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Small homelands vs. teaching Polish and Slovenian as foreign languages – the analysis of coursebooks

In order to be fluent in a foreign language, it is necessary to get to know not only the language itself, but also the culture and history in which it functions. It is essential to get acquainted with general culture and history of the country and its individual parts. That is why, Polish and Slovene coursebooks present the whole countries, their regions, cities and in case of Slovenian textbooks, even villages. The following article presents the way those “small homelands”, their culture and meaning for a particular country are shown in chosen coursebooks.

This issue is related to the education and language policy of both countries. The area where, at the beginning of the 1990s, a new, independent country came to existence – The Republic of Slovenia – has never been culturally and ethnically uniform, and the number and population of minorities were changing together with the changes of borders. In the 1990s, within new Slovenian borders, one could find the representatives of many minorities, both Slavic (nations of former Yugoslavia) and non-Slavic (Hungarians, Italians, Romani people). The 11th article of Slovenian constitution states that the official language of the Republic of Slovenia is Slovene. In municipalities, where Hungarian or Italian minorities live, the official languages are also Hungarian and Italian, so it could be said that Slovenia strives towards integration, but it does not reject the individuality of particular groups. It is visible not only in language policy but also in education – in primary and secondary school young Slovenians, in great details discover all the regions of their country, their customs, folklore, etc. Also, coursebooks for teaching Slovene as a foreign language include a lot of information about different regions, cities and villages.

Poland is a country which is more ethnically homogeneous than Slovenia. Obviously, there are minorities living there that have constitutional rights. However, their presence in everyday life seems to be lesser than in Slovenia (which is naturally the result of statistics – the census from 2002 showed that 83% of people living in Slovenia declared themselves to be Slovenian, while in the same year, as many as 96% of Poles declared Polish nationality). That is why integration is not one of the most basic objectives of education policy in Poland (<https://men.gov.pl>). Coursebooks for teaching Polish to foreigners focus on places which the Poles have an emotional relationship to (e.g. Cracow, Warsaw, the Tatra Mountains), and not on all the regions.

What is a small homeland? For one person it could be their city or a village, for the other the whole region, and for another – the neighbourhood they live in. The area is not clearly defined, however, regardless of its size, it is important for the person in some way. The individual identifies with it socially, culturally, etc. in the same way as it happens in case of identifying with a “large” homeland or a nation.

While learning a foreign language, at the beginning students get familiar with basic information about the whole country. They start identifying with it, not only when they live there, but also when they learn the language on a course or during the studies in their own country. It happens automatically and results from human willingness to discover the world and the need of identification.

Almost at the beginning the students get to know important cities, relics and other attractions of the country whose language they are studying. The choice of places the students “will visit” depends mainly on the teacher and the authors of the coursebooks. Predominantly, these are the capitals and other important cities (e.g. Cracow, Maribor), cities located in places attractive for tourists (e.g. Gdańsk or Piran), typical tourist attractions (e.g. Morskie Oko or Bled) etc. By discovering the culture and history of particular places, the students become interested in them and later, identify with them. It happens most often when they live there. It could therefore be said that they gain their small homelands.

Both a statistical Pole and a statistical Slovenian are more bonded with the local community or a place where they live than with the whole country. If it comes to national affiliation, both nations state their country in the second place, and the third place is taken by the region. The EU takes only the fourth place:

	Poles	Slovenians
Place of living	61%	50%
Country	19%	31%
Region	12%	11%
European Union	3%	4%

Table 1. Sense of affiliation of Poles and Slovenians.

The table above has been created based on the announcement of CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) (http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2009/K_151_09.PDF) and the results of research found in *Slovenci in kolektivne identitete* (http://www.fuds.si/sites/default/files/tehnichni_pregled-pugelj-mag.pdf). How is that hierarchy presented in coursebooks for teaching Polish and Slovene as foreign languages?

The following article will discuss four coursebooks: two from the Slovenian series *Slovenska beseda v živo* and two from the Polish one *Hurra!!! Po polsku*. They are used to teach on levels A1-A2. They were chosen due to the fact that at beginner level the content is similar for all the languages – the students learn how to introduce themselves, their family, etc., describe their surroundings, talk about their habits, etc. The coursebooks present the content fully while the learning aids used on higher level choose more various topics (history, social problems, ecology, etc.). The books chosen for the purpose of this analysis are very popular among teachers, were written in a similar period of time and have more or less the same volume, which makes them materials proper for comparison.

The Slovenian series *Slovenska beseda v živo* was published by Center za slovenščino kot drugi in tuji jezik (Centre for Slovene as a Second and Foreign Language), which is an institution working under University of Ljubljana Department of Philosophy. The Polish series *Hurra!!! Po polsku* was created by a private language school from Cracow, Prolog. As it turns out, in case of Polish coursebooks, they are influenced by the place they originate from, because Cracow is presented as the example of a small homeland. Slovenian coursebooks are diverse in this matter, one of the common part of all the classes is *Iz življenja* (eng. From life), which teaches foreigners about different types of texts: surveys, statistical data, fragments of discussion

boards and articles, etc., at the same time getting them familiar with different places. The author encourage teachers to add similar content themselves in order to present the whole Slovenia.

Comparative analysis

The coursebooks for teaching A1-A2 levels usually contain similar content. Both Polish and Slovenian books include such topics as listed below. The table shows Polish subjects and their Slovene counterparts.

Hurra!!! Po polsku 1	Slovenska beseda v živo
<i>Greetings, saying goodbye, establishing relationship</i>	
0. Proszę powtórzyć!	1. Dober dan!
<i>Introductions, expressing feelings</i>	
1. Jak masz na imię?	1. Dober dan!
	2. Razumem, ne razumem...
<i>People's character, asking questions</i>	
2. Mam pytanie. Co to jest?	2. Razumem, ne razumem...
	3. Moja ulica
<i>Nationalities, occupations</i>	
3. Kim jesteś?	1. Dober dan!
<i>Age, family</i>	
4. Czy masz brata?	6. Družinski album
<i>Hobby, time</i>	
5. Co lubisz robić?	5. Danes je moj dan
	9. V prostem času
<i>Situations in restaurants, names of food and dishes</i>	
6. Proszę rachunek	4. Mmm... kava!
<i>Daily routines, time of the day, means of transport</i>	
7. Zwykle nic nie robię	5. Danes je moj dan
<i>Arranging meetings</i>	
8. Može pójdziemy do kina?	4. Mmm... kava!
<i>Shopping, names of shops, measurements, quantities, clothes, colours</i>	
9. Robimy zakupy	1B. 6. Juha, krompir, meso in solata
<i>Months, time expressions, past</i>	
10. To już było!	7. Kariera ali...?
<i>Time expressions, future, decisions, plans</i>	
11. Jakie masz plany?	7. Kariera ali...?
<i>Directions, places in cities, relics, location of Poland</i>	
12. Gdzie jesteś?	3. Moja ulica
<i>Asking for information, holidays, stations, airport, hotel</i>	
13. Jadę na urlop!	
<i>Flat arrangement, rooms, renting</i>	

14. Szukam mieszkania	8. Tukaj sem doma 1B. 3. Življenje na cesti
<i>Weather, body parts, illnesses, symptoms, doctor's appointment</i>	
15. Wszystko mnie boli!	
<i>Biography, time relations</i>	
16. Urodziłem się w Polsce	
<i>Sports, asking for information, expressing opinion, free time</i>	
17. Sport to zdrowie?	9. V prostem času 1B, 2. Bravo!
<i>Education, courses, trainings, expressing opinion</i>	
18. Czy lubisz uczyć się języka polskiego?	
<i>Traditions and holidays, wishes</i>	
19. Wszystkiego najlepszego!	
<i>Speeches, asking for help, company, office equipment</i>	
20. To jest moja wizytówka	

Hurra!!! Po polsku 2	Slovenska beseda v živo
<i>Descriptions of people, comparisons</i>	
1. Osobowość	1. Ali veste, da imamo novega soseda?
<i>Salaries, conditions, hours, times of the day</i>	
2. Praca	
<i>Human life, dates</i>	
3. To już historia...	
<i>Education, courses, expressing feelings, future</i>	
4. Plany na przyszłość	
<i>Shops, offices, entertainment, expressing preferences</i>	
6. Miasto	2. Bravo! 3. Življenje na cesti
<i>Animals, plants, natural environment, justifications</i>	
7. Wieś i przyroda	1B. 6. Juha, krompir, meso in solá
<i>Marriage, family, feelings, expectations, family duties</i>	
8. Relacje z ludźmi – kobieta i mężczyzna	
<i>Relationships, suppositions</i>	
9. Przyjaźń	
<i>Houshold, advertising</i>	
11. Sprzęty domowe	4. S kom živite?
<i>Contentment, complaints, inventions</i>	
12. Technika i wynalazki	
<i>Health, expressing feelings</i>	

13. Samopoczucie	5. Zdrav ali bolan?
<i>Travelling, free time</i>	
14. Turystyka	7. Po opravkih
	8. Kam bi na izlet?
<i>Wishes, expressing sadness, compassion</i>	
16. Święta, uroczystości, tradycje	
<i>Everyday language, Internet, being surprised and amazed</i>	
17. Internet	7. Po opravkih
<i>Preferences, protesting, expressing opinions</i>	
18. Prasa i książka	
<i>Free time, quoting, giving arguments</i>	
19. Kino czy telewizja	
<i>Description of a country and its inhabitants, stereotypes</i>	
	9. Zgodbe iz Slovenije

Table 2. Topics in coursebooks.

The table above shows that Slovenian coursebooks contain less classes. Moreover, each class contains less content. However, it does not mean that Slovenia and its small homelands in Slovenian publications are described in a less detailed way than in Polish books. Actually, it is the opposite – some topics were not discussed, which could be a mistake, but it allowed to include more exercises related to Slovenia, Slovenians, their culture, etc.

It is possible to discover, based on titles of classes and basic data regarding their content that during some of the classes, the topics of small homelands will be discussed. What may be surprising is the choice of content in particular exercises.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the most common place occurring in Polish coursebooks is Cracow. It is not only about the texts and tasks related to the city itself, placed in e.g. classes about tourism and free time, but the former Polish capital can be found even in grammar and lexical exercises, very often as the only place or among other places, but in most cases in the first example (e.g. *Hurra!!! Po polsku 1*, pg. 15, pg. 17, pg. 22, pg.35, pg. 68, pg.73, pg.108). Other bigger cities mentioned in the examples include Gdańsk (e.g. pg. 29), Warsaw (pg. 29, pg. 61), Poznań (pg. 61), Łódź, Wrocław, although none of them receives as much attention as Cracow.

The coursebook *Hurra!!! Po Polsku 1* also includes names of smaller locations, but in most cases, they were introduced only to make the exercises more interesting, a not in order to share information about small homelands (e.g. pg. 13 – the map of Poland in the exercise about numerals). It is the main difference between Polish and Slovenian series of coursebooks because in the books *Slovenska beseda v živo* smaller places can be found as often as the larger ones, e.g. the first lesson introduces fifteen names of places. The class starts with the introduction of places marked on the map of Slovenia which are: Trst, Koper, Nova Gorica, Kranj, Lublana, Celje, Novo mesto, Velenje, Maribor, and the next page, the question “Where are you from?” is answered with such places as Postojna, Sežana, Piran, Tolmin, Murska Sobota and Kamnik, so the places with the population of several thousand of inhabitants. Furthermore, it is easy to notice that there is no domination of one particular city in Slovenian coursebooks, which is the case in Polish ones. Obviously, Ljubljana occurs quite often but it is not as common

as Cracow in the Polish series (the first lesson presents Szczecin, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Poznań, Częstochowa, Łódź, Zakopane, but they are only used as background for practising numerals).

The students using books from both series can learn about the administrative and geographical division of Poland and Slovenia. One cannot resist the feeling that the Polish division has been introduced only to practice giving phone numbers. Its presence in the book does not add any additional content. In comparison, *Slovenska beseda v živo* offers more in this matter, as the map contains information about how to greet people in a particular region. The other map, later on, presents dishes characteristic of a particular region (e.g. sausage, kremšnita, gibanica).

During the first classes in *Hurra!!! Po Polsku 1* students are given a lot of information regarding Cracow and its surroundings (pg. 45 – the poster of Wieliczka, Zakopane, pg. 84 – the mail about Cracow and Zakopane). Even the quiz on the 7th lesson, *Czy wiesz, umiesz, znasz* is only about this region of Poland – the questions are about the number of voivodeships in Poland, the location of Zakopane and whether the students know Cracow.

The Slovenian coursebook is more diverse in this matter – during the second class, in the column *Iz življenja*, we can get familiar with the basic information about Slovenia: its area, population, main rivers, most important lakes, etc. The text is accompanied by photos of interesting, but not the most characteristic places: Piran, Triglav, the river Sava, Cerknjško Lake, Postojna cave, Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje and Kranj.

The Polish coursebook offers similar information (not as detailed as in the Slovenian one) which can be found only on 12th lesson whose topic is *Where are you?* – the maps show five cities (Warszawa, Gdańsk, Poznań, Wrocław, Kraków), the rivers (Vistula, Odra, Warta, Bug), the mountains (Tatra, Bieszczady), The Baltic Sea and Mazury. Unfortunately, even at this lesson, the students are not able to get to know other Polish small homelands because the main text and the exercises to it are about Lesser Poland. It presents Cracow and its relics (Wawel Castle, Mariacki Church, Main Square, Kazimierz), Wieliczka, Ojców and the Tatra Mountains. The exercises about giving and asking for directions are also focused on Cracow – students listen to a dialogue “Excuse me, how can I get to?”, and then they fill in the gaps about getting to the Bagatela Theatre and railway station. The following exercise includes the map of Cracow with Old Town, Stradom and Kazimierz marked on it. Obviously, giving directions based on the real maps and cities is an advantage of the coursebook *Hurra!!! Po Polsku*, although choosing only Cracow for this purpose is arguable.

The Slovenian coursebook at the third lesson also teaches how to ask and answer questions about directions. However, it does so use a fictional city map. This deprives students of the possibility to get to know one of the Slovene’s small homelands. On the other hand, it does not cause being fed up with just one city, as the same lesson, in *Iz življenja*, six people talk about their favourite places in the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana. They list the banks of the river Ljubljanica, Tivoli Park, car parks in front of City Park shopping centre, music equipment shop, railway station and the campus. Those texts were created for the purpose of the book and they reflect the personal relationship towards Ljubljana of their inhabitants well, who see it as their small homeland.

In both series of coursebooks, the topic of travelling appears at some point of teaching. In Slovenian books it happens in part 1B (lesson 8, *Kam bi šli na izlet?*), whereas in Polish ones both in the first part (lesson 13, *Jadę na urlop!*), and in the second (lesson 14, *Turystyka*). This subject is a perfect opportunity to get the foreigners familiar with small homelands, although, they take the approach of a tourist and not the inhabitant who identifies with a small homeland.

The authors of Slovenian coursebook again approached the issue in a non-standard way – instead of presenting the most characteristic places of Slovenia, they focus students' attention on less known places such as Olimje Monastery, Logarska Valley, Lipica Stud Farm, Franja Partisan Hospital and Postojna Cave, which is more popular with tourists. They also ask about other natural and cultural attractions of Slovenia, and by doing so encourage students to discover this interesting country by themselves.

The next stage of the lesson takes the students for a trip to Bled – a tourist destination. It is the only one, typical tourist destination that is described in a detailed way in the coursebooks. The remaining places of such kind, e.g. Piran located by the sea or mountain Kranjska gora, are only mentioned in the book, which is something that rarely happens. The authors assumed that foreigners learning Slovene will take an interest in Slovenia themselves and it is not necessary to get them familiar with obvious tourist attractions.

In comparison, the Polish series *Hurra!!!* follows the standards more carefully because the lesson about tourism is dominated by well-known places, although those less known occur couple of times as well. Students can get to know excursion offers: to a language course in Cracow, by the sea (Ustka, Łeba, Sopot, Międzyzdroje, Dźwirzyno), to Mazury, Zakopane and on a trip "a month in Poland". Then, they read a postcard sent from Bieszczady Mountains, Mazury, Kazimierz Dolny, Ustka and the Tatra Mountains. They can get to know something about the places, e.g. that you can ski in the Tatra Mountains. Students are asked to write a similar postcard as homework, which encourages to look for information about Poland on their own.

The second part of *Hurra!!! Po polsku* coursebook contains the lesson about Poland and tourism. Students do not learn about small homelands of the Poles. It starts with the quiz about Polish culture and history – the questions are about Penderecki, pierogi ruskie and Solidarity. The following part introduces the exercise where students have to choose one of the cities (Kołobrzeg, Gdańsk, Elbląg, Suwałki, Poznań, Warszawa, Łódź, Zielona Góra, Wrocław, Częstochowa, Katowice, Kraków, Zakopane, Rzeszów, Zamość) and describe them. However, the exercise is not about relics, interesting places or people, etc. but about the location of the city.

Smaller places can be found on the third page of the lesson, where students can read three offers: holidays in Jurata, salt mine in Iwonicz-Zdrój and Werlas in the Bieszczady Mountains. Their task is to decide which place they would choose for holidays, so such exercise is about tourism in its nature.

Beginning from 15th lesson and continuing until the end of the book, there is no information about Polish cities and places. We can find exercises built around advertisements, but they are not about specific places and we can learn what place is discussed due to area codes.

The second part of the Slovenian series of coursebooks *Slovenska veseda v živo*, despite containing less material than its Polish counterpart, definitely gives more information about small homelands. Apart from the fact that all the lessons introduce specific places (e.g. lesson 6 – the characters live in Maribor, lesson 8 – a flat to rent in Kranj), the last lesson is completely about Slovenia and its inhabitants. Students are to study the map with regions marked and then match the names and the capitals of the regions, as well as look for stereotypes regarding particular inhabitants. Later on, students get to know about a typical Slovene and the stereotype perception of people living in different regions.

Conclusions

When choosing content in order to teach Polish or Slovene to foreigners, it is necessary to consider not only the student's linguistic development but also their knowledge and cultural awareness regarding particular language area. This could be done by following people's natural tendency to identify with different types of groups (starting from peer groups, through small homeland communities, ending with ethnic groups). Classes that do not include such content become empty and students quickly notice that learning is not put into real context. The role of the teacher is to present a particular country as a whole, not partially. This could be helped by a coursebook. The first analysis shows that both Polish and Slovenian publications complete this task, although to a different degree. The Polish series *Hurra!!! Po polsku* gives detailed information mainly about Cracow and Lesser Poland, whereas Slovenian coursebooks *Slovenska beseda v živo*, allow to gain knowledge about many places including tourist and non-tourist destinations. Obviously, both series do not exhaust the notion of small homelands and the teacher should prepare additional materials on his/her own and encourage students to explore themselves either for real or on a map.

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