

THE STATE OF MULTILINGUALISM IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES

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Abstract. The article deals with the teaching of foreign languages in Europe from the point of view of multilingualism. Based on the concept of multilingualism, it analyzes and compares the statistical data published in Eurydice. It focuses on the states of the former Eastern Bloc, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, and explores the acquired kinds of languages in these countries, trends in their acquisition and the frequency of use of the foreign language in the classroom. The article focuses on the most acquired languages and percentage of pupils who are in lower secondary education 2009/10, pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education 2009/10, pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education 2009/10, as well as on trends in the shares of students who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Slovakia, as well as on trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Poland and on trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7 2009/10 in Hungary. The last aspect is the frequency of use of the first tested language in teaching by pupils and teachers in the classroom 2010/11.

Key words: foreign languages, multilingualism, teaching foreign languages, development trends, the quality of teaching, the frequency of use of the foreign language in teaching.

Introduction

Multilingualism has become one of the most discussed topics of the past decade in Europe. European society is changing under the influence of economic and social life. The significance and position of the language is changing in society. The importance of language learning is growing, not only for individuals but also for the whole society. In the context of the European education policy every citizen of Europe should, in addition to his/her mother tongue, command at least two other world languages.

Multilingualism can also be seen in the context of economic prosperity along with increased competitiveness. As Lejsková (2015: 148) reported, from an economic standpoint multilingualism is regarded as a production factor that contributes to GDP. In a political context one can perceive multilingualism as a result of the European Union policy, which aims to prepare individuals and society to changing labor market conditions.

The perception of the concept of multilingualism is very extensive. Already Wandruszka (1979) distinguished between two types of multilingualism:

- internal multilingualism,
- external multilingualism.

The term internal multilingualism refers to the individual's ability to switch smoothly to different variants of the language such as a literary language, colloquial language, specialized language, a dialect etc. The term external multilingualism according to him, is a person's ability to learn other languages.

In our paper we identify with multilingualism in accord with Janík (Janík 2013: 24) as the ability to communicate in more than three or more languages, while one of the languages is the mother tongue.

With regard to the language and multilingualism it is necessary to take a closer look at their individual dimensions:

- teleological dimension,
- epistemological dimension,
- social dimension.

The term teleological dimension means the practicality, which stands for aspects of the language that prevail in social dealings. The term epistemological dimension means the dimension of knowledge, social knowledge transfer, knowledge acquisition and its mediation. A social dimension relates to the conception of the language as a social phenomenon through which a person determines his social identity (Ehlich 2006: 23).

Besides the term multilingualism we can encounter other designations too. The use of this term allows from a content point of view further specifying the issue according to the number of languages mastered, namely:

- monolingualism,
- bilingualism,
- multilingualism.

Monolingualism involves the ability to command one language in all its variants, bilingualism means commanding two languages such as the mother tongue and multilingualism is associated with the ability to command more than two foreign languages.

Foreign literature on the topic of multilingualism is quite extensive. Compared to foreign literature, Czech literature is not so extensive (Janík 2013: 24). Yet it can be classified as follows:

- publications dealing with the issue in the Czech Republic in general (e.g. Nekvapil 2009; Nekula 2011),
- publications dealing with multilingualism in language education (Janíková 2011, 2013; Janík 2012, 2013, 2014; Káňa 2011; Vasiljev 2010),
- publications dealing with multilingualism from the psycholinguistic perspective (Janíková 2014),
- publications dealing with multilingualism and the European Union (Říčka 2011; Lejsková 2015),
- publications dealing with multilingualism from the point of view of the translation (e.g. Hlavičková 2006).

It should also be noted that the significance of foreign language knowledge still remains one of the hot topics not only in pedagogy and foreign language teaching (e.g. Průcha 2010; Meissner 2013), to a far greater extent knowledge of foreign languages has to do with a general discussion about the so-called key competencies on the turbulent labor market not only in the Czech environment. Another important part of international discussions is the quality of the current education system and the creation of so-called framework educational programs (e.g. Smolíková 2006). However, this issue is related to the current educational policy in Europe (e.g. Janík 2014).

As aptly expressed by Ehlich (2006: 17), Europe has the opportunity and – in view of the world cultural development – a task of developing concepts of a new, transnational multilingualism along with implementing it in a political, educational, economic and systematic way.

As for foreign professional literature, let us state the following authors in the manner of selection: Krumm (2003), Hufeisen, Neuner (2003), Ehlich (2006), Gerhards (2010).

1. The aim and subject of the research, the methods and hypotheses

The aim of the research is to map the state of multilingualism in the Czech Republic and compare it with the state of multilingualism in the neighboring countries of the former Eastern Bloc. We are dealing here with countries such as Poland, Slovakia and Hungary that had been chosen deliberately as they belonged to the so-called Eastern Bloc; furthermore it is attention-grabbing to follow the further development of multilingualism in these countries. Examining the issue of multilingualism is particularly important at these levels:

- in the process of incorporating the concept of multilingualism in schools,
- the possibility of incorporating the concept of multilingualism in the form of lifelong learning in the tertiary sector,
- the possibility of incorporating the concept of multilingualism in

- companies with the aim of further development of human resources,
- the possibility of streamlining the language training,
- the option of maintaining the concept of linguistic and cultural diversity,
- planning good quality teaching of foreign languages in tertiary areas etc..

On the subject of the reasons as well as of the content of this paper, we have restricted to the field of education in foreign languages.

The subject of the investigation was the teaching of foreign languages in selected European countries, and in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary in secondary education. We have focused on these thematic circles:

- acquired languages.
- trends in the acquisition of foreign languages.
- the frequency of use of the foreign language in the classroom.

Within the analysis we proceeded from the statistical data of Eurydice. Eurydice is an international European network, which focuses on collecting information on education in Europe. This network has been in existence since 1980 and provides comprehensive information about education in 36 European countries.

Data related to language education in the Czech Republic, had been compared with the data with each of these Member States of the European Union.

We proceeded from these information sources relating to primary and secondary education on the grounds, as they allow the comparison of the status of the educational policy in the framework of the European Union. For questions 1, 2 and 7 the reference year was 2010/11. In turn, the years 2004/2005, 2006/2007 and 2009/2010 were analyzed for questions 3, 4, 5 and 6. The year 2008 was not available.

We came from the evaluation of the statistical data in order to monitor the shifts in education in foreign languages and better anticipate the trends governing the teaching of foreign languages in the future. Due to the length of the investigation, we used data, which are relevant to the research project. When describing the results we used the method of analysis, synthesis and comparison.

2. The hypotheses

With the exception of Eurydice similar research has not been conducted yet. In determining the hypotheses we could only come from a sub-research of Andrášová (2012: 10), who focused on pursuing the interests of students aged 12-17 in studying foreign languages, their relationship to German and English along with variables their relationship was dependent on. The most popular second languages (L2) are English, French and German, followed by Spanish and Russian. In the Czech Republic, the most common language still in 2005 was German (Andrašová 2012: 10).

For the purposes of our research, three working hypotheses were set up:

- Hypothesis 1: The most acquired languages are English and German in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.
- Hypothesis 2: Development trends in the proportion of pupils show a tendency to select English and German language.
- Hypothesis 3: Frequency of use of the first tested language in teaching by pupils and teachers in the classroom is low.

3. The results

3.1. The most acquired languages and percentage of pupils who are in lower secondary education

In the case of the closely selected sample of the four countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, the principal differences appeared in English with a reference to the most acquired languages and the percentage of pupils in lower secondary education. While in the Czech Republic at the primary and secondary level of teaching English equals to 100%, in other countries the situation is different. In Hungary, the percentage of the acquisition of English is 58.1% and by far does not copy the situation in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. Statistical data in Poland and Slovakia are almost the same, differing only in 1, 9%. 83% of pupils in Slovakia select English in lower secondary education, in Poland it is 84.9% of the pupils.

With the acquisition of other languages, the situation is considerably different. The acquisition of English is followed by the acquisition of German, the percentage of pupils involved in the acquisition of German for the selected sample lies in the range between 22.6% and 38.4%, with the lowest percentage of pupils involved in the acquisition of German currently in the Czech Republic yet not reaching even a quarter of pupils at this level of education. The Czech Republic is followed by Hungary with 35.5%, Slovakia with 37.6% and Poland with 38.4%. We can therefore state that pupils in Poland acquire most German in the selected evaluation sample of countries.

The acquisition of Russian and French in these countries is considerably minor when compared with the acquisition of English but also German. As for the acquisition of Russian it does not exceed 8.3 percent. In the Czech Republic the acquisition of Russian is close to 3.7% and is comparable in these data with Poland, reaching 3.6%. Most of the pupils are learning Russian in Slovakia, where data reached 8.3%. We find the situation in Hungary attention-grabbing, since Russian did not appear at all in the data on the acquisition of languages; moreover instead there is an indication of the acquisition of Slovak, which is 3.6%. The last information refers to the acquisition of French. At this level of education, it is evident that the acquisition of French is the least acquired language in the presented sample of countries and moves in the range of 1,

7% to 3%. The countries with the lowest percentage of the acquisition of this language are Poland and Hungary with the same percentage of the acquisition amounting to 1.7%. Slovakia with 2.2% follows right after Poland and Hungary. Only 3% of pupils are learning French in the Czech Republic. The compared figures are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The most acquired languages and percentage of pupils who are in lower secondary education 2009/10

Country	Language/%	Language/%	Language/%	Language/%
Czech Republic	English /100%	German /22.6%	Russian /3.7%	French /3%
Slovakia	English /83.0%	German /37.6%	Russian /8.3%	French /2.2%
Poland	English /84.9%	German /38.4%	Russian /3.6%	French /1.7%
Hungary	English /58.1%	German /35.2%	Slovak /3.6%	French /1.7%

Source: Eurydice 2009: 73¹.

3.2. The most common acquired foreign languages and percentage of pupils who are in pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education

With regard to the most acquired foreign languages and percentage of pupils who are in pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education the situation is different. Still, English is the most acquired language in pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education. In the case of the Czech Republic the number of pupils involved in the acquisition of English is 84.6%, i.e. 16.4% less than in lower secondary education in the school year 2009/10. In Slovakia the number reached 85.2%, i.e. 2, 2% higher than in lower secondary education. In Poland, the number of pupils involved in the acquisition of English changed only slightly in favour of English and equals to 86.4%, thus representing an increase of 2.5%. Hungary, regarding the number of pupils involved in the acquisition of English, is the last. The number of pupils does not exceed 66.4%.

In the case of the acquisition of German in pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education 2009/10 there was generally an increase in the number of pupils as compared with the previous level of education. Most pupils acquire this language in Slovakia, and i.e. 60.4%, followed by Poland with 57, 5% and the Czech Republic with 47.4%. In the selected sample German is the least acquired language by pupils in Hungary, and it's 43%. Regarding other languages, which pupils acquire, there are distinct differences compared with the previous level of education. For example in the Czech Republic pupils, in pre-vocational general, vocational higher secondary education 2009/10, acquired French proportionally more frequently than Russian. The acquisition of

¹ Only these languages are calculated in Table 1 which are regarded as foreign languages and have been processed by the central education authorities. The languages that are taught beyond the curriculum as optional subjects are excluded.

French was 7.5%, and Russian 5.3%, which represents an increase in French by 4.5%. Russian improved its position by about 1.6% against the previous education.

In Slovakia differences in the acquisition of Russian and French were not in any way significant. The acquisition of Russian was 8.1%, and French was 7.5%, the percentage differences in the two languages were only 0.6% in favour of French. In Poland the acquisition of Russian amounted to 10.6% and French was 6.3%. In Hungary, like in the Czech Republic, the acquisition of French was in third place with 4.7%, followed by Italian that came fourth with 3%. The detailed comparison is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Most acquired foreign languages and percentage of pupils who are in pre-vocational, general, vocational higher secondary education 2009/10

Country	Language/%	Language/%	Language/%	Language/%
Czech Republic	English /84.6%	German /47.4%	French /7.5%	Russian /5.3%
Slovakia	English /85.2%	German /60.4%	Russian /8.1%	French /7.5%
Poland	English /86.4%	German /57.5%	Russian /10.6%	French /6.3%
Hungary	English /66.4%	German /43.1%	French /4.7%	Italian /3%

Source: Eurydice 2009: 73².

3.3. Development trends in learning foreign languages in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in the Czech Republic

The analysis based on the comparison of development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in the Czech Republic shows the evolution of these indicators in the course of the years 2004 to 2010. In 2005, the share of pupils who were learning English, was 73, in 2007 it was 78.5 and 84.6 in 2010. In other years, it is necessary to count with the constant growth of this share. The opposite situation is in the Czech Republic in the case of the development trend in the shares of pupils who are learning German in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education. In 2005, the share was of 56.2%, in 2007 it was 52.9% and then in 2010 merely 47.4. In the future, we can count with the further decline of this share.

The development trend in the shares of pupils who are learning French in prevocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in the Czech Republic has almost stable values, fluctuations upwards, however, do not exceed 1%. In the future, we can assume a slight increase in this share. Table 3 shows the outlined tendencies.

² Only these languages are calculated in Table 2 which are regarded as foreign languages and have been processed by the central education authorities. The languages that are taught beyond the curriculum as optional subjects are excluded.

Table 3. Development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in the Czech Republic

Year	English	German	French
2004/2005	73	56.2	6.9
2006/2007	78.2	52.9	7.4
2009/2010	84.6	47.4	7.5

Source: Eurydice 2009: 82.

3.4. Development trends in learning foreign languages in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Slovakia

Development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in the Slovak Republic are comparable with the situation in the Czech Republic. There is a rising share of pupils who are learning English, from 71 in 2005 to 75.5 in 2007 and 85.2 in 2010.

In addition, the development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning German in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Slovakia show the drop of this share in the given years, that was by 2.3 in 2006/7 and in 2009/10 there was another decrease by 0.6.

In the case of French, the trend is the opposite; the share of pupils is slightly increasing inter-annually who are learning it in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education. In 2005 the share was 6.4, in 2007, then 6.9 and 7.5 in 2010. Table 4 summarizes the results.

Table 4. Development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Slovakia

Year	English	German	French
2004/2005	71	62.1	6.4
2006/2007	75.5	59.8	6.9
2009/2010	85.2	60.4	7.5

Source: Eurydice 2009: 82.

3.5. Development trends in learning foreign languages in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Poland

The situation in Poland relating to development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10, is again the same as in the previous countries. There is an increasing share of pupils who are learning English, the share of pupils who are learning German is falling, along with a rising share of pupils who are learning French. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5. Development trend in the shares of students who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Poland

Year	English	German	French
2004/2005	82.2	65.0	9.0
2006/007	83.1	62.1	7.6
2009/2010	86.4	57.5	6.3

Source: Eurydice 2009: 82.

3.6. Development trends in learning foreign languages in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Hungary

What's more in Hungary we could record similar trends. Only in the case of French, the development is slightly different. The share of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education, however, was significantly lower in Hungary in 2005 than in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. In 2005, the share of pupils who are learning English was 62.1, in 2007 it was 65.7 and in 2010 it was 66.4. The share of pupils, who were learning German in 2005, was 48.7, in 2007 it was 48.0, and then in 2010 it was 43.1. The share of pupils who were learning French in 2005 amounted to 4.8, in 2007 then 5.1 and in 2010 4.7, which means that this share decreased slightly. In comparison with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland the percentages of pupils who were learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10, are the lowest of all reporting countries. The comparison is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Development trends in the shares of pupils who are learning English, German and French in pre-vocational, vocational and general upper-secondary education 2004/5, 2006/7, 2009/10 in Hungary

Year	English	German	French
2004/2005	62.1	48.7	4.8
2006/2007	65.7	48.0	5.1
2009/2010	66.4	43.1	4.7

Source: Eurydice 2009: 82.

3.7. The frequency of use of the first tested language in teaching by pupils and teachers in the classroom, 2010/11

One of the indicators of the quality of the teaching of foreign languages is also the frequency of use in teaching, both by teachers and pupils.

Table 7. The frequency of use of the first tested language in teaching by pupils and teachers in the classroom, 2010/11

Country	Teachers	Pupils
The EU	2.61	1.98

Belgium (French Community)	2.78	2.15
Be (German community)	3.11	2.24
Be (Flemish Community)	2.46	1.35
BG (Bulgaria)	2.62	2.02
EE (Estonia)	2.58	2.17
EL (Greece)	2.63	1.80
EC (Spain)	2.60	1.74
FR (France)	2.84	2.37
Mt (Italy)	3.22	2.28
NL (Netherlands)	1.94	1.52
PL (Poland)	2.31	1.62
PT (Portugal)	2.73	1.91
Si (Slovenia)	2.39	2.08
(Sweden)	2.83	2.51
Hr (Croatia)	2.78	2.16

Source: Eurydice 2009: 106.

As explanation it should be noted that the results are the sum of the 5-point scale (0-never, 1-rarely, 2- sometimes, 3-usually, 4-always) for two of the surveyed items along with dividing the result by two. For example, Index 2 means that the pupils and the teachers speak the tested language just occasionally. The EU average corresponds to the weighted averages of the countries participating in the ESLC, for which they are available.

In terms of the frequency of use of the foreign language in the classroom as one of the indicators of the quality of teaching it can be concluded that in the countries in which teachers usually used the first tested language in teaching (see the note on the 5-point scales above) Italy came first with the value of 3.22, followed by the German community of Belgium with a value of 3.11, as in the other countries teachers used the foreign language in teaching only occasionally.

Having considered the frequency of use of the first tested language in the teaching by pupils, we must unfortunately conclude that three-point scale has not been achieved by any of the countries. Students in Sweden have come best in this category, who reached a scale of 2.51 and pupils in France with a result of 2.37.

4. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 suggesting that the most acquired languages in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary are English and German has been proved. In accordance with Andrášová (2012: 10) we can conclude that the most popular second languages (L2 after the mother tongue) are English, German and French.

Hypothesis 2 suggesting that development trends show a tendency to select English and German could be proved too.

Hypothesis 3 suggesting that the frequency of use of the first tested language in teaching by pupils and teachers in the classroom is low, 2010/11, could be proved too.

At this point it should be noted that the language education in the Czech Republic is facing tough problems, according to the Czech School Inspection. Czech schools failed to implement some of the priorities of the national plan for the teaching of foreign languages. During the transition of pupils from a lower to a higher level of education the level of competences achieved is not determined, the individual needs of pupils are not determined and the concept of multilingualism has not been consistently implemented. Partly, this condition is caused by a lack of qualified English teachers and the adverse salary conditions as evidenced in the long term plan of educational activities and development of the educational system.

Conclusions

Today's society is in the spirit of change. Fundamental changes in society and basal changes in the structure of society are encompassed by the concept of globalization. Coalescence of the economic, political, linguistic, cultural and social world is leading to increased contacts with various societies, what ultimately is leading to higher demands on individuals to assert themselves in a new environment. One of the core competencies is the knowledge of communication in a foreign language.

Quality planning of teaching in the tertiary sector cannot do without a thorough analysis of the statistical data and monitoring of trends. Based on the examples of foreign languages and international comparisons, we demonstrated the ongoing changes in Europe. High quality teaching has to count with them, and customize them to their study degree programmes and fields of study.

A prerequisite for improving the quality of tertiary education is the knowledge of the current situation of education in foreign languages. When planning study programs in tertiary areas one cannot base solely on the assumption that the teaching of foreign languages in tertiary education lacks nowadays substantiation only because potential university students had already completed foreign languages at previous levels of education (primary, secondary).

In the future it is necessary to take into account other determinants in education, such as a growing number of migrants in Europe, rising cultural differences within Europe, the social impact of migration on education and on the labour market, etc., the growing importance of national languages in the integration of migrants, the changes to the preferences in the choice of foreign languages, etc.

As it turns out, Europe is changing rapidly. In addition to it the pace of the changes in the various branches engages linguistics, economic policy, education policy, pedagogy, sociology, culturology and many more.

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