

## AWARENESS OF IDENTITY FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE - A KEY ELEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRITICAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE FIRST LANGUAGE TEACHING

### CONSCIÊNCIA DA FUNÇÃO IDENTITÁRIA DA LÍNGUA - UM ELEMENTO-CHAVE NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DA COMPETÊNCIA COMUNICATIVA CRÍTICA NO ENSINO DA PRIMEIRA LÍNGUA

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#### Abstract

Identity junction of language does not relate only to the symbolic dimension of literary language, seen as the essential representative of national awareness. According to modern sociolinguistics, the notion of the identity junction refers also to different language variants or discourses spoken by (sub)cultural groups to which an individual belongs. While in the post-modern era an individual is expected to switch between different identities, the article discusses why a plurality of individual discourses, and the complexity of his identity should be considered in the first language teaching. The paper argues that linguistic cultural awareness is a key component of critical communicative competence and that the awareness about communicative and identity function of language should be developed closely related to each other. However, regardless of the findings that various discourses carry an identity value in communication, literary language still plays a special role in first-language teaching. This raises the question of how the teacher could help pupils to gain the sensitivity for situations requiring the use of literary language and how to become competent speakers of this discourse. It seems that both problems could also be reduced with the findings on the identity junction of different language discourses and genres or on the complexity of the identity of each individual.

**Keywords:** Identity Junction of Language. First Language Teaching. Critical Communicative Competence. Literary Language. Primary and Secondary Discourses.

#### Resumo

*A junção de identidades linguísticas não se refere apenas à dimensão simbólica da linguagem literária, vista como representante essencial da consciência nacional. De acordo com a sociolinguística moderna, a noção de junção de identidades também se refere a diferentes variantes linguísticas ou discursos falados por grupos (sub)culturais aos quais um indivíduo pertence.*

*Embora na era pós-moderna se espere que um indivíduo alterne entre diferentes identidades, o artigo discute por que a pluralidade de discursos individuais e a complexidade de sua identidade devem ser consideradas no ensino da primeira língua. O artigo argumenta que a consciência cultural linguística é um componente-chave da competência comunicativa crítica e que a consciência sobre a função comunicativa e identitária da linguagem deve ser desenvolvida em estreita relação entre si. No entanto, independentemente das conclusões de que vários discursos carregam um valor de identidade na comunicação, a linguagem literária ainda desempenha um papel especial no ensino da primeira língua. Isso levanta a questão de como o professor poderia ajudar os alunos a adquirir sensibilidade para situações que exigem o uso da linguagem literária e como se tornarem falantes competentes desse discurso. Parece que ambos os problemas também poderiam ser reduzidos com as conclusões sobre a junção de identidades de diferentes discursos e gêneros linguísticos ou sobre a complexidade da identidade de cada indivíduo.*



*Palavras-chave: Junção de identidade da linguagem. Ensino da primeira língua. Competência comunicativa crítica. Linguagem literária. Discursos primários e secundários.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the teaching of a first language both in Slovenia as well as in a large part of Central Europe has experienced a move from the traditional formalist-rational model to the communicative model. While this implies a shift from the language system and its cognitive function towards the use of language and its communicative function, there has not been any significant change to the notion of the identity function of language.<sup>1</sup>

Due to the awareness of the symbolic function of language as an element of national identity, the development of pupils' cultural/linguistic identity has in principle, remained an important part of first language teaching also in its predominant, i.e. the functional version.<sup>2</sup> Much like the traditional model of teaching, this approach is based on the presumption that literary language is inextricably linked to national culture which in turn structures and fundamentally determines the language itself. Pupils therefore learn about their own culture, understand the meaning of concepts, persons, or events in such a culture, develop a positive emotional attitude towards it as well as a general awareness about the role of the individual's national culture plays in forming his or her values, behaviour, convictions, or fundamental assumptions.<sup>3</sup> However, even in communicative-oriented classes, the reflection about the identity dimension of language is usually decontextualised and unrelated to a pupil's direct linguistic activity, and that is why it often remains on the non-critical level. As a result, while a pupil may be aware of his or

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<sup>1</sup> According to Simona Bergoč, the identity-related role of language signifies the language potential through which people realise interpersonal relationships and due to which "language can become not only a symbol of community (in the passive sense) but also a vehicle for common action (in the active sense)" (Bergoč 2010, 13-14)

<sup>2</sup> For a concise definition of various models of literacy or communication competence, see V. Vendramin 2005, Rupnik Vec and A. Kompare 2006 as well as M. Hrženjak 2004.

<sup>3</sup> According to the course syllabus for Slovene language, pupils develop the awareness that mother tongue is the most natural ability an individual acquires through socialisation and that Slovene is for most pupils a fundamental ingredient of their personal, national and citizen awareness, and, together with literature, also the most important part of the Slovene cultural heritage, as well as learn about the position and role of Slovene within the Republic of Slovenia and abroad.

her own cultural identity and culturally determined linguistic activity, they also consider their own way to be the best or even the only option. This is "an ethnocentric viewpoint" which characterises actions, opinions and is often based on stereotypical criteria.

This raises the following fundamental questions:

1. Is there a dichotomous relationship between the communicative and the identity function of language?
2. What is the relationship between language and culture in an individual's linguistic activity?
3. What is the linguistic/cultural identity or awareness that we want to develop in pupils in the "post-modern era"?
4. Can the conclusions about the identity function of language contribute to achieving other goals in teaching the Slovene language, particularly in terms of mastering communication in the literary language, which is a prerequisite for equal opportunities in professional, as well as public life and in education?

## **2 THE (NON)DICHOTOMY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNICATIVE AND THE IDENTITY FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE**

The concept of functional communicative competence was primarily influenced by functional and pragmatic linguistics, which stressed the communicative function of language and focused on everyday dialogue in an immediate context. The notion of the identity function of language, on the other hand, referred mainly to the symbolic dimension of language, seen as the essential representative of a homogeneous and monolithic national awareness. Linguistic activity was therefore interpreted functionally dichotomous, either in terms of the communicative or symbolic dimension (cf. Bergoč, 2010: 15-18, Škiljan, 1999).

A critical analysis of such a position, performed in Slovenia by Bergoč, reveals that it is too narrow for two aspects. First, the identity function of language is reduced to a mere relationship between national culture and national language. According to modern sociolinguistics, in fact, an individual's identity is complex and can be defined by using several scales of behavioural coherence: in every communication circumstance (e.g. in family, at work, in interest groups, based on gender, professional affiliation, age) we take on a certain role which we identify with (cf. Bergoč, 2010: 24- 27, Lemke, 2003: 74). In

addition, each of the social groups we identify with in a certain role can also be defined by their own discourse<sup>4</sup> (Bergoč 2010: 36,

Byram 2007: 6, 7). The concept of language community therefore refers both to national community, most clearly identified through the literary language, as well as to all other communities having their own discourse characterised by a specific geographic, social, age, time, functional, professional, or interest quality.

Second, the traditional understanding of the identity function of language is narrow in that it places language community, language culture, and linguistic/ cultural awareness solely on an abstract collective level, separating it from an individual's linguistic activity in a given situation. It is, however, the many contextual factors that determine which of an individual's identities should prevail in a certain situation and what linguistic form should a speaker's statement take, i.e. which discourse should be used along with its characteristic communicative patterns (mind schemas, scenarios).<sup>5</sup> The changes in understanding the identity function of language in communication are therefore closely linked to a different conception of context and contextual determinants. As suggested by C. Kramsch (2003: 3-4), the context was "always at the core of communicative language learning (e.g. Ellis, 1987),

/.../, but it was reduced in the 1970s and 1980s to its minimalist social dimensions in one-on-one verbal interactions. The 1990s brought back the importance of context on a much larger cultural scale and, with it, a need to rethink the relation of language and other meaning-making practices in everyday life.' In other words, the use of language cannot be analysed or understood without understanding the culture to which the speaker belongs.

Identity is thus perceived as a dynamic cognitive category which forms and expresses itself through the relationship between an individual, culture, and community

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4 In this article, the term discourse is used for the following terms: dialect, used by Halliday, which in Slovene refers only to geographic versions of language; sociolect, used by A. Skubic primarily in relation to non-standard varieties of language; and also idiom, used for example by S. Bergoč as a neutral version for language varieties. The term highlights especially the linguistic aspect of a language variety, whereas Gee (1989a: pp. 6-7) uses discourse to connect linguistic as well as cultural aspects. For Gee, discourse is in fact more than just a manner of speaking; it is an identity tool used to identify oneself with a certain group. Discourse involves words, actions, values, convictions, opinions, social symbols, such as gestures, eye movement, body posture and clothing (pp. 6-7) In the case of the linguistic aspect of discourse language variant is used as a neutral version.

5 Crystal (1997: 48) therefore, introduces the term contextual identity. It is determined by all the contextual factors which in one way or the other influence the self-positioning of speakers and the linguistic image of their statements.

in specific communicative activity.<sup>6</sup> Such a notion of the identity or the symbolic function of language is directly related with its communicative function, and both functions are inextricably linked components of critical communicative competence. That is why in language teaching the cognitive and individual perspectives, which have until recently been predominant in the development of communicative competence, are now being upgraded to include a more social-oriented view on language use and learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2003: 33). The identity function of language in teaching can no longer be perceived only as a de-contextualised, abstract national category, but should be approached and understood through an individual's communicative experience.

### **3 THE INTERACTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN AN INDIVIDUAL'S LINGUISTIC ACTIVITY**

The acknowledgement of the diversity of an individual's language identities and the identity dimension of every language activity raises a fundamental question of the relationship between language and culture. Parter and Samovar note the following: "What we are talking about, how we are saying it, how we are seeing it, our inclination or disinclination, how we are thinking and what we are thinking about, are influenced by our culture" (1991, cited in Gay, 2000, p. 77). Larre (2003: 15) suggests in consequence that language is a bridge between the socio-cultural context and an individual's mental activity. It is a mind tool used by people to make sense of the world, which is why language, culture, and thinking cannot be seen from a single perspective.

For the purpose of language teaching, the complex relationship between language and culture has been defined by K. Risanger (2006 in: Byram 2012: 6).

- The sociological aspect of the relationship between language and culture, which has always been underlined in first language teaching, focuses on the use of language and its genres in different cultural or social contexts. At every linguistic activity, speakers use a distinctive discourse pattern to show others which social role they have undertaken within the system and what is their position **in** the system of social classification. This allows an individual, says Lemke (2003: 71),

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<sup>6</sup> An individual's identity is therefore not a stable category, since it is being formed through discourse which takes place in certain historic, social and institutional circumstances, together with their characteristic discourse practices (Hall 1996: 4-5, in Bergoč: 27).

to obtain also organisational patterns of interacting with other people through language use in an ecosocial community.

- The psychological or individual aspect is based on the assumption of the inseparable connection between language and cultural experience in the life of an individual as well as their uniqueness for every person. Understanding and making sense of language activity can in fact, be achieved only through an individual's mental processing or interpretation of the message taking place "within" a person (Ule 2005: 74). Regardless of such individuality, however, its dynamics stem from the broader processes of social organisation of meanings and messages (ibid). By way of example, even previous expectations have been formed in specific social circumstances as a result of culturally defined experience; culturally based are cognitive schemas and scenarios, and last but not least also stereotypes, prejudices, opinions.
- The third aspect of the relationship between language and culture is linguistic or systemic, which analyses language rules and examines their possible connection to culturally determined roles and statuses. In an earlier time, Whorf suggested, for example, that cultural norms and language patterns develop simultaneously, with restrictions posed by a linguistic system rather than an accidental assembly of norms (Whorf: 1997: 443-446; Sapir, Whorf, in Južnič 1983: 160).<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, Lemke (2003: 108) suggests that one of the crucial functions of grammar and vocabulary is to provide the participants with the key to recognise the type of social situation they are in.

From the viewpoint of language as the fundamental element of culture, this means that the outward expression of an individual's culture and identity is a more or less typical type of discourse, together with the language forms and elements more or less characteristic of that type of discourse. Here, the choice of the form in a certain context is not accidental, since the suitability and correctness is judged depending on correlative systemic relationships between types of discourse and language forms. Such relationships reflect the cultural values, opinions and norms an individual either accepts and respects or refuses and violates.

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<sup>7</sup> Škiljan (1999: 165-209) places the connection between language systems and norms on three levels - linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic - and transfers it from wholesome discourses or discourse patterns onto the level of individual language elements.

## **4 GROUNDS FOR DEVELOPING THE CRITICAL LEVEL OF LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL AWARENESS IN FIRST LANGUAGE TEACHING**

The "postmodern era" has been profoundly marked by globalisation, multiculturalism, the increasing changeability of individual living spaces and lifestyles (Ule 2000) as well as a reflexiveness which is parallel to de-traditionalisation of the society, which requires from traditions to advocate themselves, justify their existence and utility (A. Giddes, Chouliaraki- Fairclough 1999, Cameron 2000, in Skubic 2001: 221). When it comes to language identities, the convergence of speakers from different cultures has strengthened the belief that identification is part of every language activity and that even in communication between speakers of the same national language, the choice of discourse and its (non)characteristic language forms provides an insight into speakers' values, opinions, their perception of themselves and the recipient... According to Nastran Ule (2000), the individual changeability of living spaces and styles, fuelled by a fast transformation of knowledge and the type of needed skills, contributes to a destabilisation of the social identity of individuals. An individual, she says, is expected not only to be able to adapt quickly (i.e. choose the suitable identity from the ones that exist), but also to recreate their identity in a changing society. An individual, therefore, takes on an increasing number of identities and remains open to accepting new ones in the future. Much like in the case of other traditions, de-traditionalisation calls for a redefinition of the eligibility of established language practices and, with it, the change in the role of certain discourses or genres. One of the fundamental questions of first language teaching, therefore, remains the same, i.e. how to raise pupils' awareness of the culturally specific character of every language activity and an individual's multi-identity while at the same time taking into account the changeability of identities and the need to reflect on their suitability and eligibility.

### **4.1 The critical (linguistic) cultural awareness as the goal of first language teaching in the "postmodern era"**

It seems that the development of such a linguistic cultural awareness (identity) can only be achieved by applying the model of critical communicative competence which connects the ability to communicate with critical thinking and places it into social,

political and cultural contexts (Graff, 1995: 111; in Vendramin, 2005: 76). The essential traits of a competent speaker therefore include not only developed linguistic, cognitive and pragmatic skills in the narrow sense of the word, but also:

- the motivation to reflect critically on language activity,
- the awareness of both rational as well as emotional dimensions of language and the fact that the language simultaneously appears in its different roles (cognitive, communicative, identity or interpersonal and symbolic),
- the ability to judge based on professionally valid and ethically acceptable arguments (which implies the need to rethink the widely held judgements, stereotypes and prejudices),
- the sensitivity to a broader cultural and social context and identification of a contextually determined identity based on the selected discourse, genre and linguistic formulations.
- the ability to see from different perspectives and take on different roles, and
- finally, the ability of auto-reflection or metacognition on one's own language activity and its improvement.

The linguistic cultural awareness that corresponds to the concept of critical communicative competence could therefore be defined as a motivated and ethically responsible linguistic activity of an individual, based on conscious identification with a certain social group or role and as a sensitivity to the identity dimension of language, used by other speakers. The differences between individual identities and discourses should not be seen only as a source of trouble, but rather as an advantage because when performing a language activity, we consciously choose the best possible discourse, considering contextual determinants, and its characteristic language forms or elements also as a way to express (shared or different) identity. Such an awareness is based on critically accepted knowledge, behaviour, convictions and directly or indirectly gained experience connected with the identity function of language, based on which an individual is capable of analysing and reflecting on his or her own language activity. By doing so, the individual takes into account their integration into the socio-cultural context and the emotional-identificational power of language and modifies, if necessary, his or her language behaviour.

To achieve such goals, certain principles of first language teaching need to change. First, the holistic principle suggests a mutually interrelated observation of language in its

different functions. The principle of contextualisation has been complemented by the principle of empathy in different socially determined roles, which enables pupils to accept, at least to a certain degree, the relevant identities, values, positions, and dispositions. However, assuming different roles and their identities does not in itself imply a formation of a personal value system; this can only be achieved when pupils' identities are based on cultural and broader ethical criteria and values an individual has been made aware of through critical reflection.<sup>8</sup> That is why metacognition is another key principle in the development of critical language awareness.

## **5 THE IDENTITY FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE AS A TOOL TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN LITERARY LANGUAGE**

Regardless of the findings that an individual takes on different identities and that various discourses carry an identity value in communication, literary language or, according to A. Vidovič Muha (1996), cultural language, still plays a special role in first language teaching. It is the language version which connects and represents a nation as well as enables an individual to take an equal part in education, in professional and public life. (cf. Larre 2009: 12)

This however clearly raises the question of how it is possible that speakers of Slovene who underwent functionally oriented communicative classes, learnt Slovene for 13 years and were constantly exposed to their teachers' speaking in literary language and the use of the latter in the media feel uncertain when they have to speak in public, along with their speech being constantly filled with interference from other language versions. It seems that both problems could also be reduced with the findings on the identity function of different language discourses and genres or on the complexity of the identity of each individual.

### **5.1 The sensitivity for situations requiring the use of literary language**

One of the reasons why speakers of Slovene choose not to use the (Slovene) literary language, even in situations where this would be the most appropriate discourse,

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<sup>8</sup> As stated by M. Ule Nastran (2000: 136), being more attentive towards one's own thoughts and feelings increases the consistency between one's positions and behaviour.

is the misunderstanding of the relationship between the literary language and an individual's other, especially primary discourses, stemming from two important characteristics of the Slovene literary language. Based on Giles and Powesland (1975:15) division of standard languages to *class* and *context-related*, the Slovene literary language, according to A. Skubic (2001: 211), could be classified as the context-related one. This refers to a style of speaking which is not specific to a certain social group but is instead considered to be appropriate in certain socially defined situations and should be used accordingly by the members of all social groups of a certain culture. Here, a general principle applies, in respect of which the more demanding the linguistic activity, the more need there is for literary language.

Another important research-related characteristic of the Slovene literary language compared to other discourses is that the literary language is not the primary discourse for any social group or individual.<sup>9</sup> It is different from their primary discourse and, consequently, it has to be learnt additionally by all speakers. Differences between literary language and primary discourse can be less significant, even nearly indiscernible for speakers of some versions, or greater and obvious at first contact; therefore, they reflect through linguistic similarity either a strong or weak identification with the dominant culture, its values and ideology. In this respect, A. Skubic (2003: 298) makes a distinction between cultivated and marginal sociolects in the Slovene sociolinguistic situation. Cultivated primary discourses, typical for speakers above a certain level of political, economic or cultural capital, as well as for people who have relocated geographically or climbed up the social ladder, are closer to the literary language. In their intimate primary discourse, their speakers in fact accept the rules of the dominant culture, which is expressed also through their discourse patterns (ibid). Marginal sociolects<sup>10</sup> are typically sociolects of social groups with less social power, i.e. the speech of the lower social class. While their speakers may officially recognise the "superiority" of the literary language (perceived as more "correct"), they in reality feel a strong loyalty towards their own sociolect, which they also expect from other members of their group. They see their discourse as an exceptional manner of existence (ibid), which should be forsaken if its speakers adopt another discourse. Our identities are most closely tied to our primary

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9 According to Gee (19896), the primary discourse is the manner of language use first learnt by an individual and used by the latter in direct communication with his or her friends and family.

10 They can roughly be divided into rural, urban, and immigrant sociolects.

discourse, for it is through that discourse that we begin understanding the world. Its identity power is therefore stronger than that of secondary discourses, which in Slovenia also includes the literary language.

Due to their greater resemblance to literary language, the cultivated primary discourses can often be heard in schools. They are used in informal communication or even in classes by teachers and even more, the mistakes their speakers make are less distracting than the ones committed by the speakers of marginal primary discourses. (Cf. Larre 2009: 27) Many speakers of "marginal discourses" therefore often perceive the literary language not as contextually but rather as a class-related discourse which is spoken by educated people and members of higher social classes and is as such, a "competitor" to their own primary discourse. By acquiring the literary language, they feel as if they are abandoning their primary identity and assuming the identity of other social groups, which they do not want to belong to.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, they may insist firmly on using their primary discourse even in situations which could normally require the use of the literary language or at the same time even refuse to learn it.

That is why classes of literary language should underline the following:

1. That literary language is not one of the cultivated primary discourses but a special cultural language to be used in more difficult communication circumstances by all members of the society. There are linguistic differences between the literary language and all primary discourses, which need to be learnt additionally by everybody.
2. That the differences between the literary language as a secondary discourse and an individual's intimate primary language are also functional, which is why the two cannot be arranged in a hierarchical order. While the literary language is of essential importance in achieving success in school, at the workplace and in public, a pupil's home idiom is much more suitable for use in several social contexts.

Pupils should be aware that the school does not require them to replace their primary discourse with the literary language and, with that, renounce their primary identity. By teaching them the literary language as an additional language version, it primarily wishes to enable them to easily switch between primary, literary and other

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<sup>11</sup> The differences between a child's language and socialisation at home and the language and socialisation at school often contribute to misunderstandings and conflict (Garcia & Guerra, 2004).

secondary discourses in accordance with the given situation.

## 5.2 The correct use of literary language

The errors occurring in the use of the literary language are often related to the fact that most pupils entering schools are already fluent in Slovene. (cf. Larre 2009) That is why they have a much less obvious need to master the literary language than the speakers of Slovene as a foreign or second language. The speakers of cultivated or marginal primary discourses have no problems in communicating with teachers and, later on, also other speakers of literary Slovene. By doing so, often neither the speaker of primary discourse nor the listener is aware of the speaker using a non-literary discourse (ibid). While the use of non-literary language or the interference from the primary discourse on the literary language may be overlooked, such discourses give rise to conscious or unconscious negative stereotypes.<sup>12</sup>

In order for pupils to become aware of the need to learn the literary language and develop a sensitivity to its characteristics, they need to be given the opportunity to take on suitable roles or formulate proper situations in which cultural norms require the use of the literary language. In the case of the Slovene sociolinguistic situation, its use is determined by three factors, according to A. Skubic (2001: 219). They are the code (i.e. mostly written), the context (focus on a specific addressee, the seriousness or the solemnity of the situation) and the specific content (e.g. area of expertise). These factors combine into different situations in a given socio-cultural context and thus create different genres. And to each of them, culture attributes typical linguistic characteristics. However, their combinations and the required use of the literary language are not only intralingual, but "they are also social at least to the same extent as they are semiotic and are therefore a matter of etiquette:" (A. Skubic 220), which is why the change in social norms also entails a change in the literary register.

The attitude towards the level of difficulty of individual genres and typical

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12 In connection with marginal discourses, A. Skubic notes, for example, that rural sociolects have a positive image because they are "associated with common-sense plainness and uncorruptness. Compared to them, the urban marginal sociolects are less valued since they "lack their romantic rustic appeal: 'The immigrant marginal sociolects are the least valued, "being stigmatised, often ridiculed and characterise their speakers as foreigners within a certain community.' (...-302) Similarly, speakers of cultivated discourses could be labelled as artificial and pretentious due to their linguistic traditionality, expressions of cultivated etiquette and refusal of vulgarity.

linguistic forms attributed to a certain genre by culture is therefore not inalterable. They change together with the norms of society, which is most obvious in the development of media texts. While in the past the literary language has been the norm in every media genre, it is nowadays only expected in the media believed to carry the biggest social responsibility and display information reliability. Since pupils today have different experiences with media or written texts (cf. Skubic 2001), the mere public nature or the written code, which the school defines as the fundamental criteria for the use of literary language, are no longer sufficient to develop a sensitivity to the choice of the literary language. In order to develop such a sensitivity, as the starting point for language learning teacher should choose those contexts in which the literary language would retain its role also in the future (Skubic 2001: 221). Considering the individual factors of the literary language, Skubic (ibid.) states with regard to the situation in Slovenia, that the content itself calls for the literary language "in texts with a performative force (legal and administrative texts), which may have a decisive influence on the lives of people and must therefore be precise, unambiguous, and in cognitive texts (scientific texts) where unambiguity is needed to ensure a smooth flow of argumentation" (ibid). The interpersonal and symbolic function of language calls for the use of the literary language as the highest discourse in texts whose role is to represent a nation, "where their author carries the authority of the state, and in texts in which stressing the subjectivity of their author would harm the authority of the content (e.g. more demanding didactic texts, "objective" public information)" (ibid). Last but not least, with the need to simplify the search for information, many digital texts need to be as standardised as possible, with several AI-generated texts being based on increasingly universal and unified rules of formation (ibid).

It is only in such contexts that pupils can experience the roles of speakers who must, to be efficient, use the literary language, and reflect on the cultural norms which require such a discourse, the values, positions and views expressed through the use of the literary language in a given context. This is also the point where it is useful to observe the differences between their primary discourse and the literary language and raise awareness on the traits of the literary language which can be distinguished from their cultivated or marginal primary discourse.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Multiculturalism, the diversity of individual living spaces and the changeability of lifestyles, which encourage an individual in the postmodern era to quickly adapt and recreate identities, have profoundly changed the conception of the identity function of language, also in language didactics. In first language teaching, an individual's identity is no longer related only to an abstract national level but is also seen as a complex phenomenon which involves different social roles and their discourses. Apart from developing the awareness of the national identity function of literary language, such education should also develop pupils' awareness of the cultural determination of every linguistic activity and the identity dimension of different discourses used in such situations. This could be achieved within the framework of critically oriented communicative language teaching, which goes beyond the dichotomous notion of the identity and communicative functions of language, and sees them as interrelated and complementary dimensions of language activity. In critically designed communicative teaching, the linguistic cultural awareness (i.e. the conscious identity) is consequently perceived as one of the basic ingredients of the communicative competence, developed with the support of a real-life linguistic activity, which enables pupils to immerse themselves in social roles and reflect meaningfully on different dimensions of language.

The discourse which stays at the centre of attention in first language teaching is, regardless of the findings on the complexity of linguistic and cultural identity, the literary language acting both as a nation representative discourse as well as a discourse which enables the social equality of pupils. As indicated above, the differences between the literary language and a pupil's primary discourse are not only linguistic, but also functional. For the pupil, the two discourses are therefore not opposed to one another, but rather coexist and complete one another. It is by recognising that the literary language must be learnt as an additional discourse by all speakers of Slovene, and by defining the contexts which justify the use of the literary language even in modern times, the linguistic cultural awareness can be a tool to develop pupils' sensitivity to choose among various discourses and reduce the interferences between them.

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### **Authors' Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### **Data availability**

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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