

Multilingualism in the Border Area

Language and Literary Competence in Schools
with Slovene as the Language of Instruction in Italy

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Abstract

Schools with Slovene as the language of instruction in Italy are both institutions of minority-language continuity and educational spaces for pupils with diverse language biographies. This article examines a complete corpus of 18 published interactive learning units designed to supplement regular school work in Slovene at primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels. The units address topics, communicative situations, text types and uses of Slovene that are not normally foregrounded in regular lessons. Primary- and lower-secondary curricula provide the baseline for interpreting this supplementary function, while three published studies supply contextual evidence on unequal exposure and use. The original contribution is a qualitative comparative content analysis of the final units, not of their development, implementation or effects. The analysis considers learner activity, linguistic and textual focus, literary engagement, communicative purpose and domain, interaction and modality, and the organisation of task sequences. Eight recurrent task families were identified. Across educational levels, activities move from recognition, matching and guided completion towards situated interaction, explanation, reformulation, interpretation, evaluation and the production of complete texts for specified purposes and audiences. The units extend school-based Slovene into service encounters, health, travel, technology, public information, language variation, reading and literary response. They therefore supplement the curricular development of language and literary competence by filling gaps in thematic and communicative coverage. The study does not establish effectiveness, but it shows how supplementary materials can represent broader textual, practical, public and interpretative participation through a protected minority language.

Keywords: Slovene in Italy; Minority-Language Education; Slovene-Medium Schools; Language Support; Language Competence; Literary Competence; Interactive Learning Units; Functional Literacy; Border Region

Introduction

Schools with Slovene as the language of instruction in Italy emerged and developed as central institutions of the Slovene national community. Their historical role is closely connected with language maintenance, cultural memory and community continuity, while their present role must be understood against changing demographic, social and linguistic conditions (Bogatec, 2015, p. 5–21; Grgič & Guardiancich, 2025; Jagodic, 2024, p. 31–55). These schools form an integral part of the Italian state-school system. They follow national programmes with the adaptations and additions required by the Slovene-medium setting, and locally prepared or adapted materials are needed because resources produced for the majority system or imported from Slovenia do not automatically address the linguistic profile of pupils in Italy (Bogatec, 2020, p. 17–21).

Enrolment in a Slovene-medium school no longer necessarily means that Slovene is a pupil's first, primary or strongest language of family socialisation. For some pupils, Slovene remains concentrated mainly in school and other formal settings; others use it across family, peer, leisure and public domains. The central difference is not simply whether pupils know Slovene, but how widely they can mobilise it across situations, interlocutors, genres and registers (Grgič, 2016, p. 87–102; Grgič, 2024, p. 223–228; Melinc Mlekuž, 2019, p. 67–82).

The article addresses three research questions: (1) Which task types recur in the complete corpus of interactive learning units, and how do their dominant forms differ across primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary education? (2) Which dimensions of language and literary competence are activated by the tasks, and how are they connected within individual task sequences? (3) How do the units supplement regular school work by extending the topics, communicative situations, text types and uses of Slovene available to pupils? Previous research on the EDUKA2 cross-border classroom model examined teachers' reflections on cross-border collaboration and on the usefulness of approaches such as CLIL, experiential learning, authentic learning environments and learner participation (Baloh & Bratož, 2019). To the best of the author's knowledge, the complete corpus has not previously been examined systematically at the level of task sequences.

Language and literary competence are treated as analytically distinguishable but interdependent. Language competence comprises the lexical, grammatical, textual, pragmatic and stylistic resources required to understand and produce texts in different situations. The primary-school curriculum describes these resources through components of communicative competence, including naming, syntax, pronunciation, spelling, style and metalinguistic awareness (Slovene Research Institute, 2021, p. 4–6). Vogel further emphasises intra-linguistic diversity, register, context and language-cultural awareness: competent use entails understanding not only whether a form is correct, but also what it does, whom it addresses and which social meanings it carries (Vogel, 2014, p. 3–16; Vogel, 2019, p. 1–17).

Literary competence refers to the capacity to experience, understand, analyse, interpret, evaluate and creatively respond to literary texts. Zajc (2019, p. 57–65) connects it with literary conventions and knowledge, emotional and experiential response, critical

reception, creation and recreation, and recognition of the aesthetic, ethical, cognitive and fictional effects of literature. It presupposes general communicative competence while also extending it through multi-layered reading and the verbalisation of a reading experience. Integrated competence is used here as an analytical construct for the reciprocal relationship among language resources, communicative use, textual and functional literacy, literary reception and interpretation, and cultural reflection. It does not denote an instructional programme or an implementation model. The central claim is that knowledge of Slovene in a border minority school becomes educationally consequential when pupils can act through the language, not merely reproduce linguistic forms or literary information.

Slovene in Italy Between Institutional Status, Curriculum and Unequal Use

In minority-language education, the distinction between status and use is decisive. Formal protection, institutional support and a school network are necessary conditions for language continuity, but they do not themselves generate regular use or a differentiated repertoire (Cooper, 1989; Fishman, 1991). Slovene is institutionally present in schools, media, cultural organisations and legal-protection mechanisms in Italy, yet its availability varies across everyday, public, peer-group, digital and supra-local domains. The analytical question is therefore not only whether Slovene is protected, but whether speakers encounter sufficient reasons, opportunities and resources to use it across domains.

Categories such as mother tongue, first language, language of the environment and native speaker are not neutral descriptions. Grgič (2016, p. 87–102) shows that they may acquire ideological meanings when transferred from specialist contexts into educational and public discourse. The present article therefore does not classify pupils through fixed native/non-native categories. It refers to Slovene primarily as the language of instruction and as a minority language whose acquisition and use depend on pupils' different language biographies and opportunities for contact.

A school with a minority language as the language of instruction does not automatically provide sustained access to the full range of everyday, informal and pragmatically varied uses of that language. Formal schooling is indispensable, but it cannot by itself ensure a broad repertoire (Cummins, 1989; Hickey, 2001, p. 443–474). When Slovene is encountered mainly in lessons, formal texts and ritualised community settings, pupils may acquire school-based and codified varieties without comparable confidence in peer-group, colloquial and supra-local interaction. Grgič (2024, p. 223–228) describes this imbalance as inverse diglossia: some speakers are more secure in formal standard use connected with school than in a wider range of everyday genres, styles and interlocutors.

This perspective is complemented by research on literacy and functional language use. New Literacy Studies understands literacy not only as an individual skill but as a set of situated social practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7–15; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; 2003). Mezgec (2011, p. 71–78) shows that pupils in Slovene-medium schools may

develop school and academic literacy in Slovene while experiencing greater difficulty with pragmatically oriented texts connected with public participation. Functional literacy therefore concerns the ability to use Slovene in requests, explanations, notices, instructions, applications, arguments and other socially consequential texts, not merely the ability to complete school exercises.

The curricular baseline is broad. The primary-school curriculum defines the central aim of Slovene as the development of communicative competence through listening, reading, speaking and writing and through engagement with non-literary and literary texts. It also includes critical reception, text production, language and metalinguistic awareness, and elementary literary knowledge (Slovene Research Institute, 2021, p. 4–6). The lower-secondary curriculum similarly foregrounds active communicative competence, practical and creative command of the four communicative activities, and literary experience, imagination, evaluation and cognition (Slovene Research Institute, 2019, p. 4–5). The units do not reproduce this curriculum. They supplement it by extending school work into topics, communicative situations, genres and domains of Slovene use that are not normally foregrounded in regular lessons.

Research Design, Corpus and Analytical Procedure

The evidence base has two parts: contextual evidence from published empirical research and an original qualitative comparative content analysis of educational documents (Bowen, 2009; Krippendorff, 2018; Schreier, 2012). The contextual studies were selected because they document complementary features of the language ecology relevant to the corpus: the distribution of Slovene across domains, different family and school language trajectories, and reliance on school and peers as sources of exposure. Their participant data are neither reanalysed nor pooled. All original findings reported here derive from the final learning-unit corpus.

The primary corpus was fixed before coding through three closed institutional publication sets issued in 2019, 2021 and 2025. Inclusion required a final published interactive unit intended for primary, lower-secondary or upper-secondary pupils and explicitly designed to supplement regular Slovene school work. A preschool-only unit was excluded because the comparison begins with primary education. The resulting corpus contains 18 learning units; one unit was issued in two files. Neutral codes U01–U18 are used in Appendix A and throughout the findings. Titles, authorship and production history are recorded for source transparency but are not analytical categories.

Table 1. *Empirical components, functions and analytical boundaries*

Evidence component	Role in the present study	Boundary of interpretation	Source status
Published communicative-competence study (420 students; 43 teachers)	Contextualises the difference between school knowledge, actual use and a broader communicative repertoire.	Participant data are not reanalysed.	Context only
Published interview studies (15 professionals; parent study used for context)	Contextualises language trajectories, peer use, spontaneous formulation and motives for enrolment.	No new interview analysis; datasets are not pooled.	Context only
Published COVID-19 studies (455 staff, 878 parents, 283 students, 11 headteachers)	Shows reliance on school and peers as sources of exposure to Slovene.	No response-level reuse or causal inference.	Context only
Eighteen interactive learning units	Primary corpus for task families, domains, interaction, sequence structure and language-literature relations.	No analysis of production, classroom use, learner response or effect.	Original evidence
Primary- and lower-secondary draft curricula	Define the regular curricular baseline against which the units' supplementary function is interpreted.	No evaluation of curriculum implementation.	Context only

Source: Analytical framework developed for the present study. Published research provides context; the learning-unit corpus provides the original documentary findings.

The learning unit is the primary unit of comparison across educational levels. Within each unit, individual directives and coherent groups of linked directives were read together with the stimulus and activity frame needed to establish what the learner was expected to do. This approach was necessary because the sources differ substantially in internal organisation. Some use a main task followed by lettered steps, some divide one activity into numerous numbered prompts, and others present page-based sequences without continuous numbering. Counting every blank or sub-question as an equivalent item would create false precision and obscure the organisation of the activity sequence.

Coding proceeded in two full readings. The first mapped each source by educational level, topic, mode of activity and internal progression. The second coded the task evidence across six axes: (1) required learner activity; (2) linguistic and textual focus; (3) literary activity; (4) communicative purpose and domain; (5) interaction and modality; and (6) sequence structure. Multiple coding was permitted because one sequence may combine

comprehension, lexical or grammatical work, interaction, textual transformation and literary response. A category was assigned only when it was explicitly required by the instruction or unambiguously necessary for completion. A narrative stimulus was not coded as literary solely because it told a story; literary coding required an explicitly literary text or a response concerning character, setting, perspective, imagery, interpretation, evaluation or creative transformation.

Table 2. Coding framework

Analytical axis	Categories	Operational question
Required learner activity	Recognise/select; match/classify/complete; retrieve/reformulate; transform/correct; compare/explain; interact/simulate; interpret/evaluate; produce/create	What observable activity does the instruction require?
Linguistic and textual focus	Lexis and semantic relations; morphology and syntax; orthography; cohesion; register and pragmatics; genre; summary and reorganisation; purposeful production	Which linguistic or textual resources must be mobilised?
Literary activity	Event; character and relations; motive and theme; narrator and perspective; imagery and style; context; interpretation; personal response; comparison, evaluation and creative transformation	What form of literary engagement is explicitly required?
Communicative purpose and domain	Request, inform, explain, advise, persuade, evaluate; personal, service, public, media/digital and literary/cultural domains	For what purpose and in which domain is Slovene used?
Interaction and modality	Individual, pair/group, role-based; print, image, audio/video, multimodal; transformative	How is activity organised across people, texts and modes?
Sequence structure	Orientation; comprehension; focused language/text work; situated use; reflection; new product	How are linked activities organised within the unit?

The purpose of the analysis is to identify qualitative task families and recurrent sequence patterns, not to rank individual prompts by frequency. A brief matching exercise and a multi-page reading project are not quantitatively equivalent. Auditability is supported by the explicit coding framework, the complete source inventory, neutral source codes and a retained source-by-category verification matrix. Because the author served as an editor on several source publications, the corpus was fixed before interpretation, all eligible units

were included, coding was limited to observable task requirements and every source was read twice. Independent recoding would further strengthen reliability and is acknowledged as a limitation.

The study is confined to the final published units. Their production histories, participating professionals, institutional collaboration, classroom implementation, learner responses and learning effects are outside its scope. The article neither reconstructs how the units were created nor attributes their characteristics to a developmental process. It analyses the activities, linguistic and textual focus, literary engagement, communicative purposes and domains, forms of interaction, modalities and sequence structures represented in the documents.

Figure 1. Analytical model of integrated competence in a multilingual border school

CONTEXT: institutional status • language biographies • sustained exposure • meaningful opportunities for use				
Language resources	Communicative use	Textual and functional literacy	Literary reception and interpretation	Cultural and intercultural reflection
INTEGRATED COMPETENCE IN TASK SEQUENCES Broader textual, practical, public and literary participation through Slovene				

Note. The model is relational, not sequential. The dimensions are analysed separately but become integrated when a task sequence coordinates them in use. Source: Analytical model developed for the present study.

Contextual Evidence: Unequal Language Trajectories

The first contextual study examined communicative competence among 420 students and 43 teachers in Italy and Slovenia (Melinc Mlekuž, 2019, p. 67–82). Its relevance here lies in the distinction between school-based knowledge, self-reported command and flexible use across domains. Italian and mixed practices were frequent in peer interaction, organised sport, reading and digital communication. These findings do not demonstrate an absence of Slovene competence; they show that the domains and textual practices available in the two languages are not equally distributed.

The second contextual study was a qualitative investigation based on 15 semi-structured interviews with education professionals conducted in 2020 (Melinc Mlekuž, 2022, p. 109–127). A separate study within the same project included 183 parent questionnaires and 17 in-depth parent interviews (Tenca Montini & Zago, 2022, p. 57–86). The professional and parent datasets remain methodologically distinct. Together they show that families may choose a Slovene-medium school for multilingualism, educational quality, future mobility or local opportunity without Slovene necessarily being the principal family language. Interviewees also distinguished reproduction of learnt material from the more demanding ability to formulate questions, explanations and responses in new situations.

The third contextual study examined education in Slovene during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between May and June 2020, responses were collected from 455 educational staff, 878 parents, 283 students and 11 headteachers, and quantitative evidence was complemented by interviews (Brezigar, 2020, p. 89–91; Melinc Mlekuž, 2023, p. 199–218). The interruption of physical schooling made the distribution of language exposure unusually visible. The study does not provide an individual causal estimate of language loss, but it documents how strongly access to Slovene depended on school and peer interaction for some pupils.

Taken together, the contextual studies describe unequal and changing language trajectories rather than two fixed groups of speakers. Pupils who encounter Slovene chiefly in education may retain it mainly within formal domains or gradually extend it into peer, leisure and public interaction. The documentary analysis does not classify individual pupils or infer their proficiency. It asks how the final task corpus represents uses of Slovene that may be less available in family, peer, leisure, service and public settings.

Interactive Learning Units as Targeted Language Support

The corpus contains eight recurrent task families. The categories overlap because a sequence may begin with recognition or comprehension, isolate a linguistic or textual feature, and then move towards explanation, interaction, interpretation or the production of a complete text. The task family assigned to a sequence identifies its main analytical function rather than every activity it contains.

Table 3. Recurrent task families in the complete corpus

Task family	Representative activities	Main analytical focus	Typical organisation
Recognition and selection	Identify, mark, choose, distinguish, decide whether information is stated	Focused comprehension and recognition	Usually individual
Matching, classification and completion	Connect, group, insert forms, complete a table or text	Lexis, grammar, semantic relations and cohesion	Guided written or visual activity
Retrieval and reformulation	Locate information, answer, take notes, retell, summarise	Information selection and coherent restatement	Oral or written
Transformation and correction	Rewrite, replace, correct, change form, tense, case or register	Control of form and adaptation to audience	Text transformation
Comparison and explanation	Compare variants or languages, infer, explain, justify	Metalinguistic reasoning and strategic use of resources	Oral or written explanation

Task family	Representative activities	Main analytical focus	Typical organisation
Interaction and simulation	Discuss, interview, telephone, negotiate, role-play, report another view	Pragmatic use, turn-taking and audience awareness	Pair or group
Literary reception and interpretation	Retell, analyse perspective or imagery, evaluate, recommend	Literary understanding, response and judgement	Oral, written or creative
Purposeful and creative production	Message, invitation, advice, narrative, leaflet, advertisement, creative continuation	Complete texts for a specified purpose and audience	Written, oral or multimodal

From Recognition to Situated Action

Recognition, matching and completion are prominent throughout the corpus, but they rarely form the only endpoint of a longer sequence. Images, maps, timetables, dialogues, public-information texts, video clips, poems and stories introduce entry points. Initial activities establish vocabulary and comprehension; subsequent steps require learners to use the same material for a decision, explanation, conversation or new product. Sequences therefore commonly move from access to a text, through focused analysis, towards situated use or a new product, although shorter primary-level sequences may stop after one or two stages.

At primary level, sound–letter work, missing-letter activities, copying, picture–word matching and sentence completion support emergent literacy. These activities are embedded in recognisable semantic fields such as institutions, occupations, seasons, clothing, animals, food, transport, safety and leisure. In one service-oriented unit, pupils read opening hours and contact details, decide which institution is appropriate in a practical situation, and complete or enact a short exchange (U08). In a road-safety unit, poems, short informational texts, route-related language and creative tasks place reading and writing within a familiar public domain (U17). A word is therefore connected not only with a definition or picture, but with an action and an interlocutor.

The same pattern is visible in work on form. Inflection, prepositions, verb forms, sentence order and orthography are connected with routes, food, household activities, health, plans and short narratives. Pupils may first complete a constrained form, then use it in a sentence, and finally incorporate it into a diary entry, procedure, description or spoken exchange (U11, U16). Linguistic form is made observable through use rather than presented only as an isolated rule.

Everyday, Practical and Public Communication

Everyday and service-related content forms one of the strongest corpus-wide patterns. The units represent libraries, post offices, pharmacies, healthcare, shops, transport, travel, money, household problems, leisure and public information. Learners locate details, select an appropriate institution, formulate a request, make an appointment, describe symptoms, ask for clarification, give directions, report a problem or prepare a short message. These activities correspond to the gap identified by research on functional literacy: a pupil may know the standard language used in school while having fewer opportunities to practise pragmatically consequential genres in Slovene.

At lower-secondary level, practical sequences become linguistically and socially more complex. Health-related work may combine viewing or reading, comprehension, vocabulary, phraseology, form in context, discussion and a simulated encounter with health personnel (U09). Learners must adapt politeness, ask follow-up questions, explain symptoms and use institutional vocabulary. Other units require interviews, reporting a partner's view, interpreting public information or selecting language according to the addressee (U01, U02, U05). Practical communication is therefore not reduced to a memorised dialogue. It requires the coordination of linguistic resources, turn-taking, contextual judgement and the ability to repair or extend an exchange.

Upper-secondary units extend practical participation towards public and ethically charged issues. Learners interpret texts on wellbeing, technology, environmental responsibility and media language; compare formulations; discuss possible responses; and write advice, campaign texts, leaflets, notices or reasoned positions (U04, U05, U12). The everyday orientation of the corpus does not imply lower intellectual expectations. Concrete situations provide an identifiable purpose for developed explanation, evaluation and argument.

Language Variation and Discursive Flexibility

Several sequences place local, colloquial, standard, Italian-influenced and supra-local Slovene forms in relation to one another. Learners identify contact-induced wording, compare alternatives, consult reference resources, correct forms or reformulate a message for a different audience (U03, U04, U10, U13). The requirement is not uniformity in every situation. It is an expanded capacity to choose a form in relation to purpose, interlocutor and wider comprehensibility (Vogel, 2014, p. 3–16; Vogel, 2019, p. 1–17). Existing repertoires become points of departure for comparison rather than evidence of deficiency.

Language awareness becomes more explicit at higher levels. Learners classify forms, explain case or aspect distinctions, compare semantic relations, analyse collocations and justify corrections (U11, U12, U13). Explanation after selection is important: the task is not only to produce the expected form, but to articulate why it is appropriate and how a different choice would alter meaning, register or audience effect.

Literary Activity Across Educational Levels

Literary activity is present across the corpus but is not distributed uniformly. At primary level, poems and stories support listening, reading, vocabulary, rhythm, retelling, character recognition, sequence, setting, inference and creative extension (U07, U17). An extended reading journal provides the clearest bridge towards fuller literary participation: pupils record bibliographic information, identify main and secondary characters, establish place and time, prepare a summary, formulate an opinion and decide whether they would recommend the book (U18). Literary competence is therefore represented not only as recognition of textual elements, but as the organisation and communication of a reading experience for another reader.

At upper-secondary level, literary and culturally situated texts are concentrated in selected sequences rather than spread evenly across all units. Learners interpret perspective, figurative language, stylistic effects and relations between a literary text and another cultural product (U04, U13). These sequences require both literary reading and the language needed to make interpretation explicit. Their concentration is itself an analytical finding: practical communication and language variation provide the most continuous corpus-wide thread, while extended literary interpretation appears in strategically placed sequences.

Cross-Level Progression and Integrated Competence

Across the three levels, progression is visible in four related movements. The first is from naming towards relational and context-sensitive vocabulary. Primary pupils identify and group words; lower-secondary learners use them in situations and semantic networks; upper-secondary learners explain collocations, variation and conceptual distinctions. The second movement is from closely guided activity towards less explicitly guided, purpose-driven language use. Models, pictures and completion frames gradually give way to messages, advice, explanations, arguments and multimodal public texts. The third movement is from familiar context towards wider social consequence. The fourth is from personal literary response towards interpretation supported by textual evidence.

Table 4. Dominant progression across educational levels

Analytical dimension	Primary	Lower-secondary	Upper-secondary
Language resources	Naming, sound-letter relations, sentence formation and inflection in familiar contexts	Lexical networks, register, form in use, correction and reference resources	Metalinguistic explanation, collocation, aspect, contact-influenced patterns and stylistic choice
Interaction	Guided pair talk, collective sentence building and simple practical exchanges	Service simulations, interviews, follow-up questions and reporting another person's view	Advice, negotiation, public presentation and sustained discussion of complex issues

Analytical dimension	Primary	Lower-secondary	Upper-secondary
Textual and functional literacy	Opening hours, lists, routes, postcards, short narratives and procedures	Messages, invitations, appointments, descriptions and information texts	Arguments, campaign materials, public notices, leaflets and extended advice texts
Literary competence	Listening, retelling, character and setting, personal response and creative continuation	Summary, recommendation, comparison and increasingly elaborated response	Interpretation of perspective and style, cultural comparison and justified judgement
Dominant sequence pattern	Modelled and closely guided activity	Linked guidance, interaction and explanation in new situations	Longer explanation, evaluation and purpose-driven text production

These movements support integrated competence as an analytical construct. Language resources, interaction, textual literacy and literary interpretation are not merely adjacent categories. They become reciprocally connected within task sequences. A pupil needs vocabulary and syntax to summarise a story; the summary provides the basis for evaluation; evaluation requires a coherent text addressed to another reader. A learner who reformulates an informal environmental invitation for public circulation must recognise register, select language forms, understand genre and anticipate an audience. Competence becomes visible as coordinated action.

Discussion

Supplementary Language Support for School Work

The corpus supplements rather than replaces regular instruction. Its distinctive contribution lies in broadening the thematic and communicative range of school-based Slovene. The units neither establish a separate curriculum nor repeat the ordinary subject sequence. They create additional contexts in which pupils can mobilise language and literary competence in topics, genres and situations that are not normally foregrounded in regular lessons and may also be unevenly available outside school.

Simulated Domains of Use

Everyday-life content has a structural function. It creates simulated domains in which Slovene is required for an action: locating a service, telephoning, describing symptoms, asking for information, following a route, planning a journey, advising a peer, interpreting a notice or preparing a public text. For pupils who use Italian in many peer, leisure and service settings, these scenarios provide structured opportunities to mobilise school-developed Slovene in additional domains. The challenge is not merely the quantity of Slovene, but the diversity of functions for which it is used.

Language and Literature Within One Participation Framework

The units also clarify the relationship between language and literary competence. Literary activity is not an ornamental addition to practical communication. Retelling requires selection and cohesion; interpreting a character requires precise naming and evidence; explaining figurative language requires semantic flexibility; recommending a book requires evaluation and audience awareness. Conversely, practical tasks frequently contain interpretative work: learners infer which service is needed, identify intention, judge appropriateness, explain an idiom or evaluate advice. Both domains depend on constructing meaning in relation to context and expressing that meaning through Slovene.

Interactivity in Practice

The units combine four observable forms of interactivity. Social interactivity involves pair work, interviews, role-based exchanges and reporting another person's view. Textual interactivity requires learners to select, reorganise, correct or reformulate information. Multimodal interactivity connects print, image, audio, video and public information. Transformative interactivity requires a new product for a changed purpose or addressee. This distinction clarifies how the corpus supplements school work without turning documentary description into a claim about a general instructional model.

Analytical Boundaries

The documents cannot show whether the activities are enacted as intended, whether learners complete them successfully or whether participation transfers to spontaneous communication. They can show that the published corpus represents domains of use that sociolinguistic research identifies as unevenly available. The contribution is therefore descriptive and analytical: it connects sociolinguistic need, curricular baseline and task structure without claiming causal effect.

Relevance to European Border Education

The case is relevant beyond the Slovene–Italian border. Minority-language schools may combine strong institutional recognition with uneven social availability of the language. Comparing regular curricula with supplementary task corpora can reveal which domains, genres, interlocutors and forms of text production are represented and which remain absent. Three principles are potentially transferable: language functions can be diversified beyond school-internal questioning; progression can be traced through movement from recognition to reformulation, interaction and justified interpretation; and local repertoires can become objects of reflection without being treated as deficits or replacing the need for wider comprehensibility. What is transferable is the analytical procedure, not the direct adoption of the units or an assumption that they would have the same effects elsewhere.

Limitations

The study has five principal limitations. First, it analyses published task structures, not classroom enactment, learner responses or language development. Second, the sources vary in length and internal organisation, so the analysis does not construct a frequency hierarchy of individual prompts. Third, educational-level categories overlap in several sources; the comparison therefore identifies dominant patterns rather than a controlled longitudinal sequence. Fourth, multimodal links may change over time; the study records the mode required by the published instruction but does not evaluate the continuing availability or quality of every external resource. Fifth, coding was conducted by one researcher who had an editorial role in several sources. Complete corpus inclusion, neutral codes, conservative coding, two full readings and a retained verification matrix improve auditability, but independent recoding remains desirable.

Scope of the Contribution

The contribution is confined to the final published units and their observable task structures. The study does not reconstruct their development or implementation, and it makes no claims about learner outcomes or causal effects. Its original contribution is the systematic comparison of how supplementary units extend the thematic, communicative, textual and literary range of school-based Slovene across educational levels.

Conclusion

Schools with Slovene as the language of instruction in Italy cannot be understood solely as institutions of language maintenance, although that function remains indispensable. They are also educational spaces in which pupils with different family languages and language trajectories may become users of Slovene across textual, practical, public and literary domains. The contextual studies show why this expansion matters: school may be the principal site of sustained Slovene exposure for some pupils, while peer, leisure, media and service interactions often take place in Italian or mixed repertoires.

The article's original empirical contribution is a systematic qualitative comparison of all 18 interactive learning units included under the stated criteria. Across the corpus, activities move from recognition, matching and guided completion towards situated interaction, explanation, reformulation, interpretation, evaluation and the production of complete texts for specified purposes. The units supplement the language and literary competence developed in regular instruction by filling gaps in thematic and communicative coverage. Everyday and practical contexts are prominent because opportunities to use Slovene in these domains are not equally distributed beyond school; literary activities connect reading with summary, response, interpretation and recommendation; and language-variation tasks develop awareness of audience, register and wider comprehensibility.

The findings support integrated competence as a relational analytical construct. Language resources, communicative use, textual and functional literacy, literary reception and interpretation, and cultural reflection become connected within task sequences. Institutional protection remains a necessary foundation, but its educational consequence also depends on the range of activities pupils can undertake through the language. The analysed units represent one form of targeted language support for school work. Future studies using classroom observation and learner work could examine how the sequences are enacted and how pupils respond to them; those questions lie outside the present document analysis.

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Ethics Statement

Not applicable. The original empirical corpus consists of publicly available educational documents. Previously published studies are cited only as contextual evidence, and no participant-level data are reanalysed.

Declaration of Interest

The author declares no financial conflict of interest. Her previous editorial involvement in several source publications is disclosed in the Method section.

Data Availability

The primary documents are publicly available final learning units. Appendix A lists every included source and its educational level. Stable repository links are provided in the references where available; the remaining units are catalogued by the publisher and in national bibliographic records. The coding framework is reproduced in Table 2, and the working source-by-category verification matrix can be made available for scholarly checking within copyright restrictions on source reproduction.

Appendix

Appendix A. Corpus Inventory and Analytical Boundaries

Appendix Table A1 lists all 18 school-age units included under the prespecified criteria. Source codes keep the findings centred on task structures rather than publication titles or authorship. One unit issued in two parts is treated as a single analytical source.

Appendix Table A1. Source codes and corpus characteristics

Code	Bibliographic source	Educational level	Dominant supplementary focus
U01	Jagodic, 2019, Radi potujemo	Lower/upper-secondary	Travel, dialogue, interview, reformulation, advertisement, narrative and literary extension
U02	Liberšar, 2019, Denar in dom	Lower/upper-secondary	Money, household vocabulary, phraseology, comparison of forms and interview
U03	Žigon, 2019a, 2019b, Zmigaj se!, parts 1–2	Lower/upper-secondary	Sport, peer interaction, regional comprehensibility, narrative and environmental argument
U04	Biber, 2019, Videoigrice in tehnologija	Lower/upper-secondary	Technology, digital language, comparison of forms, text transformation and literary comparison
U05	Vaupotič, 2019, Varstvo okolja, naložba v prihodnost	Lower/upper-secondary	Environmental vocabulary, invitation, message, public information and leaflet
U06	Gherlani, 2021, V družbi besed	Primary	Vocabulary fields, word and sentence reading, short writing and visual activity
U07	Grgič, D., 2021, Besede s knjižne police	Primary	Literary listening and reading, retelling, character, setting and language form
U08	Marko, 2021a, Besede v vsakdanji rabi 1	Primary	Services, opening hours, occupations, practical situations and simulation
U09	Marko, 2021b, Besede v vsakdanji rabi 2	Lower-secondary	Health, lifestyle, service encounters, phraseology and form in context
U10	Poredoš, 2021, Slovenščina in njene bližnje in daljne sosesde	Lower-secondary	Language diversity, multilingual biographies, comparison and research
U11	Marko, 2021d, Slovnica je mala malica	Lower-secondary	Morphology and syntax embedded in varied contextual activities

Code	Bibliographic source	Educational level	Dominant supplementary focus
U12	Marko, 2021c, Besede v vsakdanji rabi 3	Upper-secondary	Wellbeing, critical reading, collocation, aspect, correction and advice text
U13	Devetak, 2021, Meje mojega planeta niso meje mojega jezika	Upper-secondary	Paronyms, language contact, non-literary and literary interpretation
U14	Višček, 2025, Berem in pišem	Primary	Emergent reading and writing with varied levels of guidance
U15	Gherlani, 2025, V družbi besed 2	Primary	Vocabulary expansion, reading, short text production and seasonal themes
U16	Umer, 2025, Oblikujemo besede	Primary	Inflection in context, routes, food, procedures, diary and picture-supported writing
U17	Dobriča, 2025, Po cesti besed	Primary	Road safety, poems, stories, games, drawing and creative production
U18	Širec Rovis, 2025, Bralni dnevnik	Primary/lower-secondary	Extended reading, bibliographic data, summary, opinion and recommendation

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