

**STUDY ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVING THE  
TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SERBIAN AS A  
NON-MOTHER TONGUE IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF  
PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA**

BELGRADE, 2015





**Title of publication**

Study on the Possibilities for Improving the Teaching and Learning of Serbian as a Non-Mother Tongue in the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja

**Publisher**

Office of the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja

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**Pre-Press Production**

Perollo limited liability company, Belgrade

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All terms used in the masculine grammatical gender in the study refer to both masculine and feminine genders of persons to which such terms refer

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# ABSTRACT



## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to offer decision-makers and stakeholders a series of research findings and recommendations based on those findings for improving the teaching and learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. The main issues that have been dealt with in the research include an analysis of the situation in the sphere of learning and teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language primary schools in the aforesaid three municipalities, and problems and challenges faced by various actors involved in the process of learning Serbian and/or in ensuring the quality of the teaching of this subject. Based on the analysis of the situation, problems and possibilities, short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations have been set out for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in three municipalities in the south of Serbia. This abstract presents the main research findings, which are discussed in detail in the main body of this study.

The need to produce this study arose from an ever-increasing awareness of facts over the past few years, stemming from reports and on the basis of the experiences of institutions and organizations of civil society, as well as international organizations, concerning the inadequate knowledge of Serbian among members of the Albanian national minority who live in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

Chapter I presents the context of the three municipalities with an emphasis on education and the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. Presenting the context of the three municipalities is important for understanding the reasons for producing this study as well as for examining concrete possibilities for improving the teaching and learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in these areas, taking into account the specific local circumstances. Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja are municipalities in the south of Serbia characterized by the heterogeneity of the ethnic composition of the population.

The integrative role of language in diverse societies served as the starting point in addressing the issue of the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. The conceptual framework of the study, presented in Chapter II, is based on a set of international norms and standards in the field of human and minority rights, primarily those related to the integration of diverse societies. One of the objectives of this study is to provide a documented picture of the level of knowledge and problems regarding the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the three municipalities in the south of Serbia, so that language education policy, as a part of integration policy, can develop towards fostering integration, with full respect for the diversity of all identities including linguistic identity.

The applicable laws and regulations that, in the Republic of Serbia, govern the rights of national minorities, and above all the sphere of educating members of national minorities in their mother tongue, represent a framework in accordance with which recommendations have been set out for the improvement of learning and teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language schools in the south of Serbia. An outline of the legislative framework is presented in Chapter II.

The central part of the research is devoted to the pedagogical aspect of learning and teaching, and this is presented in the most extensive chapter, Chapter III. The methodology of the research is described in detail in that chapter. For the purposes of this study, tests were devised to check the level of knowledge of Serbian as a non-mother tongue for 4th and 8th grade students and used in 16 primary schools. Furthermore, the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue was observed in the lower and higher grades. The curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue has also been analysed, as well as current textbooks and handbooks for teachers approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Institute for the Promotion of Education and the National Education Council for the teaching of this subject. Chapter III also contains an analysis of how the curriculum is implemented, and an analysis of teachers' and pupils' opinions and needs regarding learning and teaching.

The main finding of the research is that the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the knowledge of pupils in primary schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja are not at a satisfactory level. The fundamental problem that has been observed is that pupils cannot achieve spontaneous communication in Serbian.

According to the research findings, it is undeniable that the situation observed in the field has to be improved. To that end, some of the measures could include the preparation of updated teaching material, as well as the procurement of certain sets of textbooks that are currently not in use for the teaching in higher grades. When it comes to textbooks – as is after all the case with other ethnic communities – the presence of the Albanian ethnic community also needs to be more visible, both in textbooks and in other teaching aids.

Teacher training for the teaching of this subject is the key prerequisite for improving teaching and for pupils achieving better results in learning Serbian. There is no doubt that teachers need the help of assistants/associates in classes, primarily those whose mother tongue is Serbian and who are qualified to provide such assistance.

Special attention should be paid to efforts to get pupils to use Serbian outside the classroom as well, which can be done either by organizing various excursions around the Republic of Serbia, or by encouraging contacts in joint activities with local native speakers of Serbian.

In order to achieve a comprehensive overview of the various aspects of the issue of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue, all relevant actors were consulted – a national deputy in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia from the Albanian community, the presidents of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council, an education adviser responsible for the district of Pcinja and Jablanica, the principals of 16 Albanian-language primary schools in the three municipalities, the teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in those schools, the pupils, their parents, representatives of the local media and civil society, as well as representatives of the state organs in Bujanovac and Presevo, municipal administration and the commercial sector. Their views, opinions and needs are presented in Chapter IV.

Regarding needs for the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, according to the opinions of all the aforesaid actors questioned, it is necessary to improve the quality of teaching aids, to conduct training designed for teachers who teach a non-mother tongue, in other words to allow teachers to undergo continuing professional development in the field of learning techniques and the use of modern teaching aids, as well as to stimulate pupils' contact with the living language and to take advantage of social interaction among peers for language-learning.

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Pupils of all grades, in all three municipalities, believe that a knowledge of Serbian could be useful to them in the future, both for formal reasons (education, obtaining employment in public institutions or the performance of daily tasks) and for everyday communication.

Without exception, all interviewed parents feel that it is important for pupils to gain proficiency in Serbian in school because they believe children who live in Serbia, aside from the fact that they need to know the official language of the State, should also know Serbian so that in a multi-ethnic environment such as their own, they are able to communicate without difficulties, socialize and converse with their peers. Parents think that in addition to hiring assistants and using audio and video materials for teaching, good results would certainly be achieved by encouraging socializing among children of differing national affiliation, organizing joint classes as well as sports and other joint activities.

The research also included a review of experiences from projects implemented in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo devoted to the acquisition and improvement of knowledge of Serbian (Annex 1), and the lessons learned from these experiences were taken into account when formulating the recommendations.

Several possibilities for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja were identified while this study was being produced. They can be achieved through the implementation of a series of short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations, which are presented in Chapter V. It is important that all stakeholders participate in taking the necessary measures – the institutions responsible for education matters (the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Institute for the Promotion of Education, the Institute for Education Quality Assessment), the Office of the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, local self-government organs, schools, teachers, local media and civil society, parents and pupils. Some of the proposed measures can already be implemented during the 2014–2015 academic year.

# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

This document will present an analysis of the situation and recommendations for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the Albanian-language primary schools of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities. Within the framework of the relevant domestic laws and regulations pertaining to the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the primary school system and international standards for the integration of diverse societies with a focus on the role and importance of knowing the official language, the findings of empirical research have been summarized in a manner designed to present a comprehensive picture on the situation and problems within primary schools of the three municipalities located in the south of Serbia. These findings support recommendations for measures to improve the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language primary schools.

Bearing in mind the fact that the use of a common language is an issue pervading all dimensions of social life and social integration, and also that successful public policymaking requires that policies be based on facts, when this study was devised it set the task of providing a contribution to the responsible implementation of social integration policy with the aim of creating a cohesive society. The development of this study is an attempt to verify and organize a range of unofficial and fragmented information in a manner that allows public policymakers, decision-makers and relevant institutions to use the results of the research as well as the experts' recommendations based on them, with the goal of enabling members of the Albanian national minority to become fully involved in social, political and economic developments in the Republic of Serbia.

Information about the poor knowledge of Serbian among members of the Albanian national minority comes from civil society, institutions, experts, participants in various initiatives, programmes and projects that are being implemented with the support of international partners, as well as from individuals from the Albanian community. The unsatisfactory level of knowledge of the official language of the Republic of Serbia can be directly linked with significantly reduced chances of members of the Albanian national minority making use of opportunities related to education in the official language of the Republic of Serbia, applying for job vacancies (especially in state administration), getting more involved in the decision-making process, communicating and exchanging views and opinions and participating in dialogue with members of other national minorities and the majority population, following formal and informal development and training programmes, and the like.

The need to produce this study arose from an ever-increasing awareness of facts over the past few years, stemming from reports and on the basis of the experiences of institutions and organizations of civil soci-

ety, as well as international organizations, concerning the inadequate knowledge of Serbian among members of the Albanian national minority who live in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

Systematically addressing any problem observed requires, first of all, a professional analysis, from which clearly defined public policies then follow. The analysis aims to highlight problems, identify key players, review the legislative framework, contribute to the establishment of dialogue and building consensus on the best solutions, propose solutions, and indicate the timelines within which it is possible to effect change.

Public policies will be successful only if they come from the community to which the change is supposed to pertain. That is the first condition. The second condition is that the need for change is recognized by the institutions that will largely carry it out. The third condition is that there is broad support for such change from the representatives of the local authorities, civil society organizations and the international community, which has many times recognized the importance of such initiatives for the benefit of communities living in the south of Serbia.

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We are convinced that in the case of the study you are now reading, all the conditions have been met. The issue of integration and working with young people, particularly formal and informal education, has been a priority for the Coordination Body since 2008. Accordingly, many programmes have been devised: scholarships for secondary school pupils; scholarships for study at the University of Novi Sad; support for the Albanian National Minority Council (ANMC) in the provision of textbooks for teaching in Albanian in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Serbia; and support for civil society organizations for projects in the sphere of education. Ensuring greater numbers of ethnic Albanians in institutions of the Republic of Serbia is one of the aforesaid priorities, whether it is in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja or in any other part of the Republic of Serbia. One of the problems in implementing such programmes is the insufficient knowledge of Serbian among members of the Albanian national minority, especially among the younger generations.

Civil society organizations first started to devise projects for the learning of Serbian. In March 2011, two organizations with projects aimed at the learning of Serbian for members of the Albanian national minority submitted the projects for a competition run by the Office of the Coordination Body for the support of civil society organizations.<sup>1</sup> The explanatory notes of the projects state that “it is necessary to provide conditions for further training of employees, young people and others, for proficiency in Serbian so that

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1 These organizations are the “International Human Center” from Presevo with the project “Serbian Language School” and the “Centre for Tolerance and Integration of the South of Serbia” with the project “Education Leading to Integration”.

they can avoid problems in speaking and writing in Serbian, the official language,” and that “young Albanians from the south of Serbia study in Tirana, Skopje, Tetovo or Pristina because of their insufficient knowledge of Serbian, and so for this very reason they have no opportunities to study at universities in Serbia.

Furthermore a lack of knowledge of Serbian is an obstacle to their finding employment.” Both projects were awarded finance, and there were far more applicants than the projects envisaged. The Office of the Coordination Body also organized a series of other ad hoc activities based on requests from the Albanian community, such as courses on the Serbian language for students from Presevo and Bujanovac who were enrolled at the University in Novi Sad, while in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Serbian language courses were organized for students of the Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac, as well as courses for selected candidates of the Basic Police Training Centre.

The Office of the Coordination Body initiated the project “Serbian Language School for Young People from the Albanian Community from the Municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo”.<sup>2</sup> We owe deep gratitude to the Embassy of the United Kingdom, which, as in many previous cases, recognized the importance of the initiative. The OSCE Mission to Serbia also saw the importance of improving the quality of the learning of Serbian for members of the Albanian national minority, and has successfully implemented the project “The improvement of language skills of the minority population in the south of Serbia”.<sup>3</sup> We should also note that other international organizations have grasped the importance of improving the knowledge of Serbian in the Albanian community. We owe deep gratitude to the Delegation of the European Union and the European Progress project which, in the activities planned for the next three years, have included the improvement of the quality of the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

Evaluations of projects and programmes confirm that these measures are very successful and yield good results. However, due to the fact that they can include only a limited number of participants, and are relatively expensive and of short duration, these short-term initiatives cannot meet the needs of the systematic improvement of knowledge of Serbian. Moreover, given that the needs of the Albanian community for learning Serbian are growing, a clear need has arisen for investigating the possibilities of implementing systematic solutions.

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2 More detailed information on the project “The School of Serbian language” can be found in Annex 1, “Experiences of projects whose aim is the acquisition and improvement of knowledge of the Serbian language in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac”.

3 More detailed information on the project “The Improvement of Language Skills of the Minority Population in the South of Serbia” can be found in Annex 1, “Experiences of projects whose aim is the acquisition and improvement of knowledge of the Serbian language in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac”.

Addressing the problem starts at the place where children first encounter the systematic learning of Serbian – in primary school. Bearing in mind the fact that Serbian as a non-mother tongue is learned from the first grade of primary school to the end of secondary education, it was necessary to examine the situation in the Albanian-language primary schools within the three municipalities and answer questions related to the level of pupils’ knowledge, the quality of teaching and staff, as well as the views, opinions and needs of stakeholders regarding the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue – primarily the school principals, parents and the pupils themselves.

In view of all the above, we decided on the serious, demanding and challenging task of producing this study. We received support for producing the study, as indeed on the previous occasion, from the Embassy of the United Kingdom and the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We should also note that the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities was involved in all phases of the design and implementation of this project, and that its suggestions and activities made an exceptional contribution to the production of the study.

12 | Having set out the reasons for the creation of this study, it is time to say a few words about the key actors. The education process in the Republic of Serbia is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The Ministry not only recognized all the aforesaid initiatives, it also strongly supported and contributed to the success of the activities. The Ministry was informed about every phase of the research and provided support as well as expert recommendations important for the research. It was agreed with the Ministry that a working body would be formed, and it consisted of: representatives of the Institute for the Promotion of Education, the Institute of Education Quality Assessment, representatives of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the ANMC, and experts from the universities of Novi Sad and Belgrade as well as researchers. The working body’s purpose was to determine the directions for the research, but the most important thing was to ensure the inclusion of all relevant actors.

In order to get a documented picture of the knowledge, teaching staff, working conditions, problems and possible solutions, an appropriate field research methodology was devised. Additionally, the research team paid special attention to the views of national assembly deputies from the Albanian community, the presidents of each of the three municipalities and the Chairman of the ANMC, the educational adviser of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development from the Albanian community, as well as local civil society organizations, media and representatives of the commercial sector and state and municipal administration. Also very useful were insights into the experiences of participants in two important projects, the “Serbian Language School”, run by the Office of the Coordination Body of the

Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo, and the project “The Improvement of Language Skills of the Minority Population in the South of Serbia”, run by the OSCE Mission to Serbia in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac.

Over the last few years, due to the need to improve cooperation in the process of social integration and all systematic efforts aimed at rebuilding trust, there is ever-growing motivation for learning Serbian among members of the Albanian national minority. From interviews with political leaders of the Albanian national minority, it was possible to conclude that there is an acute awareness that a problem exists concerning the lack of knowledge of Serbian in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. The national assembly deputy, the presidents of the municipalities of Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja, and the Chairman of the ANMC rated the level of knowledge of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the quality of teaching in the primary schools of these three municipalities as unsatisfactory. Exceptional cooperation was established with all local actors that the research team had the opportunity to meet during the field research, from the presidents of the municipalities and the Chairman of the ANMC, who delegated their representatives for the needs of the field research, to the school principals and their deputies and associates, who opened the doors of 16 primary schools in the three municipalities for the research team members. The views and experiences of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue to pupils from the Albanian community were of exceptional importance for considering all the important aspects of this issue.

At the end of this section we wish to add some more reasons that made the Coordination Body decide to produce this study. The issue of knowledge of Serbian is relevant for all national minorities living in the Republic of Serbia, especially with regard to the integrative role of language in ethnically homogeneous environments. The problem of the lack of knowledge of Serbian is not a feature of just the Albanian national minority; it is an issue that is also faced by members of other national minorities living in linguistically homogeneous environments, or those whose mother tongue differs significantly from Serbian. This was also confirmed in interviews with representatives of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and the National Community of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and with representatives of the national councils of the Hungarian and Slovakian national minorities. An analysis of data obtained from internal research<sup>4</sup> that was conducted in 2006 by the Pedagogical Institute of

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4 The research conducted in schools in Vojvodina has shown that the biggest problem in teaching is the insufficient development of communication competences, the lack of modern teaching material, as well as differing levels of knowledge in children starting the first grade of primary school. In accordance with the findings of relevant studies on language acquisition, the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina is also conducting a project on fostering mother and non-mother tongues in preschool establishments in Vojvodina. (Interview with Lenka Erdelj, Director of the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina, 9 May 2014.)

Vojvodina in schools where teaching is conducted in the language of a national minority, has shown that 76% of pupils attending these schools have problems with learning Serbian. These are primarily pupils whose mother tongue is Hungarian, and who live in linguistically homogeneous environments where they only have contact with the Serbian language in school. On the other hand, members of national minorities whose language is closer to Serbian (e.g. Slovaks, Ruthenians, Croats, Bunjevci, and Montenegrins) or those who live in linguistically mixed or bilingual environments (Romanians, for instance) have no problems learning Serbian. Their prior knowledge before starting primary school is substantially better compared to children who are not exposed to the language in the environment they live in, or whose mother tongue is not similar to Serbian and belongs to a different language group, as is the case with Hungarian and Albanian. Since the Coordination Body has jurisdiction over the three municipalities in the south of Serbia, attention was focused on research only in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

In view of the fact that in Serbia to date there has been no comprehensive research on the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue among members of national minorities, this study represents a first attempt at systematically researching the problems and possibilities for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools where teaching is conducted in the language of a national minority. The intention of the research team is to highlight the problems and pave the way for concrete activities based on the research, and to offer solutions in cooperation with all key actors that will improve the quality of the teaching of Serbian in primary schools in the south of Serbia.

The main findings of this study confirm that the knowledge of Serbian among pupils attending Albanian-language primary schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja is at an extremely low level. Analysing the situation of the few pupils who can speak Serbian well shows that their knowledge of the language has most often not been acquired in school and is directly related to the extent to which they use or learn Serbian outside school (for example in contacts with their peers, the media). The biggest problems that the schools are facing are the lack of professional teaching staff for this subject and the lack of resources for training and continuing professional development of the existing staff, the use of the outdated teaching methods, the lack of modern teaching aids, as well as limited possibilities for organizing meetings and social interaction between children attending Serbian-language schools and children attending Albanian-language schools.

The study comprises five chapters and an annex. Chapter I, with a short overview of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja and their characteristics within the context of education and language, depicts the context that is relevant for the creation and reading of the findings of this study.

International instruments, standards and principles in the area of the linguistic rights of members of national minorities, as well as relevant guidelines and recommendations on the integration of diverse societies that form the conceptual framework for the production of this study, are presented in Chapter II. The same chapter also provides a short overview of the legislative framework of the Republic of Serbia related to the regulations governing the education of members of national minorities and the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

The analysis of the results of the empirical research comprise the main part of this study, and this is presented in the most extensive chapter, Chapter III. The methodological framework of the research is presented at the beginning of the chapter, followed by sections aimed at providing answers to the following questions: What does the teaching process look like? Under what circumstances does it takes place and who are the teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja? What is the level of knowledge of Serbian as a non-mother tongue among the pupils in primary schools of these three municipalities? In addition to answering these questions, this central chapter of the study also contains an analysis of the curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue for primary schools, and also provides an overview and analysis of textbooks for this subject.

The views, opinions and needs of stakeholders regarding the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is presented in Chapter IV.

Guided by the frameworks of international standards and domestic regulations in the sphere of human and minority rights, and using the findings of the research that was conducted for the purposes of this study in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the authors have formulated a series of short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language primary schools. The recommendations are presented in Chapter V.

Annex I presents the experiences of other projects conducted in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja dedicated to the learning of Serbian.

The research team comprised the following members: Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic, associate professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad; Milan Ajdzanovic, senior lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad; Vesna Krajisnik, senior lecturer at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade and Administrator of the Centre for Serbian as a Foreign Language at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade; Nikica Strizak, language instructor at the Centre for Serbian as a Foreign Language at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade; Marija Stankovic, researcher and PhD candidate at the

Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade; Ivana Stanojev, researcher; Dunja Poleti, sociologist and PhD candidate at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade; Rahim Salihi, adviser to the Director of the Office of the Coordination Body of the Government of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja; Milica Rodic, adviser to the Director of the Office of the Coordination Body of the Government of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja; and field research associates: Raife Ibishi, a student at the Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac; Fadil Azizi, Chief of the Department of Social Affairs, Presevo municipality; Femi Isufi, Principal of the “Sami Frasheri” primary school; Nehat Aliu, Serbian language teacher at the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac and member of the Albanian National Minority Council; and Natasa Boskovic, the study coordinator.

The study was financed by the Embassy of the United Kingdom and the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. The expert assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, which is the main instrument of the OSCE for “conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage”, was of great importance. The documents of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, such as “The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities” and “Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies” served as the basis of the conceptual framework for the production of this study.

16 | We owe special gratitude for the support and cooperation provided during the production of the study to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; the Institute for the Promotion of Education; the Institute for Education Quality Assessment; the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities of the Autonomous Province Vojvodina; the Provincial Ombudsman of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina; the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina; Riza Halimi and Shaip Kamberi, national assembly deputies in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia; the President of the Municipality of Bujanovac, Nagip Arifi; the President of the Municipality of Medvedja, Slobodan Draskovic; the President of the Municipality of Presevo, Ragmi Mustafa; the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council, Galip Beqiri; the educational adviser from the Leskovac Schools Authority, Belul Nasufi; representatives of the Hungarian National Minority Council and the Slovak National Minority Council; the principals and deputy principals of 16 primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja; the teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue; the pupils and their parents; representatives of the media, civil society, the commercial sector, state organs and municipal administrations of the Presevo and Bujanovac municipalities.

**I. CONTEXT – THE MUNICIPALITIES  
OF PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC  
AND MEDVEDJA**



## I. CONTEXT – THE MUNICIPALITIES OF PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA

*Milica Rodic*

Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja are municipalities in the south of Serbia characterized by the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the population. These municipalities are also multi-confessional, multicultural and multilingual. The municipality of Medvedja is a part of Jablanica District, while Bujanovac and Presevo are part of Pcinja District. The Government of the Republic of Serbia paid special attention to these municipalities in 2000 by forming the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, which deals with improving the quality of life of citizens and developing these areas. The Coordination Body was established with the goal of normalizing relations in the municipalities, calming tensions among members of different ethnicities and, above all, stopping armed conflicts.

The establishment of a long-term and sustainable peace in these three municipalities was the primary focus of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Coordination Body. The development of infrastructure and economic development are of great importance for the development of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, which was indeed the primary objective of the Coordination Body from the very beginning. In addition to investment in the infrastructure and economy, the activities and projects of the local communities, the Coordination Body, the Government of the Republic of Serbia and international partners underwent a significant change in 2008 when interethnic relations and the integration of communities at the local level was made an issue of primary importance. The main mechanisms for the integration of communities are being deployed primarily in the field of employment and education, and a necessary precondition for integration is knowledge of the language of the State.

One of the priorities of the Coordination Body is working with young people with the goal of empowering and connecting them and ensuring the stable development and progress of the municipalities. Formal and informal education is at the centre of attention of state organs in the first instance, and also of international organizations. Education is important for the overall development of local areas, regions and states, and in this sphere one can identify the resources needed not just for the development of local communities but also for social integration too.

Over the past few years, it has become increasingly evident that the lack of knowledge of Serbian among members of the Albanian community constitutes a growing problem when it comes to implementing initiatives directed towards improving the situation in the spheres of work, job-seeking, continuing education and mobility in general. Knowledge of the language of the state is a precondition for successful integration and the equal participation of all communities, especially minorities, at the local and central levels of decision-making.

### ***Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja:***

The municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja are categorized as underdeveloped areas,<sup>5</sup> facing a number of obstacles and challenges. The high unemployment rate and the high level of poverty, accompanied by a conspicuous and negative migratory trend,<sup>6</sup> sluggish economic and infrastructure development and a shortage of skilled workers, are just some of the structural and resource weaknesses and shortcomings.<sup>7</sup>

18 | In order to understand the situation in the sphere of education in these municipalities in the south of Serbia, it is important to be aware of the fact that these ethnically mixed municipalities are characterized by schools that are mono-ethnic and segregated. The educational work takes place in three preschool-level

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5 The municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja belong to a group of economically underdeveloped areas that are characterized by “many decades of underdevelopment and the occurrence of the new transitional poverty (...) accumulated economic problems (no industrial resources, the collapse of major systems, an underdeveloped business community, slow privatization process), social and demographic problems”,

The Office for the Development of Underdeveloped Areas:  
[www.kornrp.gov.rs/site/page/3/nerazvijena-podrucja](http://www.kornrp.gov.rs/site/page/3/nerazvijena-podrucja) (accessed on 16 May 2014)

6 The negative migratory trend is a consequence of the decline in the birth rate and the process of intensive depopulation with people leaving to live in other parts of the Republic of Serbia or abroad – mostly to member States of the European Union, in search of employment and financial security.

7 Data on the structure of the unemployed indicate that the biggest number consists of people with no qualifications: [www.kornrp.gov.rs/images/SLIKE/Uredbe/brosura/brosura%20sve%20zajedno%20sa%20koricom-print.pdf](http://www.kornrp.gov.rs/images/SLIKE/Uredbe/brosura/brosura%20sve%20zajedno%20sa%20koricom-print.pdf) (accessed on 16 May 2014). When it comes to teaching personnel that municipalities need for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, according to data from the Vranje branch office of the National Employment Service, which is responsible for the territory of Vranje, Bujanovac, Trgoviste, Presevo, Surdulica, Bosilegrad and Vladicin Han, only one person was registered as a qualified professor for class teaching, and that person worked as a professor of Serbian language and literature in Vranje. The branch office in Vladicin Han records two unemployed persons with language degrees (Serbian language).

establishments,<sup>8</sup> 24 primary-level establishments<sup>9</sup> and five secondary-level establishments.<sup>10</sup> In almost all the educational institutions, the work is being done in ethnically homogeneous environments, which means that teaching is conducted exclusively in either Serbian or Albanian. The exceptions to this are the multi-ethnic primary schools “9. maj” in the village of Reljane (Presevo municipality), “Gornja Jablanica” and “Sijarinska Banja” (Medvedja municipality) where pupils from the two communities attend at the same time but follow separate classes. Other exceptions are two departments at the Faculty in Medvedja where students attend classes in Serbian with simultaneous interpretation in Albanian, and the department of the Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac where the teaching is bilingual and students from all communities jointly attend the classes for subjects that are conducted in Serbian.

Aside from the rare examples of multi-ethnic educational institutions, ethnic Serbs, Albanians and Roma in the south of Serbia do not share a common space because they do not attend the same schools. Thus, pupils rarely have opportunities to meet each other, socialize and exchange experiences because in some schools teaching is conducted in Serbian (those schools are usually also attend by Roma pupils), while in others teaching is conducted in Albanian. There are not many extracurricular joint activities, and those that exist are typically organized by NGOs and sport clubs and there is great demand to join them.

Knowledge of the language of the State is of fundamental importance, not only at the micro and meso level (for the individual and the local community) but also at the macro level, which in this context means the integration of different ethnic communities. Knowledge of Serbian is a basic requirement for employment in public service. The opening of new job vacancies, especially since 2010, has provided

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8 In the territory of Bujanovac municipality, there is one preschool institution that is running the school preparation programme separately in Serbian and Albanian. For preschool children from the Roma community, the school preparation programme is run in Serbian in a Serbian-language primary school in Bujanovac, and they subsequently attend regular classes in that school. In the preschool institution in Presevo municipality, school preparation programmes are organized separately in Albanian and Serbian languages. The situation is the same in Medvedja municipality – in the sole preschool institution in this municipality educational work is carried out in separate groups for children from different ethnic communities.

9 Out of ten primary schools in Bujanovac municipality, four conduct teaching in Serbian and the other six in Albanian. During the 2013–2014 academic year, in the primary school in the village of Biljaca, teaching in Serbian has been separately organized for four pupils of different grades. Primary education is organized in eight schools in Presevo municipality: six schools conduct teaching in Albanian, one in Serbian, and in one school, teaching is conducted in Serbian and Albanian. In that sole multi-ethnic school, pupils do not attend classes jointly, but separately in their own mother tongue. Out of six schools in Medvedja municipality, three schools conduct teaching in Serbian, one in Albanian and two in both languages, but it should be noted that there are no ethnically mixed classes.

10 There are two secondary schools in Bujanovac that conduct teaching exclusively in Serbian or Albanian respectively, as well as a Serbian-language music school. In Presevo there are two secondary schools – a grammar school and a secondary technical school in which students attend classes in their own mother tongue. In Medvedja there is one secondary school where students attend the classes in their own mother tongue (there are no ethnically heterogeneous classes).

new opportunities for job-seekers.<sup>11</sup> It has been observed in the recruitment processes for vacancies in state organs that very few candidates from the Albanian community understand and speak Serbian.

New opportunities have also arisen for young people graduating from secondary school and enrolling at universities. Since 2011, the Coordination Body has been providing scholarships for young people from these municipalities to study at the University of Novi Sad. The entrance examination, and then the studies themselves, implicitly require a good knowledge of Serbian, since that is the language in which teaching is conducted.

It is the same situation with the Bujanovac branch of the Subotica Faculty of Economics. The teaching in the Bujanovac branch is bilingual, and so students from the Albanian community need to be proficient in Serbian so that they can attend the classes and pass the exams that are set in Serbian. For the benefit of students who have been awarded scholarships by the Coordination Body and whose mother tongue is not Serbian, as well as students from the Albanian community attending the branch of the Faculty of Economics,<sup>12</sup> this governmental organ has organized ad hoc Serbian language courses lasting several months on a number of occasions. The first initiatives for organized learning of Serbian originated from the civil sector, first in Presevo and then in Bujanovac. Nongovernmental organizations from the two municipalities, with the help of funding from the Coordination Body earmarked for the work of the non-governmental sector, organized Serbian language classes.

Albanian leaders from the south of Serbia have recognized the importance of improving Serbian language learning. In June 2013 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the report from a meeting between the President of the Coordination Body, Professor Zoran Stankovic, and Albanian political leaders from the south of Serbia. The report contains seven topics that the Albanian leaders proposed for discussion with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. One of proposed topics was education, within the framework of which it was proposed that the possibility of improving the learning of Serbian be examined.

Serbian is a compulsory subject for pupils of all minority communities and it is taught through primary and secondary education. The basic goal of this language learning, first and foremost, is to enable members of minority communities to acquire a knowledge of Serbian so that they can use it in everyday communication.

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11 Decision amending the Decision on the maximum number of employees in state administration organs, public agencies and compulsory social insurance organizations, Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2010.

12 Serbian language classes for students attending the branch of the Faculty of Economics have been organized with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (The Hague) and the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

The aim of this study is to present research findings and concrete recommendations based on those findings for the improvement of the quality of teaching in primary education. If the recommended model proves to be effective and sustainable, it could be subsequently applied to the level of secondary education. Working with the pupils and teachers in the primary education system is the logical first step for several reasons: (1) the acquisition of new material is much easier at the earlier stages of the education cycle; (2) the curricula for the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in secondary schools assume that pupils who have gone through primary school have acquired the basic knowledge that is expected and defined by the primary school curricula. If the low level of knowledge of Serbian among pupils finishing primary school is not addressed, the teachers in secondary schools will not be able to follow the curriculum as intended with their pupils; (3) the root of the problem lies in the initial stages of the educational process. Accordingly it is necessary to develop and improve the quality of teaching precisely in those initial stages and to enable pupils, in the later stages of their development, to enhance, supplement and perfect the knowledge that they acquired in the earlier stages of their education and growth; (4) if one bears in mind that the Law on Foundations of the Education System prescribes that primary education is compulsory, unlike secondary education, then interventions in primary education will affect a larger number of pupils. This would allow a larger number of members of the Albanian community to master the basics of Serbian.

Poor knowledge of Serbian constitutes a significant obstacle to young ethnic Albanians finding jobs or continuing their education in the Republic of Serbia, communicating in various situations and handling numerous tasks. The consequence of not knowing the official language is difficulties in integrating, with the possible result of segregation and the separation of an ethnic group from the majority. Separating two groups creates a gulf, unfamiliarity and misunderstandings between them, despite the fact that they share a common living space.



## **II. CONCEPTUAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

### **II.1. Conceptual framework - the importance of language in the integration of diverse societies**



## II. CONCEPTUAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

### II.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN THE INTEGRATION OF DIVERSE SOCIETIES

*Nataša Boskovic*

The essence of the central notions underlying this study should be viewed within the context of existing international norms and standards in the field of human and minority rights, and in accordance with the standards relating to the integration of diverse societies. International standards in these areas are defined in the provisions of a number of international conventions ratified by the Republic of Serbia, as well as declarations and other documents of the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Taking into account the need for the standards to be applied in the context of a particular society and a particular moment, the authors of this study on the possibilities for improving the teaching and learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja have formulated recommendations based on the empirical and theoretical research that was carried out, taking into account not only the pedagogical perspective of learning/teaching a non-mother tongue, but also the fact that language is an important driver of social integration.

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#### ***Social integration***

Integration can be understood as “a dynamic process which involves multiple actors and they are all engaged in order to ensure effective participation of all members of a diverse society in economic, political, social, and cultural life, and it strengthens the joint and inclusive sense of belonging at both national and local level.”<sup>13</sup> Integration refers to the process of building a harmonious co-existence of multiple communities founded on constant dialogue and respect for the right of identity, and it is precisely that which makes it different from assimilation, which constitutes the coercive amalgamation of members of a mi-

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13 “Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies”, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 2012 (translation by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Belgrade 2012).

nority community into the majority culture, language and customs, and the loss or obliteration of ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

Article 5 paragraph 2 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter: the Framework Convention) also addresses this issue: “Without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation.” It is important to stress that States are not being prevented from taking measures within the framework of their general integration policy, which recognizes the importance of social cohesion and reflects the aspiration noted in the preamble to the Framework Convention that cultural diversity in any society should be a source and a factor of enrichment, not of division.<sup>14</sup>

Integration policy, therefore, is characterized by the voluntary participation of all members of society in that process with respect for and preservation of the culture and identity of members of national minorities.<sup>15</sup> Integration is a dynamic process, and consequently, an integration policy needs to be continuously enhanced and adapted to changes in society, while aspiring to secure the participation of all members of society. It is thus important to continually incorporate new elements into public integration policies that reflect the needs and social circumstances that are in a constant state of change. It is within these frameworks that we should also consider the process of integration of national minorities in ethnically and linguistically diverse societies. International standards pertaining to this process have been developed within the framework of the concept and practice of “integration while respecting diversity” by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities,<sup>16</sup> which will be discussed further below.

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### ***The right to education and linguistic rights***

The right to education is closely linked to linguistic rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was the first international document to designate education as a human right, while Article 26 stipulates that primary education shall be compulsory. The same article also states that education should promote

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14 Explanatory notes to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995): <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Reports/Html/157.htm>

15 Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Article 5.

16 The concept of “integration while respecting diversity” is a guiding principle of the work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities when it comes to dealing with potential ethnic conflicts.

understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and contribute to the maintenance of peace. In Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, these principles are elaborated further and are incorporated in international law. Minority rights in the sphere of education are further regulated in the following international instruments: Article 5 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); Article 4 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992); and Article 14 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995). The above documents elaborate and supplement the provisions of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning the rights of minorities to foster their collective identity by using their mother tongue, first and foremost through education. The same documents also provide that the right to foster a collective identity through minority languages must be balanced with the responsibility to integrate and participate in wider society.

Acting in accordance with international and domestic norms and standards governing the protection of minority rights and the preservation of the collective identity of national minorities, States take measures related to the education of members of national minorities in their mother tongue. Such measures thereby meet requirements in the area of minority rights and affirm the commitment of the State to foster diversity as a value and prized asset of its society. States undertake, within the territory in which such regional or minority languages are used, according to the situation of each of these languages, and without prejudice to the teaching of the official/state language, to make available fully or in substantial part pre-school, primary, secondary, technical/vocational, university or other higher education, as well as adult education in minority or regional languages (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 8, paragraph 1).

The process of social integration entails the acquisition of knowledge about the wider social community and learning the state language. For example, Article 5, paragraph 1 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education states that it is essential to recognize the right of members of minorities to education in their mother tongue, provided that “this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in its activities.” Just as the best way to preserve minority languages is through education, so too is the educational process of great importance for the learning of the official language in schools where teaching is conducted in a minority language, especially during compulsory primary education.

In countries where, in accordance with international standards, the right of members of national minorities to be educated in their mother tongue is exercised, the official language of the State is also be learned. In “The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities” of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the right of national minorities to education in the mother tongue was recognized as an element of the right to preserve identity, while the official language is learned as an element of integration, that is, participation in social, economic and political life.

While it may constitute a pillar and inalienable element of the preservation and development of the identity of members of national minorities, the exclusive use of the mother tongue may also be a driver of the self-isolation of a national minority, especially in areas where exposure to the majority culture and language is not great. According to the “Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies”, multilingual education enhances the value of the education of pupils in all communities and society as a whole and should be encouraged for both minorities and the majority.

### ***Language rights in the context of social integration***

Given the fact that language is a key feature of national identity, its role is of great importance for the respect and exercising of minority rights. The right to use the mother tongue is foreseen in Article 10 of the Framework Convention, which prescribes that “every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing”, while Article 7 paragraph 1 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages defines the principles and goals on which States base their policies, legislation and practice with regard to regional or minority languages used within their territories.

For the purpose of this study, we shall provide a brief explanation of the meaning of and relationships between the terms mother/non-mother tongue, minority language, foreign language, and official/state language, according to the “Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe”<sup>17</sup> of

17 From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe, Executive Version 2007. Language Policy Division, DGIV, Council of Europe. Plurilingualism is the notion introduced and developed by the Council of Europe, initially in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and subsequently in other documents relating to language education policy. According to the Common European Framework, plurilingual and pluricultural skills are the ability to use language in communication and participation in intercultural activities, whereby a person has different levels of knowledge of several languages and experience of several cultures. This is the basis for distinguishing between plurilingualism as the ability of a speaker (who is able to use more than one language), and multilingualism as the presence of multiple languages in a particular territory. It is a qualitative shift – from focusing on languages (one state can be considered monolingual or bilingual) to focusing on the speakers (p.8). More about this concept and the difference between plurilingualism and multilingualism can be found in: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe.

the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. According to this document, “first language” is a scientific term that refers to what is commonly called the “mother tongue”. It refers to the language acquired first in early childhood.<sup>18</sup> The difference between a “foreign language” and “second language” is very important because it describes the social environment in which language skills are acquired. A language adopted in the immediate surroundings is called a “second language” and is most often used in everyday situations. “Foreign language” is the term often applied to a language that is used as an official language in another country. The term “minority language” refers to languages used by minority communities, primarily in education, but also in communication with state institutions, courts and the media. The official language, otherwise also known as the state language, is a term used to signify the language that is prevalent in all public domains in a given country. The state language is often accorded the status of an official language in laws and constitutions. In accordance with the terminology used by the legislator specified in the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Serbia, for the purposes of this study the term “non-mother tongue” is used in the sense that is closest to the notion of “second language”.

### ***Language education policy as an element of integration policy***

The right and duty of members of national minorities to participate in the process of social integration is provided for in a number of international documents.<sup>19</sup>

The “Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies” of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities state that “integration policies should include measures that encourage cross-community dialogue and interaction based on tolerance and mutual respect. This covers a broad range of initiatives in various fields, including education, media and language policy.”<sup>20</sup> It is further stated that “States have an obligation to protect and promote minority languages and the right of persons belonging to minorities to learn and use them, and minorities at the same time share with the majorities the responsibility to

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18 For bilingual/multilingual people, the “first language” may be two or more languages, if the child is in contact with speakers of different languages when discovering and learning about the world.

19 Copenhagen Document, page 34; “The Hague Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities”, recommendation no.1; Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, explanation on Article 14; UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, Article 5, paragraph 1; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Article 4.

“Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies”, guideline no. 11, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 2012.

20 “Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies”, guideline no. 11, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 2012.

participate in the cultural, social and economic life and public affairs (...) This participation implies that persons belonging to minorities should acquire adequate knowledge of the state or official language.”<sup>21</sup>

An inadequate or complete lack of knowledge of the official language of the State leads to a reduction in opportunities for the participation of members of minority communities in education in the official language of the State, in specialist training, in accessing the benefits of incentive measures implemented by the State in the field of education (scholarships for secondary school pupils and university students), and in gaining employment (particularly in the state administration system) and, finally, reduced participation in the decision-making process and wider social life. If such a situation of reduced participation lasts long, it generates less and less exposure to and contact with the language, thereby also making the chances of it being learned grow ever smaller.

Communication and interaction between members of heterogeneous societies promotes contact with the language and opportunities for improving knowledge of the culture, history and religion of both national minorities and the majority population. That is the reason why the international instruments for the protection of minority rights emphasize the need to promote knowledge of languages, among other things, in order to create a climate of tolerance and dialogue (Article 6 of the Framework Convention). The principles and values of multilingualism and interculturalism in education entail, alongside the compulsory learning of the official language of the State, the learning of minority languages.<sup>22</sup> Thus, two-way learning should certainly not be neglected when it comes to the process of integration in linguistically mixed environments.

Since language is a particularly visible aspect of group identity, it easily becomes a symbol for a particular group, especially in situations of tension and conflict. Communication and understanding are all the more important when it comes to the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding. In terms of post-conflict societies, the role of language is very prominent due to the fact that trust needs to be rebuilt, together with the political and economic conditions for coexistence.

Accordingly, “knowledge of the official language is a factor of social cohesion and integration.”<sup>23</sup> That is why the State should coordinate efforts related to the learning of minority languages and the official lan-

21 Ibid. Commentary on guideline 42

22 Recommendation 1740 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on the place of the mother tongue in school education.

23 The Parties to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster the culture, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority (Article 12 paragraphs 1 and 2). In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to teaching materials, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.

guage, especially in areas where the educational process is being conducted in the language of a national minority and where the possibilities for learning the official language are largely tied to the educational system, as is the case in areas where members of national minorities constitute the majority population. “States’ policies should balance the need for one or more shared language(s) as a common basis for the integration and functioning of society with the obligation to safeguard and promote linguistic diversity, including by protecting the linguistic rights of minorities. Governments should provide accessible opportunities to learn the State language.”<sup>24</sup> Each particular situation has a number of features specific to it that must be taken into account, and it is also necessary to consider the characteristics of each particular society so that standards may be applied properly within the framework of the existing integration policy.

It should also be borne in mind that participation in the process of integration is the responsibility of all institutional and social actors, the media and civil society. It is the State’s obligation to facilitate<sup>25</sup> the creation of equal opportunities for all its citizens, without discrimination.

In European countries where public policies in the field of education and language are increasingly based on the requirements of economic competitiveness and giving priority to the learning of foreign languages, there is also a growing awareness of the need for children and young people from minority and migrant communities to learn the official language of the country in which they live. When large numbers of the population are unable to participate in economic and social life due to not knowing the language, the distribution of linguistic competence negatively affects social cohesion.<sup>26</sup>

Taking into account all the aforesaid elements, it is important to view the findings of the field research conducted for the purpose of this study in the context of social integration rather than strictly pedagogical interventions for promoting language teaching.

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24 “Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies”, Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague, 2012.

25 The Parties to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster the culture, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority (Article 12 paragraphs 1 and 2). In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to teaching materials, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.

26 Pádraig Ó Riagáin and Georges Lüdi, *Bilingual Education: Some Policy Issues*, Language Policy Division DG IV – Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education Council of Europe, Strasbourg.



**II.2. Outline of legislation in the  
Republic of Serbia in the field of learning  
Serbian as a non-mother tongue**



## II.2. OUTLINE OF LEGISLATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA IN THE FIELD OF LEARNING SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE

*Marija Stankovic*

### II.2.1. Legislative frameworks in the Republic of Serbia governing the rights and freedoms of members of national minorities

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia<sup>27</sup> guarantees the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia, which are exercised in accordance with international law protecting human and minority rights. Members of national minorities have individual and collective rights, rights that can be exercised individually or in community with others and in accordance with laws and international standards. Collective rights imply that members of national minorities, directly or through their chosen representatives, participate in the decision-making process or decide on certain matters related to their culture, education, information and the use of language and scripts, for the purpose of exercising the right to self-government in the sphere of culture, education, information and official use of languages and scripts. Additionally, members of a national minority can elect their national councils, in accordance with the Law on National Councils of National Minorities.<sup>28</sup>

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For the sphere of exercising minority rights, especially when it comes to education, a number of special laws are of great importance: the Law on the Foundations of the Education System,<sup>29</sup> the Law on Primary Schools,<sup>30</sup> the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts,<sup>31</sup> and the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities.<sup>32</sup>

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27 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 83/2006).

28 Law on National Councils of National Minorities (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 20/2014).

29 Law on the Foundations of the Education System (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 55/2013).

30 Law on Primary Schools (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 22/2002).

31 Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 30/2010).

32 Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 30/2010).

## II.2.2. Description of the education system of the Republic of Serbia

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantees everyone, under the same conditions, the right to education. The structure of the education system in Serbia comprises:

- Compulsory and free pre-school education, for a minimum of nine months;
- Eight years of compulsory and free primary education;
- Free secondary education, which, depending on the type of secondary school, lasts from three to four years;
- Higher education, accessible to all citizens under equal conditions.

32 | Compulsory and free primary education is regulated by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System and the Law on Primary Schools. Primary education lasts for eight years and is divided into two cycles. The first cycle covers the first four grades, which are organized by classroom teaching. The second cycle covers grades five to eight, which are organized by subject teaching, according to the school curriculum.

Secondary education is not compulsory. The right to free secondary education is regulated by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, the Law on Secondary Schools and the Law on Secondary Education.<sup>33</sup>

Higher education is regulated by the Law on Higher Education.<sup>34</sup> Pursuant to Article 80 of the Law on Higher Education, a higher education institution shall organize and conduct studies in Serbian, but may also organize examinations and conduct studies, or certain parts thereof, and organize the preparation and defence of final bachelor's, master's and specialist theses and doctoral dissertations in the language of a national minority or in a foreign language, in accordance with the statute of the higher education institution. A higher education institution may run a degree programme in the language of a national minority or in a foreign language if that programme is approved or accredited.

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33 Law on Secondary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 55/2013).

34 Law on Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 89/2013).

### **II.2.3. The use of languages in the education system of the Republic of Serbia**

According to the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, educational work shall be carried out in Serbian. For members of national minorities, educational work is carried out in the mother tongue, and on an exceptional basis can be carried out bilingually or in Serbian (Article 9, paragraph 2). According to the Law on Primary Schools, where a curriculum is also run in the languages of national minorities, pupils shall follow the curriculum for Serbian (Article 5, paragraph 4). Also, Article 12, paragraph 4 of the Law on Primary Education<sup>35</sup> provides that when educational work is being carried out in the language and script of a national minority, the school shall be required to organize Serbian language classes for the pupils. The issue of language use rights for national minorities is regulated under paragraph 5 of the same Article, which provides that, when teaching is conducted in Serbian, teaching shall be organized for pupils belonging to national minorities in the language of the members of national minority with elements of national culture as an elective subject.

### **II.2.4. Teacher's qualifications – the competences and qualifications required**

Educational work in educational institutions is conducted by teachers, educators and teaching associates, that is, persons who have obtained the appropriate higher education, and who must have been educated in psychological, pedagogical and methodological (PPM) disciplines at a higher education institution during their degree studies or after graduation worth at least 30 credit points and six credit points of practice in an institution, in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (Article 8 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System).<sup>36</sup> In accordance with that law, other persons may assist a teacher, educator or teaching associate in carrying out educational work.

The Law on Primary Schools (Article 69) prescribes that the teaching of grades 1 to 4 can be carried out by a teacher with an appropriate university degree or post-secondary diploma. Teaching in the Serbian language and teaching in the languages of national minorities from grades 1 to 4 can be performed by a teacher who has acquired an appropriate degree or diploma in the language in which the classes are conducted, or who has passed an examination in the language with teaching methodology at an appropriate

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35 Law on Primary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 55/2013).

36 Appropriate higher education is education gained at the second-degree level (master's degree studies, specialist academic studies or specialist professional studies) or education acquired at the undergraduate level for at least four years. On an exceptional basis, a person may work as a teacher or educator if they have completed relevant higher education at the first-degree level (undergraduate academic, or professional studies), studies for a period of three years or post-secondary education.

post-secondary or university establishment. In order to carry out educational work it is necessary, during studies or after their completion, to gain practice as a student teacher and obtain at least 30 credit points under the PPM disciplines. Subject teaching can be performed by a teacher who has an appropriate university degree.

The education that teachers, educators and teaching associates should have is prescribed by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (Article 121), according to which the job of an educator in a preschool institution can be performed by a person who has acquired the relevant higher education at the first-degree or second-degree level, through three-year studies, post-secondary education, or with an appropriate secondary education. The job of an educator in a preschool institution or a classroom teacher, except in the case of the Romany language, can be performed by a person who has completed the appropriate education in the language in which the teaching is being performed, or who has passed an examination in the language with teaching methodology, according to the curriculum of an appropriate higher education institution.

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The job of educator in a preschool institution or classroom teacher in Serbian municipalities which have a majority population of Albanian nationality (who are educated in Albanian as the language of a national minority) can be performed by persons who have acquired appropriate education in the Albanian language, or persons who have passed an examination in Albanian language with teaching methodology, according to the curriculum of an appropriate higher education institution. Similarly, the job of teacher or teaching associate can be performed by a person who has completed secondary, post-secondary or higher education in the language in which the educational work is performed, or who has passed an examination in that language according to the curriculum of an appropriate higher education institution.

One of the possible solutions for implementing a programme of learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language schools is to use an assistant teacher, educator or teaching associate. The Minister prescribes (per Article 121 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System) the detailed requirements in terms of the level and type of education of teachers, educators, teaching associates or associates in preschool institutions who run special or specialized programmes (such as a programme for learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue), pedagogical assistants or assistant teachers, the training programme for teachers and teaching associates, and the training programme for pedagogical assistants.

The work of teachers, educators and teaching associates can be performed by persons who have a work

permit or a licence,<sup>37</sup> who can carry out an individual educational plan for working with children and pupils with developmental difficulties, if trained for that, according to the curriculum and in the manner prescribed by the Minister (Article 122 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System). The job of teacher, educator or teaching associate may be performed without a licence in an institution (for up to two years from the date of employment) by one of the following:

- 1) A trainee
- 2) A person who meets the requirements to work as a teacher, educator or teaching associate, with work experience acquired outside the institution, under the conditions and in the manner prescribed for trainees;
- 3) A person who has been hired for a fixed term in order to replace an absent staff member;
- 4) An associate in a preschool institution
- 5) A pedagogical assistant or assistant teacher.

An associate in a preschool institution can perform educational work without a licence if he/she has the required education prescribed by the law.

## **II.2.5. Education of National Minorities**

In accordance with the Constitution, members of national minorities are guaranteed the right to an education in their own language in educational institutions established by the State, and the right to use their own language and script. The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities guarantees members of national minorities the right to education in their own language in preschool, primary and secondary education (Article 13, paragraph 1), while education in the language of a national minority does not preclude the compulsory learning of Serbian (Article 13, paragraph 4). The curriculum should be adapted to the specific national minority and include topics related to its history, art and culture. The national minority councils must without fail be involved in the process of formulating the curriculum.

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<sup>37</sup> A licence is a public document. The Ministry issues a licence and maintains a register of teachers, educators and teaching associates who have been issued a licence.

A certain minimum number of pupils may be prescribed in order for the right to be exercised to education in the mother tongue for national minorities within the framework of preschool, primary and secondary education, although this number may be less than the minimum number of students prescribed by law for the provision of suitable forms of teaching and education (Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, Article 13). The same article of that law prescribes that each particular educational institution shall determine what the minimum number of students required is in order for education to be provided in the minority language.

According to the Law on Preschool Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 18/2010), educational work shall be conducted in Serbian, while for members of national minorities it shall be conducted in their mother tongue, but may also be done bilingually or in Serbian, if at least 50 per cent of the parents or guardians of the children opt for that (Article 5, paragraphs 1 and 2).

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The Law on Primary Education also guarantees the right of members of national minorities to conduct educational work in the language and script of a national minority, or bilingually, if during registration for the first grade, at least 15 pupils opt accordingly (Article 12, paragraph 1). On an exceptional basis, educational work can also be conducted in the language and script of a national minority if fewer than 15 pupils were registered in the first grade, upon consent from the Minister responsible for education affairs and having obtained the prior opinion of the relevant national council (Article 12, paragraph 2). Approval for running a school programme in the language of a national minority for fewer than 15 pupils is granted by the Ministry after obtaining the opinion of the appropriate national minority council within the framework of the responsibilities of the national councils defined by the Law on National Minority Councils. If the national minority council does not provide an opinion within 15 days of receipt of the request, it shall be considered that an opinion has been given (Article 12, paragraph 3).

When educational work is conducted in the language and script of a national minority, the school is required to organize Serbian language classes for those pupils (Article 12 paragraph 4), and when teaching is conducted in Serbian, the teaching of the minority language with elements of national culture as an elective subject shall be organized for members of national minorities (Article 12, paragraph 5).

With regard to secondary education, for members of a national minority, educational work shall likewise be conducted in the language and script of the national minority or bilingually, if at least 15 pupils during registration for the first grade opt accordingly, or fewer than 15 pupils with the approval of the ministry

responsible for education affairs, and after the opinion of the appropriate national minority council has been obtained (Article 5, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on Secondary Education).

When educational work in secondary schools is conducted in the language and script of a national minority, the school is required to organize Serbian language classes for those pupils (Article 5, paragraph 4) and when teaching is conducted in Serbian, the teaching of the minority language with elements of national culture shall be organized for members of the national minority (Article 5, paragraph 5).

In order for primary and secondary education to be delivered in the languages of national minorities, it is essential that teachers who can teach in these languages are provided. The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities provides for the establishment of departments and faculties for the education of primary and secondary teachers in the languages of national minorities. The National Strategy of Serbia for Accession to the European Union notes that, in the field of education of members of national minorities, it is necessary to use sub-laws to regulate, first and foremost, the issue of the education and professional development of teachers from national minorities.<sup>38</sup> The issue of sub-laws has also been highlighted in the amended National Programme for the Integration of the Republic of Serbia into the European Union (2009).

When educational work is conducted in the Albanian language and script, as is the case with schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the school is required to organize Serbian language classes for the pupils.

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## **II.2.6. Primary school textbooks used by members of all national minorities**

According to the Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids, textbooks and other teaching aids and materials are printed in the Serbian language using the Cyrillic script. Textbooks and other teaching aids and materials are also printed in the language and script of a national minority for pupils who are being taught in that language.<sup>39</sup> Members of a national minority may also use textbooks from the mother country, but only upon the approval of the Minister of Education.<sup>40</sup>

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38 The National Strategy of Serbia for Accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the European Union 2005: 107.

39 Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 72/2009).

40 Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids, Articles 20 and 28 (Official gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 72/2009).

The National Education Council, on the recommendation of the Institute for the Promotion of Education and a national minority council, in this case the Albanian National Minority Council (ANMC), adopts the plan for textbooks and other teaching aids in the languages of national minorities, in this case Albanian, as well as textbooks for subjects of interest to the national minorities.

In addition to at least three individual expert reviews, the plan for textbooks and other teaching aids and materials in the language of a national minority shall contain the opinion of the national minority council. Some possible solutions are translating existing textbooks from Serbian into the language of the national minority; importing textbooks from the mother country, and of course, writing new textbooks.

The Albanian National Minority Council should determine the need for textbooks and other teaching aids and materials in the Albanian language and the required number of copies for the forthcoming academic year and notify the publisher accordingly in good time.

According to an extract from the register of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development,<sup>41</sup> the approved textbooks for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue for primary schools for the 2013–2014 academic year are shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1. Textbooks for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue**

Grade	Textbook	Authors	Publication year (ISBN)
1 <sup>st</sup>	Let's Learn Serbian 1, Serbian as a non-mother tongue	N. Dobric, B. Maksimovic	650-02-00090/2005 3 Oct. 2005.
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Let's Learn Serbian 2, Serbian as a non-mother tongue	N. Dobric	650-02-00025/2005 15 Apr. 2005.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The Magic of Words, reader for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade of primary school	N. Dobric	650-02-00098/2007-06 17 May 2007.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Language Tips, for Serbian as a non-mother tongue	N. Dobric	650-02-00126/2007-06 31 Aug. 2007
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Workbook with reader, for Serbian as a non-mother tongue ,	N. Dobric, M. Zivkovic	650-02-00131/2010-06 30 Jun. 2010.

41 <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/prosveta/udzbenici/skolska-2013-2014-god/679-izvod-iz-registra-odobrenih-udzbenika-skolska-2013-2014-godina>

4th	Give me a Star for a Spin, reader for the 4th grade of primary school	N. Dobric, G. Stasni	650-02-00163/2007-06 10 Jul. 2007.
4th	Language Tips, for the 4th grade of primary school	D. Zvekic-Dusanovic, N. Dobric	650-02-00174/2007-06 16 Jul. 2007
4th	Workbook with reader "Give me a Star for a Spin" for the 4th grade of primary school	N. Dobric, G. Stasni	650-02-00132/2010-06 13 Apr. 2010.
5th	Language Tips, for the 5th grade of primary school	M. Burzan, J. Jerkovic	650-02-00044/2008-06 4 Jun. 2008
5th	Freckled Childhood – Reader for Serbian as a non-mother tongue	J. Ljustanovic	650-02-00233/207-06 26 Jun. 2008
5th	Workbook with reader "Freckled Childhood" for the 5th grade of primary school	N. Dobric	650-02-00145/2010-06 30 Jun. 2010
6th	Language and Orthography Tips, Serbian as a non-mother tongue	M. Burzan, J. Jerkovic	650-02-.00310/2008-06 30 Jun. 2008.
6th	Knitting with Words, reader for Serbian as a non-mother tongue	N. Dobric, D. Zvekic-Dusanovic, G. Stasni	650-02-00311/2008-06 1 Jul. 2008
6th	Radna sveska uz čitanku Pletivo od reči, za 6. razred osnovne škole	N. Dobric, D. Zvekic-Dusanovic, G. Stasni	650-02-319/2013-06, 7 Nov. 2013.
7th	In the Sun's Mirror, reader for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 7th grade of primary school	N. Dobric, D. Zvekic-Dusanovic, G. Stasni	650-02-00192/2009-06 8 Jul. 2009.
7th	Grammar for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 7th grade of primary school	M. Burzan, J. Jerkovic	650-02-00181/2009-06 7 Jul. 2009.
7th	Workbook for Serbian as a non-mother tongue	N. Dobric, D. Zvekic-Dusanovic, G. Štasni	650-02-00177/2009-06 7 Jul. 2009.
8th	Grammar 8 - Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 8th grade of primary school	M. Burzan, J. Jerkovic	650-02-00128/2010-06 13 Apr. 2010

8th	The Unfathomable Secrets of the Mind and the Heart - Reader for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 8th grade of primary school	G. Stasni, N. Dobric	650-02-00155/2010-06 21 Jul. 2010
8th	Workbook for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 8th grade of primary school	D. Zvekic-Dusanovic, N. Dobric, G. Stasni	650-02-00584/2010-06 21 Sep. 2010

### **II.2.7. Professional qualifications of teachers in educational practice in the context of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the languages of national minorities**

According to the Rules on the Level and Type of Education of Teachers and Expert Associates in Primary Schools, <sup>42</sup> teaching and other forms of educational work for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the first cycle of primary education can be performed by the following persons:

- 1) Professor of Serbian Language and Literature in classes for national minorities;
- 2) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language and Yugoslav Literature for teaching in Hungarian, Ruthenian and Romanian-language schools;
- 3) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology (Serbian Language Specialist/Serbian Language and Linguistics)/master's degree;
- 4) Professor of Serbian Language and Literature;
- 5) Professor of Serbian Language and Literature with General Linguistics;
- 6) Professor of Serbian Literature and Language;
- 7) Professor of Serbian Literature and Language with World Literature;
- 8) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbian with South Slavic Languages;

<sup>42</sup> Rules on the Level and Type of Education of Teachers and Expert Associates in Primary Schools, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - Education Gazette, no. 11/2012.

- 9) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbian Literature with South Slavic Literature;
- 10) Professor/holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbo-Croatian Language and Yugoslav Literature;
- 11) Professor/holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Yugoslav Literature and Serbo-Croatian Language;
- 12) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language and General Linguistics;
- 13) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language with South Slavic Languages;
- 14) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language with Eastern and Western Slavic Languages;
- 15) Professor/holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Yugoslav Literature and World Literature;
- 16) Professor of Yugoslav Literature with a Foreign Language;
- 17) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbian Language and Literature;
- 18) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Literature and Serbian Language;
- 19) Classroom teaching professor;
- 20) Classroom teacher;
- 21) Master of Philology (courses: Serbian Language and Literature, Serbian Literature and Language, Serbian Literature and Language with World Literature, Serbian Language, Serbian Literature, Serbian Philology (Serbian Language and Linguistics));
- 22) Master's degree-level Professor of Language and Literature (courses: Serbian Language and Literature, Serbian Literature and Language, Serbian Literature and Language with World Literature, Serbian Language, Serbian Literature, Serbian Philology (Serbian Language and Linguistics));
- 23) Master's degree-level teacher;
- 24) Graduate teacher/master.

Persons who have attained a degree in the language of a minority (under item numbers 19, 20, 23 or 24) should possess a knowledge of Serbian to at least the C1 Level (in the Common European Framework) (Rules on the Level and Type of Education of Teachers and Expert Associates in Primary Schools, paragraph 8). Level C1 knowledge is demonstrated with a certificate showing the appropriate examination has been passed at one of the teacher-training/pedagogical faculties or at a department of Serbian language at one of the appropriate faculties in the Republic of Serbia. Persons under item numbers 3–24 of this Article shall be required to pass examinations in methodology with basic language education studies, methodology of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, or linguistics in contact (contact linguistics, theory of language in contact) for other national minorities and to complete training for teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue for 20 hours organized by the Institute for the Promotion of Education.

Teaching and other forms of educational work for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in subject-based teaching can be performed by a person who has completed higher education, namely:

- 1) Professor of Serbian Language and Literature in classes for national minorities;
- 2) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language and Yugoslav Literature for teaching in Hungarian, Ruthenian and Romanian language-schools;
- 3) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology (Serbian language specialist/Serbian language and linguistics)/master's degree;
- 4) Professor of Serbian Language and Literature;
- 5) Professor of Serbian Language and Literature with General Linguistics;
- 6) Professor of Serbian Literature and Language;
- 7) Professor of Serbian Literature and Language with World Literature;
- 8) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbian Language with South Slavic Languages;
- 9) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbian Literature with South Slavic Literature;
- 10) Professor/holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbo-Croatian Language and Yugoslav Literature;

- 11) Professor/holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Yugoslav Literature and Serbo-Croatian Language;
- 12) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language and General Linguistics;
- 13) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language with South Slavic Languages;
- 14) Professor of Serbo-Croatian Language with Eastern and Western Slavic Languages;
- 15) Professor/holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Yugoslav Literature and World Literature;
- 16) Professor of Yugoslav Literature with a Foreign Language;
- 17) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Serbian Language and Literature;
- 18) Holder of bachelor's degree in Philology: Literature and Serbian Language;
- 19) Master of Philology (courses: Serbian Language and Literature, Serbian Literature and Language, Serbian Literature and Language with World Literature, Serbian Language, Serbian Literature, Serbian Philology (Serbian Language and linguistics));
- 20) Master Professor of Language and Literature (courses: Serbian Language and Literature, Serbian Literature and Language, Serbian Literature and Language with World Literature, Serbian Language, Serbian Literature, Serbian Philology (Serbian language and linguistics)).

Persons under the item numbers 3–20 of this Article of the Rules on the Level and Type of Education of Teachers and Expert Associates shall be required to pass examinations in methodology with basic language education studies, methodology of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, or linguistics in contact (contact linguistics, theory of language contact) for all national minorities other than Slovak and Hungarian national minorities, and to complete training for the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the duration of 20 hours organized by the Institute for the Promotion of Education – Centre for Professional Development in Education.



**III. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION, PROBLEMS  
AND RESULTS OF THE TEACHING OF SERBIAN AS  
A NON-MOTHER TONGUE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS  
IN PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA**

**III.1. Methodological framework and  
research description**



### **III. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION, PROBLEMS AND RESULTS OF THE TEACHING OF SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA**

#### **III.1. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

*Milica Rodic, Dunja Poleti and Natasa Boskovic*

The main questions the authors of this study tried to answer pertain to determining the current situation and the possibility for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. The research team has conducted research and provided an analysis and conclusions obtained by means of a combined approach, namely the application of quantitative and qualitative methods. Bearing in mind that the learning of the official language of the State in the context of the integration of diverse societies is a sphere that requires the consultation of experts from many fields, as well as acknowledging the need for decision-makers and public policymakers to base their actions on facts, an inter-disciplinary approach was chosen.

The key actors, associates and stakeholders at the central and local level were identified, an analysis of the situation in the field was made, and then potential directions for future development were mapped. Empirical research was conducted in all Albanian-language primary schools (a total of 16 schools) in the three municipalities. For the purpose of analysing the situation in the field, the level of knowledge among the pupils in the primary schools was tested and data was collected on their perception of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, the difficulties they encounter and their needs in the process of formal education. By observing the teaching and interviewing the teachers and principals the team also collected information about the teaching and the teaching staff. Information about views and needs concerning the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue was collected from the responses provided by the pupils, parents, teachers, principals and decision-makers at the local and national level, and other important actors on the local scene (the presidents of all three municipalities, the president of the ANMC, a deputy in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia from the Albanian community, an educational advisor from the Leskovac Schools Authority, representatives of the media, civil society organizations, state organs, municipal administrations and the commercial sector). Recommendations for the improvement of teaching

were formulated based on the analysis of the data collected and in accordance with the applicable legislative framework, and international norms and standards, taking into consideration the initiatives that have been implemented in these three municipalities aimed improving knowledge of Serbian, also including experiences from countries in the region.

***The key actors in charge of the educational process are:***

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development;
- Institute for the Promotion of Education;
- Institute for the Education Quality Assessment.

***The actors at the central level participating in public policymaking in the sphere of education for the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja are:***

- The Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja;
- National deputies in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia from the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

***The key actors at the local level are:***

- Local self-governments of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja (presidents of municipalities, chiefs of social affairs);
- Albanian National Minority Council;
- Schools (principals, teachers, pupils);
- Parents;
- Representatives of civil society organizations and the media;
- Representatives of state organs, municipal administrations and the commercial sector.

Work in the field concerning the collection of data was conducted between March and June 2014, when the research team was in Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja.

To facilitate the collection of data in the field, some materials were produced (questionnaires and guidelines), which were used based on a methodological template, which we will now outline.

### ***Methodological procedure for the collection of data in schools:***

1. **Tests for pupils** – Special tests were produced to find out of the current level of knowledge of Serbian among the pupils and to set the starting points for determining future directions for the improvement of teaching. The tests were compiled by experts from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, who were also members of the research team. An analysis of the school curricula and textbooks preceded the production of the tests, which then formed the basis for compiling the test, and a measuring scale was set for the results achieved.<sup>43</sup> The tests were given to all pupils from the 4th and 8th grades of all primary schools in the three municipalities in which teaching is conducted in Albanian.<sup>44</sup> The methodological reason behind the selection of those particular grades whose knowledge was tested lies in the pattern defined by the school system, whereby the 4th grade represents the end of the first cycle, and the 8th grade represents the end of the second cycle of education. Accordingly, pupils are expected and assumed to have achieved certain things by the end of these two cycles. The test was given to a total of 438 pupils, 224 from the 4th grade, and 214 from the 8th grade.

2. **Interviews with pupils** – After evaluation of the test results, the number of pupils (33) with satisfactory or outstanding results was determined. The research team then conducted follow-up interviews with these pupils in the presence of the pedagogues, teachers or principals so as to establish which factors or agents of socialization contributed to their higher level of knowledge of Serbian.<sup>45</sup>

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43 The test was not graded as part of the regular education system and was produced solely for the purposes of this research. The maximum possible score in the test was 100. Pupils who achieved a score of 60 or above, conditionally speaking, performed well on the test. Due to the exceptionally low number of pupils who performed well on the test according to the scale and criteria previously set, the expert team lowered the threshold of the scale, and pupils with a score of 50 or above were taken as examples of pupils who had achieved a satisfactory score and demonstrated a knowledge of Serbian language. For more details about how the test was actually devised and structured, please see section III.5: Analysis of Test Results.

44 In the municipality of Bujanovac there are six primary schools (one urban and five rural), in the municipality of Presevo there are seven primary schools (one urban and six rural), and in the municipality of Medvedja there are three primary schools (one urban and two rural). The research covered the central schools but not their branches located elsewhere. For this purpose, pupils from some of the branch schools were brought to the locations of the central schools.

45 Pupils' knowledge and additional social factors contributing to the learning of the language are presented later in this chapter.

3. **Questionnaire for primary school pupils** – Questionnaires were completed by the pupils of the 4th and 8th grades who participated in the testing,<sup>46</sup> and pupils of higher grades according to the selections made by the schools. In order to collect as much information as possible about the pupils' perceptions concerning the teaching of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, it was important to also include in the process pupils whose knowledge was not tested. In view of the fact that the aim of the research was to identify possibilities for improving the quality of work with primary school pupils and updating teaching methods, it was very important that the research also captured pupils' opinions and views and investigated the needs of pupils from different grades so that subsequently it could be determined from which grade onwards a different approach should be applied in teaching. Pupils from the other grades for younger children did not complete the questionnaires since such a method of data collection is not suitable for children of that age. The questionnaire contains 23 questions, of both open and closed type.<sup>47</sup> The questionnaires were used for collecting pupils' opinions about the way in which Serbian classes are organized and the methods applied by the teachers during class; the pupils' views on how they would like their Serbian classes to be organized, and the teaching units and material that they find difficult or easy to learn; information about additional ways, and in what situations and with whom, they use (listen to or speak) Serbian outside school; the perception of pupils about their knowledge of Serbian and its functional application in the future. The questionnaires were completed by a total of 733 primary school pupils. The sample included 208 fourth-graders, 80 fifth-graders, 61 sixth-graders, 157 seventh-graders and 227 eighth-graders. The sample covered mostly pupils from the municipality of Presevo (365) followed by the municipality of Bujanovac with 345 pupils. The smallest number of pupils in the sample is from the municipality of Medvedja (23 pupils).

4. **Questionnaire-based interviews<sup>48</sup> with teachers** – Teachers were identified as the key actors in the process of knowledge transfer. The questionnaire for teachers contains 43 questions used to collect demographic data concerning the qualifications and professional education of the teachers, their ways and approaches in working with pupils; their opinions about textbooks, the curriculum, attending training and recommendations for improving the teaching of this subject. The questionnaire contains

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46 This is also important for the further comparison of responses given in the questionnaires where a knowledge of Serbian has been demonstrated.

47 Closed-type questions are questions with predefined answers, whereas open-type questions may be answered by the interviewees freely as they choose.

48 A questionnaire-based interview approach entails the production of a questionnaire that is completed by the researcher in the course of meeting with the interviewee.

open and closed-type questions. A total of 41 teachers were surveyed in the questionnaire-based interviews.<sup>49</sup>

5. **Questionnaire-based interviews with school principals** – A total of 15 principals of primary schools and one deputy principal were interviewed. The questionnaire used for the interview consisted of 36 open-type questions divided into basic thematic units: context (the number of pupils in the school whose mother tongue is not Serbian); perspectives (information about the attitudes of parents towards the learning of Serbian, evaluation of the way in which the language is taught); learning (profile of the teaching staff, materials used in lessons, methods applied in working with pupils, training of teaching staff, the availability of qualified staff, innovations in classroom teaching by introducing new methods and proposals to promote teaching); resources (school resources available to teachers for the teaching of Serbian language classes); support (investing in teaching staff by organizing and participating in training); activities (willingness of the principals to organize activities that would help pupils to improve their knowledge of Serbian).<sup>50</sup>

6. **Observation of classroom teaching** –In the course of working in the field and collecting data, the research team observed the classroom teaching of Serbian. In each school the team observed teaching in the younger and older grades. In order to facilitate the collection of data and its subsequent systematization and analysis, a guide for the observation of classroom teaching was produced containing three basic thematic units: the proportional use of the mother tongue and non-mother tongue in class; pupils' activity; and the types of tasks and exercises given to the pupils during classes. Besides questions pertaining to the actual content and manner in which teaching is conducted, the guide for observing classes also contains questions concerning how regularly Serbian classes are attended. The guide for observing classes was completed by the researchers who used the method of observation without participation. A total of 32 Serbian language classes were observed, 16 classes in the younger grades and 16 classes in the older grades.<sup>51</sup>

7. **Questionnaire-based interviews with parents** – Parents have an active role in managing the school by participating in the work of the school board. Parents who are members of this body were

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49 An analysis of the responses provided by the teachers is contained in Chapter III. In selecting teachers to be interviewed, the aim was to achieve almost complete coverage of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in these schools.

50 The views and recommendations of the school principals are contained in Chapter IV.

51 An analysis of the material obtained by observing classroom teaching is presented in Chapter III.

invited to talk with the researchers about their perceptions concerning the importance of the learning of Serbian for pupils. Parents from all the schools, 34 of them in total, responded to the invitation for an interview.<sup>52</sup>

***Methodological procedure for data collection – interviews with decision-makers at the local and national level:***

50 | The presidents of the three municipalities, as the representatives of these municipalities, are key actors in decision-making and the implementation of decisions in accordance with the responsibilities invested in them in the area of education at the local level. The Chairman of the ANMC, as the representative of this body, has an exceptionally important role in defining educational policies in accordance with the responsibilities invested in him by law. The national assembly deputies from the Albanian community have influence in public policymaking in the sphere of education in accordance with the mandate they have in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. The educational adviser of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is responsible for evaluating the performance of education employees and institutions. Evaluating the quality of teaching, the fairness of marks, and the skill of teachers all fall within his responsibility. All these actors were interviewed about the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language schools, about the skill of the teaching staff for this subject, the importance of learning Serbian, and recommendations for improving the quality of teaching. This information was collected with the help of a generic interview template which was used in interviews with each of the above actors.<sup>53</sup>

***Methodological procedure for data collection and the presentation of projects aimed at promoting knowledge of Serbian***<sup>54</sup>

1. Questionnaire-based interview with teachers working on a project entitled “Serbian language school for young people from the Albanian community from the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo” – A questionnaire was produced to assist discussion with the three teachers of Serbian, to show their experience acquired in working on the project and summarizing recommendations for promoting the

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52 The parents’ views are presented in Chapter IV.

53 An analysis of the interviews with the presidents of the three municipalities, the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council and the national assembly deputy is presented in Chapter IV.

54 See Annex 1.

teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. The questionnaire contained open and closed-type questions. All three teachers of Serbian engaged on this project were interviewed.

2. Questionnaire-based interview with assistants on the project entitled “Serbian language school for young people from the Albanian community from the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo” – A separate questionnaire was produced for interviewing the assistants. Two of the four assistants on the project were interviewed.<sup>55</sup>

3. Focus groups with attendees of the “Serbian language school” – Focus groups were held with the attendees of this project so as to obtain information about their motivation to improve their knowledge of Serbian. In Bujanovac and Presevo, one focus group for each was organized, each with 10 attendees.

4. Questionnaire-based interviews with assistants on a project entitled “Promoting the linguistic skills of the minority population in the south of Serbia” – Six assistants who, within the framework of a project by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, provide classes in Serbian in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac. Information was thus collected on their six months of experience working with pupils. The questionnaire for interviewing the assistants contains open and closed-type questions.

5. Questionnaire-based interviews with teachers of Serbian at the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school – Two of the teachers participating in the running of the project of the OSCE Mission to Serbia talked to the researchers conducting the study. The questionnaire produced for this purpose contained questions to gather information concerning the comparison of different methods in classroom teaching and recommendations for further work to improve the regular classroom teaching of Serbian.

6. Questionnaire-based interview with the principal of the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school – The researchers interviewed the principal of the secondary school. The information collected pertained to the current state of language learning and knowledge, the availability of teaching staff for the subject, teaching methods, and needs and recommendations for the further improvement of the quality of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

7. Questionnaire-based interview with representatives of the OSCE Mission to Serbia – Interviews were conducted with three members of the project team and the head of the local office in Bujanovac.

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55 Out of a total of four assistants, two are employed in the primary school – one as a class teacher, i.e. in the secondary school as a professor of French. Those two assistants on the project were interviewed based on the assumptions of two-way learning and the influence of the project on the further development of the teaching staff. Their opinions on the learning of Serbian and how this project has influenced a change of approach to classroom teaching are presented in Annex 1.

A separate questionnaire was devised for the purpose of interviewing the OSCE representatives, summarizing their experiences and providing recommendations for planning and improving the teaching of Serbian for pupils from the Albanian community.

***Methodological procedure for data collection on the opinions of representatives of the media<sup>56</sup> and civil society<sup>57</sup> concerning the learning of Serbian:***

The media and civil society play an important role in shaping public opinion. Accordingly, the research also includes an analysis of the opinions of representatives of the local media and civil society organizations. Their views concerning the learning of Serbian are presented in Chapter IV.

***Methodological procedure for data collection on the opinions of representatives of state organs<sup>58</sup> and the commercial sector<sup>59</sup> concerning the learning of Serbian:***

52 | Knowledge of Serbian is necessary for employment in state administration, but it is also important for doing good business in the commercial sector. The significance and importance of knowledge of Serbian was discussed with representatives of the state organs in these municipalities and representatives of the commercial sector. The importance of a knowledge of Serbian for the work they do was discussed with employees in state and municipal organs.<sup>60</sup> For the purpose of data collection, interviews were organized with representatives of state and municipal administration and business people, while discussions with the staff were conducted within a focus group. Their views are presented in Chapter IV.

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56 In Bujanovac interviews were conducted with the representatives of Bujanovac Radio and Television and TV Spektri, as well as with representatives of the internet portals Titulli and Lugina Lajm. An interview was conducted in Presevo with a representative of the internet portal Presheva.com and RTV Presevo. There was no response from a representative of Aldi TV (Presevo) to the invitation to participate in the research. Medvedja does not have a developed local media sector.

57 The research included representatives of active non-governmental organizations (Civic Initiatives in Bujanovac and Committee for Human Rights in Presevo) and organizations that have recently been dealing with the issue of the learning of Serbian (International Human Center in Presevo and Dituria in Biljaca, a village in the municipality of Bujanovac).

58 Interviews were conducted with representatives of the Tax Administration, the National Employment Service, the Police Administration and the municipal administration.

59 Representatives of private enterprises were interviewed – “Agro Adria” (Bujanovac) and “Saba Bellca” (Presevo). Invitations were also sent to “Tobacco Industry Bujanovac”, “Electrical Power Distribution” and “Bi water”.

60 Employees of the Tax Administration, Customs Administration, Police Administration, municipal administration and civil registry service were participants of this focus group.

The objectives of the research determined the methods of data collection and the way data was processed. Some of the information collected through the questionnaire-based interviews with a small number of interviewees and through observing teaching was processed in a qualitative manner. The qualitative methodology provides an in-depth insight into the situation in the field, understanding existing problems, limitations, and also an interpretation of proposals on how to overcome them.

A quantitative approach was used for processing data obtained from the questionnaires for primary school pupils and the questionnaire-based interviews with the teachers. The basic descriptive methods were applied, such as tabular and graphic representations of the distribution of the frequency of responses or representing data through contingency tables. Data was most frequently compared by grade and municipality. Whenever it was possible, open-type questions were closed into the most frequent categories, which enabled the responses to be represented in numbers.

Also, the tests on knowledge of Serbian were processed separately for the pupils of the 4th and 8th grades respectively. The differences between the average scores obtained were compared according to competences for the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo, and the statistical significance of these differences was checked by means of T-tests.<sup>61</sup> Due to the difference in the ethnic composition of the municipality of Medvedja,<sup>62</sup> the research there covered a significantly smaller number of pupils than in Bujanovac and Presevo. Therefore the results obtained in Medvedja were not methodologically suitable for statistical comparison with the results from the other two municipalities.

Besides the empirical part and data collection in the field, carrying out this study also entailed the application of the method of secondary data analysis (desk analysis). The curricula for all primary school grades for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue were also analysed, as well as the existing textbooks and teacher's books issued by the "Institute for Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids" publishing house. The study contains a description of relevant parts of the applicable legislative framework pertaining to the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and a brief review of international standards in the sphere of the integration of diverse societies and the learning of the official language of the State in that process.

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61 T-tests are a statistical technique that is used to check whether the arithmetic mean values of two compared groups are statistically significantly different or whether it is just a coincidental variation in the results. In this specific case, it was checked whether the average grades per competency in one municipality were truly higher than the average grades in the other municipality, i.e. whether it can be said that the pupils from Bujanovac performed better in the test than the pupils from Presevo.

62 T-tests are a statistical technique that is used to check whether the arithmetic mean values of two compared groups are statistically significantly different or whether it is just a coincidental variation in the results. In this specific case, it was checked whether the average grades per competency in one municipality were truly higher than the average grades in the other municipality, i.e. whether it can be said that the pupils from Bujanovac performed better in the test than the pupils from Presevo.



**III.2. Analysis of the curriculum  
for Serbian as a non-mother tongue  
for primary schools**



## III.2. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRICULUM FOR SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

*Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic*

### III.2.1. Historical overview of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the curriculum for this subject

In our multinational and multilingual environment, the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is of exceptional importance and has a long tradition. This tradition arose from the need to ensure adequate and equal education for pupils whose mother tongue is not Serbian and thereby also ensuring they have the opportunity to be included in the wider social community. There has been an evident continuity of efforts to provide those pupils with an education in their mother tongue alongside the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue (or Serbo-Croat, as it was called during certain periods, as the language used in society). Teaching in the languages of national minorities, accompanied by the compulsory learning of Serbian, tends to provide an additive<sup>63</sup> bilingualism or multilingualism (because these pupils, in addition to learning their mother tongue and Serbian, learn at least one foreign language), which implicitly entails linguistic (and not only linguistic) enrichment, and not the encroachment of one language at the expense of another.

Serbian/Serbo-Croat as a non-mother tongue began to be taught as an obligatory school subject in primary and secondary schools immediately after the end of the Second World War (Burzan 1984:5). Right from the start, one of the objectives of teaching it was for pupils to gain a useful level of proficiency in Serbian (formerly Serbo-Croat) and to equip them for everyday communication. However, until the

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63 The difference between additive and subtractive bilingualism was discussed by R. Bugarski (1997: 126–127). Additive bilingualism means the adding of knowledge acquired in another language to abilities previously mastered in the first language, which happens under “favourable conditions and with a positive psychological predisposition: the second language is acquired because it is desired” (Bugarski 1997: 126). By contrast, the subtractive type of bilingualism denotes a situation in which “knowledge in another language is acquired at the expense of the first language, which is thereby encroached upon (...). This may happen under unfavourable conditions which bear a negative predisposition: the second language is learned because it is a must” (Bugarski 1997: 126). Examples of subtractive bilingualism “are frequent among autochthonous minorities, who face many difficulties, and who need the second language for pragmatic reasons but find it emotionally repugnant since it is a threat to their own ethnic identity; this rift may also have a negative impact on the first language” (Bugarski 1997: 127). The author notes that such phenomena are also accompanied by different attitudes towards a language and, depending on those attitudes, they may lead to the preservation or expansion of a language in the long run, but also to the replacement, withdrawal or even extinction of a language.

1966–1967 academic year the content of the classes was not suited to the objectives set. The curriculum, which demanded the learning of a certain number of words within the framework of a set topic, and the learning of the basic grammar rules of Serbian, as was typical of the traditional grammar-and-translation method of foreign language learning, did not yield the desired results, despite the efforts made to apply modern teaching methods. Up until 1966, pupils learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue were exposed to the entire linguistic corpus of the Serbian language, the contents of which were not systematically arranged to meet the needs of teaching a second language. Use was made of the textbooks for Serbian as a mother tongue aimed at pupils a grade or two below the grade of the pupils learning it as a non-mother tongue.

56 | The importance of incorporating modern knowledge from glottodidactics (which means the theory of teaching languages, primarily foreign languages/non-mother tongues), psychology, linguistics and other related disciplines into the concept of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, as well as the need for the teaching of this subject to be differentiated depending on the pupils' mother tongue and the environment they live in, was acknowledged and applied back in the 1960s (more precise, in 1966) by members of the Study Department of the Vojvodina Provincial Institute for Textbook Publishing, who were given the task of producing a (at that time new) curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue. That was the first time that the structure of the Serbian language was observed from the angle of the need for this language to be taught as a non-mother tongue. Those models and linguistic elements that represented the necessary minimum for everyday communication were extracted from the abundant linguistic corpus, new instructions were given for conducting this type of teaching, and the basic difficulties in acquiring Serbian depending on the pupils' mother tongue were highlighted. The authors of this approach, who were at the same time the authors of the first textbooks for Serbian as a non-mother tongue, organized numerous teachers' seminars during those years and continuously monitored the results that came from applying this new concept. According to the authors' recollections,<sup>64</sup> some of whom at that time were professors at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad and founders of the Study Group educating professors specialized in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue (within the present Department of Serbian Language and Linguistics), these activities went beyond the borders of the State at that time. Seminars and lectures were also held in neighbouring countries and met with great interest, given that

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64 A conversation held in 2007 with Professor Jovan Jerkovic, co-author of the Curriculum for Serbo-Croatian as a Non-Mother Tongue, the handbook *Serbo-Croat in the Schools of National Communities* – a handbook for teachers, numerous textbooks for Serbian as a non-mother tongue and one of the initiators and founders of the study group and curriculum for Serbo-Croatian language and Yugoslav literature for professors in Hungarian-language schools (later, Serbian language and literature in classes for national minorities, and now Serbian philology in contact with Hungarian/Slovak philology) within the Department of Serbian Language and Linguistics at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad.

this concept was innovative and represented a practical application of the latest knowledge in language education studies. This was the first curriculum of that kind in the region which, in some centres, served as a model for the creation of curricula for similar linguistic and national situations.

The year 1966 was, therefore, a turning point in the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. The forming and development of oral skills was brought to the fore. The essence of learning was no longer the learning of isolated words or the learning grammar, or to put it another way: “Even if do we manage to master a huge vocabulary and learn the grammar, we’re still not going to have the ability to use the new language. Those things will give us knowledge about the language, but not the ability to use it”(Kocis 1966: 13). This concept adopts the standpoint “that the complete mastery of the structure of a new language with the help of a minimal number of words is the best way to learn a language” (Kocis 1966: 13). The learning of grammatical rules was replaced by the acquiring of basic patterns. Language teaching for pupils of lower grades (up to the 4th grade of primary school) took into account the so-called “pre-grammatical phase”. Within this period it is expected that pupils acquire the necessary basics for the practical use of a language. A language is primarily learned by acquiring the correct application of linguistic patterns within speech units in real speaking situations, without explicit grammatical explanations. Grammar is then gradually introduced in the classroom teaching but practicing patterns is still done. Making use of knowledge of the grammar of the mother tongue, small theoretic generalizations start to be given, the necessary terminology starts to be introduced and systematization is carried out. Grammar should be a means towards mastering a language and not be an end in itself, and thus grammar knowledge should have a practical value.

The curriculum developed on the basis of the 1966 concept provided for the first time a system for the gradual acquisition of important elements of the Serbian language system, from the first to the final grade of compulsory education. The content of classroom teaching was distributed according to the principle of so-called “vertical correlation”, meaning that some of the structures are expanded from one grade to the next, developed and combined, moving from the simple to the most complex, and new subject matter is built upon the previous material.

Officially, albeit with some minor alterations in the distribution of subject matter and the division of the curriculum into a “basic” part and an “expanded” part for pupils of different mother tongues and from various environments, this concept exists to the present day.

In the meantime, there has been an attempt to make major changes in education. Namely, the reform of the education system in Serbia commenced in 2003, with fundamental changes planned for the entire

educational system as well as in the teaching approach for each individual subject. Within this reform new curricula for the 1st grade of primary school were compiled. However, in comparison to other subjects, the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue remained undeveloped, and in fact amounted to only introductory remarks (Special Foundations of the School Curriculum for 2003: 55; Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – Educational Gazette, 23 August 2003). These introductory remarks note the importance of this subject for gaining awareness of others and the environment, for the development of self-respect and self-confidence, for the quality of communication on which the prosperity of the individual and society as a whole depends. It is proposed that in the teaching of this subject, language is presented as a natural means of communication; it is noted that lessons should be a source of pleasure, which should be encouraged through “new, scientifically and methodologically founded and well-coordinated teaching approaches”. Emphasis is also placed on taking into consideration the degree and type of difference between Serbian and the children’s mother tongue, the linguistic milieu and characteristics of the immediate environment in which the child lives, as well as individual differences in the mastering of linguistic competences in the Serbian language at pre-school age. Objectives and outcomes were not defined, and instead it is recommended to take into consideration the General Foundations of the School Curriculum, the objectives and outcomes of the teaching of Serbian (as a mother tongue) and the objectives and outcomes of the teaching of foreign languages, and that “when formulating its school curriculum, the school should find the right measure between these two models which best suits the specific needs of the children in that particular school.” It was also announced that the curricula for Serbian as a non-mother tongue would be reviewed during implementation and, if needed, supplemented with expert instructions. There is no actual curriculum content, and only these general guidelines were given.

This process was put on hold in the following year, 2004. There was a conspicuous return to the previous model of the entire system, and as far as the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue was concerned, this meant returning to the previous concept. The curricula underwent minor updates from year to year and from grade to grade. The biggest change consisted of adding set texts to work on (i.e. reading). Previous versions of the primary school curriculum did not contain any prescribed texts; the choice depended on the authors of the textbooks who were primarily guided by the section recommending certain thematic areas and instructions for the implementation of the curriculum. In the period between 2005 and 2010, the Belgrade Institute for Textbooks published new sets of textbooks for all grades of primary school with accompanying teacher’s books, which were coordinated with the updated curricula.

### III.2.2. Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the present curriculum for primary education

According to the curriculum for primary education,<sup>65</sup> the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is included in all grades of primary school and is compulsory for all pupils who are taught in the language of a national minority. In the 1st and 2nd grade, the curriculum for this subject stipulates two school classes per week (72 classes over the year), while from the 3rd to 7th grade, three classes per week are stipulated (108 classes over the year), and then in the 8th grade, two classes per week (68 classes over the year, since the school year for pupils of the 8th grade ends earlier). One can see from this information, therefore, that the total number of classes for members of national minorities compared to those for members of the majority population is two or three classes per week more.

#### III.2.2.1. Curriculum structure for Serbian as a non-mother tongue

The curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is standardized for all pupils who are taught in one of the languages of national minorities.<sup>66</sup> Within the curriculum, there is a differentiation made, whereby within slash brackets reference is made to “extended curriculum content for which the educational institution may opt at the recommendation of the teacher, depending on the pupils’ level of knowledge, the national composition of the area, the closeness of the students’ language to the non-mother tongue, etc.”<sup>67</sup>

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The beginning of the curriculum lists the objective and tasks of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue from the 1st to 8th grades of primary school. Then, within the framework of the curriculum for each grade individually, the operational tasks are listed, which break down the general goals and tasks into eight parts set for the entire primary school. The central part of the curriculum however, consists of the content, divided into sections.

At the end of the curriculum for each grade there is a chapter entitled How to follow the curriculum, in which the actual structure and concept of the curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother

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65 [http://www.zuov.gov.rs/novisajt2012/naslovna\\_nastavni\\_planovi\\_programi.html](http://www.zuov.gov.rs/novisajt2012/naslovna_nastavni_planovi_programi.html).

66 In the Republic of Serbia, in addition to Serbian, teaching is also conducted in Albanian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Croatian.

67 The way in which this is reflected in the curriculum will be illustrated in the examples provided in the analysis below.

tongue is elaborated, explanations are given with regard to the teaching of the subject, and the purpose and treatment method of individual areas are described in greater detail.

### III.2.2.2. The objective and tasks of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue

In the curricula for the 1st to 8th grades,<sup>68</sup> the objective and tasks of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue are formulated as follows:

“The objective of Serbian language classes is for the pupils to attain an active proficiency in Serbian within the framework of the planned language and lexical material, to get to know elements of the culture of the people who speak the language and to enable them to communicate, socialize and connect with members of the majority people and those of other nationalities.

The tasks of Serbian language classes are for the pupils to:

- Attain active proficiency in the spoken language within the framework of the basic language structures and a vocabulary of around 2000 /3000/<sup>69</sup> frequently used words and expressions;
- Understand people who are speaking with them and oral presentations on topics on everyday life;
- Learn correct pronunciation and intonation in expressing themselves orally and reading;
- Be able to discuss topics of everyday life;
- Have a command of the two Serbian scripts and the basics of orthography for correct written expression within the boundaries of the acquired language structures and vocabulary;
- Become acquainted with the basic rules of the Serbian language;
- Understand texts of different genres, within the framework of the planned subject matter;

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68 T-tests are a statistical technique that is used to check whether the arithmetic mean values of two compared groups are statistically significantly different or whether it is just a coincidental variation in the results. In this specific case, it was checked whether the average grades per competency in one municipality were truly higher than the average grades in the other municipality, i.e. whether it can be said that the pupils from Bujanovac performed better in the test than the pupils from Presevo.

69 The number in slash brackets is the number of words that should be learned if the extended curriculum is followed.

- Become acquainted with the basic characteristics of the culture of the people whose language they are learning;
- Become accustomed to using dictionaries and language guides independently, and be capable of finding information, receiving education and educating themselves in the Serbian language;
- Develop the interest and motivation to learn Serbian and thus gain greater competence in communication and the ability to think in Serbian.”

In the period between 2001 and 2003, new requirements and standards of educational achievement were introduced into the curriculum for the 7th and 8th grades: <sup>70</sup>

“The objective of Serbian language classes is to ensure that all pupils attain basic linguistic literacy and progress towards meeting the relevant standards of educational achievement, to become equipped to solve problems and tasks in new and unfamiliar situations, to be able to express and explain their opinions and engage in discussion with others, to develop their motivation to learn and their interest in the subject matter, as well as to attain active proficiency in Serbian within the framework of the planned language and lexical material, to become acquainted with elements of the culture of the people who speak the language and become equipped to communicate, socialize and connect with members of the majority people and those of other nationalities.”

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<sup>70</sup> The objectives that are new for these grades are formulated identically as for the subject of Serbian language, and it can be seen that, with some minor differences, they have been set for all subjects. It should also be noted that standards for Serbian as a non-mother tongue have not yet been established.

### III.2.2.3. Overview of the curriculum broken down by sections

The curriculum content for each grade contains several sections, whereby it is noted that all the elements are mutually connected and that they are to be taught as such.

**Tabela 2.2.1. - Overview of sections and their appearance in each grade:**

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Subject matter	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Linguistic matter	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Oral exercises	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Reading and writing	-	/+/ +	+	+	+	+	+	+
Orthography	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Grammar	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Word formation	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-
Reading materials	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+

The section subject matter contains topics and situations in which language is acquired. It covers multiple thematic areas (such as school, family and home, immediate and wider environment, nature and society, current affairs, pupils' free time, the everyday lives of young people, etc.), some of which appear in multiple grades. However, this repetition is quite justified, give that it is expected that the same thematic area, depending on the knowledge of the language and the interest and age of pupils, is covered through different content and different language skills. Thus, for example, the theme of School in the 1st grade covers the space and objects that the pupils of this age encounter, as well as the situations they find themselves in (the classroom, furniture, basic school equipment; the school yard, the school building; school staff, pupils; situations in class time and break time; appropriate festivities and holidays), while the same thematic area in the 8th grade covers situations more appropriate for the pupils of that age (neigh-

bouring schools – in the same locality or nearby; meetings between pupils – cooperation, competition, correspondence; types of sports; pupils' everyday experiences, summer and winter holiday experiences).

This section also lists forms of social interaction (greetings, modes of address, introductions, polite requests, expressing thanks, etc.), which are learned gradually, from the simplest to the more complex, and serve to facilitate the learning of authentic language and enable natural communication

The basic purpose of this section and the theme areas within it, is to enable the acquisition of language models and certain vocabulary. To that end, the language models are precisely set out in the curriculum (within the framework of the section on subject matter) and it is recommended that particular language models be acquired through the most appropriate subject matter. On the other hand, the curriculum does not list words and expressions to be learned. The purpose of the subject matter section is to guide teachers and textbook authors through the selection of the appropriate vocabulary. Concerning the mastering of a certain stock of vocabulary, the curriculum, in the first part, favours a minimal productive vocabulary in the process of mastering the important elements of the language. Enriching the vocabulary should happen gradually, in parallel with overall development and the development of expression in the mother tongue. The curriculum also contains recommendations for the semantization of words (=explaining meaning) and their assimilation (= acquisition). In the semantization of words, the use of specific items and different visual aids is suggested. As regards assimilation, the emphasis is placed on the need for words to be acquired within a context, in a sentence, linked with a particular verbal situation. There is also emphasis placed on differentiating between an active and passive stock of words and phrases.

The section entitled linguistic matter contains linguistic models that are illustrated with specific sentences. The curriculum contains separate models that are supposed to provide for the mastering of a greater part of the spoken language. The acquisition of language starts with practicing the models in their basic form, and then they are gradually expanded and combined with each other. The material is cumulative because new subject matter always builds upon the previous matter. The models from one grade to another are presented through different linguistic and lexical means. The organization of the introduction of new elements provides for a gradual approach and the introduction of new elements one by one into the linguistic model. For the acquisition of the linguistic matter, the curriculum recommends the use of different types of manipulative exercises (exercises of oral repetition, answering questions, substitutions, transformations, completing, composing sentences from given elements and words according to a model, connecting sentences, varying models, expanding and contracting sentences, etc.), the purpose of which is practicing, strengthening and automating the linguistic models. These exercises should be strictly controlled to ensure that grammatically correct expressions are practiced. It is expected that once

the linguistic model is automated, the pupils will be able to build analogous constructions and use them with new specific content as appropriate to the communicative intention. The requirement for starting to practice a new model is the acquisition of the previous model, and the time that should be dedicated to practicing one model depends on the characteristics of the mother tongue and its possible influence on the elements of the language that is being learned. Some of the content within the section Linguistic Matter is placed in slash brackets, meaning that it is intended for acquisition in environments where the faster acquisition of Serbian is possible.

The gradual introduction of new elements into the model, as well as the differentiation between the basic and expanded curriculum is illustrated in the example of the model for expressing spatial relationships:

Linguistic model: Expressing spatial relationships <sup>71</sup>

**1<sup>st</sup> grade:** Practicing the basic adverbs of place (e.g. here, there, near, far), locative case with the prepositions in and on (which answers the question where?) and the accusative case with the prepositions into and to (which answers the question where to?). Patterns: Marija is sitting here. The table is in the room. The glass is on the table. Zoran runs to the park. Jelena is rushing to the post office.

**2<sup>nd</sup> grade:** Practicing new adverbs of place (e.g. forward, backward, over here, over there, left, right, straight) and the plural forms of nouns in the locative and accusative case. Patterns: They are going right. The pupils sit on their chairs. They are putting their notebooks inside their desks.

**3<sup>rd</sup> grade:** Practicing new adverbs of place (e.g. that way, this way, along there) and nouns and personal pronouns in the genitive case with the prepositions in front of, behind, next to, at. Patterns: Jelena passed by this way. Marija is sitting behind Ivanka (her). Sit next to Petar (him). He is at home. Petar was at the doctor's. The expanded part of the curriculum for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade covers: /Practicing nouns in the dative case without a preposition. Patterns: She is going to the doctor. Jovan approached the old man. The train is nearing the sea./

**4<sup>th</sup> grade:** Practicing the genitive case of nouns and personal pronouns with the prepositions above, beneath, from, out of. Patterns: Jovan lives beneath Petar (beneath him). The bird flies above the house.

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<sup>71</sup> For every grade it is also expected that the patterns from the previous grades are practiced. The presentation of the models and patterns here is somewhat simplified and abbreviated in comparison to the original text of the curriculum so as to provide a clear overview and avoid repetitions. The concept of acquiring language through practicing linguistic models ends with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades the matter learned is systematically organized from the viewpoint of explicit grammar. For example, in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade the expression of space is taught within the framework of the meaning and function of grammatical cases, and in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade within the framework of subordinate clauses (sentences denoting location).

The children are returning from the excursion. The pupils are walking out of the classroom. Beneath us is the water. The expanded part of the curriculum for this model for the 4th grade covers: /Practicing the dative case with the prepositions towards and to. Patterns: The girl is swimming towards the shore. The train was rushing to Belgrade.

**5th grade:** Practicing the genitive case of the plural of nouns and personal pronouns. Patterns: Milica stood behind her friends (behind them). The birds are flying above the houses. The pupils are walking out of the classrooms. The expanded part of the curriculum for this model for the 5th grade includes: /Practicing the accusative case of the prepositions under, in front of, above. Qualifying nouns with modifiers. Patterns: He put the bag under the seat. He leaned over the table. He came out in front of the house. He put the straw under the tired horses./

**6th grade:** Practicing the accusative case with the preposition through. Using modifiers with nouns denoting place (locative case, accusative case, genitive case) that agree with the nouns in gender, number and case. Patterns: He walks through the forest. The train passes through dark tunnels. The children are playing on the green field. He went to the nearby big yard. He lives beside our next-door neighbour. The expanded part of the curriculum for this model for the 6th grade includes: /Practicing the instrumental case without prepositions and with the prepositions under, in front of, above and the accusative case with the prepositions up, down. The nouns should be qualified by a modifier. Patterns: Milan walks along the road. The cat is under the table. The boy is standing in front of the house. The mountaineers climbed the steep path. They waited for the teacher in front of the schoolyard. The storks circled above the tall chimney. He walks up (down) the steep stairs./

The section entitled grammar appears from the 4th grade onwards. From this it can be seen that the concept of the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue is based on the standpoint that a language and its rules are first acquired intuitively (mostly by means of acquiring linguistic patterns at a young age), and that grammatical explanations and instructions are introduced gradually when the linguistic system has been roughly mastered to a certain extent and when the pupils are mentally and physically ready. However, it is important to have the right understanding of the role of grammar in this teaching because it should be a means for learning the language rather than a means for gathering knowledge about the language. This means that pupils should not learn grammar rules, paradigms and definitions by heart but should rather be equipped to apply them in communication. Furthermore, the aim of teaching grammar is also to develop awareness of the functioning of linguistic phenomena within the system and developing the ability of pupils to correct their own mistakes. For the teaching of grammar, the curriculum recommends the inductive method, guiding pupils to drawing their own conclusions about the laws and rules of

how the language functions, with assistance provided by the teacher in the form of short instructions and exercises. The curriculum also recommends that the teacher should have some insight into the characteristics of the pupils' mother tongue so as to be able to explain phenomena that are different in the two languages. The explanations that are given should be appropriate to the pupils' age and previous knowledge. This section also provides an expanded part for pupils who progress faster in learning Serbian.

The sections entitled oral exercises and reading and writing aim to go beyond the boundaries of passive/regurgitation teaching so as to move away from underdeveloped, constrained and scant answering of questions. Speaking and writing develop the ability of giving lengthier expression to connected thoughts and the ability to communicate in real situations. The curriculum demands the creation of realistic communication situations to stimulate pupils to take the verbal initiative. Communicative exercises are connected to manipulative exercises <sup>72</sup> by means of the free and functional application of previously practiced models.

The focus of the section entitled orthography is placed on those categories where there are differences in comparison to the orthographic rules of the mother tongue, and this section also provides for practicing those rules that are identical in the two languages, in order to eliminate mistakes that have been identified in the pupils' written assignments. Two or three classes per year are planned for working on orthographic material, whereby it is recommended that the number be increased to a larger number (10–12) of exercises to be incorporated into the classes for grammar and written exercises. Additionally, it is expected that checks are made on whether orthographic rules have been learned (dictation exercises, worksheets that should be corrected, etc.).

The section entitled word formation (5th–7th grade) includes productive suffixes for the construction of: nouns denoting the doer of an action, nouns denoting female persons, ethnicity, diminutives, augmentatives, hypocoristic, collective nouns and possessive adjectives. The learning of these construction models aims to enrich pupils' vocabulary and to enable them to create new words by applying analogies to existing words.

The section reading materials (5th–8th grade) is intended to be homework and is designed to get the pupils accustomed to silent reading, as well as to find out information for themselves in Serbian. The curriculum prescribes a certain number of texts (literary and popular science, as well as reading materials

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72 The basic types of manipulative exercises are set out in the overview of the section entitled "linguistic matter". Their primary objective is to create a habit of the correct use of linguistic elements, i.e. developing the ability to use grammatically correct statements independent of communicative context.

from youth and children's magazines) that are to be read, chosen by either the individual or the teacher.<sup>73</sup> The importance of motivation is also emphasized in this section. For example, it is suggested that a certain chosen excerpt from a text be read in class so as to provide stimulus for reading the whole text at home. Differentiation depending on pupils' ability may be made in various ways: by dividing a longer text into parts, by setting tasks with different degrees of difficulty, by choosing shorter and easier texts, etc. The pupils with a better command of Serbian and who are following the expanded part of the curriculum can be gradually introduced into analysing the materials read, similar as during classes of their mother tongue.

#### **III.2.2.4. Prescribed instructions on how to implement the curriculum**

The curriculum<sup>74</sup> for each grade contains instructions on how to implement and organize educational work. In brief, the key tenets can be summed up as follows:

- The importance of pupils' active participation in the class;
- The importance of the teacher planning, leading and organizing the teaching process;
- Oral practice for each student as frequently as possible;
- Respect for the principle of individualization in work;
- Standardization of the curriculum for all nationalities but also the need to take into consideration the relationship between the Serbian language and the language of the pupils;
- The teacher is desired to know the linguistic structure of the pupils' mother tongue;
- The application of the direct method (Serbian is the language of communication in class) so as to minimize the influence of the mother tongue on Serbian;
- The importance of the pupils' motivation;

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73 Such a formulation appears at the end of the curriculum, within the recommendations for the organization of educational work. The content of the curriculum for the 5th, 6th and 7th grades, where a list of reading materials (list of authors and titles of works) is given, does not indicate whether all the titles listed are compulsory in all the grades or whether the list should be taken as a list of possible choices. Below the list of reading materials (with authors and titles) for the 8th grade there is a note that "the selection of at least five works is compulsory".

74 [http://www.zuov.gov.rs/novisajt2012/naslovnna\\_nastavni\\_planovi\\_programi.html](http://www.zuov.gov.rs/novisajt2012/naslovnna_nastavni_planovi_programi.html).

- The functional use of different teaching aids;
- Connecting the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue with the teaching of the pupils' mother tongue and their correlation with other subjects;
- The acquisition of knowledge and concepts from various areas, initially in the teaching of subjects in the pupils' mother tongue, and then their application in Serbian.

This chapter also clarifies some specific points about the stages of acquiring Serbian as a non-mother tongue:

The first stage covers the 1st and 2nd grade. The approach is primarily oral. Expectations: the acquisition of basic phonetic and phonologic characteristics of the language, articulation of new phonemes, accent, rhythm and intonation of different types of communicative sentences, basic sentence structures and a basic stock of sentences (500 /600/ lexical units) within the framework of the planned thematic area; training the pupils to listen to and understand simple statements, correctly reacting to imperative phrases and questions, using and varying acquired structures and vocabulary in short dialogues about familiar situations, describing pictures and situations based on elements acquired, correct use of the basic forms of communication.

The second stage covers the 3rd to 6th grade. It represents a continuation of the development of the pupils' speaking abilities: acquisition of new linguistic models (the previously acquired models are expanded and combined and varied with newly acquired ones) and new vocabulary (900 /1600/ lexical units), mastering speech elements, correction of mistakes on all linguistic levels. The pupils are trained to use the acquired linguistic models and vocabulary in the form of longer dialogues or monologues, as well as to listen to and understand more complex linguistic statements. New communicative functions are introduced and practiced. Starting from the 4th grade pupils gradually begin to acquire linguistic knowledge (explicit grammar is introduced), and as of the 5th grade they are introduced to the most frequent suffixes. In addition to oral skills (speech and understanding speech) two more skills are developed – reading and writing. The first alphabet, the graphemes of which differ from those of the pupils' mother tongue to a lesser degree, is acquired in the 3rd grade, while the second alphabet is acquired in the 4th grade. The pupils are trained to express themselves in writing using the correct orthography of the Serbian language. Starting from the 5th grade they start independent reading of reading materials. Attention is also paid to learning about elements of the culture of the people who speak Serbian.

The third stage covers the 7th and 8th grade. The goal of this stage is to shape the communicative abilities of the pupils. The pupils' acquisition of linguistic and communicative competences continues to be developed, and more complicated linguistic models are adopted (7th grade). The linguistic material is systematized and compared with the pupils' mother tongue. Work on the correction of interlingual and intralingual mistakes is continued. The new vocabulary and phrases are acquired, written expression is developed and the orthographic material is systematized. The pupils are trained to perform text analysis.

### III.2.3. Overview and commentary on the opinions of teachers concerning the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue

1. A total of 41 teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja were given the opportunity to express their views about the appropriateness of the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for primary schools, to cite material which they think is unsuitable for pupils of a certain age, as well as to suggest additions/amendments to the curriculum. The tables below show that 53.7% of the teachers stated that the existing curriculum is suitable but also that 73.2% of them consider that there should be additions or amendments made to it. Based on this it may be concluded that some teachers who deemed the existing curriculum to be suitable nevertheless think that additions or amendments need to be made to it.

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**Table 2.2.2. Overview of responses to the question: Does the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue contain any material that is not suitable for pupils of a certain age?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No, I think that the existing curriculum is suitable	22	53.7
Yes	19	46.3
Total	41	100

**Table 2.2.3. Overview of responses to the question: Do you think that there should be some additions or changes made to the curriculum?**

Odgovori	Frequency	Percentage
No	11	26.8
Yes	30	73.2
Total	41	100.0

2. **Question from the questionnaire:** *Which material from the curriculum do you think is unsuitable for pupils of a certain age?*

Of the material considered unsuitable for pupils of this age, the area of grammar was most often highlighted (7 teachers), with it being described it as too bulky. Problems were also cited with reading materials (4 teachers), and there were also concerns about inappropriate content in the selection of short stories (1 teacher), epic poems (1 teacher), poetry – the analysis of which is complicated and difficult to comprehend (1 teacher) and some texts that are too big (1 teacher). Three teachers raised issues on subject matter, highlighting as inappropriate the topics of falling in love for the 6th and 7th grade (2 teachers), war themes (1 teacher) and the lesson on Easter (1 teacher).

Two teachers commented on methods of work: “The method and form of work should be updated. More attention should be paid to the culture of language” and “The translation of texts from the worksheets is difficult for pupils in the younger grades.”

3. **Question from the questionnaire:** *What material should be used to add to or amend the curriculum?*

General objections on the volume and difficulty of the curriculum were made by four teachers, who suggested it should be simplified, reduced in volume, and made easier and more appropriate for the pupils’ age. Two teachers identified a lack of consistency between the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the curriculum for Albanian (as a mother tongue) pertaining to both the volume of material and the order in which material is covered (some units in Serbian are more demanding and are covered earlier than under the curriculum for Albanian).

An overview of suggestions pertaining to certain segments of the curriculum shows the following:

Three teachers recommended a reduction in volume and simplification of grammar. Suggestions concerning the selection of reading materials were given by four teachers, which pertained to modernizing the texts, adding texts that are in keeping with the culture and customs of the Albanian national minority, and the selection of texts that are clear and brief, as well as the removal of texts written in dialects. Additions to the curriculum concerning the selection of topics were suggested by five teachers, for the inclusion of material from everyday life in rural areas, material about local culture, the environment, nicer and more cheerful topics and, generally speaking, material that will help children to master communication in everyday life. Suggestions were made to remove outdated and unnecessary material, as well as lessons with religious material or to include holidays celebrated in these communities (Bairam). Concerning writing, suggestions were made about when to start teaching the Cyrillic alphabet (“the teaching of the Cyrillic alphabet should start earlier, not in the second semester of the 4th grade”), the time planned for mastering Cyrillic (“the children are expected to master Cyrillic within four classes in the 4th grade”), and the total number of written exercises (“more written exercises should be added – there are only four under the curriculum”).

This question also prompted comments that were not directly related to the content of the curriculum. Some comments pertained to the way the curriculum is implemented, the prevalence of certain areas in teaching practice, the application of certain methodological approaches, and types of exercises (“attention should be paid to the culture of the language”, “more dialogues should be included”, “dictations and retelling should be more prevalent”, “more emphasis should be placed on oral exercises, communication and grammar exercises, analysis of literary works, the reproduction of read texts and reading”, “children in Vojvodina and in the south do not need to work in the same way”), while other comments pertained to teaching aids: textbooks (“include Albanian names in the textbooks”, “new words should be translated into Albanian; an illustrated grammar book should be produced”) and other additional teaching material (“use more visual material like illustrations and drawings”, “use films and other materials that could encourage the children to engage in discussion more and improve their knowledge”).

4. The teachers’ opinions about the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools may contribute to the improvement of the teaching of this subject, as well as to the greater success of pupils in learning Serbian if certain material is amended or corrected.

There is no doubt about the relevance of the observations on the need to pay attention to the specific conditions in which teaching is conducted and to ensure that the elements of different cultures are rep-

resented on an equitable basis. These points are noted in the curriculum but they could be given greater importance. Certainly, the observed discrepancy between the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the curriculum for Albanian should be taken into consideration.

There are, however, some suggestions that indicate that some of the teachers are not sufficiently informed about the concept, structure and recommendations for the implementation of the curriculum.

This conclusion comes primarily from the comments about the excessive volume of material on grammar. The impression is that there are some teachers who do not differentiate between two related sections – “linguistic matter” and “grammar” – and they cover material from the curriculum that falls under “linguistic matter” from the aspect of explicit grammar. Objections concerning the volume, complexity and excessive prevalence of grammar material may be a consequence influenced by the interpretation of these two sections in the textbooks.

The influence of textbooks is probably also at work in the suggestions pertaining to the modernization of topics, especially in the senior grades, due to the fact that reading books from previous generations are used in teaching instead of new sets of books. On that point it should be borne in mind that the curriculum prescribes only one part of the texts (in the section on “reading materials”), while the other texts which are in the readers are the result of the selection of authors based on the section “subject matter” and are not obligatory.

Suggestions for additions and amendments to the curriculum relating to working methods and teaching aids also indicate the need for teachers to familiarize themselves thoroughly with the instructions for the implementation of the curriculum, since most of the suggestions are already covered in the curriculum.

#### **III.2.4. Observations on the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue**

1. The structure and content of the curriculum, as well as the recommendations for its implementation, undoubtedly reveal that it is partly based on content and teaching methods for the teaching of foreign languages, as well as elements and content for the teaching of Serbian as a mother tongue. This approach is not essentially wrong if we bear in mind the fact that the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is done under very differing circumstances, and so it is necessary to bring it closely in line with methods that are characteristic of the teaching of foreign languages in places where Serbian is not used in everyday communication and where the pupils’ mother tongue is not related to Serbian. Moreover, it

can and should be brought more into line with the teaching of Serbian as a mother tongue in bilingual or mixed environments and those in which the mother tongue is similar to Serbian.

2. Looking from the perspective of foreign language teaching methods, it may be noted that the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue is a combination of two basic approaches that have been used from the mid-20th century to the present: 1) the approach whereby language is primarily acquired by practicing basic linguistic models by means of various structural exercises primarily aimed at practicing, strengthening and automating the linguistic models and achieving linguistic competence (the ability to construct grammatically correct statements); and 2) the communicative approach, which focuses on establishing communicative competence (the ability to use adequate verbal communication depending on the communicative situation) by using authentic language in natural communication.

Thus, the establishing of grammatically correct linguistic habits and the ability to use a language in situations of everyday life should be viewed as the dominant approaches in the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, and all the other elements of the curriculum are means to those ends. With that in mind, it is especially important to properly understand the role of grammar and reading texts and not to equate them with the functions these parts of the curriculum have in the mother tongue, especially in environments where knowledge of Serbian is limited. To wit, if the same approach to teaching grammar is taken as with the mother tongue, then too much importance will be given to explanations, the learning of grammar terminology, morphological and syntactical analysis and the like, which will leave insufficient time for practicing the practical application of the rules. Likewise the treatment of texts cannot be approached the same way in these environments as the treatment of texts in the mother tongue. Namely, insisting on teaching a large number of texts, especially those that are longer and more demanding, inevitably leads to their translation, thus ruining the very point of their use, which is to provide a basis for discussion. Translating takes a lot of time, often leads to the mechanical memorization of set constructions and does not contribute to equipping the pupil for spontaneous communication. Indeed it is precisely the ability to communicate spontaneously that is the actual goal of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, because only in this way can it be said that the child has mastered Serbian which, ultimately and most importantly, will result in enabling him/her to continue his/her education (also) in that language and to feel an equal member of the wider community.

3. The direct link with Serbian as a mother tongue is especially visible in the prescribed reading materials. If we compare the lists of texts for those two subjects it is evident that for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, just a selection was made from texts prescribed for the subject of Serbian as

a mother tongue. Certainly the selection of reading materials is in keeping with considerations for age, educational values and literary merit, and it satisfies the set objective and tasks with respect to learning about elements of the culture of the Serbian people, but it must be said that in some environments it is not at all in keeping with the abilities of the pupils, whose knowledge of Serbian is weaker, and therefore it is necessary to include texts whose language and content is easier and more meaningful for pupils from such environments.

4. Some material in the curriculum is generalized and lends itself to being covered differently in the textbooks, as well as different interpretations while being taught in the class, which is especially notable in the section on grammar. This may have positive as well as negative effects. Such generalization may be a reflection of the aspiration to make the curriculum flexible and to leave enough scope for certain parts of the material to be covered briefly or in further detail, again depending on the conditions in which the class is taught. On the other hand, there may be a negative effect if the concept of teaching this way is not sufficiently understood and these units are automatically covered in detail. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret those segments of the material correctly and adapt them to the working conditions. It has been observed that often the best choice is not made by the teacher and that valuable time, which is limited by the number of classes, is wasted on learning material that is not of primary importance.

5. The curriculum prescribes a certain tempo in learning Serbian, but also suggests that new material should not be covered until the previous material has been absorbed. In environments in which the conditions for the teaching of this subject are more difficult (above all in a homogeneous environment in which Serbian is not spoken and where Serbian is not similar to the pupils' mother tongue) this may lead to a situation that, in the desire to meet the requirements of the curriculum, some parts of the material is covered without being fully absorbed by the pupils. Such a situation is very detrimental, given that the concept of the curriculum is based on the interconnection of one part of the material to the next, i.e. each new element assumes an understanding of the previous one. Material that is not properly absorbed thus accumulates, the requirements grow ever larger, and thereby the level of success drops ever lower.

6. Although it is highlighted in the curriculum that, in addition to the basic content there is also expanded content, the difference actually amounts to the different number of words that are to be acquired in the course of a school year (and the total number over the course of all eight grades) and parts of the content given in the section entitled "linguistic matter". Differentiation is also mentioned in the requirements on how to cover texts and reading materials. It can be concluded that the differentiation provided for in the requirements of the curriculum and its content is not in line with the big differences that exist in levels of previous knowledge and ability to handle tempo and volume in learning Serbian in

different environments. In other words, the fundamental differences in the ability to learn Serbian that exist between pupils whose mother tongue is similar to Serbian and pupils whose mother tongue is very different to Serbian, are not sufficiently reflected in the curriculum. The requirements presented in the curriculum are too similar.

7. A detailed examination of the content of the curriculum gives the impression that it is better suited for use in mixed environments and for pupils whose mother tongue is similar to Serbian. With respect to homogeneous environments and languages not similar to Serbian, a fundamental understanding of the concept of the teaching of this subject is needed on the part of all those who are involved in shaping that teaching and its implementation in the classroom. In such circumstances it is of vital importance that there is an active attitude towards the curriculum, meaning the selection of those parts of the material and the application of those methods and procedures that are most effective towards fulfilling the set objective and tasks.



**III.3. How the curriculum is implemented  
in primary schools in the municipalities  
of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja**



### III.3. HOW THE CURRICULUM IS IMPLEMENTED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA

*Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic and Milan Ajdzanovic*

**Introductory remarks.** During the multiple visits of the experts and associates to the municipalities of Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja in March and April 2014, undoubtedly one of the most important segments their attention was dedicated to was the observation of classroom teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the primary schools that were included in this research. The material for this part of the research was collected by completing the relevant and suitably large guide for observing teaching during the classes of different grades.<sup>75</sup> Members of the expert group and the associates had the role of observers and did not participate in the class itself in any way. In some cases there was only one of them, but usually, in order to get a better insight into the teaching, two of them were present, as evidenced by the fact that 48 completed guides were used for the observation of 32 classes.

The actual class observation guide consisted of 28 questions divided into four parts, the purpose of which was to collect various information about, most importantly, the relationship between the mother tongue and non-tongue tongue in the class, the pupils' activities, the types of tasks and exercises used in class, as well as the number of pupils present during the classes. Of course, where necessary, the observers added some of their own observations that were not answers to the questions set in advance. It is interesting that such observations were quite frequently of key importance for describing how the classes were run, which will be discussed further below.

The first part of the class observation guide (*Proportional use of the mother tongue and non-native tongue in class*), with a total of 12 different questions, was the most extensive part, which is no surprise given that, as can be seen from its title, it was dedicated to the key element and tool of each class – language. The other parts were of noticeably smaller size, which was again simply a consequence of the correlation with the subject to which they were dedicated; those other parts respectively had eight questions (*on Pupils' activity*), five questions (*on Types of tasks and exercises*) and three questions (*on Pupils [completed at the end of the class]*).

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75 A note on this this point: although it was initially foreseen that only certain grades would be focused on, due to some specific features of the organization of classroom teaching (one of them of course being combined teaching for the junior grades) and also due to time limitations, this research included all grades, albeit not to the same extent in all schools.

The first part of the guide focused on observing the class, all that concerns language, and collecting information about the proportional use of the mother tongue and non-mother tongue – i.e. Albanian and Serbian – in class, as well as on situations in which the teachers used one of the two languages.

### III.3.1. Description of the current situation

The data obtained in this segment of the research (by observing the classes) will be briefly presented below. First, it is worth noting that a correlation was observed between the teacher's mother tongue and the proportion of the use of Albanian in the teaching: if the teacher's mother tongue was Albanian, that language was (extremely) dominant in the teaching, and the reverse was also true. Of course, another factor that bore influence on the share of use of languages was the pupils' age: the younger the pupils, the more their mother tongue was prevalent during the class. On the other hand, among the few teachers whose mother tongue was Serbian (a total of six of them), the use of this language was significantly more frequent than the use of Albanian, which was most obvious among the teachers who do not speak any Albanian at all.

78 | The pupils' mother tongue was the primary means used in explaining to them any unknown words from Serbian and this was, almost without exception, done by using the traditional method: by writing the words in Serbian and their translated equivalents in Albanian on the blackboard or, when the situation demanded, by orally translating texts from Serbian into Albanian.<sup>76</sup> Some teachers, albeit not very often, used a different method of semantization: by showing illustrations and/or objects to explain the meaning of unknown words, which was done mostly in the lower grades.

In view of all this, it is not surprising that pupils taught by a teacher who gives them explanations in Albanian, when asking questions in class, did so almost without exception in their mother tongue, Albanian. On the other hand, those who were more exposed to Serbian in their classes acted in one of two ways in such situations: they either used that language themselves to ask various questions– which happened more often – or did not ask any questions at all, neither in Albanian nor in Serbian.

Concerning teaching aids, it should be said that in most of the schools, a blackboard and chalk were the only teaching aids at the teachers' disposal, and so the use of any other aids was mostly a matter of cre-

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<sup>76</sup> Of course, an exception to this practice lies with the aforesaid teachers who do not speak Albanian (or do not speak it well) and therefore explained unknown words by providing synonyms in Serbian.

ativity and ingenuity, and also the motivation of the teacher. However, none of these three factors was noticed to any great extent during the classes observed.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, and no less importantly, none of the teachers had an assistant to help run the class which, as the later insight into the situation showed, was not only a trait of the classes observed.

It was also noted that pupils of the lower grades used more modern textbooks, with much richer content and were accordingly more appropriate for their age, and which were undoubtedly more attractive – a fact that is sometimes neglected. On the other hand, in Serbian language classes in the higher grades, the pupils used textbooks which were obviously outdated in terms of form, and even more so in terms of content. This difference between the textbooks in the lower and higher classes can be explained by the fact that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development provides new textbooks for children from the 1st to 4th grade,<sup>78</sup> whereas those in the higher grades are forced to obtain textbooks for themselves, the consequence of which is the inheriting of textbooks from previous generations or photocopying them. This, to a certain extent at least, has a negative influence on the effectiveness of the class.

Finally, in closing this overview of the languages used in class, a few words should also be said about the Serbian of those conducting the classes. Although this might not perhaps be expected considering the context, some aberrations of varying degrees from the standard norms of Serbian were in evidence among both teachers whose mother tongue was Serbian, as well as those whose mother tongue was Albanian. Of course, this was much more prevalent among the latter, with certain irregularities in articulation<sup>79</sup> and stress, as well as in all other aspects of the language. However, this group had some (in truth, rare) exceptions of teachers who, the observers noted, had good pronunciation and their Serbian had

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77 However, one should not conclude from this that there are no teachers at all who have a different approach to their work – on the contrary, there are some, but very few of them.

78 As of 2009 the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has been providing free textbooks for pupils of junior grades in the Republic of Serbia. During the first year the Ministry provided textbooks free of charge for all first-graders of primary schools (the pupils did not return them); in 2010 the Ministry provided so-called working textbooks for the first and second-graders of primary schools (the pupils did not return them); in 2011 the Ministry provided so-called non-working textbooks and workbooks for the first, second and third-graders of primary schools (the pupils have to return them at the end of the school year); in 2012 the Ministry provided so-called non-working textbooks and workbooks for the 4th grade of primary schools (the pupils have to return them at the end of the school year); in 2013 and 2014 the Ministry provided workbooks for the first cycle (from the 1st to 4th grade).

79 This refers to examples like the specific nature of the sound [l] in the Serbian of these speakers, which is the result of interference with Albanian.

no grammatical mistakes at all.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, even among the teachers whose mother tongue was Serbian, as a result of dialectal influences, various aberrations from the norm were not infrequent; these being primarily aberrations in stress – but not only that.

When it comes to pupils' activity, the class observation showed that the pupils were active to the same extent that they were stimulated by their teacher: if the class was organized in a one-way manner, as was usually the case, from the teacher to the pupils, the pupils were often reduced to being mere observers in the class. On the other hand, in classes where the teacher endeavoured to include all the pupils in the class, the class dynamics were significantly better, and the pupils significantly more active, even if that type of engagement merely amounted to interacting with their classmates in their mother tongue to translate unknown words or answer questions. However, even those teachers who paid greater attention to including pupils in the class seldom did anything other than frontal instruction and group work, the consequence of which was a class that did not differ much from standard patterns and in which, due to that, the children used the non-mother tongue much more often in a reproductive way rather than in an active way. It was also observed that to a certain degree the pupils' gender had an influence on their activity: although most of the observers stated that boys and girls were equally (in)active, some of them identified the girls as being consistently the more active and motivated of the two groups. On the other hand, gender was not a relevant criterion for teachers when trying to include pupils in the class: most of the teachers paid equal attention to boys and girls.

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During their classes some teachers used tasks and exercises from the textbooks, and some did not, and this could be ascribed more to the nature of the lesson being covered – no particular pattern was observed concerning the pupils' age and/or the teachers' mother tongue. However, there were some teachers who demonstrated considerable creativity and provided their own tasks, exercises and examples besides those offered in the textbooks. Of course, it hardly needs pointing out that the practical use of the non-mother tongue was much more common among the pupils of the teachers from that second group, whereas among those from the first group it was often completely non-existent.

However, here it should be clearly noted that many teachers were seen to be making their best efforts, which should be appreciated, especially in view of the limitations imposed by the financial situation ev-

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<sup>80</sup> Of course, this kind of assertion needs to be qualified somewhat and taken as relative, given the dialectal norm of Serbian as spoken in that area.

ident in some of the schools, and some of them <sup>81</sup> showed initiative and enthusiasm worth every praise and which could serve as a universal model.

As regards the issue of attendance levels of classes of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, it can be said that the pupils, at least in the observed classes, demonstrated regular attendance, as was evidenced from checks of the pupil registers.

Finally, an important note should be made here: despite the rather exhaustive class observation guide that was dedicated to the various aspects of classroom teaching, as well as the undoubted professionalism of all those who monitored the running of the classes, it is questionable whether all the data obtained should be taken at face value. To wit, in some instances, in the observations recorded in the margins of the questionnaires <sup>82</sup> or in discussions after impressions of the observed situation had been consolidated, there was a lingering suspicion (apparently justified) that the observed class had in fact been prepared in advance in agreement with all its actors, and that the observers actually witnessed a kind of performance in which the questions and answers were known and fixed in advance. However, typically such classes, precisely because of the obvious lack of spontaneity, could not reach the expected level, whereby even under the given circumstances, various mistakes could not be avoided in the non-mother tongue, both on the part of the pupils and – especially significant and worrying from a professional point of view – on the part of those who were running the class. Of course, on the one hand there is a clear motivation for the teachers who resorted to preparing their class like this: their aim was to present their own work in the best possible light, especially due to the fact that, as they themselves confirmed, such visits, which could be viewed as a form of inspection of their work, are very rare (even though this visit was certainly neither intended nor presented as such to the school staff). <sup>83</sup> It is clear that the observation of teaching inevitably has a negative effect on the level of spontaneity of the teachers and pupils, which to an extent gives the wrong picture of the situation in the field, but on the other hand it is necessary and useful for collecting the information needed.

It is an undoubted fact that this segment of the research dedicated to the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, even if one sets aside all of the aforesaid doubts concerning the spontaneity of

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81 Here we should note the example of one teacher, a sculptor by profession, who has prepared for publication a small illustrated Serbian-Albanian dictionary.

82 Two of them are as follows: “I have a slight suspicion that the class has been staged in advance, at least to a certain degree” and “Everybody is included, they’re all very motivated, but it’s as if it’s a re-enactment of previously assigned tasks and roles.”

83 Nevertheless, even efforts such as these speak for themselves.

what was seen, could not give a comprehensive insight into how the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is organized in the 16 schools visited in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, but it was more than enough to allow certain shortcomings to be observed in the running of these classes.

From all the above one may draw a conclusion that was somewhat expected, and is not just a characteristic of the environment that was covered in this research. Namely, the approach of the teachers teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue is quite frequently an intuitive one, sometimes even chaotic, whereby the set tasks and the objective clearly prescribed by the curriculum are not fully achieved. Furthermore, the impression is gained that some of the teachers have never even familiarized themselves with the curriculum itself in any detail.

### III.3.2. Analysis of responses from the teachers' questionnaire

In the questionnaire, the teachers expressed their views on various aspects of how teaching is done (methods that are applied, teaching aids, measuring and evaluating results of teaching and pupils' knowledge) and gave suggestions for the improvement of teaching which, in their opinion, would lead to the greater success of pupils in learning Serbian.

Presented below are the questions from the questionnaire followed by the statistical data and comments on the data obtained.

**Table 3.2.1. – Overview of responses to the question: When do you use the mother tongue of your pupils during a lesson?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
I do not know my pupils' mother tongue	4	9.8
Constantly	2	4.9
When I am explaining new material	30	73.2
I avoid using my pupils' mother tongue	4	9.8
Other answer	1	2.4
Total	41	100.0

The teachers use their pupils' mother tongue during class mostly when explaining new material (30 teachers), four teachers avoid using the mother tongue in class, four teachers do not know the pupils' mother tongue, and two teachers use it constantly in class. In comparison to the recommendations for the implementation of the curriculum, whereby the direct method is suggested, it is evident that most of the teachers deem it necessary to give explanations in the mother tongue and so the use of the mother tongue cannot be excluded from the class. The latest approaches in teaching a second language (foreign language/non-mother tongue) do not completely exclude the use of the mother tongue in class, but they do, however, suggest the dominant presence of the language that is being acquired, not only in the phase of practicing material, but also when the material is first introduced as new matter, i.e. when it is being explained. To that end, there are recommended ways of presenting new material that do not require the use of the mother tongue (visual aids, paraphrases, inductive concluding, etc.), the implementation of which would be very useful in class, and the mother tongue should be left aside as a vehicle for situations when neither of the above is effective. In this way the bonds between the elements of the linguistic system being learned are strengthened and the possible negative influence of the mother tongue is minimized.

**1. Table 3.2.2. Overview of responses to the question: How much time on average do you allocate to giving explanations in a class, and how much to practicing new material from the language/grammar?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
15 minutes of explanation, the rest is practice	15	36.6
Roughly equal amounts	15	36.6
Explanations take up the main part of the class, and practice is done at the end	11	26.8
Total	41	100.0

Slightly more than a third of the teachers (15) stated that practicing material from the language/grammar takes up the greater part of their class. More than a third of the teachers (15) dedicate an equal share of time to explanations and practice, while a quarter of the teachers surveyed (11) use most of the class for explanations and only the final part for practice. These data lead to the conclusion that the theoretical part of the teaching of language/grammar should be reduced in more than half of the classes and more time should be spent in practice and practical application of the material, which would undoubtedly improve the acquisition of the non-mother tongue.

**Table 3.2.3. Overview of responses to the question: In your classes how much is devoted to the pupils doing oral practice and how much to written work?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
The same amounts	16	39.0
More is devoted to writing (including written tasks)	6	14.6
More is devoted to speaking	19	46.3
Total	41	100.0

Almost half of the teachers (19) stated that speaking activities are used more in class than written activities. The questionnaire did not contain a question about the type of speaking activity, and so it cannot be concluded whether the teachers took speaking to also mean the reciting of memorized prose/poetry and the answering of questions, stating words without any context and even reading aloud. According to their assessment, oral and written activities are equally distributed in the classes of 16 of the teachers. Six teachers give preference to written expression. In everyday life, however, the oral use of language is far more prevalent, and therefore in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue this linguistic skill should be given priority, in its practical and functional application. Of course, written activities should not be neglected but used to the extent to which the available time permits.

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**Table 3.2.4. Overview of responses to the question: Describe how you usually cover new language material**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
I just follow the material set out in the textbook, sticking to the same sequence and volume	13	31.7
I bring in additional materials (texts, illustrations, music, etc.)	3	7.3
I combine material from the textbook with additional material	24	58.5
Other answer	1	2.4
Total	41	100.0

More than half of the teachers surveyed (24) use a textbook in combination with additional materials when teaching new language material, a third (13 teachers) just follow the material as it is presented in the textbooks, and three of them bring in their own materials. It should be borne in mind that the interpretation of the content of the curriculum presented in the textbooks is only one of the options at the disposal of teachers, as well as the fact that the textbooks are written for all pupils in the Republic of Serbia

who are attending classes of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. In other words, although giving preference to only one teaching aid is what frequently happens in our teaching practice, there is no doubt that this can be counterproductive because certain lessons or parts of them should be brought into line with the cultural and linguistic environment from which the pupils come, so that the material may be absorbed more easily. This, of course, requires additional efforts from the teachers, but it will have a positive effect on the quality of teaching.

**Table 3.2.5. Overview of responses to the question: Do you explain new, unfamiliar words to the pupils? If you answered this question with a “yes”, please indicate the ways in which you explain new, unfamiliar words to the pupils.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Translation into the mother tongue	25	61.0
I use illustrations (pre-prepared illustrations or I draw them on the blackboard)	5	12.2
I use a descriptive and associative method to help them work out the meaning	10	24.4
Other answer	1	2.4
Total	41	100.0

All the teachers surveyed answered this question in the affirmative – they all explain new, unfamiliar words. Most of them use the method of translating into the mother tongue, which is considered a method that should be avoided in teaching a non-mother tongue and should be used only when new vocabulary cannot be explained by other methods, or when other methods are unreliable or inefficient. It is recommended that, whenever possible, use be made of visual aids, demonstrations, descriptions, and any other methods that minimize direct association with the mother tongue and strengthen the linguistic system of Serbian for the pupils.

**Table 3.2.6. Overview of responses to the question: In your classes do you do real-life role-play exercises?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
We do not do real-life role-play exercises in class	5	12.2
Very rarely, a few times a year	4	9.8
Less than once a month	5	12.2

Once or twice a month	13	31.7
Once a week	11	26.8
Almost every lesson	3	7.3
Total	41	100.0

Exercises in which various real-life situations are acted out with the pupils are very useful, not only because they train the pupils to communicate with speakers of another language in real and unavoidable situations, but also because by artificially creating an authentic speaking environment, creativity is encouraged, and a new sphere of vocabulary is expanded and absorbed. Thus, the pupils are equipped to use the non-mother tongue outside school in real-life situations, applying and activating the knowledge, skills and habits acquired in the classroom. Therefore, a special question was dedicated to such exercises. The analysis has shown that such exercises are organized by most teachers, but not with equal levels of frequency: most of them use such exercises once or twice a month (13), followed by once a week (11), while nine teachers rarely use them (a few times a year, or less than once a month). Five teachers never organize this type of exercise, and only three teachers organize them during almost every class. The teachers who do not organize such exercises explained that this was because of the pupils' age ("they are small, they do not understand"), because they rely on using the textbook, because of lack of time, and because of their lack of experience in teaching this subject.

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The situations that were most frequently cited as examples were: "in the shop"/"at the market" and "at the doctor's", followed by "traffic", "family relations" "situations in school", and "holidays and birthdays". A few of the teachers mentioned situations mostly referring to polite communication: "behaving in everyday life", "communicating with elderly people", "mutual respect", "the behaviour of pupils in school and outside it", and, directly related to those situations, also communicative functions when making someone's acquaintance, meeting on the street, communicating with officials, asking for help and making requests. Also mentioned individually were: the post office, the theatre, the library, finding one's way in the city, sports, seasons, Serbian customs, indicating the characteristics of objects and people, topics on culture, and important dates.

Some of the teachers did not cite precise situations and instead gave rather generalized responses: "topics from real life in keeping with the pupils' age", "topics from everyday life", "topics from the textbook corresponding to real-life situations", "general topics and situations", "random topics concerning general situations".

Such exercises play an important part in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, especially in environments in which Serbian is not the language spoken in the immediate surroundings. For pupils who come into contact with Serbian almost exclusively during classes, it is advisable that such exercises be organized as frequently as possible so as to prepare them to use the language outside the classroom. It is of vital importance to train the pupils to practically apply the material they have learned in class.

**Table 3.2.7. Overview of responses to the question: Which teaching aids do you use when teaching?**

Responses	Frequency	Procent
I only use textbooks	23	56.1
I only use other visual aids (photographs/pictures, books, etc.)	1	2.4
I only make my own materials	1	2.4
Combined approach	16	39.0
Total	41	100.0

More than half of the teachers surveyed only use textbooks (23), whereas the others mainly combine textbooks with other materials (16). One teacher indicated that he/she only uses other visual aids, and another indicated that he/she only makes his/her own materials.

The question on which textbooks are used in class was answered by seven teachers as follows: “Serbian as a non-mother tongue”, “reader, workbook, language tips”, “reader, grammar book, workbook”, “Serbian as a non-mother tongue – reader, language and orthography tips, textbook Let’s Learn Serbian”, “Magic – reader, workbook, language tips and grammar”, “picture book Let’s Learn Serbian for 1st and 2nd grade”. Given that the full details of the textbooks were not stated, it can only be assumed that these are textbooks issued by the Institute for Textbooks. One of the teachers did note that the textbooks were those of the Institute, and that he/she also uses teacher’s books, “but for grammar in Albanian – correlating with Serbian”. Also, these responses give no indication about the percentage of teachers who use the new textbook sets, nor how many of them use all the books from one set, or just some of the books of a set.

The teachers who use other teaching aids besides textbooks mention: visual aids (illustrations, drawings, photographs, pictures, posters – 11 teachers), audio material (3 teachers), realia (objects in the classroom and personal materials brought from home – 4 teachers) and the Internet (1 teacher).

The results of the responses to this question indicate the need for additional teaching materials to be produced for the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

**Table 3.2.8. Overview of responses to the question: How do you measure the level of knowledge attained by the pupils?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
By using tests <sup>84</sup>	28	68,3
By marking homework	25	61
Through oral exercises in class	35	85,4
Other answer	32	78
Other answer	1	2,4
Total	121	295,1

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As can be seen from the last row in the table, the teachers could give more than one answer to this question. In addition to the five possible responses provided in the table, the teachers were also offered one other response (“I do not check the knowledge of my pupils”) which, unsurprisingly, none of them chose.

The data indicate that the teachers mostly combine multiple ways of measuring the knowledge attained by their pupils. Given that the curriculum expects various kinds of knowledge and skills to be acquired, the combination of various procedures to check attainment is necessary.

Nevertheless, oral evaluation should be the primary criterion since the oral use of language is dominant in everyday communication and its importance is such that every teacher ought to use it (14.6% of the teachers do not measure knowledge through oral evaluation).

Since the questionnaire did not contain a question on the types of knowledge and skills that are evaluated, it cannot be determined whether the teachers primarily evaluate reproductive, theoretical or active, practical knowledge.

**Table 3.2.9. Overview of responses to the question: In your view, do your pupils have a good knowledge of Serbian?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
They are excellent at reading, writing and communicating in Serbian	3	7.3
They are good in oral communication, but improvement is needed in writing and reading	5	12.2
They are good in writing and reading, but improvement is needed in oral communication	20	48.8
Improvement of written and oral communication is needed	13	31.7
Total	41	100.0

Half of the teachers surveyed (20) were satisfied with their pupils' ability to read and write but felt that their oral communication needed improving. The converse situation, with a need to improve reading and writing but satisfactory competence in oral communication, was noted by far fewer teachers (5). Excellent results in all domains of language use were noted by only three teachers, while a need to improve in all the domains was observed by 13 teachers. This result is certainly a consequence of the work method employed in lessons. The results obtained indicate a need to change priorities in the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue – more attention should be paid to the active oral use of language and the improvement of all linguistic skills in general.

**Question from the questionnaire:** *Which of your classroom activities (methods, work techniques, types of assignments and exercises, etc.) motivate the pupils to learn Serbian?*

The largest number of teachers cited dialogue as the technique that motivates pupils the most. Also frequently noted were games that facilitate faster and easier language acquisition – dramatizations, role plays, quizzes, word associations, etc. Several teachers also highlighted the methods of illustration and demonstration as very stimulating. Some, on the other hand, observed that their pupils are fond of learning poems and reciting them.

A few teachers highlighted the importance of the teacher's attitude to work and the creation of a positive atmosphere in class: "establishing a good teacher-pupil relationship, which motivates the children to learn more", "relaxed communication between the teacher and pupil allows the pupils to be more active in class", "closeness and good contact with the pupils", "friendly approach", "dedication to work".

For the purpose of illustration, the following particular observations should also be mentioned: “tasks from the workbooks should immediately follow the completed unit, tests”, “they like reading and writing, and especially copying from the blackboard”, “doing written exercises on a specific topic, real-life role-plays – meeting a police officer, soldier, guests”, “I also often use real examples and try to explain to the children why it is necessary to learn Serbian”, “there is nothing that motivates them”.

A smaller number of teachers offered a generalized answer without giving a clear description of the technique: “by means of assignments and exercises”, “depends on the topics being covered”, “verbal methods, frontal instruction, active learning”, “practicing during class and analysing texts”, “trying to get the pupils familiar with the content”, “spending time on various material for teaching Serbian”.

**Question from the questionnaire:** *Which classroom activities do you feel are less fruitful?*

90 | The most frequent answer given to this question was “grammar”, and some teachers explained this as follows: “this is more about content than activities – the learning of grammar yields poor results”, “the grammar is too bulky, as are the language tips – I don’t get chance to cover them and use them”, “going through the grammar material, which is too bulky for the 8th grade”. Also a very frequent response was that “reading long texts” yields poor results, while “abstract topics” and “abstract concepts” were given as slightly less frequent answers. Two teachers cited problems with learning the Cyrillic alphabet and reading texts in Cyrillic, while another two highlighted the ineffectiveness of methods that are typical of traditional teaching: “frontal instruction – the pupils should be made to be more active”, “classic teaching – the monologue method”. Meanwhile three teachers cited circumstances beyond their control: “the demands are too great – both within the subject, and other circumstances, too”, “they’ve got no facilities at all”, and “noise”.

Some examples of individual answers are: “when there’s not much use of additional teaching aids (e.g. today she brought a painted egg because the topic was Easter)”, and “not being prepared for the class”. Among the activities that were cited as less fruitful were some examples that were also cited among the activities that motivate the pupils: “they do not like learning poems by heart”, and “writing compositions”. Of course, this is influenced by differences among the pupils, different topics, the choice of poems, and age, all of which stands as testament to the fact that the teacher must know the pupils well. It also confirms that there are some activities that cannot be universally categorized as advisable or inadvisable; rather, it is important to take into consideration all the circumstances in which the activities take place.

The frequency with which grammar and the reading of long texts were associated together in activities that are less fruitful may be interpreted by the relatively large degree of attachment of teachers to the curriculum content as it is interpreted in the textbooks.

**Table 3.2.10. Overview of responses to the question: Do you use assessments or the knowledge of your pupils as a basis for revising your methods for the learning of Serbian (in order to achieve the best possible results)?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, after every class I determine which approach works best for them	33	80.5
Sometimes	7	17.1
I decide my own method that works best for me regardless of the effect	1	2.4
Total	41	100.0

The table shows that a large majority of the teachers, in their own estimation, constantly monitor the efficiency of their actions based on the evaluation of the pupils' knowledge and revise their own methods in order to try to improve the teaching.

**Table 3.2.11. Overview of responses to the question: Would you be willing to introduce new methods and new ways of working in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No	2	4.9
Yes	39	95.1
Total	41	100.0

The largest number of teachers noted the necessity of modern teaching aids and supporting equipment: audio-visual materials, computers, smart boards, and language study CDs. Some stated that they were hampered by not having a language laboratory for this subject. This detail indicates that many teachers feel that teaching methods are contingent on teaching aids. Many also cited methods whose application does not depend on teaching aids but rather on the teachers themselves: "the critical thinking method", "more of the conversation method – and not explanations, dialogue, role play, and so on", "more interactive work, the active learning of teachers brings better results", "more communication between the

pupils”, “work in groups and pairs”, “more relaxed methods”. A few noted that a correlation needs to be made between the content of different subjects. Two highlighted the need for them to attend seminars, and another two stated that they are already applying new methods. The need for more contact with the Serbian environment was highlighted by one teacher (“the pupils should be sent to a Serbian environment to make contacts”), and one suggested organizing camps and workshops. One teacher unreservedly supported every initiative (“every innovation is good”), while two gave guarded responses (“as long as it’s in the pupils’ best interest”, “if it benefits teaching”).

The two teachers who gave a negative response to this question explained their reasons for doing so: retirement and the use of methods that are already yielding good results.

However, a certain inconsistency emerges if these data and the data presented previously on teachers revising their own methods are compared to the data related to the usage of teaching aids. Namely, even though the teachers are aware that constant self-evaluation and the ensuing improvement of teaching quality that comes from adopting new methods are key for achieving the primary objective of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, the data that shows that more than half of them use a textbook as the sole teaching aid and that only one in ten of them avoid using Albanian in teaching, demonstrates that their genuine willingness to improve teaching has not led to any change in practice. It hardly needs stating that without such change there will be no real improvement the attainment of pupils.

**Question from the questionnaire:** *If you have any suggestions for improving the attainment of pupils learning Serbian, please share them with us.*

Many of the suggestions were the same as those given previously. They mostly referred to the need for providing better working conditions. The teachers stated that the conditions need to be provided for modernizing teaching: the provision of a language laboratory for Serbian as a non-mother tongue with supporting equipment so that modern technology can be used. Audio-visual teaching aids are needed, televisions, internet, beamers, films, cassette players, CDs, wall decorations, posters, etc.

With regard to textbooks, the need was highlighted for them to be revised and brought up to date (in terms of both content and appearance), adapted to the children and brought into line with the environment. There is also a need for Serbian-Albanian dictionaries tailored to pupils. However, some teachers did not find any fault with the textbooks, but stated that the pupils need to be provided with the current sets of textbooks. One of the complaints (“there is no teacher’s handbook”) shows that not everybody is familiar with the existence of the teacher’s handbook.

A number of suggestions pertained to the need to involve parents and the broader community: “the parents, too, should draw attention to the fact that it’s important to know Serbian, it’s not all to do with the pupils”, “representatives of the municipality should visit schools and motivate pupils on why it’s important to learn the language of your surroundings, involve the parents in motivating them and working with the children on the importance of the language of their surroundings”. There were also suggestions on establishing cooperation with other schools, organizing class trips and sending children to Serbian environments, and again the need for making a correlation with other subjects was repeated.

Individual suggestions also included: “introducing teaching assistants”, “the number of classes should be increased”, “choosing topics appropriate for the age, affinities and mood of the pupils”, “the pupils who know the language better could help those who don’t speak so well”, “apply the same principles as those for studying a foreign language, such as English”, “reading sports sections from newspapers because pupils are interested in sports”, “setting aside more classes for practice and reviewing”, “group work and extracurricular activities, theatre as a type of learning in regular teaching”.

There was also a suggestion that was directed to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development: “The Ministry should organize a demonstration class in school. The training for teachers is just based on theoretical knowledge and has no practical application.”

### III.3.3. Qualifications of teachers

Out of a total of 41 teachers, 15 teach only the lower grades (1st to 4th), seven teachers teach both lower and higher grades, and 19 teach only the higher grades (5th to 8th).

**Table 3.3.1. Overview of the qualifications of teachers who teach the lower grades**

Qualifications of teachers	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary school	1	6.7
Post-secondary school	6	40.0
University, undergraduate studies	8	53.3
Total	15	100.0

Out of the 15 teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue to the lower grades only, one graduated from secondary school, six graduated from post-secondary school, and eight teachers completed undergraduate studies at university. The teacher who graduated from secondary school is a business specialist, those who have post-secondary diplomas attended teacher training college (three in Gnjilane, one in Djakovica and one in Vranje; of whom one stated the studies were in Albanian language and one in Serbian language and literature). Four of the teachers who completed undergraduate studies attended teacher training faculties (two in Vranje, one in Pristina and Vranje – specifying Serbian language and methodology, and one in Skopje), two graduated from the Faculty of Philology in Pristina (Serbian language and Serbian/Yugoslav literature), one graduated from the Faculty of Economics (business studies) in Presevo and one from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in Pristina (biology) and has passed the licencing examination for teachers (in Nis). One of the teachers did not state the name of the faculty or the location.

Based on this data, four teachers were trained for teaching Serbian (as a mother tongue) in lower grades (one at a post-secondary school, one at a teacher training faculty and two at a faculty of philology), but none were trained to teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

**Table 3.3.2. Overview of the qualifications of teachers who teach the higher grades**

Qualifications of teachers	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary school	1	3.8
Post-secondary school	13	50.0
University, undergraduate studies	10	38.5
University, master's degree or specialist studies	2	7.7
Total	26	100.0

A total of 26 teachers teach the higher grades (19 teach higher grades only, and seven teach both higher and lower grades): one graduated from secondary school, 13 have post-secondary diplomas, 10 completed undergraduate degrees, and two have master's/specialist studies degrees.

Eight teachers graduated from a teacher training college (the highest number in Gnjilane – four, one in Vranje and one in Prizren, while two did not state the location), of which three state Serbian language and literature (Gnjilane). One teacher with a post-secondary diploma graduated in biology and chemis-

try (at the Kliment Ohridski post-secondary school). Four teachers graduated from a teaching training faculty (two in Vranje, one in Pristina and Vranje – professor of classroom teaching, one did not state the location). Two teachers graduated in Serbian/Serbo-Croatian language and literature, one at the Faculty of Philology in Pristina and one at the Faculty of Philosophy in Gnjilane. In these grades, Serbian as a non-mother tongue is also being taught by one teacher who graduated in sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Pristina and one with a degree from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Pristina. For the rest of the teachers the data is incomplete, but what was stated includes economics (1), mathematics (1), pedagogy (1), Albanian language (1) and Serbian language teacher (1) – with no information on whether this refers to higher education or not.

According to this data, two teachers have the appropriate qualifications to teach Serbian as a mother tongue to higher grades, but none of them list the other requirements that should be met for teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

### **III.3.4. Analysis of responses from the pupils' questionnaire**

In the questionnaire, pupils stated their views on the types of activities and the classroom teaching methods (what they do, what they like and dislike, and what they would like to do), about the teaching material and areas that they find the most interesting and the most difficult, about homework, and the length of Serbian language classes.

This analysis shows the results of the responses to particular questions, followed by a summary.

**Table 3.4.1. Overview of responses to the question: What do you do in Serbian language classes, how would you describe them?**

G R A D E	Responses									
	The teacher does most of the talking, we answer only when asked a question	We sing songs and recite	We watch films and other video material	We draw, colour, make collages, comics, photos, etc.	We communicate in Serbian a lot, we think up specific situations and act out various roles	We write poems, essays, articles and the like.	We read	We follow the textbooks (learn from the textbooks and do textbook exercises)	We learn letters and words we don't know	other
4	77.7%	20.8%	7.1%	8.1%	33.0%	14.2%	13.7%	3.0%	5.6%	3.0%
5	95.0%	6.3%	7.5%	1.3%	20.0%	26.3%	12.5%	8.8%	10.0%	.0%
6	80.0%	5.0%	.0%	3.3%	28.3%	11.7%	3.3%	.0%	1.7%	3.3%
7	92.9%	3.2%	4.5%	1.9%	33.3%	17.3%	3.8%	1.9%	5.1%	1.3%
8	87.2%	5.8%	3.1%	1.8%	33.2%	13.7%	7.1%	1.8%	2.2%	.0%
Total	86.09%	9.32%	4.73%	3.62%	31.29%	15.86%	8.48%	2.78%	4.59%	1.39%

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Pupils were allowed to circle multiple responses.

Based on the responses to this question, the teacher is the one who does most of the talking in Serbian language classes, and the pupils answer when asked a question. This was as stated by 86.09% of the pupils, and broken down by grades the figures are: 4th grade – 77.7%, 5th grade – 95.0%, 6th grade – 80.0%, 7th grade – 92.9%, 8th grade – 87.2%.

This data shows that the teachers usually resort to the monologue method, which is one-directional and does not stimulate pupils to participate actively in the class.

In second place, but with a somewhat lower frequency in comparison to the previous response, is communication in Serbian, thinking up specific situations and role play (31.29%), which is distributed almost equally across the 4th, 7th and 8th grades (around 33%), and somewhat less in the 6th grade (28.3%), and the least in the 5th grade (20.0%).

Next comes writing (poems, essays, articles, etc.) as indicated by 15.86% of the pupils, with the most in the 5th grade (26.3%), and the least in the 6th grade (11.7%).

A total of 9.32% represents singing songs and reciting, most frequently in the 4th grade (20.8%), and in the other grades ranging from 3.2% to 6.3%. An almost identical percentage of the pupils identified reading (8.48%), with more in the 4th grade (13.7%) and the 5th grade (12.5%), and somewhat less in the 8th (7.1%), 7th (3.8%) and 6th (3.3%).

Less than 5% goes on various other activities such as: watching films and other video material (4.73%) – more in the 4th and the 5th grade (7.1% and 7.5%), and less in the 7th and the 8th grade (4.5% and 3.1%), and in the 6th grade – 0%; learning letters and new words (4.59%) – mostly in the 5th grade (10.0%), and half that amount in the 4th and 7th grade (5.6% and 5.1%) and considerably less in the 8th and the 6th grade (2.2% and 1.7%); drawing, colouring, making collages, comics, photographs and the like (3.62%) – most popular in the 4th grade (8.1%), and considerably less in the other grades (1.3% – 3.3%). Also, a very small percentage of pupils (2.78%) claim they work from the textbooks (learn from the textbook and do exercises) – most in the 5th grade (8.8%) and much less in the other grades (in the 6th – 0%).

**Table 3.4.2. Overview of responses to the question: What do you like best in Serbian language classes?**

G R A D E	Responses				
	The way the teacher works with us	The textbooks we have	Additional materials	Answers related to the language itself and literature	Other
4	77.2%	37.1%	12.9%	8.9%	1.5%
5	89.9%	45.6%	5.1%	7.6%	.0%
6	81.7%	23.3%	6.7%	5.0%	.0%
7	92.9%	29.7%	5.8%	5.2%	1.3%
8	91.1%	22.2%	5.8%	4.4%	.0%
Total	86.70%	30.70%	7.80%	6.20%	0.70%

In this question pupils were allowed to circle multiple responses.

The vast majority (86.70%) indicated that the way the teacher works was what they liked best about Serbian classes, with a somewhat higher percentage in the 7th (92.9%), 8th (91.1%) and 5th (89.9%) grade, and a somewhat lower percentage in the 6th (81.7%) and 4th (77.2%) grade.

A considerably lower percentage (30.70%) identified that it was the textbooks that they have. In that regard, the 5th grade pupils (45.6%) gave the highest percentage of positive opinions on the textbooks, while the lowest percentage was noted with the 8th grade pupils (22.2%) and a slightly higher percentage than that came from the 6th grade pupils (23.3%).

Additional materials were liked best by 7.80% of the pupils, by a somewhat higher percentage of the 4th grade pupils (12.9%) and by a somewhat lower percentage of the pupils in the other grades (5.1% – 6.7%). Work connected to the language itself and literature was identified by 6.20% of the pupils, again with the highest percentage in the 4th grade (8.9%), and a falling trend as we go up through the grades (5th – 7.6%, 6th – 5.0%, 7th – 5.2%, 8th – 4.4%). Other responses amount to only 0.70%.

**Table 3.4.3. Overview of responses to the question: What do you like least in Serbian language classes?**

G R A D E	Responses				
	The way the teacher works with us	The textbooks we have	Additional material	The things we do in class	The lack of resources
4	35.7%	32.4%	40.0%	8.6%	1.6%
5	29.1%	41.8%	38.0%	8.9%	.0%
6	20.0%	40.0%	38.2%	10.9%	.0%
7	24.3%	31.3%	45.1%	6.3%	.7%
8	17.7%	35.4%	40.2%	11.5%	1.0%
Total	25.60%	34.82%	40.77%	9.23%	0.89%

In this question pupils were allowed to circle multiple responses.

Compared to all the other responses offered, the pupils liked additional material the least in Serbian language classes (40.77%), with no great variations in this response across all grades (38.0%–45.1%). Next come the textbooks they use (34.82%), in the range of 31.3% (7th grade) to 41.8% (5th grade). The teacher’s way of working was identified by 25.60% of the pupils. Compared to the other grades and to this average, 4th grade pupils (35.7%) are the least content with the teacher’s way of working, and the 8th grade pupils (17.7%) are more content. “The things we do in class” was identified by 9.23%, more in the 8th grade (11.5%) and in the 6th grade (10.9%), and the least in the 7th grade (6.3%). It is interesting to note that only 0.89% expressed dissatisfaction over a lack of resources, and in the 5th and 6th grade no pupils marked this answer.

If we compare the data obtained from the teachers with those obtained from the students, it can be seen that they are somewhat contradictory. Namely, according to teachers, the things that need to be changed in order to improve the quality of teaching are mainly those that do not concern themselves: the improvement of working conditions, the procurement of more modern textbooks and new aids, greater involvement of parents and the local community, and the like, while in all of this, they often do not identify the importance of their own role and changing the way the class is run, even though almost all of them without exception are willing (or claim they are, at least) to introduce new teaching methods. On the other hand, one in every four pupils indicated that the least appealing thing in Serbian language classes is the teacher’s way of working, which is not surprising given that most of the pupils, as they themselves indicated, mostly (or only) listen to the teacher and answer questions. It is clear from this that the way to go about making fundamental change is to change the conditions of the classes, but, more importantly, the very approach to teaching.

**Table 3.4.4. Overview of responses to the question: What would you most like to do in Serbian language classes?**

G R A D E	Responses							
	Sing songs, recite	Watch films and other video material	Crtamo, bojimo, pravimo kolaže, stripove, fotografije i sl.	Draw, colour, make collages, comics, photographs and the like	Write poems, essays, articles, etc.	Read	Learn language and grammar (from the textbook) and do exercises	Other
4	44.6%	18.8%	14.5%	38.7%	18.3%	7.0%	7.0%	2.7%
5	20.3%	29.1%	10.1%	34.2%	34.2%	8.9%	8.9%	1.3%

6	16.7%	21.7%	8.3%	50.0%	15.0%	11.7%	1.7%	.0%
7	15.1%	25.0%	11.2%	48.0%	25.7%	2.6%	3.3%	2.0%
8	14.8%	32.3%	5.4%	48.0%	21.5%	4.0%	5.4%	1.8%
Total	23.57%	25.86%	9.86%	44.14%	22.43%	5.71%	5.43%	1.86%

The biggest number of pupils expressed the desire to communicate in Serbian in the class, think up specific situations and act out various roles (44.14%), a somewhat lower percentage in the 4th grade (38.7%) and in the 5th grade (34.2%), and somewhat higher in the other grades (in the 7th and 8th grades – 48.0%, in the 6th grade – 50.0%).

25.86% identified watching films and other video material, the lowest percentage in the 4th grade (18.8%), and the highest percentage in the 8th grade (32.3%). It is not a rule, however, that it is necessarily the older pupils who mark this activity more, given that the 5th grade pupils marked this answer with a percentage higher than the average for this question (29.1%).

Singing songs and reciting comes next (23.57%), with an obvious difference between the younger pupils and the older ones: 4th grade – 44.6%, 5th grade – 20.3%, 6th grade – 16.7%, 7th grade – 15.1%, 8th grade – 14.8%. Those differences can be attributed to the characteristics of their ages.

Writing poems, essays and articles, in other words creative writing, was suggested by 22.43% of the pupils, the highest percentage being in the 5th grade (34.2%), and the lowest in the 6th grade (15.0%), which indicates that those differences are not contingent on the age.

Drawing, colouring and making various visual material was marked by 9.86%, the highest percentage being in the 4th grade (14.5%), and the lowest in the 8th grade (5.4%), which can again be a consequence of the age difference.

A desire to read is expressed by 5.71% of the pupils, with the highest percentage in the 6th grade (11.7%), and the lowest in the 7th grade (2.6%). The differences are obviously not caused by the age difference, but can be attributed to textbook reading experiences, or the choice of texts and the way they are approached and covered. Also, given that the question did not state what kind of reading (for example, practicing reading technique or informative reading), it cannot be known with certainty what individual pupils were actually referring to.

Learning language and grammar from the textbook and doing related exercises was identified by 5.43%, with more 4th grade pupils (7.0%) and 5th grade pupils (8.9%) suggesting this kind of learning, and with the lowest percentage shown by the 6th grade (1.7%), while the 7th and 8th grade are closest to the average percentage on this response (7th – 3.3%, 8th – 5.4%). These differences may again have been influenced by the characteristics of the textbooks and the approach to this kind of material.

“Other” is marked by 1.86% of the pupils, ranging from 0% to 2.7%, with no particular rule pertaining to age noticeable.

**Table 3.4.5. Overview of responses to the question: Which part of Serbian do you find most interesting?**

G R A D E	Odgovori					
	Grammar	Reading (practicing reading in class)	Writing and translation	Oral communication	Literature	Other
4	40.1%	59.4%	18.8%	16.3%	10.4%	1.5%
5	40.0%	53.8%	12.5%	23.8%	25.0%	2.5%
6	27.6%	37.9%	5.2%	31.0%	8.6%	.0%
7	45.5%	30.1%	9.6%	32.7%	22.4%	2.6%
8	32.3%	31.0%	5.3%	38.5%	15.5%	.0%
Total	37.81%	41.83%	10.80%	28.81%	16.07%	1.25 %

Reading (practicing reading in class) is the most interesting part of teaching for the largest percentage of pupils (41.83%). Broken down by grade, this response was most frequently marked by 4th grade pupils (59.4%). The percentage gradually drops as we move up through the grades (5th – 53.8%, 6th – 37.9%, 7th – 30.1%, 8th – 31.0%), which is in keeping with expectations if we interpret the responses as practicing reading techniques. Nevertheless, the indication that the pupils like reading texts in Serbian should be treated with caution. On the basis of the questionnaire, it cannot be known with certainty whether the pupils interpreted this question as meaning the reading aloud of a previously translated and familiar text (with the aim of mechanically practicing the skill of reading aloud) or whether they took it to mean the reading of an unfamiliar text with the aim of acquiring new knowledge.

A surprisingly large percentage of pupils identified grammar as the most interesting part (37.81%). This is an unexpected result, given that they also picked this area as the most difficult, and also the fact that the grammar in the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is often described as excessive and not properly adapted for these pupils. Grammar is most interesting for the 7th grade pupils (45.5%). Compared to them, this part of the teaching is less interesting for the 4th grade (40.1%), 5th grade (40.0%) and 8th grade pupils (32.3%), and the least interesting for the 6th grade pupils (27.6%).

Oral communication is somewhat less interesting (28.81%), and is most interesting for the 8th grade pupils (38.5%). The data show that it is least interesting for the lower-grade pupils and the percentage gradually increases with the grades (4th – 16.3%, 5th – 23.8%, 6th – 31.0%, 7th – 32.7%). The approach to teaching may influence this trend.

The pupils find literature less interesting in comparison to the previous areas (16.07%). The percentages go from the highest in the 5th grade (25.0%) to the lowest in the 6th grade (8.6%), and no particular rule according to grades can be discerned (4th – 10.4%, 7th – 22.4%, 8th – 15.5%). It is very likely that the choice of texts and the way they are covered influences these results.

Writing and translation fall far behind reading in terms of how interesting they are to the pupils. A total of 10.80% of the pupils marked this as the most interesting area. The younger pupils like these activities rather more, and the older pupils like them less (4th – 18.8%, 5th – 12.5%, 6th – 5.2%, 7th – 9.6%, 8th – 5.3%).

**Table 3.4.6. Overview of responses to the question: What do you find is the most difficult material in Serbian?**

GRADE	Responses						
	Grammar	Reading (practicing reading in class)	Writing and translation	Oral communication	Literature	Other	Everything is easy
4	34.9%	12.8%	19.5%	27.7%	17.9%	2.6%	3.1%
5	53.8%	6.3%	12.5%	15.0%	17.5%	3.8%	.0%
6	46.6%	6.9%	10.3%	25.9%	8.6%	5.2%	.0%
7	46.8%	5.2%	24.0%	17.5%	5.2%	2.6%	6.5%
8	57.4%	4.0%	15.7%	11.2%	12.6%	.4%	3.6%
Total	47.61%	7.18%	17.75%	18.73%	12.68%	2.25%	3.38%

The highest percentage marked grammar as the most difficult material (47.61%). The range goes from 34.9% in the 4th grade to 57.4% in the 8th grade, which is not surprising in view of the fact that grammar material gradually increases and becomes more complex from one grade to the next.

A much lower percentage considers oral communication the most difficult part (18.73%). Broken down by grade, this segment was more often marked by the 4th grade pupils (27.7%) and the 6th grade pupils (25.9%), and the least often by the 8th grade pupils (11.2%). This result may indicate the increase in communicational competence in accordance with age.

An almost equal percentage of pupils marked reading and translation (17.75%), with these activities being marked as most difficult by the 7th grade pupils (24.0%), and the least by the 6th grade pupils (10.3%). In other grades the percentage varies (4th – 19.5%, 8th – 15.7%, 5th – 12.5%). The data obtained do not indicate a particular rule according to grades.

Literature follows in terms of frequency, marked by a total of 12.68% of the pupils. It was more often marked by pupils of the 4th grade (17.9%) and the 5th grade (17.5%), with a somewhat lower frequency by 8th graders (12.6%), and the least by the 6th graders (8.6%) and 7th graders (5.2%). This result could be affected by the type of text and the way literary texts are covered.

The percentage of pupils who marked reading (practicing reading in the class) as the most difficult is the highest in the 4th grade (12.8%) and it gradually drops to the 8th grade (4%), which is an expected result. A total of 7.18% of the pupils marked reading as the most difficult material. This is a relatively low percentage and can be attributed to the large percentage of the pupils who marked this activity as the most interesting.

A total of 3.38% of the pupils claim that they find everything easy, mostly in the 7th grade (6.5%), while none in the 5th or 6th grade claimed this (0%). The indication that, compared to other grades, it is in the 7th grade that most pupils consider that they find everything easy, is not expected, in view of the fact that the material for this grade is relatively weighty and demanding. "Other" was marked by 2.25%, mostly in the 6th grade (5.2%), and the least in the 8th grade (0.4%).

**Table 3.4.7. Overview of responses to the question: Does your teacher give you homework to be done at home?**

G R A D E	Responses	
	YES	NO
4	98.5%	1.5%
5	81.0%	19.0%
6	85.0%	15.0%
7	87.9%	12.1%
8	97.8%	2.2%
Total	93.0%	7.0%

An average of 93.0% of the pupils claim that they are given homework. There is, however, a large percentage difference notable between grades and, according to the data obtained, it is not contingent upon age because more pupils of the 5th (19.0%), 6th (15.0%) and 7th grades (12.1%) indicated that they were not given homework, while a significantly lower number in the 4th (1.5%) and the 8th grade (2.2%) provided the same answer.

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**Table 3.4.8. Responses to the question: What kind of homework do you usually do at home?**

G R A D E	Responses					
	Exercises concerning the last lesson, from the worksheets and the readers	Writing essays on a given topic	Exercises concerning the last lesson, and writing essays	Learning new words	Learning poems	Other
4	69.4%	24.6%	3.3%	.5%	1.6%	.5%
5	45.9%	28.4%	8.1%	14.9%	.0%	2.7%
6	78.4%	17.6%	2.0%	2.0%	.0%	.0%

7	72.1%	22.4%	2.0%	2.0%	1.4%	.0%
8	72.2%	20.3%	2.4%	5.2%	.0%	.0%
Total	69.0%	22.6%	3.1%	4.0%	.7%	.4%

On the question regarding homework, the data indicate the following:

Around two thirds of the pupils (69.0%) marked that they do exercises concerning the last textbook lesson (worksheets and readers). Of those, the lowest number of homework of this type is marked by the 5th grade (45.9%), and the highest number by the 6th grade (78.4%).

The next highest percentage is for composition-writing exercises on a given topic (22.6%). It can be seen that these are more popular in those grades which had a lower percentage for textbook exercises – in the 5th grade (28.4%), and the least in the 6th grade (17.6%). It might be that these data are a result of the overall assessment of the teacher regarding the adequacy of textbooks for certain grades, and regarding the suitability of certain textbook units for homework.

Learning new words at home is identified by a total of 4.0% of the pupils, mostly in the 5th grade (14.9%), and the least in the 4th (0,5%). From the 6th to the 8th grade the percentage ranges from 2.0% to 5.2%. Learning poems at home has a relatively low percentage in all grades (0.7%), is not noted at all in the 5th, 6th and 8th grade, while in the 4th and 7th grade a percentage of 1.6% and 1.4% respectively, is recorded.

Other types of homework aside from those suggested in the questionnaire were not identified in the case of the 6th, 7th and 8th grade, in the 4th grade were noted by 0.5%, and in the 5th grade by 2.7%. It would be interesting to find out what types of exercises those were.

**Table 3.4.9. Overview of responses to the question: Do you practice at home what you learned in Serbian language class?**

G R A D E	Responses	
	YES	NO
4	97.5%	2.5%
5	100.0%	.0%

6	98.3%	1.7%
7	98.7%	1.3%
8	96.0%	4.0%
Total	97.6%	2.4%

Almost all of the pupils (97.6%) marked that they practiced at home the things that they learned in Serbian language classes. There are no significant deviations in this answer across the grades. It is noticeable that in comparison to the other grades, a somewhat higher number of 8th grade pupils do not practice at home (4.0%), but even that is not a high percentage.

**Table 3.4.10. Overview of responses to the question: Do you consider the length of the Serbian language class appropriate?**

G R A D E	Responses		
	The class length is appropriate	The class length is too long	The class length is too short
4	84.8%	8.8%	6.4%
5	93.8%	2.5%	3.8%
6	90.0%	8.3%	1.7%
7	98.1%	1.3%	.6%
8	92.5%	.9%	6.6%
Total	91.5%	4.0%	4.5%

A Serbian language class usually lasts 45 minutes, as marked by 96.2% of the pupils.

A total of 91.5% of the pupils are satisfied with the length of the class. Among them, the greatest deviation can be seen in the 4th grade, in which 8.8% of the pupils indicated that the class is too long, and 6.4% that it is too short. In the 6th grade the class is too long for a somewhat higher percentage (8.3%) in comparison to those for whom it is too short (1.7%), whereas the converse situation exists in the 8th

grade – there are more pupils who consider that the class should be longer (6.6%), and fewer of those who think it should be shorter (0.9%). In the 8th grade this could be the consequence of a growing awareness of the need to know Serbian, but also of the curriculum for this subject, according to which the 8th grade pupils have one class per week less than the other grades.

### **III.3.5. Summary observations on the results of pupils' responses**

#### ***Concerning working methods, the proportional presence of certain fields of study and activities, their level of difficulty and how interesting they are***

Based on the responses to the question “What do you do in Serbian language classes, how would you describe them?”, in which 86.9% of the pupils marked the answer “the teacher does most of the talking, we answer only when asked a question”, it can be concluded that classes are dominated by frontal instruction and one-way communication initiated by the teacher asking questions. This is supported by the fact that the percentage for communicating in Serbian and simulating situations from everyday life is significantly lower, having been marked by far fewer pupils – 31.29%.

Most of the pupils appear to be content with this way of teaching and organizing classes, judging by the responses to the question “What do you like best in Serbian language classes?”, given that a very large percentage (86.70%) circled the response “the way the teacher works with us”, and that this response is significantly ahead of all the other available responses (the second most popular response, with 30.70%, concerned textbooks). On the other hand it must be said that the percentage of pupils who highlighted the teacher’s way of working as the thing they liked least in Serbian language classes (25.60%) should hardly be neglected, either.

The fact that a large percentage of pupils are content with the teacher’s way of working should not be taken to mean that they do not wish that greater prominence is given to communicating in Serbian. Indeed, under the question “What would you most like to do in Serbian language classes?”, communication was in first place (44.14%), far ahead of the other responses (in second place with 25.86% was watching films and other video material). The idea that the organization of oral communication activities in class could be changed to be made better and more interesting is also supported by the fact that this activity came in third place on the rating of interesting areas of the Serbian language with 28.81% (with reading at 41.83% and grammar at 37.81% being indicated as more interesting).

If we examine the relationship between the current situation (“What do you do in Serbian language classes?”) and the desired situation (“What would you most like to do in Serbian language classes?”), we can see that, aside from the aforesaid desire for more emphasis on communication, of all the available things, pupils would most like: to watch films and other video material (current situation – 4.73%, desired – 25.86%); to sing songs and recite (current situation – 9.32%, desired – 23.57%, although the figures are much higher among the younger children); to write poems, essays and articles (current situation – 15.86%, desired – 22.43%); and even to learn from textbooks and do textbook exercises (current situation – 2.78%, desired – 5.43%). Devoting more attention and time to the above activities would reduce the proportion of frontal instruction, which is largely based on the teacher talking and asking questions and getting responses from pupils.

The situation is, however, slightly different when it comes to reading. A total of 8.48% indicated that they read in Serbian language classes, while only 5.71% would like to read. In the question on the most difficult aspects of learning, reading was indicated as the most difficult by the fewest number of pupils (7.18%), and at the same time it was most frequently circled as the most interesting part of Serbian language (41.83%).

The results of the responses to the questions which relate to the learning of linguistic material and grammar are also telling. On the one hand, a relatively small percentage circled the response indicating that they liked the classwork on language (6.20%), and an even smaller percentage indicated that they would like to learn language and grammar and do accompanying tasks (5.43%), and a large percentage also indicated grammar as the most difficult aspect (47.61%, and this percentage is far ahead of all other responses offered on the most difficult aspect), yet on the other hand, 37.81% indicated grammar as the most interesting aspect (just behind reading– 41.83%).

### ***Concerning teaching resources***

There are no significant differences in the number of pupils who indicated textbooks as the thing they liked the most and the number of pupils who indicated textbooks as the thing they liked the least (30.70% liked them the most, 34.82% liked them the least). Judging by the results of this survey, pupils are less content with the additional material (40.77% indicated that they least liked the additional material, and 7.80% indicated they most liked the additional material). Pupils do not feel that there is a lack of teaching resources, as only 0.89% marked this response on the question on what they liked the least.

### ***Concerning homework and practicing at home***

Homework is assigned, according to 93.0% of the pupils. In most cases homework relates to the latest lesson in the textbook. At home, according to the survey results, 97.6% of pupils practice what they have learned in Serbian language class.

### ***Concerning the length of class***

A Serbian language class lasts 45 minutes. A total of 91.5% of pupils consider this to be the optimal length, while roughly equal percentages consider it too long (4.0%) or too short (4.5%).

In view of all the above, the situation as found in the field must undoubtedly be improved, and some of the measures could include the production of new, modern textbooks, i.e. a solution that can be implemented relatively quickly, and equipping schools with certain sets of more up-to-date textbooks that already exist but are currently not in use. However, just as is the case with other ethnic communities, it is necessary to render the profile of the Albanian community more visible, both in the textbooks and in other teaching materials, as this will make the material more meaningful and understandable for the pupils, and they will be able to identify with certain characters in their books. The importance of producing dictionaries should not be neglected either, as they are very useful for the acquisition of a non-mother tongue, and the same is true for the production of various audio-visual aids. Of course, in all this we should not forget about those who actually do the teaching – the teachers – who have expressed interest in attending various seminars and improving their knowledge. Finally, special attention should be paid to efforts to get pupils to use Serbian outside the classroom, which can be achieved either by organizing various excursions to other places in the Republic of Serbia or by encouraging contacts with local native speakers of Serbian.

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**III.4. Analysis of textbooks for Serbian as  
a non-mother tongue from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>  
grade of primary school**



## III.4. ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOKS FOR SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE FROM THE 1st TO 8th GRADE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Vesna Krajisnik and Nikica Strizak*

### III.4.1. Overview of the structure and content of textbooks for Serbian as a non-mother tongue from the 1st to 4th grade of primary school

The curriculum for the 1st to 4th grades provides for different approaches in presenting the teaching material, given that a large number of 1st grade pupils are encountering the language for the first time, acquiring its melody, intonation and alphabet, and then gradually mastering other parts of the language system. Due to the different approaches to linguistic and literary content – from listening exercises in the 1st grade and learning the letters of the Latin alphabet (in block letters) in the 2nd grade, to more complex linguistic and literary content in the 3rd and 4th grades – the textbook sets are structurally different for the 1st and 2nd grades compared to the 3rd and 4th grades. For this reason the textbook sets will be analysed separately for each grade, indicating their specific characteristics and consistency in following the curriculum, and some better solutions will be recommended.

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#### III.4.1.1. Textbook sets for the 1<sup>st</sup> grade

##### ***Structure***

The textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 1st grade of primary school consists of the textbooks *Let's Learn Serbian 1*, the accompanying CD and a *Teacher's Book*, by the authors Natasa Dobric and Biljana Maksimovic.

The textbook is designed as a picture book, without any textual content except for the unit titles, with 25 units in total. The textbook contains additional illustrated exercises intended for pupils' manual work. Each unit represents one of the thematic wholes provided in the curriculum, and the authors endeavoured to include content and activities from the immediate surroundings and everyday lives of pupils: *Hello children, Neighbours, School, Where is the classroom, Break time, School day, Forgotten equipment, A family, The children tidy their room, Ana and the doll, New Year, Grandfather Frost, On the way to school,*

*Tunnel, A messy boy, At the market, Going to the shop, Let's count to 20, Vesna is sick, The post office, Hello this is..., Days of the week, A morning in the flower garden, A feast, Now let's all go to the swimming pool.*

The entire linguistic content of the units that follow the illustrations in the textbook is also presented in an audio version, on CD. The texts are provided in the Teacher's Book, so that the pupils cannot see the textual description of what they are listening to.

Illustrated exercises constitute an additional way to stimulate pupils on the unit topics. For the 1st grade these exercises are based on cutting out pictures, matching and grouping them together, fitting them in a frame or positioning them in the right place.

The teacher's book contains the texts that accompany the illustrations, teaching instructions and exercises. The texts are mostly presented as dialogues consisting of simple subject-predicate sentences with the addition of an object or an adverbial. In the foreword to the teacher's book, the authors state that, in order to adhere to the thematic requirements of the curriculum, they were forced to fabricate most of the texts, whereby they took special care to ensure that the texts were well stocked with the language models contained within the language material section of the curriculum.

After the texts, teaching instructions are provided for the teacher to use together with the objectives and tasks, pupils' activities, teaching resources and other aids necessary for covering the unit content, recommended activities pertaining to units, as well as the language models used.

Exercises are presented as a distinct entity within each unit. Given that the curriculum does not expect pupils of this age to be reading and writing in Serbian, the authors have devised the exercises so as to meet the aims of oral communication: answering questions, asking questions, filling in gaps, transformation exercises, substitution exercises, monologue and dialogue exercises, and various games.

At the end of each unit the new words and phrases are provided.

At the end of the textbook, 13 children's songs are provided for reciting and singing, suitable for the age of the pupils.

## ***Analysis***

The curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 1st grade of primary school does not expect the pupils to be taught to read and write in Serbian; rather, the acquisition of the language at this level entails practicing correct pronunciation and articulation of phonemes, melody and intonation of sentences, as well as the basic communicative models needed for everyday communication. The expected vocabulary acquisition for the 1st grade is 200 words, or 250 words for the more advanced pupils. The language resources expect to cover the naming of basic terms and actions in everyday life, as well as expressing frequent states and feelings.

In that regard it can be said that the textbook structure is appropriate for the intended purposes and the age of the pupils, mostly because it uses illustrations as the most effective medium for communication for this age, the units are well arranged and correspond to the number of lessons expected to be allocated under the curriculum, and the audio recording (CD) is designed to ensure correct pronunciation of linguistic terms in keeping with the standards of the Serbian literary language.

However, in many ways the textbook's content exceeds the linguistic capabilities of 1st grade pupils in all linguistic aspects:

1. The content of the units, as we have already mentioned, is presented using illustrations (in the textbook) and audio (on the CD), and represents dialogues between two or more characters (except in unit 1). The texts are bulky and, in view of the fact that the pupils do not know either the words or their grammatically altered forms, it is difficult for them, on just the basis of melody, to perceive their semantic value and connect the situations illustrated in the textbook. This primarily applies to those pupils whose mother tongue is not similar to Serbian. The number of lexical units (559) significantly exceeds the recommended number in the curriculum. Although the number of new words is indicated after each unit (from 13 to 34 per lesson, which is in keeping with methodological standards), it should be noted that the authors listed only lexemes with full meaning as the new words, and did not take into account auxiliary words (pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.), which are also distinct lexical units and require learning just like any other word. Adding those to the aforesaid stock of vocabulary would significantly increase the total number of words. Introducing a large number of new words into a single unit may hamper the language-learning process, especially with pupils of this age who have not yet mastered the skill of writing.

2. The choice of vocabulary often exceeds the needs of 1st grade pupils. Although the authors took into consideration the diverse environments from which the pupils come, and accordingly included vocabulary which corresponds to both urban and rural areas, the selection of words for pupils encountering Serbian for the first time should stick to basic concepts and people from their surroundings. To that end, it is impossible to justify including words such as: to wave, watchman, to pat, cube, bowl, to insert, head-phones, blouse, post-box, etc.

3. The selection of grammatical items is too extensive, and they distributed too densely. In the very first unit, the smallest unit of all, we encounter personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, nouns, the present tense of the auxiliary verb *I am*, the verbs *to be called* and *to have the surname*, both singular and plural forms and all three grammatical genders, and nouns with expanded declensions. The entire vocabulary (25 words) and grammar are repeated in the exercises. Over the next units the introduction of new grammatical forms continues – the case system, the verbal tense and mood system, the use of both verbal aspects, morphological models, etc., which in many ways exceeds the bounds expected under the curriculum.

Conscious of the problem of excessive lexical and grammatical material being used in a textbook for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 1st grade of primary school, the authors draw to the attention of teachers the fact that “in certain parts of the textbook (referring primarily to the texts that accompany the situations and events) we go beyond the content expected under the curriculum for this age group. Namely, the texts that accompany the situations illustrated in the textbook sometimes contain linguistic models that are not planned for this grade, but for some of the higher grades. Of course, pupils are not expected to have an active command of those linguistic models. Even though the scope of the curriculum material is limited, natural communication should not be disrupted.”

However, the teacher’s book does not mention what the minimum linguistic material is that the pupils are expected to have a command of, and which can lead to the functional learning of the language at the beginner’s level. The linguistic content presented this way can at this point be followed by pupils who already have an adequate previous knowledge of the language, who are in daily contact with the Serbian language outside the classroom, or if their mother tongue is similar to Serbian. For all other pupils the linguistic content needs to be limited by using additional language teaching resources which will give pupils of this age the necessary linguistic competence in the proper way:

- The most frequently used or common concepts and people from the pupils’ immediate surroundings should be named in the basic grammatical form, starting with those in the classroom, at

home, in the street, in the playground, in the shop, etc., while paying attention to the selection of words in keeping with the age and cognitive abilities of the pupils;

- Grammatical forms should be presented as models, at the syntagm or sentence level (good day, good morning, I'm cold, give me, it's raining, it's sunny, etc.);
- At this level of knowledge, complex linguistic expressions/texts should not be used (except songs, tongue twisters and rhymes, which pupils can memorize whole or in part);
- Limiting linguistic material creates space for frequent repetition, which will yield active and productive knowledge.

### **III.4.1.2. Textbook set for the 2nd grade**

#### ***Structure***

The textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 2nd grade of primary school consists of the textbook *Let's Learn Serbian 2*, an accompanying CD, and a *Teacher's Book*, by the author Natasa Dobric.

The textbook set is structurally identical to that of the 1st grade. The textbook consists of 28 thematic units (lessons): Back to school, In the class, Ana's and Ivan's school day, Carnival, At the market in autumn, In the shop, Birthday, At the theatre, The fox and the raven, What did Ana do?, Lunchtime, Mummy and Ana are baking cakes, Guests are coming to see us, New Year, Let's count, Winter, A new friend, The mirror, At the playground, We're playing hide and seek, At the Zoo, Easter, Shopping, In the countryside, Ruined ice cream, The cricket and the ant, Fish on Mummy's dress, We're going on holiday. As in the textbook for the 1st grade, Ana and Ivan are the main characters, around whom all the main events and activities in the textbook revolve.

The linguistic content of the units accompanying the illustrations in the textbook is presented in an audio recording, on CD. The texts are provided in the teacher's book. In addition to the illustrations, some minimal textual content is included in the book – individual words which, in combination with the illustrations, are used for practicing the grammatical and lexical knowledge of the pupils. Some of the units also include short children's songs by some of our famous children's authors, which fit within the thematic framework of the unit.

The illustrated exercises, attached to the textbook, have been devised as an additional way to stimulate the pupils on the unit themes. They are based on cutting out pictures, matching and grouping them together, fitting them into the frame or placing them correctly.

The teacher's book contains the texts to accompany the illustrations, instructions for teachers, and exercises. The texts are mostly dialogues, but there are also some descriptive and narrative texts composed of simple and complex subject-and-predicate sentences with modifiers, objects or adverbials. As with the 1st grade textbook, teaching instructions are provided after the texts. The exercises are presented as a distinct entity in each unit. The new words and expressions are provided at the end of each unit. Children's songs for reciting and singing and suitable for the pupils' age are given at the end of the textbook and also as part of the exercises.

### ***Analysis***

116 | The curriculum for the 2nd grade assumes that the pupils of this age are learning the letters of whichever alphabet is closest to that of the mother tongue (Latin or Cyrillic script), and reading and copying short texts and songs written in block letters. They are also expected to understand longer messages, spoken pieces (8–10 sentences) and short dialogues in keeping with the curriculum topic, with the aid of visual resources, and to acquire around 200 new words and phrases (250 for the more advanced pupils). Accordingly, the textbook set is well devised:

1. The textbook set for the 2nd grade represents a continuation of the textbook set for the 1st grade in terms of structure, concept and content. However, the approach to the linguistic material is more selective, with a better selection of the key elements.
2. The content of the units, 28 in total, is presented using illustrations (in the textbook), with the audio recording on the CD, and with the texts in the teacher's book.
3. The selection of thematic units and their lexical and grammatical content mainly constitutes an extension of what was covered in the 1st grade, with some new additional items.
4. More attention was paid to the selection and volume of new lexemes – from five to 20 new words and phrases per unit, with the total vocabulary being 407. The vocabulary is well distributed and

connected to the thematic whole. New terms and expressions connected with school subjects are introduced (triangle, set, circle, square, adverbs, etc.).

5. From unit 5 onwards the written word is introduced – at first short, monosyllabic words, and then longer words and songs, and later, in the final units, sentences and short stories combined with illustrations. The Latin alphabet is used (being closer to Albanian), in block letters.

6. The exercises in the first part of the teacher’s book are mainly standardized types and are designed for oral practice of grammatical literacy, while in the second part, when the pupils are learning to read and write, the exercises are more diverse and more imaginative.

Although this textbook set for the 2nd grade was devised in accordance with the curriculum and with obvious efforts on the author’s part to make all the curriculum material as meaningful as possible for the pupils in a fitting and analytical way, certain shortcomings can nevertheless be observed. Fixing these shortcomings would improve the effectiveness of teaching and the learning of the material:

- Pupils of the 2nd grade are beginning to read and write in Serbian language. It would be expected to begin that process by mastering Serbian letters (in the Latin script), as Serbian letters have quite a considerable number of different graphemic (and phonetic) characteristics in comparison to Albanian letters. Special attention should be paid to the most difficult Serbian phonemes and their graphemes, emphasizing the distinction between them. However, this is omitted from the textbook and it goes straight into the writing and reading of words, leaving that entire important part of linguistic competence up to the teachers and their individual writing styles.
- The vocabulary is more extensive than that expected under the curriculum, although it is presented and distributed across the units in a better manner than in the 1st grade textbook, which is apparent from the number of new words and phrases in each unit – from five to 20. Again we should note that those are just the words with full semantic meaning, while the auxiliary words are not enumerated in the list of new words.
- Some of the texts are too big with too much information, especially the dialogues, and although the illustrations aid understanding, the pupils find it difficult or impossible to follow the course of events

- The exercises are mostly grammar-based and some of them are very demanding. A single exercise (sentence) is used to check knowledge of several grammatical items, which is too difficult for pupils of this age given that they cannot read or write and yet are expected to memorize (without any textual support) all these words and grammar information.

### III.4.1.3. Textbook set for the 3rd grade

#### **Structure**

The textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 3rd grade of primary school consists of *Language Tips*, by Natasa Dobric, a *Workbook* with a reader called *The Magic of Words*, by Natasa Dobric and Maja Zivkovic, and a *Teacher's Book for teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue to accompany the textbooks for the 3rd and 4th grade of primary school*, by Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic and Natasa Dobric.

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The *Language Tips* book has been devised as a grammar practice book that highlights grammatical rules and gives pupils the opportunity to practice them through various exercises. It consists of 20 units and five tests for checking knowledge. Each unit consists of three parts: the first part, with textual content and illustrations, represents the thematic and grammatical introduction to the unit; the second part highlights the grammatical rules and changes to the grammatical form of words; and the third part consists of exercises on the grammar material. The author paid special attention to the selection and quantity of vocabulary. The choice of words was made based on the thematic framework of each unit, and they are mainly the frequently used words from the immediate everyday surroundings of the pupils and their interests.

The reader consists of eight separate sections and a total of 32 units. The sections are divided according to theme: I. A,B,C, *a cat purrs*; II. *A book is your best friend*; III. *Family album*; IV. *Her eyes are windows, her mouth a door*; V. *We're growing, playing and being friends*; VI. *I am telling you a story*; VII. *In the village and in the city*; VIII. *The magic of nature*.

Each of the 32 units consists of two parts, thematically connected, and each part has the same structure: a text (a story or a poem by a children's author or from pupil assignments), a conversation about the text, and exercises which require the pupils to draw, retell the story, act or write something appropriate related to the topics in the text.

The workbook complements the reader. It consists of 32 units which thematically follow the units of the reader. Its basic function is practicing writing and consolidating vocabulary from the reader, and the Latin alphabet is given in both block letters and cursive at the beginning. The units consist of several exercises that require the pupils to write words and sentences, ask questions, circle the correct answers, solve word-search puzzles, connect similar terms together, etc. Some of the units have additional exercises “for those who want more”.

The teacher’s book accompanies the textbook sets for the 3rd and 4th grade and provides examples of ways to cover the units in the reader and the language tips book. The authors selected 12 units, six for each grade, of which three are applicable for a homogeneous ethnic environment, and the other three for a mixed ethnic environment. They contain the basic types of classes: working on texts, oral and written exercises, and systematization of material. As stated by the authors, their aim was to illustrate possible ways to apply methodological systems and procedures with the intention of encouraging further creative work in the teaching of Serbian.

The second part of the teacher’s book is a *Supplement – Some rough outlines for the arrangement of material for the 3rd and 4th grade of primary school*. It contains a very well laid out teaching plan for the 3rd and 4th grade, for homogeneous and heterogeneous ethnic environments, for each semester separately. The following frames of reference are given: *Number of classes, Teaching unit, Class type, Teaching methods, Teaching resources and Homework*.

This approach to covering units in many ways makes teaching easier for teachers, while at the same time leaves them sufficient space for their own creativity and adapting the structure and course of the class to the situation in the classroom.

### ***Analysis***

The curriculum assumes that 3rd grade pupils will attain functional literacy in Serbian in the sense that they can write in block and cursive letters from the Latin alphabet, read and understand short texts suited to their age, be familiar with and use basic grammatical rules, and expand their existing vocabulary by 200 new words. This enables them, within certain limited bounds, to be active participants in communicating in Serbian, in both written and oral forms.

The textbook set for the 3rd grade in its structure and content follows the recommendations of the curriculum and enables pupils to gain a command of the necessary linguistic skills in a functional and interesting way. We would particularly highlight the Language Tips and Workbook, whose content represents the minimum necessary material and are especially interesting for those pupils who had no prior knowledge of Serbian, as well as for those whose mother tongue is not similar to Serbian, as is the case with the pupils from the Albanian community.

The units in the *Language Tips* are well suited to the age of the pupils, both in terms of content and the way the linguistic material is distributed: (i) the texts are short and understandable, with simple content, and accompanied by illustrations which are, together with the text, the vehicles of information; (ii) the grammatical content is presented gradually and clearly; and (iii) the exercises, devised as a combination of text and illustrations, enable the pupils to practice the necessary grammar in a fun way. The grammar material called for under the curriculum is covered over the course of 20 units: the perfect tense, the future tense, present tense of reflexive verbs, possessive pronouns, possessive adjectives, case endings of nouns and pronouns and the basic case meanings. The units are not too bulky and their content is well suited to the pupils' perception.

Checking the knowledge attained is done through five tests which are given at the end of units 5, 10, 14, 18 and 20. Each test consists of five tasks which have several requirements within them. Each requirement carries a certain number of points, and the author suggests that, based on the total number of points scored in the test, instead of giving a grade, an indicative comment could be given: *Bravo! You did an excellent job with it all!*, *Good, but I know you can do even better*, *You must try a lot harder*, etc., which can be very encouraging for pupils. This method enables pupils' self-evaluation, but also assessment of the pupils' knowledge by the teacher.

The workbook exercises rather imaginatively encourage pupils to use new words, to create new words by adding suffixes, to see the relationships between words (thematic links, polysemy, antonymy), to ask questions, and also to gain a command of the basics of orthography of standard Serbian. All this is enriched with illustrations which, as we have already mentioned, are a great help for pupils of this age in trying to understand new linguistic content.

The content of the reader is determined by the curriculum and consists of numerous texts (original or adapted), the authors of which are mainly some of our writers of children's literature, but there are also some specially constructed texts. As stated by the authors of the teacher's book, the readers (meaning those of both the 3rd and 4th grade) "cover those parts of the curriculum (...) that determine the thematic

areas that should be covered in the teaching of this subject, those parts that are directed towards the organization of various oral and written exercises, as well as those parts that concern reading and mastering orthography, although the readers put the emphasis on the themes and oral exercises, while the other sections are primarily covered in the workbooks.”

Each unit in the reader, as noted above, consists of two parts – parts a) and b) and two texts. The text under part a) is lexically and structurally simpler and is intended for pupils with a lower level of linguistic competence (usually in ethnically homogeneous environments), while the texts under b) are longer and linguistically more complex and, as such, are intended for pupils with a higher level of competence. However, despite this selection and the attempt to make the acquisition easier for the children by inserting a small descriptive list of new words in each lesson, as well as the well-designed exercises to encourage interaction among pupils and between the pupils and the teacher – many texts, while thematically suitable, are too difficult for children who are only expected to attain the basics of functional literacy in the 3rd grade. A smaller number of unfamiliar words with familiar grammatical forms would lead to greater linguistic productivity and the increased interest of pupils for new content. This teaching resource can, however, significantly enrich the linguistic knowledge of those pupils who already know Serbian or whose mother tongue is similar to Serbian.

Here we should particularly draw attention to the choice of content for Unit 12. This unit describes how the holidays of Christmas and the Feast of St. Nicholas are celebrated. Since these are important religious holidays for the Serbian people, they should by all means be mentioned and their customs explained to the children, but it would also be important to draw a parallel with similar customs celebrated by members of national minorities. However, not only does this unit not mention this, but one exercise intended for discussion on the unit contains the question “When do you celebrate Christmas?”, taking no account of the possibility that the pupil might be of a different faith or does not celebrate any religious holidays at all. At the same time, the name of St. Nicholas is given in Hungarian, Slovak, Rumanian and Ruthenian, but not in Albanian. This could be corrected during the teaching of the unit in class, but certainly such content should be made suitable for all communities living in Serbia

### III.4.1.4. Textbook set for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade

#### **Structure**

The textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school is structurally the same as that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and consists of Language Tips, by Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic and Natasa Dobric, a reader, Give me a Star for a Spin, by Natasa Dobric and Gordana Stasni, a Workbook to accompany the reader, by Natasa Dobric and Gordana Stasni, and a Teacher's Book for teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue to accompany the textbooks for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school, by Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic and Natasa Dobric.

In view of the fact that the concept of this textbook set is almost the same as the textbook set for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, we will not go into an explanation of the structure of each book, and instead will only highlight any new content and different approaches.

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The *Language Tips* consists of 20 units and four tests for checking knowledge, given at the end of units 4, 9, 14, and 20. The units continue covering grammar and its systematization, expanding what was previously learned, and also introducing the new grammar material called for under the curriculum: the imperative and conditional moods, new meanings of prepositional phrases, verbal aspect, verbs of motion, antonyms of verbs, distinctive meanings of adjectives and prepositions, etc. The vocabulary of pupils is also enriched with grammatical terms: present tense, perfect tense, future tense, masculine, feminine and neuter gender, names of types of words, etc.

The reader consists of eight separate sections and a total of 30 units. The sections are divided according to theme: I. *School words*; II. *My family*; III. *This is me*; IV. *Winter pictures*; V. *Children like funny words*; VI. *Combine the pleasant with the useful*; VII. *The sun's golden hand*; VIII. *What is a good thing to do in summer?*. Given that the curriculum for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade expects the introduction of the Cyrillic script, 15 units are in Latin script, and the other 15 are in Cyrillic. At the end of the reader there are two descriptive glossaries – one for the texts in Latin and one for those in Cyrillic. Nouns are listed with the gender designated, and verbs are accompanied by the form for the first-person singular in the present tense.

The workbook follows the reader thematically and structurally, consisting of 30 units, 15 in Latin script and 15 in Cyrillic. The unit concept is largely similar to that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## ***Analysis***

Pupils of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school, as expected under the curriculum, should have an adequate command of all language skills: they should learn 200 new words and phrases (250 for advanced pupils) and begin to use them actively in making themselves understood, verbally communicate in line with the linguistic and thematic material that has been covered, understand the texts being covered, read texts written in cursive Latin script, and then also in cursive Cyrillic, and be able to write in both scripts.

The authors of the textbook set for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade expand the linguistic content, both in terms of grammar and vocabulary, while sticking to the same textbook structure and unit concept as those for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The new linguistic content, as determined by the curriculum, relates to the large number of meanings which, given the complex morphological and syntactic structure of the Serbian language, require a command of extensive grammatical material: the case system, verbal aspect, enclitic forms of pronouns and verbs, and in that regard, word order in sentences, subjectless sentences, etc. Despite the evident intention of the authors of the *Language Tips* and the *Workbook* to choose the most important grammatical and lexical items and to present their basic meanings, most of the units nevertheless have too much new content which is introduced and practiced at the same time.

The choice of texts for the *Reader*, as in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, is designed for two levels of knowledge. However, here too we see the use of texts which, it seems, have been included due to the demands of the curriculum, but we should be mindful that the pupils do not know many of the words in the texts and their grammatical changes, nor the verbal forms (passives, conditional sentences, etc.), which often makes their significance and purpose questionable. Despite the fact that the reader contains two types of texts and their coverage is adapted for pupils from heterogeneous and homogeneous ethnic environments, the impression is that both texts are more suitable for the use of the second group of pupils, while the first group, who have only recently attained functional literacy, are not able to follow the text content with any real understanding, they can just learn them off by heart (songs and tongue twisters). The lack of texts that relate to members of all national minorities is again evident in the textbook set for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Isolated examples with that kind of content usually relate to minorities in Vojvodina, which puts all other minorities in an unequal position.

The workbook is well designed: it allows the introduction and contextualization of new words, as well as the introduction of a new alphabet – Cyrillic. However, despite the good design, the choice of content (texts or sentences), which serves as the context for new vocabulary, is frequently too difficult and often contains words that pupils are not able to understand or grammatical content that is completely new to

them. Thus, instead of serving as an aid in the systematization and positioning of new words, they make pupils feel helpless and, as was seen during the observation of classes, force them to resort to the only possible way of getting the necessary information – translating into Albanian by the teacher, which is certainly not the best way to achieve the desired results.

#### **III.4.1.5. Conclusion on the textbook sets for the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade**

The textbook sets for the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grades have been produced in accordance with the curriculum in terms of the selection of language material and the way it is presented. In terms of content and structure they are in line with the pupils' age, needs and interests. New content is connected with what has been covered before, so that, for example, a thematic area covered in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade is supplemented and expanded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Texts from the readers, especially the authors' own, are up-to-date and well organized from a methodological perspective. The large number of various exercises in the textbooks and workbooks allow the pupils to learn the planned material in a fun and productive way. However, despite the good design and varied content, the textbook sets for the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grades do not allow all pupils equally to attain linguistic competences. Namely, as the authors themselves state in the teacher's books, the content should meet the needs of two groups of pupils – on the one hand, those who have a greater predisposition to attaining a command of Serbian due to the similarity of their mother tongue to Serbian or due to the fact that they come from a linguistically heterogeneous environment, and on the other hand those who do not have these predispositions. Based on the analysis of the textbook sets, the impression is that their content is not fully suited to pupils who are encountering Serbian for the first time, which will be discussed further below.

The textbooks for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are designed differently in comparison to the textbooks for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The reason for this is that the curriculum assumes that pupils should attain a functional and systemic command of writing skills (block letters and cursive) in only the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, so the entire teaching content for the first two grades amounts to familiarization with the Serbian language system and the acquisition of the selected and numerous linguistic models, and also demanding grammatical content – by heart. The entire linguistic content is presented to the pupils of the first two grades without the use of text, only through the illustrations of the numerous thematic areas. Texts to accompany those illustrations are given in the teacher's book and it is left to the teacher to verbalize those illustrations and introduce to the pupils the melody of the Serbian language. However, if the pupils (and here we are primarily referring to pupils from homogeneous linguistic environments, without any prior knowledge of Serbian) find themselves in a situation where they have to listen to texts, usually of the dialogue type,

yet do not know a single word in Serbian, one has to wonder just how much they can actually benefit from the introduction to the language's melody and intonation, if they cannot understand anything of what they are hearing. These thematic areas also contain parts that verbalize certain words – nouns and verbs – in various grammatical forms, but even this verbalization is based entirely upon the memorization of word melody, without graphic support. At the same time, the number of new words introduced in each unit and their grammatical changes is too big for simple memorization by the pupils. It seems that the two most important characteristics were neglected when new words were selected – frequency and need. The vocabulary far exceeds the recommendations of the curriculum and does not leave scope for selection. This sort of approach to linguistic material in textbooks, especially for the 1st and 2nd grade of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, hampers the attainment of the desired result, i.e. an understanding of the system of the new language and acquisition of minimal and productive linguistic content.

The textbook sets for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade are structured and designed in the same way and it is their content that allows pupils to become literate in Serbian and use the two scripts. This creates the way for the pupils to attain a command of all language skills. However, the demands of the curriculum, especially those pertaining to grammatical literacy, are very ambitious and not in keeping with the abilities of pupils who are just beginning to become literate in Serbian. The tempo of the introduction of material is such that the textbooks do not contain any units that have easier material or avoid new content to instead focus on presenting familiar material in a different way (using different situations, methods or techniques).

The exercises are mostly of the structured type and contain textual content based on filling in blanks, substitution and transformation. However, given that the pupils of this age have mastered, at a lower level, all language skills, the exercises would be much more effective and efficient if structural and communicative models were combined together more, with particular emphasis on the latter, and if this model were used more frequently to create up-to-date situations in keeping with the pupils' age, in the form of comics or illustrations, using textual content on computers (e-mail, Facebook, etc.), mobile telephones (SMS messages, conversations), filling in gaps in comic strips using textual content, etc. This is a much easier way to introduce communicative and structural models that do not require context in the form of extensive linguistic content, as this function is performed by the image. This is the best way to convey essential information free of the excessive content that burdens most of the textbooks for the 1st to 4th grade. At the same time, in this way new content, both lexical and grammatical, would achieve the effect of appearing necessary, and the pupils would become more actively engaged in acquiring the content and solving tasks.

The programme in the readers, for both the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, should be minimized to a few simple sentences, which means either fully adapting and abbreviating literary texts for children, especially prose texts, or devising new texts suited to the pupils' prior knowledge and their interests.

It should be borne in mind at all times that the curriculum recommends selecting linguistic material for the two groups of pupils according to the ethnic composition of the environment, the level of prior knowledge of the language, and linguistic similarity. The minimal curriculum is set out, according to which 200 new words and phrases (or 250 for advanced pupils) are to be introduced per year for the pupils to actively master, whereby attention should be paid to making sure that auxiliary words are included within those 800 words. This number of words to a large extent corresponds to the descriptors for level A1<sup>85</sup> knowledge of (Serbian as a) foreign language and enables them to serve as the foundation to acquire the grammatical minimum needed to command a basic but productive knowledge of Serbian.

It should be emphasized that the most sensitive moment for learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue in an ethnically homogeneous environment is the time of first contact with that language – the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. If the linguistic content presented to pupils of that age exceeds their abilities, both in scope and presentation methods, this shortcoming cannot be compensated for in the subsequent grades; the entire curriculum will remain at the theoretical level and the pupils will remain functionally illiterate, as indeed has been demonstrated by the extremely poor test results.

### **III.4.2. Overview of the structure and content of textbooks for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school**

The textbook sets for all four of the higher grades of primary school have an identical composition. Each contains a reader, a workbook and a grammar textbook. Nevertheless, due to the specific nature of the curriculum and the differences it sets out between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue, and also given the size and richness of content of each textbook set, we will provide an analysis of the textbooks for each grade separately.

In addition to the books intended for the use of children, all four textbook sets for the higher grades of primary school are accompanied by a Teacher's Book for Serbian as a non-mother tongue to accompany the textbooks for the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school, by the authors Dusanka Zvekić-Dusanović and Natasa Dobrić.

### III.4.2.1. Textbook set for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade

#### **Structure**

The textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school consists of a reader – *A Freckled Childhood*, by the author Jovan Ljustanovic, a *Workbook* to accompany the reader *A Freckled Childhood*, by Natasa Dobric, and *Language Tips*, by Mirjana Burzan and Jovana Jerkovic.

The reader contains a total of 64 texts: 15 poems, 48 prose texts and one drama text. The texts are grouped into six thematic areas: *School again; I am travelling; The city and the village; A plate of light; A freckled childhood; and Love for a cloud (reading material)*. The texts in the reader are printed in Latin and Cyrillic script, 12 in Latin and 52 in Cyrillic. There are only two texts in the Jekavian dialect, both from folk literature.

The instructional apparatus consists of several different segments. Questions on the text (*Conversation about the poem/Conversation about the text*) are always given, which is primarily intended to check how much the pupils have understood, but it is also suggested that pupils may examine the text to pick out the traits of the characters and other details. Sometimes the text comes with a suggestion for a dramatization, a biography of the writer, or advice to read the entire book from which a particular fragment appearing in the reader was taken. A total of four texts are accompanied by segments marked with an asterisk, with various titles (*We suggest..., Improve, Do, Retell..., Act*), which contain ideas for independent oral expression inspired by the text.

At the end of the book there is a Glossary containing 527 entries, while alongside each text in the reader, in the margin, unfamiliar words are explained, sometimes with an illustration of the term being defined. Illustrations in the reader are always thematically connected with the text and intended to have a purely motivational function.

The workbook accompanying the reader, as explained in the teacher's book, is conceptually different from the workbooks for the higher grades. Namely, in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade the workbook is more directly connected with the reader. It contains additional exercises, questions and tasks pertaining to 18 texts from the reader. The exercises are of various kinds, and some are marked with an asterisk, entitled *For those who want more*.

The tips on language and orthography contain 35 units, which cover grammar and orthography matters called for in the curriculum. Each unit begins with a short methodological text which introduces the grammatical item intended to be covered in that unit. Questions for text analysis are given after each text, followed by the grammar material, definitions, rules regarding formation and examples. The second part of the unit consists of exercises.

If the grammar item in a unit is already familiar, some orthography points or short lessons on word formation are included with it. Each of these segments is indicated in the margin with a graphical and lexical symbol. Definitions and formation rules are contained in the segment “Grammar”, examples are contained in the segment “Example”, orthography rules are in “Orthography”, and exercises in “Exercises” and “Revision”.

At the end of the book a *Glossary of Grammar and Orthography* is given, which is a compilation of all terms covered in the textbook with a translation in four languages.

## ***Analysis***

The content of the textbook set fully follows the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school.

Although the reader for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade consists of texts of varying difficulty and size, as clearly stated in the teacher’s book, it does not provide any kind of marking to denote the more demanding texts, as was done for the three following grades. The choice of texts to cover is left to the teacher. To that end the teacher may find the teacher’s book a very useful guide, as it provides a rough outline of how to distribute the material in two versions, one for a heterogeneous environment, and the other for a homogeneous environment.

The *Language Tips* contain all definitions and the most important information about the material being covered, in separate boxes, which significantly improves the page presentation and makes learning easier. Also, at certain points in the *Language Tips*, in addition to the motivational (decorative) illustrations that accompany each lesson, there are also functional illustrations which very successfully depict various linguistic and grammatical elements and relationships (grammatical number and gender, verbal aspect, etc.).

Finding one's way in the *Language Tips* is greatly hampered by the textbook's imprecisely labelled structure and content. The end matter of the book is very meagre, and the units do not have titles that correspond to their content; the titles instead correspond to the content of the methodological text used for the opening of the unit. For example, the unit that covers the imperative is titled "A Glass of Water", while in the contents it is referred to only as Unit 25, even though both terms "imperative mood" and "commands" appear within the unit and in the definition of that verbal form. Given that the use of explicit grammatical terms should be avoided for this age group, it is clear that the units should be named some other way, but it might be more practical to name the unit that deals with the dative case "To whom?", rather than "Advice", as it currently stands.

Unit segmentation and marking the segments in the margins is an excellent idea, but it has been implemented in a somewhat vague way. In view of the age of the children for whom it is intended, this textbook could perhaps be richer in colour and the distribution of elements comprising each page should be made clearer.

### III.4.2.2. Textbook set for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade

#### **Structure**

The textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school consists of three books. They are: a reader – *Knitting with Words* by the authors Natasa Dobric, Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic and Gordana Stasni; a *Workbook* accompanying the reader *Knitting with Words* by the same authors, and *Language and Orthography Tips*, by Mirjana Burzan and Jovan Jerkovic.

The reader contains a total of 58 texts: 17 poems, 37 prose texts and four drama texts. The texts are grouped in seven thematic areas: *Pupils' confessions*; *Knitting from verse and stories*; *Precious pearls of wisdom*; *Floral landscape in colour*; *Grain of knowledge*; *Nearly there...*; and Selection from the reading material. Sixteen texts are in the Latin script, 42 in Cyrillic. There are six texts in the Jekavian dialect, all in Cyrillic print: two texts are from folk literature, the rest are by the authors.

The instructional apparatus consists of numerous segments. The first part always consists of questions about the text (*Let's talk about the poem/Let's talk about the text/Let's talk about the fairy tale/Let's talk about a drama piece*). In addition, depending upon the theme and type of text, various additional tasks

and instructions for further work are provided (e.g. *Recite.../Act.../Tell.../Retell the text.../Write and create...*). An important part are the instructions to analyse the phrases and expressions that appear in the text, as well as the exercises for expanding vocabulary and mastering new words and phrases (*Search the text for.../Find the meaning of the words and phrases.../Let's enrich our vocabulary/New words – a richer vocabulary*). The segments *It's good to know.../You already know... and Notice, discover, learn....* present content from literary theory and definitions of terms: narration in the first/third person, narrator, folk tale and fairy tale, fable, fable writer, plot, chronological order, topic, scene, stage directions, lyric poem, descriptive poem, decasyllable, motive, composition of a poem, personification, rhythm, etc. Short biographies of the authors are attached to some of the texts.

Two glossaries are provided at the end of the book: *Glossary from the Cyrillic texts* containing 333 entries, and a *Glossary from the Latin texts* containing 88 entries. As with the reader for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, in the margins of each text there are explanations of unfamiliar words. The illustrations are thematically connected with the text and in most cases are reproductions of artwork.

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The language and orthography tips, as with the book for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, consists of 35 units. Each unit deals with one issue from grammar, word formation and/or orthography. The textbook design is very similar to that of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade book: a short text is followed by an explanation of the grammar item, sometimes using a graphically depicted definition, followed by examples, sometimes with illustrations, while the second part of the unit always consists of various exercises.

The workbook for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade differs rather substantially from that of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and the difference, as stated in the teacher's book, is consistently followed in the workbooks for the two following grades. Specifically, the workbook is no longer so closely connected to the reader (nor to the language tips). The 6<sup>th</sup> grade workbook consists of 16 units. Seven units are printed in Latin script, and nine in Cyrillic.

## ***Analysis***

The design of the reader, despite certain differences, is very similar to that of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. It contains many more texts than are necessary for working on in a school year, and it is left to the teacher to select the texts for inclusion in his/her annual teaching plan, depending on the assessment of the pupils' current knowledge, the environment in which the language is being learned, and the like. The basic difference, in comparison to the previous grade, is that the "more difficult" texts are marked by with an asterisk, which makes the choice easier for the teacher. Each thematic section contains easier and more

difficult texts, so that if the teacher makes a consistent selection of texts of the same level of difficulty, the diverse vocabulary called for in the curriculum will be covered.

Here we must highlight a specific problem similar to that which exists in the book for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Namely, under the text about Easter, the first question about the text is “When is Easter celebrated in your area?”, while the written exercise states: “We suggest you describe how this holiday is celebrated in your family”. Tasks formulated this way suggest that all the children for whom the textbook is intended celebrate the same holiday, which of course is not true. A similar problem appears in the unit *Holidays and celebrations* in the workbook, where greetings and customary phrases for wishing people happy holidays in Serbian are given only for the Christmas and Easter holidays.

In the language and orthography tips there is a large number of exercises, and certain grammar items (cases, and some verbal forms) are covered in both the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, which is very good, because it enables the pupils to expand and consolidate knowledge previously gained. For example, the afore-said imperative mood is presented in both the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade the way it is formed is explained and a definition is given, while the 6<sup>th</sup> grade focuses on the phonetic changes within the imperative and provides for additional practice of this verbal form. In the same way, with repetition and expansion, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade covers grammatical cases, comparison, word formation, etc.

Most of the units in the workbook can be used independently from the reader. As stated in the teacher’s book, previous experience has shown that the texts from a reader do not provide the vocabulary needed for everyday communication, and pupils learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue do not have the opportunity to learn basic terminology from other school subjects, which represents a major difficulty for further schooling. For this reason the units in the workbook are related to the other subjects learned by the pupils at school.

This workbook contains topics on friendship, sports, family life, art, biology, geography, etc. The units are suited to the pupils’ age, and they are creative and interesting. Tasks are formulated in relatively simple language, and many questions concern the pupils’ lives and world and encourage oral and written expression on familiar themes.

The correlation with other subjects is one of the most important characteristics of this textbook. Knowledge acquired by the pupil in other subjects in the mother tongue “comes flooding back” and facilitates the learning of Serbian on familiar content.

### III.4.2.3. Textbook set for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade

#### **Structure**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the textbook set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue consists of three books: a reader entitled *In the Sun's Mirror* by the authors Natasa Dobric, Dusanka Zvekic-Dusanovic and Gordana Stasni. The same group of authors wrote the *Workbook*. In accordance with the changes to the curriculum in the third stage of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue (i.e. the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades), the grammar book is no longer called *Language Tips*, but *Grammar*. The authors are the same as in the previous grades, Mirjana Burzan and Jovan Jerkovic.

The reader for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade offers teachers a total of 59 texts: seven in Latin script and 52 in Cyrillic. There are 42 prose texts and 17 poems. There are no drama texts in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade reader. The texts are divided among nine thematic areas: *The beautiful things that allure us....*, *A mighty intellect and a merciful heart....*, *In the sun's mirror...*, *Illusory landscape....*, *May there be no division, opposition or parting....*, Pictures of light and remembrance.., Let's read and learn... and Reading material. There are eight texts in the Jekavian dialect, five of which are from folk literature, two texts are by Branko Copic and one is by Vuk Karadzic.

The instructional apparatus consists of parts and tasks similar to those of the previous reader, so there is no need to cover them in detail here. Terms and concepts from literary theory that are defined in this reader are: biography, autobiography, epic poem, epic decasyllable, theme, hagiography, stanza, couplet, tercet, quatrain, symbol, reflexive poem, poet image, travelogue, etc. Two glossaries are provided at the end of the book: a *Glossary from the Cyrillic texts* with 575 entries, and a *Glossary from the Latin texts* with 95 entries. As in the previous readers, in the margins of every text explanations of unfamiliar words are provided. There are not many illustrations, mostly photographs and reproductions.

Grammar is a textbook entity that is introduced under that name for the first time in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. In the previous two grades, grammar is covered more or less implicitly, with the switch to explicit grammar made in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. This is the reason why the unit titles in the Grammar are actually the names of teaching units. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade covers types of words (nouns, adjectives, personal pronouns and numbers), impersonal sentences, and the function and meaning of grammatical cases. The material is organized into 35 units, 22 printed in Cyrillic script, and 13 in Latin. Each unit begins with a methodological text, underneath which are questions on it. Examples, definitions, explanations and exercises then follow. The supplement at the end of the book provides rules on transcribing foreign names in Serbian.

The design of the Workbook is similar to that for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. There are 15 units, 12 printed in Cyrillic script, and the remaining three in Latin. The themes presented in this workbook concern school life, free time, sport, fashion, family relations, holidays, films, music, etc.

### ***Analysis***

In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade the biggest change can be seen in the field of grammar. The textbook which encompasses the teaching content of linguistic material, grammar, word formation and orthography is now called Grammar. The way of presenting the material and the language in which this is done is not significantly changed compared to the two previous Language and Orthography Tips, it is just that there is more theory than in the previous grades. The most important thing is that the grammatical cases are “given names” in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and they are presented as a declension system, complete with exceptions and phonetic changes noted. The phonetic changes are not named, which is a good thing. Comparison of adjectives is dealt with in a similar fashion in this textbook.

Systematization of knowledge regarding the meaning of the grammatical cases is done in such a way that each of the cases is covered in a separate unit or two, within which pupils are reminded about what they already know or should know about the cases. This way the textbook is designed to give the teacher space to go back to what the teacher considers most essential and, in certain classes where the overall level of Serbian is lower, to cover certain items a second tome.

The supplement on the transcription of names from various languages is very useful and practical.

The workbook continues to be the part of the textbook set which is most closely connected with daily life and the development of real communicative competence. The themes presented within it are very meaningful for pupils. Units in the workbook function as a combination of exercises and new information. There is a large number of exercises per unit, which again enables the teacher to choose those that are most suitable for each individual class.

### III.4.2.4. Textbook set for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade

#### **Structure**

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook set has the same structure and authors as for the previous grades. Gordana Stasni and Natasa Dobric are the authors of the reader *Unfathomable Secrets of the Mind and the Heart*; Dusanika Zvekic-Dusanovic, Natasa Dobric and Gordana Stasni are the authors of the *Workbook for the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade of Primary School*; and Mirjana Burzan and Jovan Jerkovic are the authors of the *Grammar Book for the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade*.

The reader consists of 47 texts, of which 10 are printed in Latin script. A total of 17 texts are marked with an asterisk denoting a more difficult text, which can also be seen in the index at the end, where it also marks those texts. There are 31 prose texts, 13 poems and three dramas in this reader. There are only five Jekavian texts (two by Copic, two by Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic and one folk tale). The thematic groups of the texts in this reader are: *The mind imagines more than the sea can carry*; *Sparks of light*; *From the cradle to the grave...;* *Unfathomable secrets of the mind and the heart*; *A journey through beauty and knowledge*; and *Reading material*. Two glossaries are given at the end of the book, a *Glossary for the Cyrillic texts* containing 265 entries, and a *Glossary for the Latin texts*, with 95 entries. The reader also contains some very interesting photographs and illustrations, which go very well with the content of the text. A new feature compared to previous readers can be found in the key words given in the margins alongside the text, and these truly are key words and terms from the text. The instructional apparatus is, as before, rich and ample. It contains many questions on the text, exercises for expanding vocabulary and learning new phrases. It also contains: a classification of folk literature, definitions of metaphor, allegory, irony, satire, humour, hyperbole, features of poetic language, internal monologue, characterization, types of drama, stages of dramatic plot, and types of comedy.

The *Grammar* in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade is dedicated to verbs and the system of compound sentences. The material is divided into 22 units, with the ones dealing with verbs printed in Cyrillic script, while those dealing with compound sentences are printed in Latin. Each unit, in addition to the explanations and definition of the grammatical item, also contains a large number of exercises. The definitions are graphically highlighted and easy to spot. At the end of the book a *Glossary of grammar and orthography is provided*, containing terms covered in the book, and their translations in four languages.

The *Workbook* is somewhat shorter than those for the previous grades; it consists of nine units, all printed in Cyrillic. It is again aimed at the development of skills for specific, practical communication. The units which are more connected with the reader are those on folk literature and about Vuk Karadzic.

### ***Analysis***

Despite the change of angle for the presentation of language material and the progression to explicit grammar, most of the space in the *Grammar* and the *Workbook* is still dedicated to exercises to create the habit of the correct use of various patterns, which is a good thing.

In view of the fact that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade is the final one, the question arises: why does not even this textbook contain any final test or revision of material, which would enable the pupils to go back over the most essential material and check their formal knowledge?

The *Workbook* for this grade is again perhaps the most meaningful for the pupils, their themes and interests. Particularly interesting in that regard is the unit entitled Teenagers, which enables the pupils to think and speak about their age, positive and negative characteristics and modes of behaviour, about how adults see them, etc. The final unit entitled *Where do we go from here?* may also be important for the pupils because it discusses the choices that lie ahead in the immediate future of the 8<sup>th</sup> grader. This unit also contains thematically appropriate lyrics from a song by the rock band *Riblja Corba*, which is yet another way to bring this subject closer to the pupils' real lives.

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### **III.4.2.5. Conclusion on the textbook sets from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Based on the analysis of the current textbooks for the higher grades of primary school, several conclusions can be made:

1. The textbook sets very consistently follow the curriculum in all aspects, and in that respect represent a reliable support for teachers.
2. The textbooks are designed in the same manner as those for Serbian as a mother tongue, and perhaps therein lies the source of some major shortcomings. Even though the amount of class time is

significantly different for the two subjects, three textbooks per year are foreseen for both. Inevitably the question is raised as to how useful this is for environments where the mother tongue greatly differs from Serbian.

3. The textbook sets for higher grades, with the partial exception of the workbooks, take almost all their linguistic material from literature. Perhaps opening up to other sources of linguistic material would contribute to more functional learning of Serbian.

4. In connection with the above, it needs to be said that there is inconsistency between the level of difficulty of the texts in the readers and the assumed linguistic knowledge of the pupils, even when texts are marked as easier. This inconsistency exists in the books for all four grades. The aorist tense is used a lot in the texts, yet it is not even supposed to be covered in primary school; likewise there are present participles, past passive participles, and very long sentences with unusual word order. The question is raised as to how the teacher is supposed to proceed when dealing with a text where, for example, the aorist tense appears. Should the teacher explain it to the pupils, even though it is not in the curriculum, or just ignore it, deliberately leaving things vague and unexplained, thus preventing the pupils from gaining a complete understanding of the text?

5. The curriculum states that teaching must be done in such a way as to enable frequent verbal activity for pupils. However, the length of most of the texts in the readers on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the complete absence of exercises of the kind that require a picture to be described or two pictures to be compared to identify differences between them, and the absence of other exercises and activities which do not require the use of a text, all make it difficult to achieve this objective.

6. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school, the *Language and Orthography Tips* provide a good distribution of texts for checking knowledge. This is a very useful practice and it would have been good if this practice had not been abandoned in the higher grades. In view of the volume of the material and the complexity of Serbian grammar, they are very much needed.

7. The *Glossary of Grammar and Orthography* provides translations of terms in only four languages of national minorities in Serbia – Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Ruthenian. Since it was decided to present this glossary with translations, the only possible solution should have been to provide transla-

tions in the languages of all the national minorities. Unfortunately, this glossary does not function as an index of terms in any of the grades, i.e. it does not indicate page numbers or the unit in which a given term can be found.

8. The subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is meant equally for members of all national minorities who live in the Republic of Serbia. So there is scope within this subject for “everyone to get to know each other”. But in reviewing the textbook sets, the prevailing impression is that not enough space was given to learning about Serbia as a multinational country and depicting all the national minorities that live in it. This could be overcome with a more diverse selection of authors and texts, the presentation of content specific for diverse cultures, as well as the use of different first names and surnames in the grammar and orthography exercises.

9. The *Teacher’s Book for teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade* is a precious source of advice and instructions that can significantly aid teaching. Given the specific issues and great challenges that this subject poses for curriculum writers, textbook authors and teachers alike, it would be useful to have a teacher’s book for each grade separately.

10. The textbooks for the higher grades of primary school are designed as working textbooks, and are not loaded with theoretical explanations, which is good. Learning from examples is more effective and can yield better results.

### **III.4.3. The use of textbooks in the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja**

The observations above are also in keeping with the opinions of teachers, 97.6% of whom stated that they use the textbooks of the Institute for Textbooks. A total of 56.1% of teachers answered the question “Which teaching resources do you use?” by stating that they use a textbook as their sole resource. However, even 53.7% of them consider that the material within the textbooks is too bulky, that there are too many new words, that the volume and selection of grammatical content is not suited to the age of the pupils, that there is proportionally too many textual pieces, that the texts are too long, and that three textbooks constitute too much material for a single subject.

In analysing the individual textbooks that comprise a set for Serbian as a non-mother tongue, we have determined that 21 teachers stated that they found the reader, with regard to its structure and suitability for pupils of a particular age, useful and it helped them in their teaching, 17 teachers stated that they were partially satisfied with the reader, while a small number of them – two – expressed dissatisfaction with this teaching resource.

The following are cited as its main flaws:

- The texts are frequently not in line with the age and linguistic abilities of the pupils;
- Too many drama texts – more simple texts based on real-life situations are needed;
- The reading material is too extensive;
- Shorter and clearer texts are needed;
- The texts in the readers for the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade are too long: some of the units have ones that are as much as three to four pages long;
- The themes are not relevant for pupils from rural areas;
- The book should be adapted for all national and religious affiliations; no religion should be mentioned, this is excessive for a reader;
- Many texts are outdated and not meaningful for children from the Albanian community, such as epic poems and fables, as well as texts about the Second World War, the former Yugoslavia, and texts that carry religious and cultural content (e.g. the text from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade reader about Saint Sava, Christmas celebrations, etc.).

There were also some comments that indicated the opposite view: 29.26% of the teachers consider the reader to be well designed, that it is good that it has two types of texts that the teacher can choose from, that the textbook is good and comprehensible for children, and that there are no superfluous texts.

Similar figures are observed in connection with the Language Tips, which deal with grammatical content. Around 90% of the teachers surveyed consider them to be very good or partially good with regard to usefulness and structure, while a somewhat smaller number of teachers are content with the Language Tips with regard to their suitability for the pupils' age, but also cited some significant flaws:

- The textbook is too bulky for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade;
- There is too much grammar;
- It is not suited for the age of the pupils;
- There is a lack of coordination between the curriculum for Albanian as a mother tongue and the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue, and some grammatical issues are dealt with in Serbian before they are dealt with in Albanian. The workbooks received the highest ratings from the teachers, who consider them to be the books that are best suited to pupils.

On the question of which linguistic content was most difficult for pupils to absorb, only 15 teachers (of the total of 41) responded that it was grammar (which is in no way in accordance with the test results), with most answers highlighting the texts from the reader and the reading material.

What the pupils like while learning Serbian is, according to the teachers, learning poems and reciting, fairy tales, stories about everyday life, units on sports and animals, group work, dramatization of texts and drama texts in general because they have more dialogue, texts about school, parents, etc.

On the other hand, the pupils do not like the units in the Jekavian dialect, grammar, informative texts, popular science texts, grammar material in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade – complex-compound sentences, lessons that are covered like the free reading material – long extracts which are difficult to comprehend, excessively long texts, epic poems, etc.

Aside from the textbooks, teachers stated they used additional material in the form of catalogues, posters and other language education material, which is certainly in accordance with modern language teaching, but not in accordance with the results achieved by the pupils.

What the research team saw during visits to the schools in all three municipalities, and discussed with the teachers, is that the use of textbooks for the lower grades is systematically widespread, because those

textbooks are donated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. At the same time, the use of new textbooks for the higher grades is rare.

## **III.5. Analysis of test results**



## III.5. ANALYSIS OF TEST RESULTS

*Vesna Krajisnik and Nikica Strizak*

### III.5.1. Testin

Testing covered pupils of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in all 13 Albanian-language primary schools in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo (of which one is ethnically heterogeneous), and in the three schools in the municipality of Medvedja (two of which are ethnically heterogeneous). The knowledge of a total of 433 pupils (206 in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 227 in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade) was tested. The testing was done anonymously, and prior to the test the pupils were assured that test results would not affect their school grades or be recorded in school documents in any way.

Testing in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo was conducted between 24 and 28 March 2014, in the classrooms of the pupils' own schools. Some pupils from branch schools were brought to the central schools for this purpose. In view of the fact that teaching in some schools is organized in two shifts, the testing was done in line with the school timetable. Pupils were given the time of one class to complete the test, but this was extended where necessary. Testing in the municipality of Medvedja was done on 24 and 25 April, under the same conditions.

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The testing was conducted by the research participants, in the presence of the teachers. The test instructions were communicated to the pupils in both Serbian and Albanian, and the requirements of each task in the test were printed bilingually. To facilitate understanding, each task was accompanied by a completed example.

The assessment of knowledge of Serbian was done by testing the following competences:

- **Writing** – using both scripts, and writing a short text on a given theme;
- **Comprehension** – listening and reading;
- **Grammatical literacy** – correct use of the grammatical forms of Serbian

- **Vocabulary** – understanding and using words from various thematic areas

Verbal productivity was assessed only with pupils who scored above average in the test.

### III.5.2. Test structure

Each test consisted of 10 tasks, with a time limit of 45 minutes to complete the test. Each task, depending on the number of requirements within it, carried 5 to 20 points. The maximum number of points that could be scored by completing all tasks was 100.

The types of tasks were tailored to the content of the tasks and the pupils' age and, in order to make the test dynamic, the following types were used alternately:

- Multiple choice questions: circling the correct answer, matching two terms together;
- Filling in missing content – words, phrases, parts of sentences, complete sentences, texts – in the form of various fill-in exercises, formulating questions for given answers or providing the answers to given questions;
- Transcribing – words or sentences, from one script to another.

Although the tasks of both tests were structured in a very simple way and were always provided with an example of how to complete the task, in the test for the 4th grade, given that these were younger pupils, some of the tasks were presented with illustrations to facilitate a better understanding of the content, and at the same time to stimulate pupils' curiosity and maintain their concentration during the test. The use of grammatical terms was avoided by using appropriate linguistic context, and in this way the pupils' answers were prompted and guided with the aim of accessing their functional, and not theoretical, knowledge of the Serbian language.

### III.5.3. Test content

When determining the test content we were guided by:

- a) The curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade and from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade;
- b) The content of the textbooks (readers, worksheets, grammar books) approved by the Ministry of Education (which are discussed in further detail elsewhere in this study); and
- c) The descriptors for Serbian as a foreign language at the A1 and A2 level produced by the Centre for Serbian as a Foreign Language at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, which were created in accordance with the recommended standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). To wit, the curriculum contains content and methods that refer to both mother-tongue teaching and foreign language teaching, but choosing whether to use one or the other approach depends on how prevalent Serbian is in the pupils' surroundings, and also on the level of similarity of Serbian to the pupils' mother tongue. Given the fact that the Albanian language is prevalent in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac (and in Presevo it is extremely dominant), that Serbian and Albanian are not related to each other, and that descriptors have not yet been formulated for Serbian as a language of national minorities, we decided to match the test content to the descriptors for Serbian as a foreign language, for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at level A1 level, and for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at level A2:

**Table 5.3.1. Descriptors of Serbian as a foreign language, level A1**

Level A1					
UNDERSTANDING	WRITING	VOCABULARY	GRAMMAR		
			PHONOLOGY	MORPHOLOGY	SYNTAX
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands a read text that is simple and lexically limited, which is tested by answering questions on the text.</li> <li>- Understands simple instructions, numbers, prices, time on the clock, simple messages from everyday life.</li> <li>- Can connect a situation presented in a text with some other situation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can use graphemes to represent all 30 phonemes of Serbian.</li> <li>- Can write a short text consisting of simple sentences.</li> <li>- Can use both scripts to transcribe a text from Latin script to Cyrillic and vice versa..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands a limited lexical corpus, sufficient to give basic information about oneself and the surroundings, and to put basic questions to another person.</li> <li>- Understands and uses basic greeting expressions..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can differentiate all 30 phonemes of the Serbian language, and represent them in the form of graphemes.</li> <li>- Recognizes the phonological opposition of phonemes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can differentiate between different types of words and basic types of changes that occur within them..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can construct a simple nominal, verbal or adjectival syntagm in a congruent way.</li> <li>- Can construct the interrogative, negative, and affirmative form of a simple or complex sentence.</li> </ul>

**Table 5.3.2. – Descriptors of Serbian as a foreign language, level A2 level**

Nivo A2					
UNDERSTANDING	WRITING	VOCABULARY	GRAMMAR		
			PHONOLOGY	MORPHOLOGY	SYNTAX
<p>- Understands simple, well-structured stories, personal letters and stories on everyday topics as well as simple instructions.</p> <p>- Understands simple dialogue and narrative texts about familiar subjects.</p>	<p>- Can write a simple text which consists of compound sentences.</p> <p>- Can use both scripts.</p>	<p>- Has a sufficient vocabulary to be able to understand and extract basic information from texts and conversations on familiar topics.</p> <p>- Can describe in a simple way a thing being observed, e.g. a picture.</p>	<p>- Can differentiate between fricatives and affricates.</p> <p>- Can hear and note the phoneme J.</p>	<p>- Knows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The most commonly used feminine nouns ending in a consonant; agent nouns ending in 1(a)c;</li> <li>2. Enclitic forms of pronouns in the most common communicative expressions;</li> <li>3. Comparison of adjectives;</li> <li>4. Tenses: present, perfect, future, imperative, potential; past passive participles of the most common verbs; position of verbal enclitics in simple sentences; verb form of the most common verbs;</li> <li>5. Frequently used prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions and exclamations.</li> </ol>	<p>- Can construct interrogative, negative and affirmative forms of a compound sentence.</p>

The entire test content was in line with the curriculum for the 4th or 8th grade respectively, except in the composition writing tasks – in both cases they were given topics that are not covered in the textbooks, but were completely in accordance with the expected linguistic abilities of the pupils.

The knowledge of literature, culture and traditions expected under the curriculum was not tested, only functional linguistic competence.

**Table 5.3.3. Overview of exercises contained in the test for the 4th grade**

FOURTH GRADE TEST			
Task	Task description	Tested competence	Number of points
1.	Pupils are given a short time to read the questions which relate to a text, which is then read to them twice. There are five questions on the text, each with three answers to choose from, with only one correct answer.	Aural comprehension of a text	5
2.	Ten individual words, which together cover all the letters of the Latin script, are to be transcribed into Cyrillic script.	Writing	10
3.	Ten short sentences are given. In each one, a given word (in brackets) has to be added using the correct grammatical case form.	Grammatical literacy	10
4.	Pupils have five tasks, requiring them to write three words for each of the following: sport, season, musical instrument, school subject, type of vegetable.	Vocabulary	15
5.	Matching together words from the right and the left column, while applying the grammatical rules of gender and number	Grammatical literacy	5
6.	Circling the right answers, out of multiple choices, concerning a dialogue text.	Comprehending a written text	5

7.	Based on information given in pictures and the correct tense, pupils are required to complete sentences with the appropriate forms of the given verbs and nouns.	Grammatical literacy	20
8.	Five simple sentences are presented in a table, given in either past, present or future tense. Pupils are required to rewrite the sentences in the remaining two tenses, using the modifiers yesterday, today, and tomorrow.	Grammatical literacy	10
9.	Five short sentences are given with one underlined sentence element, based on which pupils should formulate a question.	Grammatical literacy	5
10.	There is an illustration of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf, alongside which part of this well-known fairy tale is written, stating the most important details. Pupils are required to provide their own ending to the story as they see fit, abiding by the relevant syntactic, lexical and semantic values of the Serbian language.	Writing	15

**Table 5.3.4. – Overview of exercises contained in the test for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

EIGHTH GRADE TEST			
Exercise	Exercise description	Tested competence	Number of points
1.	Pupils are given a short time to read questions which relate to a text, which is then read to them twice. There are five questions on the text, each having three possible answers, only one of which is correct.	Aural comprehension of a text	10

2.	Five sentences with blanks instead of predicates. One out of the three answers must be chosen, paying attention to the verbal aspect.	Grammatical literacy	5
3.	Five sentences are given, which should be completed using a subordinate clause in order to form a complex sentence.	Grammatical literacy	10
4.	Five sentences with spaces are given; three should be completed by choosing the word or phrase in the correct case, and two should be completed by choosing a properly transcribed personal name from Albanian.	Grammatical literacy	5
5.	Based on the description of a given term, a blank should be filled with an appropriate lexeme. There are 10 blanks to be completed.	Vocabulary	10
6.	Pupils are given five sentences with an expected answer underlined, for which a correct question should be formulated.	Grammatical literacy	10
7.	A short text is given, to be transcribed in Cyrillic, either in block letters or cursive, according to the choice of the pupils.	Writing	10

8.	A short composition (12–13 lines) is to be written on a given theme (description of a best friend). Four additional questions pertaining to the theme are given, to provide further clarity on the topic.	Writing	20
9.	Five sentences are required to be completed using the correct verbal form, which pupils should formulate themselves from the infinitive provided.	Grammatical literacy	10
10.	A text printed in Cyrillic is to be read and 10 questions on the text are to be answered.	Comprehending a written text	10

### III.5.4. Analysis of the test results

The test results from the schools in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo exhibit some partial differences compared to each other, but a very large difference is noticeable in relation to the results from the municipality of Medvedja. In order to gain the most precise possible data on the linguistic competence of pupils and the conditions that affect language acquisition, we analysed the results from Presevo and Bujanovac together, and those from Medvedja separately.

#### III.5.4.1. Analysis of test results in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo

By analysing the results obtained, we gained information which points to the systematic lack of knowledge of Serbian by pupils in all primary schools of the aforesaid municipalities, in both the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

In analysing the results, two facts should be borne in mind, as they can lead to a slightly skewed picture when processing the statistics: (1) individual good results stand out significantly from the average scores

and cannot be attributed to either the class or the school; and (2) it is apparent that pupils with weaker knowledge copied their answers from pupils with a higher level of knowledge.

Of the total number of pupils tested, the scores attained span a range from 1 to 83, with only a negligibly small number of pupils scoring above 50 points,<sup>86</sup> which is also evident from the average score of 27.02. The 4th grade pupils showed a significantly weaker knowledge.

**Table 5.4.1. Summary of tests for the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo**

Bujanovac and Presevo				
Grade	Total number of tests	Lowest score attained	Highest score attained	Average score attained
Eighth grade	217	3	83	31.56
Fourth grade	203	1	75	22.18
Total test results	420	1	83	27.02

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If we analyse the results for each school individually, it can be seen that an average result of over 50% was not achieved in any of the schools, which would be the level needed for it be possible to speak of any knowledge of Serbian on the part of the pupils. The “Naim Frasheri” school located in the urban part of the municipality, has the best results, particularly in the 8th grade.

**Table 5.4.2. Summary of tests broken down by schools in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo for the 4th and 8th grades**

Bujanovac and Presevo – 4th and 8th grade				
Schools	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average result
Naim Frasheri”, Bujanovac	38	10	81	37,24

<sup>86</sup> Result assessment was firstly done in accordance with the the assessment standards for Serbian as foreign language – a successful test score required a minimum of 60 points (60%). However, in view of the extremely poor results, the pass threshold was reduced to 50%.

“Muharrem Kadriu”, Veliki Trnovac, Bujanovac municipality	56	12	80	35,36
Zenel Hajdini”, Rajince, Presevo	29	4	71	32,93
“Ali Bektashi”, Nesalce, Municipality of Bujanovac	23	13	83	32,65
“Sami Frasheri”, Lucani, Bujanovac municipality	34	2	79	30,21
“Abdulla Krashnica”, Miratovac, Presevo municipality	32	7	68	28,41
“Selami Hallaci”, Oraovica, Presevo municipality	34	3	45	24,97
“9. maj”, Reljan, Presevo municipality	37	3	57	22,16
„“Desanka Maksimovic”, Biljaca, Bujanovac municipality	34	7	75	21,76
„Ibrahim Kelmendi”, Presevo	52	6	59	20,38
„“Migjeni”, Cerevajka, Presevo municipality	13	3	34	17,38
„Ditura”, Crnotince, Presevo municipality	25	7	28	16,40
„Migjeni”, Muhovac, Presevo municipality	13	1	37	16,00

### ***Analysis of the test results for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo***

The test results for the pupils from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade are lower than the overall average. It can be seen that the average values are fairly consistent, in the range from 13% to 27.67%. If we leave out the extremely high, isolated results (three cases), these values would be significantly lower and would show the real picture of the pupils' knowledge. The best result was achieved in the "Muharrem Kadriu" school in Veliki Trnovac, Bujanovac municipality (33.11/100), and the worst in the "Migjeni" school in Muhovac.<sup>87</sup> One important observation made in analysing the results is that most pupils did not even attempt to tackle the more demanding tasks, despite the clear instructions translated into Albanian and the examples given showing how to answer the questions.

**Table 5.4.3. Tests of the 4th grade pupils in schools of Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities**

Bujanovac and Presevo – 4th grade				
Schools	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
"Muharrem Kadriu", Veliki Trnovac, Bujanovac municipality	27	12	71	33,11
"Ali Bektashi", Nesalce, Bujanovac municipality	9	13	48	27,67
"Sami Frasheri", Lucani, Bujanovac municipality	13	2	64	26,31
"Zenel Hajdini", Rajince, Presevo municipality	14	4	57	24,93
"9. maj", Reljan, Presevo municipality	17	6	52	21,47
"Desanka Maksimovic", Biljaca, Bujanovac municipality	18	7	75	20,61
"Naim Frasheri", Bujanovac	20	10	33	20,60

<sup>87</sup> Muhovac is a monoethnic, isolated village in the municipality of Presevo.

“Selami Hallaci”, Oraovica, Presevo municipality	18	3	27	20,50
“Abdullah Krashnica”, Miratovac, Presevo municipality	15	8	35	19,80
“Dituria”, Crnotince, Presevo municipality	13	9	28	16,85
“Ibrahim Kelmendi”, Presevo	28	6	29	16,68
“Migjeni”, Cerevajka, Presevo municipality	7	7	22	16,57
“Migjeni”, Muhovac, Presevo municipality	4	1	37	13,00

By using deeper analysis of the test results, the types and levels of pupils’ knowledge were identified with respect to the tested competences. To that end, primarily the results of individual tasks were analysed.

**Table 5.4.4. Results of the tests of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo**

Test results – Bujanovac and Presevo – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Tasks	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
1 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	5/5	2,85
2 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	10/10	3,93
3 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	6/10	1,12
4 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	15/15	6,52
5 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	5/5	1,71
6 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	5/5	2,78
7 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	20/20	1,79
8 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	9/10	,71
9 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	5/5	,33
10 <sup>st</sup> task	203	0	12/15	,42
Overall score	203	1	75/100	22,18

In the **first task** – aural comprehension of a text – an average score of 2.85 points out of 5 was achieved. When the tests were marked, credit was given only to the pupils who followed the test instructions, whereby only one of the three answers could be circled. Given the pupils' age and lower level of linguistic competence, the available answers consisted of simple statements, either a single word or a short phrase. The lack of skill in dealing with exercises of this type was noticed even in this the first exercise because a large number of pupils were circling two or even all three answers.

The average score achieved in the **second task** – for the transcription of individual words from Latin script to Cyrillic – was 3.93 out of a possible 10. Points were awarded to only those words that were correctly written in Cyrillic script (one correctly written word was worth one point), regardless of whether they were written in cursive or block letters. Answers ranged from a complete failure to do the task, through partially correct answers in which the two scripts were mixed up, to completely correct answers with all the letters correctly written in Cyrillic script. The pupils used cursive writing more often than block letters, but in many cases it was noticed that it was unskilled writing, often resembling drawings.

In the **third task** – the correct use of grammatical case forms – unlike the previous two tasks, the maximum number of points was not achieved by anyone, and the overall average score was very low – 1.12 points. Even though the way to do this task was demonstrated with an example, this pupils answered in various incorrect ways: by repeating the case form given in the example, by the wrong choice of the case form, by copying the word from the brackets, by arbitrarily choosing new words, and by writing words in Albanian... Only those answers written in accordance with morphological and phonetic rules of the Serbian language were awarded points.

In the **fourth task** – on knowledge of vocabulary – a less than 50% result was achieved: out of a maximum of 15 points, the average score was 6.25. In marking the tests, orthographic errors such as double letters, and phonetic and morphological mistakes which occurred due to neglecting the principle of congruency were partially tolerated. The most frequent mistakes related to writing a required lexeme in Albanian and giving the wrong answers due to misunderstanding the task requirement.

In the **fifth task** – matching together adjectives and nouns while ensuring agreement in grammatical gender and number – despite our expectations that this exercise would be easy, a relatively low average result of 1.71 out of 5 was achieved.

The **sixth task** tested understanding of a written text. Although the pupils did not have a very large choice from which to determine the correct answer (by circling the letter in front of the correct answer), the

result achieved was below expectations: 2.78 out of 5. In the theory of pupil testing, multiple choice questions are considered easy because they guide the pupil's response and do require a productive response.

The **seventh task** was one of the most demanding and represented a combination of graphical and textual information. Pupils were required, by matching them together, to follow the requirements concerning the correct use of verbal forms and numbers. In view of its complexity, this task carried the highest number of points – 20. However, only one pupil managed to score 20 points, while the average was only 1.79. The most frequent mistakes made by the pupils concerned the incorrect use of verbal forms or mistakes in writing numbers. When assessing the tests we did not find that pupils had had any difficulties understanding the exercise.

The **eighth task** tested knowledge on word order and tenses (present, perfect, future) within the context of a given sentence, and an average result of 0.71 points out of 10 was accomplished. This is one of the exercises where pupils did not even attempt to answer the question despite the clearly given examples, which leads to the conclusion that the pupils do not have a command of this level of grammatical literacy.

The **ninth task** – construction of an interrogative sentence for a given answer with the correct use of adverbs or prepositional phrases – saw the weakest test results: 0.33 out of 5. In analysing the results, a heavy influence was detected from non-standard forms of Serbian typical for this dialect region, but also numerous mistakes stemming from insufficient knowledge of the language.

The **tenth task** – completing a story – was the most demanding in the test, but also the freest in terms of choices on how to answer it. Pupils were allowed to choose their own words, form sentences and partially change the narrative course, but the semantic structure of the story had to be maintained. The choice of the story “Little Red Riding Hood” was motivated by the fact that the tale is widely familiar among children of this age, and its motifs appear in the teaching material for the 1st grade. In order to focus the pupils as much as possible on the content of the story, an illustration was provided alongside the text. However, The average score of 0.12 out of 15 indicates two things. First, unfamiliarity<sup>88</sup> with this story, and second, the unskilled way that the course of the narrative was followed by even the small number of pupils who attempted to meet the requirements of this task. Only one pupil managed to complete the story in a satisfactory way, albeit with some slight deviations from the norms of the Serbian language, to earn 12 points, which was the best result for this task. Most pupils did not even try to write anything, while those who did at least attempt to start the task used Albanian words or simply “threw out” some words without attempting to connect them in sentences.

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88 Pupils frequently told us that they were not familiar with this story, even though its motifs appear in the textbook material planned for the 1st grade.

In analysing the individual results for each task, we have seen that the pupils achieved the poorest results in those tasks which required them to write complete sentences by themselves, regardless of whether these were tasks testing grammatical competence or composition writing. These were also the most complex tasks testing the ability to construct sentences with respect to grammatical, lexical and semantic aspects.

Grouping together tasks according to competences, we obtain data that indicate several things:

- Which skills, in the use of language by the lower-grade primary school pupils, do they have a satisfactory, poor, or non-existent command of;
- The way in which pupils of this age acquire language;
- How much appropriate content is present in the teaching of Serbian.

The following table shows the results for individual competences achieved by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade primary school pupils:

**Table 5.4.5. Results according to individual competences that were achieved by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils in the schools of the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo**

Bujanovac and Presevo – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Competences	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Grammatical literacy	203	0	43/50	5,67
Vocabulary	203	0	15/15	6,52
Writing	203	0	17/25	4,34
Aural comprehension of a text	203	0	5/5	2,85
Comprehending a written text	203	0	5/5	2,78

The highest scores are observed in the linguistic competence concerning understanding, of both aural and written texts, where a result of over 50% was accomplished – an average score of 2.85 or 2.78 out of 5 respectively was achieved. Individual maximum scores were also accomplished in both tasks. All this points to the fact that the pupils mostly have a passive knowledge of the language, as a result of perception of both aural and written linguistic content.

The next result concerns the knowledge of vocabulary – out of a maximum of 15 points an average score of 6.52 was achieved. The maximum number of points was accomplished in this task, too. However, given that this competence was assessed based on the nominalization of individual lexical values, very frequent in the basic lexical corpus, much higher results were expected.

The results derived from the assessment of the writing competence incorporate the results of two skills: writing in Cyrillic and the independent writing of a text. From the maximum of 25 points an average of 4.34 was accomplished, and no pupil achieved more than 17 points. This poor result was mostly influenced by the exceptionally low level of performance in the composition writing, while a somewhat better result was achieved in writing in Cyrillic. In view of the fact that independent text writing (composition) is considered to be the most demanding linguistic skill which requires a command of almost all aspects of a language (phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic), a result as poor as this is not surprising in the light of the general lack of knowledge of Serbian.

The worst result was achieved in the assessment of grammatical competence – from the maximum of 50 points an average of 5.67 was achieved. This result represents the most obvious way to evaluate the way pupils are learning the language in the classroom. Namely, while all other linguistic competences could be mastered outside the school to a greater or lesser extent, both in communication with speakers of Serbian and by listening to the language on television, the correct use of grammatical constructions, without the contamination of dialectal speech, can only be mastered through the teaching process. As a result of what would appear to be the inadequate approach to this problem, non-standard linguistic expressions were noticed being used by those few pupils who responded to the tasks pertaining to grammatical literacy. It should be noted that knowledge of the basic case meanings and the three basic tenses with the use of frequently used words was tested. Based on this, we can conclude that this problem is paid very little attention in school because, on the one hand, it represents the most complex level of the linguistic system and demands a satisfactory level of linguistic and teaching competence on the part of teachers, and on the other hand it is the most difficult area for pupils in the process of learning, so if they do not get adequate support from the teachers and from the instructional material, the results inevitably fall short. This is also supported by the results of the observation of teaching, which show that the teachers rely exclusively upon a demonstrative method when explaining grammatical items, while pupil-teacher interaction is almost non-existent. Those same results also indicate the rather frequent incorrect use of grammatical forms by the teachers when speaking, and also mistakes in the teaching approach.

### ***Analysis of the test results for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo***

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade achieved better results than the 4<sup>th</sup>, although the overall 8<sup>th</sup> grade average score still falls far below 50%. In comparison to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, however, a greater span among the results can be seen, as well as greater inconsistency. The school with the best average result is “Naim Frasheri”, whose average result for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade was 55.72%. This is the only result, in both grades, above 50%. The weakest average result was achieved in the “Ditura” school, amounting to 15.92 points out of 100. As regards the best individual result, only two schools had individuals scoring above 80 points, one in one school with 81 points out of 100, and another in another school with 83 points.

**Table 5.4.6. Tests of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade pupils in the schools of Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities**

Bujanovac and Presevo – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Schools	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
“Muharrem Kadriu”, Veliki Trnovac, Bujanovac municipality	18	33	81	55,72
„Ali Bektashi“, Nesalce, Bujanovac municipality	15	22	71	40,40
“Sami Frasheri”, Lucani, Bujanovac municipality	29	13	80	37,45
„Zenel Hajdini“, Rajince, Presevo municipality	17	7	68	36,00
“9. maj”, Reljan, Presevo municipality	14	14	83	35,86
“Desanka Maksimovic”, Biljaca, Bujanovac municipality	21	5	79	32,62
“Naim Frasheri”, Bujanovac	16	17	45	30,00
„Selami Hallaci“, Oraovica, Presevo municipality	24	15	59	24,71

“Abdullah Krashnica”, Miratovac, Presevo municipality	16	11	36	23,06
“Ditura”, Crnotince, Presevo municipality	20	3	57	22,75
„Ibrahim Kelmendi“, Presevo	6	3	34	18,33
“Migjeni”, Cerevajka, Presevo municipality	9	5	30	17,33
“Migjeni”, Muhovac, Presevo municipality	12	7	23	15,92

The results of the “Naim Frasheri” school, as we have already mentioned, are the only ones exceeding 50%, with a total of seven tests (out of 18) with a score exceeding 60%. When these tests were being assessed, there was a strong impression that pupils had copied from each other because many answers were identical including, most tellingly, many incorrect answers. Interviews with the pupils who had achieved good results confirmed the suspicion that the results were not authentic.

In the “Zenel Hajdini” school the “pass rate” (scores above 60 points) was very low, but there were a number of tests with scores between 50 and 60 points, which indicates a certain level of knowledge higher than in other schools. Also, this is one of the schools where knowledge of cursive Cyrillic is at a very high level, which is always a result of school work and teaching, and not spontaneous acquisition.

The schools “Muharrem Kadriu”, “Abdullah Krashnica”, “Ali Bektashi” and “Sami Frasheri” showed very similar types of results: from a large number of tests with very bad scores, a few pupils stood out in their demonstration of a certain level of knowledge in the test, and some of them also subsequently demonstrated solid oral competence, which we will discuss further in due course.

The “9. maj” primary school in Reljan, Presevo municipality, is the only multi-ethnic school. However, the test results indicate that there is probably no communication with the pupils whose mother tongue is Serbian.

As with the 4th grade, under the first level of analysis we differentiate the results of each individual exercise, for all schools, with the aim of getting a clearer picture of what pupils know the best, and what they do not know so well.

**Table 5.4.7. Test results of the 8th grade pupils in Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities**

Rezultati testa – Bujanovac i Preševo – VIII razred				
Tasks	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
1 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	10/10	6,27
2 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	5/5	2,43
3 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	10/10	2,03
4 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	5/5	2,74
5 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	9/10	2,04
6 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	10/10	1,00
7 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	10/10	7,51
8 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	18/20	3,25
9 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	10/10	1,35
10 <sup>st</sup> task	217	0	10/10	2,94
Total result	217	3	83/100	31,56

In the **first task** – aural comprehension of a text – an average score of 6.27 out of 10 was achieved. As with the task of this type for the 4th grade, only those answers that followed the instructions were given credit – i.e. only one answer out of three possible answers could be circled. The pupils' satisfactory skill in solving a task of this type was noticed, and mistakes in circling multiple answers were not noticed. In view of the more complex structure of the aural comprehension text in comparison to the 4th grade text, and the expected better developed perceptive abilities of pupils in the 8th grade, this exercise was scored with a higher number of points available than for lower-grade pupils – a maximum of 10 points. During this task pupils encountered two problems: the first concerned the length of the answers offered (which had to be read and understood in a relatively short time), and the other problem concerned more subtle semantic differences between the available answers.

The same type of exercise (multiple choice) was used in the second requirement – on knowledge of verbal aspect. The average score for the **second task** was 2.43 out of 5.

In the **third task** – on the use of subordinate clauses – the average score achieved was 2.03 out of 10. This exercise gave pupils a certain freedom in answering; after a conjunction, they were required to write a

subordinate clause as they saw fit. The task's requirement, on an exceptional basis, used the grammatical term "subordinate clause" because according to the curriculum the system of subordinate clauses is a fundamental grammatical concept that is covered in the 8th grade, so it is to be expected that this term is familiar to pupils of this age. However, on the basis of the results, two things were determined: first, the pupils do not recognize this term and give answers in the form of a syntagm or individual words; second, they do not understand the meaning of "conjunction". The task was assessed by evaluating both the correct use of a subordinate clause and the correct grammatical structure of the sentence, and on that basis a maximum of two points for each sentence were available. If the pupil provided a correct subordinate clause, but with grammatical or orthographic mistakes, only one point was given. Also, if the answer used a syntagm or prepositional phrase using the correct case form and without any other mistakes, making a correct sentence in the Serbian language, this answer would also be given one point, since the aim of this task was to test for functional, communicatively useful knowledge of the language.

The **fourth task** tested two competences – grammatical literacy and orthography. Although different competences were tested, the exercise requirement was the same – circling the correct answer. The average result was 2.03 out of 10. This result was mostly influenced by the answers which relate to orthography, while a significantly lower number of points was scored in the part of the exercise testing grammatical competence.

In the **fifth task** – on knowledge of vocabulary – pupils were required to provide the right terms based on a given description. A knowledge of words in everyday use, which the descriptions clearly pointed to, was expected. But despite the expectations that this exercise would be the easiest one for the pupils, since it concerns basic vocabulary and since many answers were recognized as correct, the results indicated a very limited vocabulary, and so even with some tolerance for orthographic mistakes, a maximum score was not achieved in any of the tests. The average result was 2.04 out of 10.

The **sixth task** – constructing an interrogative sentence for a given answer, abiding by the correct use of adverbs and prepositional phrases – showed, as in the 4th grade, the weakest test score, 1 out of 10. In analysing the test results, we observed the heavy influence of non-standard dialectal forms, as well as numerous errors stemming from insufficient knowledge of the language, particularly on word order in sentences and declension.

The **seventh task** – transcribing a text into Cyrillic script – was the most successfully completed task of the entire test in all municipalities. An average result 7.51 out of 10 was achieved. A very small number of pupils did not even attempt this task, but most displayed a high level of knowledge of the Cyrillic script. The exercise requirements did not specify whether cursive or block Cyrillic letters should be used, but the

pupils mostly used cursive. The handwriting of most pupils testifies to several years of reliable knowledge of Cyrillic.

The **eighth task** – composition writing – was the most demanding exercise of this test. It evaluated the pupils' ability to independently write a grammatically and semantically correct text on a given theme. The theme (the description of a best friend) was chosen in order to be familiar to the pupils and to limit the lexical choice to words from the basic vocabulary. However, despite the theme and additional sub-questions provided, the average score achieved was 3.25 out of 20. The maximum number of points was not achieved by any of the pupils. Perhaps out of all the questions, this one most graphically represents the inadequacy of the knowledge of Serbian on all linguistic levels.

The **ninth task** tested knowledge of the system of verbal forms in a given sentence context. The verbal forms tested are included in the curriculum for the higher grades of primary school. The average score was 1.35 out of 10, which is the second worst result in the entire test, and as such indicates the very low level of knowledge regarding the morphologic and syntactic elements of Serbian.

The **tenth task** evaluated understanding of a written text. The pupils were required to answer (in the form of a word, a phrase or a sentence) questions on the text. The text was printed in Cyrillic script, but pupils were free to choose which script they wrote their answers in and this was not taken into consideration in awarding points. Credit was given to all answers that indicated understanding, irrespective of any errors in grammar or orthography. This task carried a maximum score of 10, but the average score achieved was 2.94 points, which indicates surprisingly weak understanding of more complex expressions/discourse, even though the questions were leading and gave clues to the right answer.

After the analysis of the results of individual tasks, the exercises are grouped according to the tested competences. The following are test results for the 8th grade.

**Table 5.4.8. Results according to individual competences that were achieved by the 8th grade pupils in schools of Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities**

Bujanovac and Presevo – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Competences	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Grammatical literacy	217	1	38/50	9,56
Vocabulary	217	0	9/10	2,04

Writing	217	0	26/30	10,76
Aural comprehension of a text	217	0	10/10	6,27
Comprehending a written text	217	0	10/10	2,94

Comprehension, as in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, yielded the highest scores. A significant difference can be seen between the average scores for comprehending a written text (2.94 out of 10) and aural comprehension of a text (6.27 out of 10), which to a certain extent is related to the complexity of the requirements for each exercise, but also, of course, to the varying types of passive knowledge that the pupils have.

Writing in this test was evaluated using two separate exercises. One concerned knowledge of the Cyrillic script, and there the score is significantly better (7.51 out of 10) than in the exercise which required the writing of a text on a given theme (3.25 out of 20). In the context of overall results, combining these two results gives a relatively good average score of 10.76 out of 30. It must be noted, however, that knowledge of a script by no means indicates a command of the writing competence. The 8th grade pupils demonstrate a good command of the Cyrillic script, from which we may conclude that a large number of Serbian language classes were dedicated to writing practice and/or transcription.

An unexpectedly poor result (only 2.04 out of 10) was noted in vocabulary knowledge, and this was surprising given that the words sought were from everyday vocabulary (house, food, occupations).

The most important part of the test, which also carried the highest number of points, was on knowledge of grammar – and not theoretical knowledge of grammar, or knowledge regarding rules and exceptions, etc., but just the ability to use grammar with the aim of communicating in the standard Serbian language. As has already been stated, the role of the teaching process in gaining a command of grammar is decisive. The results point to an extremely low level of grammatical competence, even when it comes to the simplest grammatical issues (for example, expressing the present, past and future; expressing a direct object, etc.) There was a total of 50 points available, but the maximum score achieved was 38. The average score on knowledge of grammar in the 8th grade was only 9.56.

## ***Assessment of verbal competence***

Despite the overall very bad results, in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade a certain number of tests with significantly better results than the average stood out. This concerned a total of 33 pupils, 11 from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 22 from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Two interesting questions arise in connection with these results: first, whether these pupils also possess a corresponding oral competence, that is to say, whether their command of Serbian is active or passive; and second, where and how did these pupils learn Serbian? In which situations do they have an opportunity to use it and practice it?

A month after the written tests, these pupils were interviewed on the school premises, again in the presence of their teachers, instructors, or school principals.

A level of oral competence in keeping with the test results was demonstrated by 18 pupils: six in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 12 in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The children cited watching television programmes in Serbian as the main source of their knowledge and – an especially curious fact – the most frequent response was that they watched Turkish soap operas with subtitles in Serbian, and this was how, with the aid of parents or other household members, they learned Serbian. Most of the children who are exposed to Serbian this way also have someone at home who speaks Serbian and supports the child in learning (parents, grandparents, etc.). In some cases, the answers were different from the typical ones, and here we will highlight some completely atypical but very colourful cases: a boy from Presevo learned Serbian during a lengthy hospital stay for treatment in Nis; a girl from Biljaca learned it by conversing with her little brother’s nanny, whose mother tongue is Serbian; a boy from Bujanovac stated that he learned Serbian by being friends with his fellow players in a local football club; a pupil from Lucani acquired a pretty good command of Serbian by watching science programmes on the RTS channel, and then even passed on his knowledge of Serbian to his best friend.

Pupils of the “Sami Frasheri” and “Muharrem Kadriu” primary schools, in both grades, demonstrated the best abilities in oral communication and holding a conversation in Serbian

## ***Analysis of the test results in the municipality of Medvedja***

In view of the fact that that municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac consist of a predominantly Albanian population and that interlingual contact and influence is relatively weak,<sup>89</sup> the test results for the munic-

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89 This particularly relates to Presevo where the Albanian population is dominant, whereas the municipality of Bujanovac is multiethnic, consisting of an Albanian, Roma and Serbian community.

ipality of Medvedja, which has a predominantly Serbian population, have been treated separately from the other two municipalities. It was assumed that the test results should be better in this municipality as a result of greater exposure to the Serbian language and interethnic contact in general.

The total number of pupils tested in three schools was 13. The lowest score of 12 points and the highest score of 81 points, together with the average score of 51.31 points, could indicate better results compared to the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac. Based on the average score it can be concluded that the pupils who were tested, in general, possess the basic linguistic competence that is expected for the level of 4th and 8th grade pupils. Even though at first glance the pupils in the 4th grade seem to have a better score, it is still not statistically greater than the results of the pupils in the 8th grade.

**Table 5.4.9. Summary of the tests for the municipality of Medvedja**

Medvedja – 4 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Grade	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	12	77	50,30
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	3	29	81	54,67
Overall test result	13	12	81	51,31

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However, the results obtained for such a small sample cannot be used to draw valid conclusions, but they may aid us in pointing the way forward for further research.

### ***Analysis of the test results for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the municipality of Medvedja***

In view of the relatively small number of pupils tested, we did not think it useful to analyse the results for each exercise; instead the test analysis is done according to the results of linguistic competences.

**Table 5.4.10. Results broken down by individual competences that were achieved by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils in schools in Medvedja municipality**

Medvedja – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Competences	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Grammatical literacy	3	26	41/50	33,00
Vocabulary	3	5	14/15	10,67
Writing	3	0	16/25	5,33
Aural comprehension of a text	3	4	5/5	4,33
Comprehending a written text	3	5	5/5	5,00

166 | Bearing in mind the fact that a very small number of pupils were tested, no relevant conclusion can be formulated. Three pupils tested produced the best results in comprehending a written text, and all three pupils had the maximum number of points. A somewhat weaker result was achieved in the aural comprehension of a text. The result for grammatical literacy came next, with 33 out of 50, and vocabulary knowledge with 10.67 out of 15. The poorest result was seen in the competence for assessing writing – 5.33 out of 25.

### ***Analysis of test results for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the municipality of Medvedja***

The test results of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade pupils were more uniform and on average better than in the other two municipalities. The only competency with weaker results than in Bujanovac and Presevo was the aural comprehension of a text. However, given the very small sample, we cannot make any definitive conclusions on any of the tested competences.

**Table 5.4.11. Results broken down by individual competences that were achieved by the 8th grade pupils in schools of Medvedja municipality**

Medvedja – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade				
Competences	Total Number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Grammatical literacy	10	1	34/50	18,00
Vocabulary	10	0	8/10	4,00
Writing	10	0	25/30	16,60
Aural comprehension of a text	10	2	8/10	5,20
Comprehension of a written text	10	0	10/10	6,40

Aural and reading comprehension were again the most powerful aspects of the linguistic competences, but the average score for aural comprehension was the only one that was not statistically significantly better than the results in Bujanovac and Presevo. This is unexpected, in view of the dominant presence of the Serbian language in an environment such as Medvedja.

The most significant difference in comparison to Bujanovac and Presevo can be seen in the competence tested by composition writing: the average score in Medvedja is 7.90, which is a significantly better result in comparison to the average scores for the same task in Bujanovac and Presevo (3.25). The scores concerning knowledge of the Cyrillic script are similar to the scores for the other two municipalities – the average in Medvedja is 8.70.

Both vocabulary and general grammatical literacy are better in Medvedja; their overall average score is almost two times better than in Presevo and Bujanovac. Of course, we should again not lose sight of the fact that the sample in Medvedja was small, so all of the conclusions should be viewed with some caution.

However, despite the evident difference, it must be said that the 8th grade test results in Medvedja were nevertheless far below expectations.

### III.5.5. Conclusion

In examining the overall results broken down by municipality, it can be concluded that the best results were achieved in the municipality of Medvedja, where members of the Albanian community are exposed to the influence of Serbian to the greatest extent. Only in this municipality were scores achieved that indicate that the pupils have a command of Serbian sufficient for functional use.

The weakest results were achieved in the municipality of Presevo – 23.55 out of 100, where the biggest range between the lowest and highest scores achieved was also seen; slightly better results were seen in Bujanovac municipality, but neither of these two municipalities attained an average result that would indicate a satisfactory knowledge of Serbian.

Pupils of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the municipality of Presevo achieved by far the worst results, where the highest score barely exceeds the minimum needed to be deemed satisfactory linguistic competence for pupils of this age.

**Table 5.5.1. Summary of test results for pupils of all grades from the three municipalities**

TOTAL				
Municipality	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Bujanovac	198	1	83	30,91
Presevo	222	3	71	23,55
Medvedja	13	12	81	51,31

**Table 5.5.2. Summary of test results for 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils from the three municipalities**

4 <sup>th</sup> GRADE				
Municipality	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Bujanovac	91	1	75	25,49
Presevo	112	3	57	19,48
Medvedja	3	29	81	54,67

**Tabela 5.5.3. – Summary of test results for 8th grade pupils from the three municipalities**

8th GRADE				
Municipality	Total number of tests	Lowest score	Highest score	Average score
Bujanovac	107	5	83	35,52
Preševo	110	3	71	27,70
Medveđa	10	12	77	50,30

Based on the results obtained from testing Serbian as a non-mother tongue for 4th and 8th grade pupils of primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the following conclusions can be made:

- The pupils for the most part do not have a functional knowledge of Serbian to the extent of being able to communicate in the language, either in writing or orally, and nor are they capable of understanding someone who is speaking to them;
- Passive knowledge of the language is seen in the relatively good knowledge of both Serbian alphabets and the ability to transcribe in one direction (from Latin to Cyrillic script);
- Insufficient knowledge of Serbian vocabulary prevents communication and the conveying of information, whether in writing or orally;
- Successful verbal communication is seen in just a few pupils and has generally not been acquired through the teaching system;
- Grammatical literacy is at a very low level, and in the case of the 4th grade pupils is almost undetectable;
- The possibility of free expression (in writing) is prevented by the general lack of knowledge of Serbian;
- A correlation is observed between the demographic structure and the test results – the bigger the proportion of the population with Serbian as a mother tongue, the better the test results.

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**IV. VIEWS , OPINIONS AND NEEDS OF  
STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNING THE LEARNING  
OF SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE**



## **IV. VIEWS, OPINIONS AND NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNING THE LEARNING OF SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE**

This chapter presents the views, opinions and needs of stakeholders concerning the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. Given that understanding views on language-learning is very important for any attempt to improve the teaching process, and particularly for understanding the possibilities for systematic improvement, the research team tried to cover representatives of all stakeholders – a deputy from the Albanian community in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, Shaip Kamberi; the President of Presevo Municipality, Ragmi Mustafa; the President of Bujanovac Municipality, Nagip Arifi; the President of Medvedja Municipality, Slobodan Draskovic; the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council, Galip Beqiri; the educational advisor from the Leskovac Schools Authority, Belul Nasufi; the principals of the 16 Albanian-language primary schools in the three municipalities; the pupils of those primary schools and their parents; representatives of civil society organizations and the media; and representatives of state organs, municipal administration, the commercial sector and employees.

### **IV.1. VIEWS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY FROM THE ALBANIAN COMMUNITY, THE PRESIDENTS OF THE PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA MUNICIPALITIES AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ANMC**

*Natasa Boskovic*

The national assembly deputy, the presidents of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities and the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council (ANMC) are in agreement regarding their general assessment of the quality primary school education in these municipalities. They state that they are generally satisfied with the quality of primary education, and that the current situation is much better than it was a few years ago. They share the opinion that in comparison to the previous period much has been achieved, particularly concerning the improvement of infrastructure. Problems nevertheless remain, particularly regarding the lack of qualified teaching staff and modern teaching resources.

When it comes to difficulties in primary schools in the three municipalities, the following problems were identified: the lack of teaching staff with appropriate qualifications; the lack of textbooks for teaching in Albanian; the lack of technical equipment and modern teaching aids in classrooms; and an insufficient number of seminars and professional development training for current teaching staff. There have certainly been some improvements; for example in most cases the issue of transportation for pupils and school staff has been resolved with the help of local authorities, while certain problems, especially concerning infrastructure, have been partially resolved, thanks to the efforts of state institutions and international organizations. A problem present in all three municipalities is the progressive decrease in the number of pupils in schools and, in relation to that, the existence of very small departments with poor working conditions, especially in the rural schools.

172 | A key difficulty encountered by primary schools in these three municipalities is the lack of qualified teaching staff. Shaip Kamberi, a deputy in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, particularly highlights that insufficiently qualified staff are often being used for teaching, while at the same time there is not enough training available at the regional and central level, that would, among other things, contribute to overcoming this problem. Assessing that the quality is closely linked to the lack of textbooks in Albanian, he says that teaching is often done with the use of inadequate teaching materials. Although representatives of local self-government assess the quality of teaching as satisfactory, the main objections and problems refer to the fact that in the majority of cases, the teachers do not come from the local area, i.e. from those three municipalities, and are thus not sufficiently motivated and are less dedicated to teaching. According to the President of Bujanovac Municipality “the teachers should be assessed according to the success of their pupils,” and furthermore a way should be found “to stimulate teachers who achieve good results”. The Chairman of the ANMC states that “the teachers are increasingly less engaged and motivated in teaching,” and that “the schools do not score such good results in competitions as they used to”. The President of Presevo Municipality asserts that the quality of teaching is suffering “because inadequate teaching staff are being used for teaching”.

Problems are also present when it comes to teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, the most important being the lack of professional teaching staff, meaning the lack of appropriate qualifications, and also the fact that teachers often do not speak the mother tongue of their pupils. In addition, there is an evident lack of interest among teachers for an innovative approach to teaching. On the other hand, the President of Presevo Municipality feels that “from the first grade of primary school the children are overburdened with a large number of subjects” which, in combination with inadequate teaching staff, results in the poor quality of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. According to him, another difficulty concerns

the fact that the local self-government is burdened with the high travel costs of teachers, who mainly come from Vranje or Vladicin Han, where they live, to teach in schools in Presevo municipality. Slobodan Draskovic, President of Medvedja Municipality, has a different view on the quality of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. In his opinion, the quality of teaching in primary schools in the municipality is satisfactory, which is reflected in the fact that the children there have good marks in the subject.

As far as is known by the three presidents of the Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities and the Chairman of the ANMC, the parents believe that it is necessary for their children to learn Serbian. National Assembly Deputy Shaip Kamberi asserts that although efforts are being made to overcome the ethnic distance, nevertheless young people today generally do not watch television programmes or follow other media output in Serbian, and furthermore have almost no contact with their peers from other communities. He says that parents recognize this too, and are aware of the fact that the future of their children is in the areas they were born in, and that therefore it is very important for them to have a sufficiently good knowledge of Serbian. The parents think that it is important for their children to learn Serbian language for the purposes of employment, education, and communication in general, although, according to the President of Bujanovac Municipality, “few members of the Albanian national minority are involved in the work of state organs and generally they do not have any experience of being involved in the organs of state administration”, which does nothing to help raise awareness of the need to learn Serbian.

The views of the national assembly deputy and the representatives of the local authorities are positive with regard to the need for good knowledge of Serbian, and not only Serbian but other languages as well, following the saying “a man is valued by the number of the languages he speaks”. Knowledge of Serbian, according to the President of Bujanovac Municipality, is “necessary to allow communication in a multi-ethnic community”, while the President of Presevo Municipality sees the necessity of knowledge of Serbian in terms of “employment, further education and job opportunities in state organs”. The Chairman of the ANMC thinks that it is essential for children to speak Serbian because “it is the official language of the country they live in, and because it is important for communication and coexistence,” adding that “it is very important that the Serbs learn Albanian, too”. The view of the Chairman of the ANMC is that the best contribution to the process of integration would be the knowledge of both languages, that is, “the development of bilingualism which would be useful for education and employment”. The President of Bujanovac Municipality thinks that knowledge of Serbian would help young people in their personal and professional development. In addition, he thinks that knowing any foreign language is very useful, but that “the State has to make more effort concerning the Serbian language”. They all agreed that knowing the language is very important for further education and employment, particularly in state institutions, as

well as for everyday communication and coexistence in an ethnically mixed environment.

The National Assembly deputy, the presidents of the three municipalities and the Chairman of the ANMC think that the State needs to intervene in the educational system, and they state that they would support an initiative whereby children in primary schools would follow an improved and new approach in the teaching of Serbian, but also stress that it is important that such intervention should be ongoing and sustainable. According to the National Assembly deputy Shaip Kamberi, there is a need to introduce alternative and supplementary teaching materials and devise systematic improvements within the framework of the existing educational system with the support and cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. Certainly there is agreement among all those with whom we spoke regarding the need for a general modernization of teaching, including the use of modern teaching methods and instructional materials, such as the digital resources used elsewhere around the world.

In all three municipalities, there is goodwill and support for the launching of an initiative aimed at giving children from different schools an opportunity to socialize and take part in joint activities. At present, there are school competitions in knowledge and sports organized with the support of the municipalities. In Medvedja, there are other additional events, and work is also being done to make it possible for children to meet and socialize in sport competitions, May-Day gatherings, and during the summer period in “Spa Days” and “Geyser Nights” events. In all three municipalities, there is interest and support for children who do not speak the same language and who come from different schools, to organize activities that would encourage both the learning of languages and socializing. Some of the activities suggested are competitions in knowledge, trips, excursions and other events in the spheres of culture, science, sports and recreation.

All those with whom we spoke agreed that the older generations have a good command of Serbian and communicate well in it, while this is not the case with younger generations whose knowledge of the language, in most cases, is at an extremely low level. The President of Bujanovac Municipality believes that the reasons for this lie in the fact that when the older generations were at school “there was better teaching staff”, as well as in the fact that at that time television programmes were almost exclusively in Serbian. The deputy Shaip Kamberi believes that “it is necessary to achieve a higher level of social integration, especially in the context of European integration”. He added that young people from rural areas in southern Serbia today are in an extremely unfavourable situation and that there are not many contacts with their peers from the Serbian and Roma communities. The President of Presevo Municipality thinks that the reason lies in the fact that “during that time, there were more Serbs living in the area, so there

was more communication and the learning and knowledge of languages was bi-directional.” The Chairman of the ANMC thinks that the older generations knew Serbian better “because Albanian was once taught in schools as a subject, that is, as the language of the social environment” as well as because “the idea of Yugoslavia and the shared country was strong”. Younger generations today mainly watch satellite television, primarily the numerous channels in Albanian, they go to Albanian-language schools, and in many places, particularly in Presevo municipality, they live in environments where they have almost no opportunity to come into contact with peers who have Serbian as their mother tongue. In addition, the poor knowledge of Serbian is one of the consequences of the conflict in 1999–2001, as well as the political situation characterized by tensions which, according to the President of Bujanovac Municipality, contributed to “distancing, differences and a lack of trust”. The Chairman of the ANMC also states that “during a certain period there was propaganda against the learning of Serbian”, a position later replaced by “disinterest”.

Today, the issue of learning Serbian is seen from a perspective that takes into account the recognized need to improve the knowledge of Serbian with the aim of establishing better communication and more prosperous coexistence in the spheres of education, work and employment. The National Assembly deputy, the presidents of the three municipalities and the Chairman of the ANMC think that there are possibilities for improving the knowledge of Serbian in the existing educational system, starting from primary school.

Their suggestions for improving the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue are focused around the need for good training of the current teaching staff and the education of new teachers, for both primary and secondary schools. It is felt that the priorities in that process should include qualitative and continuous training of the teaching staff both from the Albanian and Serbian community, as well as modernization of the teaching process and teaching resources. In that regard, the President of Presevo Municipality stresses that there is a need for a number of universities to set up appropriate departments for the education of staff for teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, as well as a need for all teachers to improve their IT skills in order to meet the requirements of modern trends in education. The deputy Shaip Kamberi concludes that for the development of coexistence and contribution to the process of social integration, as well as for the exercising of minority rights, especially through participation in institutions, it is necessary to systematically work on improving knowledge of Serbian among members of the Albanian national minority.

## IV.2. OPINION OF THE EDUCATIONAL ADVISOR OF LESKOVAC SCHOOLS AUTHORITY

*Natasa Boskovic*

The educational advisor from the Schools Authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development responsible for teaching in the municipalities of the Pcinja and Jablanica district, assesses the overall quality of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language primary schools as satisfactory. Based on an external assessment of schools conducted in 2012–13 and 2013–14, in which four primary schools were visited – “Abdullah Krashnica” in Miratovac, “Migjeni” in Cerevajka, “Naim Frasheri” in Bujanovac and “Sijarinska Banja” in Sijarinska Banja, he expressed the opinion that “in the classes visited, a large number of quality standards in teaching and learning were met, which certainly shows that the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue is of good quality. In the class teaching, the teachers who have passed Methodology of Serbian Language Teaching have better and higher quality classes and the pupils have a command of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. It should be noted that only a small number of schools were visited, and so it could not be claimed on that basis alone with any great certainty that the teaching of this subject is entirely of high quality.”

With regard to the teaching staff and the prescribed qualifications, the educational advisor notes that “it has been observed that the teachers who are not properly qualified do not produce satisfactory results in the learning of the language and that their pupils do not have a command of Serbian as a non-mother tongue,” and also that “it can be concluded that it is very important for the teachers to have supplementary training” in order to be able to say that the teaching staff working in the schools are satisfactory.

Based on the data from the external assessment and the classes that were visited in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities, the educational advisor states that “the teachers mostly use traditional working methods, but as regards the forms that the work takes, they are diverse, and that encourages interaction between pupils.”

In the educational advisor’s opinion, “the quality of the textbooks should be improved and the teachers should receive supplementary training to make them better qualified. Additionally, teachers should also be given the opportunity to benefit from continuing professional development in the sphere of learning techniques and the use of modern teaching aids. It should be especially noted that peer learning is not

used enough.” The educational advisor also adds that “training that is specifically designed for teachers who teach a non-mother tongue has not been carried out”, and notes that he makes this assertion on the basis of interviews with teachers and the advisor for professional development.

The educational advisor confirms that new and old textbooks are being used in teaching: “It should be highlighted that with the new textbooks there is a discrepancy because at the end of the textbook instead of a Serbian–Albanian glossary there is a Serbian–Hungarian one. In talking with the teachers they have also pointed out another very important fact about how the texts in the textbooks are not always appropriate for the pupils’ age (the texts and poems are too long).”

### **IV.3. VIEWS OF PRINCIPALS OF 16 ALBANIAN-LANGUAGE PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

*Ivana Stanojev*

During the field research conducted in March and April 2014, the researchers interviewed the principals of the Albanian-language primary schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities. The aim of the interview was to determine the current situation, and to get an insight into the possible difficulties of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue (the availability and qualifications of staff, the methods used in teaching, an overview of existing and required resources, the support of relevant institutions and organizations of professional training, etc.) The interviews also covered issues on the prospects for organizing teaching in a different, interactive way and the willingness of the school administration to innovate in teaching by using modern methods. The information was collected in an atmosphere of trust and openness to cooperation on the part of the principals. The principals provided all the data necessary for the research.

The first question in the questionnaire takes an introductory look at the principals’ opinions on their satisfaction with the way Serbian is being taught as a non-mother tongue in the schools. Although most of them responded that they were mostly satisfied, the questions that followed gave a more realistic picture and clarified the problems in teaching. Some of the principals think that the children in the lower grades are overburdened with too much subject matter, that the textbooks in the senior grades are not culturally suited to children from the Albanian community and the geographical region, while a very frequent response was that there were no qualified staff. The school principals indicated that the quali-

fications of the teachers who teach Serbian as non-mother tongue were largely unsatisfactory and that the trained staff were not available in the area. In most of the schools, the principals hired teachers to teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue with qualifications lower than the prescribed level. It frequently happens that the subject is taught by class teachers (with Level 6 qualifications), while it is less frequent that it is taught by teachers with Level 7 qualifications who are qualified pedagogues, economists, Albanian Studies specialists and so on, who have also passed an examination on the Serbian language. The most frequent reason cited for hiring teachers with lower qualifications than those prescribed is the lack of qualified staff, but also often in the recruitment process, priority is given to class teachers with Level 6 qualifications who were made redundant.<sup>90</sup> The principals also state that qualified staff often do not apply for vacancies, with some of the possible reasons for this being, as they suggest, their distance from the schools and badly organized transport. All the principals agree that the biggest problem is that there is no investment in educating the teachers for this subject.

Poor knowledge of the language can also be a consequence of using outdated teaching methods. The principals state that the current teaching staff rarely use new methods in teaching. They usually use standard methods (*ex cathedra*) in their work with pupils, occasionally combining them with dialogue and monologue methods. Only a few principals confirmed that their teachers use illustrations, group work and demonstrational methods in teaching. Although many schools have language laboratories, they are almost never used for classes in Serbian. In addition, almost all schools have access to the internet, but it is usually used for administrative work and only very rarely for the preparation of the teaching of Serbian. Also, although half of the schools have facilities for listening to audio recordings, they are rarely used during Serbian language classes. The principals suggested that training on the use of computers and the internet should be organized for the teachers, to encourage them to use modern methods and interactive materials that can be found on various internet sites.

All the principals we interviewed think it is necessary to invest in training the current staff who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue. Most of the schools do not often (less than once a year) send teachers to training events organized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. These are mostly training events in Vranje or Leskovac, as the schools do not have the funds to cover the expense associated with training events that are organized in Belgrade or Novi Sad. Apart from being rarely organized in the vicinity of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, these training events are also short, which is the reason why, according to the principals, they do not yield notable results.

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90 Under the provisions of the Special Collective Agreement for Employees in Primary and Secondary Schools and Student Dormitories, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 12/2009.

The principals consider that training is necessary and that professional development should modernize the way of working (innovative and interactive approaches to teaching) and enable the teachers to acquire new skills and new knowledge of teaching methodology and educational standards. Most of them suggest that the local self-government and the Ministry should allocate more funds to ensure that teachers from poor municipalities can participate in training, or at least organize them more often at the local level. As the teaching of Serbian is done by class teachers in most of the schools, it is suggested that for the needs of this group special training events on Serbian as a non-mother tongue should be organized. Although there is a need to invest in the current staff, some of the principals fear that the teachers would not be interested in such training, either because they are not qualified enough or because they are in those positions only temporarily. That is why, apart from organizing training, some other specific suggestions were given for improving the quality of the teaching of Serbian as non-mother tongue.

Some principals are familiar with the possibilities of introducing assistants into the teaching and think that it could help the current staff. Investing in audio-visual equipment, adapting textbooks and publishing a Serbian–Albanian dictionary for the pupils would be easy-to-implement solutions that would, in the interviewees’ opinions, improve teaching to a great extent.

Additionally, the principals think that organizing extracurricular activities with Serbian-language schools could facilitate the better learning of the language – nature activities, visits to craftspeople in the Serbian community, trips and excursions with pupils of Serbian nationality are just some of the suggestions. Some schools are already establishing ties with other schools, but this is mostly at the level of annual competitions and sport activities.

The main obstacle to conducting such activities, which do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, is financial resources, and also the small number of pupils and schools’ isolation, which is the reason why many programmes cannot be implemented. All the principals would gladly accept an invitation for cooperation with other schools, either from central Serbia or the other schools in the same area. It was suggested that excursions could be organized with Serbian-language schools from Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja, or that there could be joint participation in cultural and sports events. The politics of the 1990s, the increased availability of media output in the other languages and the lower quality of teaching are, in the opinions of the interviewees, partly to be blamed for the poor knowledge of the language. Almost all the principals see the lack of inter-ethnic interaction as the main reason for the substandard knowledge of Serbian compared to previous generations.

#### IV.4. VIEWS OF THE PARENTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS ON THE LEARNING OF SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE

*Marija Stankovic*

According to the parents, school board meetings are generally held once a month or once every two months, or more often as required. The topics that are mostly discussed during school board meetings and the issues most frequently addressed are learning and the discipline of children. Some of the most frequent topics also include the work of teachers – the quality, working methods, expertise and qualifications of the teaching staff, as well as problems in relation to organizing and conducting teaching, and also textbooks and teaching aids (the availability of textbooks and discussions on their quality and content). Some of the topics that are discussed at school board meetings, according to the parents, also include the “de-politicization of schools”, adopting decisions on pupils’ activities (the organization of excursions, entrance examinations and competitions), followed by issues concerning the school budget and any current problems of a technical nature (security of the school building, insurance of the pupils, work conditions, pupils’ transportation, etc.).

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When asked whether they deal with the issue of the quality of teaching, all parents replied that they do. Most parents consider that the lack of skilled teaching staff, along with inconsistent learning, i.e. excessive material being covered too quickly, as well as the lack of up-to-date Serbian-Albanian dictionaries, are some of the biggest obstacles to good quality teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. There is only one school where the parents said they were satisfied with the quality of the teaching.

Without any exceptions, all parents who are school board members think that it is important for the pupils in schools to learn Serbian, because they believe that children living in Serbia, in addition to needing to know the official language of the State, should also know Serbian so that in a multi-ethnic environment such as theirs, they can communicate, socialize and see eye to eye with their peers without any difficulties. Also, children should learn Serbian for the sake of their “prospects” which, the parents say, are reflected in the gaining of scholarships from the Republic of Serbia for education, following and applying for various competitive situations (studies, employment), and also for the very possibilities it offers for getting a job.

In the places where they live, children generally have no opportunity to listen to or learn Serbian outside school; they have very little or no direct contact at all with the Serbian language. Children sometimes watch Serbian-language TV channels or read newspapers, if they have access to them.

All parents without exception would gladly support the improvement of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue. In one of the schools, parents stated that they “would be willing to participate in training sessions and workshops”, and most would be willing to do everything necessary to make it easier for the children and to motivate them to learn Serbian. Only one parent was sceptical about the issue of introducing new methods of teaching, because he believed that the introduction of any new methods of teaching would be sensible only if those models were applied in the learning of all the other subjects at school. The parents consider communication with mother-tongue speakers of Serbian more than welcome and that, apart from engaging assistants in teaching and using audio and visual materials in teaching, encouraging the socializing of children of differing national affiliation, organizing joint classes and sports and other joint activities would certainly yield good results.

The parents proposed the use of attractive and innovative approaches, especially for the younger grades. They mentioned: the use of audio and video materials, photographs and illustrations, language workshops, additional and supplementary classes, learning by playing, language laboratories for Serbian, and engaging assistants in the teaching. Organizing language courses and vocational seminars for teachers was also suggested. The parents also suggested giving additional motivation to the pupils by organizing trips, excursions, sports competitions, and other joint activities with children from Serbian-language schools. More than half of the parents interviewed believe that the introduction of interactive teaching with additional equipment would be useful, but that it would involve additional expense. In one school parents are of the opinion that the pupils would be motivated by testing and that the children should be given lower marks in order to motivate them (“their grades are high, so they don’t have any motivation to learn”).

Parents are only partially satisfied or not at all satisfied with their children’s knowledge of Serbian. They try to help them with their homework and explaining new words, but they do not communicate with them in Serbian. The pupils are, in the parents’ opinion, satisfied with the teaching, but not with their own knowledge (“they can’t read, write or communicate in Serbian”). According to the parents, the children do not know why they should learn Serbian when they have no possibility of using it – “there is no practical communication”. Some of the pupils are planning to study or work outside of Serbia as, according to their parents, they think that “they have no means or opportunities here”, which is a further demotivating factor for learning Serbian. Parents believe that it is good for children to start learning Serbian as early as possible, although they think they are already overburdened and that the volume of the subject matter should be reduced and the quality increased (“work more on a single lesson”).

Regarding the importance of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language and bilingual primary schools, the views of the parents of pupils attending those schools are concordant and positive. According to the answers obtained from all of the parents interviewed, linguistic competences and knowledge of the language are rated as being among the most important and valued areas of knowledge that can be acquired in the education process.

## IV.5. VIEWS AND OPINIONS OF PUPILS

*Ivana Stanojev*

182 | In Presevo and Bujanovac, outside of school Serbian is mostly used in healthcare institutions, but a large percentage of pupils also say that they learn Serbian by watching television. Serbian is also used in discussions with parents and other family members, especially in the younger grades, which may be a consequence of not understanding homework assignments, which they very often complete with their parents' assistance, and this was also confirmed by the analysis of interviews with parents. A significant deviation was noted among 6<sup>th</sup> grade pupils, who assert that they do not use Serbian out of school (41.7%, as compared to the other classes where the figure is around 20%). A greater percentage of such answers was received from the pupils from Presevo, who are less exposed to Serbian in their community. In contrast to pupils from Presevo and Bujanovac, those from Medvedja largely use Serbian in shops and in communication with other children (friends), while the data also indicate that Serbian in Medvedja is more prevalent in communication with neighbours.

Pupils in Presevo and Bujanovac mostly watch TV programmes in Albanian (about 50% of respondents), while programmes in Serbian are watched to a lesser extent, about 25%. Watching TV programmes in Serbian increases in the senior grades, as well as watching programmes in English and in Turkish. The most popular Serbian-language TV channel among pupils is PRVA TV, while programmes in Albanian are more prevalent on cable television (mainly cartoons and films). The situation is a little different in Medvedja, where it is mostly Serbian-language TV channels that are watched, while programmes in Albanian are watched by a somewhat smaller percentage.

In response to the question on whether they were satisfied with their school marks in Serbian, around 91% of pupils replied that they were satisfied, while the most dissatisfaction was expressed by the 5<sup>th</sup>

grade pupils (16.7%), which may be as a result of the change from class-based teaching to subject-based teaching. This is in line with the findings of the questionnaire for the principals on their dissatisfaction with the (un)availability of qualified staff. Although the majority of pupils of all grades believe that they are excellent at reading, writing and communicating in Serbian, it can be seen that the 4th and 5th grade pupils to a lesser extent consider that they are partly satisfied (oral communication is good but written communication should be improved), while there is a significant number of 7th and 8th grade pupils who consider that they have a good command of writing but need to improve oral communication.

In all three municipalities, pupils of all grades consider that knowledge of Serbian could be useful for them in the future (96.4% of respondents). The lowest percentage, although still very high, is present among the 4th grade pupils (91.5%), while the 7th and 8th grade pupils express greater interest for learning Serbian, which is directly related to the continuation of education because, they feel, they need Serbian most of all for that in the formal use of language (for educational purposes, or employment in public institutions or in shops). The 4th and 6th grade pupils are of the opinion that knowledge of Serbian is important for communicating, while in Medvedja a significant percentage of pupils believe that Serbian is important for the informal use of language, too (socializing, trips, relations with neighbours). The questionnaires also showed that some students recognize the importance of knowing the language of the State they live in (about 10% of respondents), while 20% of pupils consider that knowledge of Serbian is useful in every respect (for the future, relationships, life).

## **IV.6. VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

### *Milica Rodic*

Interviews with representatives of civil society organizations and the media were conducted in May 2014. Representatives of Civic Initiatives (Bujanovac), Dituria (in Biljaca, Bujanovac municipality), the International Human Center (Presevo), the Committee for Human Rights (Presevo), television stations Radio Television Presevo, Radio Television Bujanovac and Radio Television Spektri from Bujanovac, the internet portals Presheva.com (Presevo), Titulli.com and Lugina Lajm from Bujanovac participated in the research.

Almost all of those whom we interviewed spoke of the poor knowledge of Serbian among young people from the Albanian community. As a positive change, however, they cited a high level of motivation and interest to learn the language among young people from the Albanian community, emphasizing the need

to supporting them in those endeavours. The opinion of the representative of the Titulli.com internet portal was rather different: he stated that young people are not, in fact, motivated to learn Serbian since they see no future prospects where they live. The poor knowledge of the language is a consequence of the lack of direct communication among the young people from the Albanian and Serbian communities. It was also asserted that those who do know the language did not acquire their knowledge in school but in informal circumstances, mostly by participating in the activities of non-governmental organizations.

The representatives of the media and civil society organizations consider the lack of the knowledge of Serbian as an obstacle for the development of the young generations of ethnic Albanians, and stated that those who know the language are in a more advantageous position compared to others. Learning the language is considered important because of “the fact that the young people live in a country where Serbian is the official language, where they will encounter it in every institution”, but also because of the need for “participation of Albanians in state institutions.”

The representatives of the organizations that launched the first initiatives for organizing Serbian lessons saw the necessity for members of the Albanian community to learn the language. Their initial expectations regarding the level of interest for attending these activities were modest, but they encountered a much larger number of candidates than they estimated. Since 2013 the internet portal Titulli.com has been publishing news in Serbian, and their stated aim was to make this media outlet an information channel “that would also enable the Serbian community to follow events in the local area”. Although they expected a certain amount of criticism from a section of the local community considering this decision, they were actually supported by members of the public. The representative from the internet portal Presheva.com, one of the most visited portals in the Albanian language in Serbia, highlighted the need to make information available to all citizens simultaneously and that the news should be translated into Serbian, but also the fact that they do not have the resources needed to turn this idea in reality.<sup>91</sup>

The interviewees stated that the media and civil society organizations can make a major contribution and play a crucial role in addressing the issue regarding the learning of Serbian, noting that their activities are doing much to create a space for communication and socializing for young people from different ethnic backgrounds. They believe that civic associations can make an additional contribution by proposing a way to systematically address this problem. The role of the media is to highlight the importance of learning

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91 The media representatives state that, due to the lack of knowledge of Serbian by journalists from the Albanian community, they often have to engage extra people to provide translation and other services, which seriously hampers their work and represents an additional financial obstacle. Training events that are organized for people working in the media sector are mostly in Serbian, so some individuals encounter difficulties in attending and following such training events. For all these reasons, it was noted during the interview that there is a need to organize additional training for journalists aimed at improving their knowledge of Serbian.

Serbian by promoting the activities of those involved in it and by working on “raising awareness and changing the negative views about Serbian as well as awakening an affection for learning it”. The media should demonstrate that “the Serbian language is an unavoidable necessity” by organizing shows and programmes in Serbian that would include young people from different ethnic communities. Representatives of the civil society organizations and the media believe that “there must be coordination between the media, civil society organizations and schools, so they can work together to address this problem and awaken the interest of young people to learn Serbian.”

#### **IV.7. VIEWS OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF STATE ORGANS, MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR AND EMPLOYEES**

*Milica Rodic*

In order to determine how much a knowledge of Serbian is needed for employment or improved job performance, the research team conducted interviews in June 2014 with representatives of the state and municipal administration and representatives of the commercial sector. Representatives of the Tax Administration (Bujanovac), the National Employment Service (Bujanovac), the Police Station (Bujanovac), Bujanovac Municipality (the Chief of the Municipal Administration);<sup>92</sup> and the companies Agro Adria (Bujanovac) and Saba Bellca (Presevo) participated in the research. A focus group was set up with employees from the Albanian community who work in the Tax Administration and local administration (Bujanovac).

Interviews with the representatives of the state organs, municipal administration, businesspeople and employees unequivocally indicated the necessity of knowing Serbian. The responses provided can be summarized into two categories. The first consists of the responses and explanations on the necessity of knowing Serbian, on the part of both those already employed and those seeking employment. This primarily concerns communication with people from the outside world (clients, members of the public, partners, etc.) whose mother tongue is Serbian. The interviewees also pointed out that the regulations that employees need to be familiar with are written in Serbian. Interviewees from the Police Station in Bujanovac consider knowledge of Serbian especially important, and they noted that the nature of their

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Invitations for interviews were also sent to Elektrodistribucija, Bujanovac Tobacco Industry and the “Bi Voda” company.

job required quick interventions and reactions when tackling the kinds of problems that they encounter. The second category of responses is related to the fact that it is necessary to know Serbian because it is the official language of the State and also is a language spoken in these municipalities.

The representatives of state administration at the local level think that members of the Albanian community employed in state organs and those applying for jobs in state administration face difficulties at work or in being accepted for employment, precisely due to poor or non-existent knowledge of Serbian.<sup>93</sup> The representatives from the commercial sector also indicated that it is desirable for employees to know Serbian since most of the business is done in this language. Even though the representatives from the commercial sector stated that they personally have a good knowledge of Serbian, they indicated that some of the employees do not know the language sufficiently well, which sometimes makes doing business difficult. They believe that not knowing Serbian has a negative impact on dealings with business partners, suppliers and customers, and also with the institutions that they collaborate with, so they emphasize that learning the language is necessary for communication and successful business operations.

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Employees of the Tax Administration and local administration, with whom the focus group was conducted, think that, for better job performance and the need for rapid and effective communication, a knowledge of Serbian is extremely important for working in the state administration. They added that they can do their jobs much more easily precisely because of their knowledge of Serbian and noted that without it, they would not be able to fulfil their tasks and duties.

It was pointed out again during these interviews that young people from the Albanian community who speak little or no Serbian are faced with difficulties and obstacles when applying for jobs. All the interviewees shared the opinion that those who do speak Serbian well enough to be able to communicate independently have an advantage compared to those who cannot do so.

In order to increase workplace efficiency and ensure that new employees perform to high levels, the recommendation of the interviewees is that young people from the Albanian community should be

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93 The representatives from the Tax Administration and the National Employment Service stated that these bodies do not have difficulties in working and communicating with members of the public, but that to their knowledge, this problem does exist in other institutions. Due to the poor of knowledge of Serbian, the Chief of the Police Station in Bujanovac proposed a new staffing specification which envisages the hiring of two interpreters to improve the work efficiency of employees. On the other hand, the municipal administration in Bujanovac had no difficulties in going about its business because people from both communities are employed in each service in the municipality.

motivated to learn Serbian.<sup>94</sup> In addition to the good command of Serbian that prospective candidates should possess, some of the interviewees also indicated the need for the learning of Albanian.<sup>95</sup>

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94 The representatives from the Tax Administration and the National Employment Service stated that these bodies do not have difficulties in working and communicating with members of the public, but that to their knowledge, this problem does exist in other institutions. Due to the poor of knowledge of Serbian, the Chief of the Police Station in Bujanovac proposed a new staffing specification which envisages the hiring of two interpreters to improve the work efficiency of employees. On the other hand, the municipal administration in Bujanovac had no difficulties in going about its business because people from both communities are employed in each service in the municipality.

95 The Chief of the Municipal Administration in Bujanovac indicated the need for knowledge of Albanian, stating that “it is necessary to know Albanian, as a language of the environment”. The representative of the National Employment Service stated that employees whose mother tongue is Serbian, due to their lack of knowledge of Albanian, are not able to communicate with members of the public from the Albanian community.



**V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING  
THE TEACHING OF SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER  
TONGUE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA**



## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF SERBIAN AS A NON-MOTHER TONGUE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA**

The following recommendations stem from the comprehensive analysis of the learning and teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities. The analysis included:

- Checking the current knowledge of Serbian as a non-mother tongue among the pupils of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade;
- Analysis of the curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue;
- Analysis of the current textbooks and teacher's handbooks that were approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development for the teaching of this subject;
- Observation and analysis of classes of Serbian as a non-mother tongue from the aspect of professional and methodological competence of the teachers;
- Analysis of the social and educational frameworks within which the classes of Serbian as a non-mother tongue are being conducted (the survey of pupils, parents, teachers, school principals, presidents of municipalities, the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council, the deputy in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia from the Albanian community, the educational advisor of the Ministry of Education from the Albanian community, representatives of the media, civil society organizations, state organs, municipal administration and the commercial sector from the municipalities where the research was conducted);
- Review of the experiences of the existing non-institutional initiatives for the improvement of knowledge of Serbian as a non-mother tongue;
- Interviews with representatives of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina and the Provincial Ombudsman of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina aimed at gaining an insight into how Serbian as a non-mother tongue is learned in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina;

- First of all, the most important findings of the research will be summarized, the outcome of which will be short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations that should be implemented in the forthcoming period with the aim of improving the learning and teaching of Serbian for pupils from the Albanian community.

## **The main research findings**

### **V.1. (Not) knowing the language**

The main research finding is that the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the knowledge of pupils in primary schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja are not at a satisfactory level. The basic problem that has been observed is that pupils cannot achieve spontaneous communication in Serbian.

These assertions are based on the analysis of the test results that reveal data on a systematic lack of knowledge of Serbian among the pupils of all primary schools in the aforesaid municipalities, both in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. No school achieved an average score sufficiently high that would make it possible to say that its pupils have a knowledge of the language. The pupils, in most cases, do not have a functional knowledge of Serbian to the extent that they can communicate in that language, either in writing or orally, and nor are they able to understand someone talking to them. The few pupils who achieved above-average results in the test possess the overall linguistic competence envisaged by the curriculum for that age, although, according to the data obtained by interviewing those pupils, it was discovered that their linguistic competence was generally not acquired through the teaching process. In the course of the research, it was also noticed that there were no extracurricular activities organized for the pupils of these schools that would give them an opportunity to establish contact with their peers whose mother tongue is Serbian, which is an important element in improving communicative competence.

### **V.2. Professional and linguistic improvement of teachers**

According to the data obtained from the 41 teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the municipalities of Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja, it can be seen that not one of them is qualified or trained to teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue, and only six teachers meet the requirements that, according to the Rules on the Level and Type of Education of Teachers and Teaching Associates in Primary Schools (hereinafter “the Rules”), are needed for teaching Serbian (as a non-mother tongue) in the grades

they are currently teaching. This situation on the ground is a consequence of the lack of qualified staff, who are in short supply for various reasons. According to the primary school principals, when job vacancies are announced there are no applications from teachers qualified to teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue, which represents a major problem for all schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

The training of the teachers to teach this subject is a key precondition for the improvement of teaching and achieving better success with pupils learning Serbian.

To that end, it is necessary to organize seminars and workshops where teachers can be specially trained on the methodology of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue and exchange experiences with teachers teaching this subject in other environments in the Republic of Serbia. The importance of the (self-) development of teachers must also be emphasized, and to that end they must be encouraged and supported in various ways. In any case, as the interviews with the teachers demonstrated, they are very aware of the benefits of professional development, but up to now it has rarely been available to them.

Without question, the teachers need help from assistants/associates, primarily those whose mother tongue is Serbian and who are qualified to provide such assistance, especially given that the Law on the Foundations of the Education System makes provision for this.

The research results have shown that, in addition to professional development, it is also necessary to take steps to improve the teachers' command of standard Serbian.

### **V.3. Improving teaching**

The teaching of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue has its own peculiarities in terms of both content and methodology, and it certainly cannot be equated with the teaching of a mother tongue, whether it be Serbian or the language of a national minority. As a result of their lack of professional training, teachers often resort to methods that are not based on modern theories on the acquisition of a non-mother tongue/second language. These methods very often result in work characterized by the negative aspects of traditional, lecture-based, reproductive, pseudo-active teaching with strong emphasis on the grammar/translation method. Teachers usually try to cover the set tasks and content envisaged by

the curriculum and often find themselves caught in a gap between the teaching of a mother tongue and the teaching of a foreign language (which, at least intuitively, they know should be taken into consideration). In contrast to this, the instructions on how to implement the curriculum (which are integral part of that official document) actually highlight the ineffectiveness of such methods and suggest pupil activities, the importance of the practical use of language, the application of various forms of exercises, and also stress the need for teaching to be conducted in line with the pupils' capabilities and needs within the given linguistic and cultural environment. The curriculum contains two levels of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue, based on the pupils' prior knowledge, the ethnic composition of the environment the pupils come from, and the linguistic similarity of the two languages. The level that envisages the minimal linguistic content that a pupil should master is in line with the number of classes and the pupil's age, so that its application can enable all students to gain a command of basic language competences. It is the responsibility of the teacher, with the aid of the language teaching resources provided, and also using their own independently prepared material, to find the most effective way to make the envisaged language content as approachable as possible for the pupils and enable its acquisition.

One of the recommendations in the curriculum for this subject is that the use of the pupils' mother tongue should be avoided in teaching, so as to increase the effectiveness of the acquisition of Serbian. However, the results of the testing indicate that this is not the only precondition for successfully gaining a command of the language. Namely, the pupils' achievements are equally bad regardless of the teacher's mother tongue or the language that was used in the teaching process. It should be said that the most important thing of all is a kind of "evolution" in the class, transitioning the emphasis away from the teacher and onto the pupils, who should be given a more important, central place in the teaching. They should be much more active; not waiting to be asked a question, but asking questions instead; not mechanically reproducing, but actively producing. All of this can be achieved with the introduction of appropriate teaching methods, exercises, etc. that have hitherto rarely been used in classes. Only this way will pupils be truly equipped to express themselves in Serbian, and this will ultimately open up new prospects for them in the future. In order for this to happen, it is necessary to move away from the teaching methodology for Serbian as a mother tongue (which is what the teachers with the relevant qualifications have been trained in) and begin to use certain select principles for the methodology for teaching foreign languages.

#### **V.4. Textbooks and other teaching aids**

The education system in the Republic of Serbia is, to a large extent, based on textbooks. They are the basic teaching aid and for the majority of teachers represent the primary guidelines for organizing the teaching process.

The use of textbooks for Serbian as a non-mother tongue, given that the same ones are intended for members of various minorities and for both levels of teaching (basic and advanced), must not be mechanical and uncritical but selective and adapted to the pupils' capabilities. Considering the fact that the textbooks, as the analysis has indicated, are too bulky in terms of both grammatical and lexical material, and are very often conceptually equated with the pupils' mother tongue (Albanian) and in some cases even go beyond it, it is necessary to select the material, in accordance with the curriculum, and determine the linguistic minimum for each class that would ensure a functional knowledge of the language. Some textbooks, primarily for the lower grades (the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade readers) are structured in such a way, although the minimal content in them is still excessive. It is particularly important to pay attention to the 1st grade teaching material, where (some) pupils are encountering the Serbian language for the first time. And precisely in this case a major discrepancy is noted between the curriculum and the textbook, which is overloaded with language content, intended only for aural presentation. Given that in Albanian-language schools, pupils of the higher grades do not use the latest editions of the textbooks, it is necessary to provide new sets of textbooks that are more appropriate in terms of their look and content. This should be accompanied by the production of new, modern teaching material as well as equipping schools with various teaching aids that would be truly useful in the classrooms.

Considering the above observations, it is clear that the situation we found should be changed for the better.

## ***Recommendations***

### **Short-term recommendations (September 2014 – September 2015):**

- Provide all pupils and teachers with the current new editions of textbook sets.
- Provide all teachers with the current teacher's books that accompany the textbook sets.
- Provide additional teaching material – exercises, posters, catalogues, games, digital material, etc. to facilitate, especially for lower-grade pupils, the acquisition of basic language content, vocabulary and linguistic models in a creative manner that is appealing for children; as a transitional solution until the regular production of new textbook sets, it would allow every pupil, in every class, to acquire the envisaged functional content that can also be used outside the classroom.
- Organize seminars and training events for the teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in all Albanian-language primary schools, aimed at additional capacity-building regarding teaching methodologies and the modernization of the working methods of current teaching staff.
- Organize meetings with teachers from other parts of the country who also teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue, aimed at sharing experiences, identifying successful models and adapting them to the needs of the environment they work in, as well as analysing teaching methods, problems encountered, their observations made, and organizing the professional demonstration of one or two classes.
- Engage qualified associates/assistants in schools where there is a noted lack of qualified teaching staff and lower level of proficiency in standard Serbian on the part of the teachers.
- Encourage teachers and assistants to make a qualitative change in the approach to teaching, moving away from an ex cathedra approach towards an interactive mode; encourage communication in the learning of Serbian so that it can be applied in everyday life.
- Also in the teaching process, encourage teachers to actively plan every class and motivate the pupils to learn Serbian.
- Introduce quarterly testing (at the end of each three months) – and according to the envisaged curriculum, clearly specify the minimum attainment of pupils in the teaching of Serbian as a

non-mother tongue; create models of the tests to be used for testing pupils, so that teachers know in what way, to what extent and at what pace they should teach the material. Quarterly testing would allow both teachers and pupils to have regular insight into the results of their work.

- Launch competitions for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue at the school, municipal and district level in order to make it possible for pupils from the three municipalities to participate in the competitions for this subject at the republic level.
- Organize meetings between representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Institute for the Promotion of Education, the Institute for Education Quality Assessment and teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language schools, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching.
- Establish a working group (within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development or the Office of the Coordination Body) that would monitor the progress of the implementation of recommendations, devise further steps and evaluate the results achieved.

### ***Mid-term recommendations (September 2015 – September 2017):***

- Teacher's handbooks should be written for each grade and made available to teachers (publishers should treat them as a mandatory part of the textbooks); the teacher's books should highlight the important distinction between the methodology of teaching a mother tongue and teaching a non-mother tongue.
- A dictionary should be written (as a supplement to the existing readers) for pupils of all primary school grades that would facilitate more effective learning of Serbian.
- Provide continuous training for teachers on teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue in accordance with the Rules on the Level and Type of Education of Teachers and Teaching Associates in Primary Schools, and monitor the application of modern teaching methods in the classroom.

- Establish links between schools in the local area and with school in other parts of the country; organize mutual visits of pupils from two schools that belong to different national communities (and as part of those visits organize various recreational, scientific, cultural and sports activities), resulting in the establishment of communication and learning about cultural similarities and particularities among the pupils.
- Depending on the technical capacities of the schools and the teachers, an online “network” should be established to connect teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and provide them with the opportunity to exchange various positive experiences: class preparation, exercises, texts (selection, adaptation, method of covering) etc. Especially useful would be the exchange of experiences among teachers who work in homogeneous environments and those who teach Serbian to pupils whose mother tongue is significantly different to Serbian.
- Organize tandem workshops – depending on technical capacities, ensure that pupils from the Albanian community get a “buddy” from the Serbian community (not limited to just the southern part of Serbia) with whom they can communicate in Serbian via social networks, with partial monitoring by teachers and parents.
- Establish standards and then descriptors for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue.
- Introduce mandatory national testing in order to determine the level of pupils’ attainment.
- Identify the need for harmonizing the curricula for the subjects of Albanian (as a mother tongue) and Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

### ***Long-term recommendations:***

- Ensure the right conditions are put in place for the education of new teachers, in accordance with the standards of modern methodology for teaching a non-mother tongue. Devise incentive measures for the higher-education study of Serbian among young people from these three municipalities, particularly those from the Albanian community.
- Ensure the right conditions are put in place for the learning of Albanian by members of the majority population in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, in accordance with international standards of two-way learning.

- During the regular production of new textbooks, analyse the views and opinions of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in primary schools in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja with regard to the existing teaching material and bringing the texts up to date; supplement the texts according to the teachers' recommendations, in the fields of everyday life, protecting the environment, entertainment, art, and, in general, content that would help children master everyday communication. Cultural content should be distributed evenly for all minority communities.
- In accordance with the research results, and after the standards and descriptors have been determined, analyse the need for amendments to the curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and to textbooks for this subject.



**Annex 1 – Experiences of the projects  
whose aim is the acquisition and  
improvement of knowledge of Serbian in the  
municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac**



## **Annex 1 – Experiences of the projects whose aim is the acquisition and improvement of knowledge of Serbian in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac**

*Milica Rodic*

***The project “Serbian language school for young people from the Albanian community in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo” run by the Office of the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja***

The Coordination Body, with the continuous support of the British Embassy, has twice organized a free Serbian language school in Bujanovac and Presevo.<sup>96</sup> The long-term goal of the project Serbian language school for young people from the Albanian community in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo (hereinafter referred to as the Serbian Language School) is the improvement of knowledge of Serbian as the official language of the Republic of Serbia, to enhance integration.

The number of applicants exceeded expectations both times. Serbian classes were taught simultaneously in Bujanovac and Presevo for 310 participants during 2012–2013, and for 250 participants during 2013–2014.

In both cases, the Office of the Coordination Body announced a public call for tenders and schools that possessed a licence for organizing classes in Serbian were selected. The people who taught the classes were by vocation teachers of Serbian language and literature and had experience of working in schools. In organizing and conducting the classes they had help from assistants from the local community whose mother tongue is Albanian and who have a high level of knowledge of Serbian. The teachers of Serbian were responsible for teaching, while the assistants, who were present in the classroom throughout the lessons, were active when called on by the teacher. Classes were organized twice a week for the duration of four school classes. The total duration of the School was seven months, with a total of 112 classes per cycle. The textbooks used during the teaching were “Word by Word” (for the beginners’ levels) and “More than Words” (for intermediate levels) issued by the “Institute for Foreign Languages” in Belgrade.

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<sup>96</sup> The first cycle of the Serbian Language School was organized from November 2012 to May 2013, and the second cycle covered the period from November 2013 to May 2014.

During the first year of running the project, the Office of the Coordination Body defined the target group, which consisted of young people between the ages of 15 and 30. The starting point in defining the target group was the well-reasoned assumption that this age group needs Serbian to facilitate the continuation of education, for employment, and also for everyday communication. Since there were also applicants for the classes who did not belong to the defined age group, during the second year of the project, all those who were interested in learning/improving their knowledge of the language were allowed to attend the classes.

Most of the attendees at the Serbian Language School were female secondary school students, between the ages of 15 and 20,<sup>97</sup> from rural areas. A significant number of participants were students of the Bujanovac branch department of the Faculty of Economics, as well as students of other profiles and from other faculties.<sup>98</sup> The attendees at the Serbian Language School had mostly been in contact with the language through media sources, which is associated with a passive knowledge of the language, and this could be seen in their level of (partial) comprehension, and the inability to engage in oral communication. There were very few participants who commanded active, two-way communication in Serbian, and those did generally use the language for going about simple, everyday tasks. The most frequent reason that participants in the project gave when asked why they wanted to learn the language was the desire to communicate with their peers from another community, while many also mentioned the practical aspect of knowing the language, too. A considerable number of participants expressed a desire to study Serbian language at higher-education level.

During the second year of the project, at the proposal of primary school teachers in the village of Biljaca (Bujanovac municipality), 58 Serbian language classes were organized within the framework of the project for a group of 80 pupils, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

After the entrance test, which was used at the start of each year to determine the initial level of knowledge of participants, groups were formed and the schedule of classes was made. On both occasions it was determined that the vast majority of candidates had either a very small or non-existent knowledge of Serbian.

To facilitate the systematic data collection on the experiences gained during the running of the project in Bujanovac and Presevo, questionnaire-based interviews were conducted with the three teachers who

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97 In the first cycle, of the 250 participants who received diplomas, 151 were female and 99 were male. In the second cycle, 180 participants received diplomas, of whom 129 were female.

98 Data obtained from the registration form completed by participants in the first Serbian language class.

were engaged in the project in both cycles,<sup>99</sup> two out of the four assistants,<sup>100</sup> and focus groups with 20 participants. During the data collection for this study, the teaching of Serbian in Bujanovac was observed.

In order to work in a post-conflict society and ethnically heterogeneous environments it is important to possess skills of rapid cognition and learning about the culture and particularities of the ethnic community with which the work is being done. It is also important to be open to cultural learning and adjusting to the social circumstances and distinctive cultural features. For this reason the selection of the teaching staff for the project was made with the utmost care. The three teachers demonstrated that, in addition to their formal qualifications, they also possessed the skill of being able to adjust quickly and be sensitive to the particular circumstances of the environment, thanks to which they easily managed to establish good relations with the assistants and the participants.

Instead of *ex cathedra* teaching, the emphasis was placed on a dynamic, innovative and interactive approach. Each teacher developed her own teaching methods, and the effects of work and the results achieved were monitored on a weekly basis. Immediately prior to the teaching, the teachers discussed and agreed the teaching plan with the project team, together with a description of the methodology and goals. The teachers and the assistants stated that the freer and more informal approach to teaching, as well as flexibility in the selection of interesting content for the programme, were of utmost importance for the success and good results of the project. On the completion of classes, the teachers analysed the results achieved each week.

All three teachers mainly used the dialogue method in classes, considering it to be the best way to encourage participants to speak Serbian. Other methods were used as well, such as the game method (most often word association, guessing games or role plays), and the monologue and textual method.<sup>101</sup> In addition to those methods, various other less conventional forms of expression were also used – making comic

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99 Since the majority of the candidates for learning Serbian were in Bujanovac municipality, one of the teachers taught classes in Presevo, while the two were in Bujanovac.

100 Two assistants were engaged in the Serbian classes in Bujanovac, one was in Presevo and another in Biljaca. The decision to interview assistants was guided by the logic that the assistants, who are by profession teachers and work in schools with pupils of various ages, in working on the project had the opportunity to perceive new and different approaches to the teaching process. Two of the assistants, one a primary school teacher and the other a secondary school teacher, were chosen for the interview.

101 The dialogue method or conversation method is a complex method for working with students because there is a variety of ways in which it can be achieved. This working mode is reflected in interaction and dialogue between the teacher and the pupils. The game method is a way of covering teaching material through simultaneously playing and learning, in other words constitutes learning by playing. The monologue and textual method, according to the communication and information criteria, represents a way of teaching whereby the teacher is the dominant figure. The monologue or lecture method is an oral presentation method, the oldest and most frequently applied mode of teaching in the classroom. The textual method or text-work method entails classroom work with the pupils on a text that was prepared in advance (from the textbooks, worksheets, etc.).

strips and writing articles for the school magazine (workshop work), and also using mind maps to make it easier for the participants to adopt more demanding content, especially in the field of grammar. The methods that, according to the teachers' opinions, yield the best results in the learning of language are learning through games, the association method, quizzes, group work, and the dialogue method. The selection of methods depended on the linguistic unit that was planned for learning, the age of the participants and their level of knowledge.

The assistants and teachers believe that the approach applied within the project differed significantly from that applied in schools. On the one hand, due to the smaller number of participants in the groups,<sup>102</sup> it was noticed that teaching was much simpler because the teachers could pay attention to each participant and determine the knowledge acquired and any difficulties the participants had in absorbing the material. It should be also noted that the participants in the Serbian Language School demonstrated strong motivation to learn the language. The teaching methodology that was characterized by an interactive approach and the material which participants considered to be of good quality created additional motivation for learning the language. The approach used in this project resulted in good knowledge of the language because it emphasized dialogue, learning through games and association, and the literature was tailored to the level of knowledge of the pupils. Oral and written exercises were also frequently used. This was confirmed in the final tests, the results of which demonstrated significant progress in the knowledge acquired. Over 90% of participants passed the final test.

Based on the experience of working with the pupils from Biljaca,<sup>103</sup> the teachers of Serbian indicated that the pupils from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade were learning and absorbing grammar much faster, especially content that was being taught simultaneously in Albanian (types of words and grammatical cases). The learning methods did not differ from those used in the Serbian Language School, and the most frequent methods used were the game method and associations, since it was observed that they were the most fitting for the age of the pupils.

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102 Each teacher worked with four groups of participants, with the number of participants in each group not exceeding 20

103 In the period from January to May 2014, 58 classes were organized for pupils of the senior grades (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade) in the "Desanka Maksimovic" primary school in the village of Biljaca (Bujanovac municipality). The idea for organizing the classes came from the teachers of this primary school. At the very beginning, as in the Serbian Language School project, pupils took a test, which determined that everyone in the group had the same level of knowledge, i.e. that almost none of them had any knowledge of the language. In order to facilitate the work with 80 pupils, two groups were formed – one consisted of pupils from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and the other consisted of pupils from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The classes were held on Mondays and Fridays, and two teachers engaged on the Serbian Language School project taught the additional classes with the pupils from Biljaca, assisted by a teacher from the Albanian community who teaches lower-grade pupils in Bujanovac municipality.

Prior to attending the classes, some participants of the *Serbian Language School* had a passive knowledge of the language. A passive knowledge of a language is reflected in the complete or, more often, partial understanding of simple language content. The results achieved after seven months are reflected in more frequent and independent use of Serbian.<sup>104</sup> The teachers noted that participants were freer in communication and that their sentences were grammatically more correct. Based on the tests that were periodically organized in order to determine the knowledge attained, the checking of homework (which was given on a weekly basis), oral exercises in class and written exercises and tasks during the class, the teachers stated that some participants had acquired a basic knowledge of Serbian, while the knowledge of other participants had improved. Having a command of basic knowledge in the area of grammar and vocabulary had, as a result, increased participants' self-confidence, and the assistants felt that, thanks to this, they had subsequently become more engaged in the regular classes of Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

The teachers and assistants stressed that it is important to establish good relations with the pupils and to take a less formal approach, so as to stimulate their motivation for learning the language. In the assistants' opinion, the pupils' motivation should also be stimulated outside school, and it is essential to include parents as well, so that the pupils become more aware of the importance of learning Serbian. Encouraging the pupils to independently come to conclusions, within the framework of lexical and grammatical knowledge, is another aspect that the teachers and assistants highlighted during the interviews.

The most important results of this project are reflected in the increased number of young people from the Albanian community who improved their knowledge of Serbian and the increased desire and motivation for learning the language.<sup>105</sup> This project has also demonstrated the existence of another dimension to learning and gaining knowledge and skills: assistants had the opportunity to see, learn and devise their own teaching methods that are being applied in working with pupils in primary and secondary schools.

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<sup>104</sup> The monitoring of progress and the measurement of results were conducted in several layers. Apart from tests (at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the project), the participants had to do homework once a week, while during the class they did written and oral exercises and communication was encouraged. Classes were designed in such a way that the results and improvements could be discerned on a weekly basis, including segments and aspects of the language whose acquisition is much slower. The project team created two types of questionnaires. The first type was used for data collection regarding the motivation for learning Serbian, the usefulness and application of the acquired knowledge as well as the perception of the amount and quality of the content acquired. These questionnaires were given at the beginning and end of the project period. The second type of questionnaire was

<sup>105</sup> Some of them used their knowledge for gaining a scholarship for studying in Novi Sad, or for participating in a six-month internship programme in public institutions in Belgrade, during which time they gained work experience.

Focus groups were formed with participants of the Serbian Language School who attended classes in both project cycles. <sup>106</sup> The aim of this procedure was to collect data on their motives for learning the language and the ways and situations in which they can apply the knowledge acquired. They stated that the reasons that prompted them to learn Serbian were education, <sup>107</sup> employment, wanting to perform better in a current job, and communication in general. <sup>108</sup> A positive attitude and desire to learn the official language were also evident. <sup>109</sup> Finding a job, continuing education and the need to go about everyday tasks were the three most common answers when asked how they plan to use the knowledge of Serbian acquired.

Participants in the focus groups stated that after the classes, they did not have any difficulties in communicating in Serbian in everyday life. Some noted that they were able to read books in Serbian and study for exams, that they felt that their self-confidence had grown, and that they coped better in going about everyday business. Given that participants in the focus groups indicated that knowledge of the language had contributed to the growth of their self-confidence, they added that they feel more free and safe because they can use the language. Nonetheless, participants in the focus groups indicated that it was necessary for them to improve their knowledge in the area of grammar and grammar rules.

As well as at university, with work colleagues or friends, participants of the focus groups stated that they currently use Serbian at work, in school, sometimes even at home speaking with their parents, and they also watch television programmes in Serbian. <sup>110</sup>

Based on their experiences, the teachers and assistants indicated that the following things are important for the learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue:

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106 There were two focus groups, one in each municipality. Each focus group consisted of 10 participants from the Serbian Language School. The teachers of Serbian selected the participants for the focus groups.

107 Participants who have completed undergraduate studies cited the need to learn and/or improve knowledge of the language in order to find a job easier or continue with their education. Students of the branch department of the Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac need to learn Serbian so that they can follow their classes and pass their exams without difficulties. Younger participants in the Serbian Language School, who are currently secondary school pupils, stated that they need to know the language for admission to university, or to gain a scholarship to study in Novi Sad, and also simply for reading books in Serbian.

108 Almost all of the participants stated that one of the main reasons for attending the language classes was to be able to communicate in Serbian on the everyday level (with people who work in public institutions or with members of the public whose mother tongue is not Albanian).

109 This was the most frequent answer: "We live in Serbia and we should know the language". Some individuals said that knowledge of the language provides the opportunity to socialize with Serbs and Roma.

110 "Magazine", "Women" and "Jigsaw Puzzle" are TV shows that participants of the focus groups cited as ones they watch. Some noted that they watch tennis and that their favourite sportsmen are Novak Djokovic and Ana Ivanovic.

- Dynamic methods should be applied in language learning (the monologue method should be avoided), and special attention should be paid to the method of learning grammar rules and content (the game method should be used);
- The level of formality should be reduced in the approach to teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue;
- Pupils should be encouraged to reach conclusions independently, within the framework of lexical and grammatical knowledge;
- Teachers should be skilled and qualified;
- Knowledge of the pupils' mother tongue is important;
- Work should be done with parents on the pupils' motivation to learn Serbian.

### ***Project of the OSCE Mission to Serbia – “Improving Language Skills of the Minority Population in South Serbia” <sup>111</sup>***

Since September 2013, the OSCE Mission to Serbia (hereinafter referred to as the OSCE), with the financial support of the Embassies of Germany and Switzerland, has been running the project “Improving Language Skills of the Minority Population in South Serbia” in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac. The aim of this initiative is to improve the opportunities and the framework for integration of members of the Albanian and Roma national minorities through the improvement of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in secondary school.

The project has two dimensions, the first of which entails working with pupils in the secondary school, while the other dimension is focused on the preparation of members of the Albanian and Roma communities for studying Serbian language at the University of Nis. In this overview of the results of the project conducted by the OSCE, the component of working with the secondary school pupils will be presented. The people responsible for conducting these activities are recent graduates in Serbian language and literature, who have been offered the opportunity to gain their first work experience by participating in teaching in a multi-ethnic environment.

<sup>111</sup> Improving Language Skills of the Minority Population in South Serbia.

After an intensive selection procedure, <sup>112</sup> five teaching assistants were chosen. A sixth member of the assistant team was a graduate who had completed her studies in the Department of Albanian Language and Literature in Belgrade, who gave Albanian language classes to the other assistants.<sup>113</sup>

For the purposes of this study, the research team conducted questionnaire-based interviews with: the principal of the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school; the two teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the “Sezai Surroi” school and participate in the project as mentors of the selected assistants; the six assistants; and the project team (three representatives) and the head of the OSCE local office in Bujanovac.

Members of the research team observed the teaching of classes in the secondary school: one class of Serbian language in the grammar school stream and one class in the vocational stream.

Members of the project team stated that the OSCE selected a secondary school in Bujanovac due to the fact that it is a multi-ethnic municipality. Additionally, the OSCE has a local office in Bujanovac, which makes the organizational side of the project simpler, and a working relationship had already been established with certain teachers from this school previously.<sup>114</sup> Pupils from the third year of secondary school, from all departments and streams, were selected for the work.<sup>115</sup> The secondary school was chosen because of the pupils’ age, and the representatives of the OSCE stated that the project was aimed at an age group for whom it is assumed that the individuals are mature enough to think about their future and which university faculties they might wish to enrol in.

According to the representatives of the OSCE, the initial idea for working on improving the knowledge of Serbian and the quality of teaching in the secondary school was based on various experiences: for example, the students of the branch department of the Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac, as a result of poor

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112 From all the applicants, 15 candidates were chosen to attend a seven-day training course on new methods and best practices for language learning, and on working in multicultural environments, the development of language in such environments, the acquisition of a “second language” and bilingualism, strategies and environments that stimulate the acquisition of a “second language” in the classroom, basic knowledge of the Albanian language, and gender equality. The selected assistants came from the south of Serbia (Leskovac, Nis, Pirot) and also from Belgrade.

113 The importance of the learning of the pupils’ mother tongue has been recognized, so as to facilitate the acquisition of Serbian.

114 It was stated during the interview that it is important to find teachers who will not be resistant to new working methods, who are open to new and different approaches, and who are qualified to teach this subject.

115 The target group comprised 240 pupils from 13 classes of the 3rd grade of the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school. The OSCE decided to work with 3rd grade pupils partly in view of the fact that the school year is shorter for the pupils of the final year due to university entrance exams.

knowledge of Serbian, have difficulties in studying, and selected candidates for the Centre for Basic Police Training (in Sremska Kamenica) in many cases have not passed the test on knowledge of Serbian and consequently have been unable to progress through the necessary training and meet the requirements for working in the police. Given that there is a legal framework that prescribes the learning of Serbian within the system of education, the OSCE has implemented the project within an educational institution.

The principal of the school accepted the OSCE's invitation for cooperation and enabled the implementation of the project in the school. He stated that there is insufficient qualified teaching staff for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue, and that there are not enough professional development training events, which should be organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The teachers, assistants and project team members also emphasized the importance of training and professional development for teachers. The principal also stated that the pupils have the support and understanding of their parents.<sup>116</sup>

Teaching has been conducted by the assistants, with the support of the two regular teachers acting as mentors. The OSCE project team believes that the assistants also have the role of being educators to the teaching staff, who can transfer knowledge to the teachers about how to design classes that differ from the usual ones.

The assistants defined their role as follows: helping the existing teaching staff to become familiarized with new methods of work; improving methodology; helping pupils to change their attitude towards learning Serbian; helping pupils in accordance with the demonstrated level of knowledge; tailoring the curriculum to the pupils' knowledge; equipping pupils for basic communication; helping pupils who have a better knowledge of the language and have expressed the wish to study Serbian; conducting regular teaching under the mentors' supervision; organizing extracurricular activities, making preparations, work plans, tests and reports.

A problem that teachers encounter while working with the pupils in secondary school is the insufficient knowledge of Serbian acquired in primary school, as a result of which working to the defined curriculum is hampered. Thus, one of the assistants' tasks consisted of devising the content for every class, in accordance with the observed needs and the level of pupils' knowledge. This way of working is considered effective by both the teachers and the assistants.

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<sup>116</sup> The teachers who were interviewed also recognized the importance of the role of the parents and suggested that parents should be involved in activities to motivate pupils to learn Serbian.

The assistants stated that the main difficulty they encountered while working with the pupils is the unsuitability of the curriculum for the pupils from this environment. The same problem was identified by the teachers. This unsuitability is reflected, they say, in the overrepresentation of literary analysis and insufficient focus on the practical use of the language. The curriculum envisages that Serbian is learned twice a week, while the number of classes for English is double that. Due to the uneven level of knowledge of Serbian within each classroom,<sup>117</sup> the assistants have been preparing each class independently with the aim of making the learning of Serbian as effective as possible, taking into account the pupils' knowledge and the need for the practical application of the language.

The principal, assistants and teachers stated that the approach to the learning of Serbian within the project is different from the conventional approach. The difference is that within the project, the assistants prepare the working plan independent of the curriculum. The emphasis is placed on grammar, expression and orthography. The mode of learning is interactive and communication is focused on. Freedom in communication between the pupils and teachers is developed. Priority is given to interaction with pupils, situational and language games, the bilingual method and multimedia approach. The dialogue method, interaction with pupils through role-play and group work, organizing quizzes for the pupils and audio-visual aids have contributed to better knowledge among the pupils and an increase in their motivation to learn the language.

Knowledge of the pupils' mother tongue has proved to be very important in the language learning process. Learning the language of the minority community reduces the potential distance between the pupils and teachers, or in this case the assistants. When the assistants make mistakes in their occasional use of Albanian, the pupils realize that making mistakes is a normal thing and it should not discourage them to use the non-mother tongue. Knowledge of Albanian is also important for teaching Serbian because it can be used for clarifying material, and for drawing parallels in the grammar and other rules in Serbian and Albanian. The use of the aforesaid methods gives much better and more visible results because, according to the teachers, assistants and the principal, it is an innovative way of working with the pupils.

The technical conditions for organizing teaching have especially been improved with the provision of a language laboratory for learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue, which was donated as part of the project. Language lab teaching in a classroom specially equipped with technical facilities contributes to the improvement of work with the pupils and consequently to their better knowledge. One of the sug-

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<sup>117</sup> Some assistants indicated that an additional difficulty in working with pupils who possessed a certain command of Serbian was that the local dialect that was manifested in the spoken and written language.

gestions of the school principal is that the benefits and possibilities of organizing language lab teaching should be used more often.<sup>118</sup>

Conducting teaching with the help of assistants is a novelty that facilitates the work of the teachers and makes the class more interesting for the pupils. The teachers believe that for the sake of better organization of work in the classroom, it is necessary to reduce the number of assistants in the classroom from the three to one or two assistants. Some of the OSCE representatives are of the same opinion.

Working with other individuals in the classroom, the assistants believe, significantly facilitates the teaching and yields positive results, which can be seen in the development of different approaches for pupils with differing levels of knowledge of Serbian; it increases the motivation and activity of the pupils and helps in “overcoming the language barrier”.<sup>119</sup> At the same time, pupils respond positively to their presence in the classroom, and after the first cycle of the project (September–December 2013) the results of the joint work were visible, especially with regard to the motivation of the pupils to learn Serbian.

The principal likewise believes that the organization of teaching with assistants is more successful because the increased interest of the pupils to learn the language can be observed, as well as their progress in knowledge of the language and motivation to participate in the class and extracurricular activities. A proposal for improving the quality of teaching is the introduction of teaching assistants for all teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in this school and in all grades.

Based on the experiences of the OSCE representatives, the following things are important for ensuring the lasting results of these types of initiatives:

- The involvement of state institutions that will recognize the results of this project as an example of good practice (the key partners identified are: the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Office of the Coordination Body, the Institute for the Promotion of Education);
- The involvement of local actors (local self-government, leaders, the Albanian National Minority Council, directors, teachers, the parents’ council, pupils);

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118 The principal remarked that it was necessary to organize training for teachers to give them the knowledge and skills necessary for the use of the language lab for teaching Serbian. This is precisely the reason why teachers use this facility only partially in teaching. At the time of the interview, the language lab did not have internet access, which the principal felt was an obstacle to organizing even better teaching.

119 “Overcoming the language barrier” was cited as an example of mutual language learning, i.e. an example of the good practice of learning Albanian.

- The involvement of international actors and the provision of financial support;
- Cooperation with the University of Nis;
- Drawing up a multi-year plan for the improvement of language teaching;
- Staff planning so that the use of teaching assistants becomes constant practice <sup>120</sup> as well as recruiting new teaching staff;
- Adopting a strategy that would enable recent graduates to gain practical work experience with pupils in the classroom, like the opportunity that was provided within the OSCE project;
- Ongoing work on the training and professional development of teachers;
- The learning of Albanian by teachers whose mother tongue is not Albanian, who are teaching pupils of Albanian nationality;
- The introduction of new methods of learning and teaching.

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In addition, the OSCE representatives stated that it is necessary to improve and supplement the current textbooks with content produced in cooperation with the ANMC. Work should also be done to adjust the curriculum for the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue.

The OSCE representatives stated that this initiative is meant to indicate different solutions with regard to teaching, and that changes within the system are possible. <sup>121</sup>

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120 Recommendation that instead of three, two assistants participate in the teaching.

121 The OSCE representatives indicated that “changes” refer to changing the programme and introducing assistants into the system of education.

**Annex 2 – Tabular overview of pupils  
in schools in the municipalities of  
Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja**



## Annex 2 – Tabular overview of pupils in schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja

*Prepared by Milica Radic*

Data for Bujanovac and Presevo were obtained from the school principals, while the data for Medvedja were obtained from the municipal administration. The data obtained were used in planning field work to gather data in the schools. The data are for the 2013–2014 academic year and show the number of pupils in the schools attended by pupils from the Albanian community.

### Schools in Bujanovac municipality:

“Ali Bektashi” primary school, Nesalce (Bujanovac municipality)			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	21	12	9
II	36	20	16
III	35	14	21
IV	41	23	18
I–IV	133	69	64
V	53	31	22
VI	37	20	17
VII	50	29	21
VIII	45	20	25
V–VIII	185	100	85
TOTAL	318	169	149
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 4.			

<b>“Desanka Maksimovic” primary school, Biljaca (Bujanovac municipality)121</b>			
<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PUPILS</b>	<b>BOYS</b>	<b>GIRLS</b>
I	36	17	19
II	26	12	14
III	44	20	24
IV	49	24	25
<b>I–IV</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>82</b>
V	44	21	23
VI	51	27	24
VII	64	30	34
VIII	50	27	23
<b>V–VIII</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>186</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 3.			

<b>“Migjeni” primary school, Muhovac (Bujanovac municipality)</b>			
<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PUPILS</b>	<b>BOYS</b>	<b>GIRLS</b>
I	9	4	5
II	16	9	7
III	17	7	10
IV	15	11	4
<b>I–IV</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>
V	12	2	10
VI	16	13	3
VII	20	9	11

VIII	20	9	11
V–VIII	68	33	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>61</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 3.			

<b>“Muharrem Kadriu” primary school, Veliki Trnovac (Bujanovac municipality)</b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	62	34	28
II	80	41	39
III	85	48	37
IV	98	50	48
I–IV	325	173	152
V	121	64	57
VI	110	52	58
VII	113	65	48
VIII	108	55	53
V–VIII	452	236	216
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>368</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 7.			

<b>“Naim Frasheri” primary school, Bujanovac</b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	34	21	13
II	42	21	21
III	38	17	21
IV	37	20	17

I-IV	151	79	72
V	48	25	23
VI	65	32	33
VII	43	23	20
VIII	60	30	30
V-VIII	216	110	106
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>178</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 5.			

<b>“Sami Frasheri” primary school, Lucani (Bujanovac municipality)</b>			
<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PUPILS</b>	<b>BOYS</b>	<b>GIRLS</b>
I	35	17	18
II	36	23	13
III	34	15	19
IV	31	17	14
I-IV	136	72	64
V	34	17	17
VI	54	28	26
VII	62	32	30
VIII	50	17	33
V-VIII	200	94	106
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>170</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 6.			

## Schools in Presevo municipality:

<b>“9. maj” primary school, Reljan (Presevo municipality)</b>						
Teaching conducted in Serbian				Teaching conducted in Albanian		
GRADE	NO. OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS	NO. OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	11	8	3	40	21	19
II	12	7	5	36	20	16
III	5	2	3	44	19	25
IV	9	5	4	49	28	21
I–IV	37	22	15	169	88	81
V	10	7	3	67	36	31
VI	4	3	1	46	24	22
VII	5	2	3	47	30	17
VIII	2	1	1	48	25	23
V–VIII	21	13	8	208	115	93
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>174</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 4.						

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<b>“Abdullah Krashnica” primary school, Miratovac (Presevo municipality)</b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	18	8	10
II	25	13	12
III	31	23	8
IV	31	16	15
I–IV	105	60	45

V	37	19	18
VI	52	25	27
VII	46	28	18
VIII	36	17	19
V–VIII	171	89	82
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>127</b>

The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 4.

**“Dituria” primary school, Crnotince (Presevo municipality)**

GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	25	15	10
II	34	19	15
III	45	18	27
IV	38	22	16
I–IV	142	74	68
V	41	23	18
VI	48	24	24
VII	45	23	22
VIII	50	25	25
V–VIII	184	95	89
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>157</b>

The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 12.

**“Ibrahim Kelmendi” primary school, Presevo**

GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	160	88	72

II	183	106	77
III	198	97	101
IV	187	85	102
I-IV	728	376	352
V	264	124	140
VI	270	143	127
VII	251	132	119
VIII	231	110	121
V-VIII	1016	509	507
TOTAL	1744	885	859

The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 12.

"Selami Hallaci" primary school, Oraovica (Presevo municipality)			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	34	17	17
II	50	30	20
III	55	30	25
IV	46	19	27
I-IV	185	96	89
V	63	35	28
VI	67	30	37
VII	68	28	40
VIII	45	23	22
V-VIII	243	116	127
TOTAL	428	212	216

The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 4.

<b>“Zenel Hajdini” primary school, Rajince (Presevo municipality)</b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	15	8	7
II	32	19	13
III	20	11	9
IV	30	16	14
I–IV	97	54	43
V	33	23	10
VI	21	14	7
VII	34	19	15
VIII	30	18	12
V–VIII	118	74	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>87</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 4.			

<b>“Migjeni” primary school, Cerevajka (Presevo municipality)</b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	7	3	4
II	5	3	2
III	5	2	3
IV	10	4	6
I–IV	27	12	15
V	7	3	4
VI	5	2	3
VII	8	4	4
VIII	6	5	1

V–VIII	26	14	12
UKUPNO	53	26	27
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 2.			

### Schools in Medvedja municipality:

<b>“Zenel Hajdini” primary school, Tupale (Medvedja municipality)</b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I–IV	5	3	2
V–VIII	16	7	9
TOTAL	21	10	11
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 2.			

<b>“Gornja Jablanica” primary school, Medvedja<sup>122</sup></b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
II	2	1	1
IV	3	1	2
UKUPNO	5	2	3
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 1.			

<b>“Sijarinska Banja” primary school, Sijarinska Banja (Medvedja municipality)<sup>123</sup></b>			
GRADE	NUMBER OF PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS
I	5	3	2
II	3	2	1
III	3	2	1

IV	4	4	/
I-IV	15	11	4
V	2	/	2
VI	4	2	2
VII	5	3	2
VIII	3	2	1
V-VIII	14	7	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>
The number of teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue is 2.			

**Annex 3 – Questionnaires used in  
research in the field in the municipalities  
of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja**



## Annex 3 – Questionnaires used in research in the field in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja

This annex provides a total of 16 questionnaires and one guide that were compiled for the needs of the field research. Other information about the field research and each questionnaire or guide used is provided in section III.1., on the methodological framework of the research.

### 1.

**Note: This questionnaire was compiled for discussions with the national assembly deputy, the presidents of the three municipalities and the Chairman of the Albanian National Minority Council.**

1. *How would you rate the quality of primary education in Bujanovac/Presevo/Medvedja?*
2. *What are the difficulties in the education system faced by the municipality of Bujanovac/Presevo/Medvedja?*
3. *Are you familiar with the issue of quality of teaching?*
4. *Are you familiar with the level of quality of teaching of the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
5. *In what subjects/areas is knowledge most valued – which subjects are most important for children to know?*
6. *Do you have any insight into whether most parents of children who attend primary school in this municipality believe that it is necessary for their children to learn Serbian?*
7. *Do you believe it is important for children to know Serbian?*
8. *Why do you think that?*
9. *Are you of the opinion that knowledge of languages would facilitate progress for young people (in their personal and professional lives, etc.)?*

10. *Would you support an opportunity for children to learn Serbian better?*

11. *Would you support an initiative whereby primary school children take classes in Serbian that would be organized differently to how they have been organized up to now (for example, with the use of classroom assistants, the use of different methods, learning through play, etc.)?*

12. *Are children from different schools able to engage in joint activities that allow them to socialize?*

13. *Would you support an initiative whereby activities are organized for pupils from different schools who do not speak the same language, which would encourage language-learning and socializing?*

## 2.

**Note: This questionnaire was used for discussions with the principals of Albanian-language primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.**

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### I. Context

1. *How many pupils in the school do not have Serbian as their mother tongue?*

### II. Outlook

1. *Are you satisfied with the way Serbian as a non-mother tongue is taught in this school?*

2. *Do you have any insight into whether most parents of children from this school consider it important for their children to learn Serbian?*

### III. Learning

1. *Do the teachers who teach Serbian in your school also teach other subjects?*

2. *If the teachers are also assigned to other subjects, please indicate what those subjects are.*

3. *Does the teacher who teaches Serbian in this school also teach in another school?*
4. *If the teacher also works in other schools, how often does he/she work in the school that you are the principal of (on a weekly basis)?*
5. *What level of qualifications do candidates need to be employed in this school as teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
6. *Are the educational backgrounds of the teaching staff in this school at a satisfactory level for this subject?*
7. *Are you satisfied with the availability of teaching staff who are trained/have the appropriate educational backgrounds for this subject?*
8. *Have you hired teachers to teach Serbian who have a lower than prescribed level of education? If so, why?*
9. *Which textbooks do the teachers use when teaching this subject?*
10. *Do the teachers of this school who teach Serbian use new methods in working with the children?*
11. *Which methods do they mainly use?*
12. *Do you think digital materials or any other materials would be useful for learning Serbian?*
13. *Do you believe any new approaches or additional training would yield better results among the pupils when it comes to learning Serbian? Do you have any suggestions for new approaches?*
14. *Would you be prepared to develop, together with the teachers at the school, a new way of working with the pupils in this subject?*
15. *Do you have any concrete suggestions for improving the quality of teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
16. *Are there any obstacles to implementing those suggestions (and if so, what are they)? If you believe that such obstacles exist, please specify exactly what you mean.*

#### **IV. Resources**

- 1. Does the school have a language laboratory for the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
- 2. How technically equipped are the classrooms in which this subject is taught?*
- 3. Do you have the ability to listen to audio recordings?*
- 4. If your answer was yes, do the teachers use that facility in their classes in Serbian?*
- 5. Do you have a computer or a projector?*
- 6. If your answer was yes, do the teachers use that facility in their classes in Serbian?*
- 7. Do you have access to the internet?*
- 8. If your answer was yes, do the teachers use that facility in their classes in Serbian?*

#### **V. Support**

- 1. Do you believe it is necessary to invest in training your current teaching staff assigned to teaching Serbian?*
- 2. What would be your suggestion for any training that these teachers should undergo?*
- 3. Do the teachers of this school attend any training given by the Ministry of Education?*
- 4. If they do attend such training, how often and where?*
- 5. Does that training yield results, and if so, what kind of results?*
- 6. If the training does not yield the desired results, please state your opinion on why not.*

## VI. Activities

1. *Do you organize any joint activities for your pupils with pupils from other schools, through which they socialize together?*
2. *Would you support the idea of organizing activities for pupils from different schools who do not speak the same language, which would encourage language-learning and socializing?*
3. *Do you agree that the older generations know Serbian better than the younger generations? If so, why do you think that is?*

### 3.

**Note: This questionnaire was used for discussions with teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.**

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#### I. Information about the teacher

1. *Location where you teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue:*
2. *Schools where you teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue:*
3. *Grades in which you teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue:*
4. *Qualifications/highest level of education completed (state the full name and location of the educational institution)*
  1. Primary school \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Secondary school \_\_\_\_\_

3. Post-secondary college \_\_\_\_\_

4. University, bachelor's degree \_\_\_\_\_

5. University, master's degree or specialist studies \_\_\_\_\_

6. University, doctorate \_\_\_\_\_

5. *How long have you been teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

6. *Mother tongue of teacher:*

1. Albanian

2. Serbian

3. ther – please state which \_\_\_\_\_

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## **II. Information on teaching**

7. *When do you use the mother tongue of your pupils during a lesson?*

1. I do not know the mother tongue of my pupils

2. Constantly;

3. When I am explaining new material

4. I avoid using the mother tongue

5. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

8. *How much time on average do you allocate to giving explanations in a class, and how much to practicing new material from the language/grammar?*

1. Up to 15 minutes for explanations, the rest is practice
2. Roughly equal amounts
3. Explanations take up the main part of the class, and practice is done at the end
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

9. *In your classes how much is devoted to the pupils doing oral practice and how much to written work?*

1. The same amounts
2. More is devoted to writing (including written language/grammar exercises)
3. More is devoted to speaking (dialogues, monologues, oral grammar exercises)
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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10. *Describe how you usually cover new language material.*

1. I just follow the material set out in the textbook, sticking to the same sequence and volume
2. I bring in additional material (texts, illustrations, music, films, games, etc.)
3. I combine material from the textbook and additional material
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

11. *Do you explain new, unfamiliar words to the pupils?*

1. Yes
2. No

12. *If your answer to the previous question was yes, please indicate how you explain new, unfamiliar words to the pupils?*

1. I translate them into the mother tongue
2. I use illustrations (pre-prepared illustrations or I draw on the board);
3. I use a descriptive and associative method to help the pupils work out the meaning of a new word
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

13. *If your answer to question 11 was no, please clarify why you do not explain new, unfamiliar words to the pupils.:*

1. The pupils use dictionaries
2. I get them to do it as homework
3. The pupils translate the words among themselves
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

14. *In your classes do you do real-life role-play exercises?*

1. We do not do real-life role-play in the classes because  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Very rarely, a few times a year
3. Less than once a month
4. Once or twice a month
5. Once a week
6. Almost every lesson

15. *If you do real-life role-play with the pupils, please give us a few of the situations that you most often use as examples (which real-life situations do you most often cover this way):*

16. *Which teaching aids do you use when teaching? (Please choose only one response)?*

1. I only use textbooks (state which ones)
2. I only use video materials (state which ones)
3. I only use audio materials (state which ones)
4. I only use other visual aids/photographs, pictures, books, etc. (state which materials)
5. I make my own materials (state which sources you use)
6. A combined approach – using several resources (state which resources are most often combined)

### **III. Textbooks and the curriculum**

17. *Do you use textbooks of the “Institute for Textbooks”?*

1. Yes
2. No (please explain why) \_\_\_\_\_

18. *If you use textbooks of the “Institute for Textbooks”, what is your opinion of the readers with regard to their usefulness?*

1. The readers are very useful and help me with the teaching of every class
2. The readers are partially useful
3. The readers are not useful and do not help me plan my lessons and teach
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

19. *What is your opinion of the readers with regard to their structure?*

1. The readers have a very well devised structure and way of presenting material (from the less demanding to more complex lessons, tasks, etc.)
2. The readers have a partly well devised structure and way of presenting material
3. The readers do not have a well devised structure and the material is not presented well
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

20. *What is your opinion of the readers with regard to how well suited they are to pupils of a particular age?:*

1. The readers' content and structure are fully suited to the pupils
2. The readers are partly suited to the pupils in terms of content and structure
3. The readers are not suited to the pupils, neither in terms of content nor structure
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

21. *What is your opinion of the language/grammar tips with regard to their usefulness?*

1. The language/grammar tips are very useful and help me with the teaching of every class
2. The language/grammar tips are partially useful
3. The language/grammar tips are not useful and do not help me plan lessons and teach
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

22. *What is your opinion of the language/grammar tips with regard to their structure?*

1. The language/grammar tips have a very well devised structure and way of presenting materia (from the less demanding to more complex lessons, tasks, etc.)
2. The language/grammar tips have a partly well devised structure and way of presenting material
3. The language/grammar tips do not have a well devised structure and the material is not presented well
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

23. *What is your opinion of the language/grammar tips with regard to how well suited they are to pupils?:*

1. The language/grammar tips' content and structure are fully suited to the pupils
2. The language/grammar tips are partly suited to the pupils in terms of content and structure
3. The language/grammar tips are not suited to the pupils, neither in terms of content nor structure
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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24. *What is your opinion of the workbooks with regard to their usefulness?*

1. The workbooks are very useful and help me devise tasks for the children
2. The workbooks are partly useful
3. The workbooks are not useful and do not help me with teaching
4. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

25. *What is your opinion of the workbooks with regard to their structure?*

1. The workbooks have a very well devised structure (from the less demanding to more complex tasks, etc.)

2. The workbooks have a partly well devised structure
3. The workbooks do not have a well devised structure and the material is not presented well
4. Other answer – please specify

26. *What is your opinion of the workbooks with regard to how well suited they are to pupils?*

1. The workbooks' content and structure are fully suited to the pupils
2. The workbooks are partly suited to the pupils in terms of content and structure
3. The workbooks are not suited to the pupils, neither in terms of content nor structure
4. Other answer – please specify

27. *Are there any texts in the readers that you feel are superfluous or unnecessary?*

28. *Do you feel that the material in the textbooks is excessive?*

1. Yes (please explain)
2. No.

29. *Which lessons/materials have you noticed that the pupils like most/from which the pupils absorb knowledge most easily?*

30. *Which lessons/materials have you noticed that the pupils have more difficulty in absorbing knowledge from/that are difficult to comprehend?*

31. *In your view, is there any material in the curriculum for Serbian as a non-mother tongue that is not suitable for pupils of a particular age?*

1. Yes (please state which material)

2. No, I feel that the current curriculum is appropriate

32. *Do you think any additions or changes should be made to the curriculum?*

1. Yes (please state which material)

2. No

#### **IV. Assessment and self-evaluation of teachers**

33. *How do you measure the level of knowledge attained by pupils? (You may select more than one response)*

1. By using tests

2. By marking homework

3. Through oral exercises in class

4. Through written exercises and assignments in class

5. Other answer – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

6. I do not check the knowledge of my pupils

34. *In your view, do your pupils have a good knowledge of Serbian?*

1. I have noticed that they are excellent in reading, writing and communicating orally in Serbian

2. They are good at oral communication, but improvement is needed in writing and reading

3. They demonstrate good knowledge in reading and writing in Serbian, but improvement is needed in their oral skills

4. Improvement in both written and oral communication is needed

35. Which of your classroom activities (methods, work techniques, types of assignments and exercises, etc.) motivate the pupils to learn Serbian?

36. Which classroom activities do you feel are less fruitful?

37. Do you use assessments or the knowledge of your pupils as a basis for revising your methods for the learning of Serbian (in order to achieve the best possible results)?

1. Yes, after every class I determine which approach works best for them, and which approach yields the best results, and I try to apply it as often as possible

2. Sometimes

3. I decide my own method that works best for me regardless of its effect/results

38. Would you be willing to introduce new methods and new ways of working in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue? Please explain your answer.

1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_

2. No \_\_\_\_\_

39. If you have any suggestions for improving the attainment of pupils learning Serbian, please share them with us.

## V.Support

40. Do you receive any additional support for teaching Serbian from the Ministry of Education?

1. Training for teachers

YES

NO

Where \_\_\_\_\_

How often \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 2. Additional classroom equipment      | YES | NO |
| (Please specify which equipment) _____ |     |    |
| 3. Additional teaching material        | YES | NO |
| (Please specify which material) _____  |     |    |
| 4. Other support                       | YES | NO |
| (Please specify) _____                 |     |    |

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE ONLY FOR TEACHERS WHO HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY RECEIVE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

41. *Using the scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates extremely poor and 5 indicates excellent), please rate the importance and effect of the additional support you receive from the Ministry of Education:*

- |                                    |   |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Training for teachers           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Additional classroom equipment: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Additional teaching material    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Other support (please specify)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

42. *Do you receive any support for teaching Serbian from other entities (e.g. donors, municipal administration or others)?*

1. We do not have any additional support

2. Training for teachers	YES	NO
Where _____		
How often _____		
3. Additional classroom equipment	YES	NO
(Please specify which equipment, from whom) _____		
4. Additional teaching material	YES	NO
(Please specify which material) _____		
5. Additional financial support (extra salary, etc.)	YES	NO
(Please specify) _____		
6. Other support	YES	NO
(Please specify) _____		

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE ONLY FOR TEACHERS WHO HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY RECEIVE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM OTHER ENTITIES**

*43. Using the scale of 1 to 5, rate the importance and level of effect of the support you receive from other entities:*

1. Training for teachers	1	2	3	4	5
2. Additional classroom equipment	1	2	3	4	5
3. Additional teaching material	1	2	3	4	5
4. Additional financial support	1	2	3	4	5
5. Other support (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

44. Do you use teachers' handbooks when planning lessons?

45. The older generations have a good knowledge of Serbian, which is not the case with the younger generations. Do you agree with that, and why do you think that is?

## 4.

**Note: This questionnaire was completed by pupils of the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades of Albanian-language primary schools in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.**

1. Name of school:

2. Place:

3. Sex (circle one)

1. Male            2. Female

4. Which grade are you in?

5. What do you like best in Serbian language classes? (You may circle more than one response)

1. The way the teacher works with us

2. The textbooks we have

3. Additional materials (videos, audio, photographs, etc.)

4. Something else \_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you like least in Serbian language classes? (You may circle more than one response)

1. The way the teacher works with us

2. The textbooks we have

3. Additional materials (videos, audio, photographs, etc.)

4. Something else

7. *How many minutes does a Serbian language class last?*

8. *Do you feel that the duration of a Serbian language class is appropriate? (Circle one response)*

1. The duration of the class is fine

2. The duration of the class is too long

3. The duration of the class is too short

9. *What do you do in Serbian language classes? How would you describe them? (You may circle more than one response)*

1. The teacher does most of the talking, we answer only when asked a question

2. We sing songs, recite

3. We watch films and other interesting video recordings which help us learn the language

4. We draw, colour, make collages, comics, photographs, etc.

5. We do a lot of communicating in Serbian, we think up specific situations and act out various roles

6. We write poems, essays, and articles about our school and surroundings

7. Something else – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

10. *What would you most like to do in Serbian language classes? (You may circle more than one response)*

1. Sing songs, recite

2. Watch films and other interesting video recordings which help us learn the language

3. Draw, colour, make collages, comics, photographs, etc.
4. Do a lot of communicating in Serbian, think up specific situations and act out various roles
5. Write poems, essays, and articles about our school and surroundings
6. Something else – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

*11. Does your teacher give you homework?*

1. YES
2. NO

*12. What type of homework do you most often do at home?*

1. Tasks related to the last lesson we did, from worksheets and readers
2. We write our own compositions on various topics
3. Something else \_\_\_\_\_

*13. Do you practice at home what you learned in Serbian language class?*

1. YES
2. NO

*14. Which part do you find most interesting in Serbian?*

1. Grammar
2. Reading (reading practice in class)
3. Writing compositions
4. Oral communication
5. Literature
6. Something else \_\_\_\_\_

15. *What material in Serbian do you find most difficult?*

1. Grammar
2. Reading (practicing reading in class)
3. Writing
4. Oral communication
5. Literature
6. Something else \_\_\_\_\_

16. *What is the name of the textbook that you use for Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

17. *What do you like best in the textbooks that you use for that subject? (Circle one answer)*

1. Texts
2. Tasks
3. Illustrations
4. Something else – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

18. *What do you like least in the textbooks that you use for this subject? (Circle one answer)*

1. Texts
2. Tasks
3. Illustrations
4. Something else – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you use Serbian outside school? (You may circle more than one answer if applicable)

1. No, I don't use Serbian outside school
2. Yes, in shops
3. Yes, at the doctor's
4. Yes, in the street with other children, school friends, etc.
5. Yes, for watching TV (I watch cartoons, movies, TV series)
6. Yes, I listen to music
7. Yes, via the internet
8. Yes, sometimes at home I speak Serbian with
9. Yes, with neighbours
10. Yes, I attend(ed) some extra courses in Serbian

20. When you watch TV at home, in what language is your favourite TV show?

21. Are you satisfied with your grade in this subject?

1. YES
2. NO

22. Are you satisfied with your knowledge of Serbian?

1. I'm fully satisfied with my knowledge because I am excellent at reading, writing and communicating orally in Serbian
2. I'm partly satisfied with my knowledge because I'm good at oral communication, but my writing needs some improvement

3. I'm partly satisfied with my knowledge because I'm good at writing, but my oral communication needs some improvement

4. I'm not at all satisfied with my knowledge of Serbian

23. Do you think that a knowledge of Serbian could be useful to you in the future?

1. YES                      2. NO

24. In what way could a knowledge of Serbian be useful to you in the future?

## 5

**Note: This questionnaire was used for the purposes of an interview with the educational advisor in the Leskovac Schools Authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, responsible for the schools of the Jablanica and Pcinja district.**

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*1. Are you satisfied with the way Serbian as a non-mother tongue is taught in Albanian-language schools (and with the quality of the teaching of this subject)?*

*2. Are you satisfied with the availability of teaching staff who are trained/have the appropriate qualifications to teach the subject of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in schools?*

*3. Which textbooks do teachers use when teaching this subject?*

*4. Do the teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the schools in Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja use new methods in their work with the children?*

*5. Which methods do they mainly use?*

*6. Do you think that some new methods and additional training would yield better results for the pupils when it comes to learning Serbian? Do you have any suggestions for new approaches?*

*7. Do you have any specific suggestions regarding improving the quality of teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

8. *Are there any obstacles to implementing those suggestions (and if so, what are they)? If you believe that such obstacles exist, please specify exactly what you mean.*
9. *Do you believe it is necessary to invest in training the current teaching staff assigned to teaching Serbian?*
10. *What would be your suggestion for any training that these teachers should undergo?*
11. *How often are training sessions accredited by the Ministry of Education organized for teachers who teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
12. *How often and where are those training sessions held?*
13. *Do you think it is important that children should know Serbian?*
14. *Why do you think that?*

## 6.

**Note: This questionnaire was used for interviews with parents whose children attend Albanian-language primary schools in the municipalities of Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja**

*School:* \_\_\_\_\_

1. *How often are parents' committee meetings held?*
2. *What topics do you mainly discuss and which issues do you usually address?*
3. *Do you also deal with the issue of the quality of teaching?*
4. *Which subjects do you think are most important for children to know – which knowledge is valued mostly highly?*

5. *Do you know whether most parents of the children at this school believe that it is necessary for them to learn Serbian?*
6. *Does the parents' committee believe, and do you personally believe, that it is important for the children in the school to learn Serbian?*
7. *Why do you think that?*
8. *Would you support an opportunity for children in this school to learn Serbian better?*
9. *Would you support an initiative for children in this school to be taught Serbian in a way that is organized differently to how it has been done to date (for example, with the use of teaching assistants, different methods, learning by playing, etc.)?*
10. *Do children in this locality have an opportunity to hear or learn Serbian outside school?*
11. *If they do, to what extent?*
12. *Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the quality of the teaching of Serbian?*

## 7.

**Note: This guide was used during observation of the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Albanian-language primary schools of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja**

*School:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Grade:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Duration of class:* \_\_\_\_\_

## **I. Distribution of the mother tongue and non-mother tongue in the class**

- 1. To what extent is the mother tongue of the pupils present in the class?*
- 2. When is the mother tongue of the pupils present in the class?*
- 3. How much communication is done in the mother tongue, and how much in the non-mother tongue?*
- 4. Does the teacher translate texts?*
- 5. If the teacher doesn't translate texts, who does?*
- 6. How does the teacher explain new words?*
- 7. In what language does the teacher explain material?*
- 8. Do the pupils ask questions? In what language?*
- 9. Does the teacher use a textbook (and if so, which?) and any other aids/resources in teaching?*
- 10. What is the mother tongue of the teacher?*
- 11. Is the teacher's pronunciation in Serbian correct and clear, and is his/her speech grammatically correct?*
- 12. Does the teacher have an assistant to help run the class?*

## **II. Activity of the pupils**

- 1. Is the class dominated by speech of the teacher or the pupils?*
- 2. Are all the pupils involved? If not, does the teacher try to include those who are less active?*
- 3. Are boys and girls equally active in the class, or is one of the two groups noticeably calmer/quieter/more active?*

4. *Does the teacher try to include boys and girls equally?*
5. *How much of the total class time is devoted to oral expression, and how much to written expression?*
6. *Is the flow of communication always from the teacher to the pupils, i.e. does the teacher always initiate communication, or do the pupils sometimes do so too?*
7. *Is there any interaction in the class between pupils in the non-mother tongue in terms of asking each other questions, conveying information to each other, or assigning tasks?*
8. *Apart from frontal instruction (with the teacher addressing all the pupils), is there any individual or group work?*

### **III. Types of tasks and exercises**

1. *Does the teacher use tasks and exercises from the textbook?*
2. *Does the teacher use any other teaching materials, and if so, which?*
3. *Does the teacher check theoretical knowledge (familiarity with rules, definitions), and if so, in what way?*
4. *Does the class feature any oral exercises like dialogues, monologues delivered by the pupils, role play, etc.?*
5. *How much practical use of the non-mother tongue is in the class?*

### **IV. Pupils (after the end of the class)**

1. *How many pupils were present in class?*
2. *How many are enrolled in the department/register?*
3. *Do the pupils regularly attend Serbian lessons?*

## 8.

**Note:** This questionnaire was used for interviews with representatives of the media and civil society organizations from the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo.

1. *What's your assessment of the situation among young people with regard to their knowledge of Serbian?*
2. *What's your position on this? Do you think that young people encounter obstacles if they can't speak Serbian or have advantages if they can speak Serbian?*
3. *What role do you see for civil society and the media in addressing this issue?*
4. *Have you encountered difficulties in communicating with your users/associates/colleagues whose mother tongue is Serbian (and how much does the lack of knowledge of Serbian affect the work of your organization)?*
5. *How did you come up with the idea of organizing a project for the learning of Serbian for members of the Albanian community?*
6. *What were your assumptions and expectations before implementing the project?*
7. *Are you satisfied with the results achieved following the end of the project?*
8. *What was the Albanian community's reaction to your initiative for organizing a Serbian language course? Did you have any difficulties in implementing the project?*

## 9.

**Note:** This questionnaire was compiled for interviews with representatives of state and municipal administration and employees in the state and municipal organs in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac.

1. *Do you think that a knowledge of Serbian is necessary for people who do not have Serbian as their mother tongue and who want to apply for jobs in state administration or are current employees in state administration?*
2. *How important is knowledge of Serbian for working in state administration? (If possible, please provide an example of a specific situation)*
3. *How much does knowledge of Serbian make work easier for employees?*
4. *Do the representatives of state organs in these municipalities encounter any difficulties at work as a result of poor knowledge of Serbian on the part of candidates applying for vacancies or persons who are current employees?*
5. *Do you think that young people looking for jobs are more likely to encounter obstacles because of not being able to speak Serbian, or are more likely to enjoy advantages if they can speak Serbian?*
6. *Have you encountered any difficulties in communicating with citizens or colleagues whose mother tongue is Serbian?*
7. *To your knowledge, have employees encountered difficulties in communicating with users/associates/partners/citizens/colleagues whose mother tongue is Serbian?*
8. *Do you have any suggestions for addressing the problem of the lack of knowledge of Serbian among employees or persons seeking work in the private sector?*

## 10.

**Note: This questionnaire was compiled for interviews with representatives of the commercial sector in the municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac.**

1. *Do you think that people looking for jobs in the private sector should have a knowledge of Serbian?*
2. *Do you consider it desirable for people working in your company to know Serbian, too?*
3. *Why do you think that Serbian is needed for working in your company?*

4. *Do you think that young people looking for jobs encounter obstacles because they can't speak Serbian, or have an advantage because they can speak Serbian?*
5. *Have you encountered any difficulties in communicating with users/associates/partners/colleagues whose mother tongue is Serbian?*
6. *Have your employees encountered any difficulties in communicating with users/associates/partners/colleagues whose mother tongue is Serbian?*
7. *If you feel that you or your employees don't speak Serbian well, in your opinion, does that affect the work and business done by your company, and if so, how?*
8. *Do you have any suggestions for addressing the problem of lack of knowledge of Serbian among employees or people seeking jobs in the private sector?*

## 11.

**Note: This questionnaire was used for interviews with the Serbian language teachers in the "Serbian Language School" project run by the Office of the Coordination Body.**

1. *How long have you been teaching Serbian (in years and months):* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Before your involvement in the project of the Office of the Coordination Body, did you have any opportunity to teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
  1. YES
  2. NO
3. *What is the level of knowledge of attendees?*
  1. I noticed that they were excellent in reading, writing and communicating in Serbian;
  2. They're good at oral communication, but improvement is needed in their writing and reading;

3. They demonstrate good knowledge in reading and writing in Serbian, but their oral skills need to be improved;
4. Writing and oral communication need to be improved;
5. Other answer – please clarify:

4. *How do you measure the knowledge attained by attendees? (You may select more than one answer)*

1. Through tests;
2. By checking homework;
3. Through oral exercises in class;
4. Through written exercises and tasks in class;
5. Something else – please clarify:
6. I do not check the knowledge of attendees.

5. *Which methods do you use most frequently in your Serbian classes in the project?*

6. *In your opinion, do some of the methods yield good results (methods which the attendees respond well to)? Which ones?*

7. *In your opinion, does the working method you use within the project of the Office of the Coordination Body differ from the customary approach in teaching?*

1. YES
2. NO

8. *If you answered “yes”, please describe how those two approaches differ:*

9. *What are the main difficulties that you encounter in teaching within this project?*

10. *After the first cycle of this project, do you notice any results?*

1. Yes, I do notice some results. Which ones?

2. I do not notice any results.

11. *What are the most important experiences from this project that contributed to helping pupils absorb knowledge of the language easier?*

12. *What are your recommendations for improving the teaching of Serbian in schools?*

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHERS WHO HAVE BEEN TEACHING PUPILS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BILJACA IN THE SECOND PART OF THE PROJECT OF THE OFFICE OF THE COORDINATION BODY**

13. *Are there any differences in working with the group composed of pupils from the 5th and 6th grades versus that of the pupils from the 7th and 8th grades? If there are, please describe what the differences are:*

14. *Which methods do you use most frequently in working with the pupils from Biljaca?*

15. *Do you find the help of the local assistant useful when you're working with the pupils from Biljaca, and what results, in your view, does this approach yield?*

16. *In your opinion, how many classes per week are needed for the pupils to master the material prescribed under the curriculum?*

17. *On the basis of the experience of working with the pupils from Biljaca, what are your impressions and recommendations for the learning of Serbian in regular teaching?*

**12.**

***Note: This questionnaire was used for interviews with the assistants in the "Serbian Language School" project run by the Office of the Coordination Body.***

1. *Please describe your role in the project:*

2. *In your opinion, does the approach that you use within the project differ from the customary way of learning Serbian in schools, and if so, please describe the difference.*

3. *If you compare those two approaches, which, in your opinion, yields the best results?*

1. Neither of them;
2. The customary approach;
3. The new approach that I'm applying in the project run by the SKT;
4. Both approaches.

4. *Why do think that is?*

5. *What results, in your opinion, does the Serbian Language School yield?*

6. *What are the main difficulties that you encounter in the learning of Serbian as part of this project?*

7. *After the first cycle of the project, do you notice any results?*

1. Yes, I notice some results. Which ones?
2. No, I don't notice any results.

8. *After your involvement in the project have you changed the way you work with your pupils in school? If so, please describe the change.*

9. *Which new methods did you adopt while working on the project, and which ones led to you to teaching in a different way in school and/or led to your pupils absorbing knowledge of the language easier?*

10. *What are your recommendations for improving the teaching of Serbian in primary schools?*

## 13.

**Note:** This questionnaire was used for interviews with attendees at the “Serbian Language School” project run by the Office of the Coordination Body.

1. *Why did you decide to attend the “Serbian Language School”?*
2. *In your opinion, is your knowledge of Serbian better than it was before you started the course?*
3. *After the Serbian Language School, do you have any difficulties communicating in Serbian in daily life?*
4. *If your answer to the previous question was “yes”, please specify in what situations you still have difficulties caused by shortcomings in your knowledge of Serbian:*
5. *Do you believe that you should carry on improving your knowledge of Serbian?*
6. *Do you feel more secure and self-confident because you have gained a knowledge of Serbian?*
7. *After attending the course do you feel more at ease in speaking Serbian?*
8. *In what way do you currently communicate in Serbian?*
9. *Do you believe that your knowledge of Serbian could help you in the future?*
10. *In what way do you plan to use the knowledge of Serbian that have gained in the course?*

## 14.

**Note:** This questionnaire was used for interviewing representatives of the OSCE responsible for the implementation of the project that the Mission ran in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac.

1. *What was the original idea, and what were the primary assumptions for the implementation of the project that the OSCE is running in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac?*

2. *What is the objective of the implementation of the project run by the OSCE Mission in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac?*
3. *Based on what information was the procedure for the project’s implementation determined (the selection of the school, selection of grade and department to work with, etc.)?*
4. *Do you encounter any difficulties in implementing the project? If your answer is “yes”, what are the main challenges?*
5. *Do you notice any results after the first cycle of the project?*
  1. Yes, I notice some results. Which ones?
  2. No, I don’t notice any results.
6. *What, in your opinion, is key for ensuring lasting results for initiatives like this?*
7. *Who, in your opinion, are the key partners for ensuring the quality of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the sustainability of the results achieved?*
8. *On the basis of the lessons learned to date from the project implemented by the OSCE Mission to Serbia in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac, what are your suggestions for improving the teaching of Serbian in schools?*

## 15.

**Note:** This questionnaire was used for interviewing the principal of the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac, in which the OSCE Mission to Serbia ran a project.

### I. Context

1. *What was the main motive for participating in the OSCE Mission’s project and in the work on teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*
2. *Do you feel that most parents of the pupils at your school consider it important for their children to learn Serbian?*

## **II. Support**

- 1. Are you satisfied with the way that Serbian as a non-mother tongue is taught in the “Sezai Surroi” school?*
- 2. Are you satisfied with the qualifications of the staff at the “Sezai Surroi” school who teach this subject?*
- 3. Do you feel that addition investment in the staff is needed (training, etc.)?*
- 4. Are you satisfied with the availability of staff who are trained/have the appropriate qualifications for this subject?*
- 5. Do you consider it necessary to invest in training the current staff who are responsible for teaching Serbian?*
- 6. What would be your suggestion for training that these teachers should undergo?*
- 7. Do teachers at your school attend any training run by the Ministry of Education? If so, how often and where?*

## **III. Learning**

- 1. Which textbooks do the teachers use for teaching this subject?*
- 2. Do the teachers of the “Sezai Surroi” school who teach Serbian use any new methods for working with the pupils? If so, which ones?*
- 3. What is your opinion about working in the classroom with pupils with the help of other personnel/assistants?*
- 4. What results, in your view, does that approach yield?*
- 5. How do pupils respond to new personnel/assistants in the classroom?*
- 6. Can you provide any specific suggestions for improving the quality of teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

7. *Are there any obstacles blocking the implementation of those suggestions, and if so, what are they? Please be as specific as possible if you feel that such obstacles exist.*

8. *What are the most important experiences from this project that have helped the pupils learn Serbian more easily?*

#### **IV. Resources**

1. *Does the school have a language laboratory for teaching this subject?*

2. *Do you have facilities for listening to audio recordings?*

3. *If your answer was yes, do the teachers use that facility for organizing the teaching of Serbian?*

4. *Do you have a computer and a projector?*

5. *If your answer was yes, do the teachers use that facility for organizing the teaching of Serbian?*

6. *Do you have access to the internet?*

7. *If your answer was yes, do the teachers use that facility for organizing the teaching of Serbian?*

## **16.**

**Note:** This questionnaire was used for interviews with the teachers of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac, who participated in the project run by the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

1. *Which grades do you teach Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

2. *How long have you been teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

3. *What is your mother tongue?*

4. *How do you measure the knowledge attained by pupils? (You may select more than one answer)*

1. I do not check the knowledge of my pupils;
2. Through tests;
3. By checking homework;
4. Through oral exercises in class;
5. Through written exercises and tasks in class;
6. Something else – please clarify: \_\_\_\_\_

5. *In your opinion, what is the level of knowledge of your pupils who have just completed primary school and enrolled at secondary school?*

1. I have noticed that they are excellent at reading, writing and communicating in Serbian;
2. They're good at oral communication, but improvement is needed in writing and reading;
3. They demonstrate good knowledge in reading and writing in Serbian, but their oral skills need to be improved;
4. Both written and oral communication need to be improved;
5. Something else, please clarify: \_\_\_\_\_

6. *Which methods do you use most frequently in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

7. *Does the working method you use within the project run by the OSCE Mission differ from the method you normally use in teaching?*

1. Yes, it's different;
2. No, it's not different.

8. *If you answered "yes", please describe how those two approaches differ:*

9. *If you compare the two approaches, which, in your opinion, yields the best results?*

1. The customary approach that I normally use;
2. The new approach that I've been using within the project run by the OSCE Mission;
3. Both approaches yield good results;
4. Neither of the approaches.

10. *Why do think that is so?*

11. *What is your opinion on classroom work with children with the help of other personnel/assistants?*

1. It makes teaching easier;
2. It makes teaching more difficult;
3. Something else – please clarify

12. *What results, in your opinion, does this approach yield?*

1. It doesn't yield any results/I haven't noticed any results;
2. It yields positive results – please clarify
3. It yields negative results – please clarify
4. Something else – please clarify

13. *How do pupils respond to new personnel/assistants in the classroom?*

1. The pupils do not respond to assistants;
2. Positively – please clarify
3. Negatively – please clarify

4. Something else – please clarify

14. *What are the main difficulties that you encounter in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

15. *After the first cycle of this project, do you notice any results?*

3. Yes, I do notice some results. Which ones?

4. I do not notice any results.

16. *How do you measure and quantify the results achieved in the project?*

17. *After the first cycle, have you changed the way you work with pupils? If yes, please describe the change.*

18. *Has the project helped/contributed to you teaching Serbian in a different way, and do the pupils absorb knowledge of the language more easily?*

1. YES

2. NO

19. *If it has helped, please clarify how. If you feel that it has not helped, please clarify why.*

20. *What are your suggestions for improving the teaching of Serbian in schools?*

21. *The older generations know Serbian well, but that is not the case with the younger generations. Do you agree with that, and why do you think it is so?*

## 17.

**Note:** This questionnaire was used for interviews with the assistants engaged in the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in the “Sezai Surroi” secondary school in Bujanovac, who participated in the project run by the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

1. *For which grades have been helping the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

2. *How long have you been teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue (in years and months)?*

3. *Before participating in this project, had you taught Serbian to pupils from a minority community?*

1. YES                      2. NO

4. *In your opinion, what is the level of knowledge of the pupils you have been working with?*

1. I have noticed that they are excellent at reading, writing and communicating in Serbian;
2. They're good at oral communication, but improvement is needed in writing and reading;
3. They demonstrate good knowledge in reading and writing in Serbian, but their oral skills need to be improved;
4. Both written and oral communication need to be improved;
5. Something else, please clarify: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. *Describe your role in the project/how you participate in the running of the class for Serbian as a non-mother tongue:*

6. *Which methods do you use most frequently in working with the pupils?*

7. *What is your opinion on classroom work with children with the help of other personnel/assistants?*

1. It makes teaching easier;
2. It makes teaching more difficult;
3. Something else – please clarify

8. *What results, in your opinion, does this approach yield?*

1. It doesn't yield any results/I haven't noticed any results;
2. It yields positive results – please clarify

3. It yields negative results – please clarify

4. Something else – please clarify

*9. How do pupils respond to new personnel/assistants in the classroom?*

1. The pupils do not respond to assistants;

2. Positively – please clarify

3. Negatively – please clarify

4. Something else – please clarify

*10. What are the main difficulties that you encounter in teaching Serbian as a non-mother tongue?*

*11. After the first cycle of this project, do you notice any results?*

1. Yes, I do notice some results. Which ones?

2. I do not notice any results.

*12. How do you measure and quantify the results achieved by the pupils?*

*13. What are the most important experiences from this project that have contributed to the pupils absorbing knowledge of the language more easily?*

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