

SAVREMENE TENDENCIJE U NASTAVI JEZIKA I KNJIŽEVNOSTI [CURRENT TRENDS IN TEACHING LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE]. ED. BY JULIJANA VUČO. BELGRADE: FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY, 2007. Pp. 648.

Reviewed by Mirjana Mandić*

This volume assembles contributions submitted at the international conference “Current Trends in Teaching Language and Literature” held at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade on 7 and 8 April 2006. It contains 74 papers grouped into nine thematic chapters: *Linguistic models; Didactic materials in language instruction; Language in literature, literature in language; Teacher competences; Modern methods, techniques and approaches in language and literature instruction; Workshops; Living languages teaching policy; Specificities of university teaching; and Multidisciplinary in teaching language and literature.*

This review takes a look at individual chapters and contributions, but also points out the most important aspects of the volume as a whole.

The majority of papers discuss the teaching of foreign languages, encompassing virtually all languages taught in Serbia and the region: both classical (Ancient Greek and Latin) and modern (widely spoken world languages: Russian, English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Chinese, but also Balkan: Slovene, Macedonian, Hungarian, Rusyn, Romanian, Modern Greek, Turkish). The papers discussing the methodology of teaching foreign languages are predominantly functional in approach, or more precisely, “functional-notional-experiential”, as the approach is termed by one of the contributors, Jasmina Dražić. A current trend in teaching foreign languages shows a shift in focus from formal to communicative aspects of language, its goal now being to develop the learner’s communicative competence and related pragmatic skills rather than to focus solely on grammatical structures and vocabulary without an idea of what the function of things learnt

is. In contrast to the traditional approach, which has been in use in Serbia for decades, a use-oriented approach to language teaching is now being developed. The impression the reader of this volume gets is that the innovations prescribed by the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEF) are being implemented in Serbia and the region.

A group of papers is focused on Serbian as the first language, with special reference to the quality of didactic materials used in teaching and to the use of modern tools and techniques apt to facilitate first language teaching. The papers discussing Serbian as a foreign language highlight the communicative method as most appropriate considering the structural distinctiveness of the Serbian language.

Apart from language instruction, the volume pays great attention to the methods of teaching literature both in Serbian and in foreign languages. Special attention should be paid to the contributions discussing the application of contemporary critical theories, fresh critical readings, and fresh tools in studying literary works (such as the active participation of students in the analysis of literary works or the dramatization of literary works). The need is stressed for establishing a link between the teaching of literature and the teaching of language.

With most papers laying emphasis on teaching, it should be noted that all edu-

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ational levels, from primary to university, are looked at.

The contributors are professors not only from faculties of philosophy and philology, but also from non-philological faculties, as well as secondary school teachers and psychologists, who are closely familiar with what students expect from the instructional process and who form the basis for a high quality approach to language and literature studies.

The volume is intended for the designers of language and literature teaching methods, for teachers of Serbian and foreign languages and for literature teachers at all education levels. As many contributions reflect modern approaches to language and literature, they may prove useful to linguists and philosophers, but also to language and literature students.

Linguistic models

The contributions in this chapter (Ksenija Končarević, Mihajlo Fejsa, Rita Flies, Tijana Ašić, Veran Stanojević) look at numerous ways of applying different linguistic theories and models with a view to giving a methodological boost to teaching foreign languages and to facilitating their learning.

Ksenija Končarević's "Linguodidactic application of the linguoculturological field model" introduces us to the model through the example of *Russian Orthodox tradition* intended for theology students. The linguoculturological field is defined as a "hierarchically organized system of units integrated by their shared semantics and by their reflecting a circle of phenomena and elements of culture as the field's deep framework". According to Končarević, this model ensures a complex command of a language through interaction with the culture it belongs to.

Application of modern semantic and pragmatic theories in teaching French tenses is insisted upon by Tijana Ašić's paper "On semantic and pragmatic pa-

rameters in teaching tenses", and Veran Stanojević's "Modern semantic approaches to the imperfective-perfective opposition and their applicability in teaching foreign languages". They look at the system of tenses in French (although the models are applicable in teaching other languages too) from the viewpoint of Vandlar's, Reichenbach's and Relevance theories.

Didactic materials in language instruction

The contributors to this chapter (Darja Martelj, Dijana Plut, Nenad Tomović, Slobodan Stević) discuss various didactic materials such as textbooks, grammars and other handbooks for first and foreign languages.

Darja Martelj's "Italian imperative: How it is used in real communication vs. what is offered by Italian textbooks" offers an analysis of seven Italian language textbooks with regard to the quality and quantity of the tasks concerning the imperative.

Dijana Plut, in her "Structure of tasks in primary third-grade readers", shows that market opening and increasing competition among publishers in Serbia during the past few years have given a boost to the quality of textbooks. She analyzes two third-grade Serbian readers of equal quality with regard to respective proportions of area-related tasks (understanding of text read, orthography, writing, grammar, vocabulary, literature, speech culture) and with regard to the knowledge and skills supported by the tasks. As the analysis shows, although quite different, the two readers can be equally useful in dealing with different areas of language, which provides teachers the possibility to choose the textbook they deem most appropriate.

Living languages teaching policy

One of the areas where the effectiveness of a country's language policy is reflected is the area of planning and designing

the policy of teaching foreign languages. Accordingly, the volume pays particular attention to theoretical and practical questions from the domain of planning language instruction.

The contributors to this chapter (Jelena Filipović, Maja Djukanović, Predrag Mutavdžić, Ralf Herman, Žarko Bošnjaković, Željko Marković) advocate the importance of the concept of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in addressing the question of foreign languages.

Jelena Filipović, in her “Ideological aspects of language teaching policy and planning”, stresses that language planning should not depend on ideological, political and social factors, but rather on scholarly and expert understandings. She gives an account of different views and perspectives on language policy and planning, as well as a historical overview of language policy in Serbia (as regards the planning of first, second, minority and foreign languages instruction). Putting forward the pros and cons to the implementation of the CEF, she believes that an important argument in its favour is that it is intended for all involved in the educational process, paying special attention to teachers’ continuous education, motivation and critical self-awareness.

In her paper “Who, where, when, how and why should learn Slovene” Maja Djukanović stresses the need for establishing Slovene studies in Serbia, her major arguments being the modern market requirements. The paper gives a historical outline of Slovene studies in Serbia, and an overview of the basic language textbooks used in teaching Slovene for years.

The inadequate status of Serbian studies at foreign universities is the focus of Željko Marković’s paper “On the status of Serbian studies at German universities”. Using Cologne University as a case study, he sheds light on the more general problem of declining interest in Slavic languages.

Teacher competences

The contributors to this chapter (Tamara Kostić-Pahnoglu, Miloš Bajčetić, Bojan Lazarević, Ivana Vilić) point to the necessity of improving the quality of teaching, which can be achieved in a variety of ways: teachers’ continuous evaluation and self-evaluation, development of new skills, such as, for example, on-line education, or, in the case of foreign languages teaching, development of teachers’ communicative competences.

Education reforms

The implementation of the Bologna declaration at the universities in Serbia, and the region, requires, among other things, that first and foreign languages and literature teaching should be restructured and curricula modified so as to meet the needs of students. The contributors to this chapter (Ana Vujović, Jelena Vujić, Slaviša Orlović, Dušica Ristin, Ljiljana Djurić) give their accounts of the reform process, primarily in the area of teaching English and French, drawing attention to the communicative competences of both students and teachers.

Given that the reform process is broader than just higher education, some papers (Biljana Milatović, Milena Mrdak, Nada Todorov, Radmila Popović) discuss the work with younger age groups.

Modern methods, approaches and techniques in language and literature instruction

The focus of this chapter is on the diversity of new teaching tools. The contributors are: Andjelka Pejović, Danijela Djorović, Ifigenija Radulović, Isidora Bjelaković, Jasmina Dražić, Jelena Vojnović, Predrag Novakov, Ljiljana Petrovački, Gordana Štasni, Sabina Halupka-Rešetar, Tatjana Šuković, Vesna Krajišnik, Vesna Pilipović, Dušanka Zvekić-Dušanović and Nataša Dobrić.

Danijela Djorović’s “English and Italian cognates in teaching reading in a foreign technical language” looks at the Third

Language Acquisition Theory, according to which the knowledge of a single foreign language may facilitate the process of acquiring a second foreign language. Based on the tenets of this theory, she carried out a survey on a sample of 127 students, the results of which show that the understanding of specialized texts in Italian may be based on the knowledge of etymological cognates from English. The theory may be successfully applied in learning other languages, but also in acquiring other skills.

Five contributions discuss Serbian as a foreign or as a second language (Isidora Bjelaković, "Methodological framework for Serbian as a foreign language in 'Let us learn Serbian 1' (beginner level)"; Jasmina Dražić, "Principles for compiling a minimum monolingual dictionary of Serbian as a foreign language"; Jelena Vojnović, "Acquisition of the noun case system in learning Serbian as a foreign language (beginner level)"; Vesna Krajišnik, "Importance of semantic coverage in selecting a lexical minimum in teaching Serbian as a foreign language"; and Dušanka Zvekić-Dušanović and Nataša Dobrić, "Some possibilities of the application of modern methodological systems in teaching Serbian as a second language"). The approaches are varied and cover different aspects and problems involved in the teaching and learning of Serbian.

Specificities of university teaching

Two ideas underlie this chapter. One is that institutions of higher education are able to exert a global influence, especially in terms of elucidating cultural and language differences and improving relations among people. Accordingly, by offering instruction in different languages and literatures, the faculties of philology in Serbia help overcome cultural barriers. Several papers in this chapter lay emphasis on this dimension of teaching and learning foreign languages.

Edita Andrić in her paper "Teaching Hungarian as a second language" suggests a reconsideration of the status of Hungarian as a second language. In her view, students should be offered the possibility to learn it as a foreign language and, in a multiethnic environment such as Vojvodina, as a community language. Andrić advocates the communicative-contrastive method, emphasizing the typological difference between Hungarian and Serbian.

Julijana Vučo, Milica Nedeljković and Ivana Mitić, in their co-authored paper "Italy on this side of the Adriatic. Motivation attitudes and cultural stereotypes among students of Italian", find the beauty of the Italian language to be the students' chief motive for enrolling on the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, and the love of Italian art and culture to be their predominant sentiment.

Mirjana Marinković, in her "Specificities of teaching Turkish at Belgrade University", deems it necessary for Turkish to be studied through all stages of its development and in all of its distinctive features.

The other underlying idea of this chapter is the modernization of teaching in terms of developing new skills and using modern technology.

Nadežda Stojković's "Learning the principles of oral and written presentation in language instruction for academic/professional purposes" points to the importance of skills such as oral and written presentation. She offers an overview of the basic features and structure of a written presentation, types and forms of professional documents, as well as the distinctive features and principles of structuring spoken presentations. The underlying idea is that these methods have very practical purposes and can be effectively incorporated into university-level instruction.

Slavka Bogojević's "A new subject at our university: Academic writing" raises the question of standardizing academic

discourse in Serbian and points to the need for introducing Academic Writing as a subject into the curriculum with a view to encouraging the students to approach the act of writing more carefully and more scrupulously.

Slobodanka Kitić's "The theory of multiple intelligences and the teaching of English" points to pedagogic implications that Gardner's theory may have for language teaching. She lays emphasis on the concept of *education for understanding*, according to which the goal of modern education is to understand different aspects of the world around us.

Jovan Ajduković's "Linguistics on the Web: on the portal 'Balkan Rusistics'" points to the importance of electronic learning and internet presentation. The portal in question is a scholarly portal providing information about the Russian language, literature and culture, Slavic studies and general linguistics.

Biljana Mišić-Ilić ("Computers and foreign languages learning"), Jasmina Djordjević ("Information and communication technology in the modern classroom: Teaching English language and literature from one computer to another"), and Predrag Stanojević ("Internet and literary studies") point to the advantages of using modern technology in teaching language and literature, most of all the Internet, computers and language laboratories. The use of modern technologies boosts student motivation, and enhances the diversity and interestingness of the education process both for teachers and for students.

Concluding remarks

The values of this collection of papers are many and indisputable. A few suggestions may prove useful nonetheless.

The limited time frame of the conference and the limited size of the volume have made it impossible to cover all languages taught and learnt in Serbia and

the region, especially minority languages. A volume devoted to this particular topic in the future may address specific problems arising in a multilingual environment such as Serbia. Namely, the acquisition of Serbian as a second language by the minorities needs to be modernized in terms of student and teacher motivation, and of paying attention to particular problems arising as much from structural differences between Serbian and other languages as from the circumstances in which Serbian is being acquired.

Additional attention may be paid to typologically different languages from Serbian, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese and other languages successfully taught at university level for years. The question arises as to whether such languages require specific programmes and methods of instruction, and whether the specificities should be paid additional attention by the teachers. Also, not many contributions are based on empirical research, and there lack papers commenting on how the reform and new methods and tools function in practice or how students and teachers respond to the innovations.

On the whole, the volume is very useful as it reveals not only an increasing methodological diversity in language and literature teaching in Serbia, but also the diversity of languages available for learning. Modern European society being committed to the principle of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, a community's respect for cultural differences is reflected in the attention it pays to foreign languages teaching. The editorial success of the volume resides in the range of important topics structured into a whole.