

CHILDREN WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT SLOVENIAN IN THE SLOVENIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NORMALISATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analysis of discourses on children whose first language is not Slovenian and their integration into Slovenian primary schools. The research is based on a critical discourse analysis of in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted in 2011 with primary school teachers, local experts and high-level government experts in two Slovenian towns – Koper and Ljubljana. The paper shows how the lack of language proficiency of children whose first language is not Slovenian becomes constructed as a problem within specific regimes of truth. The paper claims that inclusion through language works as a governmental technique where language proficiency represents a symbolic threshold for the cultural and social integration of children whose first language is not Slovenian. This preconditions their acceptance in the hegemonic culture and society. Therefore, the paper shows how policy, experts and teachers declaratively aim for the democratic inclusion of children whose first language is not Slovenian in Slovenian schools, but at the same time they reproduce ethnocentric arguments creating an assimilationist discourse.

Key words: immigration, children whose first language is not Slovenian language, problematisation, governmentality, education

ALLIEVI SCOLASTICI LA CUI PRIMA LINGUA NO È SLOVENO NELL SISTEMA D'EDUCAZIONE SLOVENO: UN'ANALISI CRITICA DELLA NORMALIZZAZIONE

SINTESI

L'articolo presenta un'analisi dei discorsi sui allievi scolastici la cui prima lingua non è slovena e la loro integrazione nelle scuole elementari slovene. La ricerca si basa sull'analisi del discorso critico di interviste e focus groups condotti nel 2011 con gli insegnanti della scuola primaria, esperti locali, ed esperti al livello governativo in due città slovene - Capodistria e Lubiana. Il documento mostra come la mancanza di conoscenza della lingua dei allievi la cui prima lingua non è slovena diventa costruito come un problema all'interno di specifici regimi di verità. L'articolo sostiene che l'inclusione attraverso il linguaggio funziona come una tecnica governativa dello stato in cui le conoscenze linguistiche rappresentano una soglia simbolica per l'integrazione culturale e sociale dei allievi la cui prima lingua non è slovena. Questo precondiziona la loro accettazione nella cultura egemone e nella società. Pertanto, l'articolo mostra come discorsi politici, esperti e insegnanti all livello dichiarativo mirano alla inclusione democratica dei allievi la cui prima lingua non è slovena nelle scuole slovene, ma allo stesso tempo riproducono argomenti etnocentrici creando un discorso assimilazionista.

Parole chiave: Immigrazione, allievi la cui prima lingua non è slovena, linguaggio, problematizzazione, governamentalità, educazione

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, Slovenia has been a land of immigration. Nowadays almost 417,000 residents of Slovenia (one in five) are first-, second- or third-generation immigrants. More than half of all immigrants are first-generation immigrants, i.e. people whose first residence was outside Slovenia (Razpotnik, 2012). The second and third generations of immigrants were born in Slovenia but have at least one parent or grandparent whose first residence was abroad. In terms of legal status, immigrants and their children might or might not have Slovenian citizenship and/or a permanent residence permit. Immigrants and their children are also considered to hold special statuses – those with temporary protection, asylum seekers or refugees. Irrespective of which category immigrant children belong to, they are all children whose first language is not Slovenian (henceforth CwFLnS).

The majority of immigrants in Slovenia are people with ethnic origins in other (ex-)Yugoslav republics. Although Slovenia's attainment of independence in 1991 saw the introduction of several discriminatory laws¹ that eroded the rights and benefits of ex-Yugoslavs living in Slovenia, immigration rates from former Yugoslav republics have stayed almost the same, with a peak in the early 1980s and the largest growth occurring between 2000 and 2009. For instance, in 2006 ex-Yugoslav immigrants represented around 88 percent of the entire immigrant population (Ilić et al., 2008, 59).

In 2012 almost 417,000 inhabitants of Slovenia were immigrants, mostly male, manual low-skilled workers. While economic immigrants from ex-Yugoslavia still constitute the lion's share of the immigrant population, newcomers also include other nationalities, e.g. Russian, Albanian, Ukrainian, Chinese, Moldavian² etc. (Dolenc et al., 2013, 21). The stronger flow of immigrants in the last decade has been a consequence of favourable economic conditions, Slovenia's entry to the EU, and the process of family reunification – the secondary migration of family members of immigrants already living in Slovenia (Dolenc and Šter, 2011).

The Slovenian census from 2002 showed that 14.6 percent of adolescents aged under 15 did not declare themselves to be Slovenians, but some other nationality or they did not specify their nationality (Medvešek, 2006, 125). According to Slovenian legislation on education, immigrant children have the right to attain a primary school education on the same conditions as Slovenian children³. Although this right is formalised and implemented, immigrant children remain perceived as

ethnically and culturally different from the majority population of Slovenian pupils in schools and are therefore frequently discriminated against by teachers and schoolmates (Skubic Ermenc, 2006).

Another reason for their disadvantaged position is the lack of language proficiency that becomes a problem once CwFLnS enter educational institutions. Language proficiency appears to be a problem for schools, experts as well as CwFLnS themselves. While language barriers most commonly overlap with ethnicity, scarce socio-economic resources, class, gender etc., the inequalities between CwFLnS and Slovenian pupils are becoming reinforced (Skubic Ermenc, 2006). Razpotnik (2011) states that exclusion in the education system even negatively influences the individual learning achievements of CwFLnS. Therefore, CwFLnS are considered a disadvantaged group in the Slovenian education system (Barle Lakota et al., 2007, 4; Skubic Ermenc, 2006, 152) and are hence a frequent topic of expert debate.

However, so far almost no policy documents or laws have efficiently addressed the inclusion of CwFLnS in the Slovenian education system. One exception is the Strategy for the inclusion of immigrant children in the Slovenian education system (Barle Lakota et al., 2007) that specifically views CwFLnS in Slovenian schools as a problem:

Example 1: »Every year the Slovenian education system includes children of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and people with temporary protection. It has been shown that these children, pupils and students (immigrant children) have more difficulty following classes and other happenings at school or in kindergarten and are less keen on integrating into the wider social environment.⁴ This is a consequence of their lack of knowledge (ignorance) of the Slovenian language (they are mainly children whose Slovenian is a foreign or a second language), the lack of developed strategies and instruments for ensuring the inclusion of immigrant children and the insufficient inclusion of children and their parents in the scholastic and wider Slovenian environment« (Barle Lakota et al., 2007, 4).

Therefore, according to the mentioned Strategy language proficiency is becoming a precondition for the social and cultural integration of CwFLnS and is presented as being in the best interests of CwFLnS. The issue of CwFLnS is only briefly touched on in various other

1 For instance, the Aliens Act that in 1992 legitimated the illegal erasure of 25,000 ex-Yugoslavs living in Slovenia from the Register of Permanent Residents, depriving them of citizenship rights.

2 Cf. http://www.zrsz.si/trg_dela/trg_dela_v_stevilkah/zaposlovanje_tujcev

3 Resolution on immigration policy in the Republic of Slovenia (2002); Elementary School Act (1996), Article 10.

4 Underlined parts were added by the author of this paper in order to emphasise important points.

Slovenian (legislative) documents⁵. Some of these form part of Slovenian legislation, others are based on EU directives descending from the strategy on migration policy and the integration of immigrants and their children in the EU through the education system adopted at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 (Medvešek, 2006, 126). Despite Slovenia being part of UNESCO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations that all promote intercultural education through their initiatives (International Association for Intercultural Education, International Bureau of Education), it still does not have a comprehensive educational or policy solution to the problem of CwFLnS (Razpotnik, 2011, 1453, Grobelšek, 2010, 164, Skubic Ermenc, 2006).

In the Slovenian education system efforts to ensure the inclusion of CwFLnS in schools mainly involve additional classes of Slovenian language that CwFLnS take in the first year after they start primary school or when they first move to Slovenia. However, the legislation offers different definitions of what such additional classes should consist of and for how many hours a year CwFLnS have the right to attend those classes. Schools can apply for funds for a certain number of additional classes of Slovenian language, with a maximum of 35 hours per year (Barle Lakota et al., 2007, 12). Taking the knowledge and circumstances of each individual CwFLnS into account, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport determines the number of hours of classes of Slovenian language schools should later provide when carrying out the language teaching. How the classes are implemented depends on the policy of an individual school. There are no directives on the special education or profile of teachers who are conducting such classes, teaching and learning methods etc.

This is problematic when we consider that previous research studies in Slovenia have shown teachers are not educated to adopt and implement intercultural values in pedagogical approaches (Grobelšek 2010, 171, Kobolt, 2005). In addition, the data gathered in the GOETE research project (Ule and Vezovnik, 2012) led to similar findings regarding intercultural education and revealed that schools have different approaches to coping with the language barrier of CwFLnS. Due to the lack of appointed officially supported hours some schools rely on volunteers to work as teachers of Slovenian language or use the school's internal financial or human resources in order to help CwFLnS. Therefore, schools decide how much language learning is needed

for an individual CwFLnS and how much time is given to them to learn the language before starting to overlook the language barrier and to evaluate and grade the knowledge of CwFLnS. It almost entirely depends on the school personnel how and to what extent an individual child will be helped with the language (*ibid.*).

In the rest of this paper I will focus on the language issue and attempt to show how the lack of language proficiency is problematised in discourses of teachers and school experts, local policy experts and high-level government policy makers and experts. I will show that for all of these agents the expectation of language proficiency provides the most significant condition for the integration and/or assimilation of CwFLnS into the Slovenian education system. However, I will try to demonstrate how the requirement of language proficiency can also be interpreted as a technique for disciplining or normalising CwFLnS/immigrant children. I will show why regarding language proficiency as a symbolic precondition for the social and cultural assimilation of CwFLnS so as to influence the acceptance of CwFLnS in the hegemonic cultural environment is problematic in the context of seeking to implement a more democratic and intercultural notion of the inclusion of CwFLnS.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main empirical data were collected for the GOETE project (Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe, 2010–2013) (Walther, 2010). This paper takes one thematic aspect of the GOETE research project into consideration – the coping of and support for CwFLnS in primary schools (de Bois-Reymond et al., 2011, Ule, 2013). However, this paper does not focus on pupils' individual coping strategies but explores institutional governance⁶ oriented to helping CwFLnS cope with language barriers. The data presented in this paper were gathered in 2011 in Koper and Ljubljana, with each town population comprising 7–8 percent of immigrants. In each town we conducted interviews in a primary school that was selected on the basis of a presupposed higher enrolment rate of immigrant children. The data presented here are based on qualitative methodological approaches – in-depth interviews and focus groups (de Bois-Reymond et al., 2011). The analysis that follows includes:

- Ten in-depth interviews with high-level government policy makers and experts from the field

5 Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (Articles 11, 61, 62); Resolution on immigration policy in the Republic of Slovenia; Public Use of the Slovenian Language Act (Articles 2, 5, 12, 13); Organisation and Financing of Education Act (Article 2); Elementary School Act (Articles 2, 6, 8, 10); Gimnazije Act (Articles 2, 8, 9); Vocational Education Act (Articles 2, 6, 7); Aliens Act (Article 82); Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act (Article 29); Asylum Act (Articles 19, 43, 47); Regulations on rights and obligations of refugees in the Republic of Slovenia (Articles 8, 9, 10, 33); Rules on manners and conditions to guarantee the rights of asylum applicants (Articles 24 and 25); Rules on secondary school enrolment (Article 3); Guidelines for the education of alien children in kindergartens and schools (2009), The National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia), The White Book on Education, 2011.

6 The current debates on *educational* governance address different dimensions of the education system and are concerned with new ways of planning, steering, organising and coordinating actions and actors within the system (de Bois-Reymond et al., 2011, 141).

of education. At the national level, we have involved those experts who have had a crucial influence on the formation of educational policies in Slovenia in the last two decades as either policy makers, analysts and/or commentators. Policy experts in Slovenia appear in several roles, for example as policy makers and policy commentators; therefore, they are passing from decision-making positions to scientific-research positions (Ule and Vežovnik, 2012, 11-12, Ule, 2013). The interviewees were sampled amongst those involved in governmental educational policy making (the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, governmental bodies and working groups preparing policy documents on education such as the mentioned Strategy (Barle Lakota et al., 2007), and the White Book on Education), academic experts and researchers in the field of pedagogy and education. Two topics were addressed in the interviews: problems with immigrant children in primary schools and problems with the enrolment of pupils in vocational schools and gymnasiums.

- Ten in-depth interviews with external local experts collaborating with schools when immigrant children are involved. The actors listed below provide institutional guidance and support especially for pupils in 9th grade about to enrol in vocational schools and gymnasiums (career consultants, a priest, social workers at the Centre for Social Services, a psychologist at the Counselling Centre for Children, Adolescents and Parents, a representative of the project Learning for Young Adults – PUM, representatives of the Adult Education Centre – Primary Education).
- Two in-depth interviews with school principals, one from a school in Koper, the other from a school in Ljubljana
- Eight in-depth interviews with school experts who provide institutional support for immigrant children, i.e. social integration, economic support, language learning support. School experts also support (immigrant) children in their process of enrolment in vocational schools and gymnasiums (psychologists, social workers, special educators, librarians, social pedagogues, school counsellors).
- Two focus groups and six in-depth interviews with 9th grade teachers. Teachers were sampled amongst those involved in mentoring/tutoring and teaching 9th grade children. The teachers who participated in the interviews did not participate in the focus groups, and vice versa.

In order to analyse discourses on CwFLnS in the empirical material presented above, I will be leaning on

Foucault's notion of problematisation complemented with the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The notion of problematisation overcomes essentialist ways of understanding the dynamics of the formation of social subjects/objects. It allows a methodological perspective on the subject/object construction in relation to regimes of truth and discourses. As Foucault (1983) states, problematisation means the analysis of how and why certain things (behaviours, phenomena, processes) became a *problem* in a certain epoch. When Foucault says he is analysing the problematisation of madness, sexuality and criminality, he does not deny the existence of these phenomena prior to their problematisation, but treats phenomena as socially existent only when subjected to social regulation that is grounded in specific regimes of truth. Foucault explains that "problems are not always already there – not as problems, anyway. It has taken the work of hundreds and thousands of people for problems like the prison, medical power, and the like to come onto the agenda" (Caputo and Yount, 1993, 8). Problematisation "...makes something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether under the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.) (Foucault, 1989, 296).

Similarly, CwFLnS enrolled in Slovenian schools in the past decades only recently became part of the agenda and were constituted as a problem within a specific regime of truth and knowledge⁷. In this sense, a new knowledge on the integration of CwFLnS emerged within specific discourses. Therefore, the construction of CwFLnS as a problem is grounded in a specific discourse, institution or even policy document. "This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response" (Foucault, 1984, 389) is brought up by several discourses (legal, policy, expert etc.) that this paper intends to analyse with CDA.

Drawing on specific authors working with CDA – namely, Fairclough, De Cilia, Reisigl, Wodak, and Richardson – will allow me to illustrate the relationship between socio-cultural practices and the textual level of interviews and focus groups. CDA is in line with Foucault's notion of discourse and therefore discourse is considered to be an empirical category. According to Foucault (1971) and Fairclough (1992), a discourse or several discourses only represent one of the possible objects within society, where the others could be concrete social practices, economics, law, various institutions and so on. Discourses are closely linked to notions of normalisation, discipline, knowledge, power and truth. According to Foucault (1977, 93), in a society "... there are manifold relations of power which permeate,

⁷ In this case, this might be framed within the broader engagement of EU and EU-related institutions in shifting towards a more democratic, inclusionary and tolerant discourse towards immigrants.

characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. /.../ We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth". Foucault (1977, 106) stated that power is above all disciplinary while disciplines have their own discourse. Disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks of a natural role or a norm. The code they come to define is that of normalisation. Educational discourses emerging from policy documents and interviews that have CwFLnS as their object are above all aiming at disciplining and normalising CwFLnS.

In order to show how normalisation works, the vocabulary, grammar and discursive strategies (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) used by the interviewees will be taken into consideration. The exploration of discourses⁸ grounded in the field of education and represented by the above-listed categories of teachers and experts disclose how social knowledge and hegemonic power relations are reproduced and legitimised (Fairclough, 1992) in order to discipline and normalise CwFLnS in the Slovenian education system.

HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT POLICY EXPERTS

The abovementioned Strategy (Barle Lakota et al., 2007) along with other academic research (Razpotnik, 2011, Grobelšek, 2010, Skubic Ermenc, 2006, Medvešek 2006, Kobolt, 2005) clearly expresses the problematisation of CwFLnS in the Slovenian education system. Most of the abovementioned studies are framed in a discourse of multiculturalism and interculturalism promoting didactical approaches that include the planning, implementation and evaluation of the learning process in order to support changes in the existing hierarchy between the dominant ethnic and cultural majority and the subordinated ethnic and cultural minority. This kind of intercultural approach ensures equal chances for educational possibilities for minorities, preserves identity differences and promotes solidarity towards ethnic and cultural minorities (Skubic Ermenc, 2006, 152). Although the expert debate on CwFLnS had clearly been initiated, the high-level government experts and policy makers (henceforth HGPEs) who participated in our interviews seemed not to explicitly detect CwFLnS as a problem. In the examples 2 and 3 that follow, the HGPEs were asked to freely express their opinions on the issue of immigrant children in Slovenian schools. Since the study sought to determine the HGPEs' sensibility to

the problem, at first no broader contextual framework was provided by the interviewer. Interestingly, when the issue was addressed during the interviews the HGPEs showed an almost complete absence of expert discourse on CwFLnS and immigrant pupils.

Example 2: /.../ when it comes to migrants, I think, that we (Slovenia)⁹ did not encounter this so much yet, we have some individual problems, we encountered this in that period during the war in the Balkans when we had more of such refugees (HGPE interview 1).

Example 3: I don't have one (an opinion), I don't deal with this issue, I think, for Slovenia this is at the moment a relatively new question, that is not such a burning issue, according to the numbers (HGPE interview 2).

It is important to stop here and contemplate this lack of HGPE's problematisation. As mentioned, according to Foucault problematisation is an analysis of the construction of an object of analysis. This means that empirical phenomena, such as the presence of immigrant children in schools, are constructed as a problem and then solved, regulated and discussed in different ways (Foucault, 1991, 388-9). However, what we face in the expert discourse is the opposite process, a process that could be seen as the de-problematisation of CwFLnS. It is well true that problematisation may construct specific subjectivities (homosexual, criminal, mad person, migrant etc.) and for that reason could be interpreted as an ideological operation. However, at the same time even de-problematisation might be read as an ideological operation since what is left out of a discourse is actually pushed into a semantic background and might also help to rearticulate and consolidate the actual relations of power of the social majority over the social minority.

In addition to the HGPEs not revealing a coherent discourse (such as one of multiculturalism or interculturalism), they seemed to lack a reference to any kind of discursive field in which a specific solution to the problem would potentially emerge. When the HGPEs were explicitly asked about the status of immigrant pupils in primary schools, they mostly adopted discursive strategies of detachment from the topic. They provided a moral and/or very personalised point of view on the matter. In example 4, the interviewee was asked about solutions to the problem of CwFLnS in Slovenian schools and gave the following answer.

Example 4: Basically, we should take better care of these (immigrant) kids (HGPE interview 4).

8 However, discourse should not be confused with single enunciations or statements of a subject or agent. Although, personal enunciations are found in the interviews, Foucault does not reduce enunciations to a sovereign and autonomous subject, but instead speaks of discourse as the totality of enunciations that in a specific period emerge around a specific topic, object or event (Foucault, 1971).

9 All text in brackets in quotations, and parts in bold, italics or underlined were added by the author of this paper.

The interviewee in example expresses an opinion without using expert terminology and without reflecting on educational policy treating CwFLnS or making a policy suggestion as to how this “better care” should be provided. Avoiding problematisation, she/he instead adopts a personal and moral view on the matter using the first plural form. The pronoun “we” adds ambivalence to their answer. The use of indefinite pronouns such as “we” entails a metonymic operation whereby those actually responsible become de-responsibilised by not being named (Wodak et al., 1999, 164). It is unclear who the “we” refers to (teachers, institutions, Slovenians etc.). This is important because such generalisations push the relevant agents into the semantic background, leading to the de-responsibilisation of the relevant agents. In order to detach their personal views from their expert knowledge, the HGPEs even more often spoke of certain problems or adopting some measures aiming at not specifying the mentioned measures and problems. In contrast, the HGPEs also emphasised they could only provide their personal views on the issue of immigrant pupils when asked about their expert opinion. The use of definite personal pronouns (I) and attributive adjectives (my) are used in examples 5, 6 and 7 in order to emphasise the view is personal and not a professional one.

Example 5: This is my personal view on immigrants (HGPE interview 1).

Example 6: In my opinion, schools are ready (for immigrants) (HGPE interview 4).

Example 7: Let's say, as far as I know, ... (HGPE interview 2).

Especially in example 7 the words used by the HGPE seem to leave space for other knowledge or opinion on the matter. By using “as far as I know”, she/he implies that their expert knowledge might be limited, evading the question by offering a personal view before an expert opinion. If we consider the fact that the HGPEs knew they would be interviewed as experts and had agreed to that, then these strategies might be interpreted as a detachments grounded in a lack of expertise and knowledge on the matter. By pointing out their lack of articulation I do not want to emphasise the ignorance of some interviewees but wish to show that for the HGPEs CwFLnS were not framed as a problem within a certain specific discursive field. Therefore, in contrast to the Strategy (Barle Lakota et al., 2007), when CwFLnS were clearly constructed as a problem the discourse of the experts seems not to play a part in this process of problematisation.

In contrast, the HGPEs appear to critically reflect the general social position of immigrant children and are able to talk about their socially deprived status. Experts have been claiming that Slovenian society has been grounded in nationalist premises since the Slovenia gained its independence. When discussing the rea-

sons for the absence of policy documents on CwFLnS, most of the experts pointed out the social status of ex-Yugoslav ethnic provenance of CwFLnS in Slovenia. It seems the experts are well aware of the broader ideological framework determining the position of CwFLnS in schools that is presumably causing the lack of policy regulating the issue. In example 9, one expert compares Western immigrants to Eastern European and Southern-Slavic immigrants and points out the deprived position of Southern-Slavic immigrant children. In this case, the distinction was articulated as a critique of the dichotomy between Western and Eastern/Balkan culture.

Example 9: There is a difference, an absolute difference, as to whether a child is from Western European countries, /.../ Whether he comes from Southern-Slavic nations this is already a big problem, a big problem, for him to learn and so on (HGPE interview 7).

Richardson (2007, 65) states that an excessive exaggeration for rhetorical effect is made by using hyperbole. By repeating “big problem”, the expert in example 9 wants to emphasise how language learning is a problem for CwFLnS coming from the Balkans and the East. However, another expert stresses a broader political context of the difficulties of including CwFLnS, blaming Slovenia’s nationalism: “Too much national euphoria” (HGPE interview 8) has, they believe, emerged as a consequence of gaining national independence. Hence, amongst many of the interviewed experts this broader nationalist aspect was detected as the reason for a lack of suitable policy on the integration of CwFLnS in schools (referred to below as “this issue”). In example 10 this becomes even more explicit.

Example 10: This issue we simply did not want, in a way to face it, reflect it, find solutions and therefore in a way remains unreflect and we are living it apart (HGPE interview 9).

The use of the indefinite personal pronoun “we” in example 10 seems random, but it again becomes important when social agents might be exposed as being responsible for important actions in the public interest. By employing the pronoun “we” the responsible policy makers and politicians are anonymised (Richardson, 2007, 194) while the reader/listener does not know who the speaker is really referring to.

However, when asked specifically about CwFLnS learning Slovenian in schools, the HGPEs do not connect the issue of language proficiency with their critique of Slovenian nationalism. Example 11 shows that experts seem not to be keen on questioning the systemic requirement that the Slovenian language is the sole learning language for all pupils included in the Slovenian school system.

Example 11: Here there are obviously immigrant children, their (teacher's) crucial problem with them is not only that classic one with other cultural backgrounds, but it moves to the level of language. ...They are somehow sentenced to, somehow, a marginal path in education because they have a crucial lack, a lack of language. /.../ if we see it from the perspective of utility, from what the state benefits from, these people would somehow have better knowledge and would contribute if this lack were to be overcome (HGPE interview 9).

Therefore, on one hand we have the expert critique of nationalism remaining on the abstract level of ideological critique while, on the other hand, when experts reflect the level of social reality and everyday practices at school they believe that mastering the Slovenian language empowers and allows the full integration of CwFLnS. In this HGPE's opinion, language proficiency is the biggest obstacle and the most important threshold in the learning process of CwFLnS¹⁰. Further, the language problem seems to be the reason for CwFLnS being disadvantaged – *they are somehow sentenced to, somehow, a marginal path in education because they have a crucial lack, a lack of language*. The expert thinks immigrants have a lack of knowledge compared to Slovenian children, and therefore represent a deviation from normality. Foucault (1978, 85) states "Disciplinary normalization consists first of all in positing a model, /.../ and the operation of disciplinary normalization consists in trying to get people /.../ to conform to this model, the normal being is precisely that which can conform to this norm, and the abnormal that which is incapable of conforming to the norm". According to the HGPE, the state should conduct normalisation for its own benefit. At the end of the quote from example 11, the expert looks at the question of integration and language proficiency through a *perspective of utility*, claiming the state should benefit from the assimilated immigrant – *what the state benefits from*. Foucault (2000, 409) says the reason for the modern state is based on the idea that *".../the individual becomes pertinent for the state insofar as he can do something for the strength of the state"*. The deconstruction of this discursive operation leaves us with at least one problem. The expert reduces the complexity of CwFLnS integration to a matter of state utility. This is made explicit in example 12:

/.../if we see it from the perspective of utility, from what the state benefits from, these people would somehow have better knowledge and would contribute if this lack were to be surpassed (HGPE interview 9).

At this point, the problem of integration is reduced to what is beneficial for the social majority and what immigrants (guests), as a minority, have to contribute to the nation-state (host). The goal of this dichotomising discourse supposedly promoting the empowerment of CwFLnS by learning the Slovenian language is not framed as an ethical act of democratisation, but as a utilitarian goal to benefit the state and the social majority. What on the denotative level seems an egalitarian discourse reveals undemocratic features on the connotative level (Barthes, 1984). This is more clearly demonstrated in example 13.

... when we received a child in the school from Bosnia, from Macedonia, and we did get them, we knew how to treat them well, during the first year we enriched them with the language (Slovenian), ... we in brackets socialised him, we placed him in the space and place where he was living, in the time he was living in, then we required him to grow into an expert. And we knew how to make form him nicely, at least for now we have forgotten that (HGPE interview 1).

If we analyse example 13 we first see a clear distinction is made between "us", "we", "our" "Slovenian", i.e. what is attributed to the social majority, and the 'other', i.e. the immigrant child from Bosnia or Macedonia (see Resigl and Wodak, 2001). This distinction, emphasised by the constant use of the personal pronoun "we", creates an imaginary space of nationalities and a consolidation of the power of the social majority over the social minority. Further, this relation of power is evident in how the agent or subject is linguistically positioned in the sentence in relation to the object (see Halliday, van Leuven in Fairclough, 2003, 222, Fairclough, 1995, 110, Fairclough, 2003, 145). Example 13 shows the subject is "the Slovenians"/"we", while the immigrant child takes the form of the object. While the subject is active and performative "we enriched", "we socialised", "we placed", "we required" etc. the object – an immigrant child – remains passive. On the connotative level of language use, power relations between agents are most explicitly evident in relations of subjects/objects and activity/passivity. Therefore, the active subject is always the one in power. This implies that a successful integration process, as seen by the expert, requires unequal relations of power. The social majority has complete control over the integration process while the immigrant child remains objectified and reduced to passivity as not being the holder of any action.

These examples all show how the idea of integration is in fact a one-sided process of the normalisation and hegemonisation of CwFLnS. This discursive frame is

¹⁰ Later I will show how this applies to teachers who became »gate keepers« by grading the acquired language proficiency. Language proficiency seems to be the most important feature of the successful integration of the 'Other' in the majoritarian society.

continued even when dealing with local experts and teachers who are less involved in policy making but have more experience in practical matters involving CwFLnS.

LOCAL EXPERTS, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

When turning to local experts (those employed in the schools and those employed by external institutions collaborating with the schools), principals and 9th grade teachers in primary schools (henceforth LEPTs) we encounter a relatively homogeneous group. What the LEPTs have in common is their direct involvement with immigrant children/CwFLnS. This might explain why the LEPTs' discourse comes closer to what seems to constitute CwFLnS as a broader ideological problem. With the LEPTs the problem of language proficiency is more strongly emphasised than in the previously analysed HGPE group. This is somewhat logical because the LEPTs, in contrast to the HGPEs, are those who are directly involved in CwFLnS and their language barriers.

During the interviews the LEPTs were asked to name the groups of pupils they see as deprived. This question was posed in order to see which groups of pupils would be identified as deprived without influencing the interviewee with the researcher's prior assumptions concerning the different categories that would qualify as such. The majority of the LEPTs named immigrant children/CwFLnS along with economically deprived children, children with different physical, learning and psychological disabilities. Example 14 shows how CwFLnS are problematic in the LEPTs' view. Pupils who have language barriers were the most explicitly mentioned.

Example 14: Immigrants are coming, mainly Albanians. They are the most problematic because they don't know the language (LEPT interview 1).

Example 15 shows the reasoning behind the statement from example 14. In this LEPT's opinion, CwFLnS are disadvantaged because language proficiency is considered the precondition for a successful schooling process.

Example 15: Because reading and writing is the segment that determinates success in all other teaching subjects (LEPT interview 2).

Although this might seem a relevant argument, a detailed analysis shows the problem of language is not

only a pragmatic obstacle that once overcome in the learning process makes CwFLnS disappear as a problem, but it is again grounded in the presupposition that language proficiency is the precondition for the social inclusion and acceptance of CwFLnS. This is demonstrated in examples 16 and 17 when LEPTs were asked why immigrant pupils represent such a problem for the schools.

Example 16: Pupils are sensitive, if somebody does not speak Slovenian they will see them as different (LEPT interview 3).

Example 17: This work (language lessons) is intended for the kid to promptly acquire the basic words of our language, to allow communication as rapidly as possible to get included in the class and to communicate with teachers, in short, to get included in this living environment.

In the LEPTs' opinion, language proficiency is a symbolic threshold for the complete integration and assimilation of an immigrant pupil in the Slovenian cultural and social environment. This assimilationist discourse is nothing but a technique of government¹¹ rooted in the hegemonic regime of truth resulting in concrete normalising and disciplinary practices aimed at making immigrant children in concordance with the social majority. According to Rose (2004, 214), normalisation occurred within the apparatuses of rule that proliferated in the nineteenth century – the prison, the factory, the asylum, the school and later in the military – all those places where individuals were gathered together and their conduct was made visible by being judged against institutional norms. Therefore, education, in the sense of both schooling and university sectors, has become so central in the development of new forms of governmentality, exemplifying new strategies, tactics and techniques of power to furnish what has become the major form of power relations defining institutions and individuals in Western societies. The institutions of formal education – schools and universities – have become central to the “disciplining” in most if not all other fields (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998, 22). By connecting knowledge and power, these governmental techniques function as disciplining practices aimed at normalisation. Example 18 shows how the language that CwFLnS speak at home is, according to the LEPTs, blocking the normalisation process of immigrant pupils and therefore detected as problematic.

Example 18: However, the problem is simply this, that even at home they do not speak Slovenian,

11 Along with this line, I follow the studies of governmentality. Foucault (1991, 102) defines governmentality as the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target. Governmentality is also the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and the development of a whole complex of knowledge (Foucault, 1991, 103). Governmentality studies are “studies of a particular ‘stratum’ of knowing and acting. Of the emergence of particular ‘regimes of truth’ concerning the conduct of conduct, ways of speaking truth, persons authorized to speak truths, ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing. Of the invention and assemblage of particular apparatuses and devices for exercising power and intervening upon particular problems” (Rose, 2004, 19). Therefore, the process of problematisation is always leading to techniques of governmentality that produce individualisation, totalisation and normalisation.

then during the holidays they nicely go back into those places and, when they come back, what they have learned is forgotten. Thus, there is a problem (LEPT interview 3).

The statement from example 18 is clearly grounded in an assimilationist discourse. The sentence “They nicely go back into those places” expresses a moral view and discloses an exalted ethnocentric view on the practices and attitudes of immigrants. Their carelessness in learning the Slovenian language is pointed out by the adverb “nicely”. By using the pronoun/determiner “those” when referring to places and not naming the places implies that the ethnic provenance of immigrant children is not important. Immigrants became homogenised and presented as neglecting learning of the Slovenian language because they more highly prioritise their culture and language. In the LEPT’s view, this is problematic because it hinders the process of normalisation, not only through language but also through other aspects that have to be disciplined and normalised, such as family patterns, native culture etc.

Ethnocentric arguments are evident in examples 18 and 19. These reveal how the LEPTs defend the idea of the assimilation of CwFLnS. In contrast with policy docu-

ments, the LEPTs’ arguments for a multicultural and intercultural school are rare. Example 19 shows how ‘otherness’ should be disciplined by the norms and roles of the majoritarian society. In governmental societies, the constitution of the ‘normal’ is always also woven in with the hegemonic and the homogeneous, i.e. the demand to orient to the normal (bourgeois, heterosexual, Christian, white male, of majoritarian nationality) (Lorey, 2009, 192).

Example 19: Whether they are immigrants or people who come from other environments and for some time have been living with us, they lack some rules and some laws which apply to our environment and that we very much emphasise in the school for Slovenians (LEPT interview 5).

Disciplinary techniques implemented in school roles designed to suit the ethnic majority may be embodied in an external regime of structured times, spaces, gazes and hierarchies. But discipline seeks to reshape the ways in which each individual CwFLnS, at some future point, will conduct himself or herself in the space of a classroom and education where freedom is regulated (Rose, 2004, 22). Therefore, discipline here means being subjugated both under a certain specialised domain of institutional



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knowledge and under a certain educational and school regime and order. Foucault also speaks of dividing practices in which the immigrant and the native are divided. Foucault (1978, 84) says: “discipline normalizes”. Disciplinary normalisation consists first of all in positing a model – language proficiency, an optimal model that is constructed in terms of a certain result, and the operation of disciplinary normalisation consists in trying to make people, movements and actions conform to this model, the normal being precisely that which can conform to this norm, and the abnormal – the CwFLnS – that which is incapable of conforming to the norm (Foucault, 1978, 85).

Basically, the process of normalisation not only requires CwFLnS to follow the role of the majoritarian society but, as shown in example 20, it demands from CwFLnS to become a part of the mainstream majority. However, in order for her/his differences not to cause a disturbance a CwFLnS should become even more ‘normal’ than the norm itself requires. It is only at this point that normalisation will achieve its ultimate goal and CwFLnS will become a legitimate part of the majoritarian society. This is demonstrated in example 20.

Example 20: I had quite a few children who I was very impressed with because at their homes they are very, very poor, but the desire, the value, of their parents, and the parents even showed, and the children, are far more respectful of the teachers and the schools than Slovenian children. If the desire for learning exists and there is collaboration, the support of parents, such children can achieve a great deal (LEPT focus group 1).

Articulating assimilation through language learning apparently seems the most legitimate argument covering the ideological operation of social homogenisation. Building the argument on language might appear to be innocent, pragmatic and non-ideological, as presented as ‘utile’, ‘necessary’, ‘good for the pupil’ etc. as well as the precondition for a pupil’s success in school, but it clearly discloses its connotative dimension loaded with ideas of ethnic homogeneity and ethnocentricity. This becomes even more evident in examples 21 and 22 when the ethnicity of CwFLnS is presented as an obstacle in Slovenian society.

Example 21: And basically their culture is pulling them behind, their traditions and one (teachers/experts) cannot interfere (LEPT interview 7).

Example 22: This is essentially a different social environment at home. As the environment and the rules are not adapted to those basic cultural matters. They do not consider a single rule in the school (LEPT interview 5).

However, in the teacher’s view, with a proper dedication, motivation, good abilities and the support of

the family, the assimilation and progress of the pupil in the new environment can be really successful. What is interesting is how the action is one-sided, the CwFLnS takes responsibility for proper assimilation, while the adaptation of the majoritarian institutions to the needs of CwFLnS is not mentioned in this process. Examples 23 and 24 explicate ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjects.

Example 23: We get kids who are very, very motivated to learn well, to fit in the environment as soon as possible, they want to do something for themselves. Such children are very quickly integrated. They by themselves are looking for, they themselves are committed to quickly overcoming the initial difficulties (LEPT interview 4).

In contrast to the proactive CwFLnS mentioned in example 24, we encounter ‘failing CwFLnS’.

Example 24: The other group of children is those who are incapable of this. Usually they also experience educational failure. They poorly integrate into the group, or they fit in but not in the proper way. This means that if they are unable to affirm themselves with positive things they start to do negative things (LEPT interview 4).

Lessenich (2011, 311) states that Western citizens are being confronted by the activation paradigm with a modified weighting of rights and responsibilities. Individual rights and (corresponding) public responsibilities are losing prominence, while “public rights” and (corresponding) individual responsibilities are coming to the fore instead. In the activation perspective, society and schools have a legitimate claim against its members to, each and every one of them individually, act in the public interest or in the interest of the school. On the whole, it seems that the governmentality revolves around the management of boundaries: states are constantly drawing demarcation lines between ‘the passive’ and ‘the active’, between ‘the mobile’ and ‘the immobile’, between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjects. On one hand, activation is the (social) order of the day, with public policies driving people to adopt a pro-active attitude, a self-monitoring conduct of life – for the sake of society and the common good.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Studies of governmentality open up an epistemological-political field that Foucault defined as “politics of truth”. They investigate the discursive operations, speakers’ positions, and institutional mechanisms through which truth claims are produced, and which power effects are tied to these truths. Studies of governmentality trace the contours of this productive power, which produces specific (and always selective) knowledge and in

this way generates definitions of problems and fields of governmental intervention in the first place (Brockling et al., 2011, 12). Of course, systems and institutions of education involve the exercise of power as the conduct of conduct¹² and the organisation of people or in our case pupils into groups and hierarchies. Indeed, these are pre-eminent characteristics within education institutions in the sense that they not only involve leading and channelling the conduct of teachers and students, and the organisation of these people into groups and hierarchies, but also produce people to fit into wider sorts of roles and organisations (Fejes, 2008, 10). The population is regulated through schooling in accordance with the needs of society (Fejes, 2008, 11). Every education system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them (Walshaw, 2007, 101).

Slovenian public discourses have to be understood along these lines. In the early transitional period, immigrants were portrayed as the ethnic 'other', as an explicit threat to Slovenia's ethnic and social homogeneity. Nowadays, within the EU discourse on multiculturalism, interculturalism, the promotion of tolerance, human rights and even cosmopolitanism, the 'other' can no longer be reduced to a threatening enemy and pushed across the Eastern border. According to EU discourses it has to be integrated into the social majority in order to represent the minor possible threat to Slovenian national integrity. The problem we face is therefore how this integration process should be conducted or, put better, how can integration be seen differently? Maybe by omitting in a more balanced way one-way policy disciplining and normalising of whoever is perceived as 'different'. However, in the analysed discourses CwFLnS in Slovenia are perceived as a normal outcome of the present social situation and social changes, for instance the changing nature of migration flows in Europe or attitudes to various categories of 'others' seem not to be changing drastically. This was clearly demonstrated in both parts of the analysis. On one hand, respect for the differences of CwFLnS are claimed on a very general level while, on the other, the analysis of discourses uncovered a relatively ethnocentric view on how to solve the problem of CwFLnS in schools. Ideas and strategies for how to govern the problem were mainly based on the notion of assimilation.

The notions of integration and assimilation adopted by the policy documents, experts and teachers can be well contrasted with the notion of inclusion (see Young, 2000). Ideas of integration and assimilation embrace the process of normalisation. The task of integration/assimilation has always been about how to join the mainstream, how to become majoritarian. Integration/assimilati-

on are meant as the process of integrating a CwFLnS into the structures, processes and institutions of the social majority while the adaptation of institutions, such as the school system, are random and minor. Conversely, inclusion is conceived as a process of transformation, not only of socially vulnerable groups and individuals, but it also requires a simultaneous change of procedures, structures, institutions and public discourses that include socially vulnerable individuals and groups. In other words, integration/assimilation is a process of the normalisation of socially vulnerable and excluded individuals and groups up to the point where they are able to be included in the social majority.

Assimilationist discourses all aim to integrate/assimilate CwFLnS by imposing a precondition – that CwFLnS should learn Slovenian and adopt the culture so they will be able to integrate into Slovenian society. While the language learning and cultural integration of CwFLnS is presented as a practicality (CwFLnS can only follow classes if they have mastered the language), the integration process aims at the normalisation of the ethnic and cultural differences of CwFLnS. When interpreting governmental strategies of normalisation, we should bear in mind that education is mainly a practice that first of all individualises and totalises (see Dean, 2010). First, CwFLnS are located in the education system and defined as subjects outside the curve of normality. The process of individualisation makes CwFLnS visible by virtue of their differentiation from the majoritarian population (pointing out the language barrier and different culture of CwFLnS). CwFLnS are then subjected to additional classes aimed at restoring and separating them at the same time from the social totality. This process of individual disciplining is part and parcel of totalisation. Hence, an individual CwFLnS has to be pertinent to the system and therefore integrated into the functional totality of their class, school and community (Foucault, 2000, 417, 409). The complex subjectivity of CwFLnS becomes disciplined and normalised up to the point where CwFLnS no longer appear as harmful, disturbing or threatening to the social majority included in the Slovenian education system. This process allows CwFLnS to be perceived by the majoritarian society as legitimate, acceptable and 'normal'.

According to Watney (1997), normalisation also means allowing the subjectivity of CwFLnS into the Slovenian education system only in strictly codified forms. One of these forms is certainly the language or the symbolic system it represents in our culture. Therefore, CwFLnS are allowed in the majoritarian society so long as they do not represent a threat or a disturbance to the established process of schooling. This is a typical mechanism of governmentality – to monitor the popu-

12 According to Foucault, the "conduct of conduct" is the central problem of modern government. The idea of liberal government involves a paradox: liberalism asserts the sovereignty of the free individual, yet government requires that individual behaviour be regulated and modified.

lation, normalise the 'not-normal' and achieve this by giving the subjects the illusion that this is being pursued for their own good and for the sake of the larger community or the state. However, governmental techniques such as normalisation or individualisation also aim to protect the school system from potential destabilisation. As one of the HGPEs points out: *"Teachers say to me they perceive these people (CwFLnS) as problematic, as those who bring disorder into the pedagogical process, because they do not master this basic medium, and this is the language"* (HGPE interview 9). The language barrier CwFLnS experience in Slovenian schools has to be removed in order to re-homogenise the institution since language differences are disturbing the schooling process (see Blommaert and Verschueren, 1996). Within the neoliberal educational discourses that are also ever more present in Slovenia, and which mobilise notions of normality, progress, skills, lifelong learning, achievements, individual responsabilisation, proactivity and the like (Žakelj et. al, 2013, Mencin Čeplak, 2013, Živoder, 2013, Ule, 2010, 7), CwFLnS are constituted as something threatening and holding back the process of edu-

cation in schools. In order to legitimise the presence of CwFLnS in the Slovenian education system, normalisation of the lack of language knowledge seems necessary.

However, we have to consider that this assimilation to a new language occurs in terms of a symbolic and practical consolidation and homogenisation of the Slovenian national identity. The aim of this paper was to trace the productive power of truth that produces specific and selective knowledge on CwFLnS, in turn generating definitions of problems of governmental intervention. The analysis presented an aporic situation. On one hand, discourses in the educational field (see Barle Lakota et al., 2007) seem to adopt more egalitarian and tolerant perspectives on immigrants, ethnic minorities etc. On the other hand, these patterns of EU-fashioned democratisation seem to be only working on a declarative level and not to be fully implemented in systemic policy or everyday life professional practices when dealing with CwFLnS. Assimilationist discourse was shown to be predominant, proving that the Slovenian education system is well grounded in neo-colonial ideas and strategies for the most efficient normalisation of the 'other'.



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OTROCI KATERIH PRVI JEZIK NI SLOVENŠČINA V SLOVENSKEM IZOBRAŽEVALNEM SISTEMU: KRITIČNA ANALIZA NORMALIZACIJE

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POVZETEK

Članek z metodo kritične analize diskurza analizira diskurze, ki obravnavajo otroke katerih prvi jezik ni slovenščina v slovenskih osnovnih šolah. Raziskava bazira na analizi poglobljenih intervjujev in fokusnih skupin, ki smo jih v okviru projekta GOETE izvedli v letu 2011. V intervjuje in fokusne skupine so bili vključeni lokalni eksperti, eksperti, ki delujejo na državni ravni ter učitelji devetih razredov dveh slovenskih osnovnih šol v Kopru in Ljubljani. Z aplikacijo Foucaultovega pojma problematizacije članek ugotavlja, kako se različni empirični fenomeni, vezani na pojem integracije otrok katerih prvi jezik ni slovenščina v slovenskem šolskem sistemu, konstruirajo kot problem znotraj različnih režimov "resnic". Z aplikacijo kritične analize diskurza, članek ugotavlja, kako je problem integracije omenjene skupine otrok konstruiran, interpretiran ter kakšni so predlogi rešitev. S pomočjo foucaultovskega pojma vladljivosti, ki ga razumemo kot skupek institucij, procedur, analiz, refleksij, kalkulacij in taktik, ki omogočajo uveljavitev državne moči, ki si prizadeva urediti populacijo, članek dekonstruira process implementacije pojma integracija. Kajti integracija, ki se navzven kaže kot demokratični poskus vključitve otrok katerih prvi jezik ni slovenščina v slovenske šole, se v praksi izkaže za klasično asimilacijsko strategijo s problematičnimi ideološkimi implikacijami. Članek pokaže, da je integracijska politika pravzaprav oblika vladljivosti, saj zavoljo nemotenega delovanja šolskega sistema reproducira normalizacijo in totalizacijo vloge otrok katerih prvi jezik ni slovenščina hkrati pa konsolidira dana razmerja moči v družbi ter družbeni nadzor države in družbene večine nad manjšinskimi populacijami. Članek kritično postavlja problem otrok katerih prvi jezik ni slovenščina v dani družbeno-politično perspektivo kjer politika integracije nastopa predvsem kot etnocentrična ideologija implementirana skozi disciplinske prakse, diskurze in strategije.

Ključne besede: imigracija, otroci katerih prvi jezik ni slovenščina, problematizacija, vladljivost, izobraževanje

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