



**ACADEMIC EDUCATION OF FUTURE FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
TEACHERS IN MULTILINGUAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT  
(EXPERIENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE)**

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**Abstract**

Special attention in contemporary world is paid to the knowledge of foreign languages as an instrument for communication in inter-cultural and business interaction. In the process of foreign language learning a role of the teacher is irreplaceable, so it is necessary to pay special attention to education of future teachers. Harmonization of existing language subject standards and competences appears to be basic problem, as well as models of academic education of teachers who participate in the system of lifelong education. Main aspects of education of contemporary foreign language teacher are offered in the work process and model applied at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade within the framework of schooling system in Serbia, appropriate to the needs and demands of multilingual European space is presented.

**Key Words:** *Academic Education, Foreign Language Teacher, Multilingualism.*

**1. Introduction**

Education of teachers represents one of the most essential tasks of educational systems in contemporary world. Among numerous positions on this issue, most experts consider that education of future foreign language teachers should encompass several main problems: excellent practical knowledge of foreign language, thorough knowledge of the theory of foreign language teaching and kindred disciplines, cognition of conditions and contexts in which teacher acts. The importance of need for quality foreign language teachers in Europe is corroborated by a great number of projects which European council had been conducting by the end of the last century (SIGMA, TNTEE) with the intention to offer and support the most appropriate model of education of teachers. There are



known documents which were the result of such efforts, where the problems and omissions of previous systems have been recognized and recommendations for change of concept and organization of education have been given (Green Paper on Teacher Education, 2000). These documents clearly show that main pillars of the new standpoints are obligatory academic level of education of teachers, high professionalization of teacher's calling which derives from a program which contains high level of subjects channeled towards acquiring teacher's competence – 20 to 30% of contents of five-year high education is dedicated to forming teachers' competences through accepting contents from educational sciences, methodic of special subjects and obligatory lecturing practice, with emphasized need for research component. One more European project Tuning Educational Structures in Europe whose purpose is to harmonize goals of high education in the domain of education as well, establishes new outcomes and special competences (Mihaljević Djigunović & Mardešić, 2009). Three groups of generic competences are formed on the basis of empirical criteria: instrumental (cognitive, methodological, language and technological competences), interpersonal (individual and social competences) and system competences (planning, entrepreneurship, management, creativity and adaptability). The Project, as well as every other that has been created in multilingual and multinational, inter-culturally rich European context has also set up special competences which have regional significance. Kleut (2006) refers to the group of regional competences which has been harmonized for the region of Southeastern Europe (social responsibility, general culture, desire to learn, ability to summarize literature), because these competences in comparison with other areas in Europe have presented themselves as necessary specificities for harmonization of these regions in Central Europe (Kelly, Grenfell et al, 2004).

## **2. Models of education of future foreign language teachers**

According to historical Wallace Classification (1991), there are three known models of education of teachers'.

a) Teaching as trade, conservative and static model which is based on imitation, accepted until the middle of the forties of the twentieth century. The teacher learns by observing experienced older colleague, follows his advices and directions. Teaching trade has been carried over from generation to generation by imitation of experienced practitioners (Wallace, 1991:6).

b) Formal model which considers teaching as application of science is based upon accomplishments of empirical researches. Experts familiarize future teachers with scientific achievements, and afterwards they apply them in practical teaching (Wallace, 1991:9). One-way aspect (knowledge goes exclusively from experts towards practitioners) of this model as the time went



by caused separation of experts to those who think and those who work or apply, and emphasis of the difference between theory and practice in teaching and learning of the foreign language.

c) The reflexive model of education of teachers is even more accepted today than it used to be before. It educates future teacher by means of acquiring formal and empirical knowledge and enabling him for self-education (Wallace, 1991:15), and the emphasis is drawn to the student and his training for independent learning as well. His special characteristic is that he simultaneously pays attention to formal scientifically based knowledge and experience.

### **3. Model of education of teachers at the Faculty of Philology**

Teachers in Serbia, by legal provisions made at the end of 2009, must have 5 years of academic education during which they must have 30 ECTS of pedagogic-psychological-methodical teaching and ECTS of teaching practice. This legal obligation effected that Faculty of Philology in Belgrade as the largest and most comprehensive educational institution in Serbia for foreign language learning (32 languages) and education of foreign school languages teachers had to adapt its offer. As they decided upon reflexive model, academic teaching of future teachers at the Faculty of Philology is based on observation of teaching disciplines as interdisciplinary weaving of knowledge of culture, civilization, intercultural competences. Training of future teachers encompasses four necessary domains: practical knowledge of foreign language, cognizance of theory of foreign language teaching, knowing conditions in which teaching and methodical methods are realized.

#### **3. 1. Practical knowledge of foreign language**

In contemporary foreign language teaching teacher's practical knowledge of foreign language necessary implies communicative competence. Except formal language rule skills teacher should also know socio-linguistic aspects of language usage. Standards which exist in the world undoubtedly opt for possibility of communication, cultural awakening and connection with other spaces of knowledge which could stay inaccessible to mono-lingual speaker. Language skills also encompass contrasting, comparison, possibility of cognizance that world is not the only one and that there are numerous ways to realize it and see it, so that all these elements together enable future teacher, and through him his student in the surroundings he lives in or anywhere in the world to participate in the interaction in multi-lingual communities in multiple and numerous contexts at the appropriate manner (See ACTFL Standards). Standardization of language knowledge in Europe which was used from the beginning of this century in almost all European educational systems (Common European Framework for Languages), was applied at the Faculty of Philology on all levels of studies of foreign language teaching (English, French, Russian, German, Spanish and Italian), from A1 Level to C2 Level. There



is an ongoing application of standard on other non-teaching European (for example Rumanian, Bulgarian, Slovakian, Hungarian – minority languages in Serbia) and non-European languages (Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and so on).

### **3. 2. Cognizance of theory of foreign language teaching**

Theoretical knowledge in this context is based upon linguistic, psycho-linguistic, socio-linguistic and glottodidactic knowledge and foundations of science-research work which enable teachers for self-education and help them to comprehend work with students also as a possibility for improvement of general scientific and applied scientific cognitions.

On the basis of concepts and experiences expressed in expert literature, significant place should have following areas and disciplines: adoption of second language, psycho-linguistic, socio-linguistic, anthropological pedagogy, developmental psychology, psychology of education and erudition, glottodidactic, comunicology, methodic of English language teaching and so on, knowledge of language training, literature and culture for teaching vocation should be in function of future profession. That would, for example, mean that future foreign language teacher could attend subjects such as Phonetic Exercises for Teachers or Analysis of Class Discourse or Contrasting Problems of Foreign and Maternal Language, or similar (Mihaljević Djigunovic & Zergollern-Miletić, 2003).

### **3. 3. Cognizance of conditions in which teaching takes place**

Cognizance of conditions in which teaching takes place is undoubtedly important prerequisite of teacher's competence. The teacher had to have abilities to adapt his work to students' needs, adapting it according to age, group size, applying appropriate teaching strategies and techniques, making adequate selection of teaching materials, coordinating level of language in teaching, including elements of other subjects, applying elements of project, TBLT teaching and CLIL procedure, for example.

### **3. 4. Methodical knowledge**

School practice which is carrying out during studies is usually far from teaching reality in which teacher finds himself in when he faces his class and when he takes over full responsibility for the results of his teaching. However, practice during academic studies is an unique possibility for student, future teacher apply theoretic methodical principles, to harmonize his knowledge with reality of teaching situation and to familiarize with the specificities of teaching. Six ECTS of school practice offers possibility even for various forms of participation in teaching during period of preparative practice (help to the teacher, familiarizing with pedagogic-psychological service in schools, support and familiarization with inclusive education which is one of the obligatory forms of teaching, work on SLI - Specific Language Impairment problems, and so on). Although communicative approach with



learning and teaching foreign language was conquered territory a long time ago on the Faculty of Philology the project CLIL of literature culture teaching is still elaborating according to language levels in cooperation with EU experts. The Project would contribute to more stable foreign language knowledge, longer exposure to foreign language from various domains and achieving competences outside language of everyday communication. Clear national competences that teacher should have, and which were still not harmonized with above mentioned general and regional would help further defining of concepts.

#### 4. Conclusions

Model of education of future foreign language teachers applied at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade within the framework of the school system reform in Serbia is appropriate for the needs of multilingual language European region, needs for mobility and intercultural and business communication, is based upon five-year studies during which they must have 30 ECTS of pedagogic-psychological-methodical teaching and ECTS of teaching practice. Opting for reflexive model, academic teaching of future teachers at the Faculty of Philology is based upon observation of scientific disciplines as interdisciplinary weaving of knowledge of language, culture, civilization, intercultural competences. Training of future teachers encompasses four necessary domains: practical knowledge of foreign language, cognition of theory of foreign language teaching, cognizance of conditions in which teaching and methodical knowledge are carrying on.

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