

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Minority Language Policy in the Primary School System of Croatia – A Comparative Case Study

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In this paper the authors explore the minority language policy in primary school education in Croatia with the example of Serbian as a minority language. In the Croatian primary and secondary school systems there are three models of minority language education (A, B and C). The object of exploration of this paper is the implementation of models A and C in two multilingual communities situated near the urban centre of Osijek and their impact on the knowledge of that minority language, the intensity of its usage and the attitudes of its speakers towards it. The research is based upon a questionnaire conducted on a rather small sample of pupils taking part in the minority language education programmes of the primary schools in the villages of Tenja and Darda. The former is mostly inhabited by the Serbian national minority, and the latter by Croats, Serbs, Hungarians and Romas. The main objective of this case study is to establish which similarities and differences have occurred between the two communities concerning the knowledge of the Serbian language, its usage in different domains and the attitudes of its speakers towards the position and the future of the language in Croatia. This comparative study showed that there is a close correlation between the model of education, attitudes towards the minority language and the preservation of the identity and culture of the respective nationality. On the other hand, the study revealed that young speakers of both communities often use code-switching as a more practical method in their everyday communication.

Keywords: minority language policy, primary schools, Serbian language, Eastern Croatia.

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In dieser Arbeit untersuchen die Autoren die Minderheitssprachenpolitik in der Grundschulausbildung der Republik Kroatien aufgrund der Fallstudie vom Serbischen als Minderheitssprache. Im kroatischen Grundschulsystem gibt es drei Grundmodelle der Ausbildung in den Sprachen nationaler Minderheiten: die Modelle A, B und C. Praktische Durchführung der Ausbildungsmodelle A und C in zwei mehrsprachigen Gemeinschaften in der Nähe von Stadt Osijek wird erforscht, sowie deren Einfluss auf die Kenntnisse der betreffenden Minderheitssprache, die Intensität des Gebrauchs und die Einstellungen der Muttersprachler zu ihrer Sprache. Die Studie gründet sich auf einer umfassenden Umfrage, die unter den Schülern der Grundschulen in den Dörfern Tenja und Darda durchgeführt wurde. Das Hauptziel der Studie ist, Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede festzustellen, die zwischen diesen zwei Gemeinschaften mit Rücksicht auf die Kenntnisse des Serbischen, seinen Gebrauch in verschiedenen Lebensbereichen und die Einstellungen der Muttersprachler zur Lage und Zukunft dieser Sprache in Kroatien bestehen. Die Ergebnisse der Studie bestätigten eine enge Korrelation zwischen dem Ausbildungsmodell, den Einstellungen gegenüber die Minderheitssprache und der Aufbewahrung der Kultur und Identität der nationalen Minderheit. Die Studie weist auch darauf hin, dass *code-switching* in der Alltagskommunikation der jungen Generation in beiden Gemeinschaften häufig verwendet wird.

Introduction

In this paper the authors explore Minority Language (ML) policy in primary school education in Croatia through the example of Serbian as a minority language. The paper compares the results of two surveys conducted in 2010 in two multilingual communities living in the Eastern part of Croatia. Although the results were partly published in two studies on each community separately (*Minority Languages and the Language Policy in the Rural Area of Baranya (Croatia) – a Case Study* and *Serbian as a Minority language in Croatia – a Slavonian Case Study*), there are some significant differences between the results of the two studies that should be analysed.

The research is based on a questionnaire developed by Professor Sture Ureland from the University of Mannheim in Germany within a broader research on minority languages in Europe. It was conducted on a rather small sample of pupils taking part in the minority language education programmes of the primary schools of the villages of Tenja (Education model A) and Darda (Education model C). Both villages are situated near the town of Osijek: Tenja, which is inhabited mostly by the Croatian and Serbian populations, is located in its suburb area and Darda, which is located 10 km north of Osijek, where different national minorities live, primarily Serbians, Hungarians and Romas. Different results of the two case studies were analysed with respect to different education models applied in the primary schools of the two villages as well as to the ethno-linguistic structure of the people living there. Darda represents a more diverse community ethno-linguistically than Tenja, which is inhabited only by the Serbian national minority. In order to achieve an objective and scientifically reliable comparison

and as transparent interpretability of the data as possible, only the answers by Serbian ethnic groups were analysed in both samples.

It should be noted that from the very beginning of this research the authors of this paper were aware of the delicacy of the issues questioned, especially in two respects:

- 1) with respect to the effects of the war of 1991 on changes in the national structure of the country, especially with regard to the fact that the percentage of the Serbian nationality decreased from more than 11% before the war to the present 4.5 %;
- 2) with respect to the fact that the respondents were 14- and 15-year-old children.

To avoid possible frustration among respondents owing to the personal nature of the questions, the principals of the two schools, the teachers and the participants were informed before the survey was conducted that the underlying idea of the research was the promotion and protection of minority languages in Europe as one of its highest values.

In the first part of the paper the authors describe the ethno-linguistic structure of the villages of Darda and Tenja near Osijek in which the two models of ML education are applied. The main part is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the answers given by two groups of respondents educated according to different models. Special attention will be paid to the differences between the two groups concerning the intensity of usage of their first language in different domains, their knowledge of that language (here Serbian) and their attitudes towards it. The goal of the paper is to answer the following questions:

- 1) which model of ML education achieves better results in knowledge and usage of the ML and in the attitudes of its young speakers towards it;
- 2) in which respects the two models influence the ELV of the two communities, and finally;
- 3) which other factors influence the differences in knowledge, the intensity of usage of the respective ML and the attitudes of its young speakers towards it.

As this study is focused on a quantitative rather than a qualitative approach, in the conclusion, the results will be analysed with respect to the results of the qualitative in-depth research by Kolenić and Bilić-Meštrić (2012), who explored personal attitudes of 19 young minority language speakers in Osijek and the nearby area (6 of them coming from Tenja) by using in-depth interviews.

Sample and Methodology of the Research

Because of specific circumstances of ML education in the primary schools of Tenja and Darda, the sample of respondents was rather small: in Tenja 12 students, in Darda 21. The respondents are children attending the 8th grade of primary school in both villages. In Tenja, there were altogether 15 students attending the ML class (12 took part in the research), whereas in Darda, 21 out of altogether 23 children attending the ML

programme participated in the research. The sample of a total of 33 respondents was the reason why two standard statistical methods were applied: the methods of *descriptive analysis* and *variance analysis*. Although there are more precise statistical parameters like the *chi-square test*, the data achieved from such a small sample and dispersed on numerous and rather complicated questions of the original questionnaire would not be interpretable using that method. The questionnaire on which this research is based was developed within the wider European project “The Penetration of Standard Languages in Multilingual Peripheral Areas of Europe”. It consists of eight sections, organized in four sections: 1) personal data concerning the mother tongue of the respondents; 2) respondents’ competence in the minority language (ML), 3) intensity of usage of the ML in different domains and 4) attitudes towards the ML and its future in Croatia.

Theoretical Background

Before presenting the results, it is necessary to determine specific terminology that will be used in the paper, primarily the terms *minority language*, *language policy* and *ethno-linguistic vitality*.

In the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of 1992, regional and minority languages are defined as languages “that are traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state’s population, and different from the official language(s) of the state or the languages of migrants” (General Provisions, Art. 1)³. Cenoz and Gorter (2008) criticize this definition for the lack of precise determination of the term *minority*, and quote as the most accurate the definition by Special Rapporteur Capotorti, who determined minority as “a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious, or other characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language” (quoted in Cenoz and Gorter, 2008: 5).

Croatian Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities⁴ defines national minority as follows: “A national minority within the terms of this Law shall be considered a group of Croatian citizens whose members have been traditionally inhabiting the territory of the Republic of Croatia and whose ethnic, linguistic, cultural and/ or religious characteristics differ from the rest of the population, and who are motivated to preserve these characteristics” (Art. 5)⁵. The Law makes a distinction between *territorial minority languages*, spoken by minorities living in specific local areas of Croatia (like Serbian, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, Ruthenian and Ukrainian), and *non-territorial languages*, spoken by smaller ethnic groups living in different regions of Croatia (e.g. Hebrew, Romany). On the other hand, Cenoz and Gorter differentiate between “unique” minority languages and those that have a “kin-

³ Retrieved from: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/148.htm>; October 11, 2013.

⁴ Law on Education in Language and Letters of National Minorities, NN (Official Gazette) 51/00 i 56/00. Other important law stipulating the rights of national minorities is the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, passed in 2002, NN, 155/02.

⁵ Translation of the Law retrieved from: /HRV/Files/Legislation__Constitutional-Law-on-the-Rights-NM.pdf; October 11, 2013.

state” (Gorter and Cenoz, 2011). The former are spoken in one or sometimes more than one state, but are not the dominant language of any state. In a modern globalized world, unique languages vary from those spoken by extremely small minorities and are on the verge of extinction to those that “have obtained official status, a fair degree of political and economic support and strong favourable attitudes by their speakers in order to revitalize these languages and give them a sustainable future” (Gorter and Cenoz, 2011: 655). The latter group of languages represents a minority in one state but the official dominant language in another, neighbouring state – a “kin-state”. Serbian – a minority language which is the object of this research – belongs to this latter group of minority languages.

Christ (1980) defined the term *language policy* as the sum of all political initiatives by which one specific language or more languages are supported in their public validity, functioning and spreading. According to Spolsky and Shohamy (Spolsky and Shohamy, 1999; Spolsky, 2004) there are three components that build the language policy of a speech community: 1) its language practices including habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire, 2) its language beliefs about language and language use, and 3) any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management (Spolsky, 2004: 5). The language policy of the Republic of Croatia concerning the languages of national minorities is determined by The Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities of 2000. According to this law, in Croatian primary schools there are three models of ML education: model A, model B and model C. In model A all the courses are held in the ML. In model B science subjects are taught in Croatian and humanities in the ML. In model C the ML is an elective five-hour a week course which includes history and geography, music and arts of the national minority. Model A is the most common and includes about 9,000 students, out of altogether 10,260 students attending ML education programmes in Croatia⁶. All models of ML education are fully financially supported by the state; other sources and funds can be used to support the functioning of the respective educational institution, if they are in conformity with the law.⁷ The same model is applied in secondary schools. As for the term *ethno-linguistic vitality* (ELV), Martin Ehala differentiates between a subjective and objective ELV. Subjective ELV refers to values and beliefs concerning a specific language as well as attitudes towards that language in a particular linguistic community. These factors are partly influenced by objective vitality factors such as demographic structure, legal status, economic strength and the education system (Ehala, 2009: 124). Thus, objective vitality can be presented by describing social factors determining the specific ethno-linguistic group, and subjective vitality is usually explored by questionnaires. Some experts in multilingualism and minority languages developed complex questionnaires to measure

⁶ Izvješće o provođenju Ustavnog zakona o pravima nacionalnih manjina i utrošku sredstava osiguranih u državnom proračunu RH za 2008. godinu za potrebe nacionalnih manjina (2009). Zagreb: Vlada R. Hrvatske. [Report on the implementation of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities and spending of the funds from the State Budget for the needs of national minorities for the year 2008. Zagreb: Government of the Republic of Croatia].

⁷ Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju na jeziku i pismu nacionalnih manjina od 11. 05. 2000. [Law on Education in Language and Letters of National Minorities of 11 May 2000], Article 16. <http://www.zakon.hr/z/318/Zakon-o-odgoju-i-obrazovanju-na-jeziku-i-pismu-nacionalnih-manjina>, visited on April 23, 2012.

ELV, such as Richard Bourhis, who explored the vitality of ethnic groups in Canada (Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal, 1981; Bourhis and Sachdev, 1984; Bourhis, 2008), and Dörnyei and Csisér (2005), who measured objective and subjective ELV on a huge sample of more than 8,000 respondents.

In recent times more precise instruments of sociolinguistic research, new assessment matrixes and formulas have been worked out to measure the ELV (Dörnyei and Clement, 2001; Dörnyei and Csizer, 2005; Ehala, 2009). On the other hand, as Ehala claims, the demographic and other social factors characterizing the ethnolinguistic group and its usage of a specific ML are of idiosyncratic nature, thus in some cases no exact measurement of ELV is possible, especially in diverse social settings (Ehala, 2009). This fact should be taken into account in this research, too, because it is based on a rather small sample of respondents (33) and carried out in two social settings of different national complexity. Thus, the objective vitality of the two multilingual communities will be presented by rough description of their demographic structures, legal status of the respective minority language and the models of education applied in each community. Conclusions on subjective vitality will be derived from the part of the questionnaire concerning the respondents' self-assessment of their knowledge and the intensity of usage of the ML, as well as their attitudes towards the respective language. Although Croatia is claimed to have one of the best laws on rights of national minorities in Europe (statement by the President Ivo Josipović in the "5 to 5 News" on Croatian TV 1, May 16, 2013), we believe that the following statement by Spolsky is applicable to Croatia as well: "Even where there is a formal, written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed nor consistent" (Spolsky, 2004: 11), especially if we take into account the fact that after the independence war in 1991 the status of nationals other than Croatian changed from that of a constituent nation (which they had in Ex-Yugoslavia) to that of national minority. This fact should not be neglected as a factor influencing the subjective ELV of the two communities taking part in this research.

Ethnolinguistic Structure, Ethnolinguistic Vitality (ELV) and Language Policy as applied in Tenja and Darda

Ethnolinguistic Structure of the Villages of Tenja and of Darda

As stated in the introductory part of this paper, this research will indicate by which of the two models better results in knowledge and usage of Serbian as the ML are achieved, as well as in which way(s) the specific model of education influences the attitudes of children towards their mother tongue and its future in Croatia. Apart from the education model, a factor of influence may be a different ethno-linguistic structure and ELV of the villages Tenja and Darda as well as changes in the national structure as a consequence of the war of 1991. The municipality of Darda consists of Darda and three smaller villages (Mece, Švajcarnica and Uglješ) inhabited by altogether 7,062 inhabitants. In 2001, Darda itself counted 5,394 inhabitants mostly employed in agriculture and the meat factory "Belje"; 1,182 persons were registered as unemployed.⁸ Its national

⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.radio-baranja.hr/vijesti/gospodarstvo/6096-nakon-10-godina-ponovo-6000-nezaposlenih.html>. (11.11.2011).

structure is complex and diverse: Croats make up the majority with 51.87 %; Serbs are the second largest population in Darda with 28.43% of all inhabitants; Hungarians are represented by 8.23% and the Roma population by 2.97%, followed by Romanians represented by 1.69%. The ethno-linguistic structure of Croatia after the war of 1991 was characterized by Croatian ethnic homogenization (Živić, 2007). This is also reflected on the Darda and the Tenja communities. The most striking change refers to the Serbian national minority, which in 1991 represented 37.42% of all inhabitants of Darda. Due to intensive emigrations after the war, the number decreased to 28.43% and the number of Croats increased from 35.77 % to 51.87 % (Turk and Jukić, 2008: 199, 201). The Hungarian ethnic group slightly decreased from 8.88 to 8.23%⁹, whereas the number of the Roma population slightly increased at almost 3%¹⁰. In the village of Tenja, situated 6 km east of Osijek, most inhabitants are Croats (65%) and Serbs represent 30%. According to the census of 1991, Serbs accounted for 54.5% and Croats 36.7% of all inhabitants.¹¹ We can see that the ethno-linguistic structure was radically changed after the war. It will be interesting to see whether and to which extent these changes influenced the knowledge, the intensity of usage and the attitudes towards Serbs by the Tenja population.

Objective Ethnolinguistic Vitality (ELV) in Tenja and in Darda – A Comparison

In order to determine the objective ELV of the multicultural and multilingual communities of Darda and Tenja, we shall comparatively analyse indicators of ELV developed by Landweer (2004): 1) *The position of the speech community on the remote-urban continuum*, 2) *The domain in which the target language is used*, 3) *Frequency or type of code switching*, 4) *Population and group dynamics*, 5) *Distribution of speakers within their own social network*, 6) *Special outlook regarding and within the speech community* 7) *Language prestige/ status of the ML*, 8) *Access to a stable and acceptable economic base supporting the use of the ML*¹². As indicators 2, 3 and 7 (domains of usage, code-switching, status of the ML) will be analysed within the results of the questionnaire; here we shall describe the objective ELV of Darda and Tenja according to the remaining five criteria.

1) *Position on the remote-urban continuum*: The geographic location of the two villages indicates that both communities are situated near an urban centre (Osijek). As only communities remote on the urban continuum achieve a high level of ELV, we can conclude that in this respect the ELV of both villages is low because both are situated near the urban centre.

2) *Population and group dynamics* refers to the functioning of the speech community, the existence of a critical mass of ML speakers, their marriage

⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.os-darda.skola.hr/skola/povijest> (31.10.2011).

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.vlada.hr/nacionalni-program/romi/content/view/14/27/lang.hrvatski> (31.10.2011).

¹¹ Retrieved from http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/Census2001/Popis/H01_01_03/h01_01_03_zup14-3123.html, (April 23, 2012).

¹² Landweer, L. (2004). Indicators of the ELV, retrieved from <http://www.courses.essex.ac.uk>. (31. 10. 2011).

patterns, immigration and emigration. We have seen that the dynamics of both groups was very intense. The marriage pattern is connected with the level of homogeneity of the respective ethnic group. In the case of Darda this level is rather low, so this ELV indicator for Darda can be assessed as low, too. Tenja is a more homogeneous community nationally, so there are fewer interethnic marriages than in Darda (this can be deduced from the answers to our questionnaire concerning personal data of the respondents). In spite of migrations caused by recent war events and the decrease in the Tenja population, in our opinion, thanks to the national homogeneity of its inhabitants, this indicator of ELV for the Serbian community in Tenja can be assessed as moderate.

3) *Distribution of speakers within their own social network* refers to the social network of activities supportive of the ML. Because of the great ethno-linguistic diversity of Darda, we can say that the speakers of the specific ML spoken in Darda are dispersed in this speech community. The Roma group represents an exception, because it lives in a more coherent social network in which the density of family and neighbour relations is more emphasized. On the other hand, there are Hungarian, Romany and Serbian folklore groups and the Hungarian and the Serbian national associations in Darda. This confirms that there is a dense officially supported social network of minority groups in that village. Due to contradictory data connected with this criterion, we can assess this segment of the ELV as moderate. The ELV of Tenja is in this respect much stronger due to the national homogeneity of the community and participation of its members in national folklore groups and non-government civil organizations.

4) *Special outlook regarding and within the speech community* explores the internal and external identity of ethno-linguistic group. With regard to gatherings at worship services at church, as well as activities of folklore groups and other ethnic associations in Darda, the internal identity of the ethnic groups of Darda, according to the data available to the authors of this paper, seems to be sufficient. "How well a group is perceived by outsiders and whether or not it is supported by outsiders also has an impact on the value associated with the group's language" (Landweer, 2008). We have seen that the government supports learning of the ML throughout primary school education, but the conditions of the local community of Darda and the attitudes of their local authorities led to the choice of the model C of primary school education, in which the Serbian and Hungarian language are taught as elective courses. In that sense, the ELV of Tenja can be assessed as better than that of Darda.

5) *Access to a stable and acceptable economic base supporting the use of the ML.* According to the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, financial support for ML education is guaranteed at the state, regional and local level, but, generally speaking, the recession has reduced funds and the high unemployment rate in the country has reflected negatively on the economic situation both in Darda and Tenja. Considering the fact that the inhabitants of both villages commute for economic reasons to the nearby town of Osijek, according to the fifth criterion the

ELV can be assessed as moderate in both villages when the Serbian population is in question. This is not the fact in the case of the Roma, who are mostly unemployed.

Generally speaking, the above analysis indicates that the objective ELV of the Tenja population is on a higher level than that of Darda. Our conclusions on the objective ELV and the status of the ML in the two villages will be more reliable when the results of our questionnaire are analysed concerning the domains in which the ML is used and the frequency of code-switching. On the grounds of the given ELV analysis we can assume that more positive answers concerning the knowledge and intensity of usage of the respective ML could be expected by the Tenja respondents than by those coming from Darda.

Language Policy and Models of ML Education in Darda and in Tenja

The provisions of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities and the Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities of the Republic of Croatia entitle local communities to choose the model of ML education that is most appropriate to the needs of the community as well as general working conditions of the respective school¹³. According to the Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities, the Model A can be introduced into the schools of communities inhabited by national minorities under following conditions: “In school facility teaching in language and letter of national minority, tuition is held by teachers belonging to national minority concerned or to whom the language of national minority is their mother tongue or who are fully proficient in language and letter of national minority” (Article 12)¹⁴. Accordingly, “only a person belonging to national minority or a person proficient in language and letter of national minority can be chosen for the headmaster of the school facility” (Art. 13)¹⁵. The school of Tenja fulfilled these preconditions and introduced Model A. The teaching staff of the Darda school did not meet these requirements, so the local authorities of Darda have chosen Model C. According to this model, the minority language is taught as an elective course. Once the parents have signed the agreement with the school, the child is obligated to attend the courses in the minority language during the entire primary school education. In 2010, 128 children attended the minority language programme in Darda: 105 children the Hungarian language programme and 23 children the Serbian language programme. The ML programme for the Roma children was not introduced. According to the explanation given by the principal of the school, the main reason was the lack of interest both by parents and by children for those programmes. The reasons they named were the poor results achieved by their children in regular courses and the general social and economic conditions they lived in.

In the post-war years of 1991, after the peaceful re-integration of Eastern Slavonia into the territorial body of the Republic of Croatia, the model A of ML education was

¹³ Retrieved from <http://www.zakon.hr/z/318/Zakon-o-odgoju-i-obrazovanju-na-jeziku-i-pismu-nacionalnih-manjina> (April 23, 2012, 18:00) and www.public.mzos.hr/default.aspx?sec=3154 (April 23, 2012, 18:08)

¹⁴ /HRV/Files/Legislation__Constitutional-Law-on-the-Rights-NM.pdf (October 11, 2013)

¹⁵ /HRV/Files/Legislation__Constitutional-Law-on-the-Rights-NM.pdf (October 11, 2013)

introduced in the Primary school of Tenja. Since then, for every generation of students there has been one class attending the ML programme in this school. The main difference between this model and the model applied in Darda is that in Tenja all the courses are held in Serbian as the language of instruction, while the students in Darda learn it only as an elective course. Additionally, they learn about the history and the culture of the ML country through activities within additional five hours a week. In which form this elective subject will be carried out depends on the availability of the teachers qualified to teach those subjects and on the cultural and historical conditions of the specific nation. In the case of the Darda school, the subject “Nurturing the culture of the Serbian/Hungarian/Roma nation” includes lessons on Serbian or Hungarian history, art, traditional music and folklore, whereas the Roma students are primarily instructed in their national music and folklore.

Taking into account all the circumstances, it is to expect that the Tenja respondents will achieve better results concerning the knowledge and the intensity of usage of the respective minority language than those of Darda. That would confirm the model of education as one of the decisive factors for the preservation of minority languages in Croatia. Other decisive factors could be: a) motivation of the respondents to preserve their national identity, b) their attitude towards the ML and c) political reasons.

Results of the Questionnaire: Comparative Analysis

As stated in the introductory part of this paper, the questionnaire this research is based on was developed within the wider European project “The Penetration of Standard Languages in Multilingual Peripheral Areas of Europe”. The questionnaire consists of 43 questions organized in four main parts: 1) personal data and data concerning the mother tongue of the respondents; 2) respondents’ competences in the respective ML, 3) intensity of usage of the ML in different domains of life and 4) attitudes of the respondents towards the ML and its future in Croatia. Accordingly, the answers will be analysed here within the four main chapters: a) Personal data: similarities and differences between the two groups; b) Minority language vs. Croatian: Competences; c) Intensity of usage of the ML in different domains; d) Attitudes towards the ML. The answers by altogether 33 respondents will be analysed. The sample is rather small, because in Tenja 12 students out of altogether 15 students attending the ML class took part in the research, whereas in Darda 21 out of altogether 23 children participated in the research. Respondents from Tenja attend the model A and the respondents from Darda the model C of the ML education.

Personal Data: Similarities and Differences Between the Two Groups

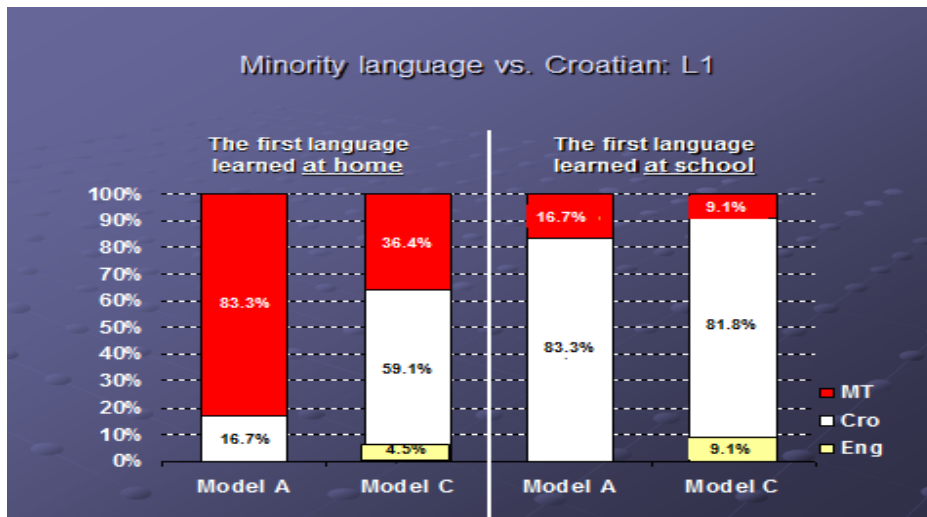
This part of the questionnaire refers to the place and the year of the respondents’ birth, their gender and the national minority they belong to. Most Darda children (21) were not born in Croatia but in Sombor, a border town in Serbia. The reason for that is that their birth coincided with the Homeland war of 1991. The war started after the Republic of Croatia declared its independence from the Ex-Yugoslavia, founding this decision on the results of democratic elections held in 1990 (until then, the Socialist Republic of

Croatia was a federal unit of Yugoslavia together with five Socialist Republics: The Socialist Republic of Serbia, Slovenia, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, the Socialist Republic of Montenegro and the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina). After the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia, some local representatives of Serbian national minority in Croatia rebelled against the legally elected Croatian authorities by cutting off several Croatian regions inhabited by Serbs from the rest of Croatian territory and expelled the domicile Croatian inhabitants from their homes. The rebel groups were supported by armed paramilitary forces coming from Serbia and in later stage by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), which led to the escalation of local fights to a bloody war. At that time the region of Baranya in the north of Osijek was occupied by paramilitary Serbian forces, so the nearest hospital was in Sombor in Serbia. For the same reason most of the respondents coming from Tenja were not born in the nearby town of Osijek, but in Vukovar - a town then separated from the rest of the Croatian territory by force. The respondents in both groups are 14 and 15-year-old children. In the Tenja group 15-year-olds dominate (75%) and in the Darda group 14-year-olds (54.5%). In both groups there are more girls than boys: in Tenja 58.3%, in Darda 68.2%. The Tenja respondents are more self-assured in their national self-determination than the children coming from Darda as a nationally less coherent community: 91.7% of the Tenja children declared themselves as Serbs whereas in Darda 68.2% of pupils attending the ML programme in the Serbian language declared themselves as Serbs and the rest was dispersed: Orthodox (18.2%), Serbian-Hungarian (4.5%) and "I don't know" (9.1%). Indecisive answers can indicate that: a) in nationally diverse communities young people feel reluctant to determine themselves nationally, b) their parents don't belong to the same nationality, or c) nationality is not an important issue in their lives.

Minority Language vs. Croatian: Competences

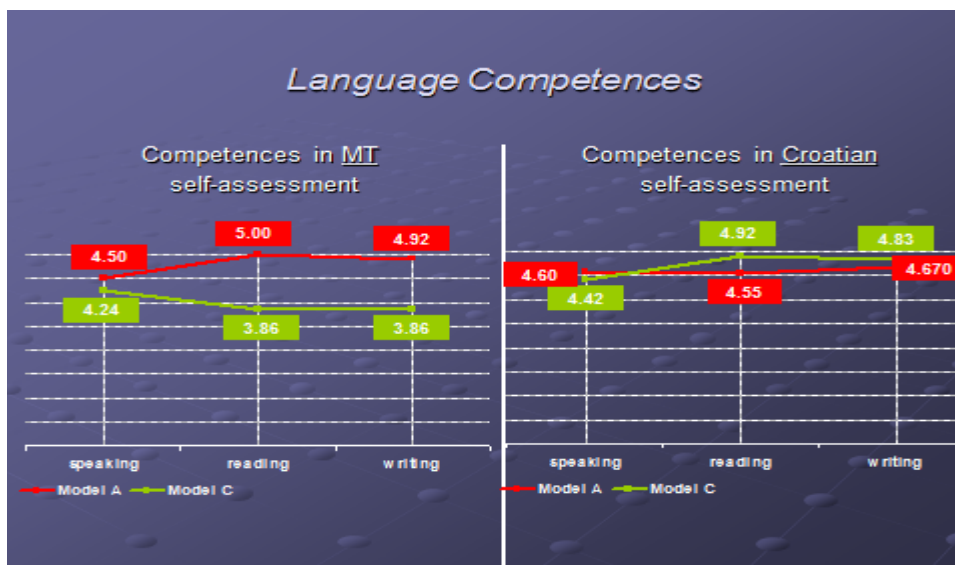
In this set of questions the respondents were asked about the first language they learned at home and at school, as well as to assess their knowledge of and competences in their mother tongue and Croatian. As for the first language learned at home, 83.3% of the respondents attending the model A (Tenja) reported Serbian as their mother tongue, whereas 16.7 % said it was Croatian. On the other hand, only 36.4% of the children included in the model C (Darda) learned Serbian as their mother tongue at home, and 59.1% reported they learned Croatian first. As for the first language learned at school, most children in Tenja (83.3%) learned both languages simultaneously (they probably joined the ML programme in later grades), 16.7% reported they learned Serbian. In Darda, 81.8% of respondents learned Croatian first and 9.1% learned their mother tongue, i.e. a minority language (ML) first:

Chart 1: Minority language and Croatian as L1 learned at home and at school (Model A/ModelC)



In the question referring to the level of knowledge of both languages, the answers offered were: a) *I understand it, but I can't speak it fluently*; b) *I can speak it, but I can't write it correctly* c) *I am equally good at speaking, reading and writing*. The prevailing answer concerning Croatian was: *I am equally good at speaking, reading and writing* (95.2% of the respondents of the model C and 91.7% of the respondents of the model A). Students attending programme A are equally good at Croatian and Serbian (91.7%), whereas 72.7% of the children attending the model C think they are good at all the three skills in Serbian. Therefore, within the model C there is a slight difference between the knowledge in favour of Croatian, but within the model A the respondents are equally confident in both languages.

Chart 2: Competences in the ML and Croatian in the model A and the model C



In the next question the respondents were asked to assess each language skill by using marks from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest mark and 5 the highest). The skills examined were: speaking, reading and writing. Because of multiple relations between the grading of the three skills, not only the descriptive statistics, but also more precise descriptive statistical instruments as variance analysis and F-test were used. That allowed closer insight into specific (co)relations between speaking, reading and writing in the ML as assessed by the two groups of students. Analysis of the data referring to the knowledge of Serbian as the ML showed that better results were achieved by students attending programme A. They assessed themselves as best at reading in the ML (5), then in writing (4.92) and thirdly in speaking (4.5). Respondents attending the model C in Darda were less confident in their ML skills: they assessed themselves as best at speaking (4.24) and equally good at reading and writing (3.86). As for the self-assessment of skills in Croatian, results were better within the model C: the students from Darda assessed themselves as best at reading Croatian (4.92 on average), then at writing (4.83) and speaking (4.42). The children from Tenja assessed all the three skills within Croatian without many differences: writing (4.70), speaking (4.60) and reading (4.55). As we can see, the differences between the two models of education are more obvious in the knowledge of the ML, whereas the results relating to Croatian are more consistent. When we compare the results of both models, we can see that the respondents from Tenja (model A) felt more confident in Serbian and the respondents from Darda in Croatian. This leads to the conclusion that the model A, educating students in all courses in their respective ML from the first to the last class of their primary school, promotes learning of the ML and makes a better ground for the development of all competences in that language than the model C. As for differences concerning specific language skills, descriptive statistics shows the greatest index of standard deviation between the two models in writing (1.352) and reading (1.236) in the ML, probably due to the fact that in the Serbian language Cyrillic script is used. There

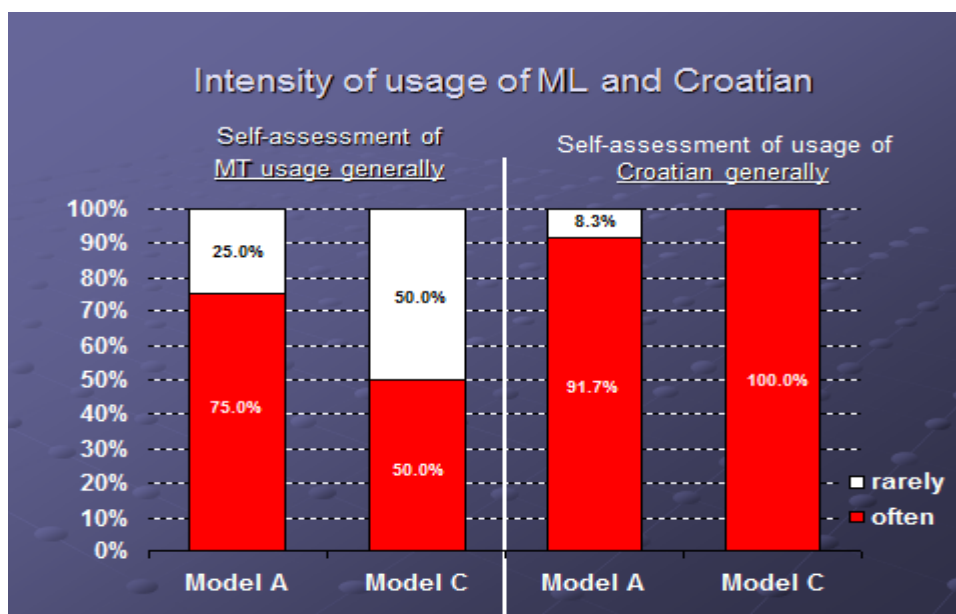
are no significant standard deviations within the skills in Croatian. The lowest mark for speaking skills in that language could be caused by its interference with Serbian.

Intensity of Usage of the ML in Different Domains

This group of questions is divided into three subgroups. The first deals with the intensity with which the respondents use the ML in relation to Croatian in communication within their family, neighbours or friends and at school with teachers and classmates. The second subgroup explores which language is used by the respondents in their religious lives and the third explores communication in connection to public media (the language of the books and newspapers they read, the TV programmes they watch, the radio programmes they listen to and the e-mails they write).

The intensity of usage of the ML language in reference to Croatian varies. The answers offered were: *constantly, often, rarely, never*. Most respondents in both groups said they used Croatian often and/or constantly, and only in the Tenja population (model A) 8.3% of respondents answered they used Croatian rarely. As for the usage of the ML, the answers of the two groups differ significantly. Most students attending the model C use the respective ML rarely (40.9%), 31.8% use it often, 18.2% all the time and 9.1% never. The answers of the respondents attending the model A are more consistent and more positive: 50% speak their mother tongue (i.e. the ML) often, 25% all the time and 25% rarely. The answers summed up in the following chart indicate the extensive usage both of the ML and Croatian by the Tenja group, which implies that this group of respondents mostly applies code-switching in their everyday communication, whereas the respondents from Darda mostly use Croatian.

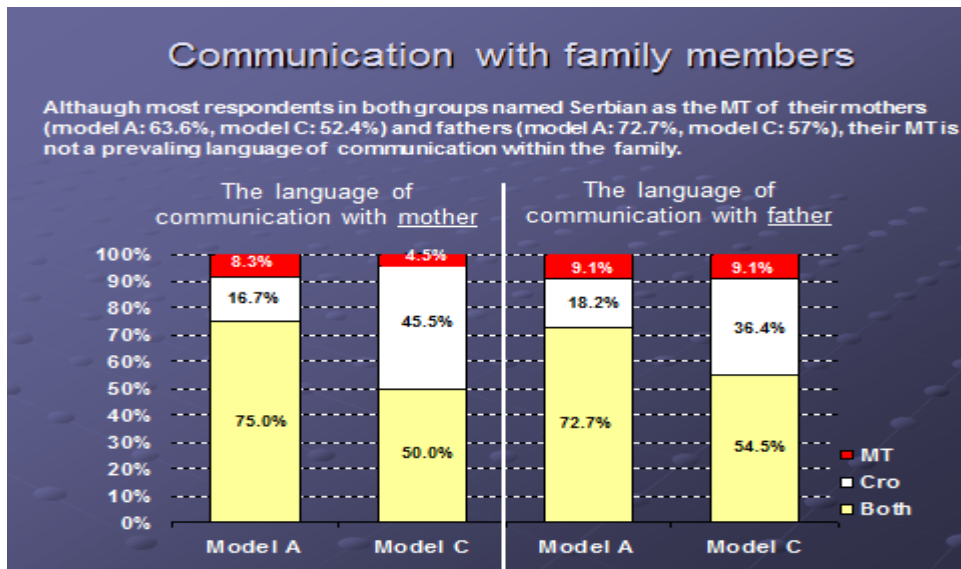
Chart 3: Intensity of usage of ML and Croatian



Asked about the language of communication with their mothers at home, most respondents said they used code-switching: in the model A, 75% of respondents, in

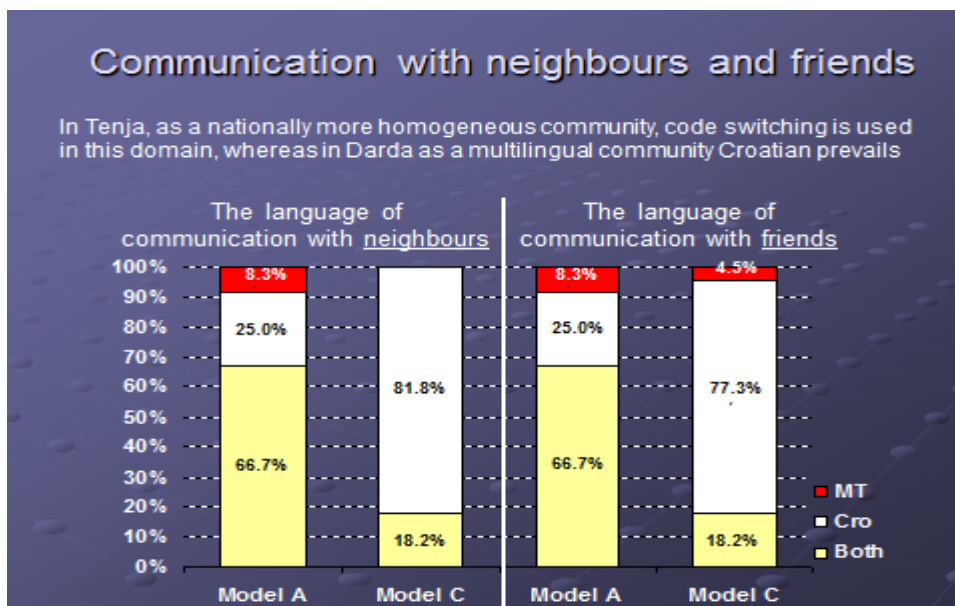
model C 50%. The data concerning communication with fathers are very similar. As the questions relating to communication with brothers and/or sisters are too detailed in the original questionnaire (communication with younger brothers/ younger sisters, elder brothers/ elder sisters), the answers were too dispersed to enable a detailed analysis. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that the respondents mostly communicate with their brothers and sisters in Croatian, whereas in communication with parents the code-switching is mostly used in both groups.

Chart 4: Communication with family members



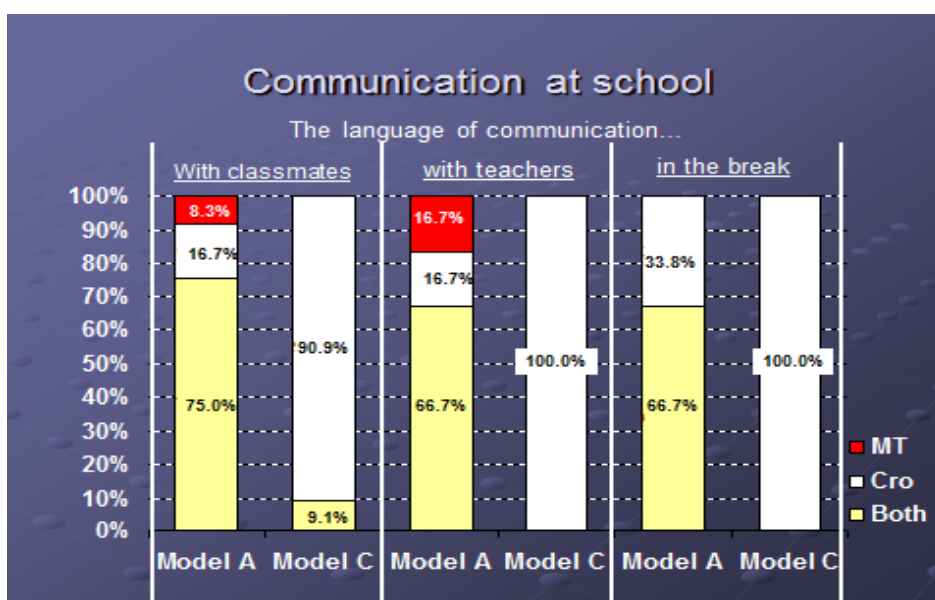
Students from Darda mostly communicate with their neighbours and friends in Croatian (with neighbours 81.1%, with friends 77.3%); students from Tenja (model A) mostly apply code-switching, depending on the language of the communication partner (66.7%).

Chart 5: Communication with neighbours and friends



As expected, there is a difference in the answers between the two groups concerning the language of instruction at school (in Darda, Croatian is used by 90.9%, in Tenja by 16.7 % of respondents). In Darda, the respondents use only Croatian in communication with their teachers and in Tenja only 16.7% of the children communicate with their teachers in Croatian, 16.7% only in the ML and 66.7% use code-switching in communication with teachers.

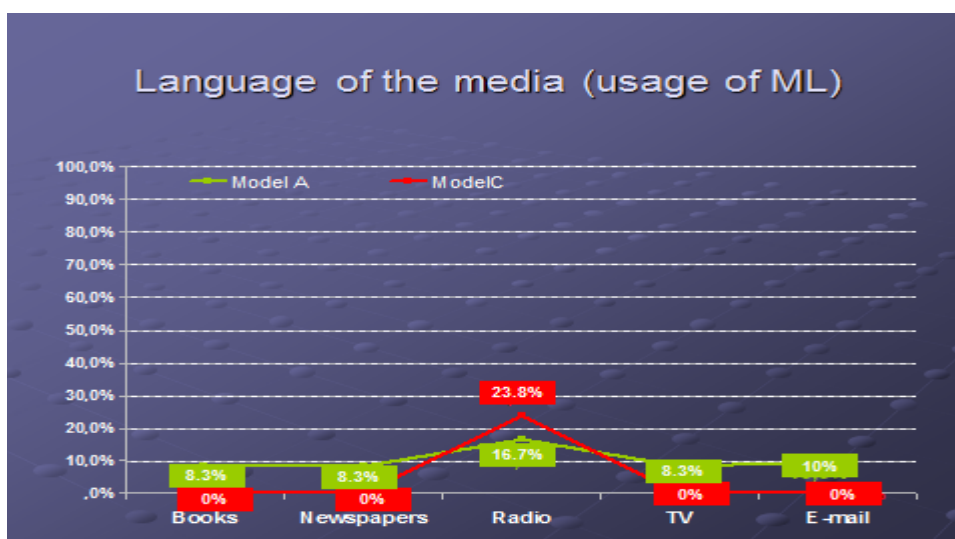
Chart 6: The language of communication at school



It is only in religious life that the ML prevails over Croatian. This set of altogether three questions refers to the language used in prayers, the language of communication with the priest and the language of the church service. The percentage of the ML usage in this domain varies here between 53% and 100%. Nevertheless, these answers cannot be taken as reliable because most respondents wrongly identified the Old Church Slavic as a language of religious service with their ML (only 3 respondents said the language of church service was not their ML, but the Old Church Slavic language).

As for the language of specific media, the availability of specific medium influences the choice of language. Thus, the children from Tenja (model A) read books written both in Serbian and in Croatian (75%), and the children from Darda only books written in Croatian (95.5%). In other media, Croatian is the dominating language, especially in newspapers (in Tenja 58.3%, in Darda 85.7%) and in e-mails (in Tenja 80%, in Darda 76.2%). In TV-programmes, children from Darda mostly choose Croatian (66.7%), while children from Tenja watch TV-programmes in both languages (83.3%). The results referring to listening to the radio are dispersed between Croatian, Serbian and both languages: In Darda, respondents mostly listen to Croatian broadcasts (47.6%), and 23.8% listen to broadcasts in Serbian. The respondents from Tenja choose broadcasts in both languages (66.7%), but from time to time, they listen both to Croatian (16.7%) and Serbian (16.7%) radio programmes. The reasons why radio is listened to more in the ML in Darda than in Tenja may be the daily availability of the Serbian Radio Banska Kosa in Baranja. The following chart shows to which extent Serbian as the ML is listened to and used in different media by the two groups of respondents.

Chart 7: The language of the media

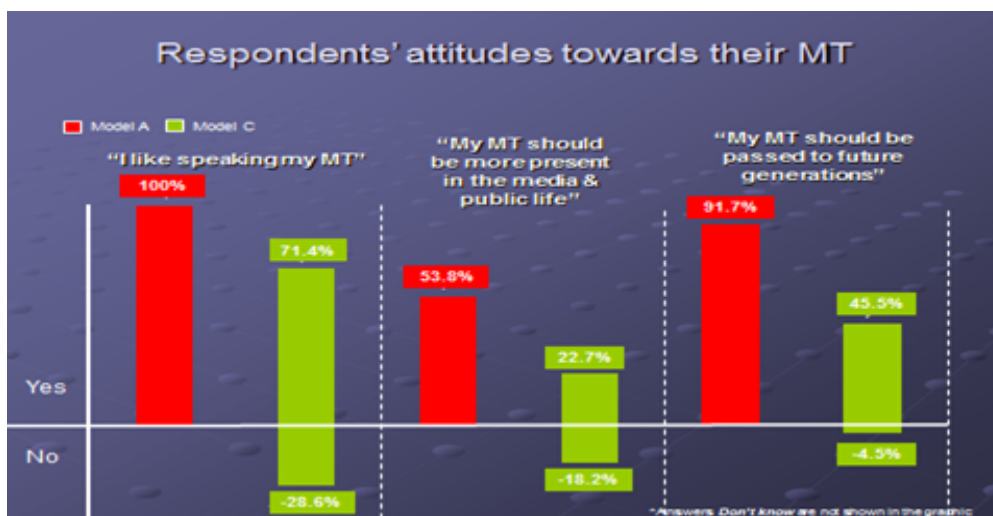


Attitudes Towards the ML

The respondents generally have a positive attitude towards their mother tongue: Tenja 100% and Darda 71.4%. It is indicative that 28.6% of the Darda children said they didn't like speaking their mother tongue (the ML). Asked whether the Serbian language should be more present in the media, 59.1% said "I don't know", 18.2% said it shouldn't be

used more in the media and only 22.7% answered affirmatively. The children from Tenja were more positive in their answers: 58.3% wanted more programmes in the ML in the media, and 42.7% were not sure. They were very positive about the future of the language (91.7%), whereas in Darda 45.5% of the answers were affirmative (50% were indecisive). This difference in answers between the two groups indicates that the ML as a language of instruction more positively influences attitudes of children towards it than when it is taught as an elective subject.

Chart 7: Attitudes towards the ML



According to T. Skutnabb-Kangas (2003), the affective and identifying role of language is far more important than theoretical debates over the ontological status of the language. In order to get a deeper insight into the delicate issues explored by this questionnaire, its results will be compared with the results of an in-depth research by Bilić-Meštrić and Kolenić (2012)¹⁶. Using the interview-method, they explored the personal attitudes of 19 young bilingual speakers in Osijek and the nearby area (3 of them growing up in Hungarian and Croatian, 3 in a variant of Bosnian and Croatian, 3 in German and Croatian, 2 in Slovak and Croatian, 1 in Roma and Croatian, 1 in Albanian and Croatian and 6 of them in Serbian and Croatian – the last group coming from Tenja). The major topics of the interview were: ML practice, cultural heritage, the ML as the subject of conversation in school, the ML as a public/ individual asset, the ML as a problem, the future of the ML. Answers given by the respondents are similar: most of them use the language only with family members (the Slovak children with their grandparents); with the exception of Roma and Hungarian children, the respondents did not have any social problems when using their language. All want to preserve their language, except for the German girls Francisca and Victoria, who said: “depends on

¹⁶ The paper by Bilić-Meštrić Klara and Kolenić Ljiljana was presented at the International LINEE conference held in Dubrovnik in May 2012 under the title „Linguistic diversity in Osijek schools – Study in language policies towards minority languages in Osijek through children's attitudes“ and represents a part of the unpublished PhD dissertation by Klara Bilić-Meštrić.

the husband". For this paper, the most interesting answers are those given by six Serbian children: Sonja (14), Vedrana (14), Tihana (14), Ljuban (14), Nikola (13), and Miloš (13). All claim that a mixture of Croatian *ijekavica* with Serbian vocabulary and some Serbian syntax is spoken at home (this explains the answers in our research represented in chart 4, which shows that most respondents use both Croatian and Serbian within their families). Sonja is the only one who is against the education programme in Serbian (model A): "Only some subjects should be separate and in Serbian". As for the language used in public life, all respondents want to adjust (Ljuban: "I'm always thinking how I am going to say something when I am outside, on a bus stop or in a shop; I know it (the language) could hurt people who live here and have lost someone"; Miloš, Sonja: "I want to adjust, to belong to the community"). All will keep the language (Miloš and Nikola want to study in Serbia, Sonja "doesn't really care").

If we compare these answers with those of our questionnaire, we can see that they are compatible in many respects, but the results of the interviews offer a deeper insight into students' attitudes and indicate that war experiences of their family members and the social-political situation in the country has strongly influenced their wish to adjust to a wider Croatian speaking community.

Conclusion

In Croatia, three most important models of minority language education are model A, in which classes are held in the language and script of the national minority, model B, which includes bilingual classes (natural sciences are instructed in Croatian, social sciences in the language of minority), and model C, which is defined by the Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities as "nurturing language and culture", with 3-5 lessons a week held in the ML. The subject of this paper was a comparison of models A and C with respect to their implications on the usage of Serbian as the ML in different domains, its status and future in Croatian society. A comparison was made on the basis of a complex questionnaire that was carried out on the sample of seventh and eighth grade children attending ML programmes within the models A and C in the villages of Tenja and Darda near Osijek. The responses to the questionnaire were analysed in four main groups: 1) personal data and data concerning the mother tongue of the respondents 2) respondents' competences in the respective ML 3) intensity of usage of the ML in different domains of life and 4) attitudes of the respondents towards that language and its future in Croatia. Keeping political, demographic, social and economic factors in mind, and especially the fact that the ML is the language of instruction according to the model of education applied in Tenja, our hypothesis was that the answers by the Tenja students would be more in favour of the ML and its preservation than by students from Darda, where the same ML is taught as an elective course.

The analysis of personal data given by the respondents showed a greater extent of self-confidence and awareness of their national identity in the Tenja group. This could be closely connected with the model of ML education and the motivation of the members of the local community to preserve their national identity. One of the motivating factors could be the changed national structure that was caused by the recent war events of 1991 and the migrations to Serbia and other countries which were

more intense in Tenja than in Darda. On the other hand, the in-depth research by Kolenić and Bilić-Meštrić (2012), carried out in the schools of the same region, showed the respondents' wish to adjust to the wider community. It seems that the specific social-political reasons, the model of education and the fact that Tenja is a more homogeneous community nationally than Darda are the most important factors influencing the awareness of national identity of the Tenja respondents as well as the importance of their ML language. This reflected positively on the knowledge and intensity of usage of this ML within the model A. As for communication in different domains, both groups apply code-switching in everyday communication in both communities. It is only in religious life that the ML prevails over Croatian in both groups. Yet, this exception to other domains of communication may be the result of misunderstanding and wrong identification of the Old Church Slavic – a language of Orthodox church services – with the ML (a few respondents added the answer that the church services were held in the Old Slavic language, but most said that church services were held in the ML as well as that they prayed in the ML). Mostly both languages are used in the communication within families in the two communities. But the in-depth research by Bilić-Meštrić & Kolenić (ibid.) showed that children overall use a mixture of Croatian and Serbian as etymologically related Slavic languages.

Differences between the two groups primarily refer to the language of instruction at school, the language of communication with teachers and the language of reading books, which is the ML in the model A group and Croatian in the model C group. The answers by the model A respondents indicate that although instructions are held in Serbian, in practice teachers do not speak exclusively that language, but rather apply code-switching. The most striking difference between the two groups is in their attitudes towards the ML and its preservation: the answers by the Tenja children are more in favour of the ML than those given by the Darda children. The social-political reasons, the model of education and the fact that Tenja is a more homogeneous community nationally than Darda, have strongly influenced the positive attitudes of the Tenja respondents towards their language. They are interested in improving their knowledge of the language and preserving it in the future. From the point of view of minority language preservation, the results from the village of Darda imply that the model C is not the best solution, because the wish for adjustment to a wider speech community leads to national and linguistic assimilation. To introduce the model A of ML education in ethno-linguistically diverse communities like Darda, many preconditions should be fulfilled and harmonized, such as the political, social, economic and teaching staff related.

Although this study showed some interesting results, there are certain limits that should be mentioned. Firstly, some questions, like the ones referring to language(s) used in the religious life, were not defined precisely enough and might have led to misunderstandings. The second cause of possible misunderstandings is the fact that there is no clear linguistic difference between Serbian as a minority language and Croatian as the official language, except for the use of the “ekavian” speech in Serbian and the “ijekavian” speech in Croatian and a certain number of lexical items. This is even more stressed by the fact that the respondents' parents were mostly raised and educated in Ex-Yugoslavia in a mixture of the two languages officially called *Serbo-Croatian or Croat-Serbian*. No

wonder that in most cases the answer to questions referring to the language of everyday communication was “both ML and Croatian”.

Although minority language policy in Croatia is regulated in accordance with the highest European standards, the question of Serbian as a minority language still presents a delicate issue due to national disputes in the recent history of Croatia. That is the reason why a more detailed in-depth research should be conducted on a wider sample of respondents.

This study opens some other questions concerning future developments in the field of minority language policy:

1. As minority language policies exist only on the level of minority communities and in the private sphere, a minority language is not recognized as an asset of the whole community - how can that be changed?
2. Is education in a minority language (Model A) always positive for children, especially those who want to continue their education in the country they live in, and like Sonja, want “to belong to a wider community”? In such cases, maybe the right to choose the language of instruction might be given not only to parents, but also to their children. If so, at what age are the children mature enough to decide on such a delicate issue – especially in the communities burdened with recent ethnic conflicts? A systematic and well-elaborated qualitative research on the state level conducted both on students and their parents living in minority language communities might offer more reliable answers to those questions.
3. Finally, taking into account the current trends of globalisation and multilingualism: Is the right to education in one’s mother tongue enough? Does it contribute enough to the quality of the national educational policy for a multicultural environment?

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