

DO YOU SEE ME?
DIKHES LJ I MAN?
DA LI M VEZ?

CAN YOU
HEAR
ME?



The word 'Roma' or 'Romani' refers to Romani, Travellers, Sinti and other groups (Manouche, Gitano, Resande, Romer, Romanlar, Domlar, Lomlar, Kaale, Egyptians, Ashkali, Tattare, Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Mandopolini, Ghurbeti, Beyash (Rudari/Ludari), Jevgjit and many others), most of whom adhere to notions of common origins, shared cultural practices and similar traditions.

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Gender specific words include all the people belonging to the listed groups regardless of their sex.

FOR MOST OF ROMANI CHILDREN CROATIAN IS NOT THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE, I.E., THEIR MOTHER TONGUE. THAT MEANS THAT SINCE CHILDHOOD THEY LEARN AND COMMUNICATE IN SOME OTHER LANGUAGE WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES. SOME ROMANI CHILDREN STARTING SCHOOL ARE NOT FAMILIAR ENOUGH WITH CROATIAN, OR DO NOT SPEAK IT ALL. UNLIKE OTHER CHILDREN, FOR WHOM CROATIAN IS THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE, ROMANI CHILDREN LEARN EVERY DAY IN A LANGUAGE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND WELL.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MASTER A LANGUAGE?

Proficiency in a language includes the ability to **speak**, as well as all the activities that involve the everyday use of **listening, reading and writing skills**. Too often teachers believe that a child who mastered speaking in Croatian can perform deeper cognitive processes and produce new knowledge in that language and that it is not true.

A child first develops the basic **skills needed for interpersonal communication**, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. This does not mean that they developed the so-called '**cognitive academic language**', which develops later.

BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY THE ROMANI IN CROATIA

- ▶ **Romani language**/*romani čhib* [tʃib] and **Bayash Romanian**/*ljimba d'bjash* [lyimba dbyaʃ] are the two languages spoken by most of the Romani people in Croatia.
- ▶ Beside these two, the Romani in Croatia speak other languages – some Romani people speak Wallachian, Albanian or Macedonian as their first language.

THE ROMANI LANGUAGE/ ROMANI CHIB

- ▶ The Romani language/*romani chib* or Romanes, as it is also called, is the official language of the Romani and it is estimated that around 3 million people in the world speak it. Most of the speakers of this language today live in Eastern Europe.
- ▶ In Croatia, *romani chib* is spoken by 42.4% of Romani.
- ▶ This language belongs to the Indo-European language group, specifically to its Indo-Iranian branch, and it is the closest European relative to Sanskrit. It is also closely related to modern languages spoken in India and Pakistan, like Punjabi. On its way from Pakistan and India, it arrived to today's Croatia in the 14th century, specifically to Dubrovnik (this is where it was first recorded). Until then the Romani language had developed under the influence of other languages, such as

Greek and Armenian, while after that it was influenced by Slavic languages and by Hungarian, Romanian and Turkish.

- ▶ Although the standardization of the Romani language is under way, due to various social and historical factors the speakers of the Romani language speak in different dialects and are sometimes, after them, referred to as the Vlax, Lovari, Kalderash, Gurbeti, Sinti, Manush, Arli... However, these differences are not such that the Romani people could not communicate among themselves.
- ▶ We should keep in mind that many Romani people are bilingual or even multilingual and that their language, just like any other language is in a mutual relationship with other languages, depending on the context.
- ▶ 5th November is the International Romani Language Day.

BAYASH ROMANIAN LANGUAGE/LJIMBA D'BJASH

- ▶ The Bayash Romanian language is spoken by the Romani in Međimurje and in the eastern part of Croatia, and it reached Croatia in the mid-19th century, after the abolition of slavery that the Romani suffered in Wallachia (present-day Romania) and Moldavia.
- ▶ In Croatia 36.5% of Romani speak *ljimba d' bjash*.
- ▶ Besides in Croatia, it is spoken by Romani communities in Serbia, Hungary and other countries.

- ▶ It is an archaic dialect of Romanian and in Croatia the term Bayash Romanian covers three dialects (Transylvanian, Baranya-Muntenian and Ludaro-Muntenian.)
- ▶ Bayash Romanian has not been standardized and is mostly passed on through oral transmission.

WHAT IS LANGUAGE USED FOR?

Language is a communication tool enabling us to organise and express our thoughts, experiences, emotions, intentions and observations and facts.

Language is **crucial for the development of social relationships** – it enables children to communicate and learn within their families, local communities and the society they live in.

Language is an **important element of culture** – people speaking the language of their community have a strong sense of belonging to the community and the culture. The vocabulary, but also phrases, intonation and even gesticulation during speech all transfer cultural properties.

Language is **associated with cognitive development** – language development enables children to process information, to memorize and to experience. Language is important for mastering and creating new knowledge and for activating higher cognitive functions, such as reasoning, decision making and reflection on reality and personal experiences.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PUPILS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT CROATIAN?

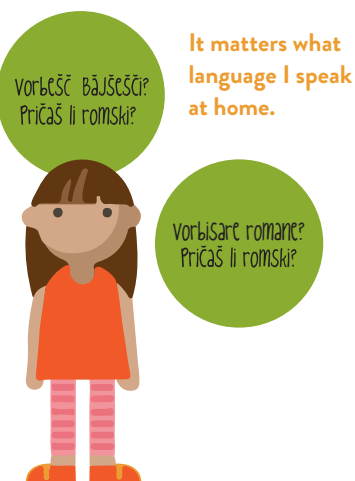
MISCONCEPTION 1

For children who have to master Croatian it would be best that only Croatian is spoken around them at schools.

Why is this a misconception?

Pupils who do not speak Croatian and at school are completely surrounded, or 'immersed' in Croatian, may have significant difficulties with understanding and learning. When pupils are allowed to use their first language alongside Croatian, they can communicate in both their first language and Croatian. It is important to allow pupils the use of their first language for psychological reasons, too, because a situation where a person cannot express oneself is very frustrating.

Give children the opportunity to use their first language.



MISCONCEPTION 2

When a child communicates in their first language it prevents them from mastering Croatian.

Why is this a misconception?

Proficiency in the first language can only help the child to better understand the second language, as a child can acquire the meanings/concepts in the first language, then learn the word for the same concepts in the second language. If the child is not familiar with the concept in the first language, they learn the word for the concept in the second language and have to simultaneously acquire the term and the concept. This misconception is based on the assumption that there is a limited 'space' in our brain for language and if this space is taken by one language, a second one will not be able to develop.

Research, however, has shown that the limited mind space concept is wrong and that actually the contrary is true.

When the children are in a safe environment and are stimulated from the outside world, their brains' activity is unlimited and – it learns. When they use two languages there is a transfer of knowledge from one language to the other. As the child's cognitive capacities grow through language development, this happens regardless of the language in which the child learns. Research has shown that the better a child is in a language, the easier and faster it is for them to learn others.



MISCONCEPTION 3

Parents should speak Croatian to their children at home.

Why is this a misconception?

It is best that the parents communicate with their children in the language they are fluent in and can best express themselves in. This may be their first language or a second language that parents speak well. When the parents talk to their children in the language they themselves cannot speak well, they are giving them the model of a language that has not been fully mastered and towards which they do not have the same emotional relationship as to their mother tongue.

Encourage parents to keep using at home the same language they have been using in the family. Explain to them that frequent conversations in the mother tongue with their children will help them in mastering a second language as well.

MISCONCEPTION 4

At school children should not speak in their mother tongue in any situation.

Why is this a misconception?

Unfortunately, many people believe that there is only space for one language in our brain. However, if we take a look at other countries, we see that children grow up learning two, three and sometimes more languages, and that it does not have any negative effects on their academic achievement.

DESPITE THE MISCONCEPTION THAT USING TWO LANGUAGES CONFUSES PEOPLE, EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT A WELL DEVELOPED BILINGUALISM ACTUALLY INCREASES 'COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY', I.E., BILINGUAL PEOPLE (INCLUDING CHILDREN) ARE BETTER AT SEEING THINGS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES AND AT UNDERSTANDING OTHER PEOPLE'S VIEWS.

Bilingual or multilingual people are often better at mastering new languages. Moreover, the children should have the possibility to express themselves in the language in which they best can. If children are not allowed to speak their first language they are given the message that their language is 'not good', and our attitudes towards the value and desirability of a language also affect language learning.

MISCONCEPTION 5

Children whose first language is not Croatian should follow a reduced curriculum.

Why is this a misconception?

Lowering expectations we have from children is unacceptable as it denies the children the chance to get the same quality of education as their peers.

Research has shown that children with lower language proficiency can follow any curriculum if it is taught in an inclusive and interactive way.

Moreover, **reducing the curriculum will put the children in a disadvantaged position, as they will never manage to catch up with their peers.**

MISCONCEPTION 6

Children who do not speak Croatian cannot achieve good results at school.

Why is this a misconception?

As we have pointed out before, lessons in different subjects do not only include the acquisition of new knowledge, but also the development of different skills, so pupils can be very successful in the subjects where the language knowledge is not crucial. For example, Mathematics is a mixture of non-linguistic (e.g., differentiating between sets) and linguistic (specific vocabulary) capabilities.

Furthermore, all the children, regardless of their first language, have to master the technical terms, acquiring both the words and the concepts (e.g., a coil, an ellipse, a cyclone, an addend...).



MISCONCEPTION 7

Romani children do not learn a second language in the same way and as successfully as other children.

Why is this a misconception?

The principles governing second language learning are universal. Sometimes it appears to the teachers that Romani children are less successful at learning Croatian, but there is a number of possible reasons. For example, in children who do not frequently experience linguistic situations (regardless of their first language), meaning children that are not often engaged in conversation, linguistic skills do not develop equally well as in children who experience such situations.

MISCONCEPTION 8

Adults are better at second language learning than little children.

This statement is only partially true.

In some areas adults are better, and in some children are. Adults learn more easily because they are already familiar with the structure of one language and understand the logic behind the functioning of a language. One area where adults are never better than children is pronunciation. Adults can never (or very, very rarely) acquire the pronunciation of a second language the way children can (at a native speaker level). However, adolescents and adults are better at second language learning overall, although sometimes it seems that it is the other way around. It seems that way because of the lightness of communication children usually achieve in a social context, but

these are also situations that do not require a very high language proficiency. Another factor that makes it seem that children are better at second language learning is that they are generally better at hearing and pronouncing sounds in a new language.

Adults, on the other hand, handle situations that include more complex communication requirements (e.g. filling out tax returns or attending a job interview).

CHILDREN WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT CROATIAN DURING CLASSES AT THE SAME TIME ARE FACED WITH ADOPTING NEW CONCEPTS AND SKILLS RELEVANT TO THE SUBJECTS TAUGHT AS WELL AS REACHING OBJECTIVES AIMING AT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING. LANGUAGE TEACHING SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO LESSONS IN ALL OTHER SUBJECTS AS WELL.



HOW TO SHOW AT SCHOOL THAT YOU REALLY VALUE THE CULTURE AND IDENTITY OF THE CHILDREN WHO DO NOT SPEAK CROATIAN AS THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE AND THEIR PARENTS?

▶ When there are more children at your school speaking other language than Croatian at home, **besides lessons in Croatian give them a chance to develop their first language skills by offering additional classes in their first language.**

▶ When employing classroom assistants for children **who do not speak Croatian** as their first language, **make sure they are people coming from a cultural background similar to that of the children.** Language is a part of culture and besides speaking the language, the assistants should be able to understand the values, traditions and other distinctive features of the culture the children come from.

▶ Do everything you can to make the pupils fluent in Croatian by enabling **frequent interaction, studying and games with the children whose first language is Croatian.**

▶ **Send the message that language knowledge is an asset by making learning at least one other language a requirement for all pupils, regardless of their first language.**

▶ **Use the mother tongue of every child in your class,** learn some words or phrases in your pupils' mother tongue, put

together a glossary of the most important words, mark your materials etc.

▶ **In bilingual classes, try to employ teachers who themselves speak both languages.**

▶ Invite the parents and children who do not speak Croatian at home to speak in their language in class. They can tell a story to the other children, teach them a song, a nursery rhyme, some words etc.

▶ Prevent other children from making fun of the children who do not speak Croatian well. Be firm. No shaming allowed.



A LANGUAGE IS BEST LEARNED IN A FUNCTIONAL/ MEANINGFUL ENVIRONMENT AND NOT IN ISOLATION WHERE THE ONLY GOAL IS LANGUAGE LEARNING.



SOME FACTS ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- ▶ **Learning a second language is based on previous experience and knowledge** – pupils learning a second language come to school knowing what a language is and how to use it for communication. **In successful second language teaching programmes the use of the first language is continuously encouraged in order for the child to further develop the understanding of new concepts, but also for psychological reasons and the development of the child's positive identity.** This is realised by encouraging parents and family members to read with their children, tell them stories, have conversations in their first language.
- ▶ **Pupils learning a second language at school may be less motivated to communicate in that language, knowing that they can satisfy the need for interaction more easily within their families by communicating in their first language. So, instead of constant correction or even making fun of them, they should be rewarded and encouraged to use the second language.**
- ▶ **A language is learned through social interaction** – to be familiar with a language means, among other things, to be familiar with the prosodic features of a language; understanding non-verbal signs, intonation, speech breaks etc. **These skills are acquired exclusively through interaction with the speakers of the language.**
- ▶ **Language and conceptual understanding (understanding of different ideas and concepts) develop simultaneously** – a language is best learned in a functional/meaningful environment, and not in isolation where the only teaching objective is language learning. Second language learning, as well as first language acquisition happens within lessons in each and every subject, as pupils learn how to use a second language for reasoning, communication and learning.
- ▶ When children use a language at home, their families try to understand what the children are trying to communicate. At school, **teachers tend to focus more on whether the appropriate form has been used, than on the meaning of the message the children are trying to convey.**
- ▶ Little children have enough time to learn their first language. **At school children are under pressure to learn a new language fast. When pressured into it, learning is not pleasant and does not give the best results.**

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PUPILS LEARN CROATIAN?

Advice on how to communicate during lessons with the children whose first language is not Croatian

SPEECH

- ▶ **Speak more slowly** – you should use your natural speech rhythm, but make longer pauses between sentences.
- ▶ **Speak clearly** – limit the use of informal speech and jargon. Emphasise the words crucial for the understanding of the concept you are explaining.
- ▶ **Pay attention to intonation** – pay attention to intonation, which often influences the meaning of the word. When necessary, emphasise the pauses between words and sentences, but not in an unnatural way.
- ▶ **Go from simple to more complex sentence structures** – begin with the simplest sentence structures, and when you see that the child is making progress start using the more complex forms. 'Pupils learn Maths.' instead of: 'Maths is one of the subjects pupils master at school.'
- ▶ **Use the unmarked word order** (Subject – Verb – Object) – 'Pupils learn Maths.' instead of 'Maths is what pupils learn.'
- ▶ **Repeat and paraphrase.**
- ▶ **Give the pupils enough time to process what they heard** – do not move on too quickly to new questions or examples.

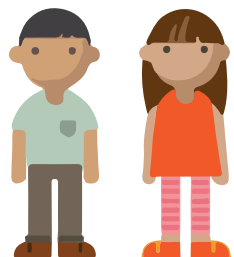


VOCABULARY

- ▶ **Pay attention to vocabulary** – use the words that are used more commonly. Explain unfamiliar terms. Use synonyms, but not too many, as that may confuse the pupils.
- ▶ **Limit the use of non-standard language and pronouns.**
- ▶ **Use short, less complex sentences** – leave out prepositional phrases that are not crucial for the meaning of the message and use names instead of pronouns.
- ▶ **Use new words in their natural context** – use new words and sentence structures in the context/content familiar to children.
- ▶ **Repeat important words** – by saying the same thing more than once, you are giving the child more than one opportunity to ‘catch’ the meaning of the word you are repeating. A word can also be emphasised by placing it more frequently at the beginning or the end of the sentence when speaking.
- ▶ **Listen** – make an effort to listen to children more and encourage them to talk instead of dominating the conversation yourself.

OBJECTS THAT REINFORCE UNDERSTANDING

- ▶ **Use concrete materials** – use objects, photographs, graphic notes and video material.
- ▶ **Write down the key words** – write the key words on the board and use other visuals to mark some words.
- ▶ **Include demonstrations into lessons** – use gestures, movements, body language and role-play.
- ▶ **Bilingual markings** – mark objects and parts of the classroom with bilingual signs, in Croatian and in the children’s first language. Always use **two different colours** for the bilingual signs and use one colour to mark one language and another for the other one.
- ▶ **Learning materials** – the classroom should be filled with materials motivating children to develop their language skills: books, picture books, theatre puppets, sound recorders, pens, papers, comic books...



POSITIVE TONE

- ▶ Encourage pupils to talk to each other.
- ▶ Base language teaching on what pupils already know and encourage them to talk about their previous knowledge and experiences.
- ▶ Demonstrate enthusiasm, trust, but also patience – this will allow the pupils to experiment with language and to not give up.
- ▶ Give open and direct praise and encouragement to your pupils.


**‘I CAN HEAR YOU’
MEANS
‘I BELIEVE IN YOU AND I
SUPPORT YOU’.**

**‘I CAN HEAR YOU’
MEANS
‘I AM LISTENING’.**

**‘I CAN HEAR YOU’
MEANS
‘I SEE ALL THAT YOU
ARE AND ALL THAT YOU
CAN ACCOMPLISH’.**

**LANGUAGE
ENRICHES.**





DO YOU SEE ME?
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