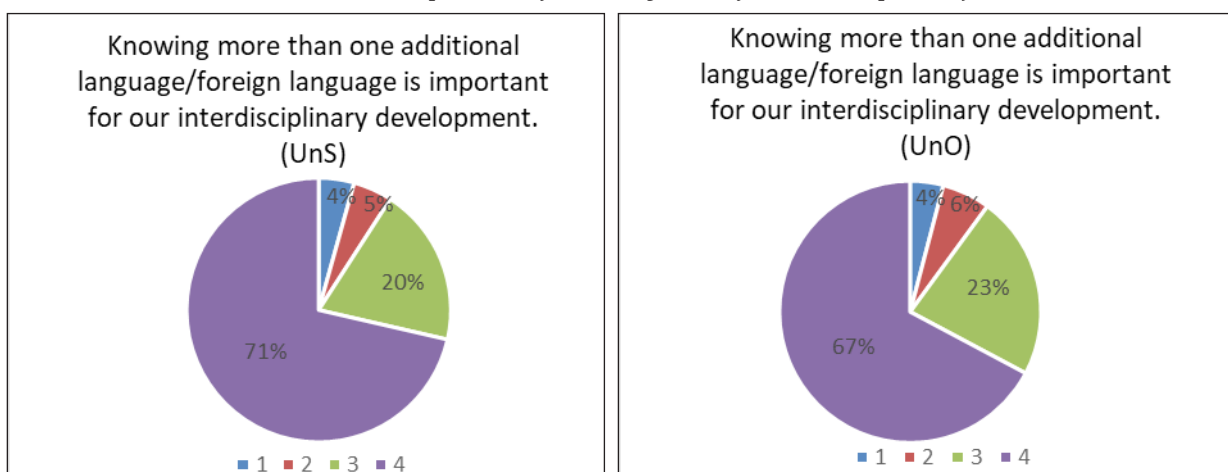
Based on that scale, most respondents from Serbia (72%) and almost half of them from oth-

er universities (49%) disagree that it is enough to master only the national language of the university where they are studying (L1). Additionally, only 39% of UnS respondents and 33% of UnO respondents agree or fully agree that English is sufficient as a modern language, while the majority on both sides disagrees with it or remains undecided.

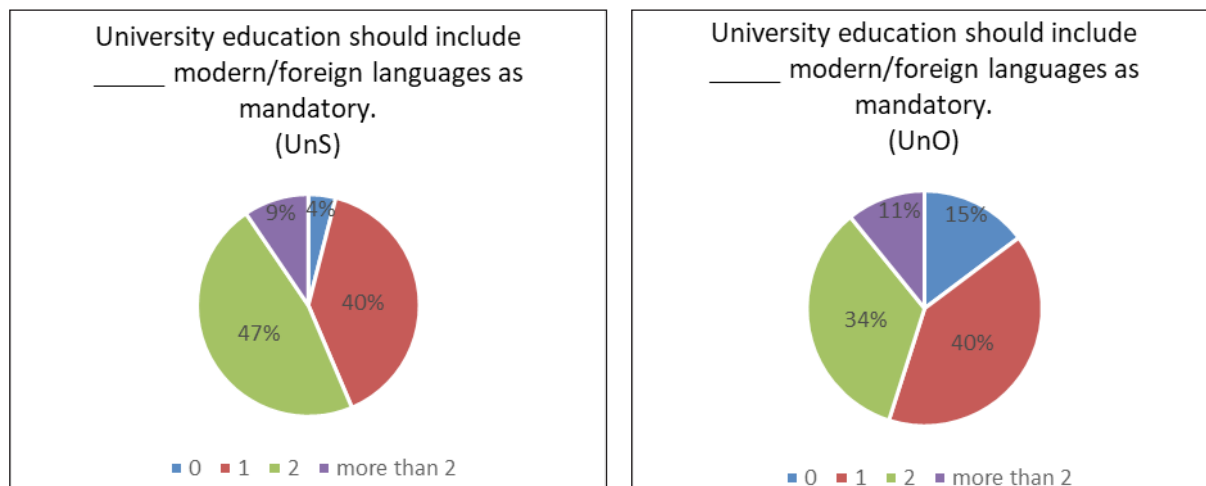
Asked whether some courses at universities should also be taught in other languages than the official national language or English, students of both UnS and UnO, on average, disagree (24%), are undecided (20%), agree (23%) or strongly agree (23%), while about 10% do not know what to think. What they do know and fully agree about is that knowing more than one additional, i.e. foreign language is important for their interdisciplinary development. Additional statistical analysis reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between UnS and UnO students related to this question ($\chi^2=4.773$; $df=3$; $p>0.05$), thus we can conclude that their attitude towards this issue is the same.

Therefore, a vast majority of students in both groups share the opinion that pre-university education should include 2 (ca. 65%) or more than 2 (ca. 15%) foreign languages as mandatory, while few of them are satisfied with just one or no additional language at all.

Picture 5. The importance of multilingualism for interdisciplinarity.



Picture 6. Students' needs for mandatory courses of foreign languages.



At the level of university education, 56% of UnS students feel the need for 2 or more foreign languages as mandatory and 45% of UnO students think the same, while one additional language seems to be enough in the opinion of 40% of both groups of students.¹² The distributions of answers are shown in Picture 6 and the hi-square analysis shows statistically significant difference between these distributions ($\chi^2=76.746$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$). All respondents agree (97% on average) that schools, high schools and universities should offer additional language courses as optional.

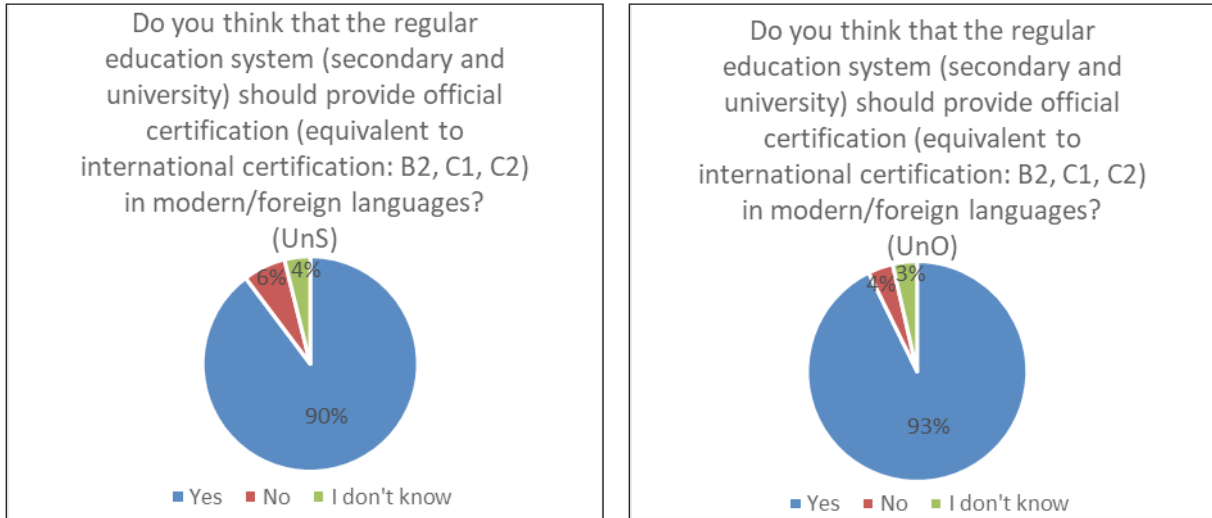
One of the most striking impressions we received in the survey is students' evident need for certification in foreign languages, equivalent to international certificates of language proficiency (CEFR). In this respect, their opinion is almost identical, as 90% (UnS), that is, 93% (UnO) students wish to obtain such certificates. This is an important finding for all the Circle U. universities, as mobility

programmes and their students' future employment and career do and may strongly depend on such proofs of language skills.

In terms of general education, students mostly agree (66% UnS and 52% UnO) that people should be able to use 2 or more than 2 foreign languages actively. This difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2=45.017$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$), so we can conclude that students from Serbia expect more foreign language courses to be offered than their colleagues from other countries. Therefore, they also share the opinion that universities should offer courses of foreign languages for general purposes at all levels of academic study (60% UnS and 82% UnO), and languages for specific purposes also at all levels of study (64% UnS and 78% UnO). These results once again indicate that, despite the unequal experience with language learning at different universities, students have similar needs and expectations from their academic institutions.

¹² It should not be forgotten that the students of UnO countries can change place of residence and study more easily than students from Serbia, which may put them at an advantage in terms of L2 acquisition. Additionally, some of their universities include language centres offering different courses, which may also be the reason why some students in these universities do not feel the need for additional languages in their curriculum.

Picture 7. Students' evident need for certification in foreign language proficiency



Attitudes towards the value of knowing foreign languages (IV)

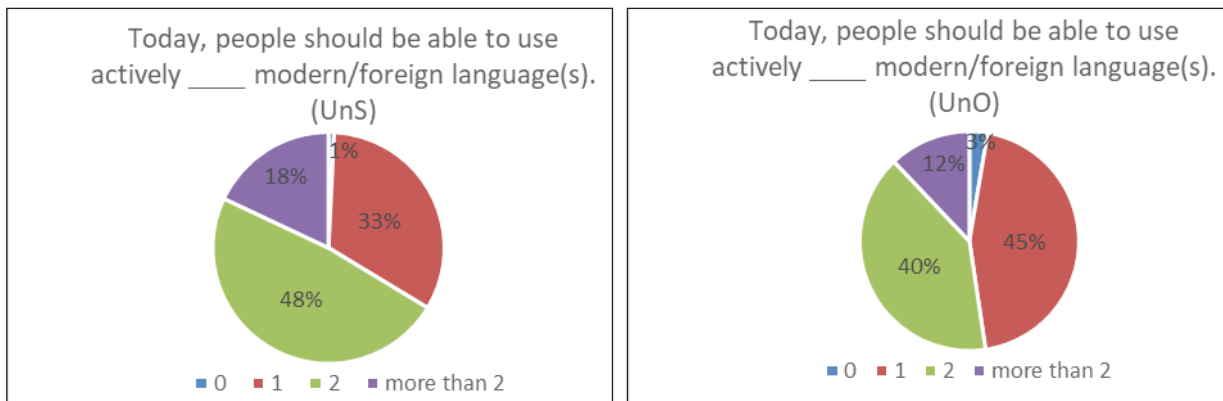
In the times of great social changes, migrations and cultural reshaping of the world image, we also wanted to investigate how much our students believe knowing other languages can help them. The scale of possible answers is, once again: 1 = disagree, 2 = undecided, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree, plus 'I do not know'.

What students of both sample groups strongly agree about is that knowing other languages can

help us avoid misunderstandings in the social, cultural, religious, professional and political spheres (71% UnS and 72% UnO), with almost identical distribution of all other answers ($\chi^2=5.657$; $df=3$; $p>0.05$). They also strongly agree (68% and 74%) that it is important for conducting and promoting dialogue.

Slightly different and also statistically different ($\chi^2=91.161$; $df=4$; $p<0.01$) attitudes were found with reference to languages helping us to be more resilient in times of crisis, as 80% of students from Serbia strongly agree or agree that knowing lan-

Picture 8. Students' opinion on the importance of languages for general education.



guages is an advantage in this respect, while 63% of their UnO peers think the same. This may be partially influenced by the hard times that Serbia has been through historically or is still experiencing politically and culturally, which would be a relevant and interesting topic for additional sociolinguistic research and elaboration.

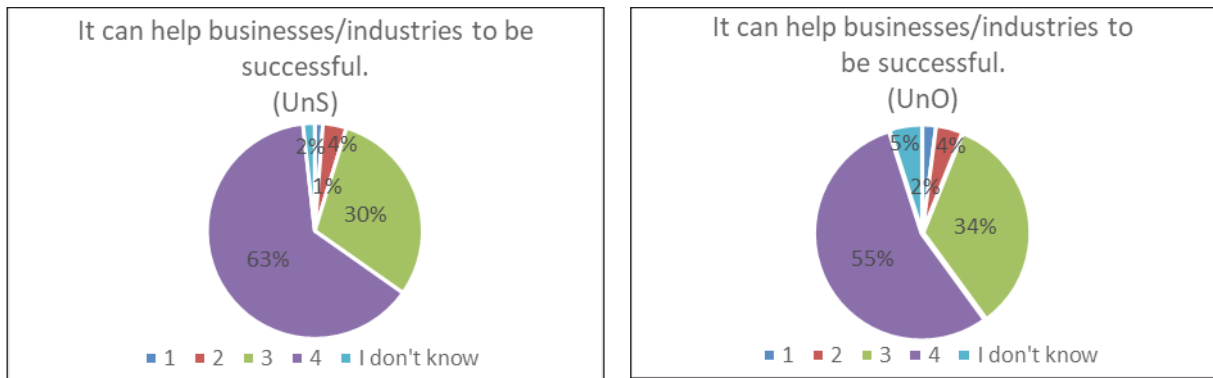
With an almost identical distribution and no statistical difference ($\chi^2=3.278$; $df=4$; $p>0.05$), the two groups of respondents share opinions with reference to the power of languages in preventing polarisation and violent extremism. Thus, on average, 33% strongly agree, 29% agree, 18% are undecided, 8% disagree, and 12% do not know what to think.

With reference to recognising fake news, disinformation and hate speech, students' opinions are

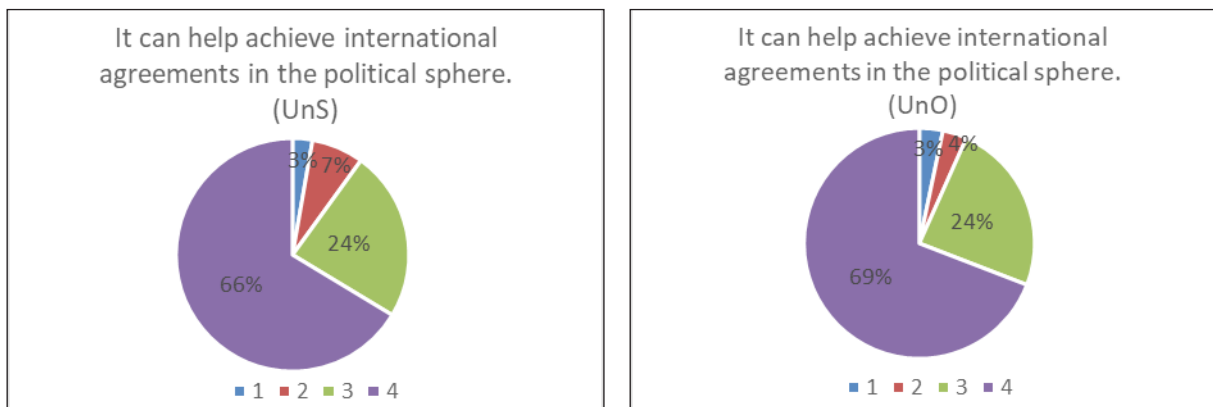
similar, though partly differently distributed, as 53% + 33% of students from Serbia strongly agree and agree, while 44% + 38% of students from the other countries strongly agree and agree with this possibility. Due to the abovementioned reasons, it also seemed interesting to see if the opinions of students from Serbia and other European countries would yield any statistically significant difference, and it was found to be so ($\chi^2=17.428$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$). Deeper insight into this matter would be valuable for researchers in the area of sociology, psychology and sociolinguistics as well.

Students also share the opinion that knowing languages helps us to be more innovative, with 88% on both sides strongly agreeing and agreeing ($\chi^2=7.835$; $df=3$; $p<0.05$), and to solve complex prob-

Picture 9. Students know that foreign languages can benefit businesses



Picture 10. Students know that foreign languages can benefit political agreements.



lems ($\chi^2=22.362$; $df=3$; $p<0.01$), whereby the distribution slightly differs (49% + 31% UnS and 39% + 39% UnO) among those who strongly agree or agree.

Last, but certainly not least important, were the two questions related to professional and political benefits of knowing languages. The vast majority of students on both sides of the sample (ca. 90%) strongly agree and agree that knowing languages can help businesses and industries to be successful and people to achieve international agreements in the political sphere (Pictures 9 and 10).

As earlier announced, since the space of a scientific paper does not allow us to elaborate on the remaining groups of questions, we shall refer the readers to the main Report (Janković et al., 2023), where they can see in what ways students like to learn languages (question group V), what motivates them to learn foreign languages (question group VI), and what they perceive as the main obstacles to their foreign language learning (question group VII).

Conclusion

Learning multiple foreign languages today means enabling communication, cooperation and interaction between people of different ethnicities in the dynamic and largely changing world. Against the backdrop of blended cultures, multilingualism has become a fact, a medium, and a reflection of human relations. Therefore, the study in question was designed to give students a chance to recognise their own position in the colourful image of human communication, and participate in shaping the future of higher education. They were asked to express their opinions, attitudes, experience and needs with reference to developing multilingualism at their universities and societies in general.

The questionnaire which was the basis of this comprehensive survey consists of multiple groups of questions. The complete and in-depth Report on it is available on Circle U's website. This paper focuses on three particular groups of questions,

which investigate students' previous experience with language learning, their opinions about learning languages and attitudes about the value of knowing other languages.

Based on both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis of the collected student responses, we can see that, as the level of education grows, the number of languages learnt by Serbian students drops. A particularly negative trend is noticeable at the level of university education, as the number of students of the other universities who learn 2 or more FLs is twice as large as that of Serbian students. We may conclude that not all students in our education system are given the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages in continuity, that foreign languages are taken for granted as curricular subjects and often sacrificed in school curricula, to the detriment of students as individuals and future professionals. This not only makes students of other European universities closer to the fulfilment of EU recommendations than students studying in Serbia, but it also puts us in a disadvantageous position in a social, cultural, economic and political sense in the long run.

Previous research has already shown that students recognise the need for a larger degree of applicability of FL knowledge and skills in real-life situations as early as in primary education. That is why the sociolinguistic and sociocultural dimension of language learning should also be taken into consideration, with more attention being paid to students' functional knowledge and use of foreign languages. The disappearance of multilingualism from our schools and universities seriously contradicts the recommendations and expectations of the European Commission related to language policies. A particularly negative trend is visible in the status of languages for specific purposes at Serbian universities, which is in stark contrast to the needs of future generations of professionals, as confirmed by this survey.

Apart from the expressed need for broader and better foreign language education, most students in the entire research sample also require academic recognition and certification of their foreign language skills, aware that these will be of utmost importance for their future careers. That is why a lot of students (more than 50%) on both sides have already been taking additional FL lessons outside the regular education system and intend to get an official language proficiency certificate outside their university.

Obviously, the needs of all students in our research sample, and the expectations they have from their education systems in terms of developing foreign language competences at all levels of education, are greater than what the systems currently have to offer, which may be a warning sign for the decision makers on both sides of this study. Despite certain statistical differences, what most students in both sample groups wish to have is a larger number of languages on offer, more courses of foreign languages, either as mandatory or as extracurricular, and better development of skills in languages for general purposes and especially in languages for specific purposes.

Students' opinions and attitudes on the importance of knowing other languages in terms of general culture and education do not significant-

ly differ between the two sample groups, nor do their preferences towards additional languages they would like to learn. The differences that do exist are partly dependent on their native languages and the foreign languages they have or have not yet learnt during their education. Most of them would like to improve their skills in the languages of wider communication, i.e. German, French, Spanish, Russian, and Italian, but in less widely used languages as well.

They are fully aware that languages can help them in social, cultural, diplomatic and political spheres, in innovative ways of thinking and interdisciplinary approaches to work, and that is why they feel the need to develop multilingually.

Students are accepted as co-creators in shaping the future of higher education. Therefore, to enhance their self-esteem as individuals and professionals, increase their international exposure, improve their social and academic integration and help them cooperate across universities and disciplines, education systems on the whole need to work on the interconnectedness of different languages and cultures by enabling greater exposure to multilingual practices in their schools and in particular at their universities.

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Web links

- <<https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2020/circle-u.-selected-as-a-pilot-european-university.html>>.
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СТУДЕНТИ КАО СТВАРАОЦИ У ОБЛИКОВАЊУ БУДУЋНОСТИ ВИСОКОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА

Полазећи од тога да је језичка разноликост њених становника базична вредност, али истовремено и значајан ресурс, Европска унија учење језика сматра једним од својих кључних образовних приоритета. У складу са тим, ЕУ је дефинисала језичку стратегију према којој би сваки становник требало да учи бар два странана језика. Потом је Европска комисија дала и препоруке које се односе на промовисање вишејезичности кроз бројне иницијативе за учење језика, пројекте и научна истраживања. Једна од таквих иницијатива јесте и међународна универзитетска алијанса Circle U., која окупила девет европских универзитета (Aarhus Universitet, Универзитет у Београду / Univerzitet u Beogradu, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, King's College London, Université catholique de Louvain, Universitetet i Oslo, Université Paris Cité, Università di Pisa и Universität Wien). Промовисање и унапређивање вишејезичности један је од кључних циљева алијансе, као и важно средство за остваривање других остварених образовних циљева. С обзиром на такав значај вишејезичности, по узору на раније обављено истраживање на универзитетима у Србији (Јанковић и сар., 2019) сprovedено је опсежно емпиријско истраживање међу студентима поменутих девет европских универзитета под називом: „Студенти се мишљају – Circle U. – Уједињени о вишејезичности – Учење језика у високом образовању” (енгл. Students Have a Say – Circle U. Survey on Multilingualism – Learning Languages in Higher Education). Циљ је био да се сагледају досадашња искуства студената са учењем страних језика, њихове потребе за оспособљавањем у области других језика, као и зајажњања у вези са значајем познавања и учења страних језика. У циљу сврху конструисан је уједињеник на који су одговарала укупно 1882 студента. Овај рад приказује компаративну анализу одговора 906 студената из Србије и 976 студената са преосталих осам универзитета који припадају алијанси Circle U. Акцент је стављен на анализу потреба студената у области учења језика и поређење њихових потреба са искуствима на доуниверзитетском и, нарочито, на универзитетском нивоу образовања. Имајући у виду суштински значај академског образовања за њихова будућа занимања, посебна пажња је посвећена учењу страног језика стране. Резултати су показали да ипак учења страних језика, посебно у оквиру универзитетског образовања, није у складу са потребама студената, али ни са прокламованим начелима и циљевима језичке стратегије Европске уније и препорукама Европске комисије. При том, видимо да су студенти из Србије у још лошијој позицији него њихови вршњаци на другим универзитетима у Европи, јер учење страних језика, а посебно језика стране, заузима још мањи део њихове универзитетског курикулума. Штавише, са нивоом образовања одага број језика које ученици, ипак, студенти могу да уче у оквиру редовног наставног програма. Свега 18% студената у Србији има ипак да учи два или више од два странана језика на универзитету, док то могућности има 35% истраженика са страних универзитета. Услед тога, студенти из Србије пријављују слабије развијене способности и на пољу активне и на пољу пасивне употребе језика. С обзиром на доминацију енглеског језика

као сѝраної, сѝуденїи обе ѝоређене їруїе исїиїаника исказују ѝоїїреду за учењем друїих широко засѝуйљених евроїских језика (францускої, немачкої, рускої, шїанскої и иїалијанскої) на универзїиїеском нивоу, као и друїих језика у оквиру редовної или факултїаїивної ѝроїрама. У укуїној ѝоїулацији око 70% исїиїаника жели да ѝоком сѝудија учи два или више од два сѝрана језика оїиїиїих намена, а око 60% исїиїаника жели да учи два или више сѝраних језика сѝруке. Сѝаїиїсїиички значајне разлике ѝоїїврдиле су извесне неїоударносїи у броју жељених језика, ѝри чему сѝуденїи из Срдије очекују више курсева језика у редовном насѝавном ѝроїраму, док би сѝуденїи сѝраних универзїиїеїа волели да науче и више од два сѝрана језика ѝоком ове фазе образовања. Свесни значаја сѝраних језика у данашњем мултїкултїуралном свеїу, сѝуденїи обе їруїе се слажу да курсеве језика оїиїиїих и ѝоседних намена ѝреда да имају у ѝонуди на свим нивоима сѝудија. Поседну ѝажњу ѝривлачи ѝоїїреда већине исїиїане ѝоїулације да за ѝознавање сѝраних језика од своїих универзїиїеїа добију одїоварајуће сертїификаїе у складу са међународним сѝандардима ѝроцене нивоа ѝознавања језика. Сѝуденїи сѝране језике не виде само као важан образовни циљ, већ и као средсїво даљеї учења, као и личної и друшїивеної развоја. У вишејезичносїи, као дїиїном ѝредуслову за вођење дијалоїа, виде и моїућносїи да се ѝреїознају дезинформације, лажне вестїи и їовор мржње, као и да се избеїавају несїоразуми на друшїивеном, култїурном, релиїијском, ѝрофесионалном и ѝолиїиичком ѝлану. У ѝознавању више језика виде и ѝуї ка иноватїивнијим начинима размишљања и инїтердисциїлинарним ѝрисїуїима раду. Свесни да језици ѝреда да ѝовезују, а не да раздвајају нације, 90% сѝуденатїа се у ѝоїїуносїи слаже да језици моїу да ѝомоїну у ѝосїизању усїеха у обласїи међународне сарадње, у виду ѝсловних и ѝолиїиичких сїоразума. Заїїо образовни сисїеми, а ѝоседно универзїиїеїи, ѝреда да им ѝомоїну да се лично и ѝрофесионално развијају на ѝољу вишејезичносїи, као одїоворни учесници у їрађењу будућносїи високої образовања и друшїива у целини. Осим на ѝољу ѝримењене линївисїиике, резулїаїи ової исїираживања моїу имаїи значајне имїликације и у обласїима социолинївисїиике, їсихолоїије и социолоїије.

Кључне речи: учење сѝраних језика, вишејезичносїи, универзїиїеско образовање, језици оїиїиїих намена, језик сѝруке