

Bilingual education: the road to multilingualism

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Globalisation emphasizes the importance of foreign languages by influencing the development of national strategies for learning languages, thus contributing to conservation or harmonization of language ecological balance in the world.

The increasing attention given to language issues in Europe resulted from the intention to overcome numerous problems related to language, communication, interaction and multi-layered international cooperation and understanding in the context of ethnic, religious and cultural differences on global level, but also to promote the integration processes enhanced by various forms of mobility. What also contributes to this is an overall democratization of public life and raising awareness in different minority groups, as well as parallel processes of globalization, localization and glocalization: comparison, permeation, survival and adaptation of local environment to global context.

At the same time, there are concerns based on the prejudice that globalization trends could endanger citizens' needs at individual and local level of identification with their people, country, religion, cultural specificities and so on. In the area of foreign language teaching policy there have been inappropriate reactions to the "danger" threatening the dominant language and culture that are allegedly jeopardized by the presence of other cultures and languages in a formal education system and environment.

Bilingual education (in Serbia since 2004) promotes multilingualism, with the belief that it contributes to overcoming linguistic, cultural and communication barriers and develops tolerance. This paper, as an appendix to the introduction of bilingual teaching, interprets the results of research on the importance of learning foreign languages, cultural and linguistic bias in students of bilingual and regular classes. The aim of the paper is to identify similarities and differences in the attitudes of bilingual and regular students.

Key Words: Bilingual education, multilingualism, multiculturalism, foreign languages, attitudes, bilingual and regular students.

Introduction

To speak more than one language is a rule rather than an exception because two thirds of the world's population are bilingual. During the eighties and nineties attention began to be paid at national levels in Europe to formative possibilities offered by bilingual education seen as a unique curriculum in two vehicular languages, one of which is not native. By publishing the White Paper (1996) titled *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*, the European Commission emphasized the need to improve the quality of foreign language learning. One of the proposals in the document is about the possibility that several high school subjects can be taught in the first foreign language. Tendencies which are related to the foreign language learning policy in Europe are presented in detail in the Common European Framework of Reference for learning, teaching and assessment of the languages of the Council of Europe. They also contain a proposal of possible scenarios of the curricula presented to the Ministerial Council of the Council of Europe in 1998. New impetus to such education was the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, Article 126, which opened the borders of Europe to the effect of large movements, shifts, increased mobility of people and business relationships between countries.

Contemporary attitudes and trends of foreign language learning policy in Europe include multilingualism as a basic principle of the European unity policy, defining it as an individual's ability to take part in intercultural interaction in two, three or more languages, at different levels. Such knowledge of a language offers the possibility of learning about multiple cultural communities, exchange of experiences and wider opportunities for work and

contacts within the European Union. Advantages of the implementation of the multilingualism principle in school systems lead to expansion of students' linguistic competence in a foreign language, development of creativity and sense of communication, greater abilities of analysis and problem solving, dissemination of knowledge in the foreign language as a vehicular language and in the mother tongue, development of self-confidence in the person who speaks the languages, greater respect for themselves, flexibility and adaptability, confidence in social interactions, developed capacity for interpersonal relations, closer ties with some environments and with the European social and cultural environment in general, and the creation of a multicultural attitude, possession of "the experience of two language worlds" (Baker, 2000). In pragmatic terms, education in two languages in a multilingual environment enables easier mobility and exchange of information in the broadest sense, including family, community, employment and international contacts in European and world context, permeation of educational systems of countries participating in bilingual education, transfer of academic knowledge from one language to another, the spirit of mutual cooperation in learning, education of a ready, open citizen of Europe with expressed tolerance and need for social harmony (Vučo, 2006).

Bilingual instruction uses two languages as a tool in teaching process, it is one of the aspects of bilingual education and ways to develop students' bilingualism. In bilingual classes in monolingual environments there is a risk that the second language might threaten the first one and replace it, which is known as subtractive bilingualism, a common phenomenon in language heterogeneous environment, where students whose first language is socially less important in their community, are taught some subjects in the language that is socially more relevant, thus endangering the development of the mother (family) tongue. The use of family language is limited only to home, school, and it is not used in the environment. This phenomenon occurs with immigrants, particularly those from socially less developed areas. When it comes to the bilingual education in Serbia²²⁷, its nature is additive, because it produces the mentioned positive effects (Filipović, Vučo, Đurić, 2007).

Europe and multiculturalism - from a political desire to political reality

The views on multilingualism and intercultural relations on which the European Union bases its policy of equality among member states, encouraging foreign language learning and condemning any kind of linguistic and other discrimination in the areas of formal and informal education are well known. Active political support sends a clear message that there is a need to strengthen the knowledge of foreign languages and define specific language needs by maintaining the diversity of languages as a factor of strengthening European unity. Expressing fear or conciliation with the so-called imperialism of the English language, or with English as a language with the power of lingua franca of the modern world (Seidlhofer, 2005: 340), a valid recommendation (European Commission, 2008) is that a European citizen should speak at least three languages²²⁸.

The idea of European multiculturalism is experiencing longer and longer moments of crisis, a social environment is increasingly hostile to the challenges of integrating poor immigrant population into the European context. This is clearly expressed by the statements of the British²²⁹ and German²³⁰ Prime Minister, affirming that "the attempts of creating a multicultural society in Germany have completely failed." Up to a few years ago clear messages contained unbelievably politically incorrect opinions addressed to immigrants, "those who don't speak the German language are not welcome," despite the fact that "in Frankfurt am Main, two out of three children under the age of 5 years are of immigrant origin". Multiculturalism and multilingualism were the main pillars on which Europe rested. The threat that these pillars might collapse, for example in Germany and Britain, where as an alternative to unsuccessful multicultural utopia a clear expression of national identity that would contribute to preventing various extremism is evoked, speaks about the danger that hangs over the entire European Union and idea of European equality of nations and languages.

²²⁷ Bilingual education in Serbia, started in 2004-2005 in French and Italian, and since 2006 it is held in English and German in some primary schools. The model of bilingual education can be regarded as original and modified according to the CLIL procedure. In contrast to this model, where a sole requirement is not the knowledge of a language, and due to Serbian legal regulations a teacher must be both proficient in the language and have a university degree of the non-linguistic subject he teaches. An anticipated level of language proficiency for teachers is C1 of the CEF. Depending on the availability of teachers, bilingual education is held for a number of subjects: history, geography, art, sociology, biology, philosophy, computer science, etc.. as a percentage of 30 to 45% of the total number of classes.

²²⁸ Language for identification, native; language of global/continental communication (English or French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, or other language), and a personal acquired language that should be developed to the full potential as a second language (represented in the education system at all levels) (European Union, 2008).

²²⁹ <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/115356/Nacionalizam-zamena-za-multikulturalnost-u-Britaniji>, the site was accessed on February 10 at 00.15h

²³⁰ <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/90060/Merkel-Multikulturalna-Nemacka-je-propala> the site was accessed on February 10 at 00.14h

Interculturalism and foreign language teaching

Modern foreign language teaching means that the view of indivisibility of learning, acquisition and teaching of a language and culture of a country, nation, area of the language is accepted and adopted. The awareness of another's culture and knowledge about it was a popular concept in the anglophone educational systems of the eighties and nineties. This is brought in connection with foreign languages and with a broader perspective of the cultural turn in other social sciences of the post-modern society (Byram, 2004:159). This issue, which, among other things deals with cultural differences and relationship to "others," regardless of their national, ethnic, social, regional, institutional or other differences, was dealt with in the works of various authors, including Tomalin & Stempelski, (1993), Byram, (1997), (2004), Kramish, (1993), Spolsky & Hult (2008), Spolsky (2009).

Based on cultural differences, but also involving the development of thought in the direction away from ethnocentrism towards relativity, as Byram says (2004:159), this concept is widely used not only in relation to foreign languages but also to other school subjects, geography, history and social sciences and mother tongue. However, it is the most obvious in foreign language learning²³¹ and can be monitored at all ages.

Knowledge of another's culture is considered very important in communicative teaching since it is understood that topics of culture and civilization are the frame and the content about which you need to communicate and around which communication is being developed.

Attitudes of young people

The attitudes of young people who are just going through the educational system in the contemporary social moment in Serbia are vividly expressed by the results of the research conducted by the Center for Children's Rights²³² and surveys of 2007²³³ depicting the attitude of young people in Serbia to their mother tongue, foreign languages, cultures and speakers (Vučo, 2007).

The vast majority of respondents agree with the affirmative attitude in relation to the knowledge of another culture, without seeking for two-way cooperation as a condition for learning about the culture. There are divided opinions on the impact of other cultures on their own: 38% of the boys are concerned about the impact of other nations believing they significantly threaten national identity of their nation, as much as 35% has a very negative opinion and 25% was undecided in these estimates. Girls are slightly less xenophobic: 29% fears foreign influence, the same number was undecided and 41% does not consider the influences of other nations as a threat to national identity. The fact that nearly half of high school students in Serbia feel bigger or less distrust towards foreign cultural influences is a cause for concern.

Clear animosity towards foreign language in general, used even in the field of entertainment is shown by the following disturbing information: 17% of the girls and boys as much as 28% are not sure how patriotic it is to listen to music in a foreign language, or are even convinced that it is very unpatriotic behavior.

The fact that the concept of ethnically clean country is opposed only by a little more than half of respondents is a cause for concern, 59% of the boys and 57% of the girls, while 21% of the girls and 22% of the boys believe that every nation should live alone in its state, which is one in five young citizen. Others have no clear view on this issue, which makes space for the development of intolerance.

Intolerance in relation to other nations (for example, the Chinese) is shown by 31% of the boys and 30% of the girls, who would deny them hospitality in our country even if they fully obeyed our laws, and only 46% of the girls and 43% of the boys would accept them.

²³¹ Foreign language appears as an instrument of learning different types of content, the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) not only focuses on the *acquisition* but it also deals with the problem of the relation between vehicular language and non-language subject. It is necessary to promote *integrated, simultaneous learning of language and content*, one through another. CLIL teacher implements a number of methodological and didactic methods such as strategies of functional understanding of the text, functional memorising and activation of vocabulary, which are already in the possession of foreign language teachers and for which the measurement with the linguistic problems is a daily challenge.

²³² During September and October of 2005, Youth Network "Living Together", made up of youth clubs from Belgrade, Nis, Kraljevo, Uzice, Zajecar, Novi Pazar, Vrbas and Subotica, with the support of the Pestalozzi Foundation from Switzerland, conducted a survey on youth attitudes towards minorities and cultural diversity in their environment. The study included 468 high school students of both sexes aged 16-17.

²³³ The survey was conducted with the students of the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University and the Third Belgrade High School students aged 16 to 20 years. The selected sample is not representative for Serbia, because it involved students of foreign philologies, and students of the Belgrade elite school, who were believed to have expressed views on the importance of languages in the contemporary world.

In a research conducted with Belgrade high school students and first year university students (Vučo, 2008) which aimed to obtain information about the attitude of the respondents to their mother tongue and foreign languages in their own and global environment, the young people felt not only patriotic enthusiasm about the knowledge and use of their mother tongue, but they also brought it in connection with the economic development of the country, while they linked a foreign language to the importance of language as a universal category, but also awareness of the limited use of Serbian as a small language. This shows raised awareness of the necessity of the knowledge of foreign languages for a prosperous life in the modern world.

Survey: sample and instruments

The specificity of bilingual teaching leads to an assumption about the usefulness and benefits of bilingual education in school, social environment and the wider environment, and in this respect the research was conducted on the views of final year students of bilingual classes and those who attend conventional (regular) classes in the Third Belgrade High School. The research is primarily concerned with students' attitudes towards foreign languages and cultures in order to gain insight on possible differences between the two classes. The research was carried out during February of academic year 2010-2011.

The research includes the following *dependent* variables: social-cultural elements of foreign language learning, attitude to native language and attitude towards foreign languages and cultures, while the *independent variables* are gender and age.

The aim and hypothesis of the research

The aim of the research is to determine the similarities and differences in the views of bilingual and regular students of the importance of learning foreign languages and the existence of some cultural and linguistic bias.

Our hypothesis was that bilingual students are more open to foreign cultures and languages and have a more tolerant attitude towards ethnic minorities in their country, and are more interested and willing to learn about other cultures.

Description of the survey

The conducted survey was anonymous. The survey includes general information about the students' sex and mother tongue, records of foreign languages that the student has learned during school as well as institutions where the student attended classes of foreign languages. This is followed by questions about respondents' interest for learning foreign languages and specific circumstances that would encourage students to learn foreign languages, the importance of foreign cultures for student personality development and its impact on the enrichment or impoverishment of the student's personality. The survey ends with questions about the views of students of the inclusion of national minorities in the environment where they live, the attitude towards foreigners and foreign residence. Most of the questions are a combination of open and closed questions. Statistical analysis of the data included a descriptive analysis of the results.

Results of the research

The research included two fourth-grade²³⁴ classes in the Third Belgrade High School: a regular class of science and mathematics course and a bilingual class that has certain subjects in Italian and French.

In connection with the sex distribution of the respondents we can see that in the bilingual class there are more female than male students (18 female students vs. 12 male students, while in the regular class 12 female students compared to 15 male students).

Most students in both classes marked Serbian as their mother tongue, while the low percentage of students marked another language (one student per regular class listed Macedonian, Russian and German, and one student per bilingual class listed English and French).

The students of both classes have mostly been taught the same foreign language as part of formal education (English and French). The difference, however, is reflected in the learning of German and Italian for the benefit of bilingual classes.

As with the experience of learning foreign languages that are not present in the Serbian school system, students from bilingual classes have more diverse experience in relation to their peers in regular classes: they mentioned languages such as Romanian, Portuguese, Greek, Latin and Hungarian.

²³⁴ The fourth grade is the final year in the secondary school system in Serbia. Students graduate from secondary school with 18 years of age, which corresponds to the age when majority is attained.

Besides, bilingual students are interested in learning more languages in comparison to students of regular classes (Figure 1).

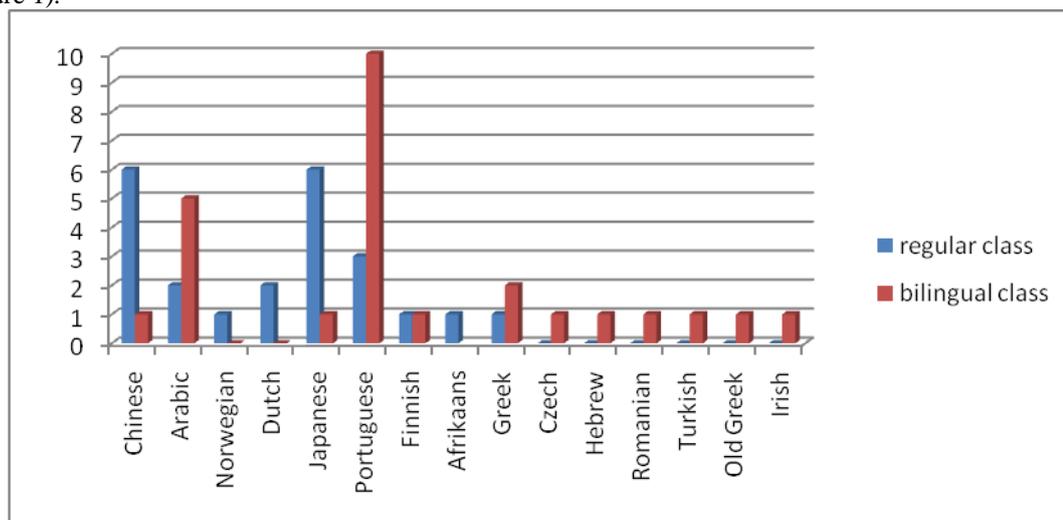


Figure 1. Languages that students would learn, and are not offered in the survey.

The need for openness and language tolerance, communication and the desire for cultural integration is shown by the answer given by all the students (of both classes) that if they lived in a foreign country, they would try to learn the language of that country.

The students expressed their opinion on the advantages of knowledge of mother tongue in the modern world (Figure 2). Most bilingual students see the benefits of knowing their own mother tongue, while most students of regular classes do not recognize this advantage in the modern world.

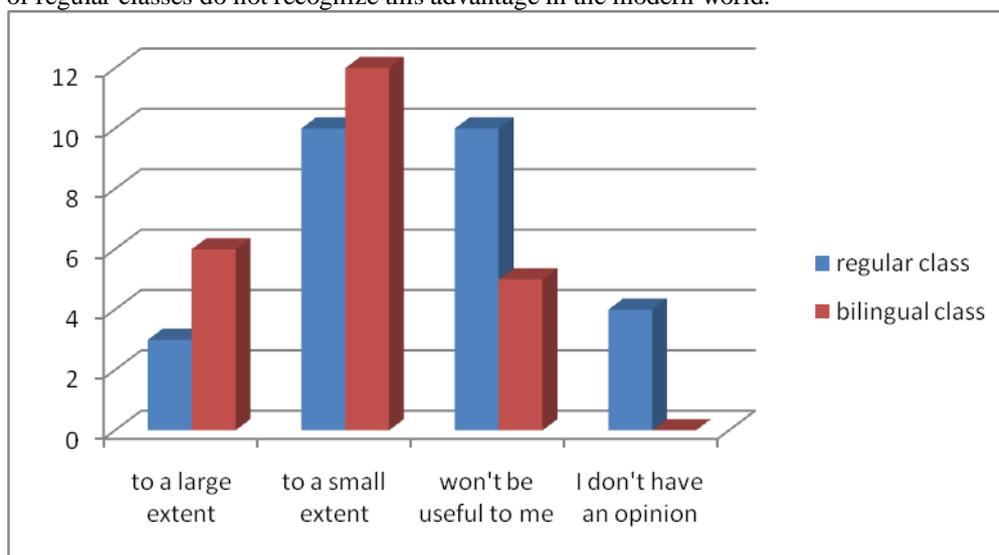


Figure 2. Students' answers about the usefulness of their mother tongue in the modern world.

In connection with an assessment of how knowledge of the culture of other nations enriches personality, students of both classes mostly recognized positive effect on personality development, although the bilingual students' had a more positive attitude (Figure 3).

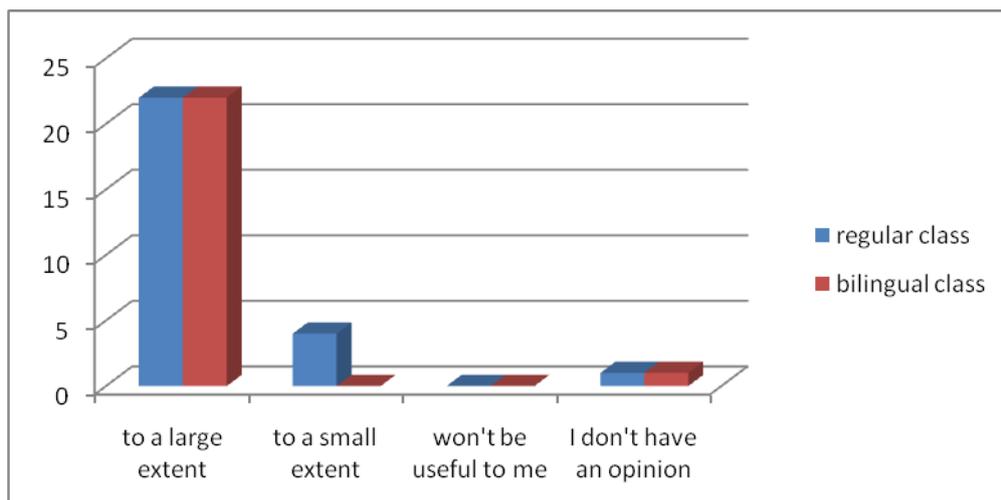


Figure 3. Students' answers on the impact of the knowledge of other nations' culture on the personality enrichment.

Namely, all bilingual students said that knowledge of other cultures enriches a person to a large extent (except for a student who had no position on this issue). Also, we note that bilingual students made greater and more detailed feedback than the regular students in which one recognizes the willingness to intercultural exchange and clearly expressed awareness of how beneficial it is for building your own personality: "knowledge of other cultures has a profound effect on my personality, has forced me to challenge attitudes and has enriched me"; "each culture brings its wealth, history, significance, and each new language opens up more chances for a successful life", "knowledge of others' viewpoints and opinions help us to build a proper personality"; "when you learn about how others live you can easier see advantages and disadvantages of your own way of life"; and that "a man with more knowledge is richer in every sense of the word."

The students' responses on the degree of their interest to learn about the culture of other nations are shown in Figure 4 where we can see that all bilingual students, but one, are very much interested to learn about the culture of other nations, while the regular students show greater reluctance.

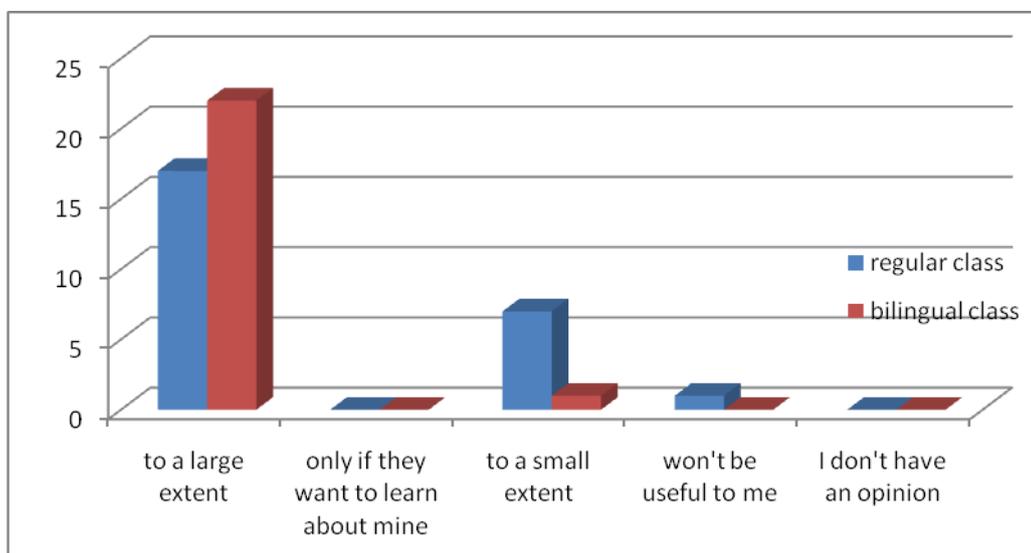


Figure 4. Students' views on how interested they are to learn about other nations' culture.

The answers on the negative impact of other cultures on their own are shown in Figure 5

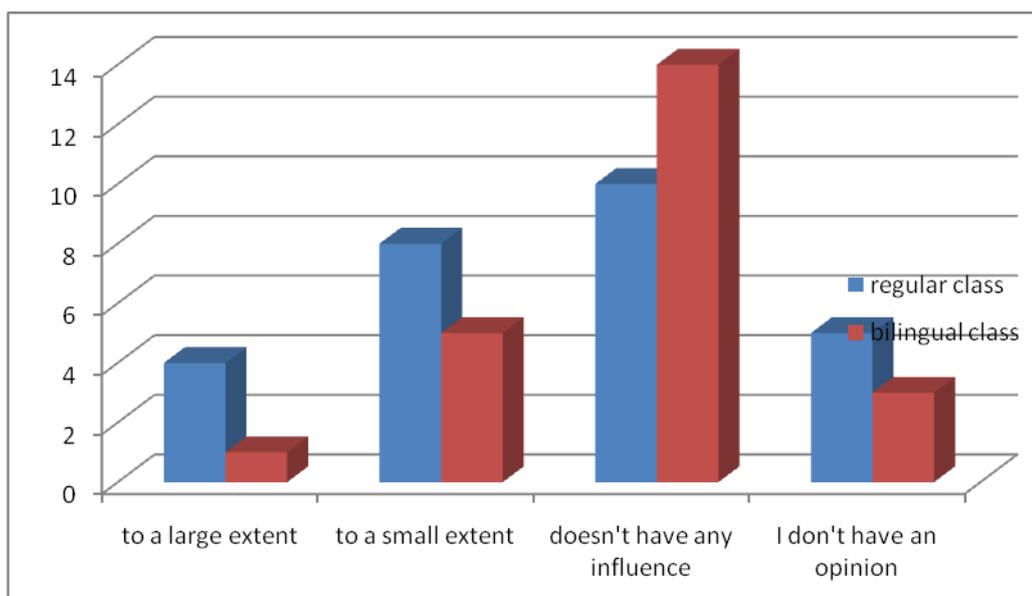


Figure 5. Students' views on the negative impact of other cultures on their own.

We can see that more regular than bilingual students believe that culture of other nations may have a negative impact on their own culture. Regular students often explain their negative attitude towards other cultures, relating them to the current political context as, for example: "Kosovo is an illustration", "our country is in a mess and it accepts and gradually incorporates into its tradition the negative things from others", or "because the elements of other cultures can replace the elements of our culture and thus we lose our identity." Unlike them, bilingual students are much more tolerant as indicated by the comments like: "if you adjust to other cultures, it does not mean you forget your own culture", "if we properly understand our identity, we will learn to live peacefully with other cultures"; "it can not affect, it can only be positive, because it enriches our culture" or "absolutely not, everyone chooses their way, knowledge of something can only be beneficial."

On the other hand, bilingual students show greater caution about the negative impact of modern technologies (listening to foreign music, surfing the Internet, etc.) on their identity, which is somewhat in conflict with their tolerant attitude to foreign cultures (Figure 6). However, this attitude can be explained by their frequent contact with foreign culture resources, and therefore greater capacity for critical attitude towards them.

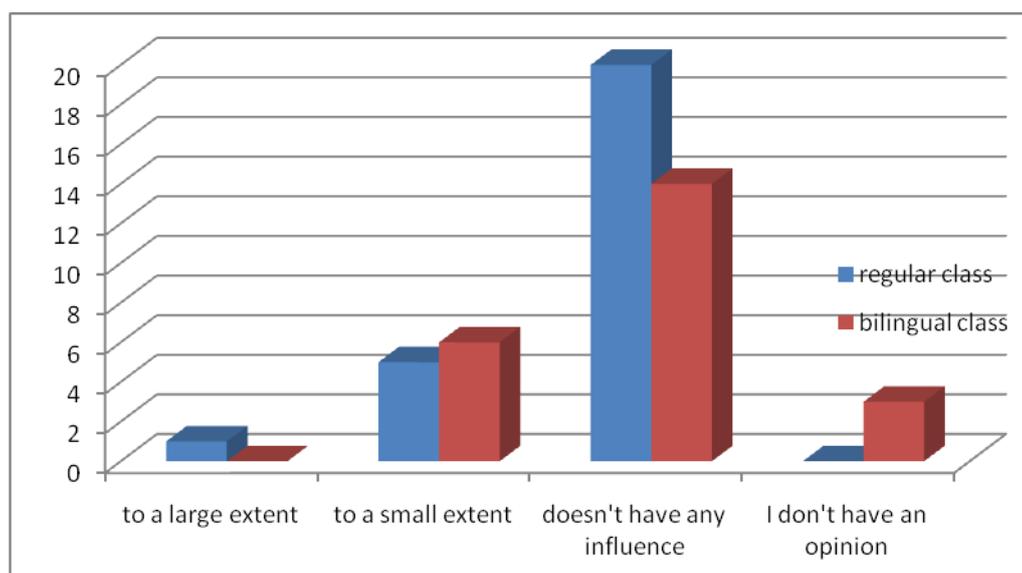


Figure 6. Students' views on the negative impact of foreign music, films and the Internet on their identity.

The answers of bilingual students indicate to a great extent a more tolerant attitude regarding the equal inclusion of ethnic minorities in their environment (Figure 7). In this regard, we highlight some feedback of the bilingual students, "national minorities were disadvantaged under the regime of the nineties and this needs to be put in order", "everything should be done to enable every citizen of our country feels the same and equal, regardless of the nationality"; "each national minority is entitled to their culture and right for this culture to be recognized (legally accepted)"; "in a democratic country people should be the most important and minorities are part of the people"; "because they are all equal regardless of their race or national origin."

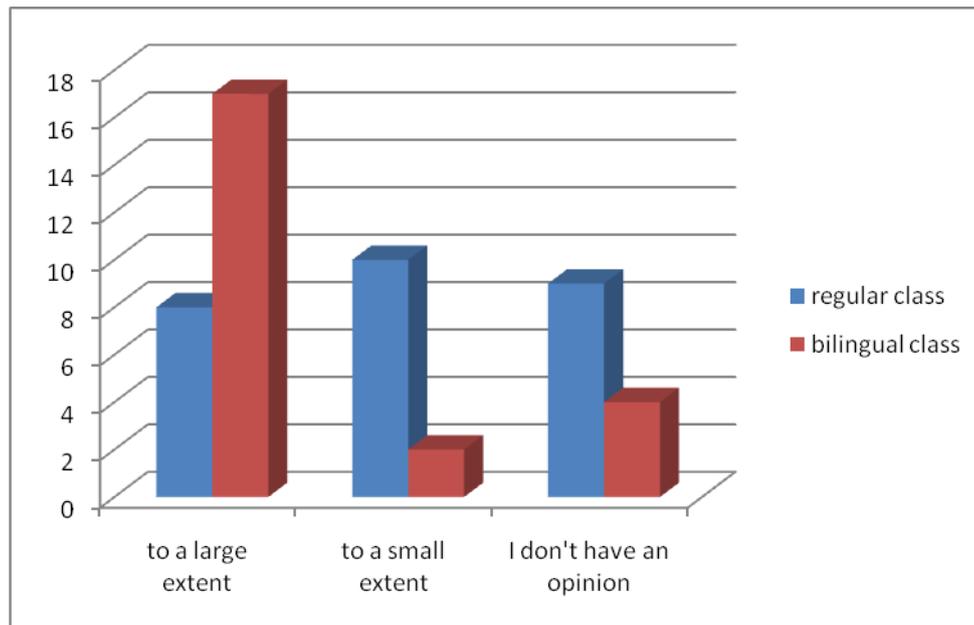


Figure 7. Students' views on the degree of justification of equal inclusion of ethnic minorities

In this regard, we would like to emphasize the fact that in the survey of bilingual classes there were no negative comments on this issue, while some students of regular classes, explaining their opinion that only to a small extent do they justify the concern for the equitable inclusion of ethnic minorities, expressed the following opinions showing clearly their animosity and xenophobia: "because there are too many of them already, and the minority becomes the majority, as already seen in Serbia (Kosovo)"; "I do not want them to be involved if they do damage to my country"; "as if they sought to have more rights than Serbs"; "I am worried because people are volatile, you give them a finger, they want the whole arm", "there are fewer and fewer Serbs in Serbia, and therefore Serbian culture is weaker, the culture of minorities has a greater impact on the Serbs" and the like. However, among students of regular classes there is a positive attitude towards this issue such as: "Serbia is a beautiful country, and others should enjoy its beauty", "It is vital that everyone has equal rights" and the like.

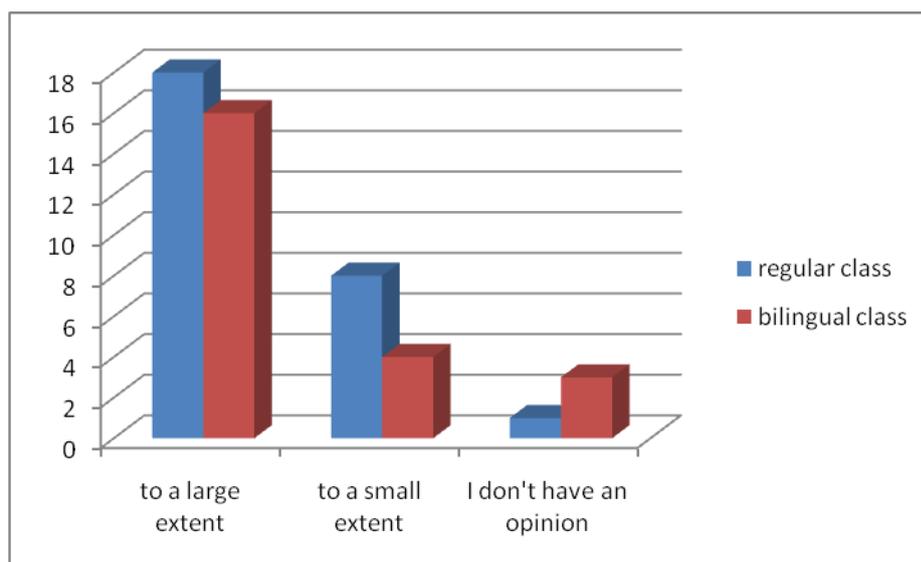


Figure 8. Students' views of how justified is openness of the country towards foreigners.

In relation to the increasing openness of the domestic environment towards strangers, (Figure 8), it is possible to see a more open attitude of bilingual students to foreigners as expressed in the following comments: "yes, and I hope to become more open because it can only have a positive effect" , "the world should learn about our culture and try to correct the opinion people have about us, which is mostly negative"; "the more open we are, the closer we are to European qualities, ie. better quality of life, and it is beneficial for the economy, too" and the like. Besides, the students of regular classes mainly gave positive comments about this question that we should be open to other countries for tourism, and they would like to see more foreigners in Belgrade as it is the case with other capitals and the like. However, some students of regular classes believe that this openness to foreigners is not mutual: "I think our country has always been open to foreigners, only they were not very open to us"; while others justify an open attitude towards foreigners solely for economic reasons: "only for foreign investment"; "for investment, capital, trade, and making the rest of the world aware that we exist on the map" and the like.

In connection with going abroad, all students of both classes say they gladly travel and learn about other cultures. It is still possible to see the bilingual students give more diverse reasons such as: "I like to travel, it allows me to look at the world from multiple perspectives and to hear of new experiences"; "It is my pleasure to get to know other people, cultures and countries, and it fulfills me as a person ", or " when you get to know how other people live you will more easily notice the advantages and disadvantages of your way of life and more easily change yourself."

Conclusion

The results of the research whose aim was to establish similarities and differences in the attitudes of bilingual and regular students on the importance of learning foreign languages and the existence of some cultural and linguistic bias, have confirmed the hypothesis that bilingual students are more open to foreign cultures and languages, and have a more tolerant attitude towards ethnic minorities in their country, and are more interested and willing to learn about other cultures. Attitudes of regular and bilingual students are substantially similar in terms of students' attitudes towards learning foreign languages and the importance of mother tongue, but the difference in their views is clearly evident in relation to tolerance towards ethnic minorities, equality of all citizens of Serbia and openness to foreigners.

A more tolerant attitude toward foreign cultures is associated with greater exposure and contact with second cultures and languages, which is a direct result of bilingual education, teaching and extracurricular content, greater opportunities to travel abroad and beyond the narrow environment. In particular, as proof of openness, we highlight a positive attitude toward the equal inclusion of ethnic minorities in the region, in contrast to the negative attitudes and fear of the impact of foreign culture on the Serbian culture. Bilingual students explain their positive attitude towards foreigners mostly by opportunities to gain knowledge of cultures, while regular students often look at it from the perspective of economic, lucrative interests and prosperity. Culturally mature and motivated attitude is expressed by bilingual students who see time spent abroad as a gain related to the enrichment of their personality, a more rational understanding "of their life" as well as awareness of a possible change in their own attitudes.

Bilingual teaching brings major novelties and a number of advantages in the school systems of countries applying it. In addition to new strategies and new spirit of modular teaching, expressed teamwork, modern methods that involve active teaching adapted to specific students needs, bilingual education provides many benefits to students, teachers, school and community as a whole.

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Establishment of bilingual classes in Serbia is in line with modern European attitudes toward the principles of multilingualism, mobility, and with contemporary trends in language learning, and includes a number of advantages: the expansion of language competence of students in a foreign language, development of creativity and sense of communication, the greater ability of analyzing and solving problems, expanding other forms of knowledge equally in foreign language as vehicular and Serbian language; developing self-confidence of a person who speaks languages, greater respect for themselves, flexibility and adaptability, confidence in social interactions, more developed capacity for interpersonal relations; establishing closer ties with the Italian, French and European social and cultural environment in general, and the creation of a multicultural attitude, possessing "the experience of two language worlds" (Baker, 2000); facilitated mobility and exchange of information in the broadest sense, from family, community, employment and international contacts in European and world context; permeation of education systems of participating countries, transfer of academic knowledge from one language to another, the spirit of mutual cooperation and cooperation at all levels of human activities; education of a ready, open citizen of Europe with expressed tolerance and the need for social harmony. The project of bilingual education brings globally an undoubted benefit as a road to multilingualism and multiculturalism.

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