

## NEW AGE REQUIRES A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION: THE REFLECTION ON DOCTORATE DISSERTATIONS DEFENDED AT THE FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY IN BELGRADE

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### Abstract

This article aims to underline interest in the changing perspective of education in its worldwide aspect of teaching and learning. Traditional vs. modern education in teaching technologies applied in the classroom and online-teaching manifests differences. Our interest is focused to English as a foreign/second language- teaching globally.

The modern version of education classified as education for the digital world, where inter-nationalism is strongly supported, is related to multi-culturalism among some authors. Language Learning (LL), as well as Foreign Language Learning (FLL), is a part of modern education with the stress on teaching a language to get skills of manipulating the language for job opportunities in the 3rd Millennium's digitalized world.

The New Age differentiates teacher preparation as a problem according to new standards in teaching. Foreign language teachers are less ready to implement new requirements in classroom teaching than students who have become accustomed to the digital world because they were born into it. Students are used to applying digital knowledge in learning a foreign language. Therefore, teacher training in digital thinking through computer-based skills and abilities must evolve.

To conclude, we wish to straighten ideas to the holistic approach to teaching that will empower students to grow their professional, social, and emotional personalities implemented in the new world attitudes.

In this paper, we will raise issues of methods and the choice of teaching materials, the approach to teaching EFL, and the importance of the curriculum corresponding to student learning needs. In this respect, the validity of the doctoral theses defended at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, the Department of English, 2015 – 2018, is a matter of analysis by applying qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

**Keywords:** *New Age education, the digital world, modern teaching technologies.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The New Age<sup>2</sup> demands an education<sup>3</sup> that will allow students to learn from different materials apart from textbooks intentionally written to foster rote learning. The reproduction of teaching materials in the classroom has come far beyond the learning goals of traditional schooling<sup>4</sup>.

“Giving lecture style presentations is often regarded as old-fashioned and connected with many disadvantages: lectures fail to provide instructors with feedback about student learning and rest on the presumption that all students learn at the same pace. Moreover, students’ attention wanes quickly during lectures and information tends to be forgotten quickly when students are passive. Finally, lectures emphasize learning by listening, which is a disadvantage for students who prefer other learning styles. Alternative instructional practices based on active and problem-oriented learning presumably do not suffer from these disadvantages” (Schwerdt & Wuppermann 2011: 365).

When teaching a foreign language, we expect students to react according to the developing communication. It is a matter of taking action, in the right place, at the right moment, with appropriate phrasing, by paying attention to the participant’s personality in the conversation. New teaching goals should include rethinking of education methodology and learning English as a foreign language for a learner’s successful future life.

The second important thing is the pace students should keep up with the job Market.<sup>5</sup> The Global world in this new-age schooling aims for academic excellence in the teaching classroom. Students learn not just through in-room teaching but with the help of extra-curricular activities that promote their holistic growth and enhancement into well-trained individuals. Foreign language performed in real communicative situations helps students develop knowledge of science and technology. With the help of excellent foreign language knowledge and the ability to manipulate language forms, students get insight into scientific matters through literature sources and conversing while exchanging ideas in professionally-based research projects. Researchers in education policy improvement to be competitive to modern learning requirements set

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<sup>2</sup> New Age learning provides interactive learning technology that helps increase motivation for learning in the digital world. See about the new theory for teaching and learning in: John Gerard Scott Goldie (2016). *Connectivism: A knowledge learning theory for the digital age?* *Medical Teacher*, 38, 10, pp. 1064-1069, published online April 29, 2016; Steve Wheeler (2015). *Learning with ‘e’s. Educational theory and practice in the digital world.* Crown House Publishing; Betsy Duke, Ginger Harper, and Mark Johnston (2013). *Connectivism as a Digital Age Learning Theory*, New York: *The International HETL Review*, Special Issue 2013, pp. 4-13.

<sup>3</sup> Kopylovskaya Y. Maria (2018). *Tuning-in: Re-thinking an ESP Methodology Course in the Digital Age*, pp. 213-237. In: *Teaching Languages and Cultures: Developing Competences, Re-thinking Practices*. Eds: Lazarevic Nina, Paunovic Tatjana and Markovic Ljiljana. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> Guido, Schwerdt & Amelie, C. Wuppermann (2011). *Is traditional teaching really all that bad? A within-student between-subject approach.* *Economics of Education Review*, 30, 2, pp. 365-379.

<sup>5</sup> Nina Andreyevna Ivanenko et al. (2015). *Competitiveness of Professional Education: Purposes, Tasks and Factors of Its Participation in the International Educational Services Market*, *Asian Social Science*, 11, 1, pp. 369-374.

the teaching goals “to keep the competitive advantages and to compete at the market of educational services. Indicators of competitiveness of educational services are the following: quality of training syllabus (structure and contents); quality of the teachers’ staff (qualification, rank, scientific degree, preparation level); quality of methods of training and education (technique and technology of teaching); quality of resource ensuring process of service: material (lecture rooms and laboratories, equipment, expendable materials); informational and methodical (educational literature, grants, collections of tasks, models, exercise machines, etc.); quality of scientific researches; quality of the organization and realization of used technologies of providing educational services (form and content of educational processes, motivators); quality of control the process of providing educational services; quality process providing educational services result (compliance of students and graduates’ knowledge level to requirements of the state educational standard of specialties); high satisfaction of consumers (pupils, employers, etc.) quality of educational services; high satisfaction of teachers and staff of educational institution with the work; high degree of society members education” (Rosentsvaig, 2008, Ivanenko et al. 2015).

Hands-on teaching as part of the extra-curriculum program becomes the third issue when modernizing the education policy. Theory and practice go hand-in-hand. Neither theory nor practice is strengthened more in modern education. The importance is identical because these two support each other, and education gets the meaning. This factor in education makes teaching seen both as a theoretical and practical job. The holistic approach to teaching supports kinesthetic activities to gain value and raise the importance to the level where theoretical knowledge followed by the abilities to perform practical skills become equal for preparation to be ready and evolve into a subject that can deal with complicated real-life professional engagement.

Our goal in this paper is to appoint to education for the third Millennium that becomes significantly more important, especially since knowledge of the English language is the focus of interest.<sup>6</sup> With the help of English, interactions among people from different language areas and cultural characteristics become possible.

Another issue we point out in this paper is the question of professionalism in teaching. It concerns the initial and further preparation of teachers for the foreign language teaching job and their knowledge about the world that is striving for directions of development goals on the global scene. In the questionnaire I performed with my postgraduate and doctoral students four years ago, we can see that most students heard little or nothing about Global education requirements.

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<sup>6</sup>Dolic, S. (2019). The global perspective of issues in the education of EFL and the reflection on postgraduate studies in Serbia. Belgrade: *IRASA International Scientific Conference Proceedings, SETI I*, 2019, pp. 228-237.

Dolic, S. (2020). World English and its reflection to education in Serbia. Belgrade: *IRASA International Scientific Conference Proceedings, SETI 2*, October 2-3, 2020.

## 1. MODERN VS. TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The 3rd Millennium is overloaded with global issues. The New Age brought a different perspective of how to look upon problems and the possible acts to take to solve world problems. Education does not remain unchanged concerning advanced global requirements affecting social life and the world market. Education policy must meet with New Age requirements. Life in the so-called Global digital world is changing its view on education policy worldwide. According to the new age educational requirements while “understanding the role and relevance of technology in today's schools as well as planning for future integration” (Lynne & Levin 2009)<sup>7</sup> focus attention to the school system that presents a dual form of the curriculum; a combination of theoretical teaching followed by practical teaching organized through extracurricular activities. Dual education has the role of preparing students for active involvement in work immediately after graduation.

Global education<sup>8</sup> means acquiring knowledge, possessing skills in overcoming obstacles to the development of society, understanding the problems the world faces, undertaking activities for coming to a unique decision, and being able to shape reality by following the overall global changes.

Undertaking activities for coming to decisions, and developing the craft of shaping real life, are new demands placed before students to fulfil them within the framework of dual education. The new-age school will embrace aspects of learning that can lead learners to cope with global market requirements and job opportunities. In a word, in modern, new-age education, knowledge helps students to develop self-confidence, self-consciousness, and an emotionally stable personality.

Driven by the desire, real life turns into a constant race for the standard and style of life which seeks to attain the rise and development of the countries that are said to have reached a high level of development in every aspect. Education "for the world" becomes a formula for achieving this end. Often "world" and "global" are terminologically replaced, but the impression is that they are conceptually equal terms. Oxford English Dictionary defines "world" as "the earth together with all of its countries and peoples", or "all of the people and societies on the earth". "Global" is related to the whole world: *worldwide, international, or intercontinental*.

Teaching materials those students in traditional schooling should learn and reproduce in the classroom do not work anymore. Rote-learning does not help students develop social, psychological, and emotional growth. In the traditional education knowledge is passively accumulated. This type of learning is not functional anymore.

In keeping pace with global changes, modern education must change its approach to teaching and learning. School curriculum can provide good theoretical

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<sup>7</sup> Lynne Schrum & Barbara B. Levin (2009). *Leading 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Schools: Harnessing Technology for Engagement and Achievement*, SAGE Publications.

<sup>8</sup> Eriksson, Gillian (2012). Virtually there – transforming gifted education through new technologies, trends and practices in learning, international communication and global education. *SAGE Journals*, published online January 1, 2012, 28, 1, pp. 7-18.

knowledge, but when combined with an extracurricular education, students are ready to involve in global job opportunities. The point is that education should become meaningful for New Age.

The figure of an English teacher as an educator and a leader in the teaching process becomes central and more responsible than ever. The teacher skills and appropriate education make a pathway to find the clue for the accumulated global issues and to set goals of education to be changed.

What are the expected changes in education policy?

The organization of education depends on many factors: social, political, scientific and technological, financial, and many others that affect the development of a nation. People show an urge to compete with highly developed countries.

The holistic approach in new-age education motivates students to learn more and become better educated. Learners develop cognitive skills that help them survive in this most competitive world. It includes online learning and courses based on Information and Communication Technology for training students, and computer-based learning functions as a means of self-learning at home. The teacher role is to guide and assist in acquiring knowledge. On the other hand students get in touch with everything new in the world regarding the science they are interested for.

“Education must meet the needs of the human spirit”. Through well-organized education, learners develop “a satisfactory personal philosophy to approach learning and reveal a sense of values to cultivate tastes for literature, music, and the arts, also to grow in the ability to analyse problems and arrive at thoughtful conclusions” (Bailey 1987,10th edition).

Traditional education is essentially teacher-oriented authority into knowledge of the language and the essence of the subject he teaches. Since authorities are to obey, the teacher is an example of a model for knowledge acquisition. Teaching takes place with the help of textbooks. Modern education has brought about a complete change in the role of the teacher: he becomes an advisor, a guide through the subject matter, a co-learner, and he directs the student to steps in expanding knowledge, etc. The attitude towards textbooks is also changing: they remain a part of teaching materials without their unique necessity. Other sources of teaching materials such as books, articles, and conversations with learners from different sides of the world are at hand thanks to internet-based connections and access through the world-wide-web, so to say, it relies on the use of digital resources and multimedia platforms. New technologies applied in learning are mighty because they allow knowledge exchange endlessly.

In summary: traditional education policy and modern education differ in teaching methods, the content and delivery of information, the goals and objectives, and the overall approach to learning. While traditional education emphasizes the mastery of basic skills and knowledge, modern education emphasises critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, preparing students for the rapidly changing demands of the job market and workplace.

## 2. THE HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE NEW AGE

The holistic approach in modern education designates the philosophy that recognizes the interconnectedness of all things focusing on the development of the whole person, including their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The belief is that education is learner-oriented and that the learner is an active participant in the learning process.

This approach emphasizes the importance of experimental learning, where students are encouraged to learn by doing and to reflect on their experiences. The focus is on providing a well-rounded education that includes academic topics and art, music, physical education, and other subjects that promote creativity, critical thinking, and personal growth.

The holistic approach also recognizes the importance of the teacher-student relationship. Teachers are facilitators of learning, and they are encouraged to create a supportive and collaborative learning environment that promotes student engagement and motivation. This approach values diversity and recognizes unique student needs and learning styles.

Overall, the holistic approach to teaching and learning in the New Age represents a shift away from the traditional education that focuses solely on knowledge and towards a more integrated and personalized approach that values the development of the whole person.

The teaching method and approach to education in the 21st century implies the professionalism of teachers that reflects their preparation for the foreign language teaching job and their knowledge about the world that is striving for directions of development of goals on the global scene<sup>9</sup>. The questionnaire I performed with my master's and doctoral students four years ago showed that students do not know what Global education means, and what its goals and objectives are.

To solve the world accumulated global problems, the educational objectives for young people need to change. Learning is replaced by knowing; a lecture to learn is replaced with one to understand and collect information. In teaching to think, facts and information get linked, opinions are formed, and students come to solutions to problems. Knowledge is gained through tasks, with work on the project, by designing the best solutions to issues while using the fastest way to get to them. The same principles are applied in teaching English as an important part of education globally.

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<sup>9</sup> See: Hafdís Ingvarsdóttir (2011). Teaching English in a New Age: Challenges and Opportunities. In book: Hudson, B., Meyer, MA. *Beyond Fragmentation: Didactics, Learning and Teaching in Europe*, pp.93-106.

### 3. THE ROLE OF ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE IN THE NEW AGE

The no. 1 objective in education for global purposes is learning English as a part of education taught to make knowledgeable citizens, self-determined, self-organized, and ready to face world challenges. Fundamentally, Global education means that teaching English is the basis which provides a good understanding of exchanging communication in different scientific fields. Therefore, English takes over the role of a tool acting as necessary for the development of nations.

During learning English to know, the dichotomy of language and culture in multicultural approach is teaching real-world issues. The role of English is active in developing world progress because it is a tool that brings scientists together in coming to decisions.

The dualism between linguistics and methodology leads to the development of interest in the English language as motivation to know, understand and establish possibilities to solve issues and get involved in global actions, understand the problems, sympathize, and find ways to minimize them. Knowledge of foreign languages enables man to understand and accept the demands of reality and relations between nations.

The unavoidable component is the cultural aspect represented through language. In education at schools and universities, a foreign language with its accompanying cultural component is revealed through communication and felt in ways of behaving. Through learning a foreign language, we expand our horizons and acquire the necessary knowledge regarding peoples' reactions when they find themselves in different life situations and business conditions.

It is important to think globally and get an education that will give that initial push and open a gateway to the global business world. It is the way of thinking students should get into education. English as an international language comes into focus because, without knowing English, no successful business arrangements or any other cooperation between nations is impossible to establish.

Adequate and appropriate knowledge of the English language makes possible success in business, the use of new technologies in goods for widely spread consumption, the management of jobs in companies located in many countries around the earth and in many other parts of society. All the actions people take around the world depend on English language.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan raised concerns at the opening event of International Education Week on November 18, 2013, saying that

“Today, a nation’s prosperity depends on its people’s ability to thrive in the global marketplace. This is true for the U.S. and our neighbours across the globe. What’s more, in a nation as diverse as ours, the ability to interact comfortably and confidently with people of all backgrounds and points of view is critical. And that makes it more important than ever to provide all students with a well-rounded, world-class education— including opportunities to gain global competencies and world language skills; to understand other cultures, and, to study abroad. Learners learn to be curious and intellectually productive; they learn to use and apply received knowledge to understand how the world changes along the route toward the

appointed goal. Learners learn how to apply the appropriate knowledge and manipulate global issues effectively.”

“To succeed in this new global age, our students will need capacities that include but go beyond reading, mathematics, and science – they will need to be far more knowledgeable and curious about world regions and global issues, attuned to diverse perspectives, able to communicate across cultures and in other languages, and disposed to act toward the common good. Put simply, preparing our students to participate fully in today’s and tomorrow’s world demands that we nurture their global competence which herein is defined as the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance.”

#### 4. REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH RESULTS OF DOCTORAL THESIS DEFENDED AT THE FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY IN BELGRADE, SERBIA

Researching the topics that doctoral students dealt with in their dissertations caused an interest to the modern attitude toward education in this new age. Guided by the idea that Doctoral dissertations aim to give a new and fresh view of the education to improve the developmental process of a country by including knowledge and leading the way in creating the reality by establishing the basis for its new image, we decided to research and study defended doctoral dissertations.

The research is longitudinal, and we observe topics and themes of doctoral dissertations defended at Belgrade Faculty of Philology.

The applied techniques are quantitative and qualitative. For the goals we expected to reach in this paper, we rely on two sources: National repositories of dissertations in Serbia – NaRDuS and Kobson. In NaRDuS, 3101 doctoral dissertations titles were followed by short summaries and defended at various faculties at Belgrade University. Our interest focuses on 116 topics related to the field of research within the studies of teaching English as a foreign language. Kobson's source gave us 81 titles that had grounds in the English language field of research. Compared to Kobson's source in NaRDuS 36 more titles were found. It makes 116 titles examined altogether for this paper. In the period of 01.06.2015 – 25.12.2018, 341 doctoral theses were defended at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, out of which 116 we select to base the research on issues dealing with English literature, English teaching methodology and research studies in English linguistics.

Table 1: Number of English field dissertations in NaRDuS and Kobson sources

English field of study	Total number of dissertations	Percentage of dissertations	Year of defence
	116	100%	06.2015 – 25.12.2018.
TEFL	50	43%	
Literature	45	39%	
Linguistics	21	18%	

The data listed in Table 1 point to the following conclusions:

1. Students consider teaching methodology as a valuable field for research and study at the postgraduate level.

The reasons could be multiple. From experience, we can say that most doctorate students teach English in schools, and they teach at different levels of primary, secondary, and tertiary education. In their dissertations, they go deeper into the analyses of teaching issues that appear in active classroom teaching. Therefore, they think it necessary to come to a relevant solution through scientifically recognized solutions and conclusions. The justification we find in the topics as follows: *Evaluation and assessment of task-based activities in CLIL, Curriculum framework for foreign language preschool teaching in Serbia, The influence of grammar teaching on the general knowledge of English as a foreign language, Predictors of achievement in English language learning among students of non-English studies in Serbia,* and so on.

2. Two more fields, English Literature and English Linguistics, are less represented.

The scientific field of English literature consists of 45 titles, only five less than TEFL, which means that literature is a favourite subject among Ph.D. students of English. The titles are, for example, *The use of archetypal structures in James Joyce's fiction, Euphony of (de)generation: the role of music in the works of Ian McEwan, English modernist travel writing: literary and cultural features,* etc.

The field of English linguistics is represented with titles that relate to problems in grammar and morphology as, for example, *Evidence and epistemic modality: epistemic modal operators as bearers of evidential meanings in English and Serbian, Phrasal verbs with particles IN, OUT, ON and OFF in English: Cognito-linguistic analysis, Diachronic analysis of Participation and Gender in English,* etc.

Table 2: Corpus-based topics in English language field of research.

Field of research	Number of doctoral thesis	Corpus-based topics	Remarks
EFL methodology	50	Corpus-analysis in ESP/EFL; contrastive analysis issues: English – Serbian; strategies and techniques in EFL/ESP teaching; student needs in ICT; student autonomy; teacher education; development of speaking & writing skills; gender stereotypes in teaching &	Three dissertations are based on teaching English as lingua franca. Only one dissertation deals with education policy and FLT in Serbia. Two dissertations deal with further teacher education. Two dissertations study gender stereotypes. One dissertation is based on cultural

		learning; education policy in Serbia; English as lingua franca; cultural aspect.	perspective in teaching EFL. One dissertation considers the issue of student needs.
English literature	45	Classical analysis of issues in poetic and narrative works.	Few works deal with female characters in authors' works.
English linguistics	21	Linguistic analysis is based on grammatical and morphological sources and issues.	One dissertation deals with differences in BE & AE and analyses linguistic levels.

The title-based examination of the doctoral thesis and their summaries give us insight into the areas of English studies that Ph.D. students like to engage in the research. The conclusions after having examined dissertations in the English field of study defended at Belgrade Faculty of Philology in the academic years from mid-2015 until December 2018 are the following:

1. The corpus-related research in dissertations is adequate according to the goal of the research study.
2. The issues occurring in ESP teaching and learning are represented in dissertations. The students at doctoral studies put much effort into studying the ESP Methodology of teaching through terminology for science and technology.
3. The varieties of topics in the field of EFL methodology show a range of interest in teaching problems to gain better results in advanced knowledge and to improve the ability to use English in spoken and written manifestations. This study attitude applies both to the teaching of General English and to teaching English for special needs and purposes.
4. The literary themes are less represented. The topics in dissertations dealing with literature examined according to the traditional principle in a classical manner of literature study were the subject of many doctoral studies.
5. Topics from the scientific field of English linguistics include research studies in grammar and morphology. The scientific fields of semantics and pragmatics are represented in several doctoral theses. The reason is that students are either less interested in the mentioned fields in linguistics or do not possess enough knowledge to deal responsibly with the linguistic topics in question. This statement is subjective.

## CONCLUSION

The study of titles and themes of defended doctoral dissertations at Belgrade Faculty of Philology and the field of research in English teaching methodology, literature, and linguistics prove that the traditional research approach is applied without changing orientation toward new trends in global education requirements. Only three out of 50

dissertations deal with issues in teaching English as an international or Global language and for global goals of education. The titles that regard gender stereotypes were found in several dissertations. It is important to note that English literature belongs to scientific research students interested in doctoral dissertations. We cannot say that such topics help solve world issues. They can create a significant source of topics that provoke imagination and communication realized through reasoning and thinking about the questions in literature studies.

English linguistic field of science is the least represented in doctoral dissertations that we examined. One possible reason could be the lack of knowledge of linguistic levels of English and their mutual relations with non-native speakers of English.

In conclusion, we can say that education seen globally is based on teaching and learning to know as a general requirement. English as a foreign language is taught for business and management, also to understand and develop world progress.

About the holistic approach to teaching English as a foreign language in Serbia, we can conclude that teachers try to implement it in rare examples. Our conclusion shows that teachers need training concerning the overall global world education for today's world. The teaching license is being renewed, but the question is the quality of the seminars and the selected topics presented to teachers globally and to teachers of English as an international language. We see the solution in the authority and professionalism of the seminar organizers, who should be made up of methodologists teaching native and foreign languages as leaders in choosing topics for teacher training seminars.

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