IV.

ASPEKTI JAVNE KOMUNIKACIJE
U VIŠEJEZIČNIM SREDINAMA/
ASPECTS OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION
IN Multilingual Communities
Multilingualism and its implications

IVAN POLJAKOVIĆ
ANNA MARTINOVIC
University of Zadar

There are many factors which indicate the growing trend towards multilingualism. Globalisation and the shifting world economy are increasing the demand for knowledge of more than one foreign language. Demographic shifts, caused by increased migration, are changing the social milieu of many countries. Recent studies have shown that linguistic research should no longer focus on the monolingual speaker, but rather, on the multilingual speaker, which reflects the realistic situation of the majority of native speakers. Many countries are recognizing these new trends and are attempting to modify their policies in order to accommodate these changes. In short, there are economic, social, linguistic and political factors that support multilingualism. This paper attempts to present these factors and analyse the implications of multilanguage policies.

Key words: globalisation; multilingualism; language acquisition; European multilingual policy; Croatian universities; Foreign Language Centre.

1. Introduction

Due to rapid growth and development of new technologies in the last few decades, in particular information technology, globalisation has spread throughout the world. There are fewer barriers between national economies and increased transportation of goods and people. Migration of people has resulted in a new demographic configuration in many countries. This demographic shift and growing globalisation have changed our perception of other languages and communication in general. It is becoming increasingly clear that knowledge of one language is not sufficient enough to compete on this new global stage. In addition, social structures in major urban areas have been modified leading to the realisation that the ability to speak a foreign language is a necessity. Today multilingualism is a prerequisite for the success of an individual, a company, or a society as a whole. Governments are attempting to keep pace with these
trends by changing policies. This paper presents some of the factors that support multilingualism, analyses some of the implications of policies, and finally presents an attempt to incorporate multilingualism into the Croatian university system.

2. ECONOMIC FACTORS

As stated above one of the major trends facing the world today is globalisation. Economic systems and cultures all over the world are becoming more connected and similar with one another due to the influence of multinational companies and improved communication. According to Graddol, some of the macro trends of globalisation include the global rise of the urban middle class, the development of new communication technology such as the Internet, the changing role of the media, and reform in education (Gaddol 2006: 20). These new shifts are creating changes in many spheres including languages.

Post-modern Europe is part of this new process and is contributing to a globalised world by allowing the free movement of goods and people within its borders, which is resulting in new forms of multilingualism. The final report by the *Commission of the European Communities* (High Level Group on Multilingualism) states:

If current trends are anything to go by, mobility between jobs, geographical mobility, and transnational co-operation will become an accepted part of the working lives of a large percentage of Europeans. It will become increasingly difficult to predict the course of people’s careers. It is precisely because of this that the learning and knowledge of several languages is an important aspect of sustainable employability. (High Level Group 2007: 9).

In 2005 the European Commission reiterated its belief, in compliance with the Lisbon strategy, that knowledge of several languages is of vital importance for the success of the EU’s economy in general, and for individual companies as well. In the same year the Commission initiated a study that aimed to assess how the shortages of language skills will affect the European economy. The *Elan Study (Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise)* found that knowledge of other languages and cultures played a significant role with regard to the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The study reports:

Language and intercultural skills were found to be relevant to success in export, and a significant amount of business had been lost as a result of lack of language skills – and presumably also because of lack of intercultural skills. (High Level Group 2007: 15).

Another factor that must be taken into consideration is the fact that the world economy is shifting and new trends indicate the rise of ‘third world’ economies, including Brazil, Russia, India and China. These countries, also known as BRICS, have shown a steady growth and could account for a large portion of the world market in the near future. Globalisation has once again contributed to the world’s new economic reality. It
has allowed companies to set up in countries which provide the best cost advantage. Products are manufactured in countries where labour is cheap and they are then sold to countries where people are rich (Graddol 2006: 34). In addition, today many services are outsourced, including business process outsourcing (BPO) and information technology outsourcing (ITO). Another feature of the emerging global economy is the rise of knowledge process outsourcing (KPO), whereby services include providing specialised knowledge that requires research skills and the use of professional judgement (Graddol 2006: 37). These trends are challenging the position of the ‘lingua franca’ of the world – English. Studies indicate that although English is still the dominant language of business, nevertheless there is a growing demand for other languages.

Due to China’s rising economic importance, Mandarin has become a popular language to acquire in many Asian countries, in Europe and the USA. Graddol notes that, “An estimated 30 million people are already studying Mandarin worldwide and the Chinese government expects this to rise to around 100 million in the next few years” (Graddol 2006: 63). In South America, Brazil has become one of the leading economic giants, and has introduced Spanish courses as an alternative to English. Other countries in South America have also shown an interest in the use of Spanish, thus confirming the growing influence of this language in the region (Graddol 2006: 63).

3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The changing demographic picture of many countries is also encouraging multilingualism. For example, immigrants to English-speaking countries are finding the need to learn not only English, but also other languages, especially if they are working with other ethnic communities. Furthermore, many immigrant communities are promoting their own language by establishing their own schools and local programmes. In Britain, a survey by the UK Centre for information on Language Teaching (CILT) showed the increasing trend toward bilingualism by the fact that over 60 languages are being taught in local ethnic communities (Graddol 2006: 118). In the United States, the government has launched a ‘National Security Initiative’ to improve foreign language education in languages such as Arabic, Russian, Korean and Chinese. Moreover, Spanish has become an important language in the United States due to the predominance of numerous Spanish-speaking communities.

Another area that must be considered is the choice of language on the Internet. The demography of Internet users has changed in the last few years and there has been an increase in the number of Internet users whose first language is not English. As software is being made to display different kinds of script there has been an increase in the use of other languages. For instance, studies have shown that there has been a marked increase in the use of Chinese and other languages on the web in the last five years (Graddol 2006: 44). Many companies now offer a choice of language on their websites. Furthermore, local languages are used in chat rooms and in other contexts where everyone shares a first language. Other media forms such as international news channels have seen an increase in the use of languages other than English, including Arabic, Spanish, and French. Some independent journalists have become ‘bloggers’ and
Aspects of public communication in multilingual communities

report on breaking stories in their native language. Although the entertainment industry is still dominated by U.S. audio-visual materials, nevertheless there has been a rise in interest in other materials from other countries. For example, Chinese viewers prefer South Korean soap operas to U.S.A ones; in Europe Japanese Manga comics have become popular; ‘Bollywood’ from India has become increasingly influential; and Spanish ‘telenovellas’ are expanding world-wide (Graddol 2006: 112). In short, even though English is the dominant language in the world today, there appears to be an underlying shift of change in this status.

4. LINGUISTIC FACTORS

The globalised world has lead to the fact that more and more people speak and understand more than one language. John Edwards states, “To be bilingual or multilingual is not the aberration supposed by many…it is, rather, a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority of the world today” (Edwards 1995: 1). This new reality calls for the need to re-examine the linguistic implications of learning another language. It is generally agreed that children who learn two languages at the same time acquire them through the use of similar strategies. In fact, they are learning two first languages simultaneously and need to learn to differentiate separate contexts for the two languages in order to be successful. On the whole, bilingual children do not have a problem with interference between the two languages (Brown 2000: 67).

Much research on nonsimultaneous second language acquisition, in both children and adults, has centred on the interfering effects of the first and second language. Research has shown that the linguistic and cognitive processes of second language learning in young children are, for the most part, similar to first language processes. However, adults learning a second language have more difficulties and encounter interference with the first language. Although other factors have been cited as obstacles to second language acquisition, the fact remains that learning a second language is fraught with difficulties.

Nevertheless, according to Philip Herdina and Ulrike Jesner, who have developed a new dynamic model of multilingualism, there are several advantages that multilinguals possess that must be considered. New skills are developed when acquiring two or more languages including metacognitive strategies as a result of “learning how to learn a language and an enhanced level of metalinguistic awareness” (Herdina and Jessner 2002: 62). Multilinguals have the ability to think about the language abstractly and, as a result, can ‘play with language.’ Herdina and Jessner take Krashen’s concept of a monitor in the language learner a step further and claim that a multilingual speaker has an ‘enhanced monitor’ that watches and corrects a speaker’s language(s) in a multilingual context.

Furthermore, people who have competence in more than one language are generally more creative. Herdina and Jessner claim that

… many investigations have indicated that young bilingual people, compared to monolingual controls, show definite advantages in cognitive flexibility, creativity, divergent
thought or problem solving. Bilingual children proved to be divergent thinkers, that is, they are more creative, imaginative, flexible and unrestrained in their thinking. (Herdina and Jessner 2002: 64)

In addition to linguistic and cognitive skills, multilinguals develop a wider range of social skills. Multilinguals possess a greater sphere of social and cultural awareness:

Not to exclude the metapragmatic behaviour from metalinguistics but we would like to stress the importance of pragmatic competence or communicative sensitivity as components of sociocultural knowledge which seem to be more developed in multilingual than in monolingual speakers. (Herdina and Jessner 2002: 64)

In short, multilinguals develop cognitive, linguistic and social skills that give them an advantage over monolingual individuals.

5. MULTILINGUAL POLICY IN EUROPE

The ability to understand and communicate in more than one language is a reality for the majority of people across the globe and must, consequently, be considered a desirable life-skill for all European citizens. The European Union is founded on the principle of unity in diversity and concurrently embraces a variety of cultures, customs, beliefs and languages. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union respects cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (Charter 2000: 13, Article 22). The Berlin Declaration underlies the undeniable multilingual character of Europe as well. The European Union is not a "melting pot" in which differences are suppressed, but rather, a common home where diversity is celebrated (Berlin Declaration, 2007). The languages of Europe are an inseparable part of Europe’s identity whereby they define people as individuals, but also allow them to be part of a community. Understanding other languages builds bridges between people, cultures and European communities.

In 2002 in Barcelona, European leaders set a target to teach “the mother tongue plus two languages” at school (Barcelona Declaration 2002: 19). The EU is currently developing a New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism (Communication 2005) and has recently appointed the European Commissioner to be responsible for multilingualism in order to promote and develop multilingual policies in EU countries. This is the first time the portfolio of a European Commissioner explicitly includes responsibility for multilingualism. This reaffirms the Commission’s commitment to multilingualism in the European Union and sets out the Commission’s strategy for promoting multilingualism in European society. The Commission’s multilingualism policy has three aims: to encourage language learning and linguistic diversity in society; to promote a healthy multilingual economy, and to give citizens access to European Union legislation, procedures and information in their own languages (Communication 2005). The Commission’s long-term objective is to increase individual multilingualism until every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue (Communication 2003).
In a recent Eurobarometer survey, half the citizens of the European Union stated that they are able to hold a conversation in at least one language other than their mother tongue. The percentages vary between countries and social groups: 99% of Luxemburgers, 93% of Latvians and Maltese, and 90% of Lithuanians know at least one language other than their mother tongue, whereas a considerable majority in Hungary (71%), the UK (70%), Spain, Italy and Portugal (64% each) master only their mother tongue. Men, young people and city dwellers are more likely to speak a foreign language than women, old people and rural inhabitants (Eurobarometer 63.4 2005).

The average number of foreign languages taught in secondary schools is increasing, although still falling short of the target set in Barcelona. However, there is a tendency for ‘foreign language learning’ to mean simply ‘learning English,’ which leads towards the policy of one lingua franca (Parijs 2004), as opposed to a multilingual policy. Promoting a lingua franca is intrinsically against the Commission mandate, which promotes linguistic diversity (Orban 2007).

A Group of national experts on languages has produced recommendations to Member States which, among others, have “identified a need for national plans to give coherence and direction to actions to promote multilingualism amongst individuals and in society generally.” One of the recommendations refer to higher education institutions which should “play a more active role in promoting multilingualism amongst students and staff, but also in the wider local community” (European Commission 2004). As a result of these recommendations European countries are reforming their language policies and reviewing their educational systems in order to forge a lifelong learning approach to languages. They are introducing language learning from a much earlier stage, as well as putting more resources into languages (Communication 2005). All the member states of the European Union have made a commitment to encourage multilingualism.

6. THE SITUATION IN CROATIA

One of Croatia’s basic foreign policy goals is full membership in the European Union. Croatia views the idea of a European government as an opportunity for all European nations and countries to unite in building a future based on common values and principles. Following the European political elite, which has recognized multilingualism as an unavoidable strategy in achieving competitiveness and overall progress, the Minister of Education has appointed a national working group for monitoring the Bologna process in institutions of higher education in the Republic of Croatia. However, local politicians and heads of education institutions have responded very slowly or even negatively to the reforms necessary for the promotion of multilingualism. Such negative attitudes may have incalculable repercussions for the long term wellbeing of society as a whole. It is important to show the central and transversal role of languages in the production and the transmission of knowledge, and thus to convince heads of institutions and politicians that multilingualism concerns everyone (Berthoud 2003).

A study conducted on 143 departments at 5 universities in Croatia showed that 31% of the departments do not offer Foreign Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) to their
students at all. This means that in the first year approximately 0.7 foreign languages are learned per student. In the second and third year (semesters 3, 4, 5 and 6) 69% of the departments do not require a foreign language, which demonstrates that in the second and third year only 0.3 foreign languages are learned per student (Poljaković et al 2008). This shows a discrepancy between the European multilanguage policy (mother tongue plus two languages) and its implementation at local levels in Croatia, in particular at universities. Heads of departments have the autonomy in making decisions whether a foreign language will be compulsory or not. In many cases the need for continuous education in foreign languages is not seen. Students are often asked to consult literature in foreign languages, but, ironically, are not offered elective courses in foreign languages by these same departments. Students must struggle to comprehend specialised texts from their field of study, and, at the same time, are losing the basic communicative competences acquired in secondary school due to lack of continuity. In the following year the Bologna graduate programmes will be commencing for the first time in Croatia and students will be expected to consult literature written in foreign languages more so than in undergraduate school. These demands will cause a number of difficulties due to the fact that no language support is offered.

On the one hand there is the political willingness to embrace the Bologna process in full, while on the other hand there are many heads of departments who are not concerned with multilingual issues at all, believing either that students have already acquired communicative competency in a foreign language or that they do not need a foreign language in their particular field of study. Of course, both of these presumptions are false. It is unfortunate that some heads of departments are unable to recognize the necessity for a multilanguage facility. Rectors of all the universities in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in Croatia need to play a more decisive role in promoting, creating and implementing multilanguage policy. The involvement of the Ministry is of crucial importance due to the fact that without its financial and technical support, declarations will remain unfulfilled words.

7. ACTION PLAN

An action plan has been undertaken to promote Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) at the University of Zadar. Aware that universities play a key role in promoting societal and individual multilingualism, and guided by the Bologna Process which welcomes “proposals that each university implement a coherent language policy clarifying its role in promoting language learning and linguistic diversity, both amongst its learning community and in the wider locality” (Communication 2003: 8), the University of Zadar has supported a project which intends not only to enhance FLT, but also plans to integrate the Bologna Process into FLT in terms of multilingual policy. The project was also needed in order to implement a coherent foreign language policy at the University. Thus, the Foreign Language Centre (FLC), as an organizational unit of the University, was founded. The FLC promotes multilingualism, and aims to incorporate the Bologna recommendations with regard to FLT and to enable students to reach their
Aspects of public communication in multilingual communities

In the following academic year 2008/2009 the FLC will be offering the University of Zadar students three types of courses: Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), Language for General Usage (LGU) and Translation for Specific Purposes (TSP). LSP will be offered in English, German and French. The prerequisite for enrolment in the first semester of these courses will be an intermediate level of language competence, equivalent to B2 of Common European Framework. At the moment there are six different programmes: LSP for Social Sciences, Humanities, Maritime-Transport, Maritime-Nautical Science, Management and Nursing. LGU, a course for beginners, will be offered in English, German, French, Spanish, Russian and Croatian for foreign students. TSP will be offered to second and third year students as additional language courses for those who are already taking an LSP course. The FLC will be offering 96 different courses in FLT during the next academic year.

The FLC aims to develop its programmes gradually in the next two years. Students will have the opportunity to study foreign languages in all six semesters of the undergraduate programme and in the first two semesters of the graduate programme. This means eight semesters of continuous language education. Each department sustains its autonomy in deciding how many semesters of language learning will be compulsory for their students. However, if a department requires only one or two semesters of LSP, the students will be able to take LSP as an elective course in the following semesters.

Apart from teaching foreign languages the FLC will also, together with International Relations Office, organize student exchanges and promote language policy that “all students should study abroad, preferably in a foreign language, for at least one term, and should gain an accepted language qualification as part of their degree course” (Communication 2003: 8).

In addition, the FLC will equip a specialized foreign language library with scientific journals in various fields and languages taught in the FLC. Graded readers for all levels will be at the disposal for students taking LGU courses. Moreover, the FLC will equip a language laboratory for class activities as well as for individual learning.

8. CONCLUSION

There are many factors which support the view that multilingualism is an indispensable asset for success today. Globalisation, increased communication, demographic changes are major drivers of the need to learn and understand more than one language. It has been shown that multilinguals possess many skills which are needed not only to enrich the individual, but also to enable a country to have a competitive edge in the world market. Many countries are changing their policies with the aim of encouraging their populations to become multilingual including the European Union. Croatia, which aspires to become part of this European community, has also made policy changes to encourage multilingualism. The University of Zadar, in particular, has made a long-term plan and commitment to increase knowledge of more than one lan-
guage through the work of the Foreign Language Centre. Although there are many obstacles to overcome, nevertheless, an effort must be made by all sectors of society to encourage multilingualism in order to reap its long-term benefits.

REFERENCES


Berlin Declaration (2007). Declaration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome.


VIŠEJEZIČNOST I NJENE IMPLIKACIJE


**Ključne riječi:** globalizacija; višejezičnost; učenje jezika; europska politika višejezičnosti; hrvatska sveučilišta; centar za strane jezike.