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IN DEFENCE OF THE INTEGRATION MODEL: PRESENT DAY PROBLEMS OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN BILINGUAL CARINTHIA*

It is next to impossible to describe all the complexities of the bilingual Carinthian school system briefly because it is not comparable with any other multilingual system that I know of. Its most important organisational feature is its integration of pupils of both ethnic groups. This has, of course, an educational objective: the integration of Slovene speaking pupils into the German speaking majority, and at the same time, the development of their Slovene identity. This sounds like eating your cake and having it, but it is an old compromise dating back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its national policy. In Carinthia this integrative educational objective is reached by mixing bilingual and monolingual pupils.

Let me drop in a short comment on the Carinthian usage of the terms "Bilingual" and "Monolingual," as far as the Carinthian elementary school is concerned. "Bilingual" does not mean that a pupil is by definition fluent in German and Slovene; some bilingual pupils are, some are not. It simply means that the pupil is enrolled for both languages, German and Slovene, irrespective of his command of either of these two languages. Some do not speak a word in the second language when they begin their school career. "Monolingual," on the other hand, also does not mean that he is enrolled for German only and is not supposed to learn any Slovene. Some "monolinguals" are fluent in Slovene and German when they begin their school career. You see, things are not as easy as they seem at first glance. So remember, monolingual and bilingual do not refer to a person's quality, but to a mode of instruction.

As mentioned above, monolingual and bilingual children (=children enrolled for monolingual or bilingual instruction) get mixed for purposes of instruction. In one and the same classroom there are side by side those who have enrolled for bilingual instruction and those who have enrolled for monolingual instruction (which is always instruction in German). One and the same teacher teaches both groups at the same time and in the same room. He is supposed to teach one group - the bilingual one - about fifty percent of instruction time in Slovene, and the other fifty percent of instruction time in German. However, at the same time he is supposed to teach the other group - the monolingual one - a hundred percent of instruction time in German. In order for him to handle this difficult task of having to teach a hundred and fifty percent while only being human he must resort to group education so as to make both ends meet. In fact, he should be an expert at such group education as he must keep one group busy doing some meaningful work on its own while he is explaining

* Original: English

something to the other group. While he is doing his fifty percent of Slovene speaking, the group of the only-German monolinguals must be engaged in worthwhile activities that help them improve their language competence on their own. On the other hand, when attending to the monolinguals, it is the bilinguals who have to manage on their own.

What makes the teacher's situation even worse is the fact that among the bilinguals he usually has three proficiency levels: children who have never heard a word of Slovene; children who have a stammering knowledge of Slovene, because in their family Slovene is rarely used; and some children whose first language is Slovene. Also with the monolingual group there are different levels of proficiency. Some of these children speak Slovene at home, but their parents want them to receive a German-only education for one reason or another. In class, such children sometimes have problems with their German but understand more of what the teacher says in Slovene to the bilinguals than any of the pupils who have enrolled for Slovene while, on the other hand, their bilingual classmates may be a lot better at German. In one word, the situation is confusing not only for the reader, but also for the children. In my paper on the history and present situation of the Slovene ethnic group in Carinthia, I have tried to give some idea of why things have become so complicated.

In spite of all this confusion and difficulty, Carinthian Slovenes insist on this system for a number of reasons. First of all, they can prove with the help of statistics that the results of this weird combination of bilingual and monolingual instruction are just as good as those of monolingual German instruction. Second, they claim that the majority of Carinthian Slovenes would not want to send their children to a school providing instruction in Slovene only because they want their children to be fluent in both languages, so that they can advance socially and economically in a country where power and business are conducted in German, but that they can at the same time keep in touch with their native culture and language. At the best of cases, they wish for their children to choose freely which of the two languages and cultures should be dominant in their later life. Third, they insist that by keeping this combination of bilingual and monolingual education going there is at least some chance for monolinguals in Southern Carinthia to pick up some Slovene even when they are not enrolled for it: there is quite a considerable number of Slovene speaking Carinthians who do not enroll their children for bilingual instruction because of a deep feeling of social stigma attached to their language; yet, on the other hand, they feel badly about altogether abandoning their native tongue; there are families where husband and wife do not agree on the language group for their child and compromise by sending him to the mixed school; there are still others who fear their neighbours might not approve of their child learning Slovene. For all these people the rather chaotic way of teaching monolinguals and bilinguals at the same time provides the only chance of allowing their children at least a glimpse into the language of their origin.

So far, this system of combined bilingual and monolingual education has worked well enough for the children to survive in the economic and ethnic reality of Southern Carinthia. With

teachers who are highly motivated and have learned their job as group educators, it has even been a good system. A year ago, however, German nationalists started an initiative to replace this system by one that would separate monolingual and bilingual children. They should no longer be together in one room and should no longer be taught by the same teacher. Their main point of criticism with the bilingual/monolingual system was that monolingual children had only fifty percent of the teacher's attention whereas bilingual children would have one hundred percent of it. They said it was simple mathematics to figure out that a teacher who, according to the law, had to devote fifty percent of his time to the Slovene speaking children had only half of his time left for German; this, they said, was all right with the bilinguals, but not with the monolinguals, who were entitled to one hundred percent of a German speaking teacher. As a consequence, they imputed, German speaking children only got half of the teacher's attention while Slovene and German speaking children got all his attention. Consequently, their propaganda focused on this disproportionate allotment of teacher attention. They declared in public that the poor German children were underprivileged because they received only half of the education they were supposed to receive at school. They also claimed that the parents of monolingual children had no alternative to the existing system even if they did not want their children to passively take part in bilingual instruction. This was, according to them, sheer neglect of parents' rights.

The Slovenes and a lot of German speaking Carinthians have criticised this German nationalist move towards the abolition of the existing co-education of both ethnic groups as an attempt to destroy common schooling of Slovene and German speaking pupils. They have blamed the nationalists for appealing to secret fears of parents and for manipulating public opinion with wrong information about the quality of ethnic co-education in the combined bilingual/monolingual schools. They have suspected that the real purpose behind all the propaganda was a German nationalist attempt to isolate and discriminate those who opted for bilingual education and to create an apartheid situation in Southern Carinthia. Instead of separating the two ethnic groups, they have suggested to improve the existing school system so that it would suit both the needs of the bilinguals and monolinguals; and so that it would help foster an integrated society where speakers of both languages would live together in a democratic way, appreciating each other's differences and learning from each other.

Bilingual teachers, school authorities, sub-committees of the Socialist Party and university project groups have worked out solutions that have in common that they preserve the overall idea of ethnic co-education and of common instruction for both monolinguals and bilinguals. Each of the solutions worked out so far is based on a team-teaching system which provides two teachers for one class and one classroom. They differ in how and when and for what the second teacher should be employed.

Meanwhile, the German nationalists have not been idle. They have repeated their demand for separate instruction over and over again, using the catchwords, "Equal chances for German children!", "German teachers for German children!" and "Respect

parents' rights!" They have attacked the team teaching solution and have announced that they would fight any other solution than one that was based on separation of monolingual and bilingual instruction. Some of them even claim publicly that bilingual education is detrimental for the mind and for identity.

It seems that a lot of people lend them their ears. This is not because they are German nationalists. In fact, most of them are not but still believe in the propaganda slogans because they fear for their children to lose life chances when they stay on in bilingual schools. Most of the population, teachers included, have no idea what team teaching and modern group instruction is and can do; but they know very well that they want their children to succeed in life. It is much easier for them to understand the simple appeal of propaganda than the complex arguments of intercultural educationists.

I do not know what will become of intercultural co-education and of bilingual schools in Southern Carinthia. But I do know that it is the duty of socially responsible researchers to support those with arguments who fight for its survival and improvement.