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in the example of Slovakian national
minority in Vojvodina**

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ABSTRACT

The Slovakian people in Vojvodina are an autochthonous minority with command of both Slovakian and Serbian language. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia enables them to receive education in their mother tongue. The task of this paper is to analyse how the Slovak-Serbian bilingualism affects the process of education in children whose mother tongue is Slovakian. The starting point is the fact that education of children who belong to national minorities is specific due to choice of their official medium of instruction, change of the medium of instruction, adapting to the majority language, learning of the majority language and development of intercultural competences. Within these specific aspects, throughout this paper, we have showcased various research conducted in the past 20 years. These research deal with the choice of the medium of instruction, influence of the change of the medium of instruction on academic achievement, adaptation to Serbian language in the secondary school, learning the majority language as core subject and research on bilingualism as a factor of developing interculturality of children. Based on the results we can attempt answer to a question of how Slovakian-Serbian bilingualism affects the educational path of the Slovak national minority in Vojvodina.

Keywords: *autochthonous minority, bilingualism, education, Slovak, Serbia*

Introduction

Slovakian people in Vojvodina are an autochthonous language minority who have been living outside their homeland, Slovakia for nearly 300 years. They have migrated within the Hungarian-Austrian Empire without changing the country, but after WWI found themselves living within the borders of a different country. The term autochthonous minority denotes people who have become an ethnic or national minority in a new country without changing their place of residence (Gilbert &

Castellino, 2003; Vuković, 2010; Raduški, 2009). Their national identity is determined on the basis of their language and culture, rather than the country of residence. In their language, the term “nationality” is a ethnonym, not a politonym. The region of South-East Europe is relatively rich in linguistic minorities (Černak, 2019). Slovaks are the autochthonous linguistic minority in Serbia, Hungary, Romania and Croatia. As members of the national minority in Serbia, they are always bilingual, they have command of Slovakian as their first language and Serbian as a second language and the majority language. Their bilingualism can be observed as and studied on individual and social levels. According to the 2002 census, there are 56.637 Slovaks in Vojvodina (Makišova, 2010) and according to 2011 census there were 52.425 (Languages and scripts in Vojvodina, 2019), which is fewer when compared to the previous census, but also, due to negative birth rate and vast migrations of the young people to Europe, the number today is much lower.

Bilingualism influence many segments of life of the autochthonous national minorities: education, culture, informedness, language usage in public life, professional development and professional movement, migration. The most prolific interrelatedness can be seen in the relationship of bilingualism and education. On the one hand, bilingualism of the autochthonous minorities determines in great part their education path, and on the other hand, education is the key element in sustaining and developing bilingualism. In the literature, there are numerous examples and typologies of bilingual education in the languages of minorities (Baker, 2001, Garcia, 2009; Göncz, 2007; Skutnab Kangas, 1991). For educational needs of the autochthonous linguistic minorities, especially in central-eastern European countries, the distinction between between the concept of bilingual education and education in two languages (Göncz, 2007) is useful. Bilingual education has a broader meaning and it includes all forms of education which have as their goal promotion of bilingual students, regardless of the language used as medium of instruction. On the other hand, education process conducted in two languages means using two parallel languages in schooling, where becoming a bilingual student is not a goal. Distinction between the two is important for members of the autochthonous minorities because in their case, education in the mother tongue while taking the majority language as a separate subject is the best way to achieve high levels of bilingualism, rather than taking classes in both languages. Moreover, institutional support to the language which has less chance of developing can make a difference between success and failure in preserving minority language. Education in mother tongue and learning of the second, majority language is the way to integrate into the broader community, where many national minorities live alongside the majority. This way, assimilation is also avoided, which would perhaps occur if education was only to be conducted in the majority language or even by using both languages, as well as ghettoization, which

is a consequence of education conducted only in the minority language, without a strong presence or quality learning of the language of majority.

Official language of the instruction (particularly in elementary school which is compulsory and lasts longest) is thus one of the most significant factors for preservation and development of the mother tongue of a minority. According to a research of education in the Slovakian language in Serbia, Hungary and Romania, which was conducted by Šimonji-Černak (2012) the language of instruction is an important predictor of development of linguistic competences in Slovakian, attitude towards minority education and frequency of simultaneous usage of mother tongue and the language of majority. The medium of instruction in elementary school can be treated as an independent variable which will influence the education model applied in primary schools, status and perspectives of the development of mother tongue, acquiring linguistic competences in mother tongue and the majority language as well as development of national and linguistic identity.

Education in Serbia is conducted in the languages of minorities, thus in Slovakian, it is conducted in several different ways (Černak. 2013):

1. Entire process is done in the mother tongue of the minority, and Serbian is taken as a second language.
2. In the first cycle of the elementary school (first four years) the process is conducted in the mother tongue of the minority, with Serbian as a second language as the only subject taught in the majority language, while the the second cycle is taught in the majority language, with the minority language only present as the compulsory or elective subject.
3. The whole process is conducted in the majority language, with the mother tongue of the minority present as an compulsory or elective subject or not present at all in the curriculum.

We can see that the first model is of a developmental type (Garcia, 2009) or a strong model (Baker, 2001) of education. Its goal is development of the mother tongue, with simultaneous development of bilingualism, because the majority language is learned intensively through a separate subject. This model is aimed at non-dominant groups which want to develop their mother tongue. They have not been through a phase of language change and their language is not at risk. The theoretical framework is additive. The second model 4+4 can be positioned somewhere between the development and transitional models. Although the second cycle of the elementary education there is transition to the majority language, the motivation for the transition is not a gradual transition from the minority language to the majority language (Garcia, 2009, Skutnab Kangas 1991) but the insufficient number of students and a lack of teaching staff who would teach in the minority language. The third model, is the immersion model (Skutnab Kangas, 1991) or a weak model (Baker,

2001). The theoretical framework is subtractive, because a less valued language is replaced by a more valued one. This model does not support the preservation of the mother tongue nor development of bilingualism.

Research of the pedagogical aspect of Slovakian-Serbian bilingualism

This review paper aims to analyse how Slovakian-Serbian bilingualism influences the education process of children with Slovakian mother tongue. Research of pedagogical aspects of Slovakian-Serbian bilingualism in Vojvodina has been conducted in the past 20 years and based on these, we can conclude that the educational process of the children from minority groups there are certain particularities which do not appear in the education of the children who speak the majority language. These are:

1. The choice of the language medium of instruction
2. Change of the language medium of instruction
3. Adapting to the majority language medium of instruction
4. Learning the majority language medium of instruction
5. Development of intercultural competences

In the remainder, we will show research which have analysed these particularities and which can help us in determining how Slovakian-Serbian bilingualism influences the process of education of the Slovakian minority in Vojvodina.

1. The choice of the language as medium of instruction

In places where there are classes in Slovakian and Serbian languages, which is in the majority of locations with the Slovak population, the parents can opt for the medium of instruction of their child. This choice is particularly significant in elementary school, because of its duration and the fact that it is compulsory for all children. The question is on what grounds do parents choose the language of their child's education? Part of the answer to this vital question can be found in the research which was conducted among the 712 subjects in the region of Vojvodina Šimonji-Černak, Šukolová, Marković, in print). The subjects were adults who identify themselves as Slovak. The aim of the research was to establish the components and component values of attitudes towards education of Slovaks in their mother tongue as factors which influence the choice of language as medium of instruction. The research used a questionnaire especially designed for the purpose of the research, in the form of a five-point Likert scale. There were 20 items in total. The factorial analysis pinpointed the following groups of factors:

1. The role of school in preserving national identity
2. The possibility for education in Serbian and Slovakian schools
3. The quality of schools with Slovakian language as medium of instruction as opposed to schools in Serbian medium of instruction.
4. The role of school in preserving the Slovakian language.

The values of these components of the subjects' attitudes towards education in Slovakian language across the whole sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Factorial scores across the whole sample of subjects

	f1	f2	f3	f4
	School-national identity	Further education possibilities	Quality of the school	School-mother tongue
N	713	713	713	713
AS	2,34	1,78	2,43	1,60
SD	1,176	,929	,708	,799

The highest quality is assigned to the schools with Slovak medium of instruction (teaching staff, textbooks and resources), followed by significance of education in mother tongue for preserving national identity. On the lower side of the scale, there are the possibilities of further education in the language of majority which is provided by the education in their mother tongue, and the lowest value is the link between the education in mother tongue and preservation and retention of the mother tongue. We have to but notice that the scores are low overall, (maximum arithmetic mean is 5). Therefore, the attitude towards education of Slovaks in their mother tongue is revolving round a positive mark, the average.

We can say that the attitude is formed based on the two groups of factors and that they are involved in the decision making process of the parents and the choice of the language as medium of instruction for education in primary school.

1. Parents' perception of the of the role of education in Slovakian mother tongue and maintaining an preserving the development of the Slovakian language and Slovakian national identity.
2. Parents' perception of of the quality of schools with Slovakian as medium of instruction and possibilities for further education that they provide, manly secondary schools in the majority language.

The first factor can be observed as an intrinsic and second as extrinsic in firming up attitudes towards education in minority language, thus a factor in decision –making process of enrolling children into elementary schools (if the option is available). Parents opt for minority language as medium of instruction as they wish to preserve national identity of their ethnic community, as well as their mother tongue. Furthermore, the decision is made based on the position and quality of school in Slovakian medium of instruction compared to the ones with majority language as the medium of instruction.

2. Change of the medium of instruction and academic achievement of the students

Interest in the question of the correlation between bilingualism and academic achievement has emerged from practical problems of the teachers and parents of bilingual children. It has already been mentioned that parents of the children whose mother tongue isn't Serbian have the choice, when enrolling their children into elementary school, of the language they want as medium of instruction for their children's education in elementary schools. What interests the parents the most (and at the same time concerns them) are:

1. The correlation of bilingualism and academic achievement,
2. If learning in native language impairs learning the majority language
3. If the children are equal in command of the Serbian language in secondary school to other children, after completing elementary school in minority language.

In order to reach the right decision, which will have far-reaching consequences, parents must have valid information on all dilemmas and aforementioned questions.

There is also the matter of a practical nature, whether the change of the medium of instruction from Slovak to Serbian leads to a decline in academic achievements with the students. Šimonji-Černak (2009) has conducted a research with parallel groups of children of younger and older age. Experimental group of younger students were those who switched medium of instruction in the 5th grade from Slovak to Serbian, while the older age had two experimental groups. The first group was a group of the first graders of secondary school who completed elementary school in Slovak language and the other group of students completed their elementary education in Hungarian language. Both groups switched to another medium of instruction upon enrolling secondary school. The control groups of both ages were students who did not change Serbian language as the medium of instruction. Sample overview is shown in table 2.

Table 2

Sample characteristics

Age	Number of subjects	
	Experimental group	Control gorup
Younger	N= 41	N=75
Older	Ns=63 Nm=48	N=68

Instruments used in the research are as follows:

1. Test of communicative and a test of cognitive linguistic competence in Serbian (majority language), versions for younger and older age. Serbian in experimental groups is a new medium of instruction. Theoretical base for constructing the tests was distinction between two levels of linguistic competence, communicative and cognitive, as described by Cummins (Street & Hornberger, 2008).
2. A questionnaire on attitudes towards L1 and L2, versions for younger and older age, showing what kind of attitudes the students have towards their mother tongue, a minority language, and a second language, which is a majority language and vice versa, in the control group.
3. Raven’s progressive matrices as non-verbal test of intelligence in the younger group
4. Domino test as non-verbal test of intelligence in the older age groups.

As far as data analysis is concerned, MANCOVA statistical methods were used with and without re-testing, as well as MANOVA. The most significant results are shown in Table 3

Table 3

Differences in academic achievements with experimental group and control group at younger and older age students after the change of the medium of instruction

Age	Academic achievement (grade average) before the change of the medium of instruction		Academic achievement (grade average) after the change of the medium of instruction		Differences	Testing the significance of the differences t test or F test
	Eg	Cg	Eg	Cg		
younger	M=4,35	M=4,53	M=3,81	M=4,14	Eg= -0,537	t= 6,786
	SD=0,65	SD=0,65	SD=0,097	SD=0,96	Cg= -0,385	p≤ 0,01
					Eg - Cg=0,152	t= 6,471
						p≤ 0,01
					F= 2,026	

						insignificant
older	M _{sl} =4,16	M=4,138	M _{sl} =3,563	M=3,506	E _{g_{sl}} = -0,596	p ≤ 0,01
	SD _{sl} =0,58	SD=0,58	SD _{sl} =1,09	SD=1,26	E _{g_m} = -0,993	p ≤ 0,01
	M _m =4,24		M _m =3,24		C _g = -0,632	p ≤ 0,01
	SD _m =0,75		SD=1,37		E _{g_{sl}} -C _g =	insignificant
					+0,036	p ≤ 0,01
					E _{g_m} -C _g = 0,361	

Table 3 shows that there is a slight decline in academic achievement of all students in the 5th grade. The difference in academic achievement is 0.15 and is statistically insignificant. Therefore, the switching to the new medium of instruction which occurred in the control group has no influence over decline in academic achievement in the Slovakian students. In the older age group there were two experimental groups and one control group and all show a decline in academic achievement in the 1st grade of secondary school. The most visible decline is present in the group which switched from Hungarian to Serbian as a medium of instruction. As far as Slovakian students go, the decline in academic achievement is even lesser than with the control group which did not change the medium of instruction. To explain this phenomenon further, we will show the results of the findings of the research on measuring communicative and cognitive linguistic competences of younger and older age students (Table 4) and relations between academic achievement and two levels of linguistic competence.

Table 4

Two levels of linguistic competence of younger and older/aged students (Göncz, 2007; Černak, 2005)

		AS Slovak	AS Serbian
younger age	Communicative competences	29,13	32,58*
	Cognitive competences	23,02	40,29*
older age	Communicative competences	13,57	17,14
	Cognitive competences	28,13	38,41

*statistically significant differences

Subjects who have changed their medium of instruction in 5th grade of elementary or 1st grade of secondary school have significantly lower linguistic competence as opposed to students who have not switched their medium of instruction. Also, this decline in linguistic competences of Slovakian students does not influence the academic achievement. However, according to the finding of this

research, the influence of cognitive linguistic competence during elementary school education is in decline and by the times students reach 8th (the final) grade, communicative and cognitive competences are no longer correlated. The influence of the cognitive linguistic competence in L2 over academic achievement, and starting 8th grade, it is this competence that is relevant pertaining to academic achievement. This finding is in line with theoretical framework of Cummins. With the increase of independence in learning from the context of the situation, and the increase of cognitive demand, so does the role of cognitive linguistic competence rise. If Slovakian students have, statistically speaking, significantly lower cognitive linguistic competence than Serbian students, this means there is its negative impact to academic achievement.

3. Adapting to majority (Serbian) language as a medium of instruction

Researching adapting to a new medium of instruction can provide some answers to a question whether Slovakian students who complete primary education in minority language, Slovakian, have an equal position of command of Serbian language as students who completed elementary school in Serbian. Adapting to Serbian as a medium of instruction in school was a subject of query for Šimonji-Černak (2011). The goal of the research was to identify problems of the students in adapting to new medium of instruction and methods of dealing with this problem by the teachers. A group of 83 students in the first and second grade of secondary school who completed their primary school in Slovakian, as well as 45 teachers who work with these students participated in the research. Two separate questionnaires were created for the purpose of the research for students and teachers. The questionnaire encompassed the following thematic areas: problems in adapting to Serbian language, methods of learning Serbian language in elementary school and influence of switching to a different medium of instruction on academic achievement in secondary school. The results have shown that students have the most problems with core subjects such as physics, chemistry, Serbian, mathematics and history. The problem reflects in the fact that the students are not familiar with the terminology in these subjects since they took them in Slovakian in their elementary schools. Vocational subjects which are taught in Serbian form the basics do not pose such a problem. The students also stated that oral examination poses a larger problem for them since they cannot express themselves verbally as quickly in Serbian as they would in their mother tongue, but have to “translate” everything in their mind before answering. Both students and teachers have suggested increase in the weekly load of Serbian lessons in elementary schools because they deem that school does not prepare them well enough for the change of medium of instruction in secondary schools. Beside that, teachers have noticed a problem with output skills such as oral examination, poor vocabulary in Serbian as well as

fear and avoidance of oral examinations. Teachers have stated throughout the questionnaire that the adapting period to a new medium of instruction lasts for a year. This means that the Slovak minority students need to overcome an additional setback beside the problem of adapting to a new school and a new environment. We can conclude (Černak, 2011, Černáková, 2014b) that elementary schools with Slovak as medium of instruction have to provide students with communicative equality in Serbian with the speakers of Serbian through well designed courses and methodology of Serbian as L2. Otherwise, parents will choose schools with Serbian medium of instruction to avoid the process of adaptation and transition to a new language medium of instruction in secondary schools. It must be said that new curricula has been designed for Serbian L2 classes, with the primary goal of developing functional linguistic competences.

4. Learning a majority language

The Republic of Serbia caters for all level education in minority languages. In this case, the school is obliged to provide Serbian language classes as L2 classes. The classes of Serbian L2, according to the information available to the National Councils of National Minorities, are available in 88 elementary schools and 22 secondary schools (Krajišnik, Strižak, 2018). Moreover, in Vojvodina, which is an example of ethnically and linguistically diverse area, where Serbian is an official language and script, and there are also minority languages such as Hungarian, Slovakian, Croatian, Romanian, Ruthenian (Rusyn) and their official script (Halupka-Rešetar, Kovač Rac, 2019; Statute AP of Vojvodina, 2014).

When minority language is used as a medium of instruction, students are often less competent for oral and written communication in Serbian (Halupka-Rešetar, Kovač Rac, 2019), hence their equality of participation on everyday life and integrating into work life is sensitive. In the same way, exposure to majority language is a strong indicator of the command of that language but it also influences the attitudes towards the majority language. According to the official data, in the Autonomous province of Vojvodina, there are 45 municipalities in 39 towns and cities that have more languages in use, beside Serbian language, there are one or more minority languages used. (Jezici i pisma na teritoriji APVojvodine, 2019). Borbély (Borbély, 2000 according to Halupka-Rešetar, Kovač Rac, 2019) points out that the attitude national minorities have towards the majority language is mostly determined by the following demographic and social factors: the scale of language community, territorial allocation of its members (i.e. whether the settlements they live in are diffuse or compact), the ratio (in percentages) of different ethnic groups within a territory, as well as inter-marrying. The problem with learning Serbian as L2 can arise when students only have

contact with the second language inside the classroom, live in a homogenous community, and their mother tongue is not at all similar to Serbian.

Within the programme of subject Serbian L2 the outcomes as expected results and standards, as expected achievements are related to this subject which is taken by different ethnic minority groups with different mother tongues (which are similar to Serbian, but also structurally different), where some of them live in rather homogenous or rather heterogeneous (mixed) communities, with different degrees of command of the language. In the Republic of Serbia, there are educational standards for the completion of the elementary education, secondary education and secondary vocational education. Achievement standards are divided into three-level achievement framework (elementary, intermediate or advanced). These levels of achievement in some segments coincide with the concept of different levels of achievement in other subjects, but the process of determining these levels of achievement have taken into account theoretical and practical knowledge of acquiring the a second language (Opši standardi / General Standards, 2017). What remains to be done is creating standards for other subjects and start implementing those as well.

Levels of achievement are based on learning competences that will allow students to successfully answer the challenges of the society, to use Serbian language in their daily lives, work or tertiary education, as well as in improving their participation in cultural, economic, political and other aspects of life. Standards of achievement within Serbian L2 are divided into three different spheres: language, literature and language and culture. Therefore, classes of Serbian L2 need to be adapted to what suits best foreign language methodology and teaching practice. Teachers need to be prepared to adapt their work, methodology style and and language content to the linguistic experience of their students and the type of language which their mother tongue belongs to (Krajišnik, Strižar, 2018). Although ethnic minorities have the right to education in their minority language, one of the goals of education in the Republic of Serbia includes comprehensive inclusion of students in to the education system. (The Law on the fundamentals of the education system, 2017) which entails command of the Serbian language and language use outside the classroom.

Students who take Serbian L2 already speak another language, their mother tongue, which can influence he learning of L2 in a positive or negative way. Therefore, the command of one's mother tongue should be activated during classes of Serbian L2 (Krajišnik, Strižar, 2018) and use the positive transfer while diminishing the negative transfer (interference). In small homogeneous communities, students do not feel the need to learn Serbian. In their micro-surrounding, they feel quite secure and do not anticipate the need for L2 in advancement in any field in their future. On the other hand, those who live in a diffuse communities in Vojvodina have daily contact with Serbian as L2 and are, in many cases, bilingual.

5. Education in minority (Slovakian) language and development of interculturality

Education in the minority languages is one of the key factors of development of interculturality in countries which are heterogeneous in terms of language and culture. By interculturality, we denote mutual interaction of different cultures which entails mutual knowledge of the other's culture. We will present two items of research which dealt with textbook analysis in schools with Slovakian and Serbian as media of instruction. These provide us with an insight into possibilities offered by formal and institutionalized education for contact with other cultures. Beside that, we can see in what degree the students at school can develop intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competences as prerequisites for successful intercultural interaction.

The first research was conducted in 2015 (Šimoniová-Černáková, Beljanski, Marković, 2015) with the aim of determining in what degree the content of certain subjects in schools with Slovakian and Serbian language as media of instruction provide the meeting of minority and majority culture. Based on the goal, the following tasks were operationalised:

1. Analyse the depiction of the way of life of different ethnic groups through the knowledge that the majority culture possesses of the minority cultures, as well as the knowledge that the minority groups have of the majority group.
2. Illustrate different topics which influence the formation of attitudes, values and behaviour towards society from the perspective of belonging to a particular group (language, religion, tradition, customs).
3. Analyse the elements of quotidian culture (food, clothes) and creative culture (visual arts, performing arts, literature, culture).

The method of content analysis was used in the research used. Contents of particular lessons from the chosen subjects were analysed (mother tongue and literature, majority language as L2, the world around us, social and natural sciences, history, geography, music, arts, civic education), so it can be said that it is the analysis of the manifested contents. These particular subjects were chosen because researchers assumed that their content will suit the goal of the research and be able to provide an answer to the following question: Is interculturality nurtured in Serbia through the content of the core subjects in elementary schools?

The categories of the content analysis within this research were determined on the basis of formal and content criteria. The formal criteria pertain to frequency of topics connected to interculturality, developing interest in other cultures, ethnic and religious tolerance, i.e. what was attempted was to follow how often lesson topics occur which offer contact with other cultures. Content criteria pertain to the those which connect to other cultures through images, written pieces, food, clothes,

customs/holidays in textbooks and curricula. The sample for the research was taken from 40 textbooks in Serbian and 48 textbooks in Slovakian. The difference in numbers arises from the fact that in schools with Slovakian as medium of instruction, in each grade there is an additional subject of Serbian L2.

The results are not displayed as a table as not to overload the text, but are given descriptively, in ways of findings in terms of content analysis of the lessons and topics for given subjects. Within the language subjects there are far more opportunities for development of interculturality when it comes to Slovakian, as many as 33, in comparison to Serbian reading textbooks with only 3 clear opportunities for the 1st to the 8th grade. The opportunities for contact of cultures in the literature textbooks used in teaching Serbian as L2 is also low, merely 8 of the suitable lessons appear. The literature textbooks of Serbian L2 contain some images which present an opportunity for developing interculturality, as opposed to the literature textbooks in Slovakian with only 6 of those images and none at all in the Serbian literature textbooks.

In the minority language literature textbooks, there are far more elements which allow children to meet with Serbian literature, such as translations of Serbian authors or their portraits. The whole subject, Serbian as L2 is dedicated to a different language and culture. The equivalent for schools with Serbian as medium of instruction would be to introduce Slovakian as L2, or another language of a minority, as the language of immediate environment. Slovakian textbooks for the subjects world around us, social and natural sciences are translations from Serbian. In comparison to the materials taught in Serbian-medium of instruction schools there are more elements that support intercultural learning, almost exclusively through contact with the majority nationalities, especially their history. Members of the majority can learn very little about the minority cultures. History textbooks in Slovakian for the 6th, 7th and 8th grades have additional materials dedicated to the Slovakian history, written by the Slovaks from Vojvodina. It could be stated that children in schools with Slovakian as medium of instruction (and the same is applicable to other minorities) have far greater opportunities for developing interculturality than children in school with Serbian as medium of instruction.

Authors of the music textbooks in all grades of elementary schools are Slovaks from Vojvodina. There is a noticeable disproportion of songs in Serbian, which are present in the music textbooks in Slovakian all in original language, rather than translations. Art textbooks are translations of their Serbian counterparts, with additional material of the Slovak art in Vojvodina. Authors are also Slovak people from Vojvodina. Textbooks contain works of art and architecture, particularly religious, as well as texts about Serbian artists and their portraits. In Serbian music textbooks there are various examples of traditional folk songs from the region as well as the rest of Europe which

opens the possibility for contact with other cultures and different culture perspectives. Knowledge of the majority culture about the minority cultures is not present enough.

In the subject of civic education the textbooks are the same, and in Slovak-medium of instruction schools they have been translated from Serbian into Slovakian. In higher grades there are contents tightly linked to developing interculturality with children, whereas in lower grade there are virtually no such contents.

The second research on interculturality in school context was conducted in 2016 (Beljanski, Velišek-Braško, Šimonji-Černak, 2016). The aim of the research was to analyse the problem of interculturality in the lesson topics of the literature textbooks of mother tongues (Serbian, Hungarian and Slovakian) and to determine the opportunities for students to get in contact with other cultures through literature texts and translation in literature textbooks. The method of content analysis was used. The unit of analysis were lessons in the textbooks of three languages as media of instruction, while the categories of the content analysis were determined through possibility of contact with other cultures via original and folk poems, short stories and other forms of literature as well as national, regional, minority and world literature content. Categories of content analysis within this research were determined based on formal criteria in regard with presence or lack of occurrence.

The results show that the total number of texts in literature textbooks differ, where the most numerous are those in Slovakian (614), followed by Serbian (422) and lastly, in Hungarian (391). The literature textbooks in each of the languages the most frequent content is the one of national character, which is in accordance to the aims of the subject and aims for mother tongue. Incidentally, we must note that Slovakian and Hungarian are minority languages, so the role of national content is more important in preserving national identity.

When it comes to translation of minority authors, most numerous example can be found in Serbian literature textbooks (19) and in two other languages, this number is the same (5). Translation of world authors are most often found in Slovakian textbooks (96), while Serbian and Hungarian textbooks have a similar occurrence (50). Since translations from Serbian were observed in the regional content, we can compare Hungarian and Slovakian literature textbooks. We can see that there is a far greater number of translations of Serbian authors in Slovakian textbooks (38) than in Hungarian (7). However, it is useful to keep in mind that there is a separate subject, namely Serbian as L2, which provides ample opportunities for children to connect with Serbian language, culture and tradition. Similarly, we can observe that there are very few translations of minority authors, which means there are virtually no chances for children to get acquainted to other minorities who live in Vojvodina and Serbia.

In the end, we need to note that organising education in the language-medium of instruction of the minority and the possibility to learn the "language of the community" (the chance of the majority group to learn the language of the minority) represent a significant contribution to the interculturality, understanding and exercising human rights of the minority groups (Beljanski, Dedić Bukvić, 2020; Stanisavljević Petrović & Cvetković, 2011). In the same aspect, knowing and studying Slovakian language as a second language in the multinational community of Vojvodina represents a significant contribution to understanding and exercising human rights of the minorities (Makišova, 2010; Spevák & Šimoniová-Černáková, 2015).

Discussion

Upon inspecting the results of the described research of the population of Slovakian-Serbian bilingualism, we can notice that, as a variable, it has the most significant impact on the education of the autochthonous minorities. Namely, Slovakian children face challenges in education which the children of the majority group do not. We have summed them up in the following five categories:

1. Choice of the language medium of instruction, especially in primary school,
2. Change of the language medium of instruction, especially in secondary school,
3. Adaptation to the language medium of instruction of the majority,
4. Learning a second language (L2),
5. Development of interculturality of students i primary school.

These categories are not independent from one another, and their joint influence shapes the education of the Slovaks in Vojvodina. The first step is the choice of the language medium of instruction in elementary school. Parents are well aware of the link between language medium of instruction and development of national identity and preservation of mother tongue. This is one of the reasons why, in the majority of cases, they opt for their children to be schooled in their mother tongue. At the same time, they are aware that this means an additional subject (Serbian as L2) for their children, and that they will face the change of the medium of instruction in the secondary school. The choice of mother tongue as medium of instruction allows the children to realise their education within the framework of development model of education of national minorities, which is a strong model of bilingual education. Its goal is to nurture and develop the mother tongue and the majority language to the level of native speaker (or a close to it as possible). The hypothesis of the interrelatedness in the language development (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 2000; Göncz, 2007; Göncz, 2015) states that the developments of the first and the second language are closely connected. The degree of development of L1 represents a strong predictor for the degree of development of L2. In

other words, education in mother tongue will enable that language to develop fully, which in turn, enables the development of the second language. If the hypothesis of the interrelatedness of the languages is observed from the view point of medium of instruction, than we can say that medium of instruction equally provides for the development of that language as well as the second (in this case the majority) language (Göncz, 2007). This model also allows social and economic integration of the members of the national minority into the society they are a part of. Furthermore, according to threshold theory (Baker, 1998; Cummins, 2000; García, 2005), the positive effects of bilingualism on cognitive development occur only when a certain level of bilingual competences is reached. Education of autochthonous minorities in their mother tongue while earning the language of the majority allows reaching the threshold of bilingual competences, which means that children from the autochthonous minority groups benefit in their cognitive development.

Education system should be proactive if it aims to encourage parents to choose Slovakian medium of instruction. The results of the research on the attitudes towards the Slovakian medium of instruction show two factors: intrinsic (preservation and development of national identity and mother tongue) and extrinsic (the quality of schools with Slovakian medium of instruction, quality of the teaching staff and possibilities for further education). The easiest and fastest way to achieve improvements is within the extrinsic factors, by investing more into equipping schools, and strengthening competences of the teaching staff. Improving the teaching practice of the majority languages taught as Serbian L2 is a vital factor. It is a duty and responsibility if each school allow students who take classes in the minority language as medium of instruction to achieve a high level of linguistic competences in the majority language. These are very important for further education and inclusion onto the professional realm. Inadequate language skills in L2 might prove adverse for enrolling students in the minority language medium of instruction schools, including those in Slovakian.

The influence of the change of the medium of instruction to academic achievement is one of the most significant issues in the education of autochthonous minority groups. The results of the research (Göncz i Otoranov, 2001; Šimonji-Černak, 2012; Šimoniová-Černáková, 2014a; Velišek, 1997) point to the fact that when two languages are structurally and genetically similar, as it is the case with Slovakia and Serbian languages, there is no negative influence of the change of the language of instruction to academic achievement. Academic achievement in the 5th grade of elementary school and the 1st grade of the secondary school is in decline as compared to previous grades, but this is not due to linguistic factors. In the case when two languages significantly differ, and do not belong to the same language groups, as is the case with Hungarian and Serbian, we can expect with a high

level of certainty that there will be a negative impact of the change of the medium of instruction to the academic achievement in the 5th grade of elementary school and the 1st grade of the secondary school.\

The reasons for the negative impact of the change of the medium of instruction to academic achievement can be found in the inadequate language competences of the students, especially in the low level of cognitive linguistic competence in Serbian language which does not allow for adequate usage of the Serbian language in academic environment, as well as elements of subtractive bilingual situation in which the students find themselves after having switched to a new medium of instruction (Göncz, 2007; Šimonji-Černak, 2012; Šimoniová-Černáková, 2015; Šimonji-Černak & Bogosavljević, 2016) as well as inadequate or ill-adjusted methods of teaching (in regard to students' mother tongue) Serbian as L2 in elementary schools. Cognitive language competence has a growing influence on academic achievement as students advance in education while the influence of communicative language competence diminishes (Šimonji-Černak, 2012). This means that the less painful transition to a different medium of instruction we seek, the higher must be the level of the cognitive language competence in the majority language for students with minority mother tongue. Elements of subtractive linguistic situation can be found in the new environment for the students and new school, one of which is the fact that the minority language and culture are less valued and are substituted by a highly valued language. All this leads to decrease in the realisation of cognitive advantages that bilingualism can have as well as lowering of the academic efficiency of students (Göncz, 2007). The change of the environment of education for children can tip the scales in favour of the subtractive elements as opposed to additive elements of bilingualism which were previously dominant. Therefore, we should bear in mind that the relationship between the change of the medium of instruction and academic achievement is a complex one, and that there are different factors included. These include the similarity between the two languages, the change of school and possibility of residence alongside the change of the medium of instruction, the environment of the new school (if it is linguistically homogenous or heterogeneous), the attitude of the teachers and peers towards the student as native speaker of the minority language (Šimonji-Černak 2018).

Adapting to a new medium of instruction in secondary school is tightly linked to learning the majority language in elementary school and influences the change of the medium of instruction and academic achievement of the students. The formula for success is clear: quality instruction of Serbian language in elementary school leads to high linguistic competence in the secondary school, which makes transition to a new medium of instruction easier and prevents the negative influence of the change to a new medium of instruction on academic achievement. The accent in learning them

majority language should be on functional linguistic competence, oral production and development of students, with stress on elements of core subjects.

Based on the research conducted about the possibilities of developing interculturality with children who attend schools with minority language as medium of instruction (Slovakian, Hungarian) and in the majority language as medium of instruction, we can conclude that children in elementary schools with minority language as medium of instruction have more opportunities for developing intercultural competences and intercultural sensitivity. In their textbooks, which implies curricula as well, there are more compulsory topics which enable them to gain knowledge, positive attitudes and skills for interpreting sources and events from different cultures. A prominent position in this process belongs to Serbian as L2. On the other hand, we can conclude that the school practice of students with the majority language as medium of instruction there is little on offer about culture systems of the minority communities. Nonetheless, textbooks that use Slovakian as the medium of instruction also offer little content on other minority groups living in Vojvodina. This implies that children in schools with Slovakian language as the medium of instruction have the highest chance of contact with the Serbian culture, which is hardly enough for forming a broader picture about the multicultural and multilingual society in which they live. From this, it can be assumed that the children who attend schools with Slovakian language as medium of instruction have slightly higher developed intercultural competences compared to the children who attend schools with Serbian language as medium of instruction, and their level of intercultural sensitivity moves towards ethnorelativism.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the Slovaks who live in Vojvodina (Northern part of Serbia) represent an autochthonous national minority. By default, they become bilingual, acquiring Slovakian within tier nuclear family and gradually through informal and formal education acquire the language of the majority, which is Serbian. Their bilingualism can be defined in the terms of dimensions of bilingualism (Baker, 2001; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Rabanes & Velez, 2016) as almost balanced, more often coordinated, early (simultaneous and successive), with prevalent additive elements and monoclultural. The country of their residence has a several decades long positive practice of enabling the education process in the language of minorities. There are three different models of education available to the Slovaks: developmental model, 4+4 model (transitive) and immersion model. The most favourable one is the developmental model in which the medium of instruction is mother tongue with the majority language as L2, starting from the kindergarten to secondary school. It

enables the preservation of mother tongue, which, being a minority language, would have little chance of preservation without the support of formal and institutionalised education, especially its literary form and in terms of children's literacy. The second language is added to the first language, which contributes to creating a specific bilingual situation with prevailing additive elements.

Therefore, Slovak-Serbian bilingualism has the role of independent variable in education of children with Slovakian mother tongue. Parents often find themselves in the situation of choosing the medium of instruction for their children. This decision is particularly important prior to enrolling primary school. The question is whether the parents are acquainted well enough with the advantages of mother tongue as the medium of instruction, with empirical facts, or reach the decision intuitively, based on their personal experience? Nonetheless, Slovakian children most often attend school with their mother tongue as the medium of instruction and exercise their right to education in their mother tongue. Recently, the number of children in school with Slovakian as the medium of instruction is in decline, but it is difficult to separate the influence of at least important factors: birth rate, economic migrations (mostly to their homeland Slovakia) and negative perception of Slovakian as the medium of instruction. Based on the findings of research we can note that the change of the medium of instruction has no significant influence over the academic achievement, which is encouraging. There are certain difficulties in adjusting to the majority language as medium of instruction in secondary school. Adapting to new language can last as long as a year, but has no significant consequences on the academic achievement. One of the reasons for this can surely be the structural and genetic similarity of Serbian and Slovakian languages, therefore the Slovaks learn Serbian with relative ease (compared to, for example Hungarian minority in Vojvodina). Naturally, there is some danger of strong language interference, due to the similarity in these two languages. The development of intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity represents an immense benefit brought about by bilingualism and education in one's mother tongue. In this way, members of the Slovakian national minority become potential creators of intercultural society

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