

Twenty years of Croatian tutoring in Trieste

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Abstract

Croatian teaching abroad is a special educational program of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia. It includes a Croatian language and culture program. It is organized for school-aged children and descendants of Croatian citizens who temporary or permanently live in other countries. In the school year 2018/2019 Croatian education abroad recorded 101 teachers in 21 countries, with around 340 teaching spots attended by approximately 5,300 students. In the Italian Republic, this education is occurring in Rome, Como, Molise, Udine and surrounding areas, Trieste and Monfalcone. In 2019 Croatian tutoring in Trieste celebrated twenty years of its existence. It was established thanks to the Croatian Community of Trieste and the Croatian Consulate General, and all other persons related to the Consulate and Community, especially the Ministry of Science and Education. The Ministry recognized the importance of this effort and for 20 years has chosen teachers and entrusted them with the placement in the Croatian schools in Italy.

This paper presents a framework of Croatian education abroad. It discusses the role of teachers and reasons why students attend classes and their expectations, including the experiences of good practices of teachers and their perspectives for the future. During twenty years of Croatian tutoring in Trieste the following teachers were employed: Vesna Piasevoli, Tatjana Barković, Maša Čiča, Olga Diklić, Ana Spindler, Ana Fonović and Diana Njegovan. These teachers have shared their knowledge and experience and motivated students. Along with this, they collaborated with the Croatian Community and the Croatian Consulate General in Trieste, and with the Ministry of Science and Education. The teachers organized projects and various activities to connect students and parents with the Croatian Community and their homeland. The teachers have engaged in good practices and they are the reason why existing collaborations are fostered and developed, and the experience grows.

This paper is intended as a written trace of experience and commitment through two decades, to the present day. Its realization would not be possible without a collaboration with all the institutions and persons involved in the Croatian tutoring in Trieste. This paper unites all the collected materials and contributes to a mosaic of good practices, innovations and a process of growth and development.

Keywords: Croatian tutoring, Trieste, Croatian tutoring development and history

This paper will present the history of Croatian tutoring in Trieste, as well as the main challenges of Croatian education abroad. The history of the schools will be based on available pedagogical documentation, conversations with the president of the Croatian Community in Trieste, and conversations with the teachers who had been entrusted with a placement in Trieste. An analysis was conducted based on the number of students attending classes and a questionnaire to explore how the effort of teachers in the past twenty years has contributed to the development of good practices and experiences.

About Croatian education abroad

Croatian education abroad is an educational program of the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, established with the aim of “*preserving and developing the Croatian identity*” of children of Croatian citizens who “*temporarily or permanently*” live outside Croatia and to maintain ties with the homeland. This education is intended both for children of citizens of other countries that have lived in Croatia and for children who want to learn the Croatian language and culture and “*have the necessary language skills*” (Jovanović, 2012: 9; Prskalo, 2012: 10; Bošnjak–Süto, 2012: 13–14; Bežen-Bošnjak, 2012: 45).

Dunja Pavličević-Franić (2007) suggests that the importance of preserving the native language is highlighted by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Pavličević-Franić, 2012; CERFL, 2005). Pavličević-Franić (2012) posits that the acquisition and study of the Croatian language abroad is an indispensable component of Croatian educational policy. Dragutin Bregant (2012) discusses the importance of the Croatian supplementary school in the preservation of the native language.

The basis of the education is the Curriculum of Croatian education abroad, which has been applied since 2004/2005. It is focused on educational achievements and results, also offers teachers a certain freedom in the preparation of lessons, which is the central part of the curriculum. Teachers are given this freedom because of the heterogeneity of the study groups and the need to individualize the teaching materials so that the students will be encouraged to actively participate in the learning process (Bežen-Bošnjak, 2012; Bošnjak–Süto, 2012; Cetinić, 2012).

Croatian education, along with a language program, includes knowledge of Croatian cultural, historical and natural heritage to develop a sense of

belonging to the Croatian homeland (Bošnjak-Süto, 2012; Cvikić & Kanajet Šimić, 2012). In Italy, Croatian education abroad and teachers who encourage students and their parents to foster their language development play a big role in cultivating this sense of belonging. The teacher should know their students well and make optimal use of time through thoughtful prepared materials in advance (Samardžija, 2012; Ančić-Balić, 2012; Burić, 2010).

Milan Bošnjak (2012: 187) believes that the Croatian teachers abroad “must create quality lessons, prepare extra-curricular activities, motivate the students to deepen ties with the Croatian language and culture that they promote themselves”. Extracurricular activities are given great importance by Sanja Süto (2012: 207) as they unite all members of the Croatian Community and “*strengthen ties with the homeland*”. Katarina Aldarović Slovaček (2017: 17–18) emphasizes the importance of the teacher’s role in the process of “*learning and language teaching*”, because “*results, but also the attitude of the students*” depend on teacher’s work. The teacher imparts knowledge and values to students. In addition, interaction with the teacher is crucial for the development of language competence, especially when social interaction in a particular language is not available outside the school (Murphy, as cited in Ó Duibhir, 2010). The role of teachers can favourably influence the overcoming of difficulties in language acceptance (Jelaska, 2005).

Bregant (2012: 206) states that teaching a heritage language in a foreign country requires a special method, as it is neither a “*method of the native language*” nor a “*method of teaching a foreign language*”. The organization of training should attach importance to the diversity and particularity of students (Miljković, 2012). This means that different learning methods present opportunities for teachers to provide quality teaching that should be adapted to every single student, taking into consideration the student’s needs, motivation, and background.

Croatian tutoring in Trieste

According to the data of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, in 2018/2019 Croatian education abroad consisted of 101 employed teachers, 21 countries, 340 schools, and 5,300 students. Croatian tutoring in the Italian Republic was held in Rome, Milan, Molise, Como, Udine and the surrounding area, Trieste and Monfalcone. As stated by Vesna Piasevoli (personal communication), tutoring in Trieste began in 1999/2000 when favourable circumstances were

created. The Consulate General was founded in 1995, and the Croatian Community in 1999. It was the Croatian Community that had an important mission at the very beginning of the Croatian tutoring in Trieste. With the desire to preserve the Croatian word and culture, it was also important to give a written trace to Croatian culture. This was the inspiration to create the book *Croats in Trieste*.

The establishment of a Croatian tutoring in Trieste

The contribution for the establishment of Croatian tutoring in Trieste was provided by the Croatian Community in cooperation with the Consulate General in Trieste. The Ministry of Education and Sports in Croatia were sent a request for funding. The Ministry accepted the proposal and entrusted a placement to the first teacher of Croatian schooling in Trieste – Vesna Piasevoli (Diklić, 2011; Piasevoli, 2007). As Piasevoli (personal communication) stated, Croats, with Croatian independence and with organizing in communities and associations, were united and organized after a long period. Namely, since the First World War, the geopolitical particularities of Trieste caused a lack of Croatian tutoring, despite the numerous Croatian population there.

The president of Croatian Community in Trieste, Damir Murković, sees the importance of the establishment of Croatian tutoring in Trieste as a kind of beginning and revival of Croatian culture in these places. There is a special emphasis on the relationship of Croats in this area and fostering language and culture, in proximity to Croatia, and on the deep connection between the region Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and Istria, as well as the native Croatian Community of the 13th centuries.

The role of the Croatian Community in cultivation of Italo-Croatian relations and promoting Croatian language and culture was confirmed by the community Statute (Piasevoli, 2007). On the Croatian Community website, it states that Croatian tutoring objectives are:

(...) to allow all interested students of primary, lower secondary and secondary schools to attend Croatian classes, with special emphasis on children of Croatian origin; to learn and deepen their knowledge of the Croatian language and encourage interest and a positive attitude related to the historical, cultural and natural heritage of Croatia. (Diklić, 2011).

The Croatian Community since its re-foundation in 1999 has been guided by Gian Carlo Damir Murković. According to Piasevoli (2007), Croats

have been present in Trieste for many centuries, and at the beginning of the Twentieth century, there were organized Croatian associations, that were closed around the 1920s, under Fascist rule.

The Croatian Community and Croatian tutoring teachers have worked closely together over the years. As stated by Murković, for the Croatian Community, the most important task of education is to bring children and their parents closer to Croatian culture. This happens with the annual Christmas parties that accompany the student's performance and with end of school events. During twenty years of Croatian education in Trieste, school excursions were held, e.g., during the mandate of Tatjana Barković. Also, various writers were hosted, and events held.

The role of teachers of Croatian tutoring in Trieste

In the twenty years of Croatian tutoring in Trieste, the following teachers of Croatian education abroad were employed:

- Vesna Piasevoli (1999/2000 – 2002/2003)
- Tatjana Barković (2003/2004 – 2004/2005)
- Maša Čiča (2005/2006 – 2007/2008)
- Olga Diklić (2008/2009 – 2011/2012)
- Ana Spindler (2012/2013 – 2013/2014)
- Ana Fonović (2014/2015 – 2017/2018)
- Diana Njegovan (2018/2019 – 2021/2022)

The beliefs and works of each of these teachers will be discussed below.

Vesna Piasevoli (1999–2003)

The data that is presented here was collected by reviewing the pedagogical documentation and the conversation with Vesna Piasevoli (personal communication, August 2019). As stated by Piasevoli, the first teacher of Croatian education abroad had not been seen only as a language tutor to school-age children, but also as a teacher for adults. She had the role of a cultural representative and coordinator between the Ministry that gave her employment, the Croatian Community that had invited her, and the Consulate General, whose facilities were used to teach to students and adults. Classes began in October, and the students were mostly children of members of the Croatian Community in Trieste.

Today, 20 years after the establishment of Croatian tutoring in Trieste, Piasevoli believes that this is the greatest success of collaboration between the Croatian Community, the Consulate and Croatia because the tutoring continues to this day.

Piasevoli also worked in the Croatian Community and Consulate. She worked on projects, connecting with Croatia, and a collaboration for a bilingual journal for the Croatian Community, called *Most*. She also worked on the creation of the book *Croats in Trieste*, she participated in the realization of the project ‘A sight on Croatian cinematography’. She hosted a guest play ‘Burra’ based on a play written by Daniel Načinović, and directed by Robert Raponja, and Piasevoli carried out literary workshops, conceptualized by the Consulate. Her students also participated in the summer school in Novi Vinodolski.

After the end of her mandate, in 2003/2004, due to the large interest in studying Croatian from the members of the Slovene school Comprehensive Institute ‘San Giacomo’, Piasevoli took over from Tatjana Barković a group of students. The lessons were held in the Slovene school, where classes began to be held during the mandate of the teacher Barković. The successful collaboration between the Croatian Community president and the principal of Slovene school “San Giacomo” resulted in Croatian tutoring placement into the school facilities where even today the Croatian tutoring in Trieste is held. (Diklić, 2011; Piasevoli, 2007)

Tatjana Barković (2003–2005)

The pedagogical documentation review and the correspondence with Tatjana Barković (personal communication, May 2019) were crucial in collecting information for this paragraph. Before her mandate, Barković worked in the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region as a language tutor for the Croatian language in Italian schools. When she realized that a large number of Croatian families frequented the region, she appealed to the Ministry to start a supplementary school in Udine and the surrounding area. This was implemented in 2001/2002. In 2004 the Croatian-Italian Association, based in Udine, was founded.

Since 2003/2004 until 2004/2005 Barković was entrusted with the mandate in Trieste. According to her, the goal of Croatian education is to maintain and increase the number of students, which is achieved through motivational and dynamic training and cooperation with the homeland. She collaborated with the Croatian Heritage Foundation in Rijeka, regularly guided students through Croatia, and collaborated with the Primary School ‘Gornja Vežica’ in Rijeka through regular visits and creative workshops. She went with her students to the children’s carnival as an independent group. Such meetings, according to her, are a place of connection between school, students and parents.

In particular, she would single out an eight-day summer camp in Cres organized by Croatian Heritage Foundation in Rijeka. In 2005 students also participated in the literary competition for Croatian children living abroad, 'Zlatna ribica'. According to her, that year participants of Croatian training from Italy were the most numerous in the summer camp in Cres. Christmas and end-of school events are also held every year. Also, in March 2005 Barković together with her students participated in a charity fair to raise funds for UNICEF.

Barković (personal communication, May, 2019) notes that "it was a pleasure to work with children, to cooperate with their families and the Croatian Community in Trieste and to have support from many people who helped her in work", and how "the teachers' task was to preserve national identity through language and culture, as well as to bring children closer to Croatia, so that they always return there with pride" and hopes that through her work she contributed to this.

Maša Čiča (2005–2008)

According to Maša Čiča, school trips to Croatia, the performance of the children's choir in Bakar and close cooperation with the Croatian Community are among her most important projects. She believes that the charm of Croatian education is that it was not only frequented by Croatians, but also welcomed all those interested in Croatian language and culture. That cooperation was held in respect, and minorities in the city supported each other. The classes were adapted to the needs of the students. Among the students, she says, there were very young children and children who did not speak Croatian very well, so the teaching was individualized. She applied methods of early learning of Croatian, such as images for the adoption of vocabulary, and a lot of songs were studied. Čiča has worked in three teaching places in Trieste: in the Consulate; in the 'San Giacomo' school; and the 'Guido Corsi' school. She also worked in the Manzano region. At that time, the Croatian lessons were attended by about thirty students, and in her opinion, it was important that the tutoring survives and develops, and that Croatian identity is fostered.

Olga Diklić (2008–2012)

Olga Diklić wrote a text on Croatian training in 2011 (Diklić, 2011). In 2009, during her mandate, the decade of the existence of Croatian

tutoring in Trieste was celebrated. Pedagogical documentation is unavailable for this time period, and thus the data of teachers Čiča and Diklić have not been processed. This in no way diminishes the importance, work and contribution of Čiča and Diklić.

Ana Spindler (2012–2014)

Ana Spindler says that her most important projects were the beginning of cooperation with the workshop for gifted students ‘Novigradsko proljeće’ and the beginning of tutoring at the school Comprehensive Institute ‘Ezio Giacich’ in Monfalcone. Cooperation with this school has been ongoing since September 2013. She organized Christmas and end-of-school events. In May 2013 she organized excursions to Croatia – to Hum, Roč and Baredine. In April 2013 and 2014, her student participated in the ‘Novigradsko proljeće’, and in 2013 Spindler participated there herself. In 2013/2014 she was the coordinator of Croatian tutoring in the Italian Republic. In April 2014, Croatian author Sanja Pilić visited Croatian language students in Trieste.

Spindler gave great importance to the work of motivating students and parents, and good cooperation with the Croatian Community. As for teaching methods, the most successful was the orientation to the spoken and situational usage of the language. She believed that there was an opportunity to increase the number of students.

Ana Fonović (2014–2018)

Ana Fonović (personal communication, May 2019), during our correspondence, has pointed out that Croatian tutoring in Trieste during her mandate was marked by “*very good cooperation with all parties involved in the realization of education*”. She said that Croatian education abroad is a very specific educational program characterized by “work in heterogeneous groups, the nature of teaching as an additional/free activity and close cooperation with parents”. She believes that “working conditions are very good” and that “Croatian education in Trieste has exceptional potential and importance as a meeting place for all who want to learn Croatian language and culture, and especially for children who have Croatian as their family language”. According to her, tutoring could also be extended to other schools in and around Trieste.

From 2015/2016 Fonović was the coordinator of Croatian tutoring in the Italian Republic. She carried on many projects. Accompanied by her students, she was twice a guest at the broadcast ‘Glas domovine’. The entire mandate was marked by the participation in the “Novigradsko

proljeće” and in 2015 she herself participated in the event. From 2014/2015 until 2016/2017 the project of student correspondence with the 10th Zagreb gymnasium (highschool) ‘Ivan Supek’ took place and the high point of cooperation was the student exchange and a two-day visit to Trieste, accompanied by the Croatian radio. On the Children’s Day of Croatian culture in 2015 the performance ‘Pra priče’ by Oz theatre was performed, accompanied by a workshop. In 2016, TV reportage about the tutoring was shown on one of Croatia’s public broadcasting company (Croatian Radiotelevision) channels in the broadcast ‘Indeks’. The theatrical performance ‘Mythical creatures of Istria’ was held in Trieste in April 2017, and in November a children’s novel *The great adventures of little Orekhovich* by Ljiljana Došen was promoted. Došen also visited the school and presented traditional games and rhymes of Primorje region. In May 2018, Fonović and the students visited Brioni national park and the Arena in Pula, thanks to the funding of the Croatian Community of Trieste. Fonović organized workshops on films, and has sent works to literary competitions, such as the haiku competition in Rijeka. Christmas and end-of-school events were held every year. Starting from 2016/2017, cooperation with Croatian teaching in Rome has occurred. This is realized in the form of writing an article on teaching in Trieste and Monfalcone (Fonović, 2017; Fonović, 2018). Since 2014/2015 Fonović has collaborated with the Lesina Association of the province of Veneto, where, together with the head of the course, she participated in the examination commission for written and oral examinations of Croatian.

Diana Njegovan (2018–2022)

In 2018/2019, the cooperation with the schools ‘San Giacomo’ in Trieste and ‘Ezio Giacich’ in Monfalcone continued. The novelty is the beginning of tutoring in the Comprehensive Institute ‘Giovanni Randaccio’ in Monfalcone.

The following projects were organized: a fair for the occasion of the World Apple Day; participation in the art competition ‘The Great Men of Croatian past’; and participation in the international artistic-literary competition ‘Iserlohn – Essen – Lovas – Karaševó’. At the literary competition, four literary works were sent, winning two first prizes for composition, second prize for a song and third prize for composition. The students, accompanied by their teacher, visited Zagreb during the advent, thanks to the funding of the Croatian Community. Later, they were guests of the broadcast ‘Glas domovine’ and the teacher wrote an

article about tutoring for the journal of Croatian tutoring in Rome *Hrvatsko srce* (Njegovan, 2019). The collaboration with Association Lesina continued. The tradition of organizing Christmas and end-of-school events also continued, and the end-of-school event was celebratory. It celebrated 20 years of Croatian education in Trieste. With invitees from Croatia and Italy, almost all teachers who worked in Croatian tutoring in Trieste attended. The event was financed by the Croatian Community.

The school year 2019/2020 was marked by the beginning of the pandemic and the change of school administration in Monfalcone, which made cooperation with schools ‘Randaccio’ and ‘Giacich’ no longer possible. With the permission of the Ministry of Science and Education and the financial support of the Croatian Community in Trieste, classes were held in the Oratory of the Parish of St. Joseph. The lessons are still being taught there. During the pandemic, one part of the classes in Trieste is organized at the Istituto Comprensivo di San Giacomo, which includes the Elementary School ‘Josip Ribičič’ and the Lower High School ‘Ivan Cankar’, while the other part of the classes is held through distance learning.

The following projects were realized: I was a guest on the program ‘Glas domovine’; organized a fair for the occasion of the World Apple Day; and cooperated with the Croatian community in celebrating twenty years of the Community. This was followed by publication of my article in the magazine *Matica* of the Croatian Heritage Foundation (Njegovan, 2020). At the literary part of the international artistic-literary competition ‘Iserlohn – Essen – Orašje – Bjelovar – Zagreb 2020’, students won three third and five fourth prizes, while at the 7th meeting of Croatian haiku poets in Ivanić-Grad in 2020, a student’s poetry was praised and published. We participated in the literary competition ‘Kanižajada Limačijada’, in the literary part of the competition ‘Bogatstvo različitosti’ and the 57th ‘Šimićevi susreti’. In the competition for the best letter: ‘Pišem ti pismo... u doba korone’, two letters were praised and published, and will be republished soon.

In the school year 2020/2021, cooperation with the Association ‘Lesina’ continued. I have participated with my students in: the literary competition ‘Haiku kraj mogile 2020’; the project ‘Što mi znači...?’ organized by the Croatian Heritage Foundation; the 6th International Competition Vežica 2021; and the competition ‘Pišem ti pismo ... natječaj za naj pismo: ‘Moj razlog za čitanje’. At the literary part of the

in the international artistic-literary competition ‘Iserlohn – Essen – Zagreb – Munich – Vukovar 2021’, students won second prize and three fourth prizes, while at the haiku competition ‘Ivanić-Grad 2021’, one work received prize. The organizers translated the work into English and published the original work in Croatian and the English translation. I participated in certain professional training of the Webučionica and worked with students on the same-named project on the eTwinning platform, organized by motivated and successful Croatian teachers. On the same platform, I have participated with students in the project ‘Hrvatsko srce – Croatian Heart’ in cooperation with Pazin College, with the mediation of the Croatian Heritage Foundation – Pula Branch. I had the opportunity to present on Croatian tutoring in Trieste and Monfalcone on the occasion of International Mother Language Day. On that occasion, I collaborated with other minority associations in Trieste, and as one of partners in the project, I have composed a calendar of holidays and festivities celebrated by Croats in Trieste and the surrounding area.

In the period until January 2021/2022, I was a guest on the program ‘Glas domovine’ and had presented to colleagues and parents on Croatian tutoring in Trieste at the Elementary School ‘Josip Ribičič’ and Lower High School ‘Ivan Cankar’. The Christmas events in Trieste and Monfalcone were successful, and I participated as a recorder at the annual session of the Croatian Community. We are currently writing and collecting works for the literary part of the international artistic-literary competition ‘Iserlohn – Essen – Zaprešić – Podgorač – Novi Sad – Sovići 2022’.

Statistical review through 20 years of Croatian tutoring in Trieste

Statistical data on the number of Croatian students in Trieste is presented here along with the number of students in each level. Namely, the first level students are from 1st to 4th grade of elementary school, the second-level students are from 5th to 8th/9th grade, and the third-level students are those from 9th/10th to 12th grade, equivalent of 1st to 4th grade of high school in Croatia.

The goal is to verify the following hypothesis:

1. Croatian education in Trieste marks a continuity of attendance.
2. Most students are first and second level students.

Table 1 illustrates the number of students that attended Croatian tutoring

in Trieste from 1999/2000 to 2021/2022. The data refers only to Trieste from 1999 to 2013, and in the following years, Croatian tutoring had also been expanded to Monfalcone.

Table 1. Croatian tutoring in Trieste from 1999 to 2022

| SCHOOL YEAR | PRE-SCHOOLERS | FIRST-LEVEL STUDENTS | SECOND-LEVEL STUDENTS | THIRD-LEVEL STUDENTS | ADULTS |
|-------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------|
| 1999/2000 | / | 7 | 7 | 1 | 14 |
| 2000/2001 | / | 9 | 12 | / | 24 |
| 2001/2002 | / | 10 | 11 | 1 | 9 |
| 2002/2003 | / | 10 | 11 | 1 | 8 |
| 2003/2004 | 4 | 13 | 13 | / | / |
| 2004/2005 | 5 | 23 | 3 | 1 | / |
| 2012/2013 | / | 24 | 15 | 7 | / |
| 2013/2014 | / | 24 | 22 | 9 | / |
| 2014/2015 | / | 23 | 22 | 4 | / |
| 2015/2016 | / | 48 | 20 | 6 | / |
| 2016/2017 | / | 49 | 22 | 4 | / |
| 2017/2018 | 1 | 30 | 23 | 8 | / |
| 2018/2019 | 4 | 25 | 23 | 7 | / |
| 2019/2020 | / | 25 | 16 | 5 | / |
| 2020/2021 | / | 14 | 17 | 9 | / |
| 2021/2022 | / | 16 | 12 | 12 | / |

In the school year 2004/2005 a student is missing in these numbers because their grade and birth date are unknown, and from 2005/2006 till

2011/2012, the sequence is broken because pedagogical documentation is missing.

In 1999/2000, there were 15 school-age students. In 2016/2017 there were a record 75 students, and in 2018/2019 there were 59 students. According to the available data, 350 (51.93%) of students attended the first level (preschoolers are not included in this data), 249 (36.94%) of students attended the second level and 75 (11.13%) of students attended the third level. Thus, Croatian classes are mostly attended by students of the first and second levels: 88.87 % of them.

Questionnaire on student motivation

With permission to survey students obtained both from the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, from schools where the lessons were held, and from parents, an anonymous questionnaire was conducted. The students, who had all the above-mentioned permissions, participated in the research which was organized in their schools during June 2019. The questionnaire was conducted with the aim to investigate the reasons why students attend classes, what they find to be important, what is easy and what is difficult to master, and what the most interesting thing they have learned so far is, and what they would like to learn. The hypotheses are as follows:

- Students attend Croatian education in Trieste for family reasons and proximity to Croatia because they believe that knowledge of the Croatian language is an advantage.
- Younger students (first and second levels) demonstrate a tendency to learn through games and songs.
- Third-level students appreciate their knowledge of Croatian language and culture.
- Second and third-level students have a clearer idea of what they should and would like to learn in the classroom.
- Students tend to easily master cultural facts, while grammar and spelling present a challenge and difficulty.

2.5.1. Research results

Forty-two students have participated in this research, including: 3 preschoolers; 24 first level students; 9 second level students; and 6 third

level students. Some of the students offered multiple answers on open-ended questions as well as doing the questionnaire. Their responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' questionnaire responses

| ANSWERS | PRE-SCHOOLERS | FIRST-LEVEL STUDENTS | SECOND-LEVEL STUDENTS | THIRD-LEVEL STUDENTS |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Why do you attend croatian lessons? | - to speak Croatian with the family: 3/3=100% | 1) to speak Croatian: 13/24=54.17 % 2) family reasons: 9/24=37.5% 3) to visit Croatia and play with other children: 2/24=8.33% | 1) to improve their Croatian: 7/9=77.78% 2) family reasons: 2/9=22.22% | 1) to learn Croatian: 4/6=66.67% 2) family reasons: 2/6=33.33% |
| What do you like to learn? | - coloring, writing, animal vocabulary: 3/3=100% | 1) songs: 8/24=33.33% 2) reading, writing and speaking: 8/24=33.33% 3) vocabulary: 4/24=16.67% 4) grammar: 4/24=16.67% 5) culture: 4/24=16.67% 6) language games and drawing: 2/24=8.33% 7) comics: 1/24=4.17% | 1) everything: 3/9=33.33% 2) reading and speaking: 2/9=22.22% 3) grammar: 3/9=33.33% 4) vocabulary: 1/9=11.11% 6) songs: 1/9=11.11% 7) history: 1/9=11.11% 8) new things: 1/9=11.11% | 1) culture: 4/6=66, 67 %) 2) grammar: 3/6=50% 3) translating: 1/6=16.67% 4) poetry: 1/6= 16.67% |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| | | 8) literature: 1/24=4.17 | | |
| What is important to learn? | - songs: 3/3=100% | 1) reading, writing and speaking: 13/24=54.17 % 2) grammar: 7/24=29.17 % 3) everything: 3/24=12.5% 4) learn about important people: 1/24=4.17% 5) learn new contents: 1/24=4.17% 6) history: 1/24=4.17% | 1) vocabulary: 5/9=55.56% 2) understanding , writing and speaking: 5/9=55.56% 3) grammar: 4/9 = 44.44% 4) culture: 1/9 0 11.11% | 1) culture: 4/6=66.67% 2) grammar: 3/6=50 % 3) communication competence: 3/6=50% 4) vocabulary: 2/6=33.33% 5) tourism: 1/6=16.67% |
| What is easy to learn? | - songs: 3/3=100% | 1) reading, writing and speaking: 14/24=58.33 % 2) vocabulary: 6/24= 25% 3) everything: 6/24=25% 4) songs: 2/24=8.33% 5) nothing: 2/24=8.33% 6) language games: 1/24=4.17% | 1) vocabulary: 4/9=44.44% 2) songs: 2/9=22.22% 3) grammar: 1/9=11.11 % 4) alphabet: 1/9 = 11.11 % 5) culture: 1/9=11.11 % 6) everything: 1/9=11.11 % | 1) grammar: 3/6=50 % 2) culture: 2/6=33.33% 3) vocabulary: 2/6=33.33% 4) oral communication: 1/6=16.67% |
| What is difficult to learn? | 1) Croatian is a difficult language: 2/3=66,67% | 1) grammar: 8/24=33.33% 2) reading, writing and | 1) grammar: 4/9=44.44% 2) oral communication | 1) grammar: 4/6=66.67 % 2) vocabulary: |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| | 2) nothing: 1/3=33,33% | speaking: 7/24=29.17% 3) vocabulary: 4/24=16.67% 4) nothing: 3/24=12.5% 5) “important contents” or everything: 2/24=8,33% 6) songs: 1/24=4.17% | n:2/9=22.22% 3) history: 1/9=11.11% 4) vocabulary: 1/9=11.11% 5) nothing: 1/9=11.11% 6) everything: 1/9=11.11% | 1/6=16.67% 3) nothing: 1/6=16.67% |
| What is the most interesting? | - singing songs: 3/3=100%) | 1) singing songs: 6/24=25% 2) everything: 3/24=12.5% 3) films and comics: 3/24=12.5% 4) culture: 3/24=12.5% 5) grammar: 3/24=12.5% 6) reading and writing: 3/24=12.5% 7) vocabulary: 2/24=8.33% 8) literature: 1/24=4.17% - don't know: 1/24=4.17% | 1) significant Croatian people: 4/9=44.44% 2) communication exercises: 2/9=22.22% 3) the Tie Day: 1/9=11.11% 4) cases: 1/9=11.11% 5) etymology of Croatian surnames: 1/9=11.11% | 1) culture: 2/6=33.33% 2) media: 2/6=33.33% 3) grammar: 1/6 = 16.67% 4) differences between dialect and the standard language: 1/6=16.67% 5) poetry: 1/6=16.67% 6) Croatian inventions: 1/6=16.67% |
| What would you like to learn? | - no answer | 1) vocabulary: 5/18=27,78% 2) everything: 4/18=22.22% 3) grammar: | 1) communication competence 4/8=50% 2) history: | 1) culture: 2/6=33.33% 2) history: 2/6=33.33% 3) |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------------|---|
| | | 3/18=16.67% | 2/8=25% | vocabulary: 2/6=33.33% |
| | | 4) culture: 3/18=16.67% | 3) grammar: 2/8=25% | 4) grammar: 2/6=33.33% |
| | | 5) communication competence: 2/18=11.11% | | 5) work on oral communication: 1/6=16.67% |
| | | 6) literature: 1/18=5,56% | | 6) deepen all that is been studied:1/6=16.67% 7) literature: 1/6=16.67% |
| | | | | 8) tourism: 1/6=16.67% |

When considering the results of the questionnaire conducted at all three levels, the results show that the students mostly pointed out that they attend classes because of their knowledge of the language and culture and family reasons.

The students had a relatively clear idea of what they want to study in the coming years: 75% of the students of the first level answered the question about what they would like to learn next year; 88.89% of the students of the second level responded to this question; while on the third level, all students gave an answer. It is expected that preschool children will give importance to games and the songs. Such a response is expected even from the students of the first level. However, first level students also gave importance to learning of vocabulary and grammar. As expected, the third-level students prefer cultural content and communicative competence.

It is interesting that first-level students wrote that it is easy for them to read, write, speak and acquire new words. It was expected that cultural facts would be easy to learn, while the first-level students did not mention culture as easy to learn. The second and third-level students gave a privilege to learning the vocabulary and language use. Grammar is expected to be difficult for all the students, which is confirmed by the questionnaire.

Conclusion

Croatian education abroad is a special type of educational program of the Ministry of Science and Education. It is aimed at the development and preservation of national identity among pupils and young people. This program is based on the curriculum, while the central part of the curriculum is lesson planning. The task of the teacher is to be well-prepared for work and adapt the educational material to the students.

Croatian education abroad in the city of Trieste has existed since 1999. For 20 years, seven different teachers have been developing and improving their tutoring, utilising their experience, working on projects and linking students with the homeland. This series of teachers have brought success, and the importance of learning and knowledge of the Croatian language is therefore highlighted in the minds of students. The students are aware of contents that are important to learn, and they have a clear idea of what they would like to learn. From 1999/2000 to 2018/2019 Croatian tutoring has been continuous. In the beginning, there were 15 school-age students, and in 2021/2022 there are 40. 2016/2017 was a record year with 75 students.

Croatian tutoring in Trieste has the potential for growth and development. Croatian tutoring teachers indisputably contribute and invest in their students with their knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm, which helps to maintain the Croatian language in Italy.

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Sažetak

Hrvatska nastava u inozemstvu obrazovni je program Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja Republike Hrvatske. Uključuje učenje hrvatskoga jezika i kulture. Namijenjena je djeci školske dobi, potomcima hrvatskih državljana koji privremeno ili stalno žive u drugim državama. U školskoj godini 2018./2019., u Hrvatskoj nastavi u inozemstvu djelovao je 101 učitelj. Nastava se odvijala u 21 državi, na otprilike 340 nastavnih mjesta koje je pohađalo oko 5 300 učenika. U Talijanskoj Republici, Hrvatska se nastava odvijala u Rimu, Comu, Moliseu, Udinama i okolici, Trstu te Monfalconeu. Hrvatska nastava u Trstu u 2019. godini obilježila je dvadeset godina svog postojanja. Za pokretanje nastave u Trstu zaslužna je Hrvatske zajednica i Generalni konzulat RH u Trstu, kao i druge osobe okupljene

oko Konzulata i Zajednice te, naravno, Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja koje je prepoznalo potencijal tog zalaganja pa već 20 godina odabire učitelje i povjerava im mandat.

U radu je prikazan teorijski okvir Hrvatske nastave u inozemstvu, odnosno uloga učitelja, razlozi zbog kojih učenici upisuju Hrvatsku nastavu te njihova očekivanja, kao i iskustvo dobrih praksi učitelja te perspektive za budućnost. Naime, kroz dvadeset godina postojanja Hrvatske nastave u Trstu djelovale su sljedeće učiteljice: Vesna Piasevoli, Tatjana Barković, Maša Čiča, Olga Diklić, Ana Spindler, Ana Fonović i Diana Njegovan. Učiteljice su svakodnevnim zalaganjem prenosile svoje znanje i iskustvo te motivirale učenike. Uz to su, usko surađivale s Hrvatskom zajednicom i Generalnim konzulatom RH u Trstu te s Ministarstvom znanosti i obrazovanja. Učiteljice su organizirale projekte te razne izvannastavne aktivnosti kako bi povezale učenike i roditelje s Hrvatskom zajednicom i domovinom. One su primjer dobre prakse i razlog zbog kojih se ostvarene suradnje njeguju i nadograđuju, a iskustvo raste.

Ovaj je rad nastao kao pisani trag iskustva i zalaganja kroz dva desetljeća, do danas. Njegova realizacija ne bi bila moguća bez suradnje sa svim institucijama i osobama uključenima u Hrvatsku nastavu u Trstu. Ovim putem želim zahvaliti: Ministarstvu znanosti i obrazovanja koje odabire učitelje Hrvatske nastave i povjerava im mandat, Hrvatskoj zajednici koja je dala poticaj za osnivanje nastave u Trstu i koja daje financijsku potporu projektima pružajući mogućnost susreta i suradnje škole i Hrvata te Generalnom konzulatu RH u Trstu koji pruža potporu učiteljima i hrvatskoj nastavi. Posebnu zahvalu željela bih uputiti svim učiteljicama Hrvatske nastave u Trstu koje su prihvatile poziv na svečano obilježavanje dvadeset godina Hrvatske nastave u Trstu te su nesebično podijelile svoje znanje i iskustvo o Hrvatskoj nastavi. Rad objedinjuje prikupljene podatke i pridonosi mozaiku dobrih praksi, inovacija, procesu rasta i razvoja kao jedan cjeloviti prikaz.