

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL FACTORS ON THE STATUS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN REPUBLIC SERBIA

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Abstract

A critical and complete estimation and evaluation of educational work is a complex and accountable process, but mostly it is the inevitable task of all participants in this process. The aim of this paper is to point out the significance of extensive social impact on foreign language selection and acquisition by using the method of theoretical analysis. In this paper we will present the importance of learning foreign languages (FL), their presence in the educational system of the Republic of Serbia, the position of the state language policy, as well as the current situation and the basic attitude of the society in the selection and study of FLs. The results of this analysis should contribute to a better insight into the nature of the factors that influence the acquisition and teaching of foreign languages.

Key words: foreign languages, foreign language acquisition, social factors, bilingualism, educational system, Republic Serbia.

УТИЦАЈ ДРУШТВЕНИХ ФАКТОРА НА СТАТУС СТРАНИХ ЈЕЗИКА У ОСНОВНОЈ И СРЕДЊОЈ ШКОЛИ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРБИЈЕ

Апстракт

Критичко и целовито процењивање и оцењивање васпитно-образовног рада су сложен и одговоран процес, али надам се неопходан задатак свих учесника у том процесу. Циљ овог рада је да применом теоријске анализе и приказом актуелне ситуације укаже на значај ширих друштвених утицаја током одабира и усвајања страног језика у основним и средњим школама Републике Србије. У раду ћемо представити важност учења страних језика (СЈ), њихову заступљеност у васпитно-образовном систему Републике Србије, образовну језичку политику и планирање, као и основне ставове друштва приликом одабира и учења СЈ. Резултати ове анализе треба да допринесу бољем увиду у природу фактора који утичу на усвајање и подучавање страног језика.

Кључне речи: страни језици, усвајање страних језика, социолошки фактори, билингвалност, образовни систем Републике Србије.

INTRODUCTION

The functions of language as a basic means of communication between members of society and in politics, and as an activity of interest for every social community, are intertwined in many areas. In addition to sociolinguistics, language policy and planning (LPP) also deal with the connection between language and politics, which is mediated by an organized, targeted and long-term activity of state institutions in several different areas. These are: a) the selection of the linguistic code which is given the status of the official language in a country (status policy and planning), b) linguistic forms and lexicon of the chosen official language (corpus policy and planning), c) the selection of the languages which will be used as languages of education, as additional, foreign or second languages in a certain educational system (educational language policy and planning) (Paulston, 2003, p. 476).

Although language policy and planning are often mentioned together, they are two separate terms which imply different activities. Language policy is a set of attitudes, principles and decisions that are made in connection with the development of a language in a speech community or a sovereign state, and is the concern of experts in the fields of language, law and sociology (Bugarski, 2003, p. 91). On the other hand, language planning implies a whole set of specific measures within language policy which are undertaken in order to determine the direction of language development and this is the job of language experts (Bugarski, 2003, p. 91).

An inseparable part of every responsible language policy is educational language policy and planning (ELPP), which deal with the structure of foreign language teaching in formal education (mother tongue, foreign languages, languages of regional communities, etc.) and which reveal the scientific and socio-political orientation of their makers and the institutions that approve them (Filipović 2007, p. 375-385). LPP and ELPP are, therefore, the policies whose approaches and implementation of adequate measures enable the link between the social context and institutional language learning.

In this paper we shall offer an overview of the basic context and conditions under which foreign language teaching is organized in state schools in the Republic of Serbia, and we shall compare that with foreign language teaching in other European countries and beyond. We shall tackle the importance of foreign language learning for individuals and the entire social community, as well as the social factors that significantly influence the selection of the foreign language, the manner of its acquisition and the attitudes that the community has when institutionalized foreign language acquisition is concerned.

*Influence of Multiple Language Learning
on the Cognitive Development of Personality*

Many contemporary research studies have proven that foreign language learning has better effect on cognitive development (Daloisio, 2007; Fabbro, 2004; Freddi, 1990; Salmon, Mariani, 2008; Titone, 1996) and that people who speak at least two languages have numerous advantages over those who speak only one language (Ursulesku-Miličić, Janjić, 2015, p. 8-9). Early childhood (ages three to eight) and puberty are estimated as the optimal time for foreign language acquisition (Perani et al, 2003).

The opinions of various authors concerning the influence of age on language acquisition is still controversial. American neurobiologist Lenneberg developed a theory about the biologically “critical” period for language acquisition and emphasized the differences between the contexts that surrounds younger and older students (Lenneberg, 1967). Later research has cast doubt on this biological-genetic link (Durbaba, 2011, p. 75). Still, there are research studies that speak both in favour and against the critical period hypothesis and the significance of early foreign language acquisition. For instance, the success in certain competences such as pronunciation and fluency depends on the age when the student started learning the foreign language, as well as on the model to which the child was exposed (Ellis, 1985, p. 106; Johnstone, 2002, p. 20). On the other hand, Lightbown and Spada have concluded that the significance of early foreign language acquisition is connected to various needs and motivations of different groups of students (Lightbown, Spada, 2013, p. 97) and that early foreign language acquisition is useful if the aim is to achieve native speaker competence. If the aim is to achieve communicative skills, then the age when the learner starts learning the foreign language is not that important.

Acquiring linguistic competence plays a major role in the organization of the second language. Several psycholinguistic studies have proven that the increase of competences leads to the changes in mental processing of the second language with older students (Dufour, Kroll, 1995; Schreuder, Weltens, 1993). For example, in the early stages of second language acquisition lexical units are processed by direct translation into first language equivalents, while in the later stages of language learning, as competences increase, lexical units are conceptualized without translation.

Abutalebi et al. have summarized the numerous neurolinguistic research studies of this topic (Chee et al., 1999, 2001; Dehaene et al., 1997; Illes et al., 1999; Kim et al., 1997; Klein et al., 1994, 1995; Perani et al., 1996, 1998; Price et al., 1999) and emphasized that brain activities are more intensive during language production at a lower level of competence, whereas when higher, constant competence is achieved, the age when the language is acquired does not have great influence on the brain areas for the second language (Abutalebi, Miozzo, Cappa, 2001). Psycholinguistic

studies have proven that practice, use and experience can increase the abilities of the production and understanding of the second language (Green, 1998). The acquisition of the second language after late childhood or puberty negatively affects the degree to which the learner masters the foreign language in comparison with the level of knowledge of younger students (Birdsong, 1999; Johnson, Newport, 1989), so it is basically in the interest of the educational policy of every country to introduce early foreign language study in the educational system.

*A Short Review of the History of Foreign Language
Acquisition until the Present Day*

Even in ancient history there were attempts to learn foreign languages with native speakers, so there are testimonies regarding the procedures of foreign language learning with special reference to grammar, orthography, translation, reading skills, lexis and especially the cult of vocabulary from the period of Ancient Rome (Titone, 1986, p. 32). The phenomenon of multilingualism has existed since the earliest history, while foreign language learning has been inspired by reasons whose roots should be sought both in the present and past needs of societies and individuals (Vučo, 2009, p. 37).

In the educational system of Serbia foreign language teaching began with the adoption of the first law on schools and the establishment of the first public schools during the 1840s (Filipović, Vučo, Đurić, 2007, p. 11). At the beginning of the 20th century, French was the most taught language, especially in the age group of 11-12 year-olds; between the two World Wars it was possible to learn German as well (at the ages of 14-18), and in the late 1950s Russian and English were added to the educational system (Filipović, Vučo, Đurić, 2007, p. 12). After the educational reform of the school system in Serbia in 2003, the first foreign language has been taught since the first grade as is the case with most European countries (Baggiani, 2017, p. 2), whereas students choose the second foreign language in the fifth grade.

The changes in the political and economic climate have affected the status of foreign languages, so today English, German, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish are learned in Serbian schools as foreign languages. One of the most important factors for the selection of the foreign language is precisely the economic and political power of a certain country where that language is spoken. In many countries in the world today English is the official language (Gnutzmann, 2000) and there are also countries where English is considered to be the second language. It is still one of the official languages of the European Union,¹ NATO (in addition to French), UN (in

¹ European Union has 24 official languages while internal documentation is held in English, French and German. Although it was announced that English would no longer be used after Brexit, by the time this paper was finished, it had not yet happened.

addition to French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic), and of many international joint stock companies, so it is not surprising that English is the first foreign language since the first grade of primary school in most schools in Serbia (77%).² Teaching German, Russian and French has a long tradition in Serbian schools because of various historical, political and cultural influences, while Italian and Spanish were introduced in schools only in 2003, when the Institute for Course Books and Teaching Materials started publishing teaching materials for Italian³ and Spanish.⁴ According to the latest data from the Ministry of Education, in the academic 2018/2019, the number of students learning German and Italian has increased, while the number of students who want to learn Russian has slightly decreased. Thus, in Serbian schools the majority of students learn English (459,357), which is followed by German (116,857), French (81,021), Russian (55,873), Italian (12,597) and Spanish (5,950).

*FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
OF REPUBLIC SERBIA, OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
AND THE USA*

An important year for contemporary teaching in Serbia was 2000, when the Ministry of Education and Sport began the big project of the curricular reform. Its aim was the modernization and improvement of the entire educational system of Serbia and the new foreign language curriculum adopted the principles of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*⁵, which was published by the Council of Europe. The expectations of this project and reform were that the pupils who started learning English in the first grade of primary school would achieve the A1 level of competence by the end of the fourth grade and the A2 level of competence by the end of the eighth grade.

When the second foreign language is concerned, it is introduced in the fifth grade and the expectation is for pupils to achieve the same level of competence at the end of primary school, i.e. the A2 level. As for secondary

² According to the data from the Ministry of Education of Serbia.

³ Julijana Vučo, Saša Moderc, *Insieme! 1, Insieme! 2, Insieme! 3*, Aleksandra Blatešić, *Ciao, ragazzi!*, Aleksandra Blatešić, *Amici 1*, Aleksandra Blatešić, Jasmina Stojković, *Amici 2*, Aleksandra Blatešić, Jasmina Stojković, Katarina Zavištin, *Amici 3*, Jasmina Stojković, Katarina Zavištin, *Amici 4*.

⁴ Jelena Filipović, Jasna Stojanović, Zorana Miličević, *¡Hola amigos! 1*, Jelena Filipović, Jasna Stojanović, Zorana Miličević, *¡Hola amigos! 2*, Jelena Filipović, Anđelka Pejović, Maja Andrijević, Perdomo Gonzales Dženi, *¡Hola amigos! 3*, Anđelka Pejović, Maja Andrijević, Perdomo Gonzales Dženi, *¡Hola amigos! 4*, Anđelka Pejović, Maja Andrijević, *¿Hablamos? 1, ¿Hablamos? 2, ¿Hablamos? 3, ¿Hablamos? 4*.

⁵ First published in Serbian in 2003 in Podgorica by the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro.

education, students are expected to continue learning foreign languages they started in primary school in order to achieve the B1 level at the end of secondary school. Since grammar schools in philological and socio-lingual study fields have greater class load of foreign language classes, these students are expected to reach the B2 level of linguistic competence by the end of secondary school. As none of the European countries offer the achievement of the C1 or C2 levels in foreign language competence in their educational systems (Baggiani, 2017, p. 3), we can conclude that Serbia follows the general European educational language policy.

The class load for foreign languages in primary and secondary schools in Serbia is a very important topic which allows us to gain insight into foreign language teaching. Students in secondary occupational schools on average have significantly less foreign language classes in comparison to grammar schools. In addition, the foreign language class load in secondary occupational schools depends on the type of school and the module taken by students. Three-year occupational schools usually do not have second foreign language classes, while the first foreign language has around 120-180 classes per year. Four-year high schools have a maximum class load which is equal to that of grammar schools and the mathematical study field (280 45-minute classes). According to the Institute for the Advancement of Education (Ser. Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja, ZUOV) of the Republic of Serbia, in general grammar schools 384 classes are devoted to the first foreign language and 280 classes to the second foreign language. The situation is somewhat better in grammar schools of the socio-lingual study field, because they have 487 classes of the first foreign language and 280 classes of the second foreign language, whereas in philological grammar schools there are 695 classes of the first foreign language and 420 classes of the second foreign language.

The length of classes varies in European countries from 40 to 60 minutes. For the purposes of this paper and in order to compare the foreign language classes in Serbia and other countries, we have relied on the information on the number of hours (60 minutes) of foreign languages on a yearly level, which was collected by the *Eurydice* agency (Commissione europea, EACEA, Eurydice, 2017, p. 108-120). According to this research, primary school pupils have 54 hours of a foreign language on a yearly level in all four years and 108 hours after the fifth grade, when the second language is introduced. France and Norway have a similar class load in lower classes of primary school (52 and 54), but later the class load is much bigger, so in France in the eighth and ninth grades there are 218 hours on a yearly level. There is also a tendency to constantly increase class load in higher grades in Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark and Belgium. The educational system of Malta provides a large class load even during the first six years of education (118-125), while later, because of the

introduction of the second foreign language, this class load is even greater (171-190).

The age when children start learning the foreign language also varies depending on the educational system of the given state. For instance, in Belgium children at the age of three start acquiring a foreign language, while in Spain foreign language teaching is planned in the second cycle of pre-school education (Gatto, 2016, p. 49-50). According to the data from *Eurydice*,⁶ in the EU countries in 2014 83.8% of pupils in the first four grades learnt one or two foreign languages, which is 16.5% more than in 2005. Pupils in the 21st century start learning foreign languages earlier than it was the case in the past, but the general impression is that in the EU countries a rather small number of hours is devoted to foreign languages (5-10% of the entire class load) (Baggiani, 2017, p. 1). According to some linguists and foreign language teachers, there is an insufficient number of foreign language classes in the educational system of Serbia, which also includes the contexts where Serbian is taught as a second language (in settings with dominant minority ethnic groups or in multilingual settings) (Filipović, Vučo, Đurić, 2007, p. 10).

A great contrast to these educational systems is Great Britain, where students start learning a foreign language at the age of eleven. Gatto claims that the educational systems of most European countries introduce another foreign language between the ages of ten and fifteen and that in most European countries, except for Turkey, Greece, Denmark and Iceland, there is a possibility to take one or more non-linguistic subjects in the foreign language (Gatto, 2016, p. 50).

An even more interesting comparison is the one with the American educational system, which does not offer any foreign language classes in state primary school, unlike private schools, which sometimes offer Spanish. In addition to Spanish, German and French, which are taught in secondary school, in the last few decades there is a tendency to add more languages to this list, which is particularly emphasized in the document for *Less Commonly Taught Languages* (LCTLs) in the United States. According to the *Pew Research Center*,⁷ the research that included the majority of European countries (with the exception of the Republic of Serbia, North Macedonia, Ireland and Great Britain) and 50 American states, 92% of European countries organize foreign language learning both in primary and

⁶ This network deals with the educational and political systems in the countries of European Union and offers data analysis and statistical processing. More on that: <http://eurydice.indire.it/linsegnamento-delle-lingue-straniere-a-scuola-in-europa/> (accessed 2 May 2019).

⁷ More on that: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/06/most-european-students-are-learning-a-foreign-language-in-school-while-americans-lag> (accessed 1 May 2019).

secondary schools (results from 2016), while this was the case only in 20% of American states (results from 2017) (Devlin, 2018).

Regardless of the undoubtable benefits of foreign language learning for the development of brain and cognitive abilities, as well as the attempts to secure more space for foreign languages in the educational systems of many countries around the world, the results that have been achieved so far are not entirely satisfactory and still have uncertain outcome.

One bright example of the successful implementation of foreign languages in the educational system is Hungary which has practiced bilingual classes in secondary schools in English, German, French, Russian, Italian and Spanish since 1987 (Vámos, 1998). Bilingual education is regulated by the Ministry of Education by stimulating schools with the additional 30% from the budget if they apply the regulations from the document “Guidelines for Bilingual Education” (Zavišin, 2013, p. 110). In these schools, foreign languages classes are held with groups of 18 students and schools guarantee to have a teacher whose language of mediation is their mother tongue.

Successful examples of bilingual classes are also found in Germany, which applies the programs called *Content Based Bilingual Education* (CBBE) within the additive and integrative model, mainly in secondary schools. In the additive model, one teacher teaches a non-linguistic subject in German and the other teacher in their mother tongue, while in the integrative model one teacher teaches classes in both languages (Coonan, 2002, p. 65). When it comes to innovations in bilingual classes, Finland is also prominent because since 1991 they have had the possibility to organize classes in the foreign language without acquiring a special license, which has positively affected the rise in bilingual departments both in primary and secondary schools (Coonan, 2002, p. 60).

During the last decade in Spain and Finland there has been an increase in the interest in the CLIL method (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*), which concerns the use of the foreign language to teach non-linguistic subjects or a thematic area that merges natural and social sciences (such as a topic on endangered species or the protection of the environment, etc.) (Zavišin, 2013, p. 26). Spain does not provide possibilities for teachers to be trained for CLIL before they actually start teaching, but they have teacher training centers which organize classes in foreign languages and methodology of teaching, either directly or online (Zavišin, 2013, p. 106). The teachers who want to take courses abroad are supported by the state and schools get a temporary teaching assistant for foreign languages through the European Commission for the Programme of Lifelong Education. Their task is to collaborate with the foreign language teacher as well as with the teacher who teaches a non-linguistic subject in the foreign language.

However, many countries still have structural problems regarding the organization of bilingual classes, as they face difficulties in forming competent teachers and centers for information exchange and the support of

schools and staff. For instance, apart from the program for minorities in the north of the country, Italy still has problems in the realization of bilingual classes in secondary schools despite the documents which support this kind of education, such as the Decree of the President of Republic Italy, article 4, section 273 from 1999 (Barbero, Clegg, 2012, p. 11). After the reform of the Italian educational system⁸ in 2008, students in grammar schools have one obligatory non-linguistic subject in the foreign language and the teachers who apply the CLIL method have the possibility to be trained at universities, but without the financial support of the Ministry.

In Serbia, there are very few cases of bilingual classes and they most often take place in grammar schools: Third Belgrade Grammar School (Serbian-Italian, Serbian-French, Serbian-English), Valjevo Grammar School (Serbian-French, Serbian-German) and Contemporary Grammar School in Belgrade (Serbian-English). After considering real difficulties in the organization of high quality foreign language classes, as well as bilingual classes, every country should approach this topic responsibly and systematically with a long-term investment until the first satisfactory results are achieved.

Language learning is a specific process that can be divided into several stages. The process begins by perceiving, which is followed by the analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstracting and generalizing (Kolka, 1983, p. 34). Language use demands certain intellectual effort and work. Regardless of the extent to which a language is acquired in one of the phases, if it is not used in communication, there is a possibility to lose the achieved result. Therefore, foreign language learning requires daily rhythm and dynamics. In order to achieve verbal communication, which is the aim of most students who learn a foreign language, it is necessary to understand that foreign language learning is a well-organized system, so it is important to persist in the acquisition and mastery of linguistic rules, as well as the equally important elements of culture.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Educational System of Serbia

This short review of the presence of foreign languages in primary and secondary schools in Serbia and other countries is an attempt to emphasize the important role of foreign languages in the educational system, as well as the awareness of the importance of foreign language learning. We can conclude that the language policy of the Serbian educational system in this aspect follows the tendencies of language policies of other European countries which, among other things, support and cultivate multilingualism. What is considered to be a shortcoming is

⁸ More on this reform on the Ministry of Education of Republic Italy <http://www.istruzione.it/getOM?idfileentry=217468> (accessed 1 May 2019).

the lack of normative coherence when the second foreign language is concerned in the Serbian educational system (status of an elective subject, descriptive assessment, etc.), which was pointed out several times by the Association of Foreign Languages and Literature.⁹

The basic aim of the reform of the curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia from 2000, which was also supported by international institutions (World Bank, Council of Europe, etc.), was to modernize the entire educational system of Serbia, which included foreign language teaching. In order to track, provide and improve the quality and the development of the educational system the Institute for the Advancement of Education was founded in 2004 and the accompanying official documents regulated foreign language learning in the educational system of the Republic of Serbia: Law on Primary Education (55/13 and 101/17, article 73), Law on Secondary Education (55/13, 101/17, article 39), the Latest Curricula for Foreign Languages (*Educational Gazette* 17/13, 3/15, 4/15), the Rulebook on General Standards of Achievement for the End of Primary Education for Foreign Languages (78/17), the Rulebook on Precise Conditions for Organizing Bilingual Classes (105/15, 50/16, 35/17), the Rulebook on General Standards of Achievement for the End of Secondary General Education and Secondary Occupational Education (117/13), etc.

These laws, rulebooks and curricula have changed the concept of the syllabus by shifting the focus from linguistic content (grammar) to competences, skills and outcomes, which should lead to a functional application of language. They defined the exit levels which are flexible and differ with productive and receptive skills, while with some occupational profiles they have been coordinated with professional needs. The curricula and syllabi have been adapted to the Common European Framework of Reference.

The Serbian educational system, however, has numerous flaws, the greatest of which is the lack of a clearly defined and directed strategy in education and its consistent implementation with the timely institutional support. Changes in education are often implemented slowly and with many difficulties, while teachers often identify them as administrative duties imposed by the creators of the educational policy. Teachers list the following great flaws in this context: the centralized educational system in Serbia, the impossibility to apply the principles named in educational documents in rural settings, the discord between the academic degree and the possession of necessary skills and knowledge in the classroom, the omission of feedback about the research for the improvement of work which included the teachers, etc. (Maksimović, Marković 2012, p. 48-49).

⁹ <http://www.dsjsrbija.rs/strani-jezici-u-skolstvu/sva-dokumentacija-o-drugom-stranom-jeziku/> (accessed 7 January 2019)

The consequences of these shortcomings are numerous other problems such as an insufficient number of classes of foreign languages in comparison with some educational systems in other European countries,¹⁰ excessive class load,¹¹ modest teaching materials, many students in one class, not enough modern didactic equipment and materials in schools, the reduced application of information communication technologies in classes, the lack of financial and professional support to foreign language teachers (co-financing their stays in foreign countries for the purposes of professional development, providing native speakers as teaching assistants, etc.).

Because of these negative aspects of institutional foreign language learning, which were to a great extent caused by poor financial conditions in society, an increasing number of parents choose additional classes in private schools of foreign languages¹² which put focus on the development of the speaking skill. On the other hand, the investment in foreign language learning thus becomes a serious financial burden on the family budget.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIETY AND FAMILY ON THE SELECTION OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Among many social factors which directly or indirectly influence the education and upbringing of young people, family occupies a very important, maybe even a decisive position. It often happens that parents decide to enroll their child in a foreign language course after a journey or a holiday in a foreign country (Commissione europea, 2004, p. 6). Parents' enthusiasm is transferred onto children, who under the parents' affective impression are even more enthusiastic to choose that particular language. The influence of the society on the selection of the foreign language can be extremely strong, because the society can transfer its positive and negative attitudes onto the individual (Apelt, 1981, p. 58). Thus, foreign language learning can be more difficult if a certain country has an extremely negative

¹⁰ This topic was covered in daily papers for a wider audience and important information was presented by the Ministry of Education on foreign language learning in schools: <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/u-srpskim-skolama-dominira-ucenje-engleskog-ali-jos-jedan-jezik-mu-se-opasno/rk02he9> (accessed 30 December 2018).

¹¹ In secondary music schools students have 17 subjects in the first grade.

¹² A clear and dramatic indicator is the fact that the class load of the second foreign language is not enough and that some groups of students take foreign language courses organized by private schools which take place in the classrooms of state schools, which is regulated by a contract between the private and the state school. This close cooperation between private and state schools is obviously the result of the need for a different kind of foreign language classes in the educational system of Serbia, because students in private schools either select the languages that are not offered by state schools they attend, or want to take more classes of the foreign languages they already learn in order to learn more in better working conditions.

attitude towards that country and its culture for a number of reasons which can be historical, religious, political, etc. (Lee, 1976, p. 44).

The attractiveness of a language depends on its connection with the entire social system, so if a society is stable and efficient in all its segments, its language will be the focus of the foreigners' attention both as a means of a closer contact with that society and as a result of the ability to impose itself, which causes curiosity and a desire for learning (Vučo, 2010, p. 352). Only a few years ago there was a "craze" for learning Spanish. This trend emerged and lasted while television channels in Serbia broadcast Hispanic telenovelas. Under the influence of the media, learners changed their interest in selecting the foreign language, which can also be seen in the example of an increased interest in Turkish, also under the influence of TV series, which affected the increase of the number of students of Turkish at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade.¹³ Italian has also been popular in the last few decades and there are many reasons for this phenomenon. Italian is usually a synonym for fashion, design, music and cuisine among young people, while older generations love Italian history and culture, art and rich medieval and modern literature. In addition, some students who take courses in the Italian language see a personal or social benefit in the cooperation with Italians (Blatešić, Zanjoli, 2015, p. 127-150).

"A great interest in this language reflects the importance of Italian economy for Serbian economy: both in terms of import and in terms of export Italy has for many years been one of the most important external partners of Serbia." (Moderc, 2008, p. 282).

An interest in learning German has been on the constant rise in Serbian schools during the last ten years because parents believe that their children will benefit from knowing that language and will be more easily employed and integrated in Germanic countries which have a higher living standard than Serbia. Parents especially insisted on the introduction of German as a foreign language in secondary technical and medical schools, because these profiles are sought in Germanic countries.¹⁴ That is why the Ministry of Education took adequate measures for solving the problem of the lack of teachers of German in schools.¹⁵ The spread of German in schools in Serbia is supported by German institutions and their representatives in Serbia

¹³ This phenomenon was covered by daily papers: <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/kako-su-nas-pokorile-strane-serije-svi-bi-da-uce-turski/jdbldkc> (accessed 6 January 2019). Despite the increased interest in learning Turkish, there is still no mention of introducing this foreign language in the Serbian schools.

¹⁴ https://www.tubeid.co/download-video/qcna4_Scea3F18U/veliko-interesovanje-učenika-za-srednju-medicinsku-školu.html (accessed 5 January 2019)

¹⁵ <https://prosvetniinformatore.com/aktuelno/nastavnika-za-nemacki-nema-dovoljno> (accessed 22 July 2018)

as part of the strategy of quality EU integrations in the field of education.¹⁶ The most numerous group of foreign workers in Germany, after Turks, are the citizens of Serbia and the crucial part of the integration of foreign workers is the competence in German, which became a basic condition for gaining the citizenship and a final aim of the integration politics (Milanović, 2006, p. 309).

The arrival of Chinese investors in Serbia and the initiation of important projects of bilateral cooperation with the financial support of China has brought about the rise in the interest in Chinese culture and language. Therefore, a project entitled “Learning Chinese in schools in Republic Serbia” began in the academic 2011/2012 and the Institute for the Advancement of Education plans to introduce this language in secondary occupational schools in Serbia on the basis of the syllabus for grammar schools.¹⁷ It is undisputed that Chinese is spoken by three times more people than English because of the great number of native speakers, but also because of an increasing economic influence of China at a global scale. Parents see their children’s bright future if they speak this language and this is the attitude supported by great mobility and migrations all around the world, since the geographic distance of China is no longer an obstacle.

As the multilingualism of European citizens is considered to be one of the most important competences that should be developed throughout one’s entire life (Commissione europea, 2004, p. 5), the main field of educational language policy should be foreign language teaching (Durbaba, 2011, p. 91). The educational systems of many European countries have incorporated CLIL methodology, which has proven to be very efficient in practice when it comes to foreign language acquisition, because it stimulates the cognitive level of foreign language use (Wolff, 2012, p. 106). The application of CLIL methodology guarantees an increased degree of exposure to the new linguistic code, not only in foreign language classes, but also in other disciplines, and it is especially useful and efficient when it is necessary to lower the threshold at which a language becomes actively used. Due to positive experiences of other countries (Coonan,

¹⁶ An example of the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Republic Serbia and the embassy of Federal Republic Germany in Belgrade is the Agreement on understanding and cooperation regarding the school subject German as a foreign language, signed in 2012 with two grammar schools from Subotica (“Svetozar Marković” and “Deže Kostolanji”) and four primary schools (“10. Oktobar”, “Sečenji Ištvan” from Subotica, “Petefi Šandor” from Hajdukovo, “Vuk Karadžić” from Bajmok”.

¹⁷ More on that: <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/kineski-u-srpskim-skolama-od-1-septembra-evo-sta-ce-daci-sve-morati-da-znaju-a-u/z774z05> (accessed 28 August 2019).

2002; Serragiotto, 2003), it would be advisable to consider the possibilities of applying this methodology in Serbia.

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion we shall present concrete proposals and measures that should be adopted in order to improve the foreign language teaching in Serbia and to raise its quality. In the countries which recognize that foreign language learning is also cultural improvement in the widest sense, foreign language learning is valued and is one of the basic tasks that Serbia should accomplish, primarily at the institutional level. State institutions in charge of LPP and ELPP should define a long-term strategic plan that refers to the achievement of the final outcome of foreign language learning in Serbian schools in accordance with the socio-political, epistemological and strategic choices of a wider social community. Multilingualism, as well as other sociocultural, ethnic, religious and political knowledge acquired in foreign language classes, would contribute to the spiritual development of an individual, but also their increased self-respect and adaptability in various settings where they could express their knowledge of the foreign language acquired during their education.

We believe that the necessary conditions for better foreign language learning in Serbian schools is: 1) the precisely defined educational language policy and planning, 2) the division of students into smaller groups in foreign language classes (15-18 students), 3) an increased class load of foreign languages, 4) the equipping of foreign language classrooms with computers and projectors so teachers could apply more contemporary and technologically more innovative methods, 5) the constant education of parents concerning different ways of providing support to the child in foreign language learning, which should not be motivated exclusively by economic factors, 6) an increase in parent-teacher cooperation, 7) motivating students to engage in various forms of independent research work in a group or in a project, 8) the application of CLIL methodology in secondary schools as a method which integrates foreign languages and content during the classes pertaining to occupational subjects, 9) the formation of centers for direct and online support of foreign language teachers when it comes to professional development both home and abroad, or with the help of native speakers.

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УТИЦАЈ ДРУШТВЕНИХ ФАКТОРА НА СТАТУС СТРАНИХ ЈЕЗИКА У ОСНОВНОЈ И СРЕДЊОЈ ШКОЛИ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРБИЈЕ

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Резиме

У овом раду смо указали на важност учења страних језика, као и на знатан утицај бројних друштвених фактора на одабир и статус СЈ у школском систему Републике Србије. Након поређења услова и начина извођења наставе СЈ у основним и средњим школама у Србији и другим земљама Европе и шире, изнели смо конкретне предлоге и мере које би требало усвојити како би дошло до подизања квалитета институционализоване наставе страног језика у школама у Србији. У земљама у којима се у учењу страног језика препознаје богаћење културе у најширем значењу, настава страног језика добија на вредности, а то је један од основних задатака који Србија треба да оствари. Државни органи и институције у чијој је надлежности стварање ЈПП и ОЈПП треба да дефинишу дугорочан стратешки план о постизању крајњег исхода учења страних језика у школама Србије у складу са социо-политичким, епистемолошким и стратешким опредељењима шире друштвене заједнице.

Закључили смо да су неопходни следећи услови за стицање бољег познавања страних језика у српским школама: 1. прецизно дефинисана образовна језичка политика и планирање; 2. дељење ученика у мање групе за учење СЈ (15–18 ученика); 3. повећан фонд часова страног језика; 4. опремање учионица за стране језике компјутерима и пројекторима како би могли да се примене савременији и технолошки иновативни методи; 5. константна едукација родитеља у начинима пружања подршке детету у учењу страних језика, које не треба да буде мотивисано искључиво економским факторима; 6. појачавање сарадње између наставника и родитеља; 7. подстицање ученика на облике самосталноистраживачког рада у оквиру групе или рада на пројекту; 8. примена CLIL методе у средњим школама као методе интегрисања језика и садржаја и у оквиру стручних предмета; 9. формирање центара за директну и онлајн подршку наставника страних језика у усавршавању у земљи и иностранству или уз помоћ изворних говорника.