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SLOVENE–HUNGARIAN BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

“And the fact is that the Hungarian language must be primarily used by the minority. [...] However, if native Slovenes do not recognize the benefit of being bilingual and encourage their children to exploit the opportunity offered by the school then they will cause harm to themselves. [...] ... While a school in Prekmurje guarantees development and survival for the minority, it also enriches the majority as a kind of added value...”¹

Abstract: Recently, there is worldwide an intense debate about the efficiency and implementation of bilingual education. This problem becomes a very sensitive issue if education includes a minority and a majority language. The former one almost always has a lower level of prestige, and that is why it is endangered. That means minority language needs stronger support in the education process in order to keep the balance between languages since the macro environment of minority students is dominantly not in their mother tongue, but the official language of the state. Education of Hungarian as a mother language and as the language of instruction plays an important role in preservation of minority mother tongue and keeping and increasing its vitality. The occurrence of minority language/language variety compared to official language of the state in the school and the possibility of secondary language socialization in mother tongue are good indicators of the constitutional, legal background and legal security of a certain national community. Efficient minority education of Hungarian as a mother language and as the language of instruction could provide

1 Albina Nečak Lük, “Tény, hogy a magyar nyelvet elsősorban a kisebbségnek kell használnia”, in *50 éves a kétnyelvű oktatás a Muravidéken* [The 50 Years Old Bilingual Education in Prekmurje] ed. Jutka Király M. (Magyar Nemzetiségi Tájékoztatói Intézet: Lendva, 2011). 120–125., 123–124.

the functional bilingualism which is essential for minority's everyday life. The aim of this paper is to introduce the complexity and variety of topics of this education model, and to furthermore illustrate how the different reactions related to (the bi- and multilingual and multicultural) society can change its functioning and existence. The paper also underlines that this model is able to be renewed, and its additional features are the quick and intense changes which are regulated by law. The innovations of the new millennium which aim is the inner renewal can lead education process in the right direction and increase its efficiency but only if the creation of laws is influenced by practical needs, what is more there are not any difficulties about its implementation.

Introduction and overview

Bilingual education is not a new phenomenon; it has been around for thousands of years. Nevertheless, the true breakthrough only came in the 1960s with the spread of the immersion method in Canada.² Nowadays, there is lively debate all over the world as to how effective the method is and how it should be implemented.³ The question is especially sensitive when the educational model includes a minority and a majority language, where the former is nearly always of lower prestige and, as such, more endangered. Thus, the education process needs more support in the educational process in order to maintain a suitable linguistic balance, since the macro environment of the minority students is dominated by the state language and not the mother tongue.

School education of and in the native language plays a decisive role in preserving the minority language and in maintaining and increasing its vitality. How the presence of the minority language/language variety compares to that of the state language and how feasible secondary linguistic socialization is in the mother tongue reveal a great deal about the legal certainty and the constitutional-legal background of the given national community. Efficient education of and in the minority native language can grant functional bilingualism,

2 Rico M. Cathomas, *Schule und Zweisprachigkeit* [School and bilingualism] (Münster, New York, München, Berlin: Waxmann, 2005); Csilla Bartha, "Kétnyelvűség, oktatás, kétnyelvű oktatás és kisebbségek [Bilingualism, Education, Bilingual Education and Minorities]," *Educatio*, no. 4 (2000): 761–775.; Anne Borbély, *Kétnyelvűség* [Bilingualism] (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2014).

3 The third millennium has seen new problems added: on top of the political and economic impact, mass migration and the rearranging of Europe's nationality structure have added further responsibilities to those of bi- and multilingual education, the process of accommodating and accepting cultural diversity, in order to promote and solve the integration of migrants—and this is not always a simple issue.

which is an everyday necessity and a prerequisite of survival for the minority.⁴ The model employed in Prekmurje⁵ in Slovenia, where learning of and in the others' language is mandatory for both the majority and minority pupils (meaning the minority Hungarian is both a means of education and a school subject), is especially suitable for reaching the objective. The model of bilingual education used in Prekmurje is very complex and has a multifaceted syllabus shaped by the variety of reactions to the events of the bi- or multilingual and -cultural society. The model is open to reforms and, as such, is characterized by relatively fast and intensive changes, anchored by new laws and measures. In the new millennium, innovations serving an internal reform might move the process of education in the right direction, making it more effective, but only if the legal background is based on the needs of the given practice and if implementing is not impeded by any obstacles.⁶

Bilingual education in Prekmurje in Slovenia dates back to 1959.⁷ From the beginning, its operation and efficiency have been closely followed not only by the profession and the education policymakers, but also by those directly and indirectly impacted: students, parents and teachers. Ever since the Slovenian special classes and the minority native language classes, which had gradually become empty by the end of the 1950s, were replaced by the current bilingual model, which is mandatory for both the minority and the majority, the public opinion has been divided, its benefits and drawbacks are widely discussed in the ever-expanding professional literature. Its basic parameters, efficiency and results are analysed by minority and majority researchers in both Slovenia and Hungary. More recently, the local and regional contexts have increasingly been replaced by a European

4 Albina Nećak Lük, "Tény, hogy a magyar nyelvet elsősorban a kisebbségnek kell használnia [The Fact is Hungarian Language Has to Be Used Primarily by Minorities]," in *50 éves a kétnyelvű oktatás a Muravidéken*, ed. Jutka Király M. (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Tájékoztatói Intézet, 2011), 120–125., 123.; Elizabeta Bernjak, "Az oktatás szerepe a kisebbségi nyelv megőrzésében [The role of Education regarding Preservation of Minority Language]," in *50 éves a kétnyelvű oktatás a Muravidéken*, ed. Jutka Király M. (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Tájékoztatói Intézet, 2011a), 192–207.

5 I use the toponym Prekmurje in reference to the ethnically mixed region defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and in the municipal statutes. When referring to the statistical region, I use Mura region.

6 E.g., the Termini Hungarian Linguistic Research Network has paid special attention to the issue since 2006 (<http://ht.nytud.hu>). The first collection of studies came out in 2011—Csilla Bartha, Orsolya Nádor, and János Péntek, ed., *Nyelv és oktatás kisebbségben* [Language and Education in a Minority Situation] (Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó, 2011)—since then teaching Hungarian in the outer regions has been studied by two Domus group research projects. The one in 2013/2014 investigated the situation of Hungarian as a school subject in the bilingual and Hungarian-only primary schools in the neighboring countries, while its follow-up in 2014/2015 focused on secondary schools mainly. István Cserniczkó, János Péntek, and Szilvia Szoták, *A magyar nyelv tantárgy oktatása a külső régiókban. Program description, application material* [Teaching Hungarian as a subject in the Outlying Regions] (manuscript, 2014).

7 To refer to the *two-instruction language model of education* in Prekmurje, I use the broader term *bilingual* as that is the one preferred by the community, too.

one.⁸ Researchers agree that the so-called utopian model, regarded as the strong form of bilingual education⁹, has not fulfilled the expectations—especially not in regard to preserving the minority native language and shaping the ethnic identity of the Hungarian minority students.¹⁰ One important reason is that the methodology is not elaborate enough. Additionally, no suitable training opportunities are provided for the teachers working in the bilingual schools. Instead of a balanced bilingual state, the model has resulted in the dominance of the Slovene language, with a full range of linguistic and non-linguistic consequences for the minority students. The acceleration of the individual losing their mother tongue has greatly contributed to the current situation (i.e., the minority language losing ground). Although in theory based on the similar value and rank of the two languages, the model failed to achieve their proportionate presence throughout the complete educational process. By now, the 50–50% classroom use of the two languages is only true for the first third of the primary school including Year 4. From Year 5, it gradually shifts to 70–30%, and to 80–20% in the secondary school, in favor of Slovenian. Owing to the continuous

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- 8 From the professional literature that could easily fill a library, let me select a few titles: Lajos Bence, “A kétnyelvű oktatás története [The History of Bilingual Education],” in *50 éves a kétnyelvű oktatás a Muravidéken*, ed. Jutka Király M. (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Tájékoztatói Intézet, 2011a), 13–54.; Bernjak 2004.; Bernjak 2008.; József Bokor, *Nyelviség és magyarság a Muravidéken* [Language Identity and Hungarian Identity in Prekmurje] (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet, 2009.); Anna Kolláth, *Magyarul a Muravidéken* [In Hungarian in Prekmurje] (Maribor: Slavistično društvo, Zora 39, 2005.); Anna Kolláth, “Kétnyelvű tanárképzés: diplomán innen és túl [Bilingual Teacher Training: Before and Beyond of Teacher’s Degree],” *Korunk* 20, no. 2. (2009).; Albina Nečak Lük, “A múltból a jövőért: a kétnyelvű oktatás fél évszázada a Muravidéken / Iz preteklosti za prihodnost: pol stoletja dvojezičnega šolstva v Prekmurju [From the Past to The Future: a Half Century of Bilingual Education in Prekmurje],” in *Együtt egymásért / Drug z drugim*, eds. Jožefa Herman and Sabo Tatjana (Lendva: 2010): 15–27.; Albina Nečak Lük, “Tény, hogy a magyar nyelvet elsősorban a kisebbségnek kell használnia [The Fact is Hungarian Language Has to be Used Primarily by Minorities],” in *50 éves a kétnyelvű oktatás a Muravidéken*, ed. Jutka Király M. (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Tájékoztatói Intézet, 2011), 120–125.; Gábor Ruda, ed., *Nemzetiségi iskolák / kétnyelvű oktatás. Narodnostne šole / Dvojezično izobraževanje. Minderheitsschulen / Zweisprachiger Unterricht* [National Schools/Bilingual Education] (Pilisvörösvár, Graz: Muravidéki Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület, Artikel-VII-Kulturverein für Steiermark, 2002).; Mária Pisnjak, ed., *Kézikönyv a muravidéki kétnyelvű iskolák pedagógusai számára* [Handbook for Teachers of Bilingual Schools of Prekmurje] (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet, 2013), 416–423.
- 9 Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, *Nyelv, oktatás és a kisebbségek* [Language, education and minorities] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1997).; Lajos Bence, “A kétnyelvű oktatás története”.
- 10 Lajos Bence, “A kétnyelvű oktatás története”, Elizabeta Bernjak, “A muravidéki kétirányú kétnyelvű oktatás hiányosságai [Deficiencies of the two-way bilingual education in Prekmurje],” in *Nemzetiségi iskolák Magyarországon, Szlovákiában és Szlovéniában*, ed. Gábor Ruda (Pilisvörösvár: Muravidéki Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület, 2011), 287.; László Göncz, “A magyar nemzeti közösség nyelvi jogai és nyelvhasználata Szlovéniában [Language Rights and Language Use of Hungarian National Community in Slovenia],” in *Terveztés és határtalanítás. A magyar nyelvpolitika 21. századi kihívásai*, eds. Kata Eplényi and Zoltán Kántor (Budapest: Nemzetpolitikai Kutatóintézet, 2012): 103–121.; Anna Kolláth, *A szlovéniai magyar nyelv a többnyelvűség kontextusában* [Hungarian Language in Slovenia in the Context of Bilingualism] (Bielsko-Biala, Budapest, Kansas, Maribor, Praha: ZORA 92, 2012).

shrinking of domains where the mother tongue is used (Slovenian students are not functionally bilingual, and as a result of their—not always positive—attitude to the second language [i.e., Hungarian], classroom communication is in Slovene), registers and stylistic varieties become increasingly scant (Hungarian for specific purposes is nearly totally absent), and the minority national language is more and more limited to the family sphere. This might be the reason that bilingual education was seen as taboo until the end of the 1990s, and only after did it surface as a topic of conversation and research, mainly due to it being the 50th anniversary of bilingual education in Prekmurje. Besides accepting the current situation, opinions and analyses reveal an intention to find either a way or a way out, asking the question if there is an alternative (because there must be one) or if there is no alternative (because there cannot be one).

The trends in the third millennium have been characterized by newer kinds of research, nearly always contrastive in approach, conducted or being conducted within the framework of scientific projects. Based on the principle of preserving by abolishing, they focus on the perspectives of survival, the practical opportunities of changes and amendments. These days, it is not only school education in Prekmurje that is undergoing a hectic period (involving project-based innovations in primary and secondary education; the revision of special education rights in the parliament; trends of the amendments on the law on special education rights and the formulation and passing of the general nationality law) but also bilingual education. Bilingual education at present and future is also influenced by the shaping of the new higher education act. Through the situation and the educational programs of the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature of Maribor University, Slovenia's only Hungarian-medium higher education institution, and the operation of the Department of Foreign Languages, the higher education law will have a direct impact on bilingual education, mainly through the training of Hungarian teachers but also by providing them with a say in the training of primary school and kindergarten teachers, and the Hungarian (special language and language teaching) methodology courses that are offered would be for prospective primary and secondary school teachers not majoring in Hungarian. The main aim, besides shaping the necessary and sufficient professional, linguistic and methodology competencies, is to raise the awareness of future teachers, making them realise that bilingualism these days is not only an absolute necessity for the minority but also an extremely beneficial training opportunity for all students.¹¹ Naturally, this is only the case if it is done well, consequently applying a multilingual approach and additive methods.

11 Cathomas, "Schule und Zweisprachigkeit," 83.

Background information

Slovenia (population 2 million) is in the southwestern part of Central Europe, at the foot of the Alps. Of the population, 83% is Slovenian, and of the 22 nationalities living in the country Hungarians (0.32%) and Italians (0.11%) enjoy an autochthonous nationality status that provides a very high standard of legal protection. Independent since 1991¹², Slovenia has Slovenian as its official language. However, in the ethnically mixed regions where the Hungarian (Prekmurje) and Italian (Obala) minority communities live, the minority languages also have official status (Hungarian and Italian are regional official languages in Slovenia). Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy; its parliament has 90 members. The two autochthonous minorities have their own representatives in the parliament and have veto power on any issue concerning their community. Slovenia joined the European Union in 2004 along with Hungary, and subsequently Slovenian became one of the official languages of the EU. As for its official currency, since January 1, 2007, Slovenia has been a member of the Eurozone, replacing the previously used Slovenian tolar with the euro. Slovenia's capital is Ljubljana (population 260.000).¹³ The country's GDP (in Slovenian *bruto domači proizvod* [BDP]) was up 4.4% in 2017.¹⁴ The unemployment rate is 6.4% (2017), and inflation is 1.2%, while the gross average income is 1593.10 euro.¹⁵

Prekmurje Hungarian national community

Slovenia's two autochthonous minorities, the Hungarian and Italian national communities, are territorial minority communities. It means that the Slovenian minority policy is based on the principle of *positive discrimination* and is exemplary even on a global scale. This limits the validity of the special nationality rights to the territory where these communities

12 Before 1991 Slovenia was a member state of Yugoslavia. The Constitution was adopted on December 23, 1991.

13 Maribor, with 95,000 inhabitants, is the second largest city. The city is home to Slovenia's only university department of hungarology, the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature (<http://ff.um.si/oddelki/madzarski-jezik-in-knjizevnost/>). Muraszombat (Murska Sobota with 12,500 inhabitants), formerly the "Hungarian capital" in the region, is still the center of the Mura region, but it does not belong to the ethnically mixed area any longer. (2017). Retrieved from http://www.vlada.si/koristno/o_sloveniji/; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

14 Korenič, R. (2017). *Gross domestic product, Slovenia, 4th Quarter 2016*. Stat.si. Retrieved from <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/News/Index/6489>; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

15 SURS. Stat.si. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.stat.si/statweb/>; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

live—with no definite numbers, no numerical restrictions have impacted legal certainty. The concept of *ethnically mixed regions* (bilingual territories) is defined in the constitution as areas that are clearly stated in the charters of the administrative units (townships).¹⁶

The Hungarian national community lives in Prekmurje in northeast Slovenia in five townships: in Lendva (Lendva/Lendava), Dobronak (Dobrovnik), Moravske Toplice, Hodosi (Hodoš) and Šalovci. According to official data from the 2002 census, 6243 identified as Hungarian nationals, and 7713 identified Hungarian as their mother tongue. Of them, 5212 live in the bilingual territory (83.5%), while 1031 live elsewhere in the country, mainly in the capital.¹⁷ The main political organization is the Lendva/Lendava-based Prekmurje Hungarian Self-Governing National Community (*Pomurska madžarska samoupravna narodna skupnost*), whose 21-member council consists of the representatives from local councils. The main task of the self-governing national community is to retain Prekmurje's Hungarian national community, preserve its national-linguistic-cultural identity and its material and spiritual heritage, and to vindicate and implement the special rights granted by the constitution. In accordance with the constitution and the law, it will decide independently on all issues within its scope of authority and nurture the community's links with the mother nation and other Hungarian minority communities. The Prekmurje Hungarian cultural and information institutions were founded by the Prekmurje Hungarian Self-Governing National Community, and also cofounded the bilingual secondary school. The bilingual primary schools were co-founded by the Hungarian national communities operating in the townships concerned. The Board of Education oversees all of the professional issues related to the bilingual education.

Bilingualism, bilingual education

Whenever constructing the typology of bilingualism, not all components are examined from the point of view of the majority, since minority bilingualism, a privilege primarily of the minority community, is usually unilateral. The minority needs the state language for their daily survival, as the language is seen as an increasingly likely vehicle for the future,

16 In the Hungarian-language administration in Slovenia the word 'község' (township) has at least two meanings. It can refer to a small settlement governed by an elected self-government, the smallest administrative unit—this is equivalent to the standard Hungarian meaning of the word. On the other hand, it might (and most often does) mean an administrative unit consisting of more settlements, which used to be called 'járás' (township).

17 The 2011 census was already register based; for this reason there are no data about ethnic distribution.

along with greater success in the overall society. This is true for nearly all small bilingual minority communities in the Carpathian Basin. The majority might opt for learning the minority's language in order to familiarize themselves with the culture of the cohabiting ethnic group to utilize the opportunities arising from multiculturalism—in this way bilingualism might become bilateral to a certain extent. How competent the majority community becomes in the second language and how far it is involved in the culture of cohabitants depends on several factors. In the case of the minority, bilingualism exists on both the individual and the community levels. The majority community, however, is not bilingual, even though some members of the majority may be bilingual. For the majority, bilingualism stays below the community level, whereas with the minority, bilingualism is the result of individual bilingualism and vice versa.

Knowing what the linguistic situation is like in Prekmurje and what constitutes the actual existence of the minority and the nature of bilingual education in the region, even if it is a primarily unilateral situation, it is necessary to examine the major angles from the point of view of both communities concerned in the region. The two sides are separated in bilingualism: the variants of the variables count as positive or negative for the minority and the majority, respectively. Even if the minority community is small in number, they have a high level of legal protection (e.g., Hungarian has the status of regional official language, the community has its own member of parliament, special community rights). The living standards of the members of the minority considerably exceed those in the mother country, and they have access to a bilingual education model where both languages are a medium and also the subject of education, the language of the other is a school subject for both minority and majority students and in certain instances both study the all of the other subjects in both of the languages. Consequently, during the past 50 years the model has (also if used by the majority group, in theory, could) become bilingual. How the bilingualism of the Prekmurje Hungarian national community is shaped by both its future and the ethnolinguistic vitality of the minority's mother tongue is strongly influenced by a relatively clearly defined "shadow": the bilingualism of the other community. The power relations are largely defined by the root position: necessity could be turned into an advantage the same way an opportunity would, and the frequently pleaded principle of *I am obligated* should be replaced with *I will be more by it*.

Regarding the motives for acquiring the language, being bilingual for most of the Hungarians in Prekmurje is a natural issue, since the second language is most often acquired in a natural way in the bilingual territory (i.e., usually in the family). At the same time it is also controlled, especially in the case of children from homogenous Hungarian marriages

in small villages where the dominant ethnic group is still Hungarian and with ethnic Slovenians, who although live in the bilingual territory, still learn the second language in an institution (e.g., in school) as a compulsory subject.¹⁸

According to the sociocultural attitudes, being bilingual is mainly subtractive (i.e., reversible for the Hungarians). This means that the mother tongue can lose its value on the individual level in the mind of most of its speakers, since in a heterogeneous environment, the minority language and culture count as equal only in the eyes of the law; in practice the domains of minority language use are continuously shrinking (community level). This leads to the Hungarian mother tongue (its vernacular variety) losing ground, being substituted with the second language (the Slovenian state language) in increasingly more domains.¹⁹ However, for the ethnic Slovenian population the additive bilingualism achieved through shared existence and through the bilingual education model (i.e., the learning of the secondary minority language [Hungarian]) would not endanger the retaining of their mother tongue, because their native language, the Slovenian state language, has high social value. The practice in schools and in the society at large shows, on the other hand, that ethnic Slovenian students do not become functionally bilingual through bilingual education (the reasons have deep roots and not only linguistic ones), and this fact will define the asymmetry of bilingualism and the dominance of the Slovenian language in all social domains (unilateral bilingualism on the community level). This has a great impact on the survival of the minority Hungarian language, because the monolingual-state-language nature of all domains is bound to lead to the shrinking of the mother tongue registers.

As for the relationship between law and practice, bilingualism in Prekmurje, in contrast with the language situation of the major outer regions, is mainly *de jure* bilingualism, with a sharp contrast between the sophisticated legal background and the existing practices. In an analysis of the situation to investigate the causes, an open discourse—of utmost importance in the bilingual, multicultural existence in Prekmurje—may help to bridge the gap.

Regarding fluency in the two languages, there is an equal number of bilinguals in the Hungarian community whose language skills in both languages are equivalent. Hungarian monolinguals and bilinguals with Hungarian as the dominant language can mainly

18 Zoltán Karmacs, *Kétnyelvűség és nyelvvelsajátítás* [Bilingualism and Language Acquisition] (Ungvár: PoliPrint, 2007): 18–20.; Elizabeta Bernjak, “A muravidéki kétirányú kétnyelvű oktatás hiányosságai [Deficiencies of the two-way bilingual education in Prekmurje],” in *Nemzetiségi iskolák Magyarországon, Szlovákiában és Szlovéniában*, ed. Gábor Ruda (Pilisvörösvár: Muravidéki Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület, 2011).

19 Csilla Bartha, *A kétnyelvűség alapkérdései* [Key Issues of Bilingualism] (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1999).

be found among the older generation, who never attended Slovenian schools. By now, the majority are unbalanced bilinguals, with Slovenian as the dominant language, with clear differences in the competences in the two languages. In the case of the ethnic Slovenians, language dominance means the dominance of the mother tongue, while with Hungarians it is the dominance in the secondary language. As the domains are in the mother tongue²⁰, whose use is shrinking, this basically unilateral bilingualism is limited to informal situations (i.e., the family and daily life). It is also used in public and in literature, although nearly everybody nurtures a positive attitude towards their mother tongue, as a form of patriotism. In formal situations (e.g., in professional or public communication), however, the secondary language, Slovenian, increasingly moves into first position. Among Slovenians, on the other hand, the secondary language, Hungarian, barely passes the level of reception (many can understand what they hear or read, but few are able to use it productively). These factors do not contribute to the growing vitality of the Hungarian language, nor do they help to increase its prestige, even if the necessary institutional background is in place.

Bilingual education is not only an educational policy issue. As the mother tongue is the carrier for a given culture, the survival of the native language of the minority community—served by education in and of the mother tongue—is a basic cultural issue. The Hungarian culture lives in and within the Hungarian language; thus the minority language varieties losing ground might bring about a loss of the culture.²¹

Any form of education with the specific aim of making students bilingual is bilingual education. However, since it has a long list of constituents and exists in various forms, bilingualism has many definitions. First, we must identify what type of bilingualism is being achieved. The aims differ from community to community. In the case of minority bilingualism, the high level balanced bilingualism targeted for many years is more and more often substituted by mother-tongue-dominated bilingualism as the goal: reaching

20 The L1 of the Hungarians is the vernacular variety; the standard is taught in schools. The vernacular variety is the Prekmurje Hungarian dialect contact version that differs from the Hungarian standard in at least two features: it has a strong dialect nature with archaic elements, and its vocabulary is enriched with loan words from the state language, as a result of language interference. See more in Kolláth, *A szlovéniai magyar nyelv a többnyelvűség kontextusában*, 49–64.; István Lanstyák, “A nyelvi változatosság mint szótártani probléma [Diversity of Language as a Lexicographical Problem],” in *Nyelvből nyelvbe*, ed. István Lanstyák (Pozsony: Kalligram Könyvkiadó, 2006): 57–104.; István Lanstyák, “A magyar szókészlet szétfejlődése 1918 után [The divergence of Hungarian vocabulary after 1918],” in *Értékek és dimenziók a magyarságkutatásban*, ed. Csilla Fedinec (Budapest: MTA Magyar Tudományosság Külföldön Elnöki Bizottsága, 2008): 118–135.

21 Torgyik Judit 2005. “Nyelvi szocializáció és oktatás. [Linguistic Socialization and Education].” *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*. Retrieved from <https://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00035/00090/2005-03-ta-Torgyik-Nyelvi.html>; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

a suitable level in the spoken and written registers (the mother tongue is more important from the point of view of both the communicative and cognitive functions, while the second language is a necessary tool of integration in to the majority society).²² In Prekmurje—after a shift in dominance, with the language losing ground—aiming to achieve a balanced bilingual state reflects the rightful claims of the minority that students should be as proficient in their mother tongue as in the state language.

Bilingual education uses two languages of instruction, with approximately the same weight. This serves as a template for both the majority Slovenian and the minority Hungarian languages, and also as the goal of the educational model implemented in Prekmurje as compulsory for both the majority and the minority. To carry it into effect, the majority and minority education policy utilized the so-called target oriented (bidirectional) parallel method. In principle, the method uses both languages during a single lesson at similar proportions (earlier methods used one language in the instruction for select subjects and the other language for the other subjects). The bilingual education that kicked off half a century ago as a pipe dream and never progressed beyond that, (as we know by now it was rather a temporary emergency arrangement), because it never managed to achieve the positive, additive variety of bilingualism.

Content-wise it provided a lot, but on the other hand, it diminished the use of Hungarian. In practice, it never managed to reach the dominance or the equal position as the use of the mother tongue. By now, for the Hungarians the Prekmurje model has become a form of education in the second language (the majority language), in which the mother tongue has a limited role and fewer domains (a negative consequence of this is the nearly complete absence of mother tongue languages for specific purposes). In fact, it is merely a redirection program whose aim is to help speakers to adopt the majority language in addition to retaining the mother tongue (variety) in certain domains.²³

22 Lajos Göncz, *A vajdasági magyarok kétnyelvűsége* [The Bilingualism of the Hungarians of Vojvodina] (Szabadka: MTT Könyvtár, 2004): 273.

23 István Lanstyák, “A kétnyelvű oktatás veszélyei Szlovákiában [The dangers of Bilingual Education in Slovakia],” *Felzárkózás vagy bezárkózás? A többnyelvű oktatás előnyei, veszélyei a kisebbségi közösségek életében*, ed. Ring Éva (Budapest: Európai Összehasonlító Kisebbségkutatások Közalapítvány, 2005): 43–73.; Lajos Göncz, *A vajdasági magyarok kétnyelvűsége* [The Bilingualism of the Hungarians of Vojvodina] (Szabadka: MTT Könyvtár, 2004).

The Prekmurje (immersion) model of bilingual education

Despite the differences in proportions, the sociocultural environment, life situations, destiny events and trans-border Hungarian communities share the same goals when shaping the education system. Within the attractions and choices of the opportunities dictated by the given linguistic and non-linguistic situation, each national community will try and select an education program so that the Hungarian students can become functionally bilingual and retain the dominance of their mother tongue. Their situation is far from easy, since all state-run educational (and other) institutions will, in most cases, act in the best interest of the Slovenian majority—even if the legislation is irreproachable—and the goals of the majority of the population tend to differ from those of the minorities.²⁴

Immersion is the most effective way to achieve bilingualism. Originally from Canada and widely successful in the past 40 years in a growing number of countries all over the world, the technique was developed to teach majority students in the minority language. This means teaching school subjects in another language and immersion in the minority language that is being taught. The majority language is simultaneously the means and the materials of instruction: either all of the school material or a part of it is taught in this language. The students' attention is directed to the content of the subject and not to the language; the language is received indirectly, through the subject matter, which is the way that the mother tongue is naturally received.

The two-way/dual immersion program combines and synthesizes the second language education of minority Hungarian and majority Slovenian students. The goal is to achieve a high level of additive bilingualism in both Hungarian and the Slovenian for both target groups—for the second language (L2) to be acquired, it must not come at the expense of the first language (L1) or the mother tongue. In a way, this program is about retaining and enriching the language and trying to avoid the negative effects of subtractive (replacing) bilingualism, which is often experienced by minority students. For the program to work effectively, a class should consist of roughly the same number of minority Hungarian and majority Slovenian students. The main priority of the program is to preserve the minority's native language. Additionally, the program is expected to contribute to studying the majority language and the overall school performance of the minority language students,

24 László Szarka, "Kisebbség és kultúra. A kulturális intézmények szerepe a közösségépítésben [Minority and Culture. The Role of Institutions in Community Building]," in *A kultúra világa. A határon túli magyar kulturális intézményrendszer*, eds. Éva Blénesi, Kinga Mandel, and László Szarka (Budapest: MTA Etnikai–Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2005), 5–24., 5.

to promote their development in the second language, to help enhance their intercultural sensitivity and to ensure linguistic and ethnic equality between the majority and minority students. If the program is effective, the Hungarian language will have high prestige, members of the minority Hungarian community will have more confidence when learning the majority Slovenian language and the members of the majority Slovenian community will be motivated to accept and understand the other language and culture.²⁵

The Prekmurje model does not follow the so-called school immersion pattern. It is more of the language bath type, since the two participating target groups are not only exposed to the language of the environment in the classroom, but they are, at least theoretically, immersed in the other language and culture, which they had at birth in their micro and macro environments. The main point of language preservation programs is for the minority and majority students to be taught by bilingual teachers in both their L1 and L2. Besides nurturing and preserving the two cultures, the programs are aimed at achieving a high level of functional bilingualism. However, the question arises: did the language policies and the social conditions in implementing an education program leading to additive bilingualism exist in Prekmurje 50 years ago? Then, why did the two languages not have equal status in the first place? What predetermined the dominance of the languages that shaped bilingual education in the region? It was compulsory for both the minority Hungarian and the majority Slovenian communities, and it must have triggered the feelings of powerlessness, maybe even a grudge in both communities. The resulting friction had an impact on the education model, strongly influencing the language use in education even today.

The dual (immersion) program, which is supposed to support and retain the mother tongue or first language of the Hungarian community, should be shaped so that the resulting bilingualism is profitable for both the communities and the overall society. They must make room for important and above-average intercultural and social competencies, thus promoting the peaceful coexistence of the different cultures.²⁶ Despite the plan, the intention of implementing the utopian model of the majority community and the minority community seems right in theory, considering the recent evidence that bilingual education in Prekmurje has not lived up to expectations. Owing to the lack of balance of the languages of instruction, neither the linguistic nor the education policy goals can be achieved, and the required conditions of education cannot be put to work in practice. The

25 Cathomas, "Schule und Zweisprachigkeit," 97.; Csilla Bartha, "A kisebbségi nyelvek megőrzésének lehetőségei és az oktatás [The possibilities of minority language maintenance and the education]," *Nyelvi jogok, kisebbségek, nyelvpolitika Kelet-Közép- Európában*, eds. Orsolya Nádor and László Szarka (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 2003).

26 Cathomas, "Schule und Zweisprachigkeit," 117.

weakness of the model needs more than superficial support—there is a need to get rid of the causes of exposure. Identifying the vulnerable spots might help to take the suitable language planning steps, to bring about the professional and education policy discourse necessary for finding a solution, even if the realistic opportunities are not always outlined in concrete practice.

The Prekmurje model of bilingual education: short history and milestones

Bilingual education in Prekmurje kicked off in the 1959/60 academic year. Before that, the L1 education of the Hungarians belonged within the framework of a program supporting the segregation of the minority, where minority Hungarian children were taught separately, and the state language (Slovenian) was only present as a subject in four lessons a week. This was basically monolingual education, aimed at assimilation and not at integration, wishing to achieve state language monolingualism and not functional bilingualism in the case of minority students.²⁷ The Hungarian students received poor quality education in L1 classes where the resources, the equipment and the teachers were unsuitable simply because the public support of minority language education and the prestige of the language were below those of Slovenian in the eyes of the general public. Before 1981, there was no Hungarian education at the secondary level, preventing students in the Hungarian classes from following further education in the mother country, since they could not become proficient enough in L2, through no fault of their own. This standoff diminished the weight and prestige of minority L1 even further.²⁸ It was widely accepted in professional and political circles that the Hungarian nationality schools were not good enough to promote social integration based on mother tongue identity awareness.²⁹ The change was made

27 Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, *Nyelv, oktatás és a kisebbségek* [Language, Education, Minorities] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1997); Ofelia Garcia, “Bilingual Education,” *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Coulmas, Florian (Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 405–420.; Csilla Bartha. “A kisebbségi nyelvek megőrzésének lehetőségei és az oktatás [The possibilities of minority language maintenance and the education],” in *Nyelvi jogok, kisebbségek, nyelvpolitika Kelet-Közép-Európában*, eds. Orsolya Nádor and László Szarka (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003); Kontra 1997.; Lajos Göncz, *A vajdasági magyarok kétnyelvűsége* [The Bilingualism of the Hungarians of Vojvodina] (Szabadka: MTT Könyvtár, 2004); Cathomas, “Schule und Zweisprachigkeit,” 117.

28 Lajos Bence, *Írott szóval a megmaradásáért. A szlovéniai magyarság 1919–1989* [Written Words to survive. Hungarians in Slovenia 1919–1989] (Győr: Hazánk Könyvkiadó, 1994): 46–53.

29 László Göncz, “A magyar nemzeti közösség nyelvi jogai és nyelvhasználata Szlovéniában [Language Rights and Language Use of Hungarian National Community in Slovenia],” *Tervezés és határtalanítás. A magyar nyelvpolitika 21. századi kihívásai*, eds. Kata Eplényi and Zoltán Kántor (Budapest: Nemzetpolitikai Kutatóintézet, 2012), 103–121., 112.

legally possible by the elementary education act passed in 1959 in the Slovenian Socialist Republic, which underlined the necessity to settle the socio-cultural state of the national minorities in order to ensure the preservation and the development of minority and majority ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities.³⁰ According to those who participated in the reforming, based on the antecedents and in the reality defined by the (language) political and political situation at that time, when shaping the new model of education the true alternative was not the mother tongue–bilingual setup but the Slovenian monolingual–bilingual setup.³¹ Both the minority and the majority education policies saw this as the only way to preserve the minority L1, accepting it for a fact that the language of a minority, so small in numbers, can only be protected by coming closer near to the state language.³² At the same time, it appeared to be the only path to doing away with being locked inside the L1, creating the necessary and healthy integration mentioned above, without which there did not seem to be a future.

Thus, in the 1959/60 academic year, bilingual elementary school education was launched in Prekmurje, mandatory for both minority and the majority students. Two years later, it was followed by bilingual kindergartens. The switch did not go off without a hitch. Some of the Slovenian parents, convinced that the Prekmurje model of bilingual education would have a negative impact on their children’s linguistic and cognitive development worried that compared to what was offered in the monolingual Slovenian schools, it would limit their chances of achieving high grades and pursuing further studies, turned to the constitutional court. Having examined the case, the court in its report deemed the bilingual education legitimate. However, it recommended that a special committee be set up to assess the activity of bilingual schools. In the assessment, it was established that the bilingual schools achieve the main aspects of the pedagogical objectives and also that they have some hidden features on the basis of which their flaws can be eliminated and their performance can be enhanced.³³ Contrary to all this, experts

30 József Varga, “A kétnyelvű oktatás Szlovéniában [The Bilingual Education in Prekmurje],” in *Nemzetiségi iskolák – kétnyelvű oktatás / Narodnostne šole / Dvojezično izobraževanje / Minderheitsschulen / Zweisprachiger Unterricht*, ed. Ruda Gábor (Pilisvörösvár, Graz: Muravidéki Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület, Artikel-VII-Kulturverein für Steiermark, 2002), 9–21., 10.

31 László Göncz, “A muravidéki magyarság tegnap és ma [The Hungarians of Pekomurje yesterday and today],” *Pro Minoritate* (Nyár–Ősz 2006): 24–26.

32 Novak Lukanovič 2003.; Anna Kolláth, *Magyarul a Muravidéken* [In Hungarian in Prekmurje] (Maribor: Slavistično društvo, Zora 39, 2005), 166–185.

33 József Varga, “A kétnyelvű oktatás Szlovéniában [Bilingual Education in Slovenia],” in *Nemzetiségi iskolák – kétnyelvű oktatás. Narodnostne šole – Dvojezično izobraževanje. Minderheitsschulen – Zweisprachiger Unterricht*, ed. Gábor Ruda (Pilisvörösvár – Graz: Muravidéki Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület – Artikel-VII-Kulturverein für Steiermark, 2002): 9–21.

(mainly of minorities) talk about the failure of the bilingual schools. They do not question the students' knowledge and the competencies they obtain—it is the L1 competence of the Hungarian students that they do not find satisfactory, claiming the presence of the minority Hungarian language in the school is too limited. They point out the mock phenomena on the expectations side, conceived at the time primarily to satisfy certain “political” needs by blaming the incompleteness of the methodology, the poorly trained teachers and the lack of professional support for the inconsistency between what is intended and what is achieved.³⁴

It has greatly contributed to the present-day situation of Hungarian as L1 and the considerable loss of domains that before 1981 there was no bilingual (Hungarian–Slovenian) secondary education in Slovenia³⁵, and the first department of Hungarian language and literature (besides the Hungarian Lectorate, which had been operational since 1966) was also only founded in 1981 in the Pedagogy Academy of Maribor University (predecessor of the former Faculty of Pedagogy). The aim of the new department was to train teachers of Hungarian and teachers of other subjects with good command of Hungarian for the bilingual educational institutions in Prekmurje. It is probably not only the quantity but also the time lag in setting up the full scale of bilingual education that can be blamed for the elementary school being the backbone of bilingual education even today.

The academic year 1990/91 was the second milestone in the history of the bilingual education. Following a majority initiative, as a result of the situation analysis studies, according to which teaching Hungarian and Slovenian in heterogeneous groups is not beneficial for majority students, two types of groups were formed: mother tongue/L1 (Hungarian 1,

34 Lajos Bence, “A kétnyelvű oktatás története”; Elizabeta Bernjak, A muravidéki kétirányú kétnyelvű oktatás hiányosságai [Deficiencies of the two-way bilingual education in Prekmurje],” *Nemzetiségi iskolák Magyarországon, Szlovákiában és Szlovéniában*, ed. Gábor Ruda (Pilisvörösvár: Muravidéki Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület, 2011), 195–199.; József Bokor, *Nyelviség és magyarság a Muravidéken* [Language identity and Hungarian identity in Prekmurje] (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet, 2009), 111–136.

35 The only vocational secondary school in Lendva/Lendava had Slovene as the language of instruction. Hungarian was introduced as an optional subject in 1976/77. Some other monolingual schools also started offering Hungarian at the same time if their Hungarian students (min. 5) vindicated it. In the first few years in the municipalities of Murska Sobota, Gornja Radgona and Ljutomer, there were 280 students learning Hungarian at three lessons a week, and there were some ethnic Hungarian students learning L1 in Maribor and Ruše, too. The theoretical possibility is still there today.

Slovenian 1) and L2 (Hungarian 2, Slovenian 2).³⁶ It ended up being a failure in bilingual education, because it did not manage to achieve the high-level balanced bilingualism. Instead of helping to preserve the mother tongue, it led to a shift in dominance with all its linguistic and non-linguistic consequences for the minority Hungarian students. As a result of the bilingual education, for most of the Hungarian children, Slovenian took the place of Hungarian as L1 by the end of the elementary school. Emphasizing the dominance of the mother tongue is not realistic, as it only exists on a theoretical level.³⁷ The situation is a logical consequence of the asymmetry in the bilingual model: while Hungarian is taught on both levels, and Slovene students can learn Hungarian (with appropriate content, form and methods) as L2 up to the Matura, from Year 4 of elementary school all students are taught Slovene as L1 irrespective of their mother tongue, using L1 teaching methods. This external differentiation has led to a gradual shrinking of the L1 groups, and it has made effective Hungarian L2 teaching nearly totally impossible, as the L2 groups become extremely heterogeneous regarding the students' language competence. Teachers of Hungarian L2 were able to provide a sense of achievement neither for the students nor for themselves; most of their efforts were in vain. The resulting unstable motivation causes a loss of prestige for the minority language and culture, which, in a community so small, pushes L1 ethnolinguistic vitality and identity content in an unfavorable direction. Moreover, Hungarian language and culture losing ground endangers multilingualism and multiculturalism, which would result in the region losing its features, prosperity and colors.

Experiences very clearly show that the bilingual nature of bilingual education in Prekmurje depends mostly on the teacher from the upper primary onward. The ratio of language use depends on the language skills and the special purposes language competences of the

36 A study into the relationship of the speaking skill development and the level of cognitive abilities of children by a Ljubljana research group led by Albina Nečak Lük revealed that there is a need for the differentiated approach in teaching both Hungarian and Slovene (Nečak Lük: 1989). Tests of spoken language understanding proved that on both sides the L1 competences of children in years 1 and 2 are better for both Hungarian and Slovene children (the spoken Slovene language understanding skill of other nationalities is much better than that of Hungarian). Thus, when entering the school, the children's L1 and L2 can be clearly separated. The study's results are definite proof that bilingual education is especially beneficial for children from mixed marriages (the most important innovation in the first third of the nine-year primary school reform [i.e., the principle of one person–one language is based on this finding]) since each parent using his/her mother tongue is a positive mirror image of everyday bilingualism. By now, however, it must be accepted that in most bilingual families natural language use equals an ever-increasing Slovene monolingualism.

37 „...za pripadnike narodnih skupnosti je prvi jezik italijanski oziroma madžarski, drugi jezik pa slovenski...” ZPIMVI 3. člen [...for the national minorities L1 is Italian and Hungarian, respectively, and L2 is Slovene ...].

teachers.³⁸ Apart from the Hungarian major teachers, all the others hold degrees from Slovenian universities (and because those Hungarian teachers who obtained a degree in Hungary had only one major), it is easy to understand why teachers lack the Hungarian special purposes language register. As a result, during special purpose classes Hungarian is represented by a few vocabulary items on the blackboard (the plan on the board must be bilingual); everything else happens in Slovenian.

In the 2007/2008 academic year, the eight-year primary education was substituted with the nine-year primary program (*devetletna osnovna šola, devetletka*) all over Slovenia. Based on European norms, the new type of education was hoped to bring about the reform of the bilingual primary education as well. Reaching this targets depends nearly exclusively on the teacher, their competence in the language and the special purpose language—in theory, the teacher has complete autonomy.

Probably the most important feature of the program is the one person—one language principle in the first third (years 1–3).³⁹ This principle means there are two teachers in each class: one speaking and teaching consistently only in Hungarian and the other only in Slovenian, in and outside of the classroom. These teachers stay with the class in the first third. Being attached to the language is supposed to help the younger learners to bond with the language, and the aim is to achieve equal positions for both languages within the process of education and in the students' minds to avoid linguistic subordination. The coordinated work of the teachers requires serious planning, but as a result of this and through consistent application of appropriate methodology, both L1 (and its varieties) and L2 can be acquired at a very high

38 Needless to say, it depends on the school (whether in a village or a city) and the class (the ethnic distribution of the students and their attitude to bilingualism) how far two-directional bilingualism can be realised there. Whether it is more a cause or a consequence is a hotly debated topic these days.

39 The so-called one person—one language principle is one of the family models of how bilingualism is formed (psycholinguistic approach). Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). The various models are named after the researchers. In the Ronjat family model the two parents have different L1s, one of which is the language of the environment. The parents can speak each other's languages to a certain extent, but when communicating with the child they consistently only use their own L1s. See also in Csilla Bartha, "Nyelvcseré, nyelvvesztés: szempontok az emigráns kétnyelvűség vizsgálatához [Language Shift, Language Loss: Some Aspects of Examination of Immigrant Bilingualism]," in *Kétnyelvűség és magyar nyelvhasználat*, ed. Ilona Kassai (Budapest: MTA Nyelvtudományi Intézetének Élőnyelvi Osztálya, 1995); Zoltán Karmacs, *Kétnyelvűség és nyelvsajátítás* [Bilingualism and Language Acquisition] (Ungvár: PoliPrint, 2007); Judit Navracsics, *A kétnyelvű gyermek* [The Bilingual Child] (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1998), 93–98. Susanne Romaine regards the one person—one language technique as one method of simultaneous bilingual language acquisition—by this, she means the case when the parents' L1s are different. One parent's L1 is the language of the society the child lives in, while the L1 of the other parent is different. From the child's birth, they use their own L1s to communicate to the child. Naturally this method will only work if the parents spend approximately the same amount of time with the child, and both are consistent in their language use, which is much harder than what other people would think. Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 1995.

level. Effective education also requires harmonizing the intentions and close cooperation between the parents (choice of language) and the school (consistent realisation).

An important aspect in the process of education is the so-called benchmark (differentiated) education (*nivojski pouk*: providing education in small groups on different levels according to knowledge and competence). There are three types of multi-level education in the nine-year program. Internal (didactic) differentiation is already present in the first third, and it accompanies the whole of the education process in the teaching of those subjects where the other two types are missing. The so-called flexible differentiation (*fleksibilna diferenciacija*) appears in the second third and in Year 7. The successive combination of the single-level initial education and benchmark education means that the students are streamed in groups on the basis of their abilities, intensity of interests and academic performance in a maximum of three subjects (L1, mathematics and foreign language), up to a quarter of the total lessons. In practice, in one year the students spend 75% of the lessons in heterogeneous classes and the rest in homogeneous ones with students selected from the parallel classes based on their competencies (maximum three such groups can be formed). The decision as to which students go in which group is made together by the parents, the student and the school. The group division is flexible; students can join another group after each term provided their performance is above or below the group average. Such changes must be discussed by the school, the teacher and the parents of the student concerned.

Years 8 and 9 use a modified version of differentiation, the so-called partial external differentiation (*delna zunanja diferenciacija*). It is linked to the previous type by the subjects (L1, mathematics and foreign language); however, the students are put into three homogeneous competence groups for the whole of the academic year. Depending on their performance in Year 8, they can change groups at the end of the year. The other subjects are taught in the students' original, heterogeneous classes.⁴⁰

40 In connection with the experiences of the eight-year program, how well-known the nine-year program was, what the parents' opinion was about the innovations and the opinions of the parents concerned were examined in three groups in 1998 (922 respondents) and 2000 (943 respondents) by the ministry of education. Already in the eight-year program, the Slovenian model of differentiated education induced lively debates in the field of pedagogy and education policy and also among those concerned, parents and students alike. The nine-year program applied the existing method more consistently; however, there is growing criticism that it—especially the partial external differentiation in the third—leads to discrimination and segregation (even if, with the growing share of the model popular in the English-speaking countries, integration is the more popular direction). Critics point out that weaker students lose the chance to fit in, and the principle of *the stronger ones help the weaker ones*, which has stood the test of time, suffers a loss (Devetletna osnovna šola [Nine-year elementary school]). 2000. www.gfk.si/files/3a-devetletka.ppt

The original form of differentiation requires parallel classes—of the bilingual primary schools, the one in Lendva/Lendava is the only suitable one. In the three smaller schools there is only one class with a limited number of students that permits only a special kind of differentiation. In accordance with the three competence levels, combined study groups are formed by joining two years, and applying a combination of external and internal differentiation.

Maybe the most important feature of the new primary education program is how the knowledge acquired is evaluated and tested. The system is partly inherited, and one version is already used in Year 8. In Year 9, there is an externally evaluated national achievement test in three compulsory subjects (L1, foreign language and mathematics) and two optional ones: one science subject and one from among the humanities (*nacionalni preizkus znanja*).⁴¹ This set of exams is called small matura (*mala matura*), and by successfully passing it, students obtain a certificate of primary education.⁴²

The optional subject in a third of primary-educated students clearly shows a positive development. The school is obliged to offer minimum one and maximum three optional subjects (*izbirni predmet*): a three-year course in a second foreign language (English, French, Croatian, Italian, Latin, German, Spanish or Russian) or various subjects from the field of sciences from among which students must select one.

Multi-level education is the most effective in the language groups. The method is used in three subjects for one lesson per week, or for one subject in three lessons a week (it is up to the schools to determine which version they use). The language of instruction in these groups is 80% and 20% in Slovenian and Hungarian, respectively. Those subjects that have a national component (history, geography and the skill subjects) can also be included. The modified curriculum, the new forms meant to deliver the new content require a new approach, which is an openness to the new features from teachers, students, parents,

41 At the end of the first third students are/might be given optional oral and written tests in L1 (Hungarian or Slovene) and mathematics. At the end of the second third, tests are in L1, mathematics and a foreign Language—the first two are compulsory. Test material is prepared by the National Testing Centre. The oral and written tests are evaluated internally.

42 Findings of the above-mentioned ministry survey revealed that the parents are not satisfied with these tests. In their view, performance on a single occasion does not and cannot reflect real knowledge in all cases; at the same time it carries too great a weight when students apply for further education. They think that continuous classwork and the whole process of obtaining information should be given more attention and that external assessment should be abolished altogether. They would recommend giving emphasis to those subjects that are important in secondary school and introducing entrance tests. Additionally, in their opinion a positive grade average at the end of year 9 should be accepted as necessary and enough proof of completing primary education; there is no need for passing the small matura.

(education) policy, minority and majority alike, in order to adapt a system that produces a truly safe environment for the minority L1.

The school is the most fitting place to learn about the language when students are taught by well-prepared teachers with suitable linguistic and professional competencies from adequate bilingual textbooks. While primary schools in Prekmurje have access to a full range of bilingual textbooks, translating the Slovenian secondary school textbooks was only started a few years ago (the first two to be turned into bilingual were the history and the geography books of Year 1). Work must be carried on—translating the primary school workbooks is also a key issue. This cannot be said often enough: without bilingual textbooks, Hungarian, with its lower prestige, has no chance of survival. Translated textbooks that are attractive and linguistically correct, ones that pay close attention to the language situation, can reduce the huge advantage of the Slovene language to some extent. Texts that have been translated into the standard variety of the vernacular contribute to the birth of Hungarian special language registers, promoting the formation of universal Hungarian special terminology.

Innovations in the past five years

The two most significant innovations in the bilingual education scene in Prekmurje are the products of a research project *E-competences of bilingual education teachers (E-kompetence učiteljev dvojezičnih šol)*.⁴³ One focuses on the first third of primary education (6. 1), while the other on secondary school education (6. 2). In the light of evidence, both are success stories.

HOP: Teaching writing and reading in tandem

Hkratno opismenjevanje v slovenščini in madžarščini v dvojezični osnovni šoli – Poskus hkratnega opismenjevanja (HOP) means the parallel teaching of reading and writing in both languages. The trial version was launched in the Lendva/Lendava Bilingual Primary School during the 2013/2014 academic year. The carefully compiled project group

⁴³ A description of the project activities and their findings can be found on the project home page (www.e-kompetencia.si). The research group of the Hungarian Department of Maribor University participated as a partner; however, it was not involved in the development of the innovations discussed here.

managed to implement the project according to plan: they provided the professional and methodological background, followed each and every moment of the parallel instruction, paid special attention to the training of the teachers directly involved, and organized workshops to exchange information and experience. There was a lot at stake; planning and launching the program was an extremely responsible step. Teaching the two languages in tandem does not only set out to develop language skills and bring them up to a level where the linguistic basis of functional bilingualism can be shaped and consolidated for the majority and the minority alike—it puts emphasis on the identity-shaping role of the education model as well. Acquiring literacy in tandem in both languages puts the academic and social position and appreciation of the minority Hungarian and the majority Slovene languages on par with one another, and it can bolster the waning prestige of the Hungarian language. One of the expectations towards HOP is that when starting school, Hungarian L1 children do not choose Hungarian as L2 or regional language (which is regarded as an easy subject, meaning students can achieve better grades with less work), but they should have the opportunity to learn Hungarian at a level as high as that of Slovenian, the higher prestige state language.

The trial was a success; both the students and the parents involved had a positive opinion. Everyone interviewed praised HOP for its positive impact on the process of teaching and learning and for how it increases the students' chances of further studies (both mono- and bilingual) and job market value. It must also be mentioned that in theory the new program makes it possible for Slovenian L1 students to reach a proficient enough level in the minority language that by the end of the first third they can join a Hungarian L1 class in Year 4. The fact that following the trial in the Lendva KÁI the HOP was introduced in the 2015/2016 academic year in all four primary schools in Prekmurje is proof of how successful the model is. The results of meticulous testing based on the curricular requirements for homogeneous (Hungarian 1 or Slovenian 1) classes prove that the performance of HOP students is similar or even better.⁴⁴

44 *Končno poročilo o uvajanju poskusa »Hkratno opismenjevanje v slovenščini in madžarščini v dvojezični osnovni šoli«*. Šolski leti 2012/2013 in 2013/2014. Ljubljana, marca 2015. Projektna skupina Zavoda RS za šolstvo, mag. Vida Gomivnik Thuma, vodja poskusa. file:///C:/Users/UporabnikFF/Downloads/KON%C4%8CNO%20PORO%C4%8CILO%20-%20HOP%20(2015).pdf: 55

Table 1. Year 1 children in the bilingual schools in Prekmurje*

School	Children in Year 1 in the bilingual schools in Prekmurje											
	2015/16				2016/17				2017/18			
	H1	H2	HOP	H1	H2	HOP	H1	H2	HOP	H1	H2	HOP
Bilingual Primary School No. 1, Lendva	5	39	17	4	42	11 fő	3 fő	38 fő	11 fő	3 fő	38 fő	11 fő
	8,2%	63,93%	27,87%	7,0%	73,7%	19,3%	5,8%	73,1%	21,2%	5,8%	73,1%	21,2%
	61 children (53 Lendva, 8 Gyertyános) H1+HOP: 22 children, 36,1%											
Bilingual Primary School, Dobronak	0	7	9	0	6	4	0	6	4	0	7	3
		43,8%	56,25%		60,0%	40,0%		60,0%	40,0%		70%	30%
	16 children H1+HOP: 9 children, 56,25%											
Bilingual Primary School, Göntérháza	5	6	3	0	3	1	3	2	2	3	2	2
	35,71%	42,86%	21,42%		75,0%	25,0%	42,9%	28,6%	28,6%	42,9%	28,6%	28,6%
	14 children H1+HOP: 8 children, 57,1%											
Bilingual Primary School, Pártosfalva	4	0	3	11	3	1	10	2	1	10	2	1
	57,14%		42,86%	73,33%	20,0%	6,67%	77%	15,4%	7,7%	77%	15,4%	7,7%
	7 children (1 from Hungary) H1+HOP: 7 children, 100%											
Total number of students	14	45	38	15	54	17	16	49	17	16	49	17
	15,3%	45,9%	38,8%	17,4%	62,8%	19,8%	19,5%	59,8%	20,7%	19,5%	59,8%	20,7%
	98 children H1+HOP: 53 children, 54,1%											
	82 children H1+HOP: 33 children, 40,2%											

 *The data in the table are from those published in *Népiújság* in September every year.

Regarding enrollment, there are no consistent trends since the size of language groups depends on demographic factors, namely the number of children. The most prominent feature is, however, that the enrollment in Hungarian 2 is by far higher than either in the L1 or the HOP groups. The number of those opting for the parallel model went down by nearly 10% in 2016/2017 compared to the previous year; however, in 2017 there was a slight increase. In two of the schools there was no enrollment in the L1 programs. The school in Pártosfalva is a very special case: since 2015 the school has had an increasing number of pupils from Hungary (one in 2015, seven in 2016 and nine in 2017), who are driven to this school and back by their parents daily from Hungarian villages across the border. They have no difficulty fitting in—they find that the opportunities, the teachers' attitudes, the openness of the school, the whole process of education, and that it is very different from the schools in Hungary help make the schools much more attractive to Hungarian Parents on the other side of the border. Helping the Hungarian students become functional bilinguals is a great challenge for the schools, not an easy task, but a most exciting and rewarding one.

It was welcome news that during the 2016 autumn (16th) session of the Mixed Hungarian–Slovenian Minority Committee (16.11.2016) it was stated that the HOP in Years 1–3 has become part of the bilingual education system in Prekmurje. Furthermore, it was included in the recommendations that the Slovene partner should provide 50-50% classroom share of the two languages in the second and third thirds for those students who started their studies in the HOP program.⁴⁵

Introducing the first foreign language for young learners is a new development all over Slovenia, including in Prekmurje. In the bilingual classes the young learners take up German or English in Year 2. The second foreign language appears as an optional subject in Year 7 (in Lendva/Lendava, it is the Spanish language).⁴⁶ The direction and the consistent way it is given effect is clear proof of the efforts to achieve and support multilingualism and multiculturalism.

45 1075/2017. (II. 13.) Korm. határozat a Magyar-Szlovén Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság XVI. ülésén fenntartott és elfogadott ajánlások jóváhagyásáról - *Hatályos Jogszabályok Gyűjteménye*. Retrieved from <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A17H1075.KOR×hift=fffff4&txtreferer=00000001.TXT>; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

46 The change concerns the whole of Slovenia (the second foreign language can, in theory, be even Hungarian).

External (partial) differentiation of H2 in the bilingual secondary school

According to another highly favorable recommendation that came up during the 2016 autumn (16th) session of the Mixed Hungarian–Slovenian Minority Committee, the committee recommends it for the Slovenian party that the project, aimed at an external partial differentiation of H2 and trialed at the Lendva/Lendava Bilingual Secondary School, should be fitted into the system of bilingual education in Prekmurje. It is a very positive development that ideas from the teachers or educators have sway in the decision making process. Such forward pointing changes are bound to lead to healthy education planning in the long run.

Students applying to the only bilingual secondary school in Prekmurje bring with themselves the Hungarian language groups they joined in the primary school. The structure of the Hungarian L1 groups becomes quite chaotic at this stage because over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of students from the Slovenian monolingual areas applying to the Lendva/Lendava secondary school, especially in the vocational and secondary technical classes. They must latch onto the bilingual programs without any prior preparation. The teachers, just like in the primary classes, need to come up with a solution to the situation that seems nearly impossible to solve—using internal differentiation, they have to develop various levels of language competence, bring others up to the level and even find a way to help the gifted students. Despite the huge amount of extra work, not much seemed to be happening; moreover, the need for a change was mentioned more frequently.⁴⁷ The opportunity came in the 2012/2013 academic year when the previously mentioned E-project (*E-competencies of teachers in bilingual education*) appeared on the scene.⁴⁸ After preparing a special curriculum and selecting suitable textbooks and teaching tools, the trial period of the third level of Hungarian teaching was launched⁴⁹: the partial external differentiation of Hungarian⁵⁰

47 One of the major problems of the 2010 education policy strategy prepared in Prekmurje was the heterogeneous nature of the H2 groups. The concept of external differentiation (introducing H2 KD, Hungarian as a foreign language) visualized and described here was later implemented in the E-project.

48 *Nyitólap* || *Domov*. E-kompetencia.si. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.e-kompetencia.si/>; downloaded: October 8, 2017.

49 The textbook in use is *Lépésenként magyarul* by Péter Durst, the first book in the first two years, the second in years 3 and 4. The teachers make good use of the e-materials from the project (there are at least 23 units to choose from, depending on the group's level and interests).

50 Hungarian as a foreign language cannot be included in the bilingual program since the two languages have equal status in the bilingual region. Consequently they must have similarly equal statuses in education as well. At the same time in fact, it is in the external differentiation that is offered to students who do not come from bilingual schools, whose L1 is Slovene and who do not speak Hungarian at all.

(Hungarian2 KD).⁵¹ It set out to involve the growing number of Slovenian monolingual students from outside the bilingual area in the process of making bilingual education possibly more effective. Attracting more students from the neighboring Slovenian monolingual settlements is a matter of life and death for the school⁵²: the small Hungarian community of 6000–7000 people cannot fill even one secondary school as a result of low population. Rejecting those who do not speak Hungarian would result in a drastic drop of student numbers, putting the survival of the school in danger. The situation is grave for the school and for the children alike: while only learning the minority language as beginners, they already attend bilingual courses in the other subjects, having to cope with the Hungarian component of the course. The school statistics show⁵³ that 29.2% of the children are learning the minority language as L1 (the trend is somewhat decreasing) and 70.8% as L2. The proportion is not very reassuring: a bilingual school is only necessary in Prekmurje if there are students in the L1 group. Consequently, it is a shared task for teachers, parents, children, kindergartens, schools and politicians to think over on how they can reverse this trend.⁵⁴ The number of students who learn Hungarian as a foreign language (Hungarian2KD) has grown considerably in the past three years. Of the students, 23.2% have entered the secondary school with no prior knowledge of Hungarian, which equates to about 33% of the students attending Hungarian2s.

The opportunity to differentiate came at the right time. No wonder external differentiation was met with a very warm response. Teachers and students alike put in a lot of work: a new curriculum was developed as a supplement of the existing Hungarian2, drawing up the objectives and the content of education and the minimum expectations⁵⁵, all of which are continuously upgraded modified in the light of experience. The choice of textbooks and teaching tools was treated with circumspection; additionally, the e-teaching materials

51 The head of the experiment is Mária Pisnjak, special adviser on Hungarian language issues of the Educational Institute of the Republic of Slovenia.

52 Borut Šantak, *A magyar nyelv mint második nyelv tanításának helyzete a Lendvai Kétnyelvű Középiskolában / Položaj pouka madžarščine kot drugega jezika v Dvojezični srednji šoli v Lendavi* [The Situation of Teaching Hungarian as a Second Language in the Bilingual Secondary School in Lendava] (Maribor: Term paper, 2016), 52–53.

53 Šantak, “A magyar nyelv mint második nyelv.”

54 Mária Pisnjak, “A magyar nyelv mint anyanyelv a kétnyelvű általános iskolában [Hungarian as Mother Language in the Bilingual Elementary School],” in *Kézikönyv a muravidéki kétnyelvű iskolák pedagógusai számára*, ed. Mária Pisnjak (Lendva: Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet, 2013), 416–423., 420.

55 Mária Pisnjak, Vida Gomivnik Thuma, Vladimir Milekšič, Tomi Deutsch, and Franc Cankar, *Končno poročilo o poskusu Delna zunanja diferenciacija pri Madžarščini kot drugem jeziku v Dvojezični srednji šoli v Lendavi* [Final Report of an Experiment: Partial External Differentiation Regarding Teaching Hungarian as a Second Language in the Bilingual Secondary School in Lendava] (Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo, 2015), 35–49.

developed within the framework of the E-project are also used. The students' language skills are becoming more solid, as a result of which their attitudes are more positive, releasing more energy for intensive language learning. They can see and feel the positive effects of bilingual education and living in two languages and two cultures, learning how to accept being different, which is not a marginal issue these days.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the action and reaction to increase the Hungarian competence of the Slovene L1 students makes the whole process of bilingual education more effective.⁵⁷

Higher education

Hungarian-medium higher education is absent in Slovenia.⁵⁸ Established in 1981—simultaneously with launching the Bilingual Secondary School in Lendva/Lendava—the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature at the Pedagogy Academy of Maribor University (now one of the departments of the Faculty of Pedagogy of the university) is the only higher education institute where students can obtain a Hungarian-taught degree. The Lectorate of Hungarian Language was established in 1966 and has been in operation since as a place where non-Hungarian major students and any student of the university from Prekmurje can attend optional Hungarian language classes (two lessons per week) to develop their basic language skills, learn the standard variety of their mother tongue and acquire special language registers so that their professional competence will be marketable not only in Slovenian but also in Hungarian.

From 1986, when the Pedagogy Academy was upgraded to the Faculty of Pedagogy (which lasted until 2008), until the introduction of the Bologna Process, the department offered single-cycle, double major teacher training in Hungarian. The fact that 66% of the

56 Šantak, "A magyar nyelv mint második nyelv," 52.

57 »Moje mnenje o madžarščini je pozitivno. To je zame popolnoma nov jezik, ki mi je v dveh letih že bistveno bližje kot prej.../ I have a positive opinion of the Hungarian language. For me, this is a totally new language, but after two years, I feel much closer to it than I used to. ...« Excerpt from the opinion expressed by an M2KD student (Year 2, vocational secondary school). Šantak, "A magyar nyelv mint második nyelv," 65–66.

58 Further university/college departments would not be realistic owing to the low number of people in the Prekmurje Hungarian national community. In theory, Hungarian L1 students are all graduates from one secondary school. These days the number of students at the Hungarian Department is decreasing, too. To combat the trend, the department is set to have a new general Hungarology program accredited, which might attract Slovene students as well. The changes are open to all values of the Hungarian language and culture, which will hopefully raise the prestige of the minority Hungarians, their language and culture.

Hungarian teachers in Prekmurje hold a degree from the department is unquestionable proof of its success.⁵⁹ In Prekmurje, graduates from the department either work as teachers in the bilingual schools or in Hungarian language media and cultural institutions, where a large number have found employment.

In 2008, a single-cycle teacher training was replaced with a BA in Hungarian Language and Literature. Since then the department does not train only teachers, because the new six-semester, 90-credit BA program has no pedagogy component. On the other hand, the degrees students have obtained in this program do not qualify them to work as teachers—the program does not train teachers but rather Hungarian socio-cultural experts and linguists. They can either enter the job market directly or go to a master's program of their choice. The department offers an MA in Teaching Hungarian (the program is accredited): the degree obtained after a four-semester, 120-credit programmed, an MA examination and a defense of the MA's dissertation qualifies the graduates to teach Hungarian in primary and secondary education. The other major and the courses they share with other major students are taught in Slovenian⁶⁰; this way obtaining a Hungarian major degree is also a bilingual process in Slovenia.

Inasmuch as the department needs to serve public education, it must follow all of its reforms. All subject matter that prepares students to meet the new challenges must be included in the teacher training programs. The new higher education bill (being developed these days), the new nationality law, passing the amendments of the law about special educational rights and the re-accreditation process of the master's programs offered by the department all open the door for Hungarian as a second language and Hungarian as a foreign language methodology to have a higher share within the methodology of teaching Hungarian language and literature.

For teachers in Slovenia the language of training other than Hungarian is of course Slovenian. Consequently, those would-be teachers who also wanted to work in some other bilingual field or are currently teaching in bilingual schools (where both languages are present in all the lessons) had learned their profession, including the teaching methodology, in Slovenian. Nevertheless, shaping bilingualism does not only depend on the Hungarian

59 Irena Kumer, "Pozdravni govor [Words of Welcome]," in *30 éves a Maribori Egyetem Magyar Nyelv és Irodalom Tanszéke*, eds. Anna Kolláth, Annamáris Gróf, and Annamária Merényi (<http://www.ff.um.si/dotAsset/32256.pdf>, 2012).

60 The double major master's program is worth 120 credits (ECTS). Of them, 60 ECTS cover the two majors (consequently, 30 Hungarian Language and Literature) and 60 the so-called PDP-module (Pedagogy, Didactics, Psychology). In Slovenia, it is put down in the Higher Education Act that a teacher training program must contain a methodology component worth 60 credits.

teachers. The lecturers in Hungarian are offered to special language and language teaching methodology courses (two lessons per week) with optional attendance for these students that are interested. It is widely accepted that the efficiency of the bilingual teaching of special subjects depends mainly on the teacher (see 5.2). Most of the teachers in the bilingual schools in Prekmurje are driven by professional callings. To find a place and a future in bilingual education, on top of professional competences, teachers need suitable language skills in both languages. It is an advantage if one of the majors is in Hungarian or another language because such teachers find it easier to understand and work in a bilingual educational process (the subjects are taught in the two languages, and at the same time the teachers must teach the terminology and special purpose language use in the minority language as well). For them, applying the language teaching methodology side by side with a subject teaching methodology is no problem; they can ensure that each language receives the same amount of classroom time set down by law.

Those teachers in the bilingual schools who have suitable teaching qualification but did not attend a bilingual secondary school are expected to pass a language test—the so-called *preizkus znanja*, organized by the ministry of education (Uradni list RS, št. 011–03–8/2005)⁶¹—to prove they have the necessary skills in the minority Hungarian language. Following proposals by the department and the examination board, by amending Article 15 of the law of the special rights in minority education, this examination is to be replaced by the ECL exam, which has been in use at the department since 2014 and provides an objective picture of the Hungarian language competence of the candidates by using an external evaluation at levels defined by the European Framework of Reference. By offering an opportunity to take an ECL exam in Hungarian, after signing an agreement with the Foreign Language Centre of the University of Pécs (PTE), the Faculty of Humanities of Maribor University has become PTE’s only accredited examination center in Slovenia. Candidates can attend free consultations advising them at which level they can try.⁶²

So far, a solution has been found for neither the Hungarian language training of lower primary and kindergarten teachers at Maribor University or for the whole of Slovenia. Training teachers for the lower primary classes does not belong to the scope of training programs of the Hungarian department. Accredited training programs are offered in

61 Pravilnik, “o preizkus znanja učnega jezika na narodno mešanih območjih.” Rule about Knowledge [Regarding Language of Instruction in the Ethnically Mixed Region]. Uradni list RS, št. 011–03–8/ (2005).

62 *Certifikatni izpiti iz madžarskega jezika ECL [Certified ECL Exam in Hungarian]. Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru.* Ff.um.si. (2017). Retrieved from http://ff.um.si/oddelki/madzarski-jezik-in-knjizevnost/certifikatni-izpiti-iz-mad%C5%BEarskega-jezika-ecl.dot?language_id=1; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

Slovenian by the Lower Primary and Kindergarten Department of the Faculty of Pedagogy of Maribor University. Taking part in the development of Hungarian language and teaching methodology competences of the lower primary and kindergarten teachers in the bilingual schools has always been regarded as a priority at the Hungarian department. Apart from in-service courses (allowed by the current legislation), there has not been much that the department could do other than make sure that the topics of the lector's classes (twice a week) and the syllabus of the courses suited the teachers' needs, as far as it was possible. The topics included the Hungarian language and language use, the history of the Hungarian culture, (youth) literature and the methodology of teaching Hungarian as a second language and as a foreign language. At the end of the 4th semester, students can take a final exam and receive a certificate that enables them to find employment in bilingual education. Unfortunately, experience shows this is far from enough—moreover, the courses are optional for the students. They can choose to attend, sometimes instead of a foreign language course. It would not be a bad idea to develop a suitable university version of the college program, which had been successful in Hungary. Offering lower primary education and Hungarian as a double major to students. However, owing to the low number of those concerned and interested and because of the strict group size limits of the Bologna process, there would be a problem (in the current system; making the Hungarian language module compulsory is not possible). Overall, it would not work without minority policy support. These days, much hope is placed in support from the Mixed Slovenian–Hungarian Committee, the Slovenian–Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the representative of the Hungarian national community in the parliament. It is hoped that through their advocacy a solution can be found to this question, one that helps to preserve the language and the culture.

Over the past few years there have always been enough qualified Hungarian teachers in the schools in Prekmurje, nearly all of them young. On the other hand, there has always been a shortage of lower primary and kindergarten teachers. Occasionally, the vacancies are filled with Hungarian teachers who are professionally overqualified, but who at the same time lack the necessary methodology competence. The latter can quickly gain such competencies through in-service courses run by the Pedagogy Institute, adapted to the requirement of teaching Hungarian in the lower primary school. So far as to avoid any misunderstandings or any potential misuses, it is the community's intention to include the employment of Hungarian teachers as lower primary teachers as a minority education special right in the above-mentioned amendments.

Optional Hungarian language education

Those monolingual secondary schools in Prekmurje (e.g., in Murska Sobota, Ljutomer, Rakičan) where there are at least five students from bilingual primary schools who would like to carry on learning Hungarian offer Hungarian language as an elective subject. In the 2017/2018 academic year there were three such groups—two in Lendva/Lendava and one in Muraszombat/Murska Sobota—involving 26 students. The course means two extra lessons per week, and it is implemented by the Bilingual Secondary School in Lendva/Lendava. Students obtain a certificate at the end of the year.⁶³

At the request of the Friendship Group in Muraszombat/Murska Sobota, teaching Hungarian to children of kindergarten and lower primary age was started in the city in October 2014. Every week there is one 60-minute Hungarian lesson, unfortunately with no institutional backing so far. The lessons are attended mainly by children of Hungarian-speaking parents and/or grandparents who live in or around the city in mixed marriages with Slovenian as the dominant language. For most of them, Hungarian is only a language of origin. The very young ones can acquire the language through nursery rhymes, songs and action rhymes, while older ones can use publications from Hungary (Hungarian as a foreign language) or materials compiled by their teachers. Attendance is free, because the lessons are taught by a language advisor from Hungary who works in the bilingual region.

Sunday school in Ljubljana: teaching Hungarian as the language of origin

Although members of the migrant communities living in cities, mainly in Ljubljana, also belong to the community of Hungarians in Slovenia, so far very few studies have targeted their language use or how their bi- or multilingual situation is taking shape.⁶⁴ This

63 *Gimnazija Murska Sobota / DijaskiSvet.si*. *Dijaški svet*. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.mestomladih.si/dijaski-os/organizacija/gimnazija-murska-sobota/>; downloaded: October 8, 2017.

64 The migrant communities were also taken into account by the Maribor research group in the ELDIA project (<http://www.eldia-project.org/>). Mainly due to the low number of returned questionnaires, the detailed analysis of the language uses data of the 1032 people identified in the 2002 census; comparing it with the language use of Prekmurje Hungarians has not happened yet. Anna Kolláth and Annamária Gróf, *A szlovéniai magyar nyelv. ELDIA-esettanulmány* [Hungarian in Slovenia. ELDIA Case-Specific Report] (PLACE: PUBLISHER, 2014).; Anna Kolláth, *A szlovéniai magyar nyelv a többnyelvűség kontextusában* [Hungarian Language in Slovenia in the Context of Bilingualism] (Bielsko-Biala, Budapest, Kansas, Maribor, Praha: ZORA 92, 2012).

community consists primarily of those arriving from one of the former Yugoslav member states, and most of them live in the capital. It is their intention to preserve their Hungarian culture and mother tongue and to pass them on to their children in an organized setting, mostly within the framework of the József Attila Hungarian Cultural Association. The association, supported by the Hungarian Embassy in Ljubljana, has started a Sunday school with the intention of language cultivation, providing room for the teaching of Hungarian as a native language. At first, this type of education outside of school was funded from a tender in Prekmurje (Izobraževalna kompetenca/Oktatási kompetencia/Educational Competence). However, for the past two years the courses have been funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Education and Sport; the ministry covers the rental fee of the classrooms in OŠ Livada (Primary School, Livada) and the fee of the three teachers.⁶⁵ There are three groups that all have weekly 90-minute classes on Thursday afternoons. This is important because there are typically more children from a family, and this way the parents need not drive them to school at different times. Altogether there are 30 children, who are put into groups according to their age.⁶⁶ The first group consists of 13 children aged below seven (kindergarten and the first year of primary). Ten lower primary pupils form the second group, and the third one has seven upper primary and secondary students in it. Most children come from Hungarian families: they are the children or grandchildren of parents and grandparents from Prekmurje and Vojvodina. The parents of some of them have moved to Slovenia from Hungary (marriage or economic migration), and they have settled down and found employment. Some come from heterogeneous families in which one parent is Hungarian and the other is Slovenian. There are no children from Slovenian families.⁶⁷

According to the teachers, the most important aspect is motivation. Thus they select and apply the most exciting content and methods (e.g., singing and dance lessons, performances at cultural events, waiting for Santa). There are no set textbooks; instead, each

65 One of the teachers is a Hungarian lady from Slovakia who has a degree in Slovene. Another, who majored in Slovene and English, came from Hungary. The third, a Hungarian citizen by now, was born in Prekmurje. She is Livija Horvat, a teacher of Hungarian and Slovene, who supplied all the information about the Sunday school, and to whom I would like to express my gratitude.

66 "We do not test knowledge in any way, not even the language level. Even so, it's very hard to attract the kids who are very busy doing other things (dance, music school...) And of course it's hard to spend five, six, seven lessons in the school in the morning, and then two more in the afternoon. It's the parents who make them do it, who think it's their responsibility that the kids come to these classes." Livija Horvat

67 Gábor Ruda, "Magyaroktatás Ljubljanában [Teaching Hungarian in Ljubljana]," in *Muravidéki iskolák és könyvtárak az anyanyelv megmaradásáért / Šole in knjižnice v Prekmurju za ohranitev maternega jezika*, ed. Gábor Ruda (Pilisvörösvár, Göntérháza: Muravidék Baráti Kör Kulturális Egyesület, HETÉS Kultúregyesület, 2010), 91–92.

teacher is her own materials' designer.⁶⁸ The teachers' work needs a lot of efforts and attention. The children's Hungarian language skills are very different. While some are native speakers, others can understand it but do not use it actively. Their writing skills are non-existent or very poor, as a result of attending state language (or dominantly state language) schools—this trend is typical not only of the migrant community.⁶⁹

The teachers' aims are to use suitable content, which is about the old homeland, but which promotes the new existence, a healthy linguistic and cultural integration. At the same time, it is additive, does not force assimilation, abandoning the language of their grandparents, is a paralyzing part of their identity.

Conclusions

The mother tongue is the most important element of an ethnic identity of the minorities living in the Carpathian Basin, whether in blocks or scattered throughout the country.⁷⁰ The school presence of L1 is no guarantee of either the survival of the language or strengthening and preserving the minority ethnic identity. Minority L1 needs enhanced attention and support. As it promotes a positive attitude towards their own group, supporting the L1 of minority bilingual children has an effective impact. Becoming literate in L1, L1 dominant teaching in the first 3–4 years and using the mother tongue as the second/other language of instruction means only the minimum level of school support towards the minority L1. Real results can only be achieved by designing and consistently putting into practice an effective language strategy, the most important feature of which is planning and implementing the necessary changes in bilingual education. Preserving the native language and slowing down and stopping its loss of significance continues to

68 In principle the association has a homepage where the syllabuses of the courses and various cultural and language programs used to be made available. As of now, the homepage is not available due to being under construction.

69 The mother tongue cannot exist in all domains and varieties. Among the Prekmurje Hungarians the mother tongue does not equal to L1: what they know best and use most often is not the vernacular in the given situation, even if the identification there is at a relatively high level. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, *Nyelv, oktatás és a kisebbségek* [Language, Education and Minorities] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1997).; Márta Csire and Laakso Johanna, "Szármasnyelv mint célnyelv: a bécsi hungarológia-oktatás tapasztalatai [Heritage language as a Target Language: Experience of Hungarology Education in Vienna]," *THL2.*, no. 2 (2014): 18–26., 20. This phenomenon is strengthened by the migration background, where the mother tongue becomes the language of origin.

70 Ferenc Gereben, "Az anyanyelv az identitástudat szerkezetében [The Mother Tongue in the Structure of Identity Consciousness]," *Regio*, no. 2 (1998): 95–112.

be the main objective. The prerequisites of this development are an active communication between the majority and the minority and a harmonious interaction of all the domains of socialization (the family, the school, the workplace, the society).

In order to fill in the relatively deep gap between the *virtual* equality and the *actual* inequality of Hungarian and Slovenian, it is necessary to raise the prestige of Hungarian, among both the minority and the majority populations. This would require a realistic political concept, supportive economic links, a rich cultural life and a positive bilingual view of the languages. This latter means raising awareness of the fact that the monolingual variety of the mother tongue is not a realistic expectation in minority bilingualism—it does not only make the individuals very desperate, but it is also a threat to the survival of the minority community. Mother tongue education must consistently rely on the vernacular L1 variety acquired in the family, on the Prekmurje dialect contact variety. It is of the utmost importance that children can reach higher levels of education in their L1 language. This view of language policy is supported by the general psycholinguistic principle according to which a child performs much better in his/her mother tongue (Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis⁷¹). The change may be easier to achieve if the interlanguage nature (being influenced by contact and with strong archaic coloring) of the vernacular language variety is accepted, if the bi- or multilingual nature of the L1 is interpreted as added value and if the majority language is not seen as a burden but as a specific part of the life of people who would like to make their way in life.⁷² The fact that in Slovenia minority students can only pursue university studies in Slovenian makes the problem harder to solve. The rightful demand to increase competitiveness counteracts the fact that gaining information is more successful in the mother tongue.

After the initial methodology deficiencies, teaching Hungarian as L1 in Prekmurje faces quantity concerns: there is a steady drop in student numbers in the H1 groups due to the state language dominance and the unrestricted choice of language levels. This is what HOP sets out to change in the first third of the primary school: that parallel teaching of both languages at the mother tongue level can revitalize the minority language, which has been being pushed into the background. The model can move Hungarian as L1 in a positive direction and raise its prestige in the eyes of both the Slovenian majority and the Hungarian minority.

71 Lajos Göncz, *A vajdasági magyarok kétnyelvűsége* [The Bilingualism of the Hungarians of Vojvodina] (Szabadka: MTT Könyvtár, 2004), 38–39.

72 György Szépe, *Nyelvpolitika: múlt és jövő* [Language politics: Past and Future] (Pécs: Iskolakultúra, 2001), 147.

Addressing these methods from outside the bilingual area in the bilingual education is a matter of life or death. To prevent this from becoming a further obstacle to the school's presence of the minority Hungarian speakers, Hungarian as a foreign language has been added to the list of school subjects to meet the demand arising from the linguistic and non-linguistics realities of today. Thanks to the quick adaptation to the changing situation, the number of those with links to the Hungarian language and culture has increased. Broadening the scale of education affects language maintenance, even if the community gets more scattered.

For those attending the Hungarian courses organized for the migrant community in Ljubljana, Hungarian is seen as a native language, with the migration situation impacting the mother tongue they have brought with themselves.⁷³ They are still emotionally attached to a certain extent and maybe most still use the language at home among family, but they use Slovenian the state language, because of exposure and its importance to daily life outside of the family. Although it is supported by the ministry of education and sport, the language's existence, survival, efficiency and usefulness depend primarily on how far the community can sustain itself.⁷⁴ In order to obtain a full picture of the linguistic reality of Hungarian in Slovenia, future research should target the bi- and multilingual features of the Hungarian migrant community in Slovenia and the shaping of their Hungarian mother tongue/native language.

Compared to the teaching of traditional school subjects, bilingual education has a huge advantage: subject content is approached from the perspective of the other language and mentality as well, and problems are also defined and solved through aspects of the other

73 When defining the language of origin, several aspects must be taken into account. Márta Csire and Laakso Johanna, "Szármasnyelv mint célnyelv"; Márta Illés-Molnár, "A származási nyelv mint terminus technicus. A származási nyelv fogalma és kutatása [Heritage Language as a Term. The Definition and Research of Heritage Language]," in *Doktoranduszok a nyelvtudomány útjain. A 6. Félúton Konferencia, ELTE BTK, 2010. október 7–8.*, eds. Márta Illés-Molnár, Andrea Parapatics, and – Debóra Csernák-Szuhánszky (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2012), 109–120.; Dina Lüttenberg, "Mehrsprachigkeit, Familiensprache, Herkunftssprache. Begriffsvielfalt und Perspektiven für die Sprachdidaktik [Bilingualism, Family Language, Heritage Language. The Variety of Terms and the Perspectives of Language Pedagogy]," *Wirkendes Wort*, no. 2 (2010): 299–315.; Orsolya Maróti, "Véletlen – vagy tipikus hiba? [Coincidence – or typical mistake?]," *Hungarológiai Évkönyv* 6, no. 1 (2005): 50–55.; Márta Illés-Molnár, "A származási nyelv mint terminus technicus. A származási nyelv fogalma és kutatása [Heritage Language as a Term. The Definition and Research of Heritage Language]," in *Doktoranduszok a nyelvtudomány útjain. A 6. Félúton Konferencia, ELTE BTK, 2010. október 7–8.*, eds. Márta Illés-Molnár, Andrea Parapatics, and – Debóra Csernák-Szuhánszky (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2012), 109–120.

74 Nádor Orsolya 2013. A magyar mint idegen és mint származási nyelv tanításának néhány kérdése. [Some Issues of Teaching Hungarian as a Foreign Language and as a Heritage Language]. Retrieved from http://orszavak.nycomszsz.org/pdf/10_Nador+Orsolya_A+magyar+mint+idegen+nyelv.pdf; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

language and culture. It helps those involved to gain a better understanding of other cultures and incentivises both teachers and students to abandon thinking in terms of teaching-centered categories, to leave their one-dimensional existence and to start developing intercultural competences,⁷⁵ but only if, at the same time, they manage to maintain the minority mother tongue (Hungarian) by bringing about an additive bilingual situation for the minority community. In the third millennium, being bilingual is an inevitable necessity not only for the minority—rather it is an extremely beneficial training opportunity for all students.⁷⁶

75 Golecki, Anton 2003. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des bilingualen Unterrichts im Sachfach Geschichte. [Opportunities and Borders about Teaching History in Bilingual Education]. Retrieved from http://download.bildung.hessen.de/unterricht/lernarchiv/sek_i/bilingual/engl/geschichte_bl_en/geschichte.pdf; downloaded: October 7, 2017.

76 Cathomas, “Schule und Zweisprachigkeit,” 83.