DEAL

Development of Literacy and Language Learning for Disadvantaged Young Learners

REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF GOOD PRACTICE

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This Report originated as a result of the IO 1 Report of the Activities of Good Practice
The contributions were written by the Project team members

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

Katarina Aladrović Slovaček
Lidija Cvikić
Kristina Horvat-Blažinović
Predrag Oreški
Tamara Turza-Bogdan
Vladimira Velički
Jelena Vignjević

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET

Ivan Gundulić Primary School Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

Zoran Čorkalo
Hajnalka Draganić
Ivan Igić
Sanja Miljatović
Iskra Osmančević

University of Maribor, Republic of Slovenia

Jožica Čeh Steger
Dragica Haramija
Simona Pulko
Melita Zemljak Jontes

Univerza v Mariboru
Filozofska fakulteta

University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

Ljuljzim Ademi
Elizabeta Bandilovska
Biljana Kamcevska
Vesna Makashevska
Maya Raunik Kirkov
Emilj Sulejmani

Graphic design
Marina Gabelica

DEAL logo design
Kristina Horvat Blažinović

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1. Introduction

The Report of the Activities of Good Practice is the first intellectual result of the Erasmus + K2 project called **Development of Literacy and Language Learning for Disadvantaged Young Learners,** conducted from 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2020.

All project partners participated in creating the Report: the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, University of Maribor, Slovenia, University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, and the Ivan Gundulić Primary School from Zagreb.
The Report was published in Croatian, Macedonian, Slovene, and English.

The goal of this Report was to show that in partner countries there already exists a good practice of helping disadvantaged children acquire literacy and language learning skills. Examining these best practice examples also showed certain mutual challenges and issues which are becoming starting points for coming up with other materials which shall be presented as the intellectual results of this project.

Creating this Report was done in several phases:
1. defining the criteria of selecting best practices
2. examining available data on disadvantaged children's acquisition of the language of their education
3. collecting data through interviews and practice examinations
4. selecting and describing best practice examples.

Selecting best practices

The criteria for selecting best practices were innovation, inclusion, interculturality, and the possibility of transfer (to other participants, into other contexts).
Furthermore, one of the criteria for selecting examples was the representation of best practices through formal, non-formal, and informal learning, and we have also respected the criterion of displaying best practices regarding different children's ages. Therefore, we have shown examples from working with children from preschool to secondary school age.

Displaying available data on acquiring the language of education

For each participating country, by reviewing legislative acts and available data, the linguistic

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context with regard to linguistically disadvantaged groups was described, and this was where the relevant data on the manner and the language of education of these linguistic groups can be found.

Interviews with respondents

Following is the display of information received by interviewing various respondents working in language acquisition with disadvantaged children. These respondents work in the education system (preschools and schools), migrant reception centres, and various non-government organisations. We have collected a total of 50 interviews from all three partner countries. The interviews were listed, and based on them, we have described the situations in all the partner countries. We have paid special attention to describing the challenges, as well as the positive examples visible in the conducted interviews.
We sincerely thank all the colleagues who took part in the interviews:

The Republic of Croatia

Diana Zorić and Ana Grzunov, preschool teachers, the Laboratorij Zabave association
Petra Bedeničar, preschool teacher, Milan Sachs Preschool, Zagreb
Monika Kamenić, preschool teacher, Orehovica Primary School
Tanja Anđel, preschool teacher, Mali Princ Preschool, Zagreb
Diana Zorić and Ana Grzunov, the Laboratorij Zabave association
Senka Teški, preschool teacher, Različak Preschool
Vesna Perhoč, teacher, Ivan Novak Primary School, Macinec
Vlatka Domišljanović, teacher, Cvjetno Naselje Primary School
Đurđica Tomić Peruško, teacher, Blato Primary School, Korčula
Željka Bartoš,, teacher, Đulovac Primary School
Ivanka Novak, Croatian Language teacher, Orehovica Primary School
Zlatica Kovačić, Head Teacher, Đulovac Primary School
Anamaria Macanović, Are You Syrious association
Asja Korbar, Are you Syrious association
Tajana Sikaček, Kutina Primary School
Josipa Seletković, Kutina Primary School
Helena Ćosić, Kutina Primary School
Renata Cindrić, Dr. Vinko Žganec Primary School, Zagreb
Snježana Čubrilo, Dr. Vinko Žganec Primary School, Zagreb

Lamia Mladić, Dr. Vinko Žganec Primary School, Zagreb
Marija Vidalina, Dr. Vinko Žganec Primary School, Zagreb
Marija Luković, Head Teacher, Gustav Krklec Primary School, Zagreb
Fanita Bačić, preschool teacher, Nova Budućnost association, Samobor
Iva Raguž and Iva Lizović, volunteers, Jesuit Refugee Centre
Mirela Jozić, an employee of Porin, the Croatian Red Cross Asylum Seeker Reception Centre

The Republic of Macedonia

Sali Buzalki, Bratstvo-Edinstvo bilingual school, Sredno Konjari
Silvana Mitrevska, preschool teacher, 11 September Preschool, Resen
Nataša Elenčevska, preschool teacher,11 September Preschool, Resen
Marija Vasilevska, preschool teacher, Brešia preschool, Debar
Daniela Miteva, teacher, Maršal Tito Primary School, Strumica
Valmira Kobeci, preschool teacher, Brešia, Kolezia, Debar
Ilinka Vaskova, psychologist, Macedonian–Greek border
Biljana Stojkov, Jan Amos Komenski Primary School
Marija Atanasova, school counsellor, SUMNAL Development Association of the Roma community in Macedonia
Tanja Dimova, psychologist, non-formal education at the La Strada NGO at the Vinojug-Gevgelija refugee camp
Ivana Ilievska, psychologist, Vinojug-Gevgelija migrant camp

The Republic of Slovenia

Sonja Škoberne and Sonja Žnidaršič, teachers, Tabor Primary School 1, Maribor
Aleksandra Verbošt, Slovene Language teacher, Tabor Primary School 1, Maribor
Marjan Kulčar, Slovene Language teacher, Murska Sobota Grammar School
Renata Debeljak, Slovene Language teacher, Olga Meglič Primary School, Ptuj, Natalija Kaučič, Slovene Language teacher, Slovenska Bistrica Secondary School
Alenka Ajd Bratkovič, librarian, Slovenska Bistrica Secondary School
Metka Gselman Sedak, Slovene Language teacher, Tabor Primary School 1, Maribor
Katja Ajdnik, teacher, Dravinjske Doline Youth Centre
Vesna Bračko, teacher, Pesnica Primary School, Pesnica pri Mariboru
Dr Katja Košir, University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology

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Aleksander Jeršič, Head Teacher, Drago Kobal Primary School, Maribor
Ida Haramija, teacher, Bojan Ilich Primary School, Maribor
Blanka Kovačec, project multiplicator at The Challenges of Intercultural Coexistence project
Rezarta Zumerri, an undergraduate of Preschool Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Maribor

Describing best practice examples

Based on the collected interviews, we have selected several best practice examples from each country. We have presented a total of 14 best practice examples from all partner countries. The examples were described with regard to content and activities, the possibility of implementation at other participants, other contexts, and through formal/non-formal/informal learning and different age of the children. We have recognised mutual challenges and problems appearing in every country.

In solving the problems which we have observed while studying the practices, we shall focus on forming the required materials, activities, foundations, and manuals through other intellectual results, which we shall obtain through work in the continued execution of the project.

2. Languages of education in partner countries

2.1. The Republic of Croatia

In the Republic of Croatia, for 95% of the population (according to the 2011 census), Croatian is the mother tongue, while other residents consider one of 23 different languages their mother tongue. This means that for the majority of primary and secondary school students, as well as children in preschools, their mother tongue is also their language of education. However, for some pupils, Croatian is a second language, and the language of their environment. They belong to national minorities, immigrants to Croatia, children whose parents are in Croatia for a longer or shorter temporary stay, as well as children of Croatian nationality who were born, or have spent a part of their childhood in another country so the language of the

country they had lived in became their primary language of communication. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, members of national minorities are guaranteed the right to education in their language and script. This is realised in three models. In Model A, all classes are in the language and script of the national minority, a minority language in the Republic of Croatia and students also learn Croatian as one of the mandatory school subjects. Model B is a bilingual model in which students attend the so-called national group of courses in the minority language, and the rest of the classes in Croatian. Model C is a model where all education is in Croatian, and students who are members of a national minority attend their minority language and script classes. In Model A, pupils can attend primary school in Czech, Hungarian, Serbian, and Italian, whereas Model B education is conducted in all the above languages but Italian.

According to the most recent publicly available data, in the 2014/15 school year, there were 10 699 students who are members of national minorities involved in one of the three education models mentioned above. More than half of the students were involved in Model A, slightly less in Model C, and only 60 students were involved in Model B.

Education in the minority language is also available for preschool children. Being able to get an education in one's mother tongue and script while at the same time learning Croatian is a favourable circumstance for achieving a balanced bilingual ability. However, not all national minorities have the possibility of education in their mother tongue in all the models. For example, for members of the Roma and the Albanian national minorities, Model A and Model B classes are not yet possible. This means that for this group of students, the language of instruction differs from their mother tongue, and it is for this reason they can be considered linguistically and culturally disadvantaged students, since the level of proficiency in Croatian, their language of education, influences the achievement of their educational goals. We can also include immigrant students and returnees to Croatia in this group of disadvantaged students. Students who are starting or continuing their education in the Republic of Croatia in the Croatian language, and whose knowledge of the Croatian language is found lacking or completely absent, may study Croatian in preparatory classes or supplementary classes. Preparatory Croatian Language class is a program of intensive Croatian Language learning conducted for up to one school year and is implemented based on the Preparatory Croatian language program for primary and secondary school students with insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language (Official Gazette 151/2011). This program introduced several novelties in learning the Croatian language within compulsory education: independence of goals and educational achievements from the level of education, the interaction of language skills, and strategies of learning and using a language.

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In order to facilitate Croatian language learning for non-native speakers of Croatian, two more Croatian language learning programs have been developed, aimed at asylum seekers and asylees: Croatian language, history, and culture program for asylum seekers, asylees, foreigners under temporary protection, and foreigners under subsidiary protection for the purpose of access to the education system and integration into Croatian society (Official

2. 2. Experiences with working with non-native speaker children

The Faculty of Teacher Education and the Ivan Gundulić Primary School have conducted a total of 25 interviews. Preschool teachers, class teachers, head teachers, members of professional support staff (school psychologists/counsellors/speech and language therapists), and NGO volunteers were interviewed. Persons working with all disadvantaged children groups: national minorities and migrants, were interviewed.

We can present these interviews according to the type of institution they were conducted in, as follows:

- Formal education (schools and preschools): 21
- Non-formal and informal education (NGOs/associations): 4

It must be emphasised that non-formal forms of learning as a method are very often used in schools and preschools.

The conducted interviews show positive sides of working with disadvantaged children, as well as the problems educators encounter regardless of the type of education. Based on the conducted interviews, we shall briefly present our observations on the work, as well as the challenges and difficulties in their work, which the respondents have pointed out.

Observations based on the interviews about working with disadvantaged children

In formal education, i.e. primary schools and preschools, teachers and preschool teachers primarily strive to create an atmosphere of unity and joy in their work, where children can feel accepted.

> *First we used smiles and hugs. We tried to make our children feel accepted. (From the interview with Petra Bedeničar, preschool teacher, Milan Sachs Preschool, Zagreb)*)

> *If we go to workshops together and take them to Bundek Lake in the spring and in the summer, we motivate them to play together. Then we've got activities where we motivate them to work toward a common goal, so they can befriend each other, and through this, we can include a new child in the group. (From the interview with Anamarija Macanović, a volunteer for the Are You Syrious NGO)*

The teachers and the professional support staff of the Stjepan Kefelja Primary School, Kutina, particularly emphasised the awareness of establishing trust:

> *Before a child enrols in our school, we pay special attention to the entire situation, the surroundings into which we are bringing the child. There are already school teachers who have been receiving children from reception centres for generations. In higher primary school years, if the child speaks English, at least a couple of phrases, we try to arrange that their English teacher is also their form teacher. We prepare the teacher, especially the form teacher, and someone who will have the most contact with the child. The first contact is essential. The school counsellor and I visit the reception centre, along with a translator. We meet the whole family, examine the entire family situation, perhaps some high-risk instances which may influence the child's school life. We present our school's life and work to both the parents and the child. The child sees us as a certain first contact, so on the first school day, when the reception worker brings the child to school, the child sees us again. We also bring the child to a class which has already been prepared. We had a class who explicitly asked that the next boy or girl we bring attend their class. (Tajana Sikaček, school psychologist, Stjepan Kefelja Primary School, Kutina)*

Children from asylum-seeking families are in a particularly complex situation, as they live in reception centres and wait for their asylum requests to be granted. It is because of the particularity of their life circumstances that the possibility of inclusion in the education system

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is extremely psychologically and socially important for these children. Therefore, it is crucial to establish good and efficient administrative procedures which would enable children to spend as little time outside the education system as possible:

> *Children who are admitted to the reception centre are included in the education system as soon as possible. In Kutina, we have made the situation simpler, because, in the beginning, all four primary schools in Kutina were involved in the accommodation and the reception of the children. Now we assign children to two schools, to make the procedure simpler. The moment the children are registered at the reception centre, a decision of the Office (of State Administration) is issued stating the children will be included in our education system. The Office calls the schools, we discuss the present situation and decide which school receives the child. Immediately after the child is included in the education system, we also request that the child attends Preparatory Croatian Language classes. We are really automated by now. (Tajana Sikaček, school psychologist, Stjepan Kefelja Primary School, Kutina)*

The teachers are aware of the importance of non-formal language acquisition and many of them encourage it:

> *…I've got plenty of materials the children can use: I've got picture books, books, encyclopedias, toys, exercises, sudoku, crosswords, there's a lot, in the formal part, we've got what we usually use in teaching, and in the non-formal part, at recess, they sort themselves into groups according to their respective interests, so some play Ludo, some fourth-graders find crosswords, rebuses, and similar games interesting, so groups form, then we've got the Old Maid card game that another group plays… (Vesna Perhoč, teacher, Macinec Primary School)*

A good example of acknowledging cultural differences and adopting the Boyash Romanian language is evident in working with the Roma national minority, as preschool teachers have completed Boyash language courses:

> *… the words that they use, I can translate them all, I don't need a translator with the kids.Understanding adults is somewhat more difficult because they talk faster, but for what I need for working with children, for these games, I know the words.*

And if we are learning terms, I always ask that they first tell it to me in Boyash, and in the games, I accept the Boyash terms, then the children from Međimurje tell me their local dialect word, and then we learn and adopt the standard Croatian word. I always refer to all three words because otherwise, it just doesn't work.
(Monika Kamenić, preschool teacher, Orehovica Primary School)

In informal teaching, educators are noticing positive changes happening in their daily work with children:

> *"With asylee children, we are noticing daily positive shifts in their desire to learn Croatian, and with that, society's view on them is changing as well.*
> *(Iva Lizović, Jesuit Refugee Service)*

Teachers are trying to enable the pupils who do not speak Croatian at all and are included in the Preparatory Croatian Language classes to communicate in Croatian as soon and as efficiently as possible:

> *"The most important thing is to teach children to communicate so that they can establish contact with other children. The moment they leave Preparatory classes and succeed in establishing contact with other children, the other children teach them, perhaps not directly, but indirectly, as they listen to other children. It is important to teach them basic terms related to school life as well as life outside of the school. The basic things they will need when they enter a shop, or that they can ask for what they need… (Josipa Seletković, teacher, Stjepan Kefelja Primary School, Kutina)*

Based on all the conducted interviews, we can conclude that preschool teachers and school teachers organize many activities for improving children's speech, for example, experiential speaking games (experiencing reality through touch, sight, hearing, smell… and its identification), games of daily speech situations (for learning greetings, phrases, and communication patterns), articulation gymnastics (for developing the flexibility of the vocal system required to pronounce sounds and phonetic sets specific to the Croatian language), treasure chests/trees of new words (activities of illustrating and storing newly learned lexical items), creating picture dictionaries of the child's language and the Croatian language (together with the child's parents). They often use flashcards in their work, puzzles, etc.

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The respondents rely on previously created materials, textbooks, flashcards, puzzles, and worksheets. They also create their own materials very often. In their initial work with asylee pupils and asylum seeker pupils who speak neither Croatian nor any of the world languages, teachers especially point out the use of ICT as an extremely useful tool, particularly the possibility of translating from Croatian into the children's respective mother tongues.

Challenges and difficulties

In their work, educators are met with challenges and difficulties. The conducted interviews lead us to the conclusion that the problems they meet are often conditioned by cultural differences. Some of them relate to the unfamiliarity with the script, or to problems in the teacher (mentor) – pupil relation, where the children do not take the Croatian approach to education very seriously at times. Educators also mention the linguistic heterogeneity of asylum-seeking children groups, as those children speak different mother tongues, so it is important to find a mediator for establishing the first instance of communication:

> *"In general, there is always another child which speaks their language along with Croatian, or German, or English, so this other child is our translator. In case that there is no such child, we try to find an adult we know, who then translates for us.(from the interview with Anamarija Macanović, a volunteer for the Are You Syrious NGO)*

The problems the teachers mention are also in the pupils' knowledge, which is, according to several teachers, insufficient for a certain degree of education.

Teachers also point out that the possibility of organizing Preparatory Croatian Language classes is very positive, but that 70 hours of classes, as envisioned by the program, are insufficient for the pupils to acquire the linguistic competencies necessary to continue their education in the Croatian language.

Some respondents claimed that problems were also encountered while attempting to establish good relationships with the children's parents. The teachers believed these problems to be related to the inability to adjust to the new environment, the assumptions of cultural differences, and the inability to communicate with parents who did not speak Croatian. These

problems would be alleviated by employing translators, which are very rarely available:

> *I've only used the services of a translator with the father. The translator never entered the classroom… We've only had her for half an hour. The dad then talked about how they got here, what he did, that they expected help from the Red Cross and the Social Service, and that was the whole of the conversation.*
> *(Vlatka Domišljanović, teacher, Cvjetno Naselje Primary School, Zagreb)*

> *We've had the most problems with the parents. With the children, it was easier. Parents were difficult to communicate with, because of the language, but more so because of the cultural differences. Working with these children's parents would be needed, as well as educating them about Croatian culture, preschools, education and its expectations, the education system… (Tanja Anđel, preschool teacher, Mali Princ Preschool, Zagreb)*

Another problem which the teachers are encountering is the inclusion of children who do not speak Croatian (e.g. asylum seekers) into the regular program, regardless of their age. The respondents state that additional Croatian Language lessons are often not organised in the school the children attend, but in another school, for two or three hours per week, which is considered insufficient. The school the children are "suddenly" attending has not, with regard to the urgency of including these children, organised additional (remedial) Croatian Language classes, and the teachers state that every school that works with these children should organise these classes, for which they need professional assistance. Classes could be organised after school. Furthermore, the respondents notice a great lack of educational material, primarily visual aids, design to learn Croatian as a Second Language, i.e. aimed at linguistically disadvantaged children, as well as not being familiar with the basic phrases of the languages those children speak:

> *We would need some sort of a manual containing basic phrases in the native languages of the children coming to us. So, questions, sentences of a directing type and do not require an answer, such as "Now we're going to lunch. No school tomorrow. Homework. Do these at home. So, basic work instructions. (…) Questions which only require an affirmative or a negative answer. We would need two pages of phrases in different languages as first aid, with pronunciation.*

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It would be of great help if I had a Croatian as a Second Language textbook, which would have to have, in the beginning, phrases like Please, Thank you, Here you are, Sorry, and then slowly some others, just as if we were learning a foreign language. (…) In the classroom, it would help me the most if I knew some phrases in Arabic. (Vlatka Domišljanović, Cvjetno Naselje Primary School)

The teachers emphasised the importance of audio materials for learning Croatian. Although listening skills can be developed through live speech, there is a significant lack of appropriate and diverse listening materials:

> *We lack audio materials. We're well equipped now, we've got smartboards, so multimedia materials would be useful. Pupils need to develop their listening skills. We can't do without them. The most frequent word they hear from me is – listen! (Lamia Mladić, speech and language therapist at the Dr. Vinko Žganec School)*

In informal work with children, volunteers mention challenges in finding the best model of work:

> *At the very start, when we just began, we were in a single room, where there were both preschool children and children who have just started school. But then, over the following months, we got to this structure and writing reports, and to the fact that certain children might need additional support. In the reception centre, we have got shifts from Tuesday to Friday, and we have got three age groups organised. We work with preschool children, the 7-12 age group, these are the lower grades of primary school, and with the 12+ age group. These are formal shifts, from five to seven – two hours. If there is a need, and if the volunteers have no other obligations, they can stay longer. These are group shifts. And apart from these group shifts, we've also got individual support for the children. This individual support is for the children who have arrived recently and are learning the language, and for the children belonging to an older age group but have greater difficulty acquiring the language, or if a child has problems with a specific school subject, then they receive support in learning that subject. (Anamarija Macanović,, the Are You Syrious NGO)*

Socialization of the children is most often not a problem if pupils and their parents are

informed in advance about the inclusion of the new children. P. E., Music, and Art classes are mentioned as good ways to include these children and promote their socialization.

The interviews show that the educators are aware of language acquisition in all forms of education but that in informal education only the communicative approach to language acquisition is dominant, without the sufficient knowledge of the ways to implement elements of grammar in such a way of language acquisition.

From the conducted interviews, we can conclude that their practical needs are clear:

- the educators need additional training about interculturality and learning Croatian as a Second Language
- the educators need activities and materials of all kinds for learning Croatian as a Second Language

2. 3. The Republic of Macedonia

According to the Law on Primary Education of the Republic of Macedonia, primary education is compulsory, and it lasts for nine years organized in three educational periods, from the first to the third grade, from the fourth to the sixth grade and from the seventh to the second grade. Article 9 of this law states that the education in the primary schools is realized in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet (paragraph 1), but it also states that for the pupils who are members of the communities who attend the education in a language other than the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, the educational processes are carried out in the language and alphabet of the respective community (paragraph 2). We can conclude that in the Republic of Macedonia, instruction in the primary schools is conducted in the Macedonian language, in the Albanian language, in the Turkish language, in the Serbian language, and more recently efforts are being made in schools where there is a sufficient number of children for instruction to be conducted in Bosnian and in the Romani language. This law also provides (article 8) the right for children of foreign nationals and children without citizenship who live in the Republic of Macedonia, to attend primary education under equal conditions as children residents in the Republic of Macedonia (detailed in paragraph 5 of this Article Law).

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The formal education provides implementation of curricula and teaching programs adopted by:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for Early Childhood Development and
- Ministry of Education for Primary Education.

They provide systematic, formal education for preschool and primary school children on the whole territory of the country. Curricula and programs are implemented in the mother tongue of children/pupils and it is relatively simple if everyone has the same mother tongue.
However, this is not the case on the entire territory of the state.
The Republic of Macedonia is a multi-ethnic country where distribution by ethnicity is not the same everywhere – there are ethnical regions where teaching is conducted in only one language, but we also have regions where teaching is conducted in two or more languages. Unfortunately, there are also regions where due to various reasons (mostly because of the lack of an adequate staff who can provide education in the mother tongue of the children/pupils), pupils start their formal education in their mother tongue, but it happens that they complete the education in a different language (which is not their mother tongue).

This is the case with Roma children/pupils almost throughout the whole territory of the country, where these children/pupils receive their education mostly in the Macedonian language and, more rarely, in Albanian. In Eastern Macedonia, the same situation occurs with the children/pupils of Turkish nationality who attend classes up to grade 5 in their mother tongue and then continue to study in the Macedonian language. Sometimes the Roma children/pupils attend their classes completely in the Macedonian language. Today, there are rare cases when Albanian children/pupils attend classes in Macedonian (such cases are in the cities of Veles and Bitola).
In situations like these, educators and teachers are faced with a non-standard situation in the educational process, when students are not able to verbally communicate in the language of education, and even less – to follow the teaching of all necessary subjects.

In Macedonia there is also a great number of foreign citizens from different speaking areas who come to live in Macedonia with their families. Some of them are enrolling their children in public schools where instruction is conducted in the Macedonian language, even though their children do not speak/understand the Macedonian language, or only partially understand it. The parents' goal for their children is to help them learn the Macedonian language, but it also happens that the children who came to school in the middle of the school year have to be

instantly involved in the educational process with not enough time to prepare themselves for the new language surrounding.
In the second half of 2015 and in 2016, Macedonia become the part of the refugee route from the Middle East to Western Europe. For that purpose, a transit centre was opened on the border with Greece, where the adults and children of different ages find temporary stay and shelter. They did not speak the Macedonian language at all, the language of the country in which they were located, nor English or any other world languages for communicating with the hosts. Therefore, informal education was organized for children of different ages as a way of socializing and learning in the context of informal learning.

In all these non-standard educational situations, educators implemented various ways to reach educational goals. There are many examples of their practical work with children/pupils from different categories which present successful achievement of content and necessary activities (within formal, non-formal and informal learning).
The success of language learning for children in a disadvantaged language situation is evidence of professional and creative abilities of educators in all types of education. Various forms and methods of work are used in the realization of everyday school activities – the use of standard, but also non-standard means and strategies for learning and teaching. They provide successful conditions and ways for learning the standard language of the country, the language of education for disadvantaged young learners.

2. 4. Experiences with working with non-native speaker children

The working team from the Republic Macedonia conducted a total number of 11 interviews, divided according to the method of teaching/learning: a formal, non-formal and informal context. After extensive analysis of the interviews, we selected 3 of them, which are the best representatives of the teaching practices from the aspect of all the aforementioned ways of teaching and learning.

Context/way of learning: formal, non-formal, informal

Interviews that have been made with regard to the method of teaching can be divided into:

- formal education context: 7 interviews, out of which 4 from primary schools in Skopje, Strumica, Debar and Konjari village; 3 interviews with educators in 2 kindergartens in Resen

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and one in Debar.

- non-formal learning: an interview with a non-governmental educational organization for teaching Roma children
- Informal learning: 3 interviews from the transit centre in Gevgelija.

Language group of speakers (migrants, national minorities):

- Formal education: primary schools that provide standard education for young students with different language groups: Turkish and Bosnian, Albanian, English and Italian.
- non-formal learning: national minority of Roma children, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who do not speak the Macedonian language in which they should attend all years of primary education
- Informal learning: children - migrants from the countries of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, who speak Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish. The age of children was from preschool age to adolescents (from 2, 3 years to 17, 18 years).

In all the interviews it was emphasized that the biggest problem in language learning for disadvantages children is achieving initial positive communication. Thus, regardless of the type of learning/teaching, teachers and educators agree that before the start of the process of teaching or simultaneously, it is necessary to achieve students trust and closeness.

> *"I always try in the best way (with a smile and kindness, with familiar gestures) to introduce myself to the child, to help him/her relax and to encourage them to introduce themselves to the other kids. It should be explained to the kids that even they are similar, they are not completely the same. All of us have some differences, characteristics. When we try to overcome the differences, we first explain the differences that are more general as: gender, height, desires, etc., but the main point that unites them, they – the children are all friends. It is thus achieved to understand that the differences between the languages we speak are normal, that they are not something that should be ashamed of or feeling inhibited for the sake of ignorance of the language. (Daniela Miteva, Marshal Tito Primary School, Strumica).*

The most common problems (challenges) that arise are based on the language barrier and cultural differences. For example, for migrant children, the way of writing was problematic,

because in their culture the writing is done from right to left, the numbers and letters are quite different, and also the numerical system. Regarding the cultural barriers, the differences in the teacher – pupil relationship are evident. In the countries where the children's experiences included almost only dominant, authoritarian teachers, the more democratic way of learning and teaching was problematic and was not taken seriously.

> *A greater authority of teachers in the beginning of their education was crucial to their perception of our more democratic style of learning as inadequate, so we had to make additional efforts to achieve the set goals. (Tanja Dimova, "La Strada").*

Also, the question of mixing male and female children in learning groups was also problematic.

> *… We must be sensitive when preparing the workshops. For example: when organizing the New Year's celebration, we had the idea to gather all the children in one space and celebrate, but they immediately rebelled and demanded that males and females should be divided into different rooms while celebrating –the males should celebrate in one room and females in another. It is so, because in their culture the celebrations are always organized so that women and men are divided. (Tanja Dimova, "La Strada").*

The best activities for overcoming language barriers are social games, different types of creative expression, increased interaction of children in the group, mutual assistance, etc. This leads to greater cohesion in the group, relaxation, a will for cooperation and learning with other children who do not understand the language.

> *The language barrier can be most easily solved by activities that do not require verbal communication. Some of the best activities for overcoming language barriers are the different types of social games played together by all children where they try to fulfil a specific task or a goal. Besides the game activities, different types of creative expression are also positive (listening to music, drawing, etc.). In doing so, teachers should strive to increase the interaction of children in the group, to encourage them to cooperate as a team, to become actively involved in the activity and to find a way together to help if a member of the team needs support. (Marija Atanasova, "Subnal").*

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> *… Children learn to socialize with each other, because in the end, as a preschool teacher, I am a model of identification – just like my colleagues. So, the ways in which we react to each other and what kind of relationships we create between us, directly reflect on the way children react and behave with their friends.*
> *(Marija Vasilevska, Debar)*

2. 5. The Republic of Slovenia

Legislation, which also includes articles on immigrant pupils, is general legislation and school legislation.
The first group, general legislation, includes international documents and general Slovenian legislation: Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (2006), Resolution on Immigration Policy of the Republic of Slovenia (2002), Asylum Act (2006) and Act on Foreigners/Aliens Act (2009, 2011).

The second group, school legislation, includes the following documents: White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (2011), Basic School Act (2006), Public Finance Balance Act (2012) and Rules on Knowledge Assessment and Grading (2013); and also documents which are not yet legally binding: Strategy for the Integration of Migrant Children, Basic School and Upper Secondary Students into the Education System of the Republic of Slovenia (2007), Guidelines for Education of Foreign Children at Kindergartens and Schools (2009), Guidelines for the Integration of Immigrant Children into Kindergartens and Schools (2012).

From the above-mentioned, the documents and their articles that directly relate to (pupils) immigrants and their right to learn Slovenian as a second/foreign language are highlighted.

Slovenia is a signatory to the document of the eight Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: the European Reference Framework (OJ EU 2018/C189/8), where the first competence relates to literacy: "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, express, create, and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written forms, using visual, sound/audio and digital materials across disciplines and contexts. It implies the ability to communicate and connect effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way." The second competence

includes multilingualism (also there):

> "This competence defines the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication. It broadly shares the main skill dimensions of literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts according to one's wants or needs. Language competences integrate a historical dimension and intercultural competences. It relies on the ability to mediate between different languages and media, as outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference. As appropriate, it can include maintaining and further developing mother tongue competences, as well as the acquisition of a country's official language(s)."[1]

For the DEAL project, the above-mentioned competences are very important (by June 2018, the first competence was learning the mother tongue, while the second competence was learning foreign languages) and will undoubtedly trigger changes at the legislative level.

Some laws have been adopted in Slovenia, which provide the possibility of learning the Slovenian language, but differ in extent and form of learning. Basic School Act (1996) in article 8, paragraph 2, stipulates that "for children residing in the Republic of Slovenia whose mother tongue is not the Slovenian language, when attending elementary school, the lessons of Slovenian language and culture are organized, and in cooperation with the countries of origin the lessons of their mother tongue and culture as well." Pupils have the right to additional lessons of Slovenian language in the first (the whole year is taken into consideration, regardless the time the child moves to Slovenia!) and in the second school year after moving to Slovenia. The Act on Public Usage of Slovenian Language (2004) in article 13, paragraph 1, states that "the Republic of Slovenia encourages the learning of Slovenian language in Slovenia. To this end, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopts a program which, in addition to regular education, is also intended for language education of young people and adult citizens, as well as programs intended for foreigners in Slovenia." The current legislation (article 81 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act) provides a normative basis for providing funds from the state budget for both teaching Slovenian as well as for teaching the

[1] Priporočilo sveta o ključnih kompetencah za vseživljenjsko učenje. Official Journal of the European Union 2018, C 189: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SL/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:189:FULL&from=SL. (Access 12th January 2019.)

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mother tongue for immigrant pupils (in elementary and secondary school) integrated in regular elementary and secondary education.

The document Guidelines for the Integration of Immigrant Children into Kindergartens and Schools (2012) is of high importance, although it is not binding, therefore it serves as a document of recommendation. Guidelines encourage the implementation of the principle (Guidelines 2012: 3) of an "inclusive approach to the implementation of the rights of immigrant children to education in order to effectively integrate them and create an intercultural society."

The sensitivity of learning Slovenian as a second language or the language of the environment is also highlighted in the document White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (2011). This is a document that contains the principles, goals and strategic orientations of education, firstly the general ones, followed by the goals according to levels of education (kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school); a separate chapter contains principles, goals and strategies which apply to children immigrants and children, born in Slovenia, whose mother tongue is not Slovenian. Huge importance is paid to the awareness of the use of languages in education: Slovenian as the first and second language, mother tongue and foreign language (ibid.: 33–35). Respect for all the children whose mother tongue is not Slovenian is evident in the principle of encouraging interculturalism, since awareness of the common cultural heritage is a fundamental condition for accepting and respecting pluralism of cultures. Knowing that "the more effective and equitable integration of pupils immigrants depends to a large extent on the knowledge of Slovenian" (ibid.: 33), the authors of the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (2011) for immigrant children propose a concise course of Slovenian which should be individualized and differentiated, as well as tutoring by older pupils who have a similar (immigrant) experience.

2.6. Experiences with working with non-native speaker children

- Number of interviews: 15
- Formal education: 6
- Formal and informal education: 4
- Informal education: 2
- Formal, non-formal and informal education: 2
- Informal and non-formal education: 1

Participants: elementary school headmaster, elementary school teachers and subject teachers, secondary school professor, librarian, graduate student of the preschool education at the Faculty of Education, University of Maribor; a university teacher at the Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor.

Findings

The common findings reflected in all the interviews carried out and which should be emphasized, are as follows:

- There is a need to constantly raise awareness about the importance of supportive relations in working with vulnerable groups of children, including children who are in a disadvantaged language learning position.
- During the first contact with a child who does not understand Slovenian, it is important that the first approach is relaxed, a smile and an encouraging word should be present, even though the words are not understood. A tone of voice is also very important.
- When choosing a communication channel, one has to be aware that each child prefers a different one, but it is important to simply show the child that we care and that we are genuinely interested in him/her, gradually giving him/her a sense of security, which sometimes takes several weeks, months.
- An important communication channel through which a child starts communicating is definitely drawings; through drawings, pictures, illustrations, children can open for communication a great deal.
- Interviewers learn with children in various ways, through various activities, through artistic activities, drawing, painting, through playing (in the case of smaller children), by using pictures, describing them and talking. Language barriers can be overcome with mimic, gestures, with a compiler or dictionaries, nevertheless, using pictures, drawings etc. definitely turn out to be the easiest way. An effective approach for overcoming language barriers can be didactic or non-guided games, sports activities, and of course variety of other didactic tools for language learning.
- If there is an indirect language, it is an appropriate tool to use, as it provides easier communication, for example, by using English, Serbian, Croatian, the basics of Albanian, Russian … If there is no indirect language, communication can be organized by using gestures and with mime with the help of pictures. The child can easily become open for communication through conversation or gestures, with a smile, certainly with kindness and understanding.

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- It is necessary to work with the group for the successful socialization of the child. A consistent message is that we are responsible for the well-being of everyone in the group. In the ŠIPK project Development of the Support Program for Children Refugees in Inclusion to Social Environment (STIK), a system of peer tutoring resulted as an example of good practice. Activities that were the most effective with strengthening the feelings of attachment and affinity were the meetings of all the pupils and students where they did not learn, but mostly entertain themselves.
- When socializing a child in the environment, it is definitely the first impression that is of huge importance, we need to let the new pupil know that he/she is welcome, is accepted. The pupils are prepared beforehand with awareness that it is difficult for the new pupil, especially because of the language, thus they are encouraged to let the new pupil feel accepted, they help him/her with daily and basic issues (schedule, changing classrooms, snacks, etc.).
- Very effective activities for socializing a child are spontaneous conversations; through a sincere and relaxed conversation we let the child know that we do care about him/her and that we wish to help him/her.

Needs and challenges

Overcoming cultural differences

- First, it has to be accepted that cultural differences do exist and that the social reality of people from other cultural backgrounds is different in certain aspects. Things that are self-evident to us are sometimes not evident to others and vice versa. Sometimes (for example, in the case of eating habits), it is sensible to adapt our environment to immigrants. Where there are standpoints that conflict with our understanding of human rights, we gradually (but gently) insist that they should adapt (for example, the attitude towards women, the relation to family violence).
- It is very important to know and consider where children come from, under what circumstances they grew up or are currently growing up and to take this into consideration. This, as well as many other inclusive practices, applies to all children, not just immigrant children.
- It is only correct that we both respect each other: different eating habits, family relations, different values, religion, ways of thinking and behaviour.

- With great patience and understanding of basic cultural backgrounds, cultural differences are easier to overcome. It is necessary to learn about the basics of the individual's cultural background, before he/she joins the lessons of Slovenian language.

- Knowledge of the individual's personal background is crucial. If one is a child/adolescent who is in Slovenia at his/her own discretion (because of learning a language, exchanging, visiting relatives, etc.), the starting point is completely different, as if one is a child/adolescent who is immigrant due to the economic migration of parents or even because of family immigration.

Overcoming language barriers and achieving successful socialization

- In overcoming language barriers and for successful child socialization, the interviewer Rezarta Zumerri, from her own experience, as a child coming from a different cultural environment, stresses that she always wanted to be placed into certain groups by the teachers themselves, thus not gaining the feeling of not being a part of the group. She is aware that she has had problems with her classmates about mockery and non-acceptance regarding national and religious affiliation. She thinks that teachers should be more aware of the attitude of other children to children in a disadvantaged language position and to be more alert to the fact that these children feel comfortable in the classroom, and not merely focus on the learning achievements of the immigrant child.

Challenges and needs

Problems related to the implementation of activities are:

- Some of the respondents highlight flaws in the concept of the school system (children are expected to be successful without too early adjustments to the system) and the personal distress of children or their families and problematic teachers' beliefs.

- Not understanding the language is a huge problem, thus a head teacher (one of the interviewees) suggests that all pupils need to learn Slovenian intensively in the first few months (e. g. from 2 to 3 months) in order to ease their education. At that point, they would understand the basics, it would be easier for them to follow the lessons at all subjects. He suggests that such an intensive course should take place at the elementary school or at the Maribor Adult Education Centre; it would also be sensible to include the children's mothers, as they, as a rule, do not know the language, and therefore, these children often do not work at home or have no one to help them work at home.

- Mutual non-cooperation – parents, school, a pupil (e. g. parents of children from Kosovo come to school only if called, the father is the authority and boys have a better (superior)

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Examples of activities

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position, while girls are more willing to work).

- Frequent prejudices.
- A preparatory course of the Slovenian language is intended for the pupils, as well as additional lessons with the teacher who actively speaks their mother tongue.

Requirements for materials

- More bilingual materials (in a language that the child has mastered, and in the Slovenian language).
- Exchange of examples of good practice (materials and activities that would help in the selection and creation of meaningful activities).
- Games as a didactic tool (also various psychosocial games).
- Material that would contain a set of concrete methods and practical examples, approaches in how to present a more difficult substance (e. g. declension) in a simplified, more friendly, playful way, with a variety of different methods for effective grammar acquisition.

3. Examples of good practice

3. 1. Milan Sachs Preschool, Jasmin branch, Zagreb, Croatia

Articulation gymnastics, Creating a treasure chest or a tree of new words, Picture dictionaries of the child's language and the Croatian language

Linguistic group: Arabic (Persian) – asylee children from Syria (age: 4-6 years)

The Jasmin branch of the Milan Sachs Preschool in Zagreb operates within the Islamic community of Zagreb and is the preschool with the most Muslim children. Since 2017, the preschool also conducts the Islamic Religious Education program. Since 2016, three asylee children from Syria have been attending the preschool. When the children arrived, they only spoke Arabic. In working with these children, particularly in encouraging their Croatian language learning, the preschool teachers found Articulation gymnastics very useful. By doing Articulation gymnastics exercises, they worked on the flexibility of the vocal system

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necessary to pronounce phonemes (č, ć, š, ž, đ, dž, lj, nj) and phonemic sets (rst, str, škr, rš, št, zd…) which are typical in the Croatian language. The exercises helped the speakers of a foreign language learn to pronounce these phonemes and phonemic sets which are absent in their mother tongue. They exercised the total flexibility of their speech organs, especially the tongue while pronouncing palatal speech sounds.

In encouraging lexical development in learning the Croatian language, they also practised the activity of creating a treasure chest / a tree of new words. The activity includes painting and storing the newly learned words in a handmade chest or a tree. This helped the children visualise their progress in learning new words, which has contributed to the development of their communication-related self-esteem.

The lexical development of the speakers was further encouraged by creating picture Arabic-Croatian dictionaries, made with the support of their parents. Each child has made their personal dictionary. According to thematic units (e.g. The child and the family, The human body, Animals, Food, Plants, Colours, Clothes, The four seasons, The weather…), they have made visual depictions of terms, and also written the relevant words, both in their mother tongue and in Croatian.

The described activities also included other children, native Croatian speakers. They also took part in the beneficial exercises of Articulation gymnastics and made the treasure chest and the tree of new words, together with the asylee children. Doing these exercises made them learn a lot about the Syrian culture and the Arabic language. Thus, the selected activities also contributed to the social and emotional development of the asylee children, and not only the linguistic. The activities also contributed to the cohesion of the preschool group and the building of a friendly environment in which the children expand their knowledge through accepting differences.

3. 2. Preschool Brescia - Debar, Macedonia

Education in a bilingual group of children

Place and time of implementation: Debar, 2000 - 2018

The criterion by which this example was selected is the success in working in a bilingual group of pre-school children. The educator points out that the children were very young and only partially knew their mother tongue. In the process of parallel learning of two languages, mistakes are common, so at the beginning a group form of work is mostly used: “and with the group form of work children, although they not always say or understand words or phrases

correctly, can easily see that it happens to the others, too. I lead them through the activities in order to understand that the mistakes are normal, but that they should not give up. "(Marija Vasilevska, preschool educator).

Especially successful in this interview are the positive examples for the realization of spontaneous as well as organized activities. All children must participate in the organized activities, but participation in the spontaneous activities provides a more relaxed communication between children: they create and enforce the rules themselves, constantly communicate not only with the educator, but also with the other children, they establish order, give ideas etc.

> "Example: On a carpet I got carrots made of paper for an introductory game. Some of the children sat next to me and watched me. After I placed carrots all over the carpet, the kids asked me what to do with them. I told them that we would play with them, but I did not tell them what and how to play. I sat down and told the kids to give an idea of how we could use the carrots in the game. The one group of children gave various creative ideas how to play and what could be the rules, but finally accepted one of the few proposed games to play. I allowed them to play the game that they had devised. When the children from the group started playing with the carrots the other children became interested and asked if they could join. Everyone who wanted joined in and played the game until the breakfast time arrived. "Children communicated in both languages, based on their own vocabulary and their own abilities, learning from each other at the same time they play."
> (Marija Vasilevska, preschool educator).

It is also noted that masking games, using animal characters, are especially useful in language learning. The progress of the children is evaluated according to the activities that children realize in the organized part, but also in the spontaneous activities. Through monitoring of the child's behaviour and use of the language/s in various situations, the educator follows the development and achieves the predetermined goals of education (if the evaluation refers to filing a child record file).

In the bilingual groups within the dialects there are words that are common in both languages: jams-window is used in both Macedonian and Albanian language in dialect form, etc. There are situations when a child who understands the language, on its own initiative translates to another child who does not understand, explains what the educator asks, and describes what other children talk about. There are frequent cases when children in bilingual groups spontaneously translate without asking them (while playing).

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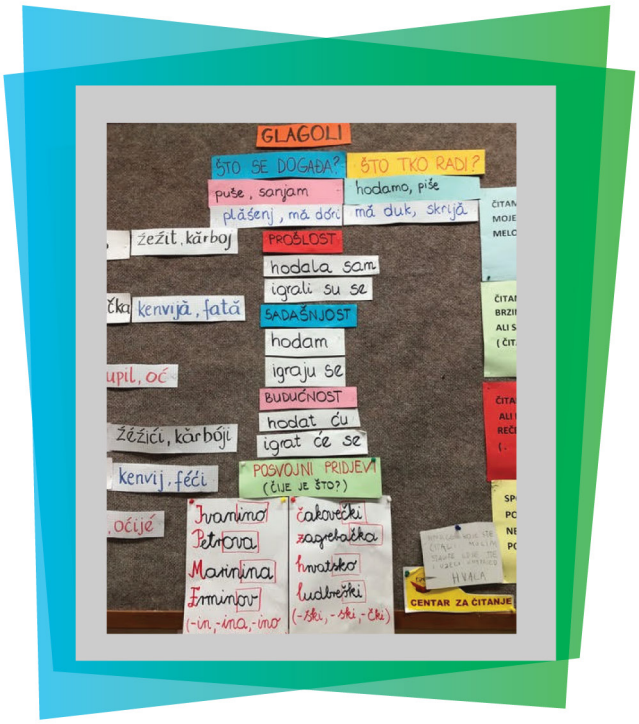

Examples of activities

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All games in which there is interaction, and which have a character of a group activity are particularly important for verbal expression and language learning.

3. 3. Laboratorij zabave (the Laboratory of Fun) – Association for Promoting Storytelling Culture, Zagreb, Croatia

Fun in a smart way. A triptych: Smart fun for everyone (a non-formal way of learning)
Linguistic group: the Roma national minority

The association was formed with the aim of promoting, developing, and improving the culture and the art of storytelling.
Location and time of conducting: Zrno Preschool, Kozari Bok, Zagreb Since April 2017, occasionally. The preschool includes Roma children who do not speak the Croatian language or speak it very poorly. The children were between four and seven years of age.

In the "Zrno" preschool on Kozari Bok, children of the Roma national minority are integrated. For this reason, this preschool was chosen for conducting the project. One of the goals was to observe how children of the Roma national minority are coping with socialization with the other children since they are in a linguistically disadvantaged position as they speak their own language at home and have had a linguistic barrier from the very beginning. They only hear the Croatian language while in the preschool, and the contact with the language stops the moment they leave. With these children, starting school is often delayed. The people helping this project were volunteers, including students of the Faculty of Teacher Education, and conducting the project was extremely demanding regarding time. The "Smart fun for everyone" project consists of three programs conducted in different preschool groups at three different locations. Each preschool group was visited three times. Each time, the workshop included about 20 children. One workshop lasted for two hours and thirty minutes, and within this period, individual activities took up to ten minutes. The triptych consists of the following parts: Journey Around the World, The Time Machine (a journey through history), and Journey Around Croatia. The aim of the project was for the children to experience and learn about the cultural features of various countries and their historical content, as well as to bring art, fun, and culture (including the Roma culture) closer to the children. It was important for the children to notice that the Roma culture stands on equal grounds as other cultures, and for the children not belonging to the Roma nationality to learn about the Roma culture. Another

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goal was, of course, the spontaneous acquisition of the Croatian language. For this project, several activities related to the Roma culture were prepared in advance: dancing, songs, short videos, and certain expressions they use, while the children of the Roma national minority taught other children new phrases, therefore, interactivity was evident. The program leaders have done research in advance, acquiring much required information and preparing materials, which is crucial. While conducting the program, there was no intermediary (pivot) language. In cases of lack of comprehension, they used images, objects, audio recordings, repetitions, and gestures. The program shall continue from time to time on a voluntary basis.

3. 4. Orehovica Primary School, Orehovica, Croatia

Preschool and Primary Education (5-14 years of age)
Linguistic group: the Roma national minority

Since 2003, the Orehovica Primary School has conducted the preschool program for children belonging to the Roma national minority. This program enables the children to develop their social and linguistic competencies. The preschool program is conducted for one school year (ten months) and includes children aged five to six, one year before they start primary school. The preschool program is primarily aimed at children of the Roma national minority but is also attended by children of the Croatian nationality. In 2018/19, there are two preschool groups, comprised of 29 children of the Croatian nationality and 15 children of the Roma nationality, which represents a good example of inclusion. The Roma children were not exposed to the Croatian language before enrolling in preschool, as their families spoke the Romanian Boyash language. Therefore, at reception, the preschool teachers first raise the child's awareness as a person through learning how to pronounce greetings, requests, names, and surnames, while at the same time contributing to the development of the group. In the formal form of education, non-formal forms of language learning are active as well, as the Croatian language is acquired in non-formal situations such as socializing in the hallways, the schoolyard, and the cafeteria, while the preschool teachers use the contrastive approach of language acquisition with the help of the children's mother tongue, the Boyash language. The children mostly prefer physical and musical activities, so materials which could help develop their acquisition of the Croatian language in such activities would be extremely useful. The preschool teachers have acquired their basic Boyash language competencies in their additional training, having completed a Boyash language course, and they claim that their knowledge of the Boyash language and intercultural competencies are crucial in their work with children. In the preschool, games

are used to conduct linguistic activities such as matching verbs to nouns and naming terms, storytelling, reading picture books together, as well as musical and physical activities and games. In these activities, the teachers use flashcards, picture books, pictures, music, and other media. They indirectly intervene in Croatian speech in the non-structured free playing of all children, e.g. cooking, building with bricks, etc., and this is one of the most efficient ways of Croatian language acquisition. The preschool also organises workshops with the parents. The preschool proved itself to be a good linguistic preparation for primary school, where the children continue to participate in activities of learning and acquiring the language. Regarding subject teaching, we present the Croatian Language school subject as a best practice example. The children are in mixed forms, but most of them belong to the Roma national minority because they represent the majority of children attending the school, so this is the only possible way to put together the forms. The contrastive approach is dominant in language learning and is observed in the making of the Boyash-Croatian dictionary and language exercises. Apart from the Standard Croatian language, the difference regarding its relation to the dominant Kajkavian dialect also exists. Collaborative learning is often used, and intercultural themes about the customs and the languages of the two peoples are selected for instruction. The pupils display them on classroom posters, where they present the coexistence of the two languages and cultures. In developing their reading interests, texts are adapted and abridged with regard to the difficult progression due to insufficient familiarity with the language. During a single lesson, a teacher working with Year 5 to Year 8 changes the methodology of teaching very often so as to keep the pupils interested. The school is proud of the fact that in the previous year, 100% of their pupils of the Roma national minority have enrolled in secondary schools.

3. 5. Olga Meglič Primary School, Ptuj, Slovenia

Help with learning
Participant: Mag. Renata Debeljak, subject teacher (of Slovenian language),
Olga Meglič Primary School, Ptuj
Place and time of implementation: Ptuj, from 2006 until the present

The method of work depends on several factors: if a student is from a Serbian or Croatian speaking environment, it is easier for him to talk, understand Slovenian, he/she adapts faster and makes contacts with other pupils easier. Therefore, first it is necessary to talk to the pupil

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to determine his/her understanding of Slovenian and based on these preliminary findings the teacher prepares a working plan. The forms of work that the teacher uses are similar to those she uses to work with other pupils, but their execution takes more time, as the teacher also uses the method of visualization, including drawing or playing. Efficiency depends on the degree of understanding, expressed interest, and domestic support. Such a pupil sits in the first row, so that the teacher can easily follow his/her progress, help him/her, translate. During the lesson, held separately, the teacher and the pupil read a story together, the teacher sketches the course of the story, translates the instructions for language practice, so the pupil can understand them and is then able to do the exercise (when dealing with, for example, verbs). The teacher often encourages comparison with the child's mother tongue, which is also interesting for pupil's schoolmates.

When working with Chinese students, the approach is different. The teacher prepares the pupils some basic questions of Slovenian language, which they write on the computer and translate them. For a better understanding, drawing, painting, and photography are extremely important in the acquisition of certain literary texts, also watching a film (e. g. Pastirci, Bratovščina Sinjega galeba).

The manner of overcoming language barriers depends on the language the pupil is speaking. The use of a certain compiler is certainly helpful; nevertheless, at times, there is already a pupil coming from the same language environment at the school already, and he/she serves as a translator; this is particularly well accepted among the Chinese.

When socializing a child into the environment, the first impression is definitely the most important, especially when we need to let the pupil know that he/she is welcome and accepted. The pupils are prepared to accept their new schoolmates beforehand, learning about their possible difficulties, especially in the case of language, thus letting him/her know that he/she is accepted, they help him/her with daily and basic issues (schedule, changing classrooms, snacks, etc.).

Other pupils always respond positively, they are curious. As a teacher (and even more as a class teacher), the interviewee assigns one pupil per week to make sure that the new pupil is not excluded, he/she helps him/her when there is a sign denoting the end of a lesson, when they change classrooms, take sports equipment, etc.

The immigrant pupils like it very much if they can present their country in front of the class, if they can do anything that is related to their culture. For example: the pupil, who was a Muslim, presented her country and religion; whereas, while reading the Koran in Arabic, she also mastered the Arabic script; she wrote on the board what other pupils and the teacher had told her to write. This was extremely interesting for all the pupils. When speaking in front of the classmates about describing the process of making something, the pupils from abroad

were very interested in presenting some dishes from their culture, their customs, etc. For home reading, they chose the most popular youth literature of their national literature and presented it to the classmates.

3. 6. Tabor Primary School 1, Maribor, Slovenia

Participant: Metka Gselman Sedak, subject teacher (of Slovenian language)
Place and time of implementation: Maribor, from 2009 until the present

Working with children combines pleasant and relaxed activities; if children do not understand any other language, the teacher communicates with gestures, with miming, and with pictures. If children come from the Slavic area, the teacher uses their language or simple Slovenian, which the pupils can understand with the support of facial expressions and gestures. The teacher uses a frontal, individual form of learning, work in pairs and groups, all depending on the age and knowledge of the pupils. At the first contact with a child who does not understand Slovenian, the teacher presents herself with a gesture of herself, saying her own name, and then gesturing to the pupil to do the same. It is always important that the first approach is relaxed, a smile and an encouraging word should be present, although they are not verbally understood. The tone of voice is also very important.
The teachers use various activities, e. g. drawing, painting, playing (especially with younger children), through pictures, image descriptions and conversations.
If there is a possibility to use an indirect language, the teacher definitely uses it, as it facilitates communication; for example, with English, Serbian, Croatian, the basics of Albanian, Russian … If there is no possibility to use the indirect language, gestures and facial expressions with the help of pictures are usually used.
The child can most easily open through conversation or gestures, with a smile, and certainly with kindness and understanding.
Language barriers can be overcome with facial expressions, gestures, even with a compiler or dictionaries, but it is definitely the easiest way to use image material.
The classmates should be encouraged to talk to a child coming from abroad, to do various activities together … Children accept games such as Activity or Memory very well. Many materials (especially visual and textual) are prepared and adapted by the teacher herself. The teacher's ideas arise promptly, from experience. The game can be included in the activity at the basic level.

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The teacher has learned a lot from the children and the adults she taught, including the basics of their languages such as Albanian or Russian, and she realized that some of us are culturally very different, and that the same gesture or facial expression that we take for granted, can be very different from ours. For example, she taught a highly educated Albanian woman from Tirana, and the language of communication was English. At the end of the teacher's explanation, the teacher asked her if she understood. She nodded from left to the right. The teacher explained to her again and asked her once again, if she understood. She nodded from left to the right again, this time stronger. The teacher repeated the explanation one more time, slowly and precisely, but the woman's reaction was the same. Then the teacher asked the woman what is the thing that she did not understand. The woman looked at her surprisingly and told the teacher that she had understood everything and that she had understood everything the first time. They found out that, in Albanian, nodding left to right means YES and nodding up to down means NO, as opposed to Slovenian.

For learning and the process of learning, intercultural differences are very important. As an example, the teacher says that the Russians are very respectful of the teacher and will do everything the teacher instructs. For Arabs, it depends on whether a woman (also a girl) is taught in a group of men (boys). If she is, she will not even utter a single word, although she knows a lot, because she does not want to show her knowledge to men and thus overshadow them.

There are also some thematic fields that are more difficult to accept by some cultures, e. g. the human body.

These kinds of cultural differences are sometimes very difficult to overcome, for example, the teacher taught women from Arabia. The teacher worked with women during breaks when the men went for a drink. At that time, the women spoke in Slovenian openly and without shame, and many showed a greater knowledge of Slovenian compared to their husbands.

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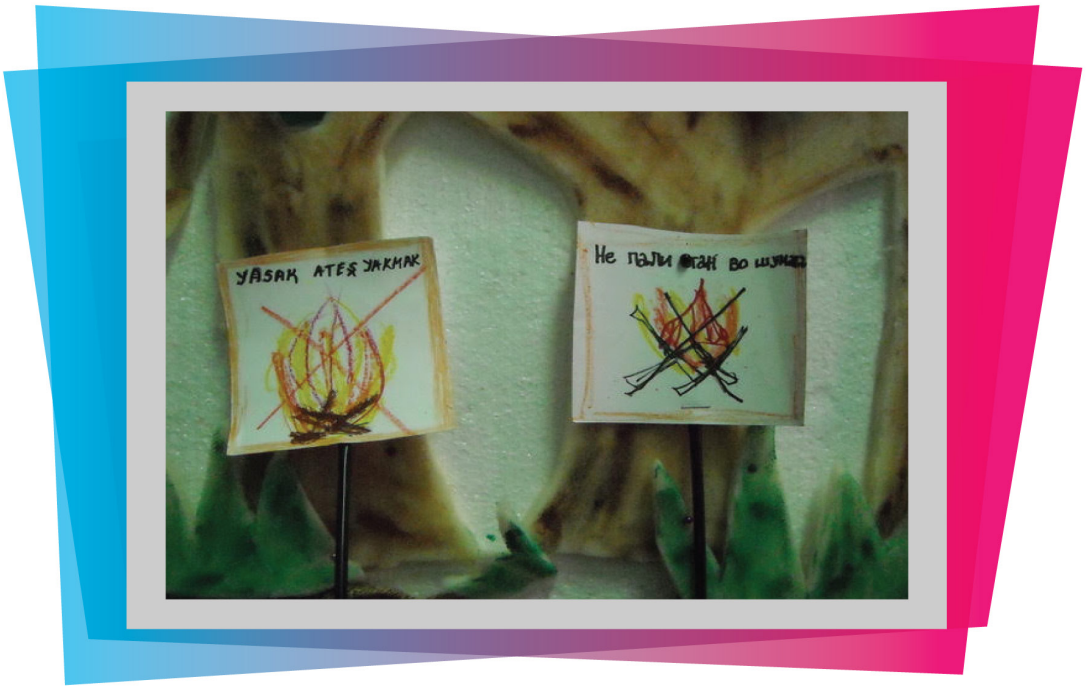

Examples of activities

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3. 7. Marshal Tito Primary School, Strumica, Macedonia

Participant: Daniela Miteva, primary school teacher
Time of implementation: from 2005 to the present

Education of children of Turkish ethnic origin, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who speak exclusively Turkish.

Children live in a part of the city where from the moment they learn to speak, they speak exclusively Turkish, watch TV shows and movies, and listen to music in Turkish. Most often they come to school without speaking any Macedonian at all. The teacher in a primary school works with groups of 16-20 children aged 6 - 6.5.

The teacher emphasized that the first contact with the children, a smile, kindness, gesture presentation, was of particular importance, and has also pointed out that a teacher using gestures should enable the child to present him/herself. As a way of communication "... I use drawings, but I often use onomatopoeia, non-verbal communication, costumes, masks of familiar characters from stories or animals" (Daniela Miteva, primary school teacher). She stated that initially she would often use her knowledge of Turkish words and make a parallel with words from the Macedonian language.

"The best communication channel is playing games with masks and taking on the character's role. By doing so, children can practice and learn the naming of the characters, but also the naming of emotions and actions. In the first part of the first grade, usually Turkish is spoken in using gestures and pantomimes, and gradually Macedonian words are introduced.

The main helping tool for the teacher was the two-year training with the Nansen Dialogue Educational Centre. From that training, manuals translated into Macedonian were used, often involving Skype by working in a classroom in Norway where the same methods of education techniques were used, but in a different environment. Materials and assets used during the activities were textbooks in Turkish, which served as a bridge for understanding with the use of photographs, pictures and illustrations.

An example of an activity in which children participated with pleasure: "I entered the classroom with a Turkish language song that the children know and from there, I started to introduce new content. Often it is with the help of a counter with which we separate key words in Turkish and Macedonian. The maximum amount is to learn and apply 5 words through the contents that we carry out according to the curriculum.

The teacher points out that she has learned from the children of another culture that "every model of behaviour has its roots in the culture from which it comes, and communication

requires knowledge of the characteristics of a culture different from ours. The foundation is respect for the ways of thinking, the patterns of social behaviour and holidays, to achieve openness, confidence and a desire for cooperation." (Daniela Miteva, departmental teacher)

3. 8. Project ŠIPK: Development of the Support Program for Children Refugees in Inclusion to Social Environment (STIK), which included work with immigrants, Slovenia

The head of the project was Katja Košir, PhD, Associate Professor, a university teacher (psychology), Faculty of Education, University of Maribor
Place and time of implementation: Maribor, from 1st March 2018 to 30th June 2018

The main goal of the project was to fill the gap in structured, deliberate and professionally based activities that would help refugee and immigrant children included in the programs of the business unit of Slovene Philanthropy in Maribor to join the new social environment, especially in the context of the school. Indirectly, through the guidance and planning of students' work, the professor worked in this field within the framework of the above described project ŠIPK STIK. Most of the twenty students who were involved in the project were included in the education of Slovenian language during the school year, when the project was under way, so that about half a year ago they were already involved in education before actual project participation.

During the project, students worked intensively with 20 refugee and immigrant pupils. The pupils received training aid and psychosocial support in the form of regular meetings with students twice a week, in the form of regular monthly meetings of all pupils and students, and in the last month also in the form of occasional meetings with tutors – their peers who were trained for tutorial work during the project. The students, the pupils and the counsellor at school reported the positive effects of these meetings both for learning activities and the social inclusion of children of refugees and immigrants. The professor met with the students regularly (every second week), and together they reflected their work and planned future activities. In case of dilemmas, the students also consulted the teacher individually. Together with students, the teacher planned and attended joint monthly meetings with children, where the students performed group activities for all children involved in the project.

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The project mostly provided individual support in the learning process, while the students were very innovative in their choice of learning activities and resources. They quickly realized that good preparation was necessary, but that at meetings the work should be adapted to the abilities, the current mood and current responsibilities of pupils.
The professor emphasized that for any effective help to the pupil – both for learning the language and acquiring a wider cultural aspect – it is key for the pupil to being able to get as much contact with his/her peers as possible, and to strive for a supportive relation with him/her, sometimes at the expense of attaining the learning goals. The support relation between the teacher and the pupil has an enormous potential to stimulate learning. The problem, however, is that in excessive productivity orientation it often occurs that learning becomes an alienating factor between the teacher and the pupil. When choosing a communication channel, professor Košir explains that it would be difficult to highlight the best communication channel, because every child has a different one. She believes that it is important for a child to show that we care about him/her and that we are genuinely interested in him/her, gradually giving him/her a sense of security, which sometimes takes several weeks, or months.
A great medium for overcoming language barriers can be games, fine arts activities, sports, and, of course, various didactic tools for language acquisition.
For the successful socialization of the child, it is also necessary to work with the group. A consistent message is that we are responsible for the well-being of everyone in the group. In the project, a system of peer tutoring turned to be an example of good practice. The activities that were the most effective and where the feelings of attachment and affection were strengthened were joint meetings of all pupils and students, where they did not merely learn, but also and mostly had fun.
For the indirect language, the students used various activities. Some examples of activities are gathered in a handbook that is accessible on this website:

https://pef.um.si/content/2018-2019/raziskovanje/PRIROCNIK-stik.pdf.

3. 9. Projects USTuj, DIMEP in ŠIPK-STIK, Slovenia

Participant: Rezarta Zumerri, graduate student of preschool education at the Faculty of Education, University of Maribor
Place and time of implementation: Maribor, 2017 and 2018.

The selection of activities for learning assistance was always adapted to the needs of the

children. The two girls the student was helping often said themselves what the areas they felt as not having enough knowledge about were. Introduction to the activity lasted a few minutes and contained relaxed conversation, for example, how they spent their day, how they were feeling, if they wanted to talk about something special, or they performed relaxing activities such as ball games, memory, etc. Although these were games, these activities helped the girls to continuously enrich their vocabulary. The indirect language with the girls was Albanian, as the performer/graduate student also had a refugee experience (a refugee from Kosovo). She tried to speak with the girls in the Slovenian language, while for longer interpretations she used the Albanian language. The graduate student believes that the best communication channel to get through to the child are definitely drawings; through drawings, pictures, and illustrations, children can communicate a lot and successfully.

In overcoming language barriers and for successful child socialization, the interviewer Rezarta Zumerri, from her own experience, as a child coming from a different cultural environment, stresses that she always wanted to be placed into groups by the teachers themselves, so as not to feel excluded. She is aware that she has had problems with her classmates about mockery and non-acceptance regarding national and religious affiliation. She thinks that teachers should be more aware of the attitude of other children to children in a disadvantaged language position and to be more alert to the fact that these children feel comfortable in the classroom, and not merely focus on the learning achievements of the immigrant child. As the most effective activities, she emphasizes spontaneous conversations, because through a sincere and relaxed conversation we let the child know that we do care about him/her and that we wish to help him/her.

An example of the activity in which the children were happy to participate were the joint monthly meetings of the ŠIPK-STIK project aimed mostly at relaxation. At one of the joint meetings, they planned to create cards with their names, and on the back, the children drew what they liked doing in their spare time. Such activities proved to be good because they made it easier for the students to plan activities related to children's hobbies (e.g., at the first joint meeting one of the girls drew a book, thus indicating that she liked reading books in her spare time; and so the graduate student brought her various books and they read them together, discussed them, explained the words she did not understand in Slovenian, and at the same time the girl enriched her linguistic knowledge).

Another example of activity: at one of the lessons, the graduate student planned a simple activity, i.e. finding a hidden object in the room. This game required the use of words as hot, lukewarm, cold, icy. At first, the graduate student was worried to a certain extent that the game would be boring for the girl, but during the first run of this activity, the student learned that sometimes even the simplest activities can be difficult for children not fluent in

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the Slovenian language; namely, the girls did not manage to use the words hot, lukewarm, cold etc. correctly for quite some time, they seemed very uninterested; and after some more playing, the graduate student realized that the girls did not understand the instructions. When she explained the rules of the game to girls in Albanian, the game became interesting and the girls even repeatedly asked the student to play it again.

3. 10. Dr. Vinko Žganec Primary School, Zagreb, Croatia

Linguistic group: children belonging to the Roma national minority and immigrant children

The Dr. Vinko Žganec Primary School has about 730 pupils and 34 forms, and about 10% of the pupils belong to national minorities. For several years, the school has been conducting the Preparatory Croatian Language Classes program, and since the last school year, it has become one of the central schools (points) of the city of Zagreb where preparatory classes are held. Apart from that, it has been conducting the Bosnian Language and Culture classes (Model C) since the 2018/19 school year. The school's activities, such as celebrating the Roma Language Day, promote the importance of preserving the students' mother tongue. Their mother tongue is also nurtured through extracurricular activities, e.g. the Drama club. An extremely positive atmosphere has been created at the school, benefiting the learning of the Croatian language as well as the preservation of minority languages.
As a best practice example, this primary school can primarily be singled out with regard to the entire staff's involvement in working with pupils whose mother tongue is not Croatian. Of particular importance is the help the teachers get from one of their professional support staff – the speech and language therapist. As a significant challenge, the teachers emphasized the insufficient acquisition of the mother tongue which is limited to everyday communication, so the children lack the foundation for learning a new language and new language skills. Therefore, the school's speech and language therapist actively participates in helping the children to learn Croatian, especially in developing their prerequisite skills necessary for learning how to read and write. During the interview, they mentioned the example of a girl who needed additional encouragement to develop her phonological awareness, and the speech and language therapist decided to use the multi-language approach. The pupil practised identifying the middle and the last sound in words, first in her mother tongue, Albanian, and later in Croatian.

3. 11. Stjepan Kefelja Primary School, Kutina, Croatia

Linguistic group: asylum seeker children, asylee children, children belonging to the Roma national minority

The Stjepan Kefelja Primary School has got 500 pupils enrolled in the core school and its two branch (rural) schools. For the last two school years, Preparatory Croatian Language classes have been held for one school period (45 minutes) every day. In the 2018/19 school year, the preparatory class includes ten pupils whose families are living at the asylum seeker reception centre. About thirty Roma pupils are enrolled in the school as well, and they take additional Croatian Language classes in the after-school care period. Most of the children belonging to the Roma national minority are bilingual pupils, speakers of Croatian whose mother tongue is the Romani language.

The asylum seeker children come from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iran, and speak different languages. Establishing communication with children in cases where there is no intermediary (pivot) language is one of the most prevalent difficulties in teaching asylum seeker children.

Based on its approach to the pupils not fluent in Croatian, the Stjepan Kefelja Primary School serves as a best practice example for several reasons: the systematic and efficient use of ICT in language learning, the integrative approach to including its pupils in education, and the attention given to the socialization of its pupils. Collaborating with the reception centre and the State Administration Office, the school has established clear, quick, and efficient procedures of including asylum seeker pupils in the school. To lessen any discomfort and facilitate inclusion, the school staff visits the reception centre to meet the child and their family. The form which the child is about to join is informed in advance about the new pupil and the particularity of the new pupil's life circumstances is explained. Because of faster socialization, the children are included in extracurricular activities (e.g. football, creative workshops, the film club). The school also organises various activities (a charity football tournament, concerts, etc.) through which they raise funds to purchase books, school supplies, sports equipment for P. E. classes, and many other material needs for asylum seeker children.

Through collaboration with the Public Open University Korak po korak (Step by Step), the school has been equipped with tablets for each child attending preparatory classes. The use of tablets and the possibility of using online translation services (such as Google Translate) are of immense help to the teachers in establishing the first acts of communication with the children. Using digital applications, the children created their personal online dictionaries. Apart from that, the teacher, in her Croatian Language lessons uses the tablets to present interactive materials (online crosswords, memory games, quizzes, etc.) which are exceptionally

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motivating for the pupils. The teachers have noticed a positive impact of using tablets in teaching, particularly with pupils attending subject classes, as the pupils can independently look up translations of unfamiliar words themselves, as well as images of certain objects or phenomena. Furthermore, the use of the tablets helps the asylum seeker children to socialise because it enables them to contact their peers outside of the classes as well.

3. 12. Non-governmental organization La Strada under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia

Place and time of implementation: transit migrant center "Vinojug", Gevgelija, 2015/2016.

Working with children at the border.
The method of teaching migrant children is informal, as it concerns the education of children in a transit centre for migrants. The criterion under which this example is selected was in the non-standard methods and teaching techniques of practical work that enable the acquisition of basic concepts and ways of communication. Teachers of Macedonian, English, mathematics, and natural sciences, as well as the communicators in the children's mother tongue were engaged in the work with children. Playing, experiential learning, and learning by encouraging creativity were the most commonly used methods of teaching. In addition, creative workshops were organized with children: drawing, painting, experimenting, etc., psychological workshops: working in a circle, encouraging psychophysical development, as well as doing the given homework. Attention was also paid to the socialization of the children, in order to encourage friendships among them. It was most often done through the organization of group games. "Organizing group games that provide conditions for children to play and learn more about each other, make friends, and organizing the activities which depend on group work for successful realization." (Tanja Dimova, La Strada).

Because children did not have a general knowledge of the language of the country in which they are staying, non-verbal communication by images, drawings, gestures and imitation is often used. To overcome the language barrier, resources from the environment, parents, and other persons who could be mediators in communication, as well as the mutual learning of languages using the Internet, illustrated books and picture books were used. In this context, the words that they need for easier navigation in the environment were learned first (to ask

for water, food, clothes, etc.). The most efficient method of work was playing, implemented in different forms:

Discovery Games – Activities through games which revealed new things, for example, conducting experiments to understand chemical reactions and properties of matter.

Creative Art workshops – making New Year decorations and gift boxes, making Christmas trees from old plastic bottles, making notes, necklaces and other works, painting landscapes, etc.

Workshops for encouraging socio-emotional development – making a tree of friendship, cooking together, group sports games (football, basketball, volleyball, etc.).

Educational games – numbering, words, matching pictures with words, computer games, letter games, association games, bingo, etc.

The most frequently used materials were recycled materials, materials from nature and materials they made through working with others.
These activities have achieved the following results: easier coping with the situation in which they find themselves, educational and cultural progress, socialization, creative abilities, and motivation.

3. 13. Non-governmental organization, Subnal, Macedonia

Additional learning and teaching in the premises of the organization after regular classes. Education of Roma children
Place and time of implementation: Skopje, 2012-1018

The criterion by which this example is selected is the way of learning that aims to support children in achieving better educational results, and overcoming language barriers, enriching general knowledge by encouraging cognitive development. In this way, with an individual approach, as well as with various teaching methods appropriate to the age of the children, they develop communication skills and abilities for easier adaptation to society.
“Children of the earliest age should be motivated to learn the basic words in Macedonian and to be able for further development and enrichment of their own vocabulary with new

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words (by reading books and magazines for children). Pre-school children should have the knowledge and should recognize the letters of the Macedonian alphabet, recognize and write the numbers from 1-10, know how to count up to 10 in Macedonian, and be able to name and distinguish the primary colours in the Macedonian language. In addition, they should know how to present themselves in Macedonian, and describe themselves and the people from their surroundings." (Marija Atanasova, Sumnal).

Apart from verbal communication, drawings and short videos are very often used for a better explanation of the subject being taught, and for easier visualization of the given subject matter. In the rooms where the activities are implemented, there are posters on the walls with the alphabet in the Macedonian language, so that they can be in constant visual contact with the letters which can help them recognize and learn the letters more easily.

Similar ways of learning and teaching also overcome the cultural differences. The most dominant are the play activities through which children easily integrated themselves in the environment. "… School and preschool children begin to interact with the rest of the children when they are involved in various group games. All types of play, especially matching games and group research in which each of the participants has given a certain task to do within the group, are the best way to an engaged participation of all children in the activity. During such games, the interaction between children lasts longer and they show a higher degree of involvement and cooperation than during other activities in which children are passive listeners." (Marija Atanasova, Sumnal).

Social games provide the best way to integrate children into a group; they also prove to be a good practice because all children are actively involved and equally motivated to play. These types of games are applied for a better socialization of children. Through educational games, all aspects of cognitive development are stimulated: attention, memory, logical thinking, imagination, but also verbal abilities. All types of play can be adapted and used for educational purposes. Games that develop the language include "Chinese whispers", "Letter game…", "Hangman" … "Crossword – Quiz", "Memory", reading, etc.

Learning by discovery as a positive teaching practice gets credit for quality because student activity can be followed throughout the whole learning process. In the acts of discovery, not only new knowledge, skills and capabilities are acquired, but the pre-existing knowledge develops to a higher level. The new developed capabilities can be applicable in new situations. The educator in the interview describes such a teaching practice that the children accepted with joy.

Activity: "We Learn About the Volcano". "The children were meant to learn more about volcanoes, as well as why volcanoes appeared, and later they had to build a volcano, carefully following

the instructions that were given on a sheet of paper and the procedures which were played on video. This activity was very helpful for the children because they managed to keep their attention until the end of the activity, learned many interesting facts about volcanoes, and by reading the instruction manual, they practiced reading." (Marija Atanasova, Sumnal).

In the realization of the educational processes, the age of the students for which didactic methods and forms of work are adapted is always taken into consideration.

"With the older children, because of the complexity of the teaching material, we always try to introduce some creative method to encourage their attention and increase the interest in learning. It is sometimes an Internet search on the subject, or the discovery of interesting facts related to the educational topic which was introduced to them for the first time. It is important for children to be actively involved in the class, to help them discover interesting facts with the teacher. In addition, at the end of the day, a short period of time is provided during which children read children's books together with an educator – to develop interest in written material and improve their language skills" (Marija Atanasova, Sumnal).

"Searching the Internet proved itself to be a good practice and creative method of learning, because it encouraged the children's attention and interest in learning. Then there was a presentation that reflected the acquired knowledge, thus improving the children's language competences" (Marija Atanasova, Sumnal).

Educators working with these children most often apply verbal and auditory learning methods when presenting and explaining the teaching material, reading texts, visual learning through images, tables and diagrams, learning by research, etc. The activities were realized individually, or in pairs and smaller groups, according to the set goals. "All children have more relaxed and flexible activities processed primarily through games and plays with different characters. Preschool teachers have to stimulate children to be actively involved and to develop new abilities and competences." (Marija Atanasova, Sumnal).

Creative Expression – In addition to playing activities, positive teaching practices also include different types of creative expression, which strongly contribute to the strengthening of self-interest in children and to the development of the concept of self. The educator from the interview most often applies the following techniques: role-playing, drawing, painting, listening to music, making puzzles, creative reading, etc.

3. 14. The Jesuit Refugee Service, Zagreb, Croatia

Croatian language – Playroom

Linguistic group: Arabian, Farsi – asylee children from Syria, Iran, Afghanistan (age: 5-15 years)

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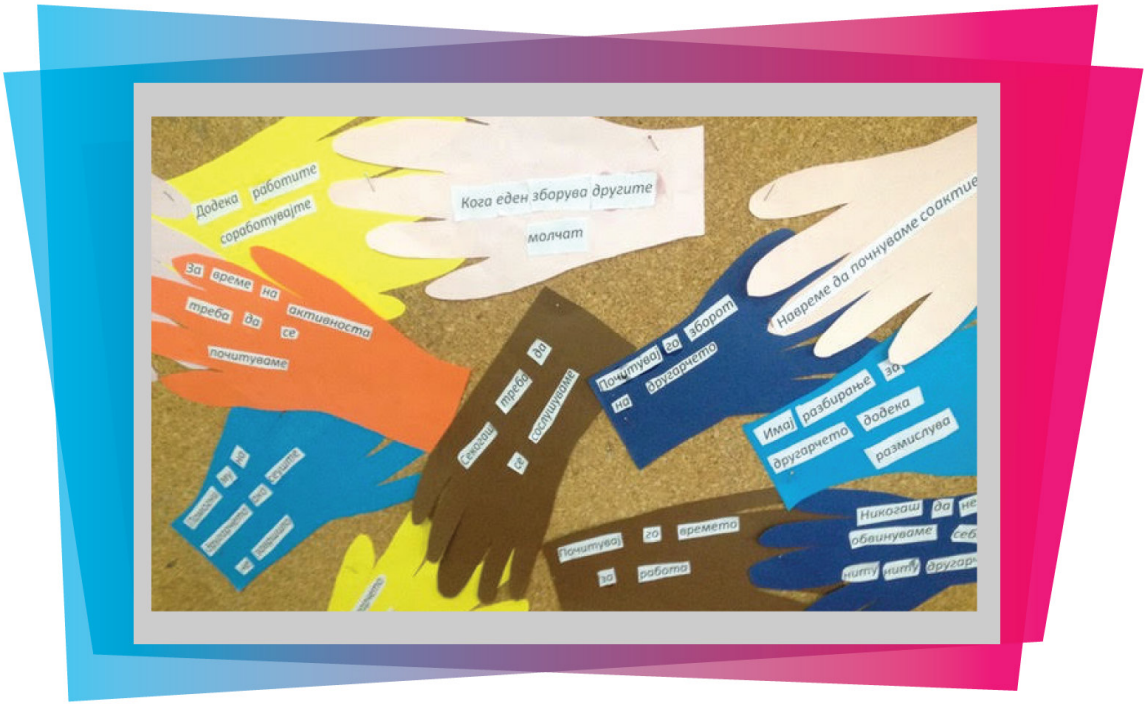
The Jesuit Refugee Service is a non-profit humanitarian organization whose mission is to a accompany, serve and advocate the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. The association is part of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) international humanitarian organization founded in 1980. They have been active in Croatia since 1993, taking care of the needs and the rights of refugees and displaced persons coming to Croatia, particularly those from African or Asian countries. In 2010, they started their activities in the Hotel Porin asylum seeker reception centre, and today, they conduct their programs of integration, inclusion, and language learning in the association's facilities in Maksimirska cesta 286, Dubrava, Zagreb.
All the conducted activities of learning the Croatian language and culture in their direct work with asylee children have the goal of learning Croatian in spoken communication and the inclusion into Croatian society. Speaking the language is exceptionally important for understanding the context of a society, and therefore the JRS volunteers conduct experiential activities with children, using everyday Croatian. A child's need for play is the motivator of all their programs, and the children in the JRS program are placed in real life situations such as using public transportation, shopping, going to school, learning about time and space... At the Playroom, the goal is to learn the Croatian language through learning vocabulary, syntagms, and their use in games in a correct and comprehensible way by using roleplaying games, free play, and language games. Picture books, picture dictionaries, and working materials in both Croatian and the speaker's native tongue help in the realisation of better communication.



Examples of activities

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4. Guidelines for further work

After conducting the activities in the partner countries, several guidelines were obtained which we shall use in our further work. Namely, from the examples described, it is evident that there is a lot of active effort being taken, not only in the formal but also in the non-formal forms of learning. However, after all the conducted interviews and descriptions of best practices, it can be concluded that the informal ways of learning are still not sufficiently recognised as opportunities for language learning.

We can also notice the educators' needs for additional education about interculturality and the ways of learning a foreign/non-native language, as well as the constant need for new language learning activities and materials of all types. Apart from that, the educators emphasise the necessity and the importance of their professional networking, mutual support, and exchanging experiences and best practices in working with disadvantaged children. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the connections between experts of various profiles from different forms of education, as practice shows that their connections are stronger in the non-formal than in the formal forms of learning.

The listed challenges and problems shall serve us as starting points to create new transdisciplinary activities, databases, and manuals which will help answer the aforementioned needs of the educators who participate in all the forms of learning: formal, non-formal, and informal.

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