



Nataša Z. Janković<sup>1</sup>

Nevena M. Buđevac

University of Belgrade, Teacher Education Faculty,  
Belgrade, Serbia

Original  
research paper

Paper received: Aug 10 2023  
Paper accepted: Sep 12 2023  
Article Published: Oct 25 2023

## *Students as Co-Creators in Shaping the Future of Higher Education<sup>2</sup>*

### Extended summary

Considering the linguistic diversity of its citizens as a basic value, as well as a significant resource, the European Union takes language learning to be one of its key educational priorities. In line with that, EU defined a language strategy according to which every citizen should learn at least two foreign languages. As a result, the European Commission put forward the *Policy Recommendations for the Promotion of Multilingualism in the European Union* through numerous language learning initiatives, projects and scientific research. One such initiative is the international university alliance Circle U., which brings together nine European 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 и Universität Wien). Promoting and improving multilingualism is one of the Alliance's main goals, as well as an important tool for achieving other educational goals. Given the importance of multilingualism, and following the example of a previous survey conducted at universities in Serbia (Janković et al., 2019), extensive empirical research was conducted among students of the aforementioned nine European universities titled *Students Have a Say – Circle U. Survey on Multilingualism – Learning Languages in Higher Education*. The goal was to gain insight into students' previous experience with learn-

---

1 natasa.jankovic@uf.bg.ac.rs

2 This paper results from research conducted within the Circle U. European University Alliance project, which is funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme under grant agreement No. 101004062.

Copyright © 2023 by the authors, licensee Teacher Education Faculty University of Belgrade, SERBIA.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original paper is accurately cited.

---

ing foreign languages, their needs for language learning, as well as their attitudes and opinions about the importance of knowing and learning foreign languages. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed which yielded a total of 1,882 student responses. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the responses of 906 students from Serbia and 976 students from the other eight universities that belong to the Circle U. alliance. Emphasis is placed on the analysis of the students' needs for language learning and the comparison of their needs with the experience at the pre-university and, especially, at the university level of education. Bearing in mind the importance of academic education for their future professions, special attention is paid to learning foreign languages for specific, professional, purposes. The results show that the practice of learning foreign languages, especially at university level, is neither in line with students' needs, nor with the proclaimed principles and goals of the European Union's language strategy or the European Commission's Recommendations. At the same time, we see that students from Serbia are in an even worse position than their peers at other European universities, because learning foreign languages, especially languages for specific purposes, makes an even smaller part of their university curriculum. Moreover, the number of languages that school and university students can learn within their regular curriculum decreases with the level of education. Only 18% of respondents from Serbia have the opportunity to learn 2 or more than 2 foreign languages at university, while 35% of the respondents from foreign universities have this opportunity. As a result, students from Serbia report less developed language ability both in the field of active and passive language use. Given the dominance of English as a foreign language, students of both compared groups of respondents express the need to learn other widely spoken European languages (French, German, Russian, Spanish and Italian) at university, as well as other languages, either as regular curricular or extracurricular courses. About 70% of the respondents in the total study population want to learn 2 or more than 2 foreign languages for general purposes at university, and about 60% of respondents want to learn 2 or more than 2 foreign languages for specific purposes. Statistically significant differences confirmed certain discrepancies in the number of desired languages, whereby students from Serbia expect more language courses in their regular curriculum, while students from foreign universities would like to learn more than 2 foreign languages during their university education. Aware of the importance of foreign languages in today's multicultural world, students of both groups agree that language courses for general and special purposes should be offered at all levels of study. Special emphasis is placed on the need of the majority of students to obtain certificates of foreign language knowledge from their universities which would comply with the international standards for language proficiency assessment. Foreign languages are seen by the students not only as an important educational goal, but also as a means of further learning, and personal and social development. With multilingualism being an important prerequisite for dialogue, they see it as helpful in recognising misinformation, fake news and hate speech, as well as in avoiding misunderstandings on the social, cultural, religious, professional and political level. They also believe that knowing multiple languages leads to more innovative ways of thinking and interdisciplinary approaches to work. Aware that languages should connect and not divide nations, 90% of students fully agree that languages can help us achieve success in the field of international cooperation through businesses and political agreements. Therefore, education systems, and universities in particular, should help them to develop multilingually as individuals and

---

professionals, i.e. as responsible participants in the shaping of the future of higher education and society in general. Apart from the field of applied linguistics, the results of this research may have significant implications in the fields of sociolinguistics, psychology and sociology.

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

## References

- Beko, L. i Mićović, D. (2022). Strip i geoforenzika u nastavi engleskog jezika po CLIL metodi – stavovi studenata. *Inovacije u nastavi*. 35 (1), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.5937/inovacije2201144b>
- Buđevac, N., Arcidiacono, F. and Baucal, A. (2011). Introduction. In: Baucal, A., Arcidiacono, F. and Buđevac, N. (Eds.). *Studying interaction in different contexts: A qualitative view* (11–15). Belgrade: Institute of Psychology.
- Buđevac, N. (2018). *Psihologija obrazovanja za vaspitače*. Beograd: Učiteljski fakultet.
- Circle U. (2023). *The Voice of Circle U. Students: Multilingualism and Language Learning in Higher Education*. Retrieved September 8, 2023. from www: <https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2023/the-voice-of-circle-u-students-multilingualism.html>.
- Clyne, M. (2004). Towards an agenda for developing multilingual communication with a community base. In: House, J. and Rehbein, J. (Eds.). *Multilingual Communication*. 3, 19–39. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Council of Europe (2023). *Plurilingualism and Pluriculturalism. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. Retrieved August 23, 2023. from www: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/plurilingualism-and-pluriculturalism>.
- Đorović, D. i Janković, N. (2018). Bodovna vrednost stranog jezika struke na Beogradskom univerzitetu. U: Vujović, A., Šipragić Đokić, S. i Paprić, M. (ur.). *Strani jezik struke i profesionalni identitet* (119–137). Beograd: Društvo za strane jezike i književnosti Srbije - Učiteljski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu.
- Đorović, D. i Lalić-Vučetić, N. (2010). Neke specifičnosti nastave italijanskog jezika na osnovnoškolskom uzrastu. *Zbornik Instituta za pedagoška istraživanja*. 150–164. <https://doi.org/10.2298/ZIPI1001150D>
- Encyclopedia Britannica. *Thomist philosophy: The development of the universities*. Retrieved August 7, 2023. from www: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/Thomist-philosophy>.
- House, J. and Rehbein, J. (2004). What is 'multilingual communication'? In: House, J. and Rehbein, J. (Eds.). *Multilingual Communication 3* (1–17). Amsterdam - Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Janković, N. (2022). The Mutual Impact of Educational Policies and Multilingualism – Report on the Circle U. Panel Discussion. In: Paprić, M., Tanasijević, M. and Janković N. (Eds). *Language – Profession – Science – 2.1.* (9–27). Beograd: DSJKS.

- 
- Janković, N., Buđevac, N., Wasserscheidt, P. and Vukelić, B. (2023). *Circle U. Research on Multilingualism. Students have a say: Circle U. Survey on multilingualism and language learning in higher education*. Retrieved September 8, 2023 from www: <https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2023/the-voice-of-circle-u-students-multilingualism.html>.
  - Janković, N. and Ristić, M. (2018). Hand in hand – developing university teachers' and pre-service teachers' cross-curricular competences. In: Začlona, Z. and Radovanović, I. (Eds.) *Chosen issues of education in the modern era* (38–50). Nowy Sacz – Belgrade: State University of Applied Sciences – Teacher Education Faculty.
  - Janković, N. i Savić Nenadović, Z. (2021). Pozitivni i negativni aspekti nastave stranog jezika struke prema stavovima studenata. U: Parezanović, T. i Nikolić, M. (ur.) *Filološki vidici 1* (83–94). Naučni skup nacionalnog značaja *Filološki vidici 1*. 1. 11. 2019. Beograd: Fakultet za strane jezike, Alfa BK Univerzitet.
  - Janković, N., Savić Nenadović Z. and Cvetković M. (2019). Značaj učenja stranog jezika struke prema stavovima studenata i nastavnika. *Inovacije u nastavi*. 32 (2), (91–105). <https://www.doi.org/10.5937/inovacije1902091J>
  - Janković, N. i Vujović, A. (2017). Problemi i dileme savremene nastave stranih jezika struke u našem visokom obrazovanju. U: Radović, V. i dr. (ur.). *Problemi i dileme savremene nastave u teoriji i praksi* (96). Zbornik rezimea. Međunarodni naučni skup: *Problemi i dileme savremene nastave u teoriji i praksi*. 26–27. 5. 2017. Beograd: Učiteljski fakultet.
  - Lazić, K., Ilić-Đorđević, S. i Ilić, D. (2022). Osnaživanje statusa stranog jezika biotehničke struke u akademskoj i široj javnosti. U: Paprić, M., Tanasijević, M. i Janković, N. (ur.). *Jezik – Struka – Nauka – 2.1* (64–79). Zbornik rezimea. Međunarodni naučni skup: *Jezik – Struka – Nauka – 2.1*. Beograd: DSJKS.
  - Marković, K., Đorđević, D. i Ilić-Đorđević, S. (2015). Motivacija studenata nefilološkog fakulteta za učenje stranog jezika. U: Cakeljčić, V., Vujović, A. i Stevanović, M. (ur.). *Jezik struke: prošlost, sadašnjost, budućnost (Language for Specific Purposes: past, present, future)* (315–327). Beograd: DSJKS.
  - Radojković Ilić, K. (2018). Kurikulumi za strani jezik struke od početnog nivoa. U: Vujović, A., Šipragić Đokić, S. i Paprić, M. (ur.). *Strani jezik struke i profesionalni identitet* (255–270). Beograd: Društvo za strane jezike i književnosti Srbije – Učiteljski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu.
  - Richards, J. C. and Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Harlow – England: Pearson.
  - Ringe, N. (2022). *The Language(s) of Politics: Multilingual Policy-Making in the European Union*. University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12080141>
  - Stanojević, S. and Petrović, A. (2020). On vocabulary learning strategies among students of foreign languages. *Teaching Innovations*. 33 (4). 107–119. <https://doi.org/10.5937/inovacije2004107S>
  - Tanasijević, M. and Janković, N. (2021). The New Virtual Reality – Teachers' and Students' Perceptions and Experience in English Language Learning and Teaching Online. *Inovacije u nastavi*. 34 (4), 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.5937/inovacije2104167T>
-

- 
- University of Belgrade (2023). *Circle U. Days. National Conference: From Academia to Policy*. Retrieved August 7, 2023. from www: <http://climate-change.rect.bg.ac.rs/index.php>; <https://www.circle-u.eu/events/2023/circle-u-national-conference-belgrade-serbia.html>; <http://www.bg.ac.rs/sr/vest.php?id=2180>
  - Vujović, A. (2015). Položaj francuskog jezika na neofilološkim fakultetima u Srbiji. Čakeljić, V., Vujović, A. i Stevanović, M. (ur.). *Jezik struke: prošlost, sadašnjost, budućnost (Language for Specific Purposes: past, present, future)* (581–588). Beograd: DSJKS.

### Web links

- <<https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2020/circle-u.-selected-as-a-pilot-european-university.html>>.
- <<https://www.circle-u.eu/events/2022/policy-roundtable-on-multilingualism-in-higher-edu.html>>.
- <<https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2023/the-voice-of-circle-u-students-multilingualism.html>>.
- <<https://www.circle-u.eu/news/2021/mapping-multilingualism.html>>.
- <<https://www.circle-u.eu/about/publications/shaping-the-future/>>.
- <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/Thomist-philosophy>>.
- <<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/multilingualism/about-multilingualism-policy>>.
- <[https://ecspm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CSPM-Policy-Recommendations\\_2011.pdf](https://ecspm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CSPM-Policy-Recommendations_2011.pdf)>.