THE INCLUSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM AND THE EFFECTS OF ACCULTURATION ON CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

In the process of English language learning the issue of acculturation inevitably appears since the members of a minority culture come into contact with the culture and language of a majority culture.This phenomenon of acculturation and its effect on second language acquisition is to be observed not only with the Bulgarian learners of English but also with all the other ethnically represented groups in our society.

This article studies the way the dilemma whether to resist or to conform to the cultural norms and the specifics of the English language is represented both by Bulgarian schoolchildren and by pupils from other ethnic groups. The difference in their results will be indicative of the degree to which the inclusive English language classroom has succeeded in giving equal opportunities for English language acquisition to all the children in the Bulgarian primary school.

Key Words: Acculturation, language learning, inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

The policy of the public school system in Bulgaria is founded upon the idea that all people, regardless of their cultures or special circumstances, are entitled to a free, quality education so that they can become productive, contributing citizens in our society.

On the first place this idea is further supported by the principles of inclusive education defined in the 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement and the framework of Action. Schools should respond to diverse needs of all children and fit themselves in children's learning styles and needs, and not the other way. Ferguson (1996), Udavi-Solner (1996), Thomas et al (1998), Ainscow (1999) and Mittler (2000) have extensively dealt on the school reforms perspectives to develop the concept and practices of inclusive education. Continuing with this approach, Sebba and Ainscow (1996) have offered a definition of inclusion:
Inclusion describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils (p.9).

The 1994 UNESCO World Conference also realized this situation when it argued that a school should,
…accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized area and groups. (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, p.6)

187

These inclusive schools,
… must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, p.11-12).

On the second place these principles are further supported by the need of modern-day society to produce global citizens able to transcend social, physical, economic, or cultural barriers to pursue their ambitions and dreams. Globalization enabled people to travel, live and work all over the world, gave them the chance to study in an international environment and work in multinational institutions. Hence comes the need for new communication skills and intercultural education which although difficult at times is very enriching and useful experience. Intercultural dialogue has long been a principle supported by the European Union and its institutions. The year 2008 was designated "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue" (EYID) by the European Parliament and the Member States of the European Union. It aimed to draw the attention of people in Europe to the importance of dialogue within diversity and between diverse cultures.

But the development of these skills for communication with people from different cultures hides one delicate aspect - and more specifically the aspect connected with the inclusion of minority groups in the host society. This task is burdened with different prejudices, negative attitudes, cultural stereotypes, fears and sometimes by actions of intolerance.

Education is the mechanism that can provide effective inclusion of the representatives of different kinds of minority groups and this inclusion can further enable them increase their job opportunities and overcome the economic barriers that prevent them becoming equal participant in the social life. Teachers must be sensitive to their students' cultural and academic differences. They need to create culturally sensitive learning communities, develop positive teacher– student–parent relationships, design lessons that motivate all students to learn, and implement those lessons using differentiated instructional strategies to maximize student learning. Diverse classrooms provide a venue for children to learn to embrace cultural differences and eliminate the barriers of racism, sexism, and prejudice.

A major challenge facing all the schools in our country is teaching primary schoolchildren a second language. The aim of this research is to compare the results in English of fourth-graders in three different schools – a Bulgarian, where predominantly the pupils are of Bulgarian origin, an Armenian school and a school where the prevailing number of schoolchildren are of Roma origin.

THE REALITIES IN BULGARIA

According to the 2011 POPULATION CENSUS conducted by the national statistical institute as of 1.02.2011 the population of Bulgaria is 7 364 570 persons.
- The Bulgarian ethnic group comprises 5 664 624 persons or 84,8% of persons who declared their ethnic identity on a voluntary basis.
- The Turkish ethnic group is the second highest number - 588 318 persons. It represents 8.8% of the population.
- The Roma ethnicity is traditionally the third one numbering 325 343 persons, with a relative share of 4.9%.
- 49 304 persons or 0.7% determine themselves to other ethnic groups. The following are included: Russian ethnic group - 9 978 persons, Armenian - 6 552, Vlashka - 3 684, Greek - 1 379, Jewish - 1 162, Karakachanska - 2 556, Macedonian - 1 654, Romanian - 891, Ukrainian - 1 789 and others - 19 659 persons.

The Bulgarian language is pointed as mother tongue by 5 659 024 persons or 85.2% of the population, the Turkish - by 605 802 persons or 9.1% and Roma - by 281 217 persons or 4.2%.

188

The connection between the ethnic self-determination and self-determination by mother tongue is strongly expressed.

The Roma ethnic group is distributed by mother tongue as follows:
- 272 710 persons or 85.0% have pointed Roma as a mother tongue;
- 24 033 or 7.5% - Bulgarian;
- 21 440 or 6.7% - Turkish;
- 1 837 persons or 0.6% - Romanian.

EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION

Surveying of the population educational status starts with 1934 census. Up to 2011 the educational structure of population aged 7 and more improves considerably. Clearly expressed tendency of increase of the number and share of population with tertiary and upper secondary education and decrease of the number of people with lower secondary or lower education is observed. For the first time during the current census (2011 Populatin Census – Main Results,w*www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf*) the category "school never visited" is included. The number of persons who have never visited school is 81.0 thousand or 1.2% of the population aged 7 and more. The fact that these people have never been part of the educational system is disturbing.

Illiterate are 112 778 persons, representing 1.7% of the population aged 9 and over years of age.

There are considerable differences in the share of illiterate persons amongst the three main ethnic groups. Amongst the Bulgarian ethnic group the share of illiterate is 0.5%, amongst the Turkish - 4.7% and amongst the Roma ethnic group - 11.8%.

Considerable differences are observed also for children aged 7 to 15 years, who are supposed to be part of the educational system, but are not as of 1.02.2011. For the Roma population the share of children who do not visit school is 23.2%, for the Turkish ethnic group - 11.9% and for the Bulgarian - 5.6%. Reasons due to which children do not visit school are not object of the census and therefore are not studied during the census. These might be health or other personal reasons.

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

According to the Law for Public Education of 1991 the compulsory starting age for primary schools is 7 (the optional is 6). The age at which compulsory education ends is 16. The levels of schooling in Bulgaria are: primary education, grades 1-4, lower secondary education, grades 5-7/8 and upper secondary, grades 8-13. Students are assessed according to a 2-6 scale with 6 as the best mark.

The English instruction is carried out in the primary course of education (1st - 4th grade) by a curriculum, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, which is obligatory for both public and private schools. The Ministry of Education and Science is the only body authorized to approve and recommend a list of international and local textbooks to be used for every grade and type of school. The schools then select among the listed textbooks, which generally fit into three main categories: textbooks written and published locally; international textbooks licensed for publishing in Bulgaria (mainly for higher grades) and original international textbooks offered on the Bulgarian market by representatives of the publishers. Besides the chosen textbooks teachers are free to use any other materials they consider useful and appropriate.

Our first hypothesis is the process of acculturation and inclusion of the Armenian representatives in Bulgarian society is far more successful than that of the Roma people.

Our second hypothesis is that there will be significant differences in the pupils' results in English between these three kinds of school.

CONCEPT AND METHODOLOGY

The research on the first stage aimed at studying the attitude of the Bulgarian people towards the inclusion of different ethnic groups in mainstream schools. Another goal we set was to investigate the validity of the statements and assumptions underlying the Acculturation model of Second Language Acquisition.

On the first stage the research is based mainly on a survey on Public Attitudes and Reactions towards Inclusive Education in Bulgaria conducted in 2006 by   ALPHA RESEARCH Ltd. (Обществени нагласи и отношение към приобщаващото образование, *cie-bg.eu/userfiles/file/PublicAwarenessSurvey_June2006.pdf*) Their attention was directed towards the attitudes of the parents, teachers and directors and the children towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs and the inclusion of children from the minority groups in mainstream schools. Our interest in this study is predominantly focused on the reactions towards the inclusion of children from minority groups. The reactions from the group discussion show that this is considered as problem only when discussing the children from Roma origin. Such negative attitude is not noticed towards the other minority groups – namely, children from Armenian, Turkish, Chinese, Russian or Jewish origin.

The group of the Bulgarian parents

Some of the parents of the Bulgarian schoolchildren have such a negative attitude towards Roma children that they express readiness to move their children out of the school immediately after Roma children happen to be enrolled in the same class as their children. Other Bulgarian parents are less reactive, more passive and ready to wait and see if any problems will appear after the arrival of the Roma pupils and strongly believe that the Roma children might drop out soon after their enrollment. Several of the participants in this survey mentioned that there are no problems in connection with integrating children from the Armenian or Jewish ethnic groups. Bulgarian parents strongly recommend Roma children to be involved in educational programmes in their Roma neighbourhood dedicated to the task to teach them "to read and write at least". They insist the venue of this initiative to be their neighbourhood in regard with the easy access and financial justification. Many parents believe that Roma people are not ready to be integrated because the choice they have made is "to do nothing and steal" but they united around the idea that chances must be given to those willing to succeed. They think that before integrating the children the Roma parents have to be prepared because if "the parents are not normal the children cannot be integrated". The lack of hygiene and the specific stink is also a great hindrance for the integration of Roma people.

The group of the Roma parents

Roma parents are willing their children to be integrated in Bulgarian schools but the difficulties they have are mainly economic. They approve very much the idea and possibility their children to continue their stay in preparatory groups after school to help them do their homework and learn their lessons. In this way they want to neutralize their financial difficulties and to ensure an appropriate educational environment for their children. Roma parents have high opinion of Bulgarian teachers but mainly due to their own low educational level and lack of ambitions for their children. The ambitions they have for their children are to give them the opportunity to find a job requiring neither qualifications nor education. This lack of ambitions or dreams is reflected upon the children later on. These parents' inability to help their children with the preparation of their lessons, their lack of control and insistence for regular school attendance makes the educational process even more difficult. They believe that it is good for their children to be in the same class with Bulgarian pupils but at the same time because of their poor communication with their children and low cultural level they are not able to identify the problems connected with their acceptance by the Bulgarian peers in the mainstream school. Parents are insensitive to their children's feelings and experience at school because physical aggressiveness is something normal for them – i.e., the "positive" image of the educational system presented by the parents is in contrast with the real "clash" with the their children's environment and their world. Foreign language education is important for these parents only because of the possibility their children to find work abroad although there are not cases of mass migration of Roma people to the countries of the European Union. Education is not viewed as a means for social mobility and realization – it is only a means for acquiring only some basic educational characteristics as reading, writing and arithmeic skills.

The group of the teachers

Teachers and directors in Bulgarian mainstream schools believe that they are not enough prepared to deal with children with Special Educational Needs. On the other hand the teachers and directors from the specialized schools strongly believe that the inclusion of children with special educational needs cannot be total and that the elimination of specialized schools might have negative effect. According to them specialized schools prepare children with special needs for integration and are an option for the parents of these children to go back to them if the integration proves to be impossible. Teachers also find the lack of normal standards of personal hygiene, the lack of support or educational assistance from the family, Roma children's indifference to the educational process and the poor discipline to be the main obstacles in their work with these children. They agree that because of their segregation Roma pupils are deprived of normal conditions for development but at the same time their presence in Bulgarian mainstream schools lowers the quality of the educational environment which is not favourable at all for the Bulgarian schoolchildren. They also believe that it is essential for the Roma children to attend preschool educational groups because there they acquire some learning habits and learn Bulgarian language.

The group of the Bulgarian children

Bulgarian children consider their peers from other ethnic groups exactly the same as them. Only one child was anxious that problems might appear. They are more than ready to spend their free time with them, go to the cinema together or on excursions. Most of the children learn about the problems of children from other ethnic groups from their parents and only one child has talked with his teacher. They are willing to accept a Roma child in their class and say that all of them have already come into contact and communicated with Roma children. But those of them who have already been in a class with a Roma peer confess that they cannot accept the unequal attitude and criteria towards them and their Roma classmates.

The group of the Roma children

The Roma children are more or less indifferent on the matter of education and school attendance because school life is not associated only with positive emotions. On the first place their difficulties are connected with the school subjects, then come the problems with the discipline – because they are either really responsible for all the disruptive acts in class or are unfairly accused of such by their teachers. This discriminative attitude of the teachers towards the Roma pupils permanently impairs these children's sense of justice and their judgement of what is right or wrong. As a whole school life is not a positive experience or a determinative factor in their whole life. They have difficulties at school because of the language barrier and their poor command of Bulgarian and they consider their parents, friends and relatives as the main source of useful knowledge and skills. Their parents' uttermost ambition is the graduation of the 8th grade and those who do graduate secondary education are rare cases of academic achievement. Education is not a part of Roma people's value system. Their communication with Bulgarian schoolchildren is superficial and not of stable or durable character. Another negative feature of Roma children's everyday life is the lack of trust towards them and the preconception that they are always ready to steal something whenever they have the opportunity.

As it is summarized in the country assessment and the Roma education fund's strategic directions called 'Advancing Education of Roma in Bulgaria' (Advancing Education of Roma in Bulgaria', http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Advancing%20Roma%20Education%20ENG%202007.pdf),   the major obstacles for improved Roma education in Bulgaria include the following:

Particular enrollment obstacles: Access to noncompulsory pre-school education is generally unavailable for Roma children, due to the required attendance fee, which many Roma families cannot afford. Furthermore, there are limited spaces in pre-school education institutions, and they have a policy that gives priority to children of working parents. As a result, many of Roma children are excluded. Even access to the one year of compulsory pre-school education (kindergarten) is often denied to Roma children, mainly because of classroom space limitations. The poor quality of education received by Roma students in the lower levels of the education system creates obstacles for their progression to higher levels. There is a general lack of support, including financial support, for students preparing for entrance exams to high schools and universities.

191

Segregated education: The system of "Gypsy schools," where the students are predominantly or exclusively Roma children, creates a poor educational environment and, consequently, low-quality education. Many Roma children are simply not allowed to enroll in Bulgarian mainstream schools, and they are instead channeled into overcrowded Roma schools. In cases where students do get transferred from a segregated "Gypsy school" to a mainstream school, further problems often arise. Desegregation can be accompanied by protests of non-Roma parents and exacerbated social divisions if: the process does not involve parents and the community, Roma children are not offered an adequate choice of schools, there is not a broad distribution of Roma children in different schools and classes, there is no preliminary support for families in need, extra lessons for Roma children are not provided, there is no information campaign, etc. Thus, transferring Roma children to mainstream schools requires an overall national desegregation policy and action programme. Education in special schools: Although the new policy of the Ministry of Education and Science supports the downsizing of special schools, the process is slow, and the majority of the children in special schools are still of Roma origin. Many of these children are enrolled by their parents – not because of any mental handicap but because of benefits like free meals and clothing.

Adult education: Adult education and vocational training is currently only available on a project basis, and the experience with the majority of these programmes has not been positive. These projects did not manage to improve the education level or employability of the Roma participants, because they did not reflect the real needs of the labour market or the education system.

THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATON AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The first step towards academic achievements is the acquisistion of the mother tongue. For many of the ethnic groups this is not the language of the host society. According to Schumann (Schumann, 1978, 1990) the degree of the successful second language acquisition is closely correlated with that cluster of social and psychological factors that he defines as the acculturation model. Schumann claims that leaners of a second language can be placed along a continuum ranging from social-psychological distance to social-psychological proximity with the speakers of the target language. The degree of language acquisition, then, would correlate with the degree of the learner's proximity to the target group. Schumann (1986, p. 385) proposes that "acculturation as a remote cause brings the learner into contact with TL-speakers and verbal interaction with those speakers as a proximate cause brings about the negotiation of appropriate input which then operates as the immediate cause of language acquisition". According to Schumann the effective acculturation and second language acquisition depend on the social and psychological distance between the learner and the target language culture. Basic is the social distance and the psychological is decisive only when the social factors have neither positive nor negative implications upon acculturation.The social variables determine the educational environment as "good" or "bad". When the learning situation is good:
- the native speakers and the learners of the target language determine themselves as socially politically, culturally, technically or economically equal;
- the representatives of the two language groups want the learners of the target language to be assimilated into the culture of the target language ;
- the representatives of the two language groups expect that the learners of the target language will share social institutions such as schools, churches, workplaces, clubs, and others with the target language group;
- the learners of the target language must be not a very large group and they must be coherent;
- the culture of the target language learners must be comparable with the culture of the native speakers;
- both groups must have a positive attitude towards one another;
- the longer second language learners plan to remain in the L2 environment, the more likely it is that they will feel the necessity of learning the target language.

The absence of these prerequisites is indicative of a poor educational situation and will certainly lengthen the social distance.

192

The psychological factors include:
- language shock - learner's confusion when using L2;
- cultural shock - learners' disorientation as a result of culture differences.

Brown (1980) postulates the process of acculturation in the target language natural environment consists of four stages:
- **Euphoria-** the learners' initial excitement over the newness of the surroundings;
- **Cultural shock-** emerges as individuals feel the intrusion of more and more cultural differences into their own images of self and security and start feeling alienated and hostile;
- **Cultural stress -** according to Brown this stage is the most crucial because it is connected with gradual recovery: some of the problems of acculturation are solved, while others continue for some time. The learner starts to understand the differences in thinking. The learner's problems center around the question of identity, she/he does not perceive himself/herself as belonging to any culture.
- **Full recovery-** assimilation, adaptation, or acceptance of the new culture. The new identity is developed.

According to Schumann if the social and/or psychological distance is great then acculturation is hindered and the learner does not progress beyond the early stages of language acquisition. As a result his/her target language will stay pidginized. Pidginization is characterized by simplifications and reductions occurring in the learner's interlanguage which lead to fossilization when the learner's interlanguage system does not progress in the direction of the target language (Gitsaki, 1998).

Pedagogical Implications

Menard-Warwick (2005) states that educators need to understand the social and personal forces that create dilemmas for students and address them directly by making them topics for discussion in class, allowing the students to use the target language to derive a collective solution based on the resources that each student brings to the class. Skilton-Sylvester (2002) encouraged teachers to learn as much as they can about their students' identities outside the classroom, and draw on those identities in classroom activities to encourage the students to continue their investment in learning.

It can be inferred that the acculturation model takes into account the most important factors which may be involved in SLA since it describes the learners' social and psychological factors. But, based on our experience in teaching English, the problem is the application of these factors in the classroom. First, the teacher may lack knowledge how to teach culture or may not have adequate knowledge to teach. Second, informing these factors to the students demand more naturalistic context than in a classroom environment.
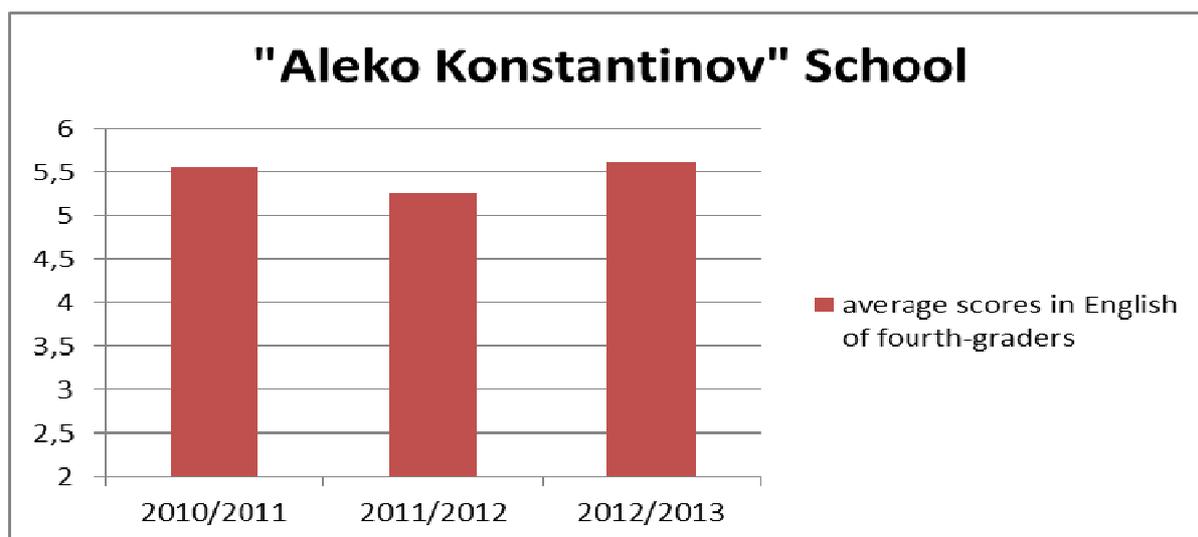
RESULTS OF THE TEACHING PROCESS

In order to prove the second hypothesis we have to take into consideration the results from the final scores in English of the fourth-graders in a Bulgarian, an Armenian and a Roma school. The Bulgarian school with predominantly Bulgarian children is called "Aleko Konstantinov". The school with predominantly Roma pupils is called "Naiden Gerov" and the Armenian school is called "Viktoria and Krikor Tiutiundjian". The pupils in the Armenian school are mainly of Armenian origin as well as the number of the children in the Roma school are predominantly of Roma origin so here are presented the results of the whole classes. All the children in the three schools are taught by the Longman textbook "Blue skies English" which makes the comparison even more reliable. The total number of the schoolchildren whose scores were researched is 721 - of them 230 Bulgarian pupils from "Aleko Konstantinov" school, 180 Armenian pupils from "Viktoria and Krikor Tiutiundjian" school and 311 Roma children from "Naiden Gerov" school.

We decided to follow the results in English in three successive years so as to be sure that the results are a tendency and not a coincidence.

The fourth-graders from the Bulgarian school "Aleko Konstantinov" have the following average results in English in the school years:

- 2010/2011 – Excellent 5,56
- 2011/2012 – Very good 5,25
- 2012/2013 – Excellent 5,61

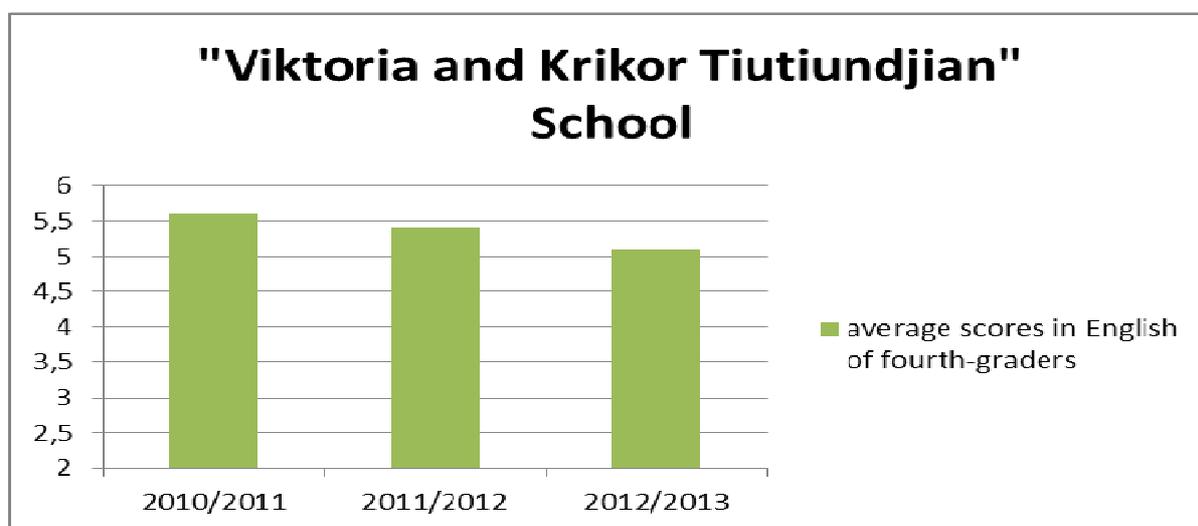The same results presented with a bar chart look like that:

Graph 1: The average scores in English of Bulgarian fourth-graders in "Aleko Konstantinov" school

The Armenian children in the fourth grade from the Armenian school "Viktoria and Krikor Tiutiundjian"have the following average results in English in the school years:

- 2010/2011 – Excellent 5,60
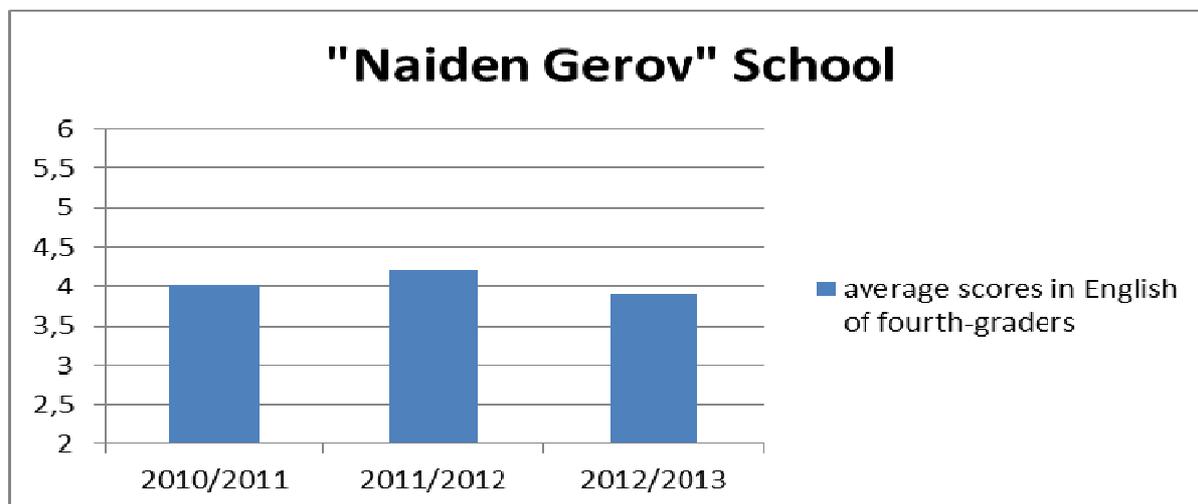- 2011/2012 – Very good 5,40
- 2012/2013 – Very good 5,10

Here are the same results presented in a bar chart:

Graph 2: The average scores in English of Armenian fourth-graders in "Viktora and Krikor Tiutiundjian" school

194

And finally the results of the Roma children from "Naiden Gerov" school by years:
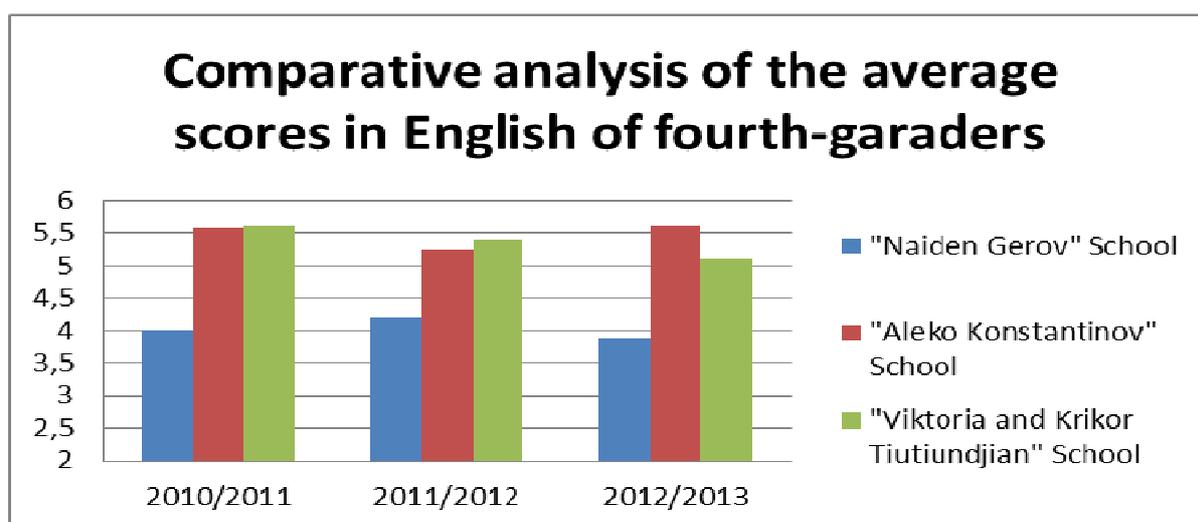
- 2010/2011 – Good 4,01
- 2011/2012 – Good 4,20
- 2012/2013 – Good 3,89

Graph 3: The average scores in English of Roma fourth-graders in "Naiden Gerov" school

The students' results in the Roma school are lower than those in the Armenian and Bulgarian schools, but they are by no means poor. These are very good achievements for primary students who have not learned basic grammatical and lexical concepts in their mother tongue yet.

As expected, the results of the pupils in the Bulgarian school and the results of the Armenian pupils in the Armenian school are comparable and range from very good to excellent. This fact can be explained with Armenian children's absence of social or psychological distance that helps them accept and adapt to the Bulgarian culture and does not hinder their acculturation.

Graph 4: Comparative analysis of the average scores in English of fourth-graders in the three schools

195

CONCLUSIONS

This research focused on the level of inclusion of fourth-graders from different ethnic groups in the English language classroom.

On one hand, we were interested in the attitudes towards the inclusion of different minority groups in the Bulgarian school and next our attention directed towards the theory of acculturation and its pedagogical implications. Thus we explored the results from a public survey conducted by Alpha Research Ltd on the Public Attitudes and Reactions towards Inclusive Education in Bulgaria conducted in 2006. Our attention was focused on the attitudes of the parents, teachers and directors and the children towards the inclusion of children from the minority groups in mainstream schools.

On the other hand, in order to explain the differences in the attitude towards different ethnic groups and their different level of academic achievements and ambitions for further advancing we took the acculturation model for second language acquisition to account for these differences. We explored the final scores in English of Bulgarian, Armenian and Roma fourth-graders from three different schools. The results can be briefly summarized in the following way:

1. The attitude of Bulgarian parents, teachers and schoolchildren towards the inclusion of Roma pupils is not favourable at all in comparison with their attitude towards the inclusion of Armenian, Jewish and other ethnic groups in mainstream schools.
2. Roma access to noncompulsory pre-school is generally unavailable, due to the required attendance fee, and the limited spaces in pre-school education institutions. This lack of pre-school education and its poor quality create obstacles for their progression to higher levels.
3. The lack of an overall national desegregation policy and action programme does not allow Roma children to be enrolled in the mainstream Bulgarian schools but mainly into the overcrowded Roma schools where the educational environment is poor, and consequently the education is of low-quality. The same does not apply for the representatives of other ethnic groups.
4. According to Schumann's acculturation model for second language acquisition the learning situation is poor only for the Roma children because neither they nor the Bulgarian society determine these two groups as socially, politically, culturally, technically or economically equal. The representatives of the two language groups are not ready for the process of assimilation into the culture of the Bulgarian language because the culture of the Roma people is not comparable with the culture of the Bulgarian society.
5. Despite the positive trends, seen in the result in English of the fourth-graders the education outcome of Roma still remains well below that of the majority.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe our research findings provide valuable and up-to-date information on the state of inclusion of different ethnic groups in the English language classroom in the primary schools in our country and the reasons for that. It will be beneficial for government officials, the Ministry of Education and Science, and other decision makers for reviewing policies and institutional structures and developing new strategies and initiatives that determine how to:

- support Roma parents and community leaders to recognise and engage in the educational development of their children;
- increasing the enrollment of Roma children in pre-school education and kindergartens;
- developing sustainable models for desegregation of all Roma schools;
- raise awareness about the need for desegregation and other Roma education support initiatives through media campaigns and other communication activities;
- provide additional support for Roma children, including mentoring, tutorials, after-school activities, and materials linked to specific grades and needs;
- reducing the number of dropouts in grades five through eight and increasing transition to high school and tertiary education;

- application of sustainable approaches to second-chance and adult education.

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