

GERMAN LANGUAGE IN THE EU

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Abstract. *The position of the German language in the EU is very important. As the only official or regional language, it is spoken in as many as seven European countries, five of which are in the EU. In the EU institutions, besides French and English, it is the most important one as a working language. Within EU, Germany takes important steps for improvement of the German language as the official and working language, starting from the fact that mastering a foreign language, which is not English, represents the foundation for the best representation of Germany in Europe and the world. The enlargement of the European Union strengthened the tendency for introducing new official European languages and it represents the opportunity for improvement of current position of the German language in the European Union.*

Key Words: *German language, EU, foreign language, measures of improvement.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important goals of cultural policy in Germany is the promotion of the interest for learning the German language in the EU and the rest of the world. The German language, one of the most important world languages, as the first or the second language, is spoken by 125 million people. In Europe, 101 million people speak German as native language, in seven European countries: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy (Southern Tyrol) and Lichtenstein. In the EU institutions the German language is used as a working language, after English and French. Bearing this in mind, it is also called the international language.

When a language is called international and given the international position, we must explain why it is so international, if it is known that there are between 2,500 and 5,000 languages used for communication and that only few of them can take that complimentary title. [1, s.5-6]¹. It is conditioned by the answer to the question: how and how much is that language used in international communication and whether it is used as working or offi-

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¹ Ammon, U., Die internationale Stellung der deutschen Sprache, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1999

cial language at the major institutions of the region and the world. An international language is studied by other language communities, to a large extent, as a language that can be used in particular national frames which are of high importance in the world.

The use of the German language, as a language of science, was not moving in safe directions in previous years. Since the 17th century the Academy of Sciences in Paris and London favored the use of the French, i.e. the English language in communication between scientists. At the end of the 17th century three German Academies of Sciences (Göttingen, Berlin, Munich) had completely different approaches to the use of the German language, as a scientific language, so German has been used for communication between scientists only in Munich since 1759, when the Academy of Sciences was established.

By remarkable development of natural and social sciences in Germany in the 19th century, during the period of classical literature, the German language became international in many scientific disciplines. Its presence was noticeable in technical sciences and in the area of medicine, where it was obligatory and the only official language. It was rarely used in economics and legal sciences. It kept that significance until late 20th century, when English took over the leadership in scientific communication. [2]² Later on, it was not so exclusive, but it was present together with English and French. It has kept that role until the present day, and the title international language can be found only among the native speakers of this language.

In this paperwork we will represent current positions of the German language as a world language among other languages in the EU, measures for improvement of the German language use and the information on the results of that endeavor.

1. GERMAN LANGUAGE IN THE EU

The native language of Goethe and Shiller gets more and more supporters in Europe. In a study done by the European Commission [3]³ the German language with 12% is right behind the English language (34%) regarding foreign languages used by European citizens. As a native language, German is in the first place with 18% of 455 million citizens of the EU, then English (13%) and French (12%). In a large number of EU countries, German language is, without any problems, used by many citizens in everyday communication. In Belgium, that percentage is 15.3% of the entire population, in Finland 23.9%, in Luxembourg 90.1%, in Sweden 32%, etc. In the new EU member states, the German language is present with a significant percentage number (in Slovenia even 45% of the population can use the German language for communication). In Germany and Austria, the German language is the only official language; in Switzerland, Luxembourg, Lichtenstein, Italy and Belgium – it is a regional official language. However, in these countries the influence of "high German" (Hochdeutsch) is overcome by the influences of regional dialects. In previous historical periods in Austria the attempts to introduce domestic words, phrases and colloquialisms were present. The acceptance of such processes can be found even in some very serious linguistic studies. [4,s.126]⁴. Peculiarity in the

² More on this in: Ehlich Konrad, *Sprachen in den Wissenschaften*, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1999

³ Drewes, D., *Sprache Goethes oft im EU-Parlament zu hoeren*, Neue OZ, Osnabrueck, 27.3.2009

⁴ Ammon, U., *Die deutsche Sprache in Deutschland, Osterreich und der Schweiz*, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1995

development of the German language in Austria was under the pressure of political development of the country. By the disintegration of the Monarchy, at the end of World War I, Austria, in which German is spoken as the native language, relied on Germany for the first time. After 1945, in historical circumstances, the possibility of dissociation from Germany appeared again and the Austrian citizens themselves consciously approved the differences in the German language spoken by the Austrians. There are almost no linguists today who seriously doubt the fact that the German language in Austria is marked by language peculiarities, and Austria is considered to be one of the national centers of the German language.

When we say "Austrian German language" we think about the standard variant of the German language which is marked as "high German" and ranked as the German language which is used for official communication in Germany. In that way, the German language is, like English, understood as one and the same language with more standard variants. By Austrian accessing the EU, the Protocol no. 10 of the Austrian Contract for Association mentions the specificities of the German language in Austria as well as the acceptance of the standard variants of the German language in this country. [5,s.9]⁵ About 20 specific Austrian phrases concerning law are the same as particular phrases in Germany. In that way the Austrian words are accepted within the EU, which is one of the first acknowledgments of the Austrian variants of the German language.

Although it does not belong to the EU community, it is very important to mention that Switzerland is a country in which the German language is one of four official languages. The result of such state was, probably, high level of democratic awareness in Switzerland, which was never under the central state authority and where municipalities, by the traditional culture and linguistic heritage, chose themselves the language to be in official service. [6]⁶ Four cultural areas were created in Switzerland, relying on neighbor countries where German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance languages were equally spoken. In this way the German language in Switzerland became the official language of the population using the dialect (Schweizerdeutsch) which consists of about hundred (Alemannic) dialects. Using the dialect, not the standard German language in Switzerland does not mean that one is uneducated, narrow minded, poor, lives in the village, etc. Using the dialect in Switzerland means presenting one's identity to the other speaker in conversation. Written German (Schriftdeutsch) is a standard language spoken only at schools, universities, on the radio and TV, but another accent is used even there. By the standard German language Switzerland is connected to the cultural areas of the EU countries, in which the German language is spoken.

Besides French and Letzeburgish (language used in Luxembourg), the German language is the third language in official communication. It has been used in Luxembourg in official communication since 1848, together with French, and Letzeburgish accompanying them in 1984. Letzeburgish is a national language, French is the language of law and German together with them, the official language. The fact that the German language in Luxembourg is not native represents an important difference in comparison with the German language in Austria and Switzerland. In Luxembourg, the German language has

⁵ Weiss, A., G., Das oesterreichische Deutsch eine Standardvariante der deutschen Sprache, Die Schriftreihe des Landes Europabueros, Nr, s.a.

⁶ Hoefele, J., Was ist die deutsche Sprache wert, Zeit, Nr. 28-29, 2004

started losing its significance, primarily for political reasons (in 1914, after coming of the Germans and later during the World War II), then after the annexation of the Duchy, since when it has been less and less possible to find the advertisements in German or the names of the streets in German. Despite that, Luxembourg is considered to be a regional center of the German language. Luxembourg is burdened with peculiarities of the Letzeburgirsh dialect in spoken language, while the standard German language is used at universities. The dominant role of the German language in Luxembourg is visible in print media, where 85% of all newspaper texts are in German. In Luxembourg, many web pages are in German, as well as in English, while some of them are only in German.

The role of the German language as a world language in the EU completes the image of German ethnic community of 73,000 people, where, on the territory of East Belgium, on the border with Germany, German is used as the native, as well as the official language.

In the Italian province Bolcano, the northernmost province in Italy, in the Southern Tyrol, more than 2/3 of the population use German as the native language. In this area the German language is used at the court, by local authorities, at school and in everyday life.

As a language of ethnic minority in Poland, the German language has been neglected, especially after 1945, when "monoethnic" concept in forming the official language was applied. [7]⁷ Today, the language of minorities in Poland experiences the Renaissance, so the use of German as the native language appears in the areas inhabited by German minorities. These areas are on the borderline of Poland and Schleswig, where a significant number (more than 200,000) of German ethnic minorities live and speak some of the variants of the standard German language. Since German minorities in Poland live on the territory of upper Schleswig and East Prussia, we can talk about two German identities, limited to this territory. The results of this are two German dialects that they use to communicate. Schleswig's dialect experienced large Slavic influence. In order to improve the German language in this minority group, with huge support from Germany, a regular daily newspaper in the German language has been printed since 1990; supplementary teaching in the native language was introduced, for the purpose of preservation of traditional linguistic knowledge acquired within the family.

Of all EU states, we should mention Denmark, with small, but well organized German community of about 15,000 people who came there after the division of Province Schleswig-Holstein in 1920. This community still fosters the German culture in schools, cultural organizations and daily newspapers.

2. GERMAN AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN EU AND MEASURES FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT

The German language, as one of the world languages, has been studied by more than 17 million people, as the first or the second foreign language at universities, Goethe Institutes, at schools and organized courses. 120,000 teachers try to improve the knowledge of course beginners, pupils and students of the German language. In science and economy the German language is one of the most important languages. Large number of writers, philosophers, musicians and scientists used German (which was their native language) for

⁷ More details on this-Peter Rosenberg: *Entwicklung der europaeischen Sprachenvielfalt-Rolle der Minderheiten*, Uni Europa, Frankfurt an der Oder, s.a.

speaking and writing. In the 19th century this language was the most important and the most frequently used in science. Many international expert magazines from different areas of archaeology, philosophy, natural sciences and medicine were published in that language. Today, English is the dominant language in the area of science, as an international language in scientific communication, despite the fact that science and research works are in firm positions in the modern German society. The number of the German Nobel Prize winners is very important (30 Nobel Prizes in chemistry, 25 in medicine, 21 in physics, 10 in literature and 8 Nobel Prizes for piece).

The German language is studied as a professional language in economic communication. Germany is a traditional economic partner in Europe and on the markets of America and Asia; globally, it is a very important exporting nation. Because of the high quality that they possess, German products are highly required in the world, and the guarantees of that quality are certainly famous companies such as BASF, Bayer, Siemens, SAP, etc. Each year, a large number of fairs and other manifestations in the field of economy (IFA, CeBIT, IAA) are organized and are becoming even more important with the EU expansion. That is how language competence of the German language, as a language of economic communication has grown; today, it represents the key qualification of economic success. This language became the *lingua franca* in the countries of Middle and Eastern Europe, in the areas of big foreign investments and the knowledge of German is highly required in the companies which have close economic relations with German enterprises, or in the branch offices abroad. By learning German as a foreign language, one increases the chances for building a firm business career in the areas of economics, technical or social sciences, diplomacy, finance, mechanical engineering, pharmacy or tourism.

In computer science, the German language is, after English, the most frequently used for Internet communication. Popular Internet lexicon Wikipedia consists of more than 10 million articles in 250 languages, mostly in English (2.2 million), while the German language is in the second place, with 729,000 articles. [8]⁸

Germany makes significant efforts to improve the use of the German language in communication, primarily among the EU member states. Different institutes for language study, organizations for preservation of the German language and its protection from the influences of other languages, linguistic organizations abroad within German minorities in a large number of European countries, central places for learning German as a foreign language in Germany itself, are the best guarantees of wide action for equal status with the English language in the EU countries. Carriers of such actions are numerous but we will mention the following:

- Goethe Institute;
- DAAD;
- DAG;
- KMK;
- German cultural organizations outside Germany

Goethe Institute, with the central office in Munich, has more than 130 branch offices in more than 70 countries in the world and 15 institutes in Germany, in which German language courses are organized – individual or special, for beginners, teachers and Ger-

⁸ Europolitan, Internet Lexicon in Boom, Muenchen, 31.3.2008

man language teachers. The objective of this institute is also the development of German culture in continuity, the improvement of the German language, offering help in German language teaching, outside German language area and introducing beginners to German culture and science. Besides that, some exhibitions, book promotions, meetings with famous people from the German cultural life, etc, are organized within the work frame of this institute. [9,s. 76]⁹

DAAD (German academic service for teachers and students exchange, organizing teaching and studying) is the largest organization for establishing relations among international high education institutions. Besides teachers and students exchange on the state level, scholarship rewarding for research and studying, DAAD helps learning the German language as a foreign language in different EU countries with the help of its 500 lectors.

DAG (German Organization for working abroad) fosters German relations with other countries, and the main task is education of the German language teachers from Northern and Southeast Europe (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, a part of Poland and Russia). This organization deals with improvement of translation in literature and organization of seminars devoted to translation from the German language.

KMK (regular conference of Ministers of culture from all German countries) deals with education in Germany, development of German culture and German language abroad and offers a large number of programs for education and specialization of German language teachers outside Germany within the exchange program.

German cultural organizations do not operate only in European countries with German minorities. Within Goethe Institute, in many countries of Europe and the world, there are cultural organizations for fostering the German language and culture and offering similar programs as Goethe Institutes. These organizations (there are about 180 in the world) foster cultural dialogue with Germany by organizing special courses of the German language and literature and publishing daily and weekly newspaper in the German language.

The improvement of the German language in the EU, the Germans do not regard only through spreading of the German language as a foreign language in other EU member states, but through striving to know at least two foreign languages in one's own country. They consider that it is the best way to point out the importance of learning the German language as a foreign language outside Germany.

CONCLUSION

The future of the German language is decided on in Europe, certainly, because this language, by the number of people who use it as the native language, overcomes all European languages except Russian. In the EU, there is a tendency for the German language to get the status of the working language. For that reason cultural policy of Germany pays more attention to the position of the German language in Europe than it did before. The German language is the working language in a small number of EU institutions, but it is not used very often. Supported by Austria, Germany tries to achieve better position concerning language. Achieving the mentioned aim is not easy at all, because many EU

⁹ Kathe, St., Kulturpolitik um jeden Preis, Diss, Uni Trier, s.a

states, believing that their language does not have a chance to become the working language, turn to English. Besides, Spain and Italy have also been trying to point out the importance of their languages. Under these pressures the German language provides a better position for itself and a bigger role in the EU states.

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NEMAČKI JEZIK U EU

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Pozicija nemačkog jezika u EU je veoma značajna. Kao jedini službeni ili regionalni jezik pojavljuje se u čak sedam zemalja Evrope, od toga u pet zemalja Evropske unije. U institucijama EU je, pored francuskog, a posle engleskog jezika, najvažniji radni jezik. U okviru EU, Nemačka preduzima značajne korake za unapređenje nemačkog jezika kao službenog i radnog, polazeći od činjenice da ovladavanje stranim jezikom koji nije engleski, predstavlja fundament za najbolje reprezentovanje Nemačke u Evropi i svetu. Proširenjem EU pojačala se i težnja za uvođenjem novih oficijalnih evropskih jezika i to predstavlja mogućnost za poboljšanje sadašnjeg položaja nemačkog jezika u zemljama Evropske unije.

Ključne reči: *nemački jezik, EU, strani jezik, mere unapređenja*