

EUROPEAN PLURILINGUALISM FROM A NATIONAL LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVE

The expected flow of information, people and goods within the United Europe requires a reflection regarding efficient communication among different language communities, across language and cultural boundaries. This aim should be achieved by means of expanded offer and intensive learning of foreign languages in the EU member states. The ability of communication in several languages should make it possible for the population of member states and member candidates to enjoy equal starting-point conditions at the challenges of growing international mobility: in the United Europe it should strengthen cooperation in the fields of education, culture and science, as well as in commerce and industry, and contribute to the overcoming of prejudice and elimination of discrimination. Multilingualism is in the process of becoming a sort of an identity card of European citizenship.

The multilingualism of citizens - a good command of a national language being a main prerequisite here - should therefore contribute not only to better understanding and tolerance, but also to respect of language identity and cultural diversity of Europe. Despite this, a number of questions is being raised regarding the future status and functions of national languages in relation to the emerging European multilingualism. Especially lesser used languages, including Slovene, ought to have an elaborate, integral strategy and tactics. The article brings a few reflections on language issues in Slovenia in the European Year of Languages.

Keywords: EU, multilingualism, language policy, lesser used languages

NACIONALNA JEZIKOVNA POLITIKA V EVROPSKI VEČJEZIČNI PERSPEKTIVI

Načrtovan pretok informacij, ljudi in dobrin v združeni Evropi terja premislek tudi glede učinkovitega sporazumevanja med različnimi jezikovnimi skupnostmi, med rojenimi govorci različnih jezikov, sporazumevanja preko jezikovnih in kulturnih meja. Ta cilj naj bi bil dosežen z razširjeno ponudbo in intenzivnim učenjem tujih jezikov v državah članicah EU. Zmožnost sporazumevanja v več jezikih naj prebivalstvu držav članic in kandidatke za pridružitve omogoči enakopravne izhodiščne pogoje ob izzivih naraščajoče mednarodne mobilnosti, v skupnem evropskem prostoru naj pospeši in okrepi sodelovanje na področju izobraževanja, kulture in znanosti, kakor tudi na področju trgovine in industrije, prispeva naj k preseganju predsodkov in k odpravi diskriminacije. Večjezičnost postaja neke vrste izkaznica za evropsko državljanstvo.

Evropski dokumenti pojasnjujejo zavzemanje za širjenje učenja in poučevanja jezikov, tujih, sosednih in manjšinskih/regionalnih tudi kot skrb za evropsko dediščino različnih jezikov in kultur, ki jo je kot dragoceno skupno imetje treba varovati in razvijati. Vsi napori, zlasti v izobraževanju, naj prispevajo k temu, da jezikovna in kulturna pestrost namesto ovire pri sporazumevanju postane vir vzajemne bogatitve in razumevanja. Prav večjezičnost državljanov - temeljito znanje nacionalnega jezika je ob tem prvi pogoj - naj torej prispeva ne le k boljšemu razumevanju in strpnosti, temveč tudi k spoštovanju jezikovne identitete in kulturne raznolikosti Evrope. Kljub temu se ob tem se odpira vrsta vprašanj o prihodnjem statusu in funkcijah nacionalnih jezikov v razmerju do porajajoče se evropske večjezičnosti. Posebno manj razširjeni jeziki, med takšne sodi tudi slovenski, bi morali imeti ob tem izdelano, celovito strategijo in taktiko. Pričujoči zapis prinaša nekaj razmišljanj o jezikovnih vprašanjih v Sloveniji ob Evropskem letu jezikov.

Ključne besede: Evropska zveza, večjezičnost, jezikovna politika, manj razširjeni jeziki

1. INTRODUCTION.

After fading away of "global" diglossia in the European realm, towards the end of the 19th century, most functions of the so called "high" languages (Latin and German in the Middle European countries) were replaced by gradual spreading of functions of national languages also into formal domains. Starting with the French revolution, language became a powerful instrument of national cohesion and solidarity. Therefore, creation and affirmation of a polifunctional standard, fulfilling communicative needs of a society in all domains of public interaction became a goal in most national language policies. Establishing of a language suitable and equipped for scientific discourse seemed to represent an ultimate proof of adequate language policy and planning endeavours in a nation. Many scholars from different disciplines, perceive development in this direction as universal and still non concluded process in some parts of the world, a process confirming the socio-psychological reality of *languages as* culture-specific phenomena.

In the post modern paradigm, especially in the field of science (as well as in other fields of human activities), development towards a new type of diglossia seems to be an unavoidable reality, especially when languages with a narrower communicative range are at stake. This calls for some kind of revision of national language policies, in which language needs and interests should be reconsidered and strategic priorities established as to the national, regional, local and individual level.

Widespread individual bilingualism, experienced up to now mostly by minority groups' members, becomes an everyday reality also for wider layers of population. Already, national elites in all kinds of enterprises have recognised that demands for fluency in more languages has augmented. For communication on an international level only few languages have been reserved already up to now. However, the question whether a national language planning should follow the technological development conceived in a foreign (mostly English) language, whether it is sensible to elaborate a language of scientific discourse on a national level in view of costs and human potentials engaged in such a work, has been put forward again in many scientific meetings.

This question was discussed on several occasions through the history of the Slovene language. From the point of view of the Slovenian past and present experience and from the Slovene language planning perspective it was precisely thanks to persistent demands and efforts on the part of the Slovene cultural elites, linguists and writers being in the forefront, that the Slovene language norm had been elaborated through several centuries to the present modern standard, equipped to fulfil the communicational functions in ever new domains of social and scientific development.

2. LANGUAGE POLICY FRAMEWORK.

With Republic of Slovenia becoming an independent state in 1991, the framework of its political, social, cultural and economic context has been thoroughly altered. There are, however, hardly any substantial changes in the language policy orientation or in the language planning activities, although the accents in this field have changed, too. In spite of the fact that the Slovene linguistic and political expert sphere was always intensively engaged in reflection of the language policy and planning issues, no explicit language strategy document has been created, so far. With Slovenia striving to join the European Union, one would expect an elaborated language strategy with transparent goals and measures to achieve the goals and to resolve the problems. In view of the foreseen active integration of Slovenia as an equal subject in European community of nations, one would expect a much more intensive work on the assessment of the complete communication networks inside Slovenia as a social system and outside, in contact with other social systems on an individual and institutional level. However, so far, a wholesome and transparent language strategy document on the priorities of language issues and developments, which are essential for regulating communication of the state on the internal and external level, taking into account an effective use of existing and available material and human resources, has not been elaborated.

Nevertheless, despite of lagging behind with elaboration of a wholesome language strategy document, which would deal with the complete array of the language diversity issues of the Slovene society, language policy has been well conceived in the individual segments of public communication. The most outstanding objects of the Slovene language policy considerations are the Slovene language status and corpus planning and the language contact issues, especially those related to the Slovene-Italian and Slovene-Hungarian contacts. Recently, especially along with the educational reform, stress has been laid on the language policy elaboration in education, conditions are being established for learning and understanding native language, foreign, state and home languages and cultures, as well as for development of professional skills and research and other creative activities. Thus gradually, a framework of the Slovene language policy has emerged, putting into the forefront two main fields of interest, namely the cultural and language pluralism issues of the Slovene society, on the one hand, and the integration of Slovenia into European community of nations, on the other.

3. INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY ACTIVITIES.

Language policy and language planning in Slovenia are closely related to the perception of the Slovene people's evolution into a modern nation, language and culture being considered the foundations of the Slovene ethnic identity and a permanent argument in the strive for the Slovene statehood through history. This sensitivity concerning ethnic identity markers, language in the first place, are due to the historical status relationship among languages in this region in times of the AO Monarchy as well as to the language policy and interethnic relationships in the post WWI and WWII Yugoslav states. Namely, throughout the history of the Slovene people, in the course of its development into a modern nation, endeavours for the Slovene language autonomy were present. In absence of other power resources - namely administrative State mechanisms - language and culture functioned as a frame of reference for national unification¹.

Today still, in the Slovene public opinion, it is the statement beyond debate that the Slovene language status planning and along with it, its corpus planning, together with gradual spreading of its functions into the channels of public communication remained a non-concluded process² until the creation of an independent Slovene state, in 1991.

All professional institutions, associations and individuals engaged in the language planning continued their work without interruption. However, on the policy making level continuity was broken. Namely, in the 70ties, following an initiative by the Slavic Association Of Slovenia, a body of experts, named "Slovene lan-

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¹ A prototype of this statement can be read in a book on the synchronic in the Slovene language development (Vidovič Muha 1996: 38) "The two basic elements that define Slovene throughout its entire history, i.e., lack of statehood (in terms of complete functionality) until 1991 and, at least in European terms, its small number of speakers, have been counter-balanced with a strong sense of linguistic and general cultural commitment of its speakers to their national entity. - In these circumstances one can understand that the normativization of the Slovene literary language was largely influenced by a language policy which - because of its incomplete standards - depended heavily on day-to-day politics.

² In spite of the fact that at the end of the 80ties the Slovene language was official language in the Republic of Slovenia (in the ethnically mixed areas Italian and Hungarian were official languages along with Slovene), and at the same time it figured as equal state language on the federal level, it was still deprived of some functions, which, in the eyes of the Slovene native speakers, were considered a sign of a full (complete) nationhood. Namely, commanding in the army units was reserved for the SC language only, also in Slovenia; the demand to assign this function to Slovene has its roots in the fact that Slovene was the commanding language in the territory of Slovenia during the WWII, and even in the AH Monarchy. After the declaration of the independent Slovenia in 1991 the continuity of language planning directions and cultural pluralism promotion was expressed also by Constitution. The Slovene language status has been changed insofar that today it is the only official language on the ... level of the Republic of Slovenia, i. e. the state language. The official function of Slovene as the state language functions in all spheres of life, in the internal and external channels of communication. (Its use has been extended also to the commandment in the Army.) Italian and Hungarian figure as official languages together with Slovene in the mixed areas

guage in public (use)", was organised in the framework of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia. Later it was transformed to Language Council, which had several sections and working groups pursuing two basic aims: to stimulate public attention for language topics, and to dwell upon the respect of the legal norms regarding the Slovene language in the Yugoslav federation, on the federal and national level. For realisation of the first task a working group, named the Language tribunal was formed. Although its main goal was to promote the language culture among Slovene language speakers by discussing and assessing the Slovene language use in mass media and in other public institutions that could have an influence on the language of public and private communication, the existence of the Language tribunal excited a lot of controversy in other Yugoslav republics.

The changed socio-political situation after 1991 soon exposed some neuralgic points. It seems that with the independence of Slovenia, a more loose attitude towards the Slovene language developed. On the one hand, this was manifested by a rather shallow respect for the norm in public, written and oral discourse. On the other hand, the influence of the American culture and mode of expression, augmented. Till then, the endeavour for the autonomy of the Slovene language was expressed, among other, in puristic efforts, mostly oriented against the influence of Serbo-Croatian. This vigilance seemed to become obsolete after the common destiny of the two languages parted. The growing impetus of political and economic integration, the so called globalisation, was reflected in Slovenia, not only in the economic subordination. In a small nation like Slovenian it has soon exposed itself also as a socio-cultural and communication phenomenon. The growth of the communication technology brought about many English language patterns in communication and American way of life of the Slovenian society, in fact they invaded most families, the impetus of English being the most expressed in the speech of young generations.

In fact, one could argue that a paradoxical thing has happened: parallel to its status promotion into a state language, there is no obvious substantial increase of the Slovene language prestige. On the contrary, there are signs that, at least in certain layers of population, its prestige has been diminishing. Many warnings have been launched against a kind of Slovene English diglossia which seemingly is about to spread in Slovenia. Alarm has been triggered on account of the public signs, language of expert and scientific meetings, language of scientific publications, language of the university lectures and seminars, diplomas and post graduate works, which more and more often is English. A case *per se*, exciting alarm is communication in the foreign enterprises in Slovenia, where frequently Slovene is not used any more even in the personal documentation of the workers.

A burning question which has not been yet elaborated as a part of the Slovene language strategy is the situation of the Slovene language in the European language policy. With the political decision of Slovenia to join the EU, Slovene exhibits all the features of a small language³. It appears to be even smaller in this European association of nations, of ethnic communities and languages than it was in the Yugoslav times⁴. This is closely related to the language acquisition planning, not only from the point of view of the foreign languages acquisition planning in Slovenia, but also with regard to the teaching and learning of Slovene as a foreign (and L2) language.

There is some evidence, however, that the picture is not so gloomy. Results of a research on language issues related to Slovenia on its path to European Union, executed among the students of the University of Ljubljana, show that the majority of the respondents supports Slovene as the language of communication in Slovenia in all channels of communication, public inscriptions included. Even more, only one tenth of the interviewed students thinks that foreigners coming to work in Slovenia do not need to know Slovene. Most of them, however expect from them the knowledge of a foreign language (predominantly of English) along with Slovene. On the other hand, there is close to 100 percent agreement that Slovene should survive and serve as the language of the internal national communication. However, along with this, a vast majority of students opts for a profound knowledge of a foreign language for each Slovenian citizen, English figuring as the most appropriate and practical language at the top of this ladder. Symptomatically, a substantial difference was found between natural sciences and technology students, on the one hand and social sciences and humanities students, on the other⁵. The attitudes of the latter are much more emotionally loaded, pointing to a more integrative orientation, with Slovene figuring as *a must* for everybody, foreigners as well as native Slovene speakers. The stand-points of the natural sciences and technology students were oriented towards more practical issues of communication, showing a more instrumental load

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³ Small in respect of the number of its speakers, in respect of the economic and technological power of the Slovene state as the home country of the majority of the Slovene native speakers and in respect of a relatively weak transparency of the Slovene culture in the European history.

⁴ Toporišič (1991:143) defines as small language a language of a relatively small community (in terms of power) within the framework of a larger one.

⁵ Similar discrepancy was traced also in other research projects. In a project executed in the Slovene-Italian and Slovene-Hungarian ethnically mixed areas, in which language policy and practice was assessed, (Nečak Lük 2000) substantial differences were found between technical and humanities elites, the first showing the tendency to give priority to the practical side of language use, and the latter underlying the symbolic, integrative function of a language. A similar picture can be found when the language of the scientific publications within the Slovene Academy of Science and Arts is analysed, natural sciences presenting a substantially higher share of their findings in English than humanities (Mlinar 1996).

which was expressed as a less firm demand for the Slovene language competence with foreigners, and, interestingly enough, also as less exclusive (English above all), more tolerant approach towards language diversity: English is still the most favoured, but along with it German, French, Spanish, Croatian, Italian etc. figure as possible means of communication in a substantially higher percentages than with social sciences and humanities students (Marušič, Žaucer 1998).

3.1. GOVERNMENTAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES.

With an aim to limit and canalise the above described detrimental phenomena, i.e. the invasion of English and other foreign language influences in public discourse in Slovenia, the former section "Slovene language in public (use)" has been restored in the framework of the Slovene Association of Slavonic languages, in 1992 (in Murska Sobota). In 1993 an initiative was given that a group of linguists and other experts within the Parliament should take an active part in fundamental language planning and should also dwell upon legislation in this field. In May 1994, in the legislative part of the government, experts, and not MPs, were nominated as a permanent working body of the parliamentary committee for culture, education and sport⁶, with the task to launch its suggestions regarding language policy and language planning to the parliament and to wider public.

In the founding act the following tasks and activities of the working group are enumerated (article 2) :

"The working group for language planning and language policy at Slovene Parliament's committee for culture, education and sport will perform the following tasks for the Parliament:

In the institutions of the Slovene state, the group will propose language planning activities and name those responsible for individual fields of administrative and public life (administration, judicature, economy, education, sport, science, culture, mass media, health service). The group will define the tasks of national and other institutions in enacting Slovene language policy. With this aim, the working group will examine legal prescriptions regulating the status and the form of communication in the enumerated fields. Where necessary appropriate changes and amendments to the law will be proposed.

The working group will discuss and provide initiatives for an efficient language policy in Slovenia.

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⁶ In the working group, headed by full prof. dr. Breda Pogorelec, there were six language specialist, two lawyers, and two psychologists.

The working group will follow the status of the Slovene language in public of the Slovene minorities in Italy, Austria, and in Hungary. With its professional initiatives, it will support the promotion of the Slovene language in public life of Slovenes living abroad.

*All initiatives, proposals and information will be addressed to the Slovene Parliament's Committee for culture, education and sport and to public.**

At the same time, several individuals concerned with the Slovene language, mostly linguists, writers and scientists, suggested that the matters regarding status of the Slovene language should be regulated by a special law. A member of the Slovene Academy of sciences and arts, offered a study on Language committees in Scandinavia as a possible model to follow in Slovenia (Orešnik 1995). The proposal, however, did not come from the working group; the first text of the Law (on the use of Slovene as the official language) was prepared at the beginning of 1997 (14.1.) by the then Minister of Culture⁷.

In the draft two separate topics are regulated. The first are the domains of the Slovene official language use, that should be regulated by law; the second is the setting up of a State Language Committee. In the first part, several domains are represented, among them also the following.

(1) operation of public institutions - The respect for the Slovene norm has been set forward in this framework and the use of Slovene in its high variety in internal and external communication has been considered obligatory in enterprises; in view of frequency and more or less formal nature of contacts with customers, several levels of communicative competence of employees can be prescribed (on top of fundamental competence obligatory for everybody, good competence, active competence, top-level competence can be prescribed). Active competence is foreseen as one of the conditions to acquire the Slovene citizenship⁸. Domains of special attention in the foreseen law are the following: public inscriptions, public information (i.e. advertising, performances⁹) and education.

(2) The task of the State Language Committee is to dwell upon systematic creation and realisation of the language policy measures. Its fundamental role is to advise and assess the activities related to language policy. Control over disregard

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⁷ Associate prof. dr. Janez Dular.

⁸ Demand for Slovene language competence (which had to be proven by a special exam), had been set forward already by the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of RS, no.1, 1991) immediately after the establishment of the Republic of Slovenia in 1991.

⁹ Article 19 deals with the use of the Slovene language on the public events with international participants financed from public funds and in the proceedings published from such events. The Slovene language title, foreword and summaries are considered obligatory along with those in a foreign language. Exceptions from this rule must be approved by the State Language Committee.

or misuse of the law is imposed on inspection in the relative sphere of activity.

A governmental decree was issued establishing an Office for Slovene language of the Government of Slovenia, while the destiny of the bill has not yet been decided upon¹⁰.

3.2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE COUNCIL.

While education (language teaching and learning, specifically) represents only one of the domains of activities of the above described bodies, another institutional form specifically oriented towards language planning and language policy in education, emerged. Following the initiative of the Foreign language project group which prepared curricular changes in the framework of the national curricular reform, a consulting body of experts was established at the Ministry of education and sport¹¹, the Foreign Language Council, with an aim to provide for a more transparent and organised work in the field of foreign language teaching and learning:

"The Council deals with questions related to the learning of foreign languages in Slovenia, follows and evaluates the state of affairs and prepares guidelines for the development of language education in the Republic of Slovenia:

at all levels of education,

for both types of foreign languages (modern and classical),

for all roles of foreign languages (international, neighbouring, language of the environment),

for all forms of education,

for all participants (young people and adults)."

Discussion about the Council's tasks, however, soon disclosed an obvious fact that the planning of a language curriculum implicitly means the planning of the status of individual languages in the society and the State. Therefore it was pleaded that the wholesome sociolinguistic situation of the country should be taken into account, with special attention being paid to the relationships among the first, second and foreign languages. After all, such an approach is justified also by

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¹⁰ Decree on establishing, structure and working sphere of the Committee for the Slovene Language of the Government of Republic of Slovenia, Official gazette of Republic of Slovenia, no. 97, October 20, 2000, p. 10585; associate prof. dr. Janez Dular was appointed the first director of the Office.

¹¹ On 12th January, 1999, the Slovene minister of education, Dr. Slavko Guber, issued a resolution on the establishment of the Foreign Languages Council at the Slovene ministry of education and sport and appointed 16 members.

the applied linguistics' evidence on the interdependence between the first and second (foreign) language acquisition / learning (Cummins 1979) as well as by the modern culture- and communication oriented approach in language teaching methods. Hence, there was an unanimous agreement that the Slovene language should figure on the Council's agenda in all its diversified roles, i. e. as the second and foreign language. This was expressed by modification of the Foreign Languages Council's tasks: *"The Council is engaged in dealing with all questions related to the learning of foreign languages and minority languages in Slovenia and the learning of Slovene as a foreign/second language in Slovenia and abroad. The Council follows and evaluates the situation and provides guidelines for the development of language education in the Republic of Slovenia."*¹²

The Foreign language Council's domain of work thus extends over the whole language teaching repertoire in Slovenia, including the Slovene as a second/foreign language teaching and minority languages.

4. SLOVENE LANGUAGE PROMOTION IN EU.

Long term activities performed by now by research institutions responsible for the Slovene language planning, (i.e. the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences and its Frane Ramovš Institute for the Slovene Language at the Scientific and Research Centre) and those responsible for spreading the Slovene language competence and knowledge about the Slovene culture and literature among native speakers as well as among foreigners (The Faculty of Arts' Department for Slavonic languages and literature, with several chairs for Slovene together with other educational and political institutions engaged in the Slovene language promotion), point to a rather abundant possibilities to learn Slovene as a second and foreign language.

Summing up discussions on future Slovene language teaching in professional and political discourse, the following standpoints can be identified¹³:

- In future, with regard to the educational system of EU, a tendency to broaden or enlarge the existing network of Slovene language teaching opportunities on different levels can be registered by both the state authorities and the university specialists. On the one hand it is expressed as a tendency to promote the Slovene language teaching in the framework of the University lectureships at universities abroad, on the other hand spreading the existing offer of Slovene language teaching in view of the Slovene language maintenance among Slovene

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¹² Article 4 of the Regulations, passed on 15th March, 1999

¹³ Standpoints and views of prominent Slovene language experts have been summed up in this chapter.

migrant population in the EU states, and promotion of Slovene language teaching as a neighbouring language and as a minority language in neighbouring states, is of high priority.

- In near future, it is beyond realistic expectations to foresee the introduction of Slovene as a foreign language into obligatory education, abroad. Even in case of expressed interest, it is hardly possible at the moment that, on a large scale, necessary logistics could be provided for by Slovenia. However, the tender of Slovene as a foreign language teaching could gradually be expanded in two ways: a) by establishing a mobile team of teachers that would respond according to demands, and b) interactive long distance courses, via internet. With regard to the "export" of Slovene, some precious experiences have been collected by delivering of special periodical courses for translators and interpreters in Luxembourg by lecturers of the Centre for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language at the University of Ljubljana (CSSFL). In spreading of Slovene as a foreign language in other European States, establishing of a network of a tender on different educational levels in co-operation with other less widely used languages could be profitable. For this aim, EBLUL initiatives for framing of a common program of activities directed to maintenance and spread of the less wide used languages are of major importance.

- As foreseen by the European program of cultural and language pluralism, attempts should be made for Slovene to figure as a subject (at least as an optional one in the beginning) in the primary and secondary level curriculum of schools in border areas and if possible also on the broader territories of the neighbouring states, Language assistants could play a crucial role in this venture. Up to now, there have been some deliberations about Slovene language assistants in schools in the mixed neighbouring regions, the initiative coming from the representatives of the Slovene minority in the relevant state.

Owing to the standpoints of language specialists, exchange of lectureships at the university level between the neighbouring states as well as other EU states is considered a matter of primary order. The investment into the infrastructure of the Slovene language, however, is closely related to the strategic aspects of Slovene language policy. So far, there are only preliminary deliberations as to commercial aspects of the Slovene language spread. In the activities of the State, Slovene as a second/foreign language teaching is still rather closely associated with cultural and ethnicity issues, most investments being directed into the Slovene language revitalisation among Slovene minorities in the neighbouring countries and among the second and third generation of Slovene migrants. Much less, the tender of Slovene as a foreign language has been oriented towards language needs, related to economic and business activities with neighbouring states and in the newly emerging (interstate) regions; at least up to now.

Nevertheless, some new development can be evidenced which could also have a positive impact on promotion of Slovene as a minority language.

In the framework of EU, Slovene language is expected to have equal status as other EU state languages. For these functions, an intensive activities have been in course in order to provide for a sufficient number of qualified translators and interpreters. On the other hand the number of people, coming to work in Slovenia is in constant growth. As up to now, Slovene will figure as official language of the Slovene state. With Slovenia becoming an EU member, free flow of people and labour, is expected to augment. Depending on the nature of their work, i.e. for instrumental motives, foreigners have up to now and will in future resort to the Slovene language learning on different levels.

However, as the head of the CSSFL underlined (Stabej 2001), there is a complex of expressly scientific work to be done in order to provide for a basis for the above described activities. The underlying scientific opus namely contributes, as one of crucial intervening variables, to potential effects of Slovene as a second/foreign language teaching: "At the level of linguistics, both in research and in university BA programmes, as well as in applied linguistics (lexicography, terminology, language teaching), the first signs of tangible changes can be observed. The topical disciplines of linguistics, which are engaged in language research in concrete situations, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, text linguistics, psycholinguistics, have become components, and sometimes even central parts of university language courses. This means that graduates will have a better awareness of the complexity of language and communication and the role they play in social events, and in accordance with this, they will also teach and research. Gradually, the linguistic infrastructure is also improving: a referential corpus of the Slovene language, FIDA (www.fida.net), has been created; this is a good source of language information, enabling a contemporary description of standard Slovene. Various language reference books have also been written in a more contemporary style by taking into account the reality of the language in its diversity, and these are intended to be used most efficiently. However, there are still serious deficiencies, and much investment is needed into researching Slovene linguistics on the one hand, and reorganising and competently rearranging it, if we wish to rectify the shortcomings in the foreseeable future. The linguistic infrastructure is extremely important precisely because it is significant for the support needed by an individual's linguistic ability, and not only for those individuals whose first language is Slovene, but also for foreign language speakers, since through Slovenia's integration process with the European Union, Slovene as a national language is gaining more and more recognition as a foreign language".

5. LANGUAGE PLURALISM IN THE SLOVENE SOCIETY

In the educational system of Slovenia, including both ethnically mixed areas, foreign languages as school subjects form an integral part of the national curriculum. In mixed areas, however, languages of both communities, besides being languages of instruction, figure as obligatory subjects, i.e. they are taught as a second language to native speakers of another language. As illustrated in Table 1, a considerable variation can be registered with regard to distribution of languages in schools of Slovenia.

Table 1: Distribution of languages as languages of instruction and subjects of curriculum in Slovenia

Territory	Ethnic affiliation of pupils	Language of instruction (school)	Languages taught as subjects (by method applied)	Curriculum specifics
SLOVENIA (state territory)	Slovene Romany ¹⁴ Native speakers of other languages ¹⁵	Slovene	Slovene as L1 Foreign Languages I and II + foreign language III (optional)	National curriculum
ETHNICALLY MIXED AREA OF THE SLOVENE ISTRIA - Italian community	Italian Slovene Native speakers of other languages	Italian	Italian as L1 Slovene as L2 Foreign Languages I and II (8/9 and 4 years respectively) + foreign language III (optional) ¹⁶	National curriculum adapted and enriched with contents from Italian history, geography and culture
	Slovene Native speakers of other languages	Slovene	Slovene as L1 Italian as L2 Foreign Languages I and II (8/9 and 4 years respectively) + foreign language III (optional)	
ETHNICALLY MIXED AREA OF PREKMURJE - Hungarian community	Hungarian Slovene Romany Native speakers of other languages	Bilingual: Slovene and Hungarian	Hungarian as L1 and L2 ¹⁷ Slovene as L1 and L2 Foreign Languages I and II (8/9 and 4 years respectively) + foreign language III (optional)	National curriculum adapted and enriched with contents from Hungarian history, geography and culture

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¹⁴ Romany communities are predominantly settled in the regions of Prekmurje and Dolenjska. For at least two decades some activities at the pre-primary level and recently also at the primary level have been conducted in the Romany language. For details see the chapter on Regional and minority languages.

¹⁵ Native speakers of languages of the former Yugoslav republics fall into this category. For children of foreign

5. 1. THROUGH HISTORY¹⁸,

for many generations of Slovenes, contact with and learning of a foreign language, was rather a rule than an exception. At the crossroads of the Germanic, Romanic, Ugro-Finnic and Slavic worlds, Slovene people was exposed to foreign language influences throughout centuries. Accordingly, languages of instruction and those taught as subjects were, depending on individual periods and individual regions, Latin and German, as well as Italian and Hungarian. There was a short interruption of this practice in the 16th century during the Reformation period, when, for the first time, Slovene language was used as a language of instruction. However, Slovene as the teaching language was replaced by a foreign language immediately after the Reformation movement had been suppressed. The use of Slovene in schools, was prolonged in the areas where the Protestant religion survived. For another short time, Slovene figured as provincial and teaching language in the Illyrian provinces, established by Napoleon. Foreign languages taught in Slovene secondary schools in that period were French, Italian and Latin, while at the university classes were in French, German, and Latin. After Napoleon's defeat, German and Latin regained their dominant position as the languages of instruction.

With the end of absolutism in Austria and the creation of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in the middle of the 19th century when greater autonomy to determine the language of instruction was assigned to the founders and financiers of schools, Slovene was gradually introduced, first in compulsory education. Therefore, in these schools instruction was conducted in different languages: Slovene, Italian, German and Hungarian. Later, Slovene was also introduced in secondary schools, the first Slovene gymnasium (grammar school) being established in 1905. One of the above mentioned foreign languages, predominantly German, figured as the subject of the curriculum.

After 1918, during the first Yugoslav state, Serbo-Croatian was introduced as a compulsory subject in all Slovene schools. On the elementary level departments with instruction in a minority language, German and Hungarian respectively, were established in the ethnically mixed areas. In secondary schools, German was also taught as a foreign language.

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citizens, or of stateless persons, living in Slovenia, additional education in their mother tongue is organised in concordance with the law.

¹⁶ Italian is often chosen as a foreign language in the Primorje region.

¹⁷ In the Pomurje region, Hungarian as L1 and L2 figure as optional subjects also in the curriculum of schools outside the ethnically mixed area.

¹⁸ In the following chapters passages from the national report on foreign language teaching (May 2001) have been used.

During the WW II, when the Slovene territory was divided into three occupational zones, the German, the Italian and the Hungarian one, the partisan school system with Slovene as the language of instruction was established in the liberated territories with Russian, Serbo-Croatian and Latin taught as foreign languages in secondary schools.

After WW II, the primary schools' curriculum included one year of Serbo-Croatian (as one of the state languages) and four years of a foreign language as compulsory subject. On the secondary level another foreign was introduced along with the first one. Pupils could choose between English, German, French and Russian. In the ethnically mixed territories, Italian and Hungarian figured as also languages of instruction, Slovene was taught as the second language (language of environment), the choice of foreign languages was the same as in schools with Slovene as teaching language. Along with this, however, Italian and Hungarian were compulsory subjects of curriculum as second languages on all levels of the educational system in Slovene schools in the mixed areas, a situation which, with some modification has.

5.2. LANGUAGE TEACHING TENDER.

In educational system of Slovenia, including both ethnically mixed areas, foreign languages as school subjects form an integral part of the national curriculum. The school reforms that followed up to 1996 did not bring substantial changes into this general picture. There was, however, a substantial change in the number of pupils who decided to choose individual languages in different periods.

Today the most widely spread first and second foreign language in Slovene school of both formal and informal types, is English. Immediately, after WW II, German followed closely as the first and second foreign language, while Russian was taught as the second foreign language along with French. The picture, however, soon changed and became quite dull, with Russian and also French losing ground rather quickly, and with English and German figuring as the only two languages in most schools, except for classical grammar school, where classical languages were also taught. The proportion between the two, however steadily moved in favour of English. French which in the 80ies lost its role of an obligatory subject of the secondary level curriculum and was only an optional subject found its place among obligatory subjects again in 1985. However, the change of status has not yet fully re-established its prestige. Serbo-Croatian figured as a subject of curriculum for a year (at the age of 10/11 or 11/12) till Slovenia parted with the former Yugoslav state. Today it can be chosen as an optional subject in the third cycle of the reformed 9 year elementary school.

Actual status of foreign languages in the national curriculum is based upon some general principles and premises put forward in The White Paper (White paper 1996). Thereby the general framework for the renewal (reform) of public education system at pre-university level has been determined, emanating from the respect for human rights and the notion of the rule of law. Among basic principles, related to the language competence issues, pluralism of cultures and values based on knowledge should be underlined. In view of the emerging future European community, cultural and language issues are closely related. Schooling being both a process of education and integration into the surrounding culture, it is necessary to widen the horizons of own specific culture and national tradition, - which should be explored at all levels of the school system - and become acquainted with other cultures and civilisations. To this end, "the ability to communicate, the capacity to understand and express oneself (in the broadest sense of the word) in both *Slovene* and in *foreign languages* is of the utmost importance. In addition to the thorough teaching of the Slovene language inseparably connected with its literature, it is necessary to begin teaching a first foreign language as soon as possible and soon afterwards (often already during compulsory schooling) a second and a third one. This is extremely important for us, since we belong to a group of smaller European countries" (White Paper 1996, 38).

The following foreign languages are taught according to the current schedules of subjects:

- in the lower grades of the elementary school (early stage) English, German, French (introduced in 1985), Italian (introduced in 1981) are offered as optional subjects;
- in the higher grades of the elementary school: English, German, French, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, Latin, Croatian,
- on the secondary level and in grammar schools (age 15-18): English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, classical languages (Latin, Greek)".

In concordance with the school autonomy principle (White book 1996, 43-46), "schools prepare the range of foreign languages taking account of traditions, the wishes of parents and pupils, and the possibility of employing suitably trained teachers. The proximity of the Italian and Austrian borders also influences the selection of a foreign language. English, as the most widespread foreign language studied, has priority in selection. The selection percentages in the first cycle of elementary education are as follows: 73% of pupils choose English, 16% German, and 10% Italian. In the second cycle of elementary education, 76% of pupils choose English and 20% German. On the upper secondary level, where two foreign languages are compulsory, English is the most frequently chosen first

foreign language (86% of pupils), followed by German (13% of pupils) and French. The general popularity and widespread use of English clearly has the greatest influence on the selection of a foreign language" (Foreign language... 2001, 9).

5. 3. LANGUAGES IN THE ETHNICALLY MIXED AREAS.

In educational system of Slovenia, including both ethnically mixed areas, foreign languages as school subjects form an integral part of the national curriculum. In mixed areas, however, languages of both communities are languages of instruction and obligatory subjects of curriculum with the same number of classes as Slovene has in schools with Slovene as the language of instruction. Above this, Italian and Hungarian also figure as obligatory subjects in schools with Slovene as the language of instruction, i.e. they are taught as second languages to native speakers of the Slovene language. Hence, the curriculum of schools is adapted to the specific needs of the population, living in the ethnically mixed area. Besides the general educational goals several additional aims are incorporated into the program. The most outstanding among them is the development of a complex capacity for living in a linguistically and culturally diversified society. Along with the development of the communicative competence in both languages, pupils are supposed to acquire knowledge about both groups' history, culture, and arts. Tolerance towards others, understanding and accepting the other group's culture along with maintenance of each group's ethnic characteristics are among the values that the school should transmit to young generations. These goals are considered the basis for the respect and promotion of democracy and human rights in future.

In view of different historical circumstances and socio-demographic structure of the Italian and the Hungarian minority as well as due to international agreements two models of bilingual education have been practised in the ethnically mixed areas since the end of the fifties – school with Italian as the language of instruction and bilingual school with Slovene and Hungarian as teaching languages with mixed classes. Both are maintenance/enrichment models (Skutnabb Kangass, 1981), their social goal being cultural pluralism, while two-way bilingualism is to be achieved as the linguistic goal: through schooling the minority and the majority populations acquire at least a receptive competence in the other group's language and substantial knowledge of the other group's historical and cultural characteristics.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In spite of the lack of an integral document about language policy and language planning in Slovenia, which would encompass different aspects of language and communicative needs in all segments of the Slovene society in the local and state as well as in the broader regional and European context, language policy is well developed in individual segments. One could claim that there exists an elaborated concept of language policy in contact situations in view of the minority languages status planning. In fact, language maintenance measures provided by legislation and institutional support (bilingual education models, contacts with native speakers across the border) have helped to secure the usage of the minority languages in public domains, which, as proven by research, ensures the linguistic continuity of a community's language across generations.

There is a *lacuna*, however, in definition of the linguistic priorities of migrant language communities, at least on the formal level.

With Slovenia becoming an independent State, the debate is still /primary/ concentrated on the Slovene language status promotion and it still reflects some of the classical controversy among linguists as well as other language policy makers. On the one hand, there is a more directive, traditional approach, pointing to different kinds of misuse of the language and underlying the necessity that language be guarded against pernicious influence from abroad (this time mostly from English). On the other hand, there is a more liberal approach, based on the view that communicative needs of people are influenced by historical, political and economic changes on national and international level, which is reflected also in their linguistic repertoires. According to this view, language policy makers should accept this fact, refrain from repression, treat the language in consistency with the modern linguistic thought, and find appropriate ways for affirmation of the Slovene language status and its consequently language culture of its speakers.

All this, in view of Slovenia's plans to join the European Union, calls for a more elaborated language strategy, especially a more expressed and transparent standpoints about the future relationships between the Slovene and other neighbouring and European languages on different levels, bilateral, regional (Alps-Adriatic), European. Recently, a heavy pressure and a strong support for foreign language teaching and learning is evident in Slovenia, impulses for an intensified activity in foreign languages promotion coming also from the European Council and European Commission. Along with this - it is obvious - the necessity to record communicative needs of the Slovenia's citizens and prepare a wholesome and transparent language strategy for future development in different spheres of activity on national, regional and European levels, becomes urgent also in view of the Slovene language status promotion in Slovenia as well as abroad.

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