

Education for mobility or intercultural competence

Parents' attitudes toward foreign language learning

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Outline

- Parental involvement and child education
- Active vs. passive role
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- L2 learning in the compulsory education in Serbia
- Methodology
 - The instrument
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- Implications for language policy and planning

Parental involvement in child education

- Parental involvement in child education has beneficial effects on child achievement
- Desforges and Abouchar (2003) --parental involvement takes many forms including:
 1. good parenting in the home, including the provision of a secure and stable environment,
 2. intellectual stimulation,
 3. parent-child discussion,
 4. good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship;
 5. contact with schools to share information;
 6. participation in school events;
 7. participation in the work of the school;
 8. and participation in school governance

Active vs passive role

- Gardner (1968; 1985; 1999)
- Active role – parents' active and conscious encouragement of the child to learn a L2
- Passive role – parents' attitudes toward the community whose language the child is learning



The more potent role is the passive one:
children mainly adopt parents' generalized attitudinal reactions toward the other community,
which may or may not lead to the development
of integrative motivation

Preactional phase of motivation

- Motivation related to the choice of an action to be carried out (Dörnyei and Ottó 1998)
 - Subjective values and norms – beliefs about the significance of being internationally open, knowing foreign languages and participating in cross cultural communication
 - Incentive values – beliefs about instrumental benefits the knowledge of L2 can bring about
 - Potency of the goals – expectancy about the probability of achieving the respective goals
 - External environment

L2 education in Serbia

- Primary schools: “mandatory elective” courses

First L2	First grade
Second L2	Fifth grade

- Six languages approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development:

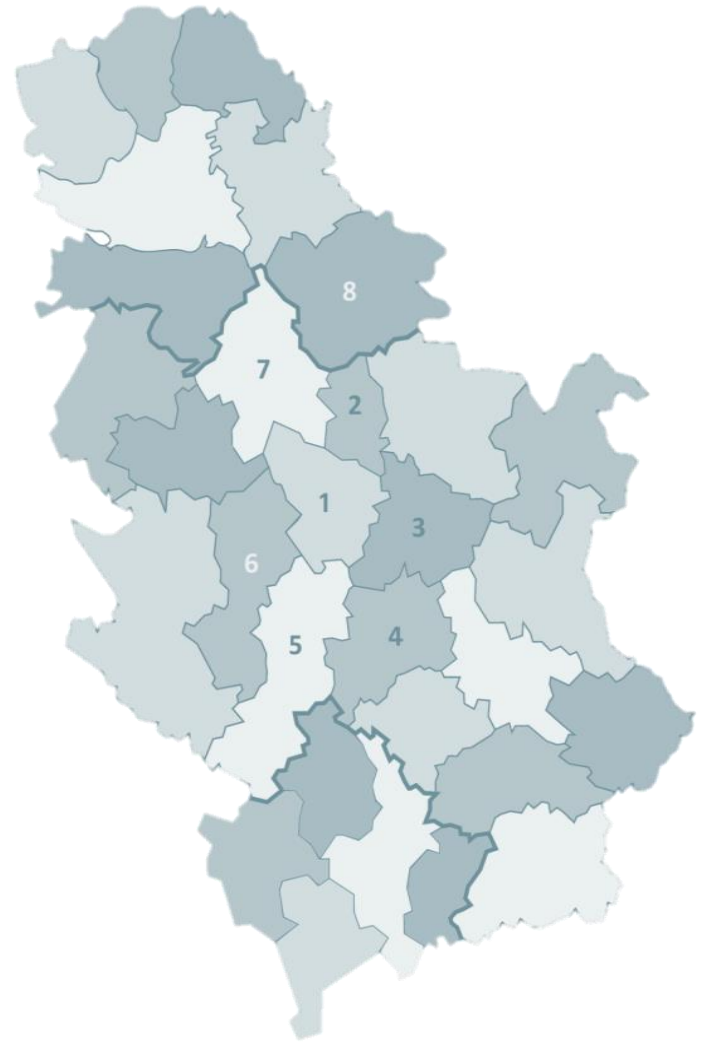
French, German
Russian, English
Italian, Spanish

Decision as to what languages will be introduced into the school curriculum depends on three instances



Methodology

- An instrument adapted from Dörnyei, Nyilasi and Clément (1996)
- French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish + Chinese
- Sample
 - Parents from 58 primary schools in the regions of the capital Belgrade and Central Serbia
 - 3459 questionnaires
 - 645 comments



Factor analysis

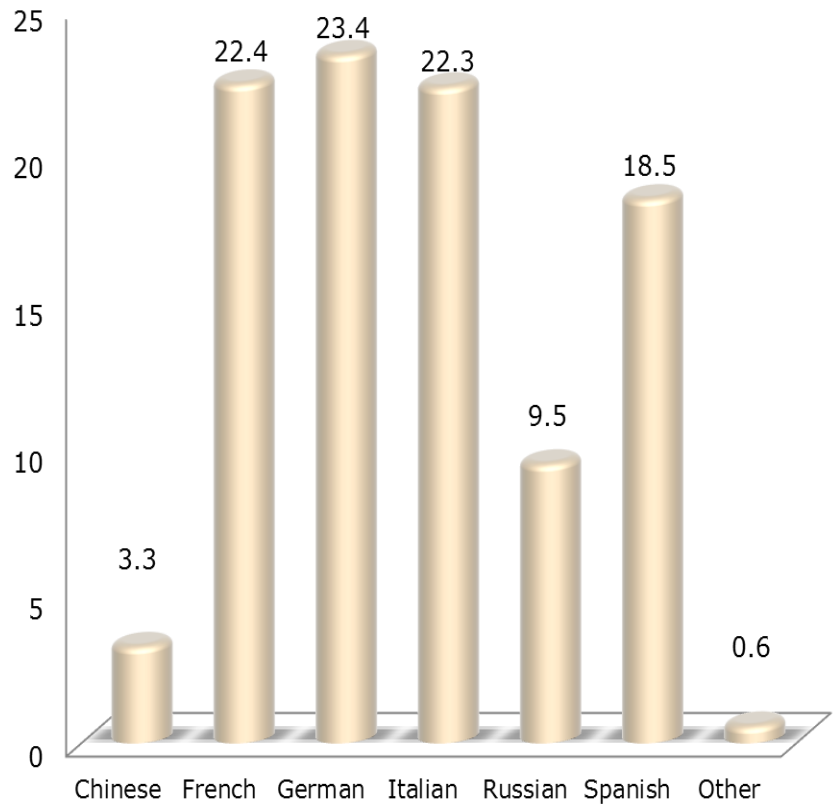
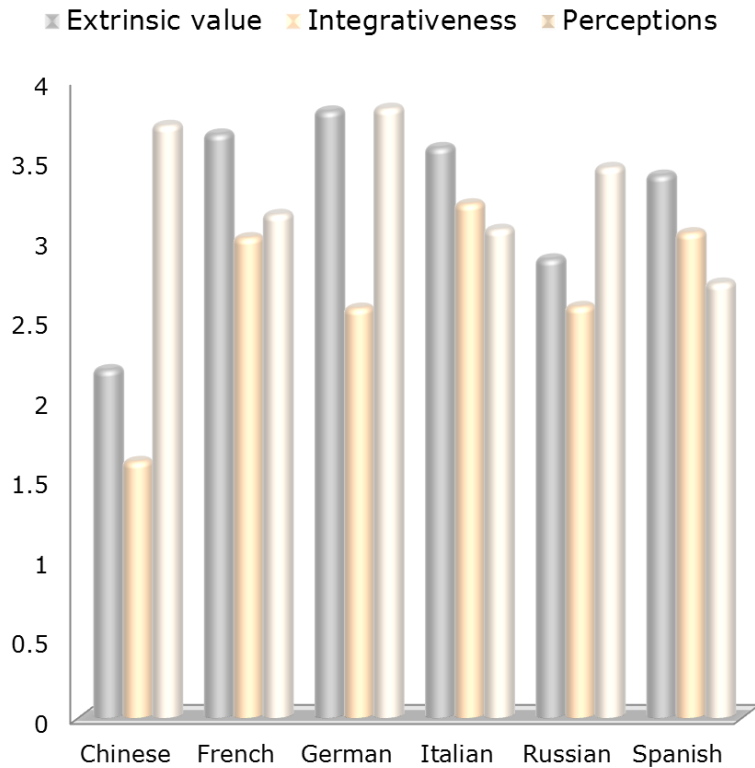
- Extrinsic value – perceived utility of L2 in terms of travel and/or future employment
- Integrativeness – positive attitudes toward different aspects of the L2 culture
- Perceptions of the presence and influence of L2 culture in the country and the world

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
Extrinsic value	6.573	38.666	38.666
Integrativeness	1.981	11.655	50.320
Perceptions	1.264	7.437	57.757

No.		Factor		
		1	2	3
5	How much would you like your child to learn these languages?	.792	.306	
3	How important are these languages for travelling?	.775		
4	How relevant are these languages for the future career of your child?	.773		
2	How important do you think these languages are in the world of these days?	.747		
1	How much do you like these languages?	.686	.440	
7	How much does your child like these languages?	.634	.409	
6	How much knowing these languages will help your child when travelling abroad in the future?	.585	.415	
15	How much do you like the music of these countries?		.771	
12	How much do you like the movies of these countries?		.756	

No.		Factor		
		1	2	3
13	How much do you like the TV programs made in these countries (series, programs, etc.)?		.706	
16	How much do you like meeting people from these countries?		.657	
14	How much do you like the literature of these countries?		.651	
17	How much would you like your child to learn about the culture of these countries?	.397	.492	
10	How often does your child get in touch with these languages?		.393	
11	How probable is it that your child will meet foreigners from these countries while in Serbia?			.781
9	How important a role do you think these countries play in Serbia?			.776
8	How important a role do you think these countries play in the world?	.432		.641

Comparisons



Parents' comments

- 645 narrative comments
- Qualitative analysis – variable oriented strategy (Huberman and Miles 1998)
- Categories:
 - Explanation of the choice
 - Specific language or languages
 - The English language
 - L2 and nature of knowledge
 - Education
 - Survey

<p>Explanations: extrinsic value personal reasons breadth attitudes stereotypes integrativeness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I've chosen these languages not because I like them but because I believe they will be important for the economy and other aspects, especially Chinese. (choice: German, Spanish, Chinese)</i> • <i>I'd prefer Italian because my child was born there and knows the Italian language but [(s)he] is forgetting it.</i> • <i>Like English, I think that German is among the important and necessary languages of the world; Italian is beautiful and very interesting.</i> • <i>Spanish – many speakers, Chinese – language of the future, Russian – familiar culture.</i>
<p>English: <i>lingua franca</i> educational reality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Other than English, I think that children don't need to learn other languages in primary education.</i> • <i>When choosing a foreign language, we believe that we shouldn't only consider current and local situation, but opt for the language which would be an asset at the time of travel, specialization, professional communication, cultural accomplishments, etc. English is then 1.</i> • <i>I think that it suffice with English; other languages are too much...</i> • <i>I would really like that [my child] masters English; we'll see which one would be the next.</i>

<p>Knowledge: value in knowing L2 plurilingualism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I'm glad that the importance of the second (third) language is acknowledged because it is fundamental to learn foreign languages and to know their cultures in the world of today.</i> • <i>Children need to know one or two L2; it is not a current trend, it is necessary in the modern society. The more languages they speak, the more person they are.</i> • <i>Knowing languages is important for creativity.</i> • <i>Every language is a treasure that represents a whole culture. It can also be useful, even though the future is unknown.</i>
<p>Education: importance of L2 high demands on children quality of teaching methodology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In my opinion, L2 learning is the most important in my child's education.</i> • <i>They could learn all languages and never come home.</i> • <i>I think that it suffices with one L2 in primary education; all others can be learned as an extracurricular activity. Let them be children.</i> • <i>It is fundamental that the children learn L2, but I don't approve the teaching methodology. There isn't enough conversation and language use, there is too much writing and grammar; as a result, even those children who have good grades barely can formulate three meaningful sentences after the primary education is over.</i>

<p>Parents' voice (or lack thereof)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't doubt that even until now the languages were chosen under the assumption that they might be useful. This is a step further. I'm glad that you want to include parents in decision the decision process. Good!</i> • <i>I think that any of these languages could be taught in our school.</i> • <i>It is sad that English isn't taught from the first grade in our school and that we as parents can't influence this sort of decisions.</i> • <i>Children and parents are barely given any possibility of choice as to what languages will be taught at school.</i>
<p>Learned helplessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The L2 education is imposed depending on whether there is already an employed L2 teacher in the school. This survey won't change a thing.</i> • <i>And where will they find job?</i> • <i>Maybe the languages are important, but we don't have a possibility to travel so the bottom line is -- I'm not interested.</i>

Challenges...

- Educational system – top down policy implementation
- Advantage of the instrumental, extrinsic value over the integrativeness, intercultural awareness
- Predominance of traditional teaching methodologies

Parent involvement

- Enabling parents to get involved...
 - (a) providing parents with information,
 - (b) giving parents a voice, and
 - (c) encouraging parental partnerships with schools(White Paper in England, 1997)



Bottom-up language planning

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