

ASSESSMENT OF FL SYLLABI AT THREE MONTENEGRIN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: One of the aims of the Erasmus+ ReFLAME project is to update the present foreign language (FL) syllabi at the non-philological departments at the three Montenegrin universities – the University of Montenegro (UoM), Mediterranean University (MedUni) and the University of Donja Gorica (UDG). To this end, the first task was to collect and assess all the first and second FL syllabi at the three Montenegrin universities. The analysis included examining the FL syllabi to provide the data regarding, among other things, the number of the syllabi collected, the faculties they are taught at, the foreign languages being taught, the number of general FL courses as opposed to FL for specific purposes courses, as well as the information on the textbooks and literature used. The results of the analysis of 226 FL syllabi, corresponding to 181 courses offered at 30 faculties at the three universities, show that the vast majority of these are taught at UoM (195), whereas 24 are taught at MedUni and 7 at UDG respectively. At UoM, 137 FL syllabi cover English, while 58 are related to other languages – Italian (14), German (14), Russian (14) and French (16). All of the overall 31 syllabi at MedUni and UDG pertain to English. A slightly higher number of the syllabi cover FL for specific purposes courses (113) compared to general FL courses (111), and only two pertain to FL for academic purposes courses. Most of the FL syllabi do not mention any exit level to be achieved, and thus are not in line with the Montenegrin Law on Higher Education (which stipulates a C1 exit level according to the CEFR). In terms of the textbooks and literature used, all the general FL courses are well equipped with appropriate textbooks. Nonetheless, there is a notable lack of adequate textbooks for FL for specific purposes courses in particular academic fields. This result was considered when making a decision on which LSP textbooks should be produced as part of the project. The overall findings of the FL syllabi analysis will also be of great use in the development stage of the project in which one of the tasks will deal explicitly with updating the current FL syllabi.

Keywords: Erasmus+ ReFLAME project; FL syllabi assessment; general FL courses; FL for specific purposes courses

Introduction

This article is the result of the analysis conducted as part of the activities defined within Work Package 1 (WP1 – Preparation) of the Reforming Foreign

Languages in Academia (ReFLAME) project. ReFLAME is a CBHE project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Its main aim is to strengthen the capacities of Montenegrin universities to offer modern, market-oriented foreign language education for non-philology students in response to a growing demand for foreign language skills in most work positions (ReFLAME Project Application 7). The project is coordinated by the Faculty of Philology of the University of Montenegro in cooperation with national partners – MedUni, UDG, Ministry of Education of Montenegro (associated partner), as well as the EU partners – the University of Warsaw, the University for Foreigners of Perugia, and University of Zagreb.

The ReFLAME project follows the *National and regional priorities for joint and structural projects Erasmus+ KA2 capacity building in higher education (CBHE) 2019*¹ which set Languages as a Category 1 national priority for Montenegro when it comes to modernisation of curricula and developing new and innovative methodologies. In a similar vein, foreign language teaching and learning is a national higher education priority in Montenegro, as decided by the Montenegrin Government and confirmed by the following documents:

1. *Higher Education Act* (2014), whose Article 80 reads as follows: “A higher education institution shall, within the curricula it organises, provide conditions for its students to learn a minimum of one foreign language at the upper advanced level”.

2. *The Strategy of Higher Education in Montenegro for the period 2016-2020* prescribes that foreign languages shall be compulsory at universities. The Strategy even recommends introducing as many FL lessons as possible into the university curricula, so that the students would gain the foreign language competences at a C1 (advanced) or C2 (proficiency) level when they graduate. In addition, the Strategy prescribes introducing teaching in English at the university level through the *English as Medium of Instruction* approach.

3. *The Strategy of Educating Teachers in Montenegro (2017-2024)* prescribes that teaching in foreign languages should be intensified in Montenegro, so as to foster incoming and outgoing mobility. The Strategy also prescribes introducing courses and modules to be taught in English (*English as Medium of Instruction*) in order to improve incoming mobility.

4. *The Strategy of the University of Montenegro 2019-2024* states that at all organization levels certain modules have been introduced to be conducted in English, in order to increase the number of foreign students (incoming mobility) and “internationalization at home”, and at least 15% of the subjects per study program have been offered in English. However, it also mentions that one of the risks involves inadequate knowledge of the English language for teaching.

In the context of setting languages as a priority no. 1 within the Erasmus+

¹ The document is available at <http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/wp-content/uploads/Priorities-for-CBHE-2019.pdf>.

framework, learning a foreign language at the upper advanced level emphasised by the aforementioned documents, and aiming at introducing courses and modules in English for fostering incoming mobility and strengthening the internationalisation of the universities, one of the aims of the ReFLAME project is to update the present FL syllabi at the non-philological departments at the three Montenegrin universities – the UoM, the MedUni and the UDG. Updating the syllabi will lead to harmonising them with the law and improving their quality, which should ultimately reflect in better and more market-customised foreign language knowledge of the Montenegrin universities students (ReFLAME Project Application 5). To fulfil this aim, the process of the FL syllabi assessment at the three Montenegrin universities was carried out. It is dealt with in this paper and its following sections. The methodology section provides details about the analytical procedure. The results part outlines the findings of the analysis, which is followed by the discussion and conclusion sections.

Methodology

For the purpose of the analysis, within *WP1 – Preparation* and its task *1.3 Assess the FL syllabi*, the first step was to collect all first and second FL syllabi taught at the non-philological departments at the three Montenegrin universities. The collection process lasted for a month – from 15 December 2019 to 15 January 2020. Upon the successful completion of the collection process, a syllabi analysis ensued in February 2020. The analysis² involved examining 226 FL syllabi, corresponding to 181 courses taught at 30 faculties of the three universities, to provide the data on the questions presented in Table 1.

1. How many syllables have been collected?
2. How many courses do the collected syllabi cover?
3. What languages do the syllabi cover?
4. How many of those syllabi cover general FL and how many of them cover FL for academic/specific purposes?
5. What year are those taught in?
6. How many classes per week are devoted to FL in each of the courses?
7. Do all the syllabi have all the required elements? If not, what parts are generally missing in the incomplete ones?
8. Do the learning outcomes mention the entrance/exit level of foreign language which is to be achieved? For those that do, are they in line with the Law on Higher Education (C1 exit level)?
9. Do all the courses have textbooks (textbooks officially published by reputable international publishers)?
10. Other comments

Table 1. Issues considered in the FL syllabi analysis³

² The analysis was carried out by Milica Vuković-Stamatović, the project coordinator at the time, and the UoM project team members: Branka Živković, Vesna Bratić and Deja Piletić.

³ The questions listed in Table 1 were extracted from the document *FL Syllabi Assesse-*

The results obtained for the syllabi of 30 faculties of the three universities, alongside all FL syllabi, were sent to the EU project partners from Croatia and Poland for their in-depth analysis and to the associated national partner – the Ministry of Education at the time. They provided useful suggestions and recommendations, which were later followed in designing the document entitled *Guidelines & Recommendations for Writing Contents of a Course Syllabus*⁴. These guidelines were afterwards followed in designing 10 syllabi⁵ for the LSP courses held within the ReFLAME LSP Summer School⁶ in June/July 2021 at the three Montenegrin universities.

Results

The FL syllabi analysis

This section gives an overview of the data obtained. It includes the details regarding the number of the FL syllabi collected, the faculties they are taught at, foreign languages being taught, information on the number of general foreign language courses as opposed to foreign language for specific and academic purposes courses, study years in which they are taught at various faculties, number of hours devoted to FL per week, required elements of syllabi, as well as the information on the learning outcomes and the textbooks and literature used. The data are summarised in the following three tables. Table 2 provides the information on the analysed issues referring to 195 syllabi offered at 18 faculties of the UoM. Table 3 outlines the data about 24 syllabi of 5 faculties at the MedUni, while Table 4 includes the details referring to 7 syllabi at the UDG.

ment, WP 1 – Preparation, Task 1.3, Revision Sheet (2020) – compiled by Milica Vuković-Stamatović (UoM); various parts of this report were prepared by the UoM project team members: Branka Živković, Deja Piletić, Vesna Bratić, Milica Vuković-Stamatović, Zdravko Babić and Petar Božović; the MedUni project team members: Elena Lilova, the UDG project team member: Dragica Žugić, the University of Warsaw project team member: Elzbieta Gajek, the University of Zagreb project team member: Ana Matijević and the representative of the Ministry of Education at the time: Nada Kovač.

⁴ The guidelines were prepared and written by the project team members: Vesna Bratić (UoM), Dragica Žugić (UDG) and Tamara Jovović (MedUni).

⁵ These are available at https://www.reflame.ucg.ac.me/updated_syllabi.html

⁶ More information available at <https://www.reflame.ucg.ac.me/SUMMER-SCHOOL.html>

UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO						
No. of faculties	18					
How many syllables have been collected?	195					
How many courses do the collected syllabi cover? NB: Some departments have joint classes.	150					
What languages do the syllabi cover?	English 137	French 16	Russian 14	Italian 14	German 14	
How many of those syllabi cover general FL and how many of them cover FL for academic/specific purposes?	General 95		Academic 2		Specific 98	
What year are those taught in?	Year 1 83	Year 2 81	Year 3 18	Year 4 8	Year 5 3	Year 6 2
How many classes per week are devoted to FL in each of the courses? L=lectures; T=tutorials	2L 36	1L+1T 3	2L+1T 103		2L+2T 53	
Do all the syllabi have all the required elements? If not, what parts are generally missing in the incomplete ones?	Most of them do. A few of them miss some fields (it varies).					
Do the learning outcomes mention the entrance/exit level of foreign language which is to be achieved? For those that do, are they in line with the Law on Higher Education (C1 exit level)?	Very few mention C1 level. Some mention B2.2 level. Most of them do not mention a level according to CEFR ⁷ .					
Do all the courses have textbooks (textbooks officially published by reputable international publishers)?	The general ones do. The specific ones vary – textbooks are missing for: civil engineering, arts (music, fine arts, drama), natural sciences and mathematics, political science, agriculture, humanities, electronics and engineering & power systems and control.					
Other comments	The forms vary. Some of the syllabi have few pieces of information, some are more elaborate.					

Table 2. University of Montenegro⁸

⁷ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

⁸ The data provided in Table 2 are extracted from Vuković-Stamatović (6).

MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY						
No. of faculties	5					
How many syllables have been collected?	24					
How many courses do the collected syllabi cover? NB: Some departments have joint classes.	24					
What languages do the syllabi cover?	English 24	French	Russian	Italian	German	
How many of those syllabi cover general FL and how many of them cover FL for academic/specific purposes?	General 10		Academic		Specific 14	
What year are those taught in?	Year 1 9	Year 2 9	Year 3 6	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
How many classes per week are devoted to FL in each of the courses? L=lectures; T=tutorials	1L+1T 2	1L+2T 14	1L+3T 6	2L+2T 2		
Do all the syllabi have all the required elements? If not, what parts are generally missing in the incomplete ones?	They do.					
Do the learning outcomes mention the entrance/exit level of foreign language which is to be achieved? For those that do, are they in line with the Law on Higher Education (C1 exit level)?	One syllabus only mentions C1 level. The majority mention B2 as an exit level.					
Do all the courses have textbooks (textbooks officially published by reputable international publishers)?	The general ones do. The specific ones vary – textbooks are missing for: Visual Arts, recent editions and books are missing for Business and Economy, Information Technology, Tourism.					
Other comments	The forms vary. Some of the syllabi have few pieces of information, some are more elaborate.					

Table 3. Mediterranean University⁹

⁹ The data provided in Table 3 are extracted from Vuković-Stamatović (7).

University of Donja Gorica Centre for Foreign Languages					
How many syllabi have been collected?	7				
How many courses do the collected syllabi cover?	7 (all University faculty units)				
What languages do the syllabi cover?	English All of them (7 syll.)	French	Russian	Italian	German
How many FL courses are taught in various faculties/departments?	Only 1 for specific purposes				
How many of those syllabi cover general FL and how many of them cover FL for academic/specific purposes?	General 6 syllabi	Academic	Specific P. 1 syllabus		
What year are those taught in?	6 at each year 1 syllabus at 3rd year				
How many classes per week are devoted to FL in each of the courses?	2 lectures	2 lec.+1 tutorial	2. lec. +2 tut. All of them		
Do all the syllabi have all the required elements? If not, what parts are generally missing in the incomplete ones?	Yes				
Do the learning outcomes mention the entrance/exit level of foreign language which is to be achieved? For those that do, are they in line with the Law on Higher Education (C1 exit level)?	Yes				
Do all the courses have textbooks (textbooks officially published by reputable international publishers)?	The general ones do, the FL for specific purposes do not.				
Other comments	-				

Table 4. University of Donja Gorica¹⁰

The results visually presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4, show that 226 FL syllabi, corresponding to 181 courses taught at 30 faculties of the three universities, were collected and assessed. The great majority of these are taught at the UoM (195 FL syllabi corresponding to 150 courses), whereas 24 are offered at the MedUni and 7 at the UDG respectively.

As for the languages the syllabi cover, at the UoM 137 of the 195 FL syllabi cover the English language, while 58 refer to other languages – Italian (14), German (14), Russian (14) and French (16). All of the overall 31 syllabi at the MedUni and the UDG pertain to English.

¹⁰ The data provided in Table 4 are extracted from Vuković-Stamatović (8).

At the three universities, 111 of the FL syllabi cover general FL courses, while 113 refer to FL for specific purposes and only two pertain to FL for academic purposes courses offered at the PhD study level at one of the UoM's faculties.

When it comes to which year the courses are taught in, the findings show that 182 of the FL syllabi, i.e. a substantial majority of them, are taught in the first year of bachelor studies, and very few of them are offered at the specialisation or master level, i.e. 4th and 5th year.

The results point to a variation in the number of hours taught per week in each of the courses. 117 of the FL syllabi at the three universities require three lessons per week, while 66 of them require four lessons per week. On the other hand, 43 of them are taught just two hours a week.

The data from the tables demonstrate that all FL syllabi have all the elements required by Montenegrin legislation, and a few of them miss some fields. What most of the FL syllabi do not state in their learning outcomes section is an exit level to be achieved, *which is not in line with the Law on Higher Education (C1 exit level)*.

As for the textbooks and literature used, all the general FL courses are well equipped with appropriate textbooks. However, there is a notable lack of adequate textbooks for FL for specific purposes courses in academic fields such as arts, humanities, philology, natural sciences and mathematics, civil engineering, pharmacy, Montenegrin legal system, political science, diplomacy and international relations, agriculture, electronics and engineering and power systems and control.

The EU project partners' conclusions and suggestions

The results obtained for 226 FL syllabi, corresponding to 181 courses, taught at 30 faculties of the three universities, together with all FL syllabi, were sent to the EU partners from Poland and Croatia for their in-depth analysis, as was planned by the ReFLAME Project Application.

The EU Polish partners provided useful suggestions and recommendations, which are summarised in Table 5 and Table 5a.

1. The FL syllabi clearly present the content of the courses, so that the Universities and the teachers know what is offered and the students know what they can expect in terms of content.
2. The FL syllabi resemble more the syllabi used in textbooks rather than the syllabi used to describe academic courses. However, some of them contain students' workload, some clearly indicate methods of teaching, some indicate forms of assessment and grading but it is not consistent across all universities, some of them indicate the language level according to CEFR.
3. The balance between general language content and professional language content varies.
4. There are different credits for language courses from 2 to 4 ECTS depending on the University. However, the justification for more ECTS indicates more individual workload.

Table 5. The Polish team conclusions¹¹

¹¹ The data given in Table 5 and Table 5a are extracted from Vuković-Stamatović (10-11).

1.	To elaborate a common template for the language course syllabus for all universities or each university may use its own template;
2.	To unify the workload for language courses across each university or in all of them;
3.	To indicate the CEFR language level for each course;
4.	To prepare their syllabi in compliance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en ;
5.	To refer to Montenegrin Qualification Framework level 6 and 7;
6.	To split the content into general language teaching and professional language teaching, either in every course or in a sequence of language teaching courses;
7.	To introduce project work strategies in the syllabi to diversify learning content in response to the professional needs of the students of different faculties in order to increase the independent use of Information and Communication Technologies for language learning;
8.	To respond to Special Education <u>Needs</u> students at the level of syllabi in terms of aids and materials available for them.

Table 5a. The Polish team recommendations

The EU Croatian partners also studied the syllabi collected and assessed the internal analysis conducted. They arrived at the conclusions and suggestions summarised in Table 6.

1.	If possible, go through the syllabi and clear any ambiguities and unify them since they are the first contact between students and their teachers as well as the course.
2.	Clearly define the outcomes of each course, according to the Bloom's taxonomy, and then develop new syllabi or revise the existing ones. There is a good manual elaborated by University of Zadar, Croatia, we would recommend, available at: https://www.unizd.hr/Portals/0/kvaliteta/Prirucnik_za_izradu_ishoda_ucenja.pdf?Ver=2019-03-07-133532-253 .
3.	Some of the syllabi are written in more detail and some of them in less, maybe it would be helpful to develop a common template for all universities and if this is not a possibility to develop templates that would be unique within one university.
4.	Since there are different credits for language courses from 2 to 4 ECTS, you could consider the possibility of distributing them equally because they indicate the required workload to complete a study programme, or a module within a study programme.
5.	To equalise and adjust your ECTS points you might consider using an ECTS calculator in order to simply calculate and award accurate amount of points to your courses depending on the students' workload.
6.	To clearly separate general language teaching material from language for specific or professional purposes material in syllabi.
7.	Check whether they clearly state what the students will be able to do for the first time or at least better than they could before and adjust them to the needs of particular study group or special needs students.

Table 6. The Croatian team conclusions and suggestions¹²

¹² The data provided in Table 6 are extracted from Vuković-Stamatović (11-12).

Secondly, the result regarding a notable lack of adequate textbooks for some areas of FL for specific purposes courses proved to be useful when making a decision which LSP textbooks should be produced as part of the project. The finding shows that there are no adequate textbooks published by reputable international publishers when it comes to some LSP fields. “Teachers use their own materials, unpublished materials, collections of materials collected from various textbooks and distributed to students without permission of the copyright owners, materials drafted for speakers of other languages which include translation of the words and translation exercises in general into another language, such as Polish or Russian, or textbooks which are not at the level required by Montenegrin law (C1 exit level), such as books series intended for A2-B1 levels (the ESP Career Paths series, for instance)” (Vuković-Stamatović 9-10). Bearing in mind the view that an LSP textbook should be made more relevant to the employment setting (Bouzidi 10), and based on this significant result, the EU expertise available in the project and the number of students to be reached, a decision about 10 LSP textbooks to be produced as part of ReFLAME Erasmus+ project was made within the preparation stage. These include: English for Science, English for Electrical Engineering, English for Civil Engineering, Italiano per i mediatori linguistico culturali in Montenegro, Legal English, English for Political Science and Diplomacy, English for Language and Literary Studies, English for Humanities, English for Visual Arts and English for Copywriting in Tourism and Hospitality. As LSP textbooks and other materials make inseparable and very important part of any LSP course that conditions its success and efficiency (Tenieshvili 22), the textbooks in question could help students meet necessary occupational needs, i.e. the needs of learners focused on a target workplace setting (Anthony 11).

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to present how the process of the FL syllabi assessment at the three Montenegrin universities was carried out and what results we have come to. The overall findings will be of great use in the development stage of the Erasmus+ ReFLAME project and in one of the tasks dealing explicitly with updating the current FL syllabi at the UoM, MedUni and UDG. Given that ESP and LSP courses in general aim to help learners with the demands of their target workplaces (Basturkmen 65), updating the syllabi will lead to harmonising them with the law, improving their quality and making their contents more modern, so as to enable professors and students to achieve better FL teaching and learning results at the Montenegrin universities. This should ultimately reflect in better and more market-customised foreign language knowledge of the Montenegrin universities students (ReFLAME Project Application 5). Finally, updating the FL syllabi will help offer more modern, market-oriented foreign language education for all students.

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**ANALIZA NASTAVNIH PROGRAMA STRANOG JEZIKA NA TRI
UNIVERZITETA U CRNOJ GORI**

Jedan od ciljeva projekta Erasmus+ ReFLAME jeste unapređenje nastavnih programa, odnosno silabusa stranog jezika na nefilološkim studijskim programima na tri crnogorska univerziteta – Univerzitetu Crne Gore, Univerzitetu Mediteran i Univerzitetu Donja Gorica. U tu svrhu, sakupljeni su i analizirani svi silabusi prvog i drugog stranog jezika na pomenutim univerzitetima. Analiza je podrazumijevala ispitivanje silabusa stranog jezika da bi se dobili podaci koji se, između ostalog, tiču ukupnog broja nastavnih programa, broja fakulteta na kojima se dati silabusi koriste u izvođenju nastave stranog jezika, broja stranih jezika koji se predaju na fakultetima, broja predmeta opšteg stranog jezika u poređenju sa brojem predmeta stranog jezika struke, udžbenika i materijala koji se koriste u nastavi stranog jezika. Analizirano je ukupno 226 silabusa prema kojima se izvodi nastava iz 181 predmeta koji se mogu pohađati na 30 fakulteta tri crnogorska univerziteta. Rezultati pokazuju da se iz najvećeg broja ovih predmeta – 195, nastava izvodi na Univerzitetu Crne Gore, dok se 24 predmeta mogu pohađati na Univerzitetu Mediteran, a 7 na Univerzitetu Donja Gorica. Na Univerzitetu Crne Gore 137 silabusa stranog jezika obuhvata engleski jezik, dok se 58 silabusa odnosi na druge strane jezike – italijanski (14), njemački (14), ruski (14) i francuski (16). Ukupno se 31 nastavni program na Univerzitetu Mediteran i Univerzitetu Donja Gorica odnosi na isključivo engleski jezik. Nešto veći broj silabusa jesu oni predviđeni za predmete stranog jezika struke (113) u poređenju sa predmetima opšteg stranog jezika (111), a samo dva silabusa planirana su za predmete stranog jezika za akademske potrebe. U većini silabusa ne navodi se izlazni nivo znanja stranog jezika, i u tom pogledu nisu u skladu sa članom 80 Zakona o visokom obrazovanju Crne Gore (kojim se predviđa izlazni nivo C1 prema Zajedničkom evropskom referentnom okviru za jezike). Kada su u pitanju udžbenici i materijali koji se koriste u nastavi, za predmete opšteg stranog jezika postoje odgovarajući udžbenici. S druge strane, utvrđen je nedostatak adekvatnih udžbenika za predmete koji se tiču određenih oblasti stranog jezika struke. Ovaj rezultat analize uzet je u obzir prilikom donošenja odluke o tome koje je udžbenike neophodno napisati u okviru projekta Erasmus+ ReFLAME. U radu se zaključuje da će sveukupni rezultati analize biti veoma korisni i primjenjivi u razvojnoj fazi navedenog projekta, u kojoj će jedan od zadataka biti unapređenje postojećih silabusa stranog jezika. Ovaj proces vodiće ka usklađivanju nastavnih programa sa Zakonom o visokom obrazovanju, osavremenjivanju njihovih sadržaja i poboljšanju njihovog kvaliteta, što će obezbijediti predušlove za sticanje znanja i vještina usmjerenih na potrebe tržišta rada.

Ključne riječi: projekat Erasmus+ ReFLAME, analiza silabusa stranog jezika, predmeti opšteg stranog jezika, predmeti stranog jezika struke