
MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Summary. The paper deals with multilingualism and multiculturalism in the context of the European Union (EU). It analyzes certain skills and competencies that multilingual and multicultural European citizens have to acquire to become full-fledged EU members. Multilingualism is becoming a social phenomenon governed by the needs of globalization and cultural openness. Thanks to the ease of access to information, facilitated by the Internet, individuals' exposure to multiple languages is getting more and more frequent, and triggering therefore the need to acquire more and more languages. Speaking many languages makes individuals more competitive and mobile. The EU policy of official multilingualism as a deliberate tool of government is unique in the world. The EU works actively in the sphere of culture and quality of life to promote the wider knowledge and use of all its official languages throughout the Union.

Keywords: multiculturalism, multilingualism, skills, competences, languages

INTRODUCTION

In fact what marks Europe out is this very diversity: the great variety of languages and cultures within its boundaries. Each language reflects a particular way of thinking, carries a memory, a literary heritage, and is the legitimate basis of cultural identity.¹ As Europe continues to expand and integrate through the EU, it faces the challenge of ever increasing multilingual and multicultural contact, within and across its borders. The many languages spoken in Europe can serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual understanding.

At the initiative of Commissioner Leonard Orban in 2008 the European Commission adopted a new strategy for languages in Europe. Under the motto "Many people speaking many languages", Orban sees multilingualism both as the ability to speak the language of others and of others to speak our language. Promoting multilingualism in the different policies of the EU, such as culture, education, communication and employment is at the centre of his objectives and he firmly believes that languages do open up new opportunities, doors to new experiences; and they can signpost the way towards a more inclusive, prosperous Europe for all citizens.

¹ Häggman, J., Multilingualism and the European Union. *Europäisches Journal für Minderheitenfragen*.

The European Union has 23 official languages and some 60 regional or minority languages. Each of these languages is part of our heritage, and has a place of its own in Europe. Multilingualism is the mastery of multiple languages. A person is multilingual if he or she knows several languages; a document or message is multilingual if it is presented in multiple languages. Promoting multilingualism in the different Policies of the EU, such as culture, education, communication and employment is at the centre of the objectives of the EU.²

The paper analyzes the importance of competences in the context of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Multicultural means: 1) of more than one culture: relating to, consisting of, or participating in the culture of different countries, ethnic groups, or religions 2) supporting integration: advocating or encouraging the integration of people of different countries, ethnic groups, and religions into all areas of society.

To be an effective communicator in the multilingual world, people have to develop multilingual and multicultural competences. The aim of the research is to analyze the skills and competences that a person will need living in a multicultural area of the EU and to discuss the importance of the characteristics of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the EU. The object of the research is the skills and competences that are necessary in the development of one's multiculturalism and multilingualism. The methods used: the analysis of scientific literature and EU documents concerning the issue of multiculturalism and learning competences.

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

EU language policies aim to protect linguistic diversity and promote knowledge of languages – for reasons of cultural identity and social integration, but also because of multilingual citizens are better placed to take advantage of the educational, professional and economic opportunities created by an integrated Europe. Linguistic diversity has become more visible than ever because people have much more contact with foreigners than ever before. They increasingly face situations where they have to speak languages other than their own.³

Article 22 of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights requires the EU to respect linguistic diversity and Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on language. Together with respect for individuals and for linguistic diversity, openness towards other cultures, tolerance for others is a core of EU value. This principle applies not only to the 23 official EU languages but also to the many regional and minority languages spoken by segments of its population. It is this that makes the EU a place where diversity can be celebrated as an asset.

² Microsoft Encharta. Gateway to the European Union. 2008, <http://europa.eu.int/languages>

³ Official EU Languages. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/com/2>

According to the recent Euro barometer survey, half of the citizens of the EU state they can hold a conversation in at least one language other than their mother tongue. The percentages vary among countries and social groups: 99% of Luxembourgers, 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.⁴ One can see that Lithuania occupies one of the highest statuses in terms of multilingualism and multiculturalism. The citizens of our country definitely have necessary skills to develop the competence of multilingualism.

EUROPEAN TYPOLOGIES OF COMPETENCES

Growing internationalization, the rapid pace of change, and the continuous roll-out of new technologies mean that Europeans must not only keep their specific job-related skills up-to-date, but also possess the generic competences that will enable them to adapt to change. In this context, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages⁵ identifies and defines the key competences needed for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability in the society. According to the Framework the key competences are defined as general abilities to perform specific tasks or functions successfully, to perform certain activities on the grounds of the existing knowledge, skills and attitude system. Skills are defined as the learned capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both. The notion of competence includes creativity, while a skill does not mean performing a task in a creative way. Competence is shown in action in a context that might be different the next time you have to act. In every profession human work is not only multiple, but also complex. That means that a worker, who wishes to perform a certain job very well must have certain abilities, which are called competences. If a person completes many various functions in a certain occupation, he or she has to acquire many different competences bearing in mind the concept of multilingualism and multiculturalism.⁶

The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences:

- a) Communication in the mother tongue;
- b) Communication in foreign languages;
- c) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- d) Digital competence;

⁴ European Commission. Multilingualism. <http://europa.eu/languages/en/chapter/14>

⁵ Common European Framework of Reference for languages, 2001,
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE_EN_asp

⁶ Foley, G., Suaugusiųjų mokymosi metmenys. Vilnius, Krona, 2007, p.37

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- e) Learning to learn;
 - f) Social and civic competences;
 - g) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
 - h) Cultural awareness and expression.

The key competences are all considered equally important, because each of them can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge society. They are necessary in the fields of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

a) *Communication in the mother tongue* is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form, and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure. Individuals should have the skills to communicate in a variety of communicative situations and to monitor and adapt their own communication to the requirement of the situation. A positive attitude towards communication in the mother tongue involves a disposition to critical and constructive dialogue, an appreciation of aesthetic qualities and a willingness to strive for them and an interest in interaction with others. This implies an awareness of the impact of language on others and a need to understand and use language in a positive and socially responsible manner.

b) *Communication in foreign languages*. Essential skills for communication in foreign languages consist of the ability to understand spoken messages, to initiate, sustain and conclude conversations and to read, understand and produce texts appropriate to the individual's needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. A positive attitude involves the appreciation of cultural diversity, and an interest and curiosity in languages and intercultural communication.

c) *Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology*. Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. It involves the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought and presentation.

Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. This competence involves an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen. Competence in science also includes an attitude of critical appreciation and curiosity, an interest in ethical issues and respect for both safety and sustainability, in particular as regards scientific and technological progress in

relation to oneself, family, community and global issues. Vast general knowledge is an inseparable part of multiculturalism, so these competencies are also important for all the members from the EU.

d) *Digital competence* involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet. Skills needed include the ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way, assessing relevance and distinguishing the real from the virtual while recognizing the links. Individuals should have skills to use tools to produce, present and understand complex information and the ability to access, search and use Internet-based services. Individuals should also be able to use IST to support critical thinking, creativity and innovation. Today the Internet and Information Technology (IT) are probably the best way to communicate and to live a fully-fledged multicultural life. It is one of the best ways to develop the competence of multilingualism.

e) *Learning to learn* is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training.

Learning to learn skills require firstly the acquisition of the fundamental basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and ITC skills that are necessary for further learning. Building on these skills, an individual should be able to access, gain, process and assimilate new knowledge and skills. This requires effective management of one's learning, career and work patterns and the ability to persevere with learning, to concentrate for extended periods and to reflect critically on the purposes and aims of learning. In the case of multilingualism this competence can be applied in learning different languages and maintaining an already acquired competence to speak different languages. Every language is some kind of a life organism that needs to be nurtured all the time, otherwise it disappears. That clearly shows that the competence of learning to learn is inseparable from the competence of speaking different languages.

f) *Social and civic competences* include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behaviour that equips individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social, working and civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation. The core skills of this competence include the ability to communicate constructively in different environments, to show tolerance, express and understand different viewpoints, to negotiate with the ability to create confidence and to feel empathy. The competence is based on an attitude of collaboration, assertiveness and integrity. For successful interpersonal and social participation it is essential to understand the codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in different societies and environments. Understanding the multi-cultural and socio-economic dimensions of European societies and how national cultural identity interacts with the European identity is essential.

g) *Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship* refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals in their everyday lives at home, in society and also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. Skills relate to proactive project management, effective representation and negotiation, and the ability to work both as an individual and collaboratively in teams. An entrepreneurial attitude is characterized by initiative, pro-activity, independence and innovation in personal and social life, as much as at work. We face situations where we have to speak languages other than our own as Europe's market becomes integrated, and thus the competence of entrepreneurship is very tightly associated with multilingualism and multiculturalism.

h) *Cultural awareness and expression*. Cultural knowledge includes an awareness of local, national and European cultural heritage and their place in the world. It covers basic knowledge of major cultural works, including popular contemporary culture. It is essential to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and other regions of the world. Skills relate to both appreciation and expression of works of art and performances as well as self-expression through a variety of media using one's innate capacities, skills include also the ability to relate one's own creative and expressive points of view to the opinions of others and to identify and realize social and economic opportunities in cultural activity. A solid understanding of one's own culture and a sense of identity can be the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity of cultural

expression. A positive attitude also covers creativity, and the willingness to cultivate aesthetic capacity through artistic self-expression and participation in cultural life.⁷

CONCLUSIONS

We are convinced that knowledge of languages benefits Europeans. A successful multilingualism policy can strengthen citizens' life chances. It can boost job prospects, open access to rights and services bring about a Europe of solidarity, because it creates paths to dialogue between people and cultures. Activating our natural aptitude for language acquisition provides us with a linguistic and cultural experience that can enhance our overall multicultural life and the competence of multilingualism. Lifelong languages' learning has become a necessity for all citizens. We need to develop our skills and competences throughout our lives for our ability to be successful in a constantly changing world and our exposure to different cultures. Growing internationalization, rapid changes, and the continuous roll-out of new technologies mean that Europeans must not only keep their specific culture-related skills up-to-date, but also possess the generic competences that will enable them to adapt to change. The knowledge, skills and competences that everyone needs are the competences that help us to communicate in multicultural and multilingual Europe.

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DAUGIAKALBYSTĖ IR DAUGIAKULTŪRIŠKUMAS EUROPOS SAJUNGOS KONTEKSTE

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⁷ The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: A European Framework. 2006, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2008/L_394/1_39420061230en00100018.pdf.

Santrauka

Dabartiniais laikais Europos Tarybos kalbų mokymosi kryptis tapo labai svarbi daugiakalbystės sąvoka. Į daugiakalbystę reikia žiūrėti daugiakultūriškumo kontekste. Kalba yra ne tik svarbiausias kultūros aspektas, bet taip pat priemonė naudotis kultūros apraiškomis. Straipsnyje apibrėžiami daugiakalbystės ir kultūrų įvairovės skatinimo tikslai ir funkcijos daugiakultūrijoje ir daugiakalbėje Europoje. Gebėjimas bendrauti keliomis kalbomis padeda plėtotis ne tik verslo sričiai, jis padeda ES piliečiams tapti konkurencingesniems ir mobiliams. ES valdžios taikoma oficialaus daugiakultūriškumo politika – vienintelė pasaulyje. ES skatina visų Sąjungos kalbų mokymąsi ir aktyvų jų vartojimą. Europos Komisijos kalbų politikos dokumentuose pažymima, kad kalbų mokymasis yra europiečių demokratinio pilietiškumo ugdymo pagrindas, o vienas svarbiausių kalbų politikos tikslų – plėtoti daugiakalbiškumą ir visų kalbų mokymosi galimybes Europoje.

Įvairios kultūros asmens kultūrinėje kompetencijoje nėra atskirtos, jos lyginamos, priešingai ir aktyviai veikia viena kitą ir tokiu būdu formuojasi turtinga integruota asmens daugiakultūrijoje kompetencija, o daugiakalbystės kompetencija yra tik viena kultūrinės kompetencijos sudedamoji dalis, kuri savo ruožtu sąveikauja su kitomis dalimis. Straipsnyje pristatomos ir aptariamasi bendrosios kompetencijos, privalomos daugiakalbiams europiečiams, norintiems tapti visaverčiais ES piliečiais. Apibūdinamas kalbų mokymosi tikslas tarpkultūrinio požiūriu – skatinti asmenybės raidą ir tapatybės jausmą, savo ruožtu plečiant kitos kalbos ir kultūros patirtį, palaikyti ir gausinti Europos kultūrų turtus bei įvairovę mokantis vieniems kitų kalbų, padėti tenkinti daugiakalbės ir daugiakultūrijoje Europos poreikius lavinant Europos gyventojų gebėjimus bendrauti vieniems su kitais peržengiant kalbų ir kultūrų ribas. To siekti reikia nuolat ir visą gyvenimą. Plečiantis individo kalbos ir jos kultūrinio konteksto patirtis, jo mąstyme tos kalbos ar kultūros nėra griežtai skirtingose mentalinėse zonose, bet susilieja į bendrą komunikacinę kompetenciją, kurioje visos žinios ir visa kalbinė patirtis papildo vienas kitas ir kurioje kalbos yra susijusios tarpusavyje ir vienos kitas veikia.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: daugiakalbystė, daugiakultūriškumas, gebėjimai, kompetencijos, kalbos.

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