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VSEBINA / INDICE GENERALE / CONTENTS

- Andrejka Žejn:** Znani in neznani dialektolog Karel Štrekelj 171
Il dialettologo conosciuto e sconosciuto Karel Štrekelj
The (Un)known Dialectologist Karel Štrekelj
- Januška Gostenčnik:** Morphological Alternations in the Local Dialect of Ravnice (SLA T411) from Slavic Comparative Perspective 187
Alternazioni morfonologiche della parlata del luogo di Ravnice (SLA T411) dalla prospettiva comparativa slava
Oblikoglasne premene v krajevnem govoru Ravnic (SLA T411) s primerjalnega slovanskega vidika
- Jožica Škofic:** Ziljsko narečje v Ratečah na Gorenjskem (SLA T008) 203
Il dialetto Zegliano a Rateče nella regione della Gorenjska (SLA T008)
Ziljsko (Gailtal) Dialect at Rateče, Upper Carniola (SLA T008)
- Tjaša Jakop:** Slovenski kraški govor Sovodnj ob Soči 215
La parlata carsica Slovena di Savogna d'Isonzo
The Local Dialect of Sovodnje ob Soči Savogna D'Isonzo) in the Westernmost of the Karst Dialect
- Klara Šumenjak:** 1. in 2. sklanjatev samostalnikov ženskega spola v koprivskem govoru: uporabnost korpusne obdelave podatkov pri oblikoslovni analizi narečnega govora 225
Prima e seconda declinazione dei sostantivi femminile nella parlata di Kopriva sul Carso: l'utilità dell'elaborazione dei dati dai corpora nell'analisi morfologica della parlata dialettale
First and Second Declension of Feminine Nouns in the Dialect of Kopriva na Krasu: Usefulness of the Corpus Approach for Morphological Analysis of Dialects
- Metka Furlan:** Iz Primorske leksike IV 237
Dal lessico del Litorale IV
From Primorska lexis IV
- Anja Zorman & Nives Zudič Antonič:** Intercultural Sensitivity of Teachers 247
Sensibilità interculturale tra gli insegnanti
Medkulturna občutljivost učiteljev
- Nada Poropat Jeletić:** Dijatopijska rasprostranjenost recepcije kodnoga preključivanja u Istri 259
Stratificazione diatopica della ricezione della commutazione di codice in Istria
Diatopic Stratification of the Code-Switching Reception in Istria

Pavel Jamnik & Bruno Blažina: Po več kot sto letih odkrita prava Ločka jama (nad vasjo Podpeč na Kraškem robu) 273 <i>Dopo oltre cent'anni scoperta la vera Ločka jama (sopra il villaggio Popecchio sul ciglione carsico)</i> <i>The Real Ločka Cave Discovered After More Than Hundred Years (Above the Village Podpeč on the Karst Rim)</i>	Danijel Baturina: The Struggles of Shaping Social Innovation Environment in Croatia 323 <i>La lotta della formazione dell'ambiente di innovazione sociale in Croazia</i> <i>Prizadevanja za oblikovanje družbeno inovacijskega okolja na Hrvaškem</i>
Marija V. Kocić & Nikola R. Samardžić: Dve strane jednog napada: otmica britanskog trgovačkog broda Adventure 1718. godine 293 <i>Due lati di un attacco: il rapimento della nave mercantile britannica Adventure nell'anno 1718</i> <i>Dve plati enega napada: ugrabitev britanske trgovske ladje Adventure leta 1718</i>	Kazalo k slikam na ovitku 335 <i>Indice delle foto di copertina</i> 335 <i>Index to images on the cover</i> 335
Cezar Morar, Gyula Nagy, Mircea Dulca, Lajos Boros & Kateryna Sehida: Aspects Regarding the Military Cultural-Historical Heritage in the City Of Oradea (Romania) 303 <i>Aspetti relativi al patrimonio militare culturale-storico nella città di Oradea (Romania)</i> <i>Vidiki vojaške kulturno-zgodovinske dediščine v mestu Oradea (Romunija)</i>	Navodila avtorjem 337 <i>Istruzioni per gli autori</i> 339 <i>Instructions to Authors</i> 341

INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Teachers, as conveyors of intercultural education in schools, should receive specific training for teaching in linguistically and culturally heterogeneous classes. Furthermore, they should be sensitive to linguistic, ethnic and social differences. Teachers need to be able to recognize student diversity and intercultural competence, in order to develop and promote the personal and academic growth of all students - including those from other linguistic and cultural environments. In this paper, the authors firstly investigate the relationship between teachers' comprehension of interculturality and their actual intercultural competence as it emerges from their perception of linguistic and ethnic diversity within their classes. Secondly, the paper focuses on the ability to adapt to changes in the social context of education by the introduction of innovation into instruction. Finally, the authors discuss their reception of school activities directed at children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The results from this research show that the lowest levels of teachers' intercultural sensitivity occur in the context of introducing novelty into instruction in response to a constantly changing social context.

Keywords: teachers, teenage migrant and/or minority pupils, intercultural education, intercultural sensitivity, heterogeneous classes

SENSIBILITÀ INTERCULTURALE TRA GLI INSEGNANTI

SINTESI

Gli insegnanti, ai quali, nei rispettivi sistemi educativi, è affidata l'educazione interculturale, dovrebbero essere adeguatamente formati a lavorare in classi linguisticamente e culturalmente eterogenee, oltre che resi accorti alla diversità linguistica, etnica e sociale. Gli insegnanti devono essere in grado di riconoscere la diversità degli studenti e la competenza interculturale, al fine di sviluppare e promuovere la crescita personale e accademica di tutti gli studenti, compresi quelli provenienti da altri ambienti linguistici e culturali. In questo articolo le autrici presentano innanzitutto la relazione tra la comprensione dell'interculturalità da parte degli insegnanti e la loro effettiva sensibilità interculturale; tale connessione si riflette nella percezione del grado di eterogeneità linguistica ed etnica delle classi, nell'introduzione di innovazioni didattiche atte ad adattarsi ai cambiamenti del contesto sociale di istruzione, nella variazione delle attività scolastiche quando si lavora con allievi che provengono da altri ambienti linguistici e culturali. Dai risultati di questa ricerca emerge che il livello più basso di sensibilità interculturale si manifesta nell'introduzione di novità nell'insegnamento come forma di adattamento al continuo cambiamento del contesto sociale ed educativo.

Parole chiave: insegnanti, studenti / alunni migranti e minorenni, educazione interculturale, sensibilità interculturale, classi eterogenee

INTRODUCTION¹

In modern society, within the European Union and in areas where globalization is taking place, people have been establishing increasingly intensive contact with national and ethnic communities outside their own. Intercultural and interethnic awareness of each individual, as well as of all institutions, plays a creative role within national culture, and is the only way for various communities to achieve free and productive cooperation. Therefore, the goal of multicultural modern societies must be to achieve intercultural awareness that arises from the recognition of one's own national identity as well as of the identity of other national communities cohabiting in the same geographical area.

The current discourse on intercultural education in Slovenia focuses on (1) integration of foreign students, giving very little or no attention to autochthonous ethnic minorities, Italian and Hungarian; (2) students and teacher exchange at all levels of education,² rather than working on promoting mutual understanding among students and teachers; and (3) adopting foreign models of the development of intercultural communication and intercultural awareness, rather than continuing and refining the well established model of intercultural relations historically present in the nationally mixed areas of Slovenia.

The authors argue that students and teachers should develop intercultural sensitivity from the onset and through the exploration of history and tradition of the Slovene national territory and consequently generalize the results of such an exploration to a constantly changing educational context. Intercultural sensitivity transfers and develops in each contact with other people. *“People are open to new influences every time they interact with one another”* (Spiteri, 2017, 12).

The research, conducted within the EDUKA – Educate to Diversity project (2011–2014), shows how the school system should work on developing intercultural sensitivity of teachers as the basis of the intercultural communication. *“Unless people can feel for one another, unless people can feel with one another, and unless people can ‘conceptually’ enter the world of each other, no amount of multicultural education can generate mutual understanding”* (Spiteri, 2017, 5). We thus investigated how teachers, as conveyors of intercultural education in schools,

understand the terms ‘intercultural awareness’ and ‘intercultural education’, both at a declarative level and in practice. Often, there is an inconsistency between teachers’ definition of intercultural education and their actual conduct when in contact with linguistically, culturally and ethnically heterogeneous groups (Gorski, 2008).

DEFINITION OF INTERCULTURALITY AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Before conducting an analysis of the notion of intercultural education, it is critical to define interculturality - in particular to specify differences between interculturality and multiculturality – terms that are often used alternatively as if they were synonymous. The two terms are clearly distinct in meaning. An explanation of the differences between the terms is needed from the outset, because these differences are related to two different ways of comprehending possibilities of intervention in the social and educational fields.

In 1989, the Council of Europe³ suggested a distinction that is both conceptual and terminological, between ‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural’, where the term ‘multicultural’ refers to the presence of various cultures in a specific geographic area or in a specific social context: in this sense, our society is becoming increasingly multicultural. It implies a simple coexistence of various cultural groups in the same area, where no true forms of interaction occur among these groups (Failli, 2003; Camilleri, 2002). With the term ‘intercultural’, on the other hand, the reference is to a situation in which the juxtaposition of various cultures is not resolved in a simple coexistence, it gives life to and requires articulate and continuous forms of relations. In this sense, intercultural means relationship and the usage of the term ‘interculturality’ conveys the idea of a constant reciprocal intention to change. Interculturality thus refers to a dimension with perspectives in dialogue: a dialogue of reciprocal transformation without assimilative intentions,⁴ but rather with intentions to build a third horizon, a higher level that allows the two previous levels to remain in a relationship without cancelling each other out. Intercultural education must therefore, be founded on the development of interactive relationships between members of diverse cultures (Sedmak, 2009; Failli, 2003; Camilleri, 2002).

1 This paper presents the results of the research project EDUKA – Educate to Diversity, conducted within the Across-frontier Cooperation Program Italy-Slovenia (2007–2013), financed by the European Regional Development Fund and national funds.

2 *“The aims of these visits were to encourage a ‘study-like’ paradigm by providing staff and students with (1) developing strong cross-cultural communication skills, and an ability to appreciate social and cultural differences leading to a higher level of selfconfidence as potential global citizens; and (2) exposure to and opportunities for international partnership working and collaboration”* (Miller & Potter, 2017, 246).

3 *Conseil de l’Europe. 1989. L’éducation interculturelle. Concept, context and programme.* Strasbourg.

4 In the past, citizenship education was based on an assimilation ideology in a large part of the world. In the USA, it aimed at educating pupils to become as similar as possible to the mythical Anglo-Saxon concept of the ‘good citizen’ (Banks, 2001).

In general, multiculturalism has been analysed under an ontological approach, as an existing or desired social reality. Multiculturalism has also been widely subjected to a political-ideological lens, focusing both on the dominant or host society, and on the migrant or (allegedly) minority groups. Conversely, interculturalism is analysable as movement with an underlying stream of consciousness, as manifested in critically aware journeys, in mutual knowledge, understanding and communication. Interculturalism is then, and preferably, a hermeneutic option, an epistemological approach (Sarmiento, 2016, 125).

Terminological differences between multicultural and intercultural refer to a diversity of contexts. The term 'multicultural education' emerges from an educational project developed in the United States and in the English-speaking part of Canada in the 1960's and 1970's.⁵ In Québec and in France, the term 'éducation interculturelle' is used, arising from a different idea of interethnic relationships, i.e. relationships that are based more on interaction and common values, rather than on differences. In certain circumstances, the two terms are interpreted as synonyms, since educational practices related to multiculturalism and interculturalism are often difficult to distinguish. However, the latter claim is not accepted by many experts (Balboni, 1999; Camilleri, 2002; Failli, 2003) who believe, instead, that the two terms hold clearly distinct differences in meaning (suggested also by the Council of Europe in: *L'éducation interculturelle. Concept, context and programme*, Strasbourg 1989). Interculturality is thus, focused on interaction and exchange; it hopes for the production of a 'convergence' culture among various members of society. The term 'convergence culture' was coined by Québec experts, pioneers in the subject. To be more precise, in Canada – and in particular in Québec – the difference between interculturality and multiculturalism was clearly defined.

It is nevertheless, difficult to distinguish between intercultural and multicultural educational practices. According to Grinter (1985), it is more effective to combine these practices than to separate them. Leicester (1992) disagrees with a dichotomy as well, suggesting that differences between paradigms should be highlighted. Multiculturalism is an expression of a liberal ideology in search of the mutual comprehension between cultures and a change in society through education. However, the liberal structure, although acceptable, is at risk of transforming into 'cultural Darwinism'.⁶ It favours intercultural education with a stronger focus on the critique of dominant paradigms

in order to produce new forms of culture through mechanisms of contamination. It results in guided and controlled contact that is not necessarily considered as negative (Zudič Antonič, 2010).

Multicultural and/or intercultural education is also intertwined with antiracial education – initially the two are blurred. In the United States, anthropology of education from the 1940s has persevered in challenging racism in schools. In the first stage of ethnic revival, ethnic groups and their supporters suggested that institutionalised racism was the fundamental cause of minorities' problems in society and school. Influential researchers of intercultural education, such as Banks (1986), insisted that racism was deeply embedded in western societies, and worked on developing pedagogical tools and techniques to overcome it.

Antiracism education should always combine with multicultural or intercultural education. If too much emphasis is placed on cultural difference and on specific characteristics of minority cultures with respect to the dominant 'mainstream culture', then the underlying causes of minorities' oppression in western societies, such as institutional racism, class stratification and the fight for power, may be forgotten.

Antiracism can also represent a political discourse: a fight against racism is part of the fight against capitalism, with racism as its structural element (May, 2001). Antiracial pedagogy originates from the role of racism in society: it is more than a mere irrational prejudice, eradicable by education; it is an ideological discourse legitimizing a system of power, stratification in classes, supremacy of one group over the other, a division of work that perpetuates inequality.

In antiracial education, it is essential to highlight the transit from difference to inequality and the construction of categories used in this transit. The emphasis is on understanding the ways that differences are used to produce inequality (May, 2001). An intercultural approach, on the other hand, insists on prejudices originating from ignorance, lack of information and communication, and focuses on possibilities of resolving these through education.

If we want to address the injustices that exist in the world that permeate our societies, we must teach students the ideals of democracy and social equality and give our young people opportunities to practise those ideals in their daily lives, both in and out of school, in whichever context we are engaged. To this end multiple perspectives are important in produ-

5 In the USA and in Canada, multicultural education developed concurrently with a general change in the conception of interethnic relationships within society and the affirmation of pluralism as a dominant ideology (Banks, 2001).

6 The term derives from the current critical usage of the term 'social Darwinism' related to imperialist and racist theories based on evolution theory and eugenics (Bonazzi, 1992).

cing curriculum theory, policy and practice that is socially just and provides opportunities for diversity in thinking (Roofe & Bezzina, 2018, 5).

The most recent studies seem to suggest that to be able to respond effectively to future educational challenges we should resort to a combination of the three concepts: antiracial, multicultural and intercultural education rather than to their division; an education that should permeate all educational disciplines and subjects, not only language instruction (Sedmak & Zadel, 2015; Mikolič, 2010).

RESEARCH

Research on interculturality was conducted within the research project EDUKA – Educate to diversity (2011–2014) – by six partner institutions in Slovenia and Italy.⁷ Schools that were selected by researchers had a high presence of linguistic, cultural and ethnical diversity in six regions in the two states.⁸ Data was collected by means of questionnaires, distributed to pupils aged 12 to 15, their parents and teachers. In this paper, selected data that emerged from the inquiry is presented.

Teachers involved in the research were asked to fill in a questionnaire that allowed us to gain data on their interpretation of the term intercultural education; on their perception of levels of linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity in the classes they teach; on the introduction of novelty into instruction as a means of responding to changes in the social context of education;⁹ and the school's activity involving pupils from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in terms of organizing additional lessons of the language of instruction (Slovene or Italian). The primary aim of the study was to identify the relationships among teachers' definition of intercultural awareness and intercultural education and their actual conduct in contact with linguistically, culturally and ethnically heterogeneous groups.

Research method

Sample and research design

281 teachers participated in the research. They taught pupils aged 12 to 15 enrolled in the school year

2012/13 in six regions in Slovenia and Italy. 77.9% were female and 21.4% male,¹⁰ the average age was 44.84 years.

Although there is still “no consensus on how to measure intercultural competence” (Wahyudi, 2016, 144), the research is based on the notion that culture and intercultural competence are related to one's cognitive schemes that transpire through their personal views and conduct. Therefore, teachers were asked to fill in a questionnaire containing closed-ended questions on their comprehension of intercultural education; to evaluate the degree of linguistic and national diversity in the classes they teach, as well as diversity with respect to pupils' citizenship; to estimate the extent and the manner in which they respond to a constantly changing social context by introducing novelty; and to estimate their school's engagement in organizing additional lessons in the language of instruction (Slovene or Italian).

Results and discussion

Research results are presented in tables and discussed. The words heading the columns (for example, SLO – Littoral) refer to the six regions involved in the research, while those in the first column on the left refers to answers offered to teachers in the questionnaire.

Teachers' views on intercultural education. The figure 85.1% in row ‘An approach based on subject and cross curricular activity’ under column ‘Total’ shows that most teachers involved in the research viewed intercultural education as embedded in every curricular and extra-curricular activity conducted by the school. In the same column, the figure 6,4% in the row ‘Additional subject for all pupils’ indicates the proportion of teachers considering that, in order to develop pupils' intercultural communication, a subject on intercultural communication should be offered to all pupils. The figure 5.0% in the row ‘Additional subject for foreign pupils’ refers to the portion of teachers that were of the opinion that a subject on intercultural communication should be offered only to pupils of diverse cultural origin.

From a comparison across regions, according to results in the row ‘Additional subject for all pupils’, emerges a slightly higher percentage of teachers from the Slovene Littoral (10.0% of teachers in Slovene schools and 12.9% of teachers in Italian schools), who hold the

7 Slovene research centre SLORI (Trieste, Italy), University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities (Koper, Slovenia), University of Trieste, Department of Political and Social Sciences (Trieste, Italy), University of Udine, Department of Anthropology (Udine, Italy), University of Venice, Department of Comparative Linguistic and Cultural Sciences (Venice, Italy), Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenian Migration Institute (Ljubljana, Slovenia).

8 From the bilingual area on the Slovene Littoral and in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy, schools with Slovene as a language of instruction and schools with Italian as a language of instruction were selected; from the central part of the two states, schools in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and schools in Venice and Ravenna (Italy) were selected.

9 Teachers who answered in the affirmative were then asked to specify the manner in which they adapt to class heterogeneity. The following answers were offered: introduction of intercultural topics, language simplification, assessment adaptation, differentiation of learning objectives, and introduction of new didactic tools. Space for additional answers was provided.

10 0.7% of teachers provided no answer to the question.

Table 1: Teachers' definition of intercultural education, divided by regions (%).

		Region								
		SLO - Littoral	SLO - Ljubljana	SLO - Italian schools	Total SLO	ITA – FVG	ITA - Venice, Ravenna	ITA - Slovene schools	Total ITA	TOTAL
An approach based subject and cross curricular activity	%	84,0	87,0	83,9	85,0	91,4	81,5	81,0	85,1	85,1
Additional subject for all pupils	%	10,0	6,5	12,9	9,4	3,4	5,6	2,4	3,9	6,4
Additional subject for foreign pupils	%	4,0	6,5	0	3,9	3,4	9,3	4,8	5,8	5,0
Other	%	2,0	0	0	,8	0	1,9	2,4	1,3	1,1
No answer	%	0	0	3,2	,8	1,7	1,9	9,5	3,9	2,5
TOTAL	%	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
	N	50	46	31	127	58	54	42	154	281

view that intercultural education should be offered as additional instruction to all pupils. The same opinion was shared by only 6.5% of teachers in Ljubljana, 5.6% in Venice and Ravenna, 3.4% in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and 2.4% in Slovene minority schools in Italy. Furthermore, figures in the row 'Additional subject for foreign pupils' indicate that none of the teachers in minority Italian schools in Slovenia consider intercultural education as additional instruction that should be offered only to foreign pupils.

In our opinion, the above data suggests that teachers in Slovene and Italian schools in the Slovene Littoral have developed a higher level of intercultural sensitivity in comparison to teachers from other regions involved in the research. This result corresponds with the findings of other investigations, which suggest that levels of intercultural perspective present among school employees is dependent upon the school setting (Norberg, 2000). Teachers from the Slovene Littoral, where intercultural education tradition within the education system goes back to the late 1950s, lean more towards instruction with intercultural education permeating all subjects, compared to their colleagues. These teachers favour more the idea that intercultural communication as additional instruction should be offered to all pupils and vice versa; only individual teachers view intercultural education as additional instruction for foreign pupils only.

Teachers' estimation of heterogeneity of their classes. Figures in column 'Total' show that teachers involved in the research estimate that classes they taught at the time of the project were heterogeneous with respect to pupils' first language (90.4% in the row 'Diverse first language', their nationality (90.0% in the row 'Diverse nationality') and citizenship (65.8% in the row 'Diverse nationality').

In Table 2, figures in the row 'Diverse first language'

show that the highest proportion of teachers claiming that classes they teach are heterogeneous with respect to pupils' first language, are teachers of minority schools on both sides of the border (91.3% of teachers in Italian schools in Slovenia and 92.9% of teachers in Slovene schools in Italy). These schools are open to pupils of any nationality and their population is in fact, traditionally quite diverse, in terms of pupils' first language, culture and nationality.

There is a negative correlation between teachers' answers regarding the language diversity of classes and their answers on intercultural education as an additional subject offered only to foreign pupils. Thus, 100% of teachers in minority schools in the Slovene Littoral answered that their classes were linguistically diverse, where nobody viewed intercultural education as a specific form of education designed for foreign pupils. On the contrary, only 85.2% of teachers from inland Italy (Venice and Ravenna) estimated their classes to be as linguistically diverse and as many as 9.3% considered intercultural education as a form of instruction offered specifically to foreign pupils. This data concurs with the findings of other research showing that levels of teachers' intercultural sensitivity depend on the school environment (Norberg, 2000) and teachers' experience with diversity (Banks, 2001).

Teachers' estimation of linguistic heterogeneity of the classes they taught during the research is similar to their estimation of national diversity of those classes, where percentages were slightly higher. Figures in the row 'Diverse nationality' indicate that percentage values ranged between 90.7% (Venice, Ravenna) and 100% (minority Italian schools in Slovenia). The only exception was those teachers from minority schools in Italy with Slovene as a language of instruction, which was accompanied by a relatively low proportion of

Table 2: Teachers' evaluation on heterogeneity of classes they teach, divided by regions (%).

		Region								
		SLO - Littoral	SLO - Ljubljana	SLO - Italian schools	Total SLO	ITA – FVG	ITA - Venice, Ravenna	ITA - Slovene schools	Total ITA	TOTAL
Diverse citizenship	%	56	84,8	67,7	69,3	81	63	38,1	63	65,8
Diverse nationality	%	96	97,8	100	97,6	93,1	90,7	61,9	83,8	90
Diverse first language	%	88	91,3	100	92,1	89,7	85,2	92,9	89	90,4
No answer	%	0	2,2	0	0,8	0	0	4,8	1,3	1,1
TOTAL	%	240	276,1	267,7	259,8	263,8	238,9	197,6	237	247,3

positive answers to the question of national diversity in their classes (61.9%) and a high proportion of positive answers to the question of linguistic diversity within the same classes.

A comparison across regions shows that teachers' answers to the question on the diversity of pupils concerning citizenship are extremely varied. Figures in the row 'Diverse citizenship' show that the largest proportion of positive answers was registered in inland Slovenia (84.8%) and the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region in Italy (18.0%); a much lower proportions of positive answers were given by teachers from other regions, with the lowest (38.1%) registered in minority Slovene schools in Italy. The data is strongly related to teachers' views on intercultural education (Table 1), where teachers from minority Slovene schools in Italy are the least inclined to support the idea that intercultural education should be offered as an additional subject to all pupils in the school.

Inconsistency between the evaluation of linguistic, national and citizenship diversity on the one hand, and the view on intercultural education on the other, observed among minority teachers in Slovene schools in Italy, shows a similar self-perception among teachers as non-cultural and non-ethnic beings as noted by Banks (2001) for his students as future teachers. In both cases, a form of assimilation is in progress, although they originate from almost diametrically opposed circumstances. Banks (2001) believes the phenomenon is related to the mono-cultural experience of the majority of the teaching body in the USA. He refers to teachers with extremely limited experience with racial, ethnic or social diversity, and who consider race and culture as characteristics of a social outcast and the different. On the other hand, in Slovene minority schools in Italy, where teachers are in constant and abundant contact with diversity, the

phenomena should be ascribed to a completely different form of assimilation; that is, more or less strongly present in the history of the Slovene minority in Italy since the establishment of political borders after World War II, namely, the silent assimilation (Čok, Pertot, 2010).¹¹

Banks (2001) points out here that teachers must develop their own reflective cultural and national identification in order to be able to function effectively in heterogeneous groups and help children from different cultural settings and groups to develop their own clear identification.

Teachers' awareness and comprehension of the diversity of classes involved in the research, was compared to data on the linguistic, national and citizenship structure of these classes provided by schools. Results in table 3 show average values of the proportion of pupils with foreign citizenship, whose nationality and language are other than that of the ethnic majority.¹²

Answers provided by teachers (see Table 2 above) and data provided by schools (Table 3) is relatively consistent concerning citizenship diversity. In both cases, the highest rate of positive answers was registered in inland Slovenia and in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, where the highest presence of foreign pupils was registered.

Answers on national diversity were also in accordance with data provided by schools; the only exception was those of teachers of minority schools in Italy with a relatively low proportion of answers (61.9%, see Table 2) related to the question of national diversity within the classes they teach. On the other hand, according to school data, in Slovene minority schools in Italy, there is a relatively high share of pupils whose nationality is not Slovene (40.0%, see Table 3). This finding shows again, the inconsistency of perception of diversity among teachers in Slovene minority schools (Table 2) and the actual rate of diversity as shown by data provided by

11 On silent assimilation of Slovenes in Italy see Susič and Sedmak (1983), Susič (1998, 2003).

12 Percentages in Table 3 are approximate, they were calculated on the base of intervals, offered by the questionnaire, related to the presence of diverse children in classes involved in the research: nobody, 1–20%, 21–41%, 41–60%, 61–80% 81–100%, no data). Data was conveyed by schools.

Table 3: Data on heterogeneity of classes involved in the research, conveyed by schools, divided by regions (%).

		Region								
		SLO - Littoral	SLO - Ljubljana	SLO - Italian schools	Total SLO	ITA – FVG	ITA - Venice, Ravenna	ITA - Slovene schools	Total ITA	TOTAL
Diverse citizenship	%	10	30	8	16	30	10	5	15	15,5
Diverse nationality	%	25	70	30 ¹³	41,7	20	10	40	20	30,9
Diverse first language	%	25	70	43	46	25	10	25	20	33

Table 4: Introduction of novelty into instruction in heterogeneous classes, divided by regions (%).

		Region								
		SLO - Littoral	SLO - Ljubljana	SLO - Italian schools	Total SLO	ITA – FJK	ITA - Venice, Ravenna	ITA - Slovene schools	Total ITA	TOTAL
Yes	%	40	19,6	29	29,9	13,8	22,2	31	21,4	25,3
No	%	60	80,4	67,7	69,3	82,8	72,2	57,1	72,1	70,8
No answer	%	0	0	3,2	0,8	3,4	5,6	11,9	6,5	3,9
TOTAL	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	N	50	46	31	127	58	54	42	154	281

school management (Table 3). The inconsistency is further confirmed by answers provided by teachers themselves on questions concerning linguistic (92.9%, see table 2) and national diversity of their classes (61.9%, see Table 2). This data furthermore, reinforces the need for a more active involvement of teachers in Slovene minority schools in Italy regarding problems related to assimilation, as well as clearer cultural perception and identification.

We find the estimate of teachers on linguistic heterogeneity, as shown by figures in row 'Diverse first language' in Table 2 (90.4% under column 'Total'), as relatively impaired. According to data provided by the schools, there is a relatively large proportion of pupils from diverse linguistic settings within the school population. Furthermore, considering the normal distribution of pupils whose first language is not the school's language, we are confident that all teachers involved in the research are in contact with diversity in the classroom. Inconsistency between the perception of levels of diversity in the classes they teach and teachers' views on intercultural education is indicative of teachers' professional conduct, which is not conducive to their definition of intercultural education. Today we come to the same conclusion Banks (2001) did more than a decade ago, when he suggested that most teaching

practices continued to reinforce rather than challenge existing social and political hierarchies, indicating how teachers – despite good intentions – had an inadequate approach to teaching in linguistically and ethnically diverse classes.

Introduction of novelty into instruction as a response to changes in the social context of education. Changes in social, and consequently in an educational setting, bring about changes in didactics as well. Teachers were asked whether they had introduced innovation into their didactics in order to adapt to the constantly changing linguistic and cultural structure of the classes they teach. Experience in teaching heterogeneous classes stimulated the majority of teachers interviewed to introduce novelty into instruction, as shown in Table 4. This is indicated by answers in the affirmative, ranging from 57.1% to 82.8%.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight the proportion of teachers that do not adapt their work to the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students. Answers in the negative, ranging from 13.8% to 40.0% and averaging at 25.3%, as shown in Table 4, demonstrate that more than one fourth of teachers involved in the research never introduced any change required by teaching heterogeneous classes. Taking into consideration that 90.4% of teachers had stated their classes were

13 One of the three schools that were involved in the research did not supply data.

Table 5: Additional lessons on the language of instruction for foreign pupils planned by schools, divided by regions (%).

		Region								
		SLO - Littoral	SLO - Ljubljana	SLO - Italian schools	Total SLO	ITA – FJK	ITA - Venice, Ravenna	ITA - Slovene schools	Total ITA	TOTAL
Yes	%	12	8,7	12,9	11	3,4	9,3	57,1	20,1	16
No	%	88	89,1	83,9	87,4	93,1	90,7	35,7	76,6	81,5
No answer	%	0	2,2	3,2	1,6	3,4	0	7,1	3,2	2,5
TOTAL	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	N	50	46	31	127	58	54	42	154	281

linguistically heterogeneous and 90.0% of their pupils were of diverse nationality, we conclude that a large proportion of teachers involved in the research do not adapt professionally to the linguistic and cultural needs of pupils. We consider this finding alarming as well as indicative of a crucial inconsistency between teachers' declarative definition of intercultural education and their actual conduct. It is furthermore indicative of a need for change in the Slovene school system, in-service and pre-service teacher training, particularly since various international comparative research in schools (PISA 2015, OECD 2016) have shown that migrant children with similar backgrounds in terms of origin and family socio-economic status achieve different results in various school systems (Rutar, 2018).

Teachers involved in the research worked with pupils aged 12–15 years at the time of the project. At this age, youngsters are most susceptible to the development of higher levels of intercultural sensitivity. The ability to view reality from other people's viewpoint – the ability that is critical to the development of intercultural competence – develops between the ages of nine and fifteen (Selman and Schultz as quoted by Pederson, 1997). Being able to view reality from other people's perspective is largely influenced by contact with diversity and school. In her research, Pederson (1997)¹⁴ established that experience with diversity is essential, yet not a necessarily sufficient factor in the development of higher levels of intercultural sensitivity. Pupils from the urban environment who were in constant contact with diversity nevertheless displayed statistically significant lower levels of tolerance to cultural diversity than their peers from the suburbs. Schools must create such an environment that fosters

positive intercultural interactions among youngsters. In the research conducted by Pederson (1997), only the suburban school offered education in conflict resolution by employing one part-time and two full-time cultural mediators who looked after communication between school employees, children from minority groups and their families. Classrooms also had posters and other citations that celebrated diversity. The author thus concluded that the school ethos, as contained within the actual and hidden curriculum, has a very strong influence on the development of intercultural sensitivity in adolescents.

The true meaning of intercultural education goes well beyond school events and other activities organized by schools or carried out by individual teachers; interculturality must permeate teachers' conduct completely. In order to achieve this, teachers must be interculturally aware and sensitive, at least at the lowest ethno-relative levels in the development of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993).¹⁵ Only a teacher who is interculturally sensitive will recognize the cultural diversity of his pupils and develop an adequate intercultural competence (Jokikokko, 2005; Zudič Antonič, 2017) and didactic strategies to develop and effectively support the personal and academic growth of pupils from all linguistic and cultural settings.

School activity involving pupils of diverse and cultural origin. For children whose first language is different from the language of a specific area and (consequently) the language of instruction, mastering this language is a very important factor of integration and feeling of acceptance. One of the most common permanent activities involving children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and organ-

¹⁴ Pederson (1997) investigated the relationships among empathy, authoritarianism, gender, intercultural contact, second language acquisition, and early adolescents' intercultural sensitivity (ICS) levels. In the study were involved 145 seventh-grade students from three school environments, namely urban, suburban and rural.

¹⁵ In Bennett's *Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity* (1993), levels of intercultural sensitivity are divided into two major groups: ethnocentric and ethno-relative. The first group is further developed in levels that are characterized by the individual's vision of the world from the viewpoint of his culture: denial, defence and minimization. The second group comprises levels of acceptance, adaptation and integration that arise from understanding that each culture is characterized by its own peculiar features that do not necessarily overlap with features of other cultures.

Table 6: Proportion of schools offering various forms of additional lessons for the language of instruction for foreign schools within each region (%).

		Region								
		SLO - Littoral	SLO - Ljubljana	SLO - Italian schools	Total SLO	ITA – FVG	ITA - Venice, Ravenna	ITA - Slovene schools	Total ITA	TOTAL
Individual during school hours	%	25	100	0	41,7	25	25	50	38,9	40,3
Individual after school hours	%	50	75	66,7	63,9	0	0	75	25	44,5
Group workshops during school hours	%	25	100	0	41,7	100	50	50	61	51,4
Group workshops after school hours	%	75	100	0	58	50	50	75	58,3	58,2

ized by schools, is a language course for the language of instruction. Based on teachers' answers, it emerges that the majority of schools involved in the research offer additional language instruction to foreign pupils, the percentage of affirmative answers for which were between 88.0% and 93.1% (Table 5). The only exception were minority schools in Italy with Slovene as a language of instruction where as many as 57.1% of teachers reported that their school does not plan or organize any additional instruction in Slovene.

Teachers' perception on if and to what extent a school organizes additional language courses (for the language of instruction) for pupils of diverse language origin depends largely on the number of hours and forms of instruction (during vs. after school hours; individual vs. group course; constant vs. temporary).

Data provided by schools indicates that additional language classes, as a way of integrating linguistically diverse children, varies significantly among schools. With the exception of two schools,¹⁶ additional language instruction is offered in all schools involved in the research. However, large differences were observed concerning the number of hours¹⁷ and forms of instruction.

Figures in table 6 show that minority schools with Italian (SLO) offer only individual lessons of Italian after school (see column SLO – Italian schools). On the other end of the scale, schools in the central part of Slovenia offer a variety of additional instruction in

Slovene, individual and group workshops, during and after school hours (see column SLO – Ljubljana). Other schools offer various forms of additional lessons in the language of instruction (Slovene or Italian) as well, with a preference for single forms of activity. Slovene schools on the Littoral offer mostly after school activities (see column SLO – Littoral); a slight preference for after-school-hours activities is also shown with Slovene minority schools in Italy (see column ITA – Slovene schools). Italian schools in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region offer almost exclusively group workshops, with a preference for activities during school hours (see column ITA – FVG); schools in Venice and Ravenna also offer additional instruction mainly through workshops, during and after school hours, while individual instruction is offered during school hours as well (see column ITA – Venice, Ravenna).

Intercultural education goes beyond additional courses of language of instruction for children of diverse linguistic origin, school events or other activities organized by the school or a single teacher. As Vižintin (2018) points out, concrete learning objectives should be added to syllabuses at different levels of education. A non-systematic approach to intercultural education seldom helps achieve its true intent and even often introduces and/or reinforces stereotypes on cultures, thus fostering a development of improper ideas on diversity (Banks, 2001). However, school has a critical role in the development of intercultural sensitivity and sensitivity for diversity in general. *“Teachers*

16 Elementary school (ES) D. Alighieri in Izola (SLO) with Italian as language of instruction and ES S. Kosovel in Opčine (ITA) with Slovene as language of instruction.

17 ES E. Mattei (ITA – Venice, Ravenna) and ES V. e D. de Castro (SLO – Italian schools) offer 10-hour courses, ES P.R. Giugliani (ITA – Venice, Ravenna) offers a 15-hour course, ES I. Cankar (ITA – Slovene schools), ES A. Manzoni and ES M. Codermatz (both ITA – FVG) offer 25-hour courses, ES L. Graziani (ITA – Venice, Ravenna) offer a 30-hour course, ES A. Bebler (SLO – Littoral) and ES P.P. Vergerio il Vecchio (SLO – Italian schools) offer 60-hour courses, ES O. Kovačič (SLO – Littoral) offers a 70-hour course, ES V. Šmuc (SLO – Littoral) and ES A. Bergamas (ITA – FVG) offer 80-hour courses, ES M. Krpan (SLO – Ljubljana) offers a 165-hour course and ES Doberdob (ITA – Slovene schools) offer a 300-hour course.

need the full support of headmasters in order to be able to implement effective intercultural education and to achieve long-term changes at the school level" (Crozier, 2009; Bešter & Medvešek, 2016). Where interculturality and intercultural education permeate school's work and life, teachers and other school employees are sensitized through contact with diversity, thus their cultural identifications become clear and their conceptions of interculturality and work in linguistically and nationally heterogeneous groups are adequate.

CONCLUSIONS

Intercultural education enables students to establish a sensitive balance between cultural, national and global identifications; to comprehend how knowledge is constructed; and to become active constructors of knowledge, as well as to participate in civil initiatives that promote a more humane society and world (Banks, 2001). Despite the undoubtedly good intentions of teachers and other educators to a considerable extent, according to Gorski (2008), even the majority of teaching practices still encourage rather than challenge the social and political hierarchies present in our society. Any analysis of intercultural education should, among other things, show the extent and limitations of the commitment to promoting a truly intercultural world on the part of each individual, school body and society in general.

Results emerging from our research confirm the absence of true intent in intercultural education in teachers. Most teachers attribute an important role to the intercultural education in the education process as a whole, as it emerges from their views of intercultural education as a subject and as a cross-curricular activity that involves all teachers. On the other hand, teachers' perception of their students' diversity, teachers' adjustment to linguistic and cultural diversity, and awareness of activities their schools offer to students of diverse linguistic and cultural origin, reveal an inconsistency between teachers' statements on intercultural education and their actual conduct. Gorski (2008) refers to such an inconsistency as a lack of true intercultural intent in the education teachers convey to their students.

Teachers require not only a particular sensitivity to recognize student diversity, but also intercultural competence to develop and promote the personal and academic growth of all students, including those from other linguistic and cultural environments (Jokikokko, 2005; Zudič Antonič, 2017). An effective intercultural education permeates teachers' personality and conduct completely. As such, it is possible only when a teacher has clear national and cultural identifications (Banks, 2001) that allow him to develop an intercultural sensitivity at ethnorelative levels (Bennett, 1993). Ongoing and consistent training in teaching heterogeneous classes is therefore, another paramount factor in effective intercultural education.

MEDKULTURNA OBČUTLJIVOST UČITELJEV

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POVZETEK

Učitelji imajo v procesu vzgoje in izobraževanja pomembno vlogo pri razvoju medkulturnosti v šolah in bi morali biti v ta namen ustrezno usposobljeni za delo v jezikovno in kulturno heterogenih razredih. Poleg tega bi morali biti občutljivi za jezikovno, etnično in socialno različnost. Učitelji morajo biti zmožni prepoznati raznolikost učencev in njihovo medkulturno zmožnost, da bi lahko razvijali in spodbujali osebno rast in učni uspeh vseh učencev – vključno z učenci, ki prihajajo iz drugih jezikovnih in kulturnih okolij. V prispevku avtorici predstavljata izbrane rezultate raziskave, v kateri sta preučevali povezave med učiteljevim razumevanjem medkulturnosti in njihovo dejansko medkulturno zmožnostjo, ki se kaže v njihovi zaznavi jezikovne in etnične raznolikosti v razredih, v katerih poučujejo. Poleg tega se raziskava ukvarja s preučevanjem sposobnosti in/ali pripravljenosti učiteljev za prilagajanje didaktike spremembam v družbenem kontekstu vzgoje in izobraževanja. V zaključnem delu prispevka avtorici predstavljata poglede učiteljev o dejavnostih, ki jih šola organizira za učence iz drugih jezikovnih in kulturnih okolij. Na podlagi rezultatov raziskave avtorici ugotavljata, da se najnižje ravni medkulturne zmožnosti učiteljev kažejo pri uvajanju novosti v pouk, s čimer bi svoje delo prilagajali stalno spreminjajočemu se socialnemu kontekstu vzgoje in izobraževanja.

Ključne besede: učitelji, najstniški učenci migranti in/ali predstavniki manjšin, medkulturna vzgoja, medkulturna občutljivost, heterogeni razredi

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