

The Serbian Language in the Eyes of Foreigners: Analysis of the Most Common Doubts of Learners on The Social Platform Reddit

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Abstract

The subject of this paper is the analysis of posts on Reddit about foreigners' confusions related to learning Serbian as a foreign language. The aim of the research is to clarify the most common questions of foreigners who are interested in learning the Serbian language. A descriptive method and a method of theoretical analysis with the technique of content analysis have been used in the paper. The analysis of research results has shown that there has been a lot of interest among foreigners for learning Serbian as a foreign language. The most common questions related to mastering the Serbian language include: 1. issues of integration into the social community (solving administrative problems, studying and working, finding friends, finding information about the character and mentality of the Serbian people, getting to know the culture and history of the Serbian people, life in Serbia without knowing the Serbian language, etc.), 2. issues of finding language learning modalities (accredited study centers, private schools, online platforms, private lessons), 3. issues of learning Serbian as a foreign language (difficulty in learning, time needed to master the language, differences between the eastern and western variants of the language), 4. issues of finding and using appropriate teaching tools (textbooks, language learning apps, podcasts, adapted folk and art texts, music, films and TV shows with foreign language translation, flash cards, illustrations and tables) and 5. the issue of mastering certain grammatical and lexical contents (Cyrillic, cases, difference between perfective and imperfective verbs, getting to know colloquial expressions).

Keywords: Serbian as a foreign language, doubts, foreigners, social networks, Reddit, posts

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Introduction

By reviewing the literature and available articles in the field of the methodology of teaching Serbian as a foreign language, we can see that this discipline has existed in a simpler form since the foundation of the Serbian medieval state, i.e., from the moment when the economic, political and military need for foreigners to learn and use it appeared. Pavle Ivić (1998: 65) singles out the period after the fall of the Despotovina in particular, because during that period, “writing in the Serbian language [...] reached a geographical spread that was not recorded before or since”. It was used by sultans, regional commanders, and janissaries as the language of diplomatic correspondence, as evidenced by a quadrilingual textbook for learning foreign languages (Arabic, Persian, Greek, and Serbian) from the library of Sultan Mahmud I (Marinković 2010; Reljić 2012). Even in later times, the Serbian language was interesting to foreigners. Two more recent studies point to the study of Serbian as a foreign language during the life and work of Vuk Karadžić (Novaković 2023), i.e., his contemporary Dimitrije Vladislavljević (Novaković 2024). The above testifies to the fact that the teaching of Serbian as a foreign language has maintained a certain continuity and has been carried out with undiminished attention over many decades and centuries.

In the middle of the last century, socio-political events in the joint state had a great impact on the systematic and organized approach to this type of teaching, both in the country and abroad. “The Republic of Serbia, as part of the federal state, started to sign agreements on sending lecturers to foreign universities, i.e., accepting contractual lecturers of foreign languages at our universities” (Krajišnik 2016: 8), and, therefore, the teaching of Serbian as a foreign language, in the true sense of the word, began to develop rapidly in the sixties of the 20th century. By signing these and similar contracts, a large number of foreign specialists (mainly from Arab countries) “who wanted to quickly master our language in an efficient Western way” came to our country. Ostoja Đurić (1984: 5), the director of the Institute for Foreign Languages of that time, notes the following: “Today, we are witnessing an exceptional cultural fact: Serbo-Croatian, as the majority language of the Yugoslav peoples, is slowly moving towards the family of world languages. [...] During the 1982/83 school year alone, there were about ten thousand foreign citizens attending classes”. It was at that time that learning Serbian as a foreign language peaked in the interest of foreigners, who came to our country for economic, political or private reasons. From that time until today, business people, diplomats, journalists, students, and housewives appear as students (Vukadinović 1984: 60). The incentives for learning the Serbian language include education, work (Krajišnik 2016: 16), the popularity of culture, history, civilization and religion, migratory movements, personal commitment to learning the language, the possibility of a tourist or study stay in the country where the language is spoken (Stojičić, Mutavdžić 2011: 268), but certainly also integration into the new social community (Novaković 2022: 84).

Methodological settings of research

Subject and aim of research

Social conditions in the Republic of Serbia at the beginning of the 21st century indicate a tendency to soften the division between the Serbian resident population and foreigners. Despite the divisions present during the nineties of the 20th century (Lazić 2009: 68), there is an obvious progress in the establishment of good neighbourly relations between “us” and “them” in all fields of human and professional activity. Owing to social networks and posts of their users, we have the opportunity to better perceive and understand the relationships and attitudes that they have towards one another. Namely, a large number of foreigners often publish textual and multimedia content, highlighting the good points of life in our country: natural beauty, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, i.e., the character and mentality of the Serbian people. An important segment of any kind of such public performance is the demonstration of the level of knowledge of Serbian and acquired linguistic competences, i.e., the expression of doubts regarding learning Serbian and getting to know its culture and history. The way they speak/write, their grammar and size of vocabulary continue to attract a lot of attention from the domestic and foreign public which expresses a wide variety of emotions towards their efforts to learn the “too difficult Serbian language”. At the same time, very often without possessing real linguistic competences, using subjective research methods, users of social networks try to discover the real causes of mastering Serbian better or worse,⁴ and to provide appropriate advice for better learning. Today, they do this on well-known social networks such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, but recently the *Reddit* platform has drawn special attention. Therefore, the subject of this paper is the analysis of posts on foreigners’ doubts regarding learning Serbian as a foreign language on the *Reddit* social network. As our corpus is represented by the posts of users on the aforementioned social network, and taking into account the protection of their identity, we coded the excerpted examples as follows: [RED01], for the first excerpted example from this social network. The aim of the research is to create a clearer picture of the most common issues that interest foreigners who (plan to) study Serbian as a foreign language.

Research tasks

In accordance with the defined subject and aim of the research, we have selected the following research tasks:

1. To isolate and classify the most frequent questions of foreigners regarding learning Serbian as a foreign language.
2. To review, using scientific knowledge of previous research studies and

⁴ It is an interesting and under-researched approach to language study in which native speakers express their own attitudes towards foreigners who use their language (Galloway 1980; Ludwig 1982; Llorca 1995). The first studies from this scientific discipline were carried out by Lambert et al. (1960) in the late fifties.

theories, responses of community members regarding the most common questions and doubts of foreigners.

Methods, techniques and research instruments

In accordance with the specific subject, aim and tasks of the research, we used the descriptive method and the method of theoretical analysis with the technique of content analysis. The material for this research consists of selected posts on Reddit. In order to select the corpus on the mentioned social network, we used the integrated ability to search for content by keywords: “Serbian Language”, “Foreigners speak Serbian” and “Life in Serbia”. The research was carried out in mid-January 2024, and all data have been descriptively explained and presented using tables and graphs.

The analysis of research results

The analysis of the results of content research on the Reddit social network demonstrated to us that there is a great interest in learning Serbian as a foreign language among foreigners. Through text (and/or multimedia) messages, in more than two hundred posts, foreign citizens disclosed their most common doubts and questions regarding mastering Serbian as a foreign language: 1. **issues of integration into the social community** (solving administrative issues of residence, study and work, finding friends, being informed about the character and mentality of the Serbian people, getting to know the culture and history of the Serbian people, life in Serbia without knowing Serbian, etc.), 2. **issues of finding language learning modalities** (accredited study center, private schools, online platforms, private lessons, etc.), 3. **issues of learning Serbian as a foreign language** (difficulty in learning, time needed to master the language, differences between eastern and western variants of the language, etc.), 4. **issues of finding and using appropriate teaching tools** (textbooks, language learning apps, podcasts, adapted folk and art texts, music, films and TV shows with foreign language translation, flash cards, illustrations and tables) and 5. **the issue of mastering certain grammatical and lexical contents** (Cyrillic, cases, differences between perfective and imperfective verbs, getting to know colloquial expressions, etc.). Owing to a large number of users who were ready to help, the afore-mentioned doubts were resolved through thousands of meaningful comments. They were written by foreigners who had previously studied Serbian, but also by native speakers, relying on: their own experience of learning Serbian/a foreign language, linguistic feeling or acquired professional competences (during philological studies).

Issues of integration into the social community

The integration of foreigners into the Serbian social community is one of the most common topics on the Reddit social network, which includes numerous issues of getting to know the character and mentality of the Serbian people and life in

the Republic of Serbia, collecting documentation for securing temporary residence, study and work, and finding friends in a new environment. Foreigners who would like to get to better know the environment they come to or are trying to “check the accuracy of (negative) stereotypes about the Serbian people”: “How can a foreigner understand Serbian culture?” [RED01]. The analysis displayed that the members of the community, speaking from their own experience, “break down prejudices about the Serbian people” [RED04], glorifying “first-hand” [RED08] hospitality, empathy, beauty and cheerful spirit:

“I had a very positive experience, and all urban legends about rude people and barbarians living in the Republic of Serbia turned out to be incorrect. The people are friendly and helpful, and their hospitality simply goes beyond description. [...] Whenever I asked for help, they helped me without asking for anything in return”. [ROW21]

As a recommendation to foreigners “who are afraid of the Serbian people due to the terrible propaganda of the foreign media” [RED32], they single out classic Serbian “films that depict the Serbian soul” [RED33] and “videos on YouTube of tourists who have visited Belgrade before” [RED34]. According to these users, just by watching these videos, “they could learn a lot about the Serbs, the entire nation and the Republic of Serbia” [RED35], “where people are more down-to-earth than in the United Kingdom and much safer in the streets” [RED36]: “These films are part of the general culture in Serbia and the surrounding region. They are an excellent depiction of the era in which they were made, but I wouldn’t say that they best depict Serbian society today” [RED37]. Judging by the responses of Reddit users, the Serbs have shown their hospitality many times, especially during the war between Russia and Ukraine, when they accepted Russians and Ukrainians as their compatriots: “Yes, I got a job here. If I had to choose between Istanbul, Berlin and Belgrade, I would choose Belgrade as the culturally and linguistically closest city” [RED45]. Also, the Serbs “speak English”⁵ [RED51] and, unlike most European nations, they do not exclude from social life those who “do not speak Serbian” [RED52]. What is more, foreigners who are “online” [RED53] express their displeasure at the fact that the Serbs switch to using a foreign (usually English) language, without giving foreigners the opportunity to use Serbian. However, in cases where foreigners want to study at Serbian universities, they must have a certificate of knowledge of Serbian as a foreign language at an intermediate level. The answers regarding this topic are very interesting, and encompass individuals’ estimates that foreigners need from six months to a year to “learn Serbian perfectly” [RED66]. Of course, many years of practice in teaching the Serbian language testify that the mentioned level of achievement requires much more time and, of course, work. In addition to the above, foreigners who wish to get employment in the Republic of Serbia express interest in getting to know the legal regulations, explained in the “Law on Employment of Foreigners” (Official Gazette 62/2023) and the possibility of validating foreign

⁵ This can be confirmed by a testimony of Arnaud Gouillon: “I could be satisfied with speaking in English with the Serbs in Serbia, because, unlike in France, the Serbs know English perfectly” (according to Novaković 2022: 85).

diplomas. Apart from the serious issues of integration among the Serbian resident population, foreigners ask sincere questions about “the possibility of finding friends in Serbia”, i.e., humorous questions about “finding emotional partners”.

Issues of finding a language learning modality

Foreigners who plan to stay in the Republic of Serbia, as well as those who already live there, often seek information about institutions where they can learn Serbian, because, as most of them underline, learning the language on your own “with the help of websites and videos does not give the desired results” [RED22]. In their answers, community members prioritize accredited study center for learning Serbian as a foreign language at universities in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Niš: “It would be best if you moved to Belgrade and enrolled in the program for foreigners at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade. [...] [RED28] Apart from the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, you can also try the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts in Kragujevac or the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, which also offer language studies” [RED29]. They are organizational units of the faculties of Philology and Philosophy, which, in addition to courses for exchange students, offer Serbian language courses within their commercial activities (see Krajišnik, Marinković 2002; Dešić 2007; Subotić, Bjelaković 2007; Novaković 2021; Nikolić Mastod 2023). Along with accredited university center, “positive experiences with Serbian language schools” also occupy an important place in the answers [RED30]. The analysis of the research results exposed that when choosing a private language school, foreigners are guided by information available on popular websites (such as *movetobelgrade.com*). However, owing to Reddit, most foreigners want to see the experiences of those who learned the language before. According to the comments after the questions, foreigners had very positive experiences with private Serbian language schools such as *Azbukum*, *Oxford Academy*, *Modern Talking* and *Belgrade Language School*. To the question “Can anyone recommend a professor of Serbian as a foreign language with pedagogical competencies?” [RED40], foreigners often mentioned the names of their professors with whom they studied Serbian online, highlighting their professional qualities: expertise, patience and skill in teaching. In addition to centers and private schools on the territory of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, foreigners also learn Serbian through the electronic platforms *iTalki* and *Preply*, which have recently had “a more significant role in connecting teachers and students” (Novaković, Jaćimović 2023: 42). It is noticeable that graduate students of Serbian Language and Literature are often interested in the above-mentioned platforms, which would enable them to find employment:

“I am studying Serbian Language and Literature. I tried teaching live lessons, but nothing came of it. Only predators called me. I have heard that there are sites for foreigners who want to learn our language, but I am not familiar with it. Does anyone have previous experience or any recommendations?” [RED52].

In addition to the mentioned modalities, foreigners were particularly interested in the existence of “language clubs” [RED66], where they could freely use “chunks of the Serbian language” [RED67]. Unfortunately, this part of the question was usually left open and insufficiently elaborated on in the comments of Reddit users.

Issues of learning Serbian as a foreign language

Teaching practice shows us that initial motivation appears as an important prerequisite for learning Serbian. By using the Reddit network, foreigners, who have never studied Serbian before or only have certain knowledge about it, express their desire to learn more or gather experiences of foreigners (and/or lecturers) about the process of learning Serbian. One of the most frequently asked questions is: “How hard is it to learn the Serbian language?” [RED04]. The answers to this question are, from a methodological point of view, very diverse, but it is particularly interesting that they are all aimed at explaining “simple pronunciation” [RED13], i.e., at indicating the existence of complex grammatical contents, such as the case and verb systems, phonological changes and “unusual [for speakers from the Anglo-American area] word order in the sentence” [RED16]. According to the research of individual users of this social network, the Serbian language, in the context of the difficulty of learning, “remains side by side with the Japanese, Russian and Arabic languages” [RED19]. In scientific papers it is noted that the Serbian language is classified in the group of “the most difficult natural languages” (Rosenberg 1979: 328).⁶ Also, a large number of foreigners, who have already started learning the Serbian language, believe that “they are not making enough progress even though they have an excellent teacher” [RED20], since they do not live in the native language environment.⁷ In addition to the above, foreigners who are not acquainted with the historical events in the Balkan Peninsula very often want to know “which language to learn – Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian” [RED22] and “whether there is any difference between them” [RED24]. The analysis of posts on Reddit revealed that questions of this type are also the ones that get the most comments, as both foreigners with experience in learning our language and native speakers, who use social networks for a kind of historical reckoning, join the conversation. In fact, there are very few linguistically based answers that explain to foreigners the events that led to the creation of political languages. Native speakers, depending on the place of birth, try to convince foreigners why they should learn a specific variant of the language, “between which there are no special differences except in the forms of

⁶ The source of complexity is certainly in the complex (grammatical) system of the Serbian language – the phonetic principle in spelling, suprasegmental features of Serbo-Croatian vowels and consonants, the seven-case system, archaic morphological structure, peculiarities in declension, conjugation and gradation, a relatively free order of words in a sentence and the existence of a large number of exceptions.

⁷ This observation is also scientifically based. In a recent study, Aleksandar Novaković and Jelena Stošić (2022: 96) have disclosed the positive influence of the environment on the linguistic achievements of foreigners learning the Serbian language.

certain words” [RED25]. Therefore, the Serbs point out to Russian citizens the use of the Cyrillic alphabet (“which will make it easier for them to learn the language” [RED26]), while the Croats promote the tourist potential of their own country. In connection with the above-mentioned question, Professor Milorad Dešić, former director of the Center for Serbian as a Foreign Language at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, previously wrote:

“Namely, in the 1990s, Yugoslavia fell apart, and with it the Serbo-Croatian language community. From one literary language, Serbo-Croatian (Croatian-Serbian, i.e., Croatian or Serbian), with Serbian and Croatian variants, we got three literary languages: Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian (which the Bosnians call Bosnian). The reasons for this development of events do not lie in the language itself, but came from the outside, from society, as a result of social changes. From a strictly linguistic point of view, it is still a question of one language, one linguistic structure, with several variants, but from a sociolinguistic point of view, i.e., state or political, there are three literary languages” (Dešić 2003: 200).

In other words, he is of the opinion that listeners from other language regions should “completely master one pronunciation, but also know the other to a certain extent.” The basic pronunciation will be the one used by the teacher: if he/she is from Serbia, it will be ekavica, and if he/she is from Montenegro or the Republic of Srpska, it will be ijekavica (the one by Vuk Karadžić, different from Croatian jekavica)” (Dešić 2003: 202). As a recommendation for learning Serbian, the community members suggest to each other: finding a “knowledgeable” teacher, good teaching materials and “a lot of patience, perseverance and work” [RED29].

Issues of finding and using appropriate teaching tools

Users of the Reddit social network, “determined to learn Serbian”, most often asked questions related to teaching tools that can be used to master our language. An important place in this group of questions is occupied by those related to finding a suitable textbook: “Do you know a good book for learning Serbian?” [RED71]⁸. In connection with these and similar questions, and by relying on their own experience or partial knowledge of the subject, social network users tried to recommend textbooks that could be used for language learning. Four textbooks stood out in particular: 1. *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar* by Ronelle Alexander and Ellen Elias Bursać, 2. *Korak no korak* by Mira Danilović, 3. *Step into Serbian* by Jelena Kiš and *Teach Yourself Serbian* by Vladislava Ribnikar and David Norris. It is noticeable that the users of the afore-mentioned social network base their recommendations on the answers of artificial intelligence (*ChatGPT 3.5*), a quick Internet search by using the English language and popular websites for downloading pirated copies of textbooks (“You can find several textbooks on *Pirate Bay* and choose the one that suits you best” [RED14]), because, as they point out, it is

⁸ Among this type of questions, those related to finding textbooks for a special group of students stand out: “for the Americans”, “for the Russians”, “for the Czechs”, “for the Germans”. It is about an issue that was raised by Bogdan Dabić back in 1986, and which, unfortunately, has not been worked on much.

not easy to find and purchase textbooks for learning Serbian abroad. Also, to a good extent, they do not know textbook production in the field of teaching Serbian as a foreign language, claiming that “there are not many textbooks for learning Serbian” [RED15]. The reality is significantly different because the bibliography of textbooks and other textbook units in the teaching of Serbian as a foreign language contains over a hundred bibliographic references. Vesna Krajišnik (1992), Đorđe Otašević (2014), Kristina Đorđević (2018) and Aleksandar Novaković (2022a, 2022b) provided the most detailed list and overview of textbook units in their papers. Closely related to textbooks are the issues of finding a suitable computer or mobile application for learning Serbian as a foreign language: “Is there an application/website for learning Serbian?” [RED17]. The majority of responses are based on the use of mobile applications such as *LingApp*, *Anki*, *Clozemaster*, *Mango*, *Ling*, *LingQ* and *Duolingo*, while several users of the social network pointed to the existence of the *Gloss*⁹ application, which contains more than 250 free lessons. By using evaluation forms to assess the quality of applications, Aleksandar Novaković (2022a: 191) displays their basic characteristics and differentiates between poly-functional and non-functional applications for learning Serbian as a foreign language.

Along with textbooks, Reddit users have established a very interesting discussion regarding multimedia content that can be used for educational purposes. First of all, they recognized the place and importance of podcasts in the process of teaching Serbian as a foreign language. In the modern methodology of teaching foreign languages, the podcast is a type of “voiced/audio textbook” (Novaković 2022a: 50). The analysis of users’ responses on Reddit indicate that they equally recommend authentic podcasts (created for native speakers) and teacher podcasts (created to achieve the goals of education and upbringing). As the most frequently mentioned podcasts in the process of teaching Serbian as a foreign language, we have singled out: *Learn Serbian Podcast* (<http://skr.rs/zm1v>), *Serbian Language Podcast* (<http://skr.rs/zm1b>), *Talk in Serbian* (<http://skr.rs/zm1u>), *Pojačalo* (pojacalo.rs), *Serbian Language Network* (<http://skr.rs/zi4f>), *Serbonika* (<http://skr.rs/zi40>) and *Podkast.rs* (<http://skr.rs/zi4E>). By understanding the importance of multimedia content in language teaching, social network users often recommended Serbian music, films and TV series as functional tools for language learning: “If you want to learn the language well, watch Serbian movies (with translation) and/or listen to Serbian music” [RED78]. At the same time, the focus is on films and TV series shot at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (*Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame*, *Balkan Spy*, *The Marathon Family*, *Who’s Singin’ Over There?*, *The Meeting Point*, *The Black Bomber*, *Dudes*; *Grlom u jagode*, *Warm breeze*, *Bolji život*, *Otvorena vrata*, *Srećni ljudi*, *Porodično blago* and *Vratiće se rode*), i.e., on the music of recognized Serbian and Yugoslav bands and performers (Bijelo dugme, Haustor, Plavi orkestar, Dubioza kolektiv, EKV, Beogradski sindikat, Bad Copy, Parni valjak, Crvena jabuka, Plavi orkestar, Riblja čorba; Zdravko Čolić, Sergej Četković).¹⁰

⁹ The application is located at the following web address: <https://gloss.dliffc.edu/Default.aspx>.

¹⁰ When foreigners asked whether they could use turbo-folk songs to learn Serbian, they usually received

However, it is very important to mention that when making a recommendation, the actual knowledge of those interested in movies, TV series and music is ignored. The above is particularly evidenced by the examples of individuals who recommended the films *Zona Zamfirova* or *Petrijin venac*, in which the main protagonists use the Prizren-Timok and the Kosovo-Resava dialect, respectively. Therefore, the logical question arises of the ability of foreigners to understand and functionally use the above-mentioned multimedia content when learning a language. In other words, it seems that the above-mentioned contents cannot be beneficial teaching tools for foreigners who expressed their interest by using English. In contrast, flash cards, tabular forms and illustrations appear to be more functional teaching tools at the initial levels of learning Serbian. Taking into account their own experience of learning Serbian as a foreign language, social network users indicated the existence of flash cards classified by topic for learning new words of the Serbian language. On that occasion, they singled out the *FlashCardo* online platform, which contains hundreds of cards in the Serbian language (<http://skr.rs/zm1T>). The analysis of the posts also revealed a great interest of foreigners in using illustrations and tabular forms for learning: 1. subjects, objects and demonstrative pronouns (<http://skr.rs/zm1j>), 2. case (<http://skr.rs/zm1B>) and 3. verb (<http://skr.rs/zm1r>) systems of the Serbian language.

The question of mastering certain grammatical and lexical contents

A large number of foreigners' questions on Reddit were related to finding the best way to master "complex grammatical and diverse lexical content" [RED81]. Foreigners who are learning our language try to "find the golden answer" [RED85] through social networks regarding how to master pronunciation, learn the case and verb systems, i.e., "pick up numerous and diverse expressions and phrases" [RED91]. The analysis of the posts showed us that foreigners from Anglo-American areas have the most difficulties with pronouncing Serbian sounds, learning Cyrillic, mastering case forms and learning the difference between perfective and imperfective verbs. Namely, as they themselves point out in their posts, the very first learned word "hello" [RED62] revealed to them that learning Serbian "will be a long journey" [RED66], because in their native language "there are no diverse combinations of consonants" that exist in the Serbian language" [RED63]. In addition to the above, community members are interested in whether it is necessary to master Cyrillic. According to the opinion of foreigners living in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, learning the Cyrillic alphabet "is not mandatory, but it is desirable" [RED69] for easier integration into the social community, because "all menus and street names are written in the Cyrillic alphabet" [RED72]. As a useful tip, users strongly suggested "focusing attention on *critical consonants*" [RED92], which are also "the most difficult part of learning the Cyrillic alphabet" [RED94]. Also, they are interested in "whether it is possible to be good at cases" [RED96], because several users of the

humorous answers such as: "By no means, don't learn a language using turbo-folk songs. Your IQ will drop to zero" [RED88].

social network indicated that even after several months of daily work, “they notice little or insufficient progress” [RED97], making jokes at their own expense: “The best way to learn cases is to be with native speakers, who will send us to the shops. [...] and after fifty years we will be able to speak properly” [RED98]. As the most functional method, they recommend one another to use the language “according to a pattern” [RED92], by memorizing the word forms of all three genders (masculine, feminine and neuter) and applying them in everyday conversation. Users of this social network, who have mastered the case forms to a certain extent, want to know the best way to learn the difference between perfective and imperfective verbs in the Serbian language, because they notice that “previously learned rules no longer help at new levels of learning Serbian” [RED99]. In addition to the above, several posts were aimed at figuring out the true meaning of certain phrases and expressions: *Поздрав, Србендо!, Поздрав, јуначе!, Кућа часту!, Где си, царе?.*

Conclusion

As we all know, the development of modern information and communication technologies has influenced the way we teach and learn. The results of recent research display that teaching Serbian as a foreign language, owing to modern technologies, has experienced an expansion in all segments of its existence: the number of students and lecturers increased, the teaching process has been modernized, the learning modality has been changed, and stronger ties have been established between teachers and students. In other words, teachers who used to rely on their own experience in their work have started to exchange ideas and observations. However, students also have not remained focused only on themselves and their needs, but have networked in an effort to provide one another with useful advice and recommendations, employing all the advantages of the modern form of communication. The analysis of the research results revealed that, in addition to the well-known social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, the Reddit social network has been used for the purposes of communication and exchange of useful information, where meaningful and (very often) purposeful communication is established around an appropriate question. In their efforts to solve all their doubts, answer the most frequent questions, find the best ways to master the Serbian language and remove their fears, foreigners, using the integrated functions of the afore-mentioned social network, usually establish a text correspondence with: 1. foreigners who previously learned the Serbian language, 2. interested native speakers and, sometimes, 3. teachers who are researching current events in the field of teaching methodology of Serbian as a foreign language. On this occasion, they start a constructive discussion regarding the most diverse issues/questions: integration into the social community, finding learning modalities, learning Serbian as a foreign language, using appropriate teaching tools and mastering certain grammatical and lexical contents. Members of such a community strive to share their own experiences of learning/teaching Serbian as a foreign language, but also to provide appropriate and purposeful advice. Sometimes such answers, depending

on the professional qualifications of the participants in the discussion, are based on mere observation of their own path through the world of the Serbian language, and sometimes on individuals' professional qualifications in connection with the issue of acquiring a foreign language. Apart from the fact that interested parties receive more or less useful answers, the entire communication proves to be very functional in terms of the future development of the methodology of teaching Serbian as a foreign language. Namely, the content on the Reddit platform provides methodologists of teaching Serbian as a foreign language with an insight into the most common doubts that foreigners have about Serbian as a foreign language. Owing to such an insight into the factual state of affairs, they can, within the framework of modern foreign language teaching, provide theoretical and practical recommendations to future teachers, but also gain new insights into the important issues of teaching Serbian as a foreign language. Also, institutions that teach the Serbian language can, as part of their own professional and marketing activities, direct their attention to activities that will influence the improvement of teaching practice.

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Srpski jezik u očima stranaca: analiza najčešćih nedoumica učenika na društvenoj mreži Redit

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Apstrakt

Predmet ovoga rada je analiza objava o nedoumicama stranaca u vezi sa učenjem srpskog kao stranog jezika na društvenoj mreži Redit. Cilj istraživanja je stvaranje jasnije slike o najčešćim pitanjima stranaca koji (planiraju da) ga uče. U radu je korišćena deskriptivna metoda i metoda teorijske analize sa tehnikom analize sadržaja. Analiza rezultata istraživanja je pokazala da među strancima vlada veliko interesovanje za učenjem srpskog kao stranog jezika. Kao najčešća pitanja u vezi sa savladavanjem srpskog jezika pojavljuju se: 1. pitanja integracije u društvenu zajednicu (rešavanje administrativnih obaveza, studiranje i rad, pronalazak društva, informisanje o karakteru i mentalitetu srpskog naroda, upoznavanje kulture i istorije srpskoga naroda, život u Srbiji bez poznavanja srpskog jezika i sl.), 2. pitanja pronalaska modaliteta učenja jezika (akreditovani centri, privatne škole, onlajn-platforme, privatni časovi), 3. pitanja učenja srpskog kao stranog jezika (zahtevnost učenja, potrebno vreme za savladavanje jezika, razlike između istočne i zapadne varijante jezika), 4. pitanja pronalaska i upotrebe odgovarajućih nastavnih sredstava (udžbenici, aplikacije za učenje jezika, podkastovi, prilagođene narodni i umetnički tekstovi, muzika, filmovi i TV-serije sa prevodom na strani jezik, fleš-kartice, ilustracije i tabelarni prikazi) i 5. pitanje savladavanja pojedinih gramatičkih i leksičkih sadržaja (ćirilica, padeži, razlika između perfektivnih i imperpektivnih glagola, upoznavanje kolokvijalnih izraza).

Ključne reči: srpski jezik kao strani, nedoumice, stranci, društvene mreže, Redit, objave

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