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Monte Librić, regionality in context

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to study attitudes toward bilingualism and the respect for diversity in the regional context and determine if there are differences in attitudes with regard to respondents’ certain socio-demographic characteristics, all following the example of the literary manifestation for children named Monte Librić. Numerous authors think that multilingualism and multiculturality are reflected through the educational system and readiness to train and encourage pupils at all levels of education to develop their own identity and respect the diversity of other identities. As many as 306 respondents participated in the research, namely teachers, pupils, preschool teachers, students and parents. Results have shown the value of linguistic expression in the mother tongue (Croatian and Italian), linguistic education, multiculturality, respect for diversity, cultural identity and the value of children’s creativity in the regionality context, as well as the role of identity, language and culture in encouraging the children’s/pupils’/students’ development.

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Identity; respecting diversity; multilingualism; multiculturality; regionality

1. Introduction

‘Respect what is other’s, be proud of your heritage’ speaks the proverb (Ribičić & Mihanović, 2012, p. 5). In times of cultural globalisation, the implementation and integration of the heritage and regional values in the school system through various educational levels is becoming more and more important. Ivon (2007, 2013) mentions the humane and creative deliberation about the heritage environment: the former emphasises the self-realisation of each young person in the development of the conscious connection to the homeland, the latter is linked to the encouraging context and the inexhaustible source of cognition and knowledge in the educational process. Each region has its own regional heritage representing the cultural-artistic value of that area and builds up the cultural identity of its successors, making them recognisable and unique in relation to others since, as claimed by Rapanić, ‘we all live in the heritage, in something inherited which forms our present’ (2000, p.19).
To love one’s homeland means to cherish its history and build its future; therefore, it is important to transfer the heritage richness to the youngest so that the tradition, culture and customs values do not get lost and fall into oblivion (Begić, 2012; Kostović-Vranješ, 2015; Nemeth-Jajić & Prvolović, 2012; Vrcić-Mataija & Troha, 2017).

The Istrian regional identity basic characteristic is multicultrality which is based on the permeation of tradition and contemporaneity of the Croatian and Italian Culture, with the aim to raise the cultural level, strengthen regionality and raise awareness about regional identity. Istrian fundamental values are multiethnicity, multiculturality and multilingualism, as well as common cooperation and respect. This also regards the use of the Italian language, the preservation of autochthonous cultural expression and the right of expression. Istria – region of culture is a cultural area consisting of various languages, customs and traditions. That is why the Istria Region made the Istrian Cultural Strategy for the Period 2014 to 2020, laying on former documents and strategies with main aims: ‘advance the work of cultural institutions and the noninstitutionalized cultural sector; advance publishing in Istria; build up a new cultural infrastructure intended for the artistic production, education, presentation and preservation of materials; manage cultural infrastructure, institutions, services and projects more efficiently; increase the public interest for cultural heritage and contemporary artistic production and deepen their understanding’ (2014, p.13).

2. Regionality in the context of preserving the cultural heritage

Furthermore, to cherish the Istrian identity tradition in the educational process, since 2014 the project Institutionalisation of Homeland Teaching of the Istria Region has been conducted in the Istria Region as an integrated programme of encouraging the regional identity in a number of educational phases. It starts with preschool education for children in early and preschool education institutions, through activities in Istrian kindergartens conducting their programmes in the Croatian and Italian language, it proceeds by encompassing pupils in both primary and secondary schools. The implementation of homeland topics in curricula is conducted by adapting to children’s/pupils’ actual possibilities and interests with the aim to support the development of personal identity, as well as the understanding and respect for diversity by accepting, cherishing and developing values and preserving tradition.

Regional heritage from the children’s/pupils’ perspective opens the possibility for correlating traditional values and everyday children’s activities, which implies the input of various areas’ contents to the educational process from an early children’s age, as to encourage the development of the regional cultural identity. Children see and often interpret cultural diversities around them in line with what they have learnt from adults. It is therefore important to convey values which are key for them to accept and respect diversity from the earliest childhood (Drandić, 2013; Lazarić & Drandić, 2017). The richness of various identities and creativity found in Istria is the consequence of different cultural communities’ contact, living together in this area by various historical circumstances, and is thus an important element of all culture’s identity (Gortan-Carlin & Lazarić, 2017; Sam-Palmić, 2010). Linguistic diversity is especially present. 'Along with the Croatian language, the standard Italian language is
present in everyday life, often replaced by the most widespread Romance idiom, Istrian-Venetian dialect, mother tongue to almost all Italian language speakers in Istria. Regarding the Croatian vernaculars, the most important one is the Chakavian, widespread in the whole region’ (Lazarić, Drandić, & Žigante, 2016, p.80).

3. Monte Librić, the eighth children’s book hill in Pula

Istria as a multicultural and bilingual region takes care about the literary education of its inhabitants. Led by this idea, in 1995 Boško Obradović, as the conceptual initiator, the Pula bookshop and the company Castropola d.o.o. founded the Book Fair in Istria, which in 2001 changed its name to Sa(n)jam knjige u Istri. This fair and literary show with Croatian and foreign writers and translators, as well as sales exhibition of Croatian and foreign publishers, held in Pula every year at the beginning of December and lasting for ten days, has been conducted by Magdalena Vodopija from the beginning.

At the first fair there were 56 Croatian publishers and exhibitors, but as early as the following year it grew to be an international manifestation with books and publication presentations, literary evenings, music shows and exhibitions. Among the many authors who ennobled this manifestation by their participation and thus became part of the city of Pula cultural memory are Umberto Eco, Orhan Pamuk, Péter Esterházy, Luko Paljetak, Claudio Magris, Alí Ahmad Saïd Asbar – Adonis, Irvine Welsh, Tess Gallagher, Nedjeljko Fabrio, Jiří Menzel, Albert Manguel, Ljudmila Ulicka, Mirko Kovač, Daniela Dennetta, Dragutin Tadijanović, Ece Temelkuran, Tatjana Toltaja, Ljudmila Petruševska, Oksana Cabeško, Errio De Luca.

As told by Slavica Ćurković, Monte Librić director, and Iris Mošnja, person responsible for public relations, in 2008, in a completely natural way and without set goals, the manifestation Sa(n)jam knjige u Istri emerged as a separate literary manifestation, closely related to children’s literature. As Pula spreads over seven hills, the name Monte Librić, as they say, was conceived as the eighth, imaginary, children’s book hill in Pula. For the first four years Monte Librić was held as part of the winter book fair in Istria, but as a separate manifestation which promotes literary creativity for children through encounters with authors, creative and educational workshops, chat room, theatre shows, film projections and performances, it soon became an unavoidable part of Pula and its wider surrounding’s cultural identity and from 2012 it has been a separate spring manifestation.

From its independent existence the Monte Librić organisers pay due and professional (scientific) attention to children’s literature offering interesting contents for a certain topic. Thus, through the theme of Unreal reality there were discussions about the importance of the contemporary children’s novel, the topic Dot, dot, dotty... was directed toward illustration as a contemporary and individual artistic expression, and with the topic Book on the move they tried to come out of the book statics stereotype so it was connected to movement and seen as a dynamic and alive process putting us on the move. The topic SoundBook wanted to show that books are not a deaf medium and that the relation between words and sounds is one of the most important relations in the experiential moment of the text read. The topic Puppet and me, 2 + 2 wanted to indicate the great importance of puppets in the children’s world, and
due to these children’s book writers often give them the main role. The topic *Animate me!* turned to multimedia contents and the visual arts to show the interweaving nature of the text, illustration and films. This year’s topic *I love the city* included almost a thousand Pula kindergartens’ children into the action ‘I am the face of the city’. Children painted their portraits on small flags and held a vivid exhibition at the Giardini in Pula and in Circolo.

Today *Monte Librić* is considered one of the most significant children’s festivals in Croatia which, with more than 50 publishers, with a large choice of children’s books, child encyclopaedias, picture books, educational picture books, multimedia, didactic materials, professional literature for pedagogues and psychologists, and with the possibility of finding Italian children’s books publishers, offers an insight into the significance of literature for younger generations.

The peculiarity of *Monte Librić* is shown in the programme named ‘More than just a story’ affirming the intercultural link and coexistence of the Croatian and Italian linguistic and cultural community on the Istrian territory and cherishing its bilingualism. As witnessed by Slavica and Iris, the festival hosted some of the most prominent Croatian, Italian and worldwide known children’s writers and illustrators like Miro Gavran, Hrvoje Hitrec, Pajo Kanižaj, Zvonimir Baloga, Mladen Kušec, Hrvoje Kovačević, Ivana Guljašević, Silvija Šesto, Sanja Pilić, Tomislav Torjanac, Zdenk Bašić, Sanja Lovrenčić, Vid Baloga, Kęstutis Kasparavičius, Svjetlan Junaković, Corrado Premuda, Alfred Stopp, Angela Nanetti, Aljoscha Blau, Alenka Sottler, David Homel, Manuele Salvi, Emanuele Nava, Fabrizio Altierio and many others.

**4. Research aim and problems**

Literature, especially children’s literature, contributes to the development of awareness and builds up the sense of belonging to a place, a region, if in its content it encourages linguistic diversity. The literary atmosphere of *Monte Librić*, the manifestation which by its activities attracts children, pupils, parents, teachers, preschool teachers and all those who interpret the homeland diversity and creativity through literature, is stimulating for the overall children’s development. It is emphasised as a unique, cultural and educational manifestation which promotes books and literary creativity intended for children/pupils at all educational levels, and it has been held in Pula since 2008. The *Monte Librić* peculiarity is in its bilingualism and intercultural atmosphere of the Croatian and Italian linguistic and cultural community.

The aim of the paper was to study the example of the literary manifestation for children named *Monte Librić* and the attitudes toward bilingualism and respect of diversity in the context of regionality. It has also been explored if there are differences in attitudes with respect to respondents’ certain socio-demographic characteristics. In line with the defined aim, the following hypotheses have been set:

- **H0:** Multilingualism in the multicultural environment is ensured by common cooperation and tolerance.
- **H1:** Respondents’ attitudes toward bilingualism and the respect of diversity differ significantly.
- **H2:** Pupils and students accept bilingualism in literature as a part of regionality.
5. Research methodology

5.1. Collecting data and study sample

The research was conducted during the *Monte Librič* manifestation in April 2017 on a sample of 306 respondents. Of the total number, 157 (51%) of them were primary and secondary school pupils, 47 (15%) were parents, 45 (14%) were students, 37 (12%) were teachers and 20 (6%) were preschool teachers. Regarding sex, 226 of them (74%) were female and 80 (26%) were male persons. Regarding the mother tongue, 245 (80%) declared the Croatian language as their mother tongue, while for 80 (26%) the Italian language was the mother tongue.

Participants were handed a questionnaire, they were introduced to the research aim, the research conduction procedure was explained, as well as the confidentiality and anonymity of participation. Pupils filled in the questionnaire with their parents’ consent and presence.

5.2. Research instrument

For this research needs the research instrument scale ZAV-liter (Regionality of the literary context) was especially created, and it consists of two parts. The first part consists of three questions relating to respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics: sex, profession and mother tongue. The second part of the questionnaire consists of 10 statements measuring attitudes toward regionality through the children’s literature content. Respondents showed their agreement through a three-level Likert-type scale: 1 = I don’t agree; 2 = undecided; 3 = I agree. The reliability of the internal consistency Cronbach’s alpha equal to $\alpha = 0.81$ (Table 1) was determined for the whole instrument.

6. Results and discussion

Furthermore, the calculated arithmetic mean of answers on the whole sample of respondents (N = 306) for each of the 10 variables (Table 2) are presented. Since participants of the research graded their attitudes on a scale from 1 (I don’t agree) to 3 (I agree), the obtained results are found in the range from 2.36 to 2.98. Consequently, it can be concluded that as part of obtained results there are differences in the range of determined mean values. It can be seen that respondents highly evaluated their attitudes regarding all 10 statements. The highest agreement, $M = 2.98$ (SD = .905) was shown for the statement 1/*The manifestation promotes the homeland linguistic diversity*, and then they point out the statement 7/*I think that respecting diversities is very important for common life*, $M = 2.79$ (SD = .476). On the other hand, although these are high values, respondents showed somewhat lower values for the statement 4/*Reading literature in the mother tongue supports interest toward school reading*, $M = 2.36$ (SD = .803) and the statement 9/*Creative workshops in the Croatian
and Italian language are important for learning the mother tongue and/or another language, $M=2.47$ ($SD=.573$).

Since respondents were estimating statements about the concept of regionality through literature intended for children, their estimations of attitudes about regionality with regard to their socio-demographic variables were studied, by checking the statistical significance of differences. To examine if there is a statistically significant difference in respondents' attitudes with regard to sex and mother tongue, the t-test of independent variables compared the research results, while the single-factor variance analysis NOVA studied the influence of one's profession on the concept of regionality measured by the scale ZAV-liter – Regionality of the literature context.

Regarding their sex, respondents were divided into two groups: male and female, regarding the mother tongue also in two groups: Croatian and Italian, while regarding their profession they were divided into five groups: teacher, preschool teacher, pupil, student and parent.

Respondents' attitudes with regard to sex are statistically very different for two variables: The manifestation promotes the regional and linguistic diversity and The cultural and educational environment helps the mutual acceptance and understanding (Table 3). A significant difference was determined with men, compared to women. Starting from the premise that the manifestation promotes regional linguistic diversity, male respondents estimate the value of the manifestation significantly higher ($t(304)=2.974; \ p < 0.05$) than women. What is more, male respondents estimate significantly higher that the value of the manifestation is in the promotion of one's own culture and language through educational workshops ($t(304)=2.169; \ p < 0.05$) compared to female respondents. A statistically significant difference in attitudes between men and women was not determined (Table 4).
Furthermore, it was determined that respondents’ attitudes toward the variable mother tongue are significantly different for respondents whose mother tongue is Croatian compared to those whose mother tongue is Italian for two statements: *Shaping the pupils’ language and cultural identity* and *Creative workshops in the Croatian or Italian language are important for learning the mother tongue and/or another language*. The obtained results indicate the importance of shaping the language and cultural identity from the earliest age. Through various forms of pedagogic-didactic-methodical work, creative workshops being part of those, we encourage the development of the awareness about the personal identity and language, as well as about the language of national minorities. The t-test was used to compare the research results of the linguistic and cultural identity role in the acquisition of the mother and/or another language, in this case Croatian and Italian. It was determined that for respondents whose mother tongue is Italian, the language education \((t(304) = 2.299; p < 0.05)\) through creative workshops \((t(304) = 2.247; p < 0.05)\) is more acceptable than for respondents whose mother tongue is Croatian. This information can be interpreted by the fact that there is a lack of didactic-methodical literature and didactic means (textbooks, reference books, dictionaries) in the Italian language and that such an approach to language education contributes to the development of the pupils and students’ linguistic and cultural identity.

A statistically significant difference was determined at the level \(p < 0.05\) for three statements of the ZAV-liter scale for respondents’ results: pupil, parent, student, teacher, preschool teacher (Table 5). Thus, a significance of differences was noticed in the perception of the sole manifestation *Monte Librić* (variable 1/*The manifestation promotes the regional linguistic diversity*): \(F_{84, 301} = 5.532; p = 0.00\). A subsequent comparison through the post hoc Tukey HSD test indicates that the mean value of group 3 – pupil (\(M = 2.83; SD = 0.856\)) is significantly different from the mean value of group 5 – parents (\(M = 2.83; SD = 0.968\)), while the remaining groups 1 – teachers (\(M = 2.32; SD = 0.669\)), 2 – preschool teachers (\(M = 2.00; SD = 1.124\)) and

### Table 4. Differences in respondents’ attitudes with relation to the variable mother tongue (t-test).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>linguistic education</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>.566</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creative workshops</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5. Determined differences in respondents’ attitudes toward bilingualism and respect of diversities in the context of regionality (ANOVA).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>manifestation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>17.111</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.278</td>
<td>5.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>232.771</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249.882</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilingualism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.637</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.409</td>
<td>2.749</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>154.310</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159.948</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respecting diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>2.704</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>66.793</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69.193</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 – students (M = 2.80; SD = 0.894) does not significantly differ from the previous two groups of respondents. It can be presumed that parents estimate this kind of manifestations as adequate to the children and pupils’ age and that it can contribute to the development of both the linguistic competence and respecting diversity and supporting reading and interest for children’s creativity in their mother tongue, Croatian or Italian. Furthermore, a significance of differences for the variable 2/Equal use of the Croatian and Italian language ensures the preservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage in Istria, where: F (4, 301) = 2.749; p = 0.028. A comparison through the post hoc Tukey HSD test indicates that the mean value of group 1 – teacher (M = 2.86; SD = 0.419) is significantly different from the mean value of group 4 – students (M = 2.36; SD = 0.712), while the remaining groups 2 – preschool teachers (M = 2.55; SD = 0.826), 3 – pupils (M = 2.51; SD = 0.748) and 5 – parents (M = 2.57; SD = 0.744) does not significantly differ from the previous two groups of respondents.

This can be explained by the fact that teachers participate in the homeland teaching project and introduce in the teaching process elements of regionality and linguistic diversity on a daily basis, so they estimated this variable significantly higher than students. For variable 7/Respecting diversity is ensured by mutual cooperation and respect among peers, the significance of differences among answers was noticed: F(4, 301) = 2.704; p = 0.031. According to the post hoc Tukey HSD test, the mean value of group 1 – teacher (M = 2.57; SD = 0.728) is significantly different from the mean value of group 5 – parents (M = 2.87; SD = 0.397), while the remaining groups, 2 – preschool teachers (M = 2.90; SD = 0.447), 3 – pupils (M = 2.80; SD = 0.420) and 4 – students (M = 2.80; SD = 0.457) does not significantly differ from the previous two groups of respondents. The obtained results lead to the conclusion that parents estimate significantly higher the role of the teacher in building positive attitudes and development of tolerance among peers in the multicultural environment than teachers.

It can also be pointed out that for other variables a statistically significant difference in the respondents’ answers (teachers, preschool teachers, pupils, students and parents) was not determined and that they equally confirm and highly estimate attitudes toward bilingualism and the respect for diversity in the context of regionality as an important element in the pupils’/students’ overall development in multicultural and tolerant communities.

According to research based on t-test results and variance analysis (ANOVA) on the ZAV-liter scale (Regionality of the literature context), conducted on participants with regard to socio-demographic variables sex (male/female), mother tongue (Croatian/Italian) and profession (teacher, preschool teacher, pupil, student, parent), a statistically significant difference was determined on a few offered variables. Namely, differences in answers were determined with regard to sex on variables The manifestation promotes regional and linguistic diversity and The cultural and educational atmosphere helps the mutual acceptance and understanding; differences with regard to the mother tongue for variables Shaping pupils’ linguistic and cultural identity and Creative workshops in the Croatian or Italian language are important for learning the mother tongue and/or another language; differences with regard to
professions for variables. The manifestation promotes the regional linguistic diversity. Equal use of the Croatian and Italian language ensures the preservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage in Istria. Respecting diversities is ensured by mutual cooperation and respect among peers. Therefore, the H1 hypothesis: Respondents’ attitudes with regard to bilingualism and the respect for diversity are significantly different is partly accepted. Regarding the second hypothesis H2: Pupils and students accept bilingualism in literature as regional works is accepted. It was determined that 86% of pupils and 79% of students visit and support the Monte Librić manifestation and think that using the Croatian and Italian language ensures the preservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage in Istria. In the end it can be concluded that the zero hypothesis stating that Multilingualism in a multicultural environment is ensured by mutual cooperation and tolerance is confirmed by respondents’ answers to each of the ten variables/statements which estimated the values of linguistic expression in the mother tongue (Croatian and Italian), linguistic education, multiculturality, respecting diversities, cultural identity and children’s creativity value in the context of regionality and the role of identity, language and culture in the support of children’s/pupils’/students’ development.

7. Conclusion

Through the literary manifestation Monte Librić, the conducted research aimed at determining if there are differences in teachers, preschool teachers, pupils, students and parents’ attitudes in the context of bilingualism of the Croatian and Italian language toward respecting diversities, tolerance and mutual interaction. The obtained results indicate the possibility of integrating language, linguistic expression and children’s literature teaching through existing and new didactic-methodical procedures and strategies with the aim to cherish interaction and communication in the mother tongue and/or national minority language.

Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to stimulate the interest for the linguistic and cultural identity in the context of regionality and development of attitudes, as well as the respect for multicultural community values. This paper’s limitations relate to multilingualism and multiculturality of Istria as a region in which the encouragement of each person’s identity development is defined by mutual tolerance and coexistence regardless of the diversities defining each single person. Thus, further research in this area can be directed toward the support of multilingual and multicultural identity development at all educational levels, because as Delors argues ‘knowing other cultures leads us […] toward the awareness about the heritage common to the whole mankind’ (1998, p.53).

Notes

2. Institutionalisation of Homeland Teaching of the Istria Region: http://www.za-nas.hr
3. It is important to mention the initiative of the Marko Marulić City Library in Split where for eight years now a round table has been held, regularly every year, about homeland in
Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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