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## **The importance of intra-linguistic diversity in teaching Slovenian as the first language**

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### **Abstract**

In recent decades, Slovenian sociolinguistic situation and within the functions of different language varieties have dramatically changed. In spite of this process, the standard language remains a language variety that enables an individual to participate equally in educational and public life. As the Slovenian schools are not successful enough in developing of the discursive flexibility and mastering of the standard language, in the article, the functions of Standard language in modern Slovenian-speaking society is described; the specific groups of primary Slovenian language speakers are defined, and some solutions for improving the first language learning are suggested.

In 1990's, in opposite to the prevailing traditional structural language-stratification theory, the new classification of the primary sociolects, based on the English functional linguistics, by A. E. Skubic was represented. According to his theory, the sociolects are defined as non-hierarchically ordered cultivated or marginal language varieties that are used and identified with by different social groups. Based on Skubic's classification, two main groups of primary-Slovenian language speakers can be described. The speakers of the cultivated primary sociolects are mostly self-confident users of language, identifying themselves with the main culture. In opposite, the speakers of the marginal sociolects could be de-privileged due to their linguistic deficit in standard language and micro-cultural discursive patterns, used in educational or public contexts.

As it is suggested, to improve students' linguistic competence and diminish deficits, the discursive flexibility should be understood as a complex awareness, consisting of cognitive, emotional-evaluative and active dimensions. Therefore, the basic principle of first language teaching should become the extended holistic principle, emphasizing the inclusion of standard and different non-standard language varieties, observation of their different functions in specific communicative situations and reflection about the complex context, that can be implemented to first language teaching in all basic phases of learning.

**Keywords:** first language teaching, language varieties, discursive flexibility, holistic principle

## Introduction

In recent decades, Slovenian society has been remarkably influenced by globalisation processes and migrations. Consequently, multiculturalism, tolerance, and acceptance of linguistic and cultural differences have become important aims in Slovenian school documents. On the other hand, the intra-cultural and intra-linguistic diversity has been more or less neglected, although the social and sociolinguistic situation has been dramatically changing for at least last two decades. It has been effected, not only by an increase of the so-called second-generation emigrants' society but also by the transitions between social classes, professions and living places or by the establishment of new cultural, financial, political elites etc. Therefore, beyond the traditional national identity, the individual's personal identities, formed through social interaction, have become more important. These processes have also been reflected in the attitude towards the standard Slovenian language, different non-standard varieties (Bayetto, ed., 2008) and social groups that speak a certain variety.

In spite of changed roles and relations between language varieties, the standard language is still a language variety that enables an individual to participate equally in educational, public, political and professional life (Larre, 1999, p. 18, Vogel, 2017, p. 41). And if an individual is not aware of the functions of the standard language or has not mastered the standard language to a certain level, he/she might be unaccepted, de-privileged or even stigmatised in both personal and social life. On the other hand, if he/she changes his/her primary variety, this change might be seen by other members of his/her primary social group as betrayal (Larre, 1999, p. 18).

The results of specific groups of primary-Slovenian language speakers in PISA research (Kolednik, 2010, pp. 142–148)<sup>1</sup> and findings on interference from students' non-standard varieties when writing graduation essays<sup>2</sup> have shown that Slovenian schools and especially the subject of Slovenian have not been successful enough in achieving this aim. In the article, to identify the reasons for this insufficiency and suggest some improvements in school practice, three questions will be discussed:

- (1) How has the Slovenian sociolinguistic situation changed compared to the traditional description of language diversity?

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<sup>1</sup> Similar, Battisti et al. (2009, p. 2) emphasize, that the minority children have been over-represented among the lowest-achieving students in USA, Australia and Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Using non-standard elements has been continuously pointed out in annual reports of the Slovenian as first language testing committee for the General Matura.

- (2) Which groups of primary-Slovenian language speakers<sup>3</sup> are the improvement of the discursive flexibility and knowledge of the standard language especially important to?
- (3) How can the objectives, content, and methods of the subject of Slovenian be upgraded to develop the students' discursive flexibility<sup>4</sup> more successfully?

## 1. The Slovenian sociolinguistic situation

### 1.1 The theoretical models of language stratification in Slovenian linguistics

The prevailing language stratification theory in Slovenian linguistics, described in Grammar of the Slovenian Language (Toporišič, 2000), classifies language varieties<sup>5</sup> along the social and functional axes. On the social axis, varieties are divided into standard and non-standard varieties that could be geographically or interest-determined, wherein the standard language is defined as an idiom of the highest hierarchical level, attributed to have a national-representative function and considered the only appropriate variety in public and formal communication.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, since the 1990s, the communicative practice has been increasingly moving away from that traditional model. Therefore, in the early 1990s, an alternative model of language stratification by Skubic (1995, 2003, 2005) as an attempt to accord theory with language use was represented. According to the English functionalism, he defined the social varieties as the languages of different social groups (Skubic, 2003, p. 297) and classified them into primary (which means the first language variety someone has learnt) or secondary sociolects<sup>7</sup> (Skubic, 2005, Gee 1989) on the one hand and into cultivated (which are more similar to the standard language) or marginal sociolects (which differ significantly

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<sup>3</sup> In the article, the expression *primary-Slovenian language speakers* is used instead of the expression *native speakers* because it refers not only to speakers who have learnt Slovenian as their primary sociolect at home; it refers also to speakers who have learnt another language as their first language, but have also learnt their primary non-standard variety of the Slovenian language before entering school.

<sup>4</sup> The term discursive flexibility is used instead of the term code-switching, because, according to Gee (1989), the discourse is understood as a connection between language and culture. Further on, Larre (1999) suggested that discourse is not »simply the way of thinking but a way of »being« in a given social situation« (p. 18).

<sup>5</sup> The expression "variety" is used as a neutral term, related to any type of language,

<sup>6</sup> On the functional axis, typical discourses are classified into four language varieties: practical-communicative, publicist (media), scientific and artistic.

<sup>7</sup> In the article, the expressions "social variety" and "sociolect" are used synonymously, as the language variety typical of a greater or smaller social group.

from the standard language) on the other hand (Skubic, 2003, p. 298; Larre, 1999, p. 16).

While on the social axis Skubic has explicitly placed only non-standard varieties of language, the standard language was seen as a tool used by speakers in different registers and genres in institutional contexts, which constitute the functional axis, whereby it can be used either as the standard variety, related to the representative function, to the non-personality and objectiveness, or as a cultural variety, related to the national-identity or high-cultural and educational social identity function (Skubic, 2001, p. 210).

For our discussion, Skubic's classification of the primary sociolects seem to be the most important because it can be used as a starting point for identifying groups of primary-Slovenian language speakers and predicting problems they might be facing. On the other hand, Skubic has neglected the identity or social power of the standard language in non-institutional contexts as well as the role of non-standard varieties in public or formal communication. In this dimension, his theory should be supplemented by the results of empirical research undertaken in the last three years.

## **1.2 The users' experiences and statements**

The empirical research on the students' knowledge, experience and values related to the standard language has been taken as a part of extended research on language policy and users' needs.<sup>8</sup> Although the sample was not relevant either according to the number of answers or in terms of the typical representatives<sup>9</sup>, the results make it possible for us to suggest some conclusions (Vogel, 2018, pp. 80-88).

- The majority of students do not have a clear concept of the standard language. As many as 90 per cent of them did not answer the question of what standard language is, while the 10 per cent of students who gave an answer define the standard language according to the traditional theory.
- The students' experiences with the use of the standard language either as speakers or as recipients have proved that the traditional criteria for choosing the standard language, as literacy, publicity, formality, pan-nationality, are not sufficient for making appropriate and consistent decisions in different speaking situations.
- Expectations or even requirements for the use of the standard language have indicated that language functions are one of the most important criteria for

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<sup>8</sup> The findings and interpretations of the results are represented in Ahačič (2017).

<sup>9</sup> The sample has not been balanced according to primary varieties, regional distribution, types of schools.

code-switching. As most students think a speaker should choose the standard language in public texts with pan-national importance, where the national identity or symbolic function is stressed, in professional monologue, especially in written communication and news media reports where the representative function is emphasised, or in communication in formal institutional situations, where the social function is the most important.

Despite the limitations, the empirical research has confirmed that the standard Slovenian language has maintained its important role in modern Slovenian-language-speaking society (Larre, 2009, p. 27). Students use it to express his/her national, citizen or social identity and values, his/her specific attitude to others in both, formal as well as informal situations, or to share important, widely relevant and scientific information with them. On the other side, different social varieties are probably used to define speakers as members of certain micro-cultural groups, to express their feelings, to persuade other people belonging to the same or a different group etc. However, the answers have also shown that the central role of the standard language in schools can only be justified if students discover its importance in their individual, professional and public lives.

## **2. Sociolinguistic specifics of target groups**

Slovenian linguistics has defined two main problems, related to the discursive flexibility in modern Slovenian society. Firstly, many speakers choose the non-standard language over the standard one in situations where the latter would be the expected and more successful variety (Kalin-Golob, 2008; Bitenc, 2016). And secondly, even if the primary-Slovenian speaker uses the standard language, interference from non-standard varieties often occurs in his/her speech. (cf. Smole 2009: 562, Tivadar and Tivadar 2015: 43–44) Nevertheless, although speakers of cultivated sociolects as well as speakers of marginal ones might be faced with both problems, the reaction of the addressee would probably differ due to the different valuation of each group of primary sociolects in the main-culture society (Bitenc 2016, pp. 80, 96).

### **2.1 Speakers of cultivated primary sociolects**

The speakers of cultivated primary sociolects are mostly self-confident users of their primary non-standard variety, because it is linguistically closer to the standard language and because their communicative patterns are the patterns of Slovenian mainstream culture (Skubic, 2003, pp. 298–301, Makarova, 2004, p. 288).

For this group of speakers, the main problem seems to be related not to refusing the standard language but to non-distinguishing between the cultivated non-standard and the standard variety or to interference from the primary

sociolect to the standard language that speakers can either be aware of or not.<sup>10</sup> The awareness of interference is more often typical of speakers from non-central Slovenia, because some linguistic features of their primary sociolect clearly deviate from the standard language and because it could rarely be heard in national media or other types of public situations. They even usually define the interference or at least recognise the points where the mistakes might occur, but are not able to correct them without being supported by the first language learning at school.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, by the speakers of central-Slovenian cultivated sociolects, interferences may arise due to equalisation of their primary variety with the standard one, often derived from the experience of using their primary language variety not only in public discourse (in entertainment events or TV shows) but also at school. Consequently, in spite of learning the standard language grammar, orthography, pronunciation, and vocabulary, many students do not manage to transfer their knowledge out of Slovenian-language lessons.<sup>12</sup>

The use of the cultivated non-standard varieties instead of the standard language also has its emotional dimension, related to the identity and social functions, that is often neglected. The non-central cultivated varieties, when the standard language should be an appropriate variety, may be seen as a humorous element or as an intentional or unintentional expression of a speaker's regional identity, which can be similar or different from that of the addressee. Therefore, they can be received with a greater or lesser degree of sympathy, and especially among speakers from central Slovenia, even with mockery and disparagement. As opposed to this, the speakers of cultivated and marginal primary varieties from non-central Slovenia often consider the use of central-Slovenian cultivated primary sociolects instead of the standard language as ignorant and sublime and consequently, the speaker and his message may be rejected.

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<sup>10</sup> Larre (1999, p. 14) has suggested that even in English, it is important to notice that everybody speaks a dialect.

<sup>11</sup> The denial of these problems at school has sometimes led to so-called miscorrections and hyper-correction or to insufficient self-esteem in using the standard language. Hyper-correction has been noticed especially within pronunciation (for example in the case of vowels) and some grammatical features (using the general conjugation even when conjugating irregular verbs etc.).

<sup>12</sup> To a certain extent, equalisation of the standard and the Ljubljana region variety can also occur in linguistics. Cazinkić (2001), for example, said that "the Ljubljana speech differs from the literary language more or less only because of the so-called modern vowel-reduction" (p. 27).

## **2.2 The speakers of marginal primary sociolects**

In Slovenian society, in spite of being faced with a similar kind of linguistic problems when learning the standard language, the general attitude towards marginal primary sociolects differs from mostly positive to negative or even underestimating. According to Skubic (2003, pp. 301–302), Bitenc (2016, p. 96), and Smole (2009, p. 561), the rural sociolects are relatively favourably valued because they are “connected to common sense simplicity and non-corruption”. Attitudes towards the urban marginal sociolects are more negative because “they do not have their romantic rusticality” (Skubic, 2003, pp. 301–302) and are at the same time seen as an expression of an under-average level of economic and intellectual power. Finally, the immigrants' marginal sociolects are valued the lowest, they are “a stigma, often ridiculed, and mark their speakers as foreigners in the community” (Skubic, 2003, pp. 301–302).

Speakers of all three groups have specific problems in both, the linguistic and the cultural domain. In the linguistic sense, their vocabulary and grammar differ from the standard ones. The dialects are marked with the specific words, morphological or syntactic forms and regionally typical pronunciation. Along with some dialectic grammar features, in urban marginal varieties there are more vulgar or inappropriate expressions and a lack of politeness. In immigrant varieties, in addition to the specific of other marginal sociolects, in all areas of grammar, emerge interferences from the first language of the speakers' parents or grandparents, which could be the object of ridicule or disparagement. In the socio-cultural sense, the speakers of marginal sociolects, when entering school, are deprivileged due to the communicative and cultural deficit rooting in their micro-culture (Campbell, 2011, p. 85).<sup>13</sup>

Although it is essential for these groups of speakers to improve their opportunities to keep up with their schoolmates, the importance of compensating their linguistic and discursive deficit has been underestimated or even overlooked for long a time until now. The consequences of this are treble (Larre, 1999, pp. 20–21):

Firstly, the linguistic deficit in the standard language affects a student's ability to comprehend, speak and write in the standard language, which is necessary for academic success at school in all academic areas.

Secondly, for teachers, the speakers of the non-cultivated varieties may have been viewed as being less intelligent or less motivated, as well as more primitive

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<sup>13</sup> Their cultural background depends on the rural, urban or immigrant micro-culture, but it is at same time often remarkably characterised by social deprivation. It is more probable that these children live in poverty and that their parents have only primary or vocational education, (Bayetto et al., 2008, p. 10) which means that their ability to support children to overcome learning or behavioural problems is very limited (Larre, 1999).

or rude. They are often corrected not because of insufficient knowledge but because of using a non-standard variety or non-cultivated discursive elements. A repeated experience of failure may even lower the student's own academic expectations and deter his effort to gain fluency in the standard language, which would be necessary to prevent him/her being discriminated in adulthood.

Finally, by many speakers of so-called marginal sociolects, the standard language is understood as a primary variety, spoken by educated people and members of the upper classes, the social group they do not belong in and cannot be identified with. It means that the standard language is seen as a competitive variety to their primary sociolect rather than as a specific language variety, used in complex speaking situations (Battisti et al., 2009, p. 2). Consequently, if the school requires them to make a non-critical change from their primary variety to the standard language in every speaking situation, while speakers of cultivated sociolects are not expected to do the same, it may also be interpreted as a request to decline the values, history, culture and identity associated with the speaker's primary social group.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. Developing critical discursive flexibility in the subject of Slovenian as the first language**

According to researches, within which the opinions on and beliefs about the relationship between standard and non-standard varieties have been considered (Tivadar & Tivadar, 2015; Smolej, 2016; Bitenc, 2016; Kenda Jež, 2015; Smole, 2009; Skubic, 2003, 2005; Kalin Golob, 2008), some typical attitudes to the standard language and its relationship with non-standard varieties can be recognised. By some speakers,<sup>15</sup> the standard language is still accepted as the most valued and hierarchically highest variety, with no regard to the specific circumstances. As a reaction to this exclusive status, some groups of speakers have developed a general non-acceptance of the standard language, even if its use would be the most appropriate variety. Apart from these extreme attitudes, there can be recognised at least two levels of conscious language-variety switching. On the first level, speakers are sensitive to language diversity, but their switching is mostly non-reflected, accorded to the communicative patterns that have been accepted in the process of language acquisition, including interferences and misuse of the

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<sup>14</sup> Fishman (2007, p. 21) in his paper titled "What do you lose when you lose your language?" suggests "you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thinking, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about".

<sup>15</sup> An uncritically positive attitude to standard language is, according to Skubic (2003, p. 298), typical for newcomers to the higher social class and—to a certain extent—for all members of the middle class. And, on the other hand, for teachers of the Slovenian language and some profiles of higher-educated people (Ahačič et al., 2017).



primary variety thought to be the standard one. On the second level, the use of varieties is based on knowledge about language diversity and linguistic differences between primary and standard varieties and the critical awareness of the circumstances, purposes, cultural and social contexts, stylistic effects and ethical responsibility.

### **3.1 The understanding of the discursive flexibility**

Although there are numerous reasons for mostly non-critical attitude towards language diversity, the teaching of Slovenian as first language has significantly contributed to it. The analyses of the current curriculum have shown (Vogel, 2017a, 2017b) that in the Slovenian language learning the traditional schematic and hierarchical ordered language stratification is still prevailing, though it is often inconsistent with students' out-of-school communicative experience.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, to make a step from the mostly uncritical to the mostly critical awareness of language diversity<sup>17</sup> the quality and the quantity of experiences should have to be increased. The quality would be improved if the understanding of the discursive flexibility would be upgraded from the theoretical knowledge or schematic switching between different social varieties to complex awareness (Vogel, 2015, pp. 38-39; Smolej, 2016, p. 465; Bitenc, 2016, pp. 39-41), consisting of three main dimensions:

- (1) The cognitive dimension includes knowledge, understanding and experience regarding

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<sup>16</sup> Analysis has revealed some inconsistencies between the general aims and their analytical operationalisation. In the general aims, the importance of interrelated developing of the critical communicative competence, language awareness and linguistic cultural awareness as the essential elements of first language learning is emphasised, which also presupposes the observation, reflection and evaluation of different language varieties and their functions in authentic communicative situations. In the opposite case, the precisely defined objectives, content and the recommended method are rooted in the traditional language stratification theory, supporting the exclusive status of standard language. Because the learning units are usually based on the precisely defined analytical operationalisation, the traditional schematic and hierarchically ordered language stratification is still prevailing, though it is often inconsistent with students' out-of-school communicative experience (Vogel, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> This aim would be achieved when the students were able to choose an expected language variety in the particular cultural and social contexts or to decline it, whereby their positive or negative decisions should be based on critical reflection on the relationship between the chosen variety and (micro-)culture it belongs in, on the prevailing language functions in a speaking situation, on the awareness of the possible consequences and of their own responsibility for them.

- different language varieties and their functions in personal, professional and public life,
- understanding every language variety as a system different from the standard one (Larre, 1999, p. 17),
- existing rules of the standard language system (Krapš Vodopivec, 2010, pp. 245-246) and their function in achieving informational preciseness or objectiveness,
- synonymous linguistic elements, their rhetoric value and connotative meanings as well as their function in building social relations, either according to established cultural schemas or not.

(2) The emotional-evaluative dimension concern:

- the general emotional attitude towards the standard language and non-standard varieties, especially the primary sociolect;
- attitudes towards specific rules and elements, typical of the standard language (or other varieties);<sup>18</sup>
- beliefs and opinions, related to objective vs. subjective discourse in different situations, including conscious use of interferences from different social varieties, discourses, genres.

(3) The active dimension can be understood as a willingness to act according to someone's knowledge, reflected experiences, values, attitudes and states.

As along with quality the basic condition for developing competence and awareness is quantity of experience, the students should be continuously encouraged to reflect on discursive practice.

### **3.2 The holistic approach**

Since the 1990s, the so-called holistic principle has been established as the basic principle of teaching Slovenian as the first language (Križaj Ortar & Bešter, 1995; Vogel, 2017c). For almost two decades, it has concerned three aspects: diversity of texts in different genres, balancing of the communicative skills, and developing all components of the functional communicative competence (motivation, cognitive, pragmatic, linguistic and metalinguistic competence). If focusing on these three domains was sufficient in the 1990s, when the functional communicative competence was declared as the main goal of language learning,

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<sup>18</sup> For example, the dual, the use of genitive, gender-sensitive use of language, use of the plural or singular form for addressing an individual etc.

today's situation requires the extended understanding of the holistic principle at least in the following dimensions.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.2.1 Intra-linguistic diversity in teaching the first language**

The exclusivity of the standard language does not lead to a majority critical discursive flexibility. To achieve this, students should be given an opportunity to compare their attitudes to different varieties, observe the different functions that a certain variety in the current situation contributes to, the effects and consequences of the chosen variety and linguistic features, giving listeners a cue to interpret who the speaker is as well as how he/her perceives the topic, the circumstances, him- or herself and the addressee. Non-hierarchical presentation of language varieties, whereby the language functions are emphasised, would strengthen the students' willingness to use the standard language when it is the most effective variety and to become proud speakers of their primary sociolects. Furthermore, by comparative analysis, the awareness of the standard language as specific language variety, which has to be learnt by almost all speakers, will be raised. And finally, comparing different language varieties is no less important for improving the students' use of the standard language, because, as Vera Smole stated (2009, p. 559), the poor knowledge of the standard language often is derived from the student's ignorance about the linguistic differences between his/her primary and standard language varieties, which does not result in discourse switching, but in unintended mixing of different language varieties instead (Campbell, 2011, p. 92).

### **3.2.2 Different language functions in the personal, public and professional domain**

According to the functional theory (cf. Jakobson, 1996; Halliday, 1986; Škiljan, 1999), language has at least three main functions: informative or representative, social or interpersonal, and an identity or expressive function.<sup>20</sup> In the first one, the standard language acts as the most neutral, non-personal, objective precise language variety; in modern Slovenian society, that function seemed to be important especially in news media or science texts and in legal and official texts with dominant performative function (Skubic, 2001, p. 223; Vogel, 2017b, pp. 12–13). The social function of standard language is often exposed in formal interaction, expressing the non-personal relationship between interlocutors or

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<sup>19</sup> In the article, we have been concerned with the holistic approach in relation to language diversity and developing of discursive flexibility.

<sup>20</sup> Those three functions are often also exposed in researching a pedagogical discourse (Kunst Gnamuš, 1992).

unequal status in the institutional hierarchy, as well as in the informal interaction, expressing the speaker's higher education and his/her belonging in non-marginal society (Skubic, 2001, pp. 212, 218-219; Vogel, 2017b, pp. 12-13; Bitenc, 2016, p. 50; Ahačič et al., 2018) or being used as a tool for increasing the distance. In the identity function, the standard language acts as a prestigious, high-cultural language form, representing whole national community.

In situations where representative function is emphasised, even today, the use of the standard language as well as the importance of grammatical rules, correct orthography and pronunciation can be clearly explained. Conversely, if we quote Bitenc (2016), in identity- or socially-focused situations the standard language has to compete with other individuals' sociolects and the choice of it depends on the given social status and role. Therefore, when students compare primary and standard language it is not enough to be focused on the linguistic analyses; it is equally important to reflect their different functions, effects and consequences. (Battisti et al., 2009, p. 2).

### **3.2.3 Complexity of communicative context**

A person's linguistic activity and his/her identification through language are inseparably interconnected (Vogel, 2015, Bergoč, 2010, Škiljan, 1999, Kramsch, 2003, Larre, 1999). Therefore, the learning content has to be contextualised not only in the current physical circumstances but also in the socio-cultural and intrapersonal or psychological context.<sup>21</sup>

Physical context, which may include time, place, a typical reason for the communication and the schematic statuses of the interlocutors, can be defined as a cue that enables a person to recognise an acquired pattern of interaction and an expected type of discourse (Lemke, 2003, p. 71). Nevertheless, the choice of a certain variety does not necessarily depend on a mutual, systemically regulated relationship between types of discourse, words and language forms. A speaker can violate cultural conventions despite having knowledge of them (Ule Nastran, 2005, p. 74), because his/her choice is strongly influenced by his/her personal acceptance or refusal of traditional main-cultural patterns, actually against the identity he/she is expected to take over. To understand how cognitive and affective dimensions of communication and social knowledge influence the choice of a variety, it has to be observed in an authentic situation in which the students are actively engaged. As Larre (1999, p. 15) pointed out, language, culture and

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<sup>21</sup> Our considerations are based on the three aspects of the relationship between language and culture, which were identified from the aspect of foreign language didactics by Risager (2006, in: Byram, 2012, p. 6): sociological, psychological and linguistic.

cognition are interrelated and overlapping and it is difficult to discuss any of the three concepts in isolation.

#### **4 Conclusion or suggestions for school practice**

Language, culture and communication are interrelated and influence each other and, in first-language teaching, they can't be developed separately. A more complex understanding of the holistic principle allows more activities for developing critical discursive flexibility to be included in all basic phases of learning. In the preparation phase,<sup>22</sup> the students have to personally experience the insufficiency of their non-standard variety within a specific speaking situation. To create such situations in the classroom, the teacher has to guide students to define a communicative problem that has to be solved, to reflect the physical as well as the socio-cultural and personal context, and to think about possible ways to solve it. Only if they understand the speaker's role and status in a specific situation, will they become truly motivated to pay attention to, observe, discuss and assess someone's or their own language behaviour and to change it.

In the representing phase, the cultural norms lying behind the established communicative schemas should be recognised or discussed. These norms are not explicitly formulated and are mostly acquired and followed spontaneously (Ule Nastran, 2005, pp. 157-160); therefore, students should ask themselves the questions of who the speaker is and which social role he/she holds, what values and views he/she advocates, what assumptions he/she bases his/her speech on, and how all these relate to his/her choice of the (non-) standard language variety. In addition, the student's attention has to be drawn to the linguistic differences between his/her primary sociolect and the standard language. The students should observe, describe and define the linguistic items and forms of both varieties, put them into the system and master the so-called problematic linguistic elements of the standard language in appropriate contexts (Campbell, 2011, p. 93, Bayetto, 2008, p. 27).

Finally, the process of developing critical discursive flexibility has to be focused on the active dimension. How students would probably act in the real world, can be only predicted if they are given a challenge to use their knowledge and skills, regarding their reflected opinions and attitudes, in a creative way. While preparing lessons, the teacher has to plan not only the practice phase but also the performance phase (for example complex role-play, the writing of public essays, leading and joining the debate, project work), which require the use of factual,

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<sup>22</sup> The motivation for learning the standard language, when students already speak the primary non-standard variety, which seems to be sufficient for them to successfully communicate with other members of Slovenian-speaking society, is sometimes hard to achieve.

conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge on the highest cognitive levels.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> According to the revised Bloom's taxonomy, the creation is defined as the highest cognitive level (cf. Anderson & Krathwohl, 2016).

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