

Formal Education¹ and Latin in the Context of Secondary School Reform in the Period of the First Czechoslovak Republic

Annamária Adamčíková
Department of History
Catholic University in Ružomberok
(Slovakia)
annamaria.adamcikova732@edu.ku.sk

ABSTRACT: The study presents a little-known debate about Latin, which took place in the context of secondary school reform in the First Czechoslovak Republic. Many opponents of classical languages questioned the traditional importance of Latin in secondary education as the main representative and bearer of classical culture. It was through the teaching of Latin that the pupil's competences were to be shaped and developed, which could then be applied by the pupil in their everyday life. At the time, this was known as formal education. The subject of much discussion has therefore been whether the practically useless Latin has any superior importance in this respect at all, and whether this role cannot be taken over by other subjects that are more practically useful. Advocates of the classical languages have therefore attempted to champion Latin, justifying and defending this unique role of it in humanities education. The aim of this article is to try to reconstruct how Latin was perceived by different parties in terms of this importance. The paper is based on a critical study of period documents and the period press. It uses critical discourse analysis to achieve its aim. We found that answering the question of whether Latin had a special significance in the transmission of formal education was not easy. This is demonstrated by the outcome of the reform itself. There was no radical elimination of Latin, but the number of Latin lessons was reduced and it was only taught from grade 3 onwards. The focus of formal education was eventually shifted to the language of instruction. However, the reform still retained Latin as a compulsory subject, which was also to continue to impart formal education. The reform thus ended in a compromise.

¹ «Formal education» [Czech: formální vzdělání] was a contemporary term denoting the training through which a pupil's competencies were to be shaped and developed, which he or she could then apply in everyday life.

It highlights the ambiguous and period-specific search for an answer to the relationship between the practical and the humanistic content of education.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Formal education; Classical languages; Latin; Secondary school reform; XX Century.

Introduction

Even before the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic, we can observe a discussion about the reform of secondary schools. The object of criticism was both external and internal reform of the secondary school. In the second half of the 19th century, the classical grammar school became the object of sharp criticism. In particular, the classical grammar school was criticized for its humanistic and one-sided orientation and because it placed great emphasis on memorization, overburdened the pupils and often missed the relevance of the curriculum for everyday life. Although the monopoly of the Latin language was broken by the *Exner-Bonitz reform* of 1849², this reform still left Latin (but also Greek) with a relatively high number of lessons³. The real subjects⁴ remained in the background, although they were becoming increasingly important. Many called attention to this and demanded that the ratio of real and humanities subjects be equalized. At the same time, pedagogical thinking in this period was influenced by pragmatism and pedocentrism, and simultaneously pedagogical and psychological knowledge was growing. The response to this situation was reformist demands, asking to make room for real subjects, but also for modern languages that were applicable in practical life. A kind of balance between humanities and real education was sought – as evidenced by the gradual establishment of other types of grammar schools (real and reform real grammar schools). Advocates of both sides were faced with the difficult task of justifying their positions⁵.

² The result of this reform was the *Outline of the Organization of Austrian Gymnasiums and Reales* [*Nástin organizácie rakúskych gymnázií a reállok*], which was finally confirmed by the Emperor after some modifications only in 1954. It also determined the nature of Austrian secondary schools in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

³ Classical languages occupied more than 40% of the lessons.

⁴ Real subjects included mathematics and science.

⁵ M. Svatoš, *Exner-bonitzovy školské reformy a jejich důsledky pro gymnaziální školství v habsburské monarchii v 19. století*, in *Minulost současnost a budoucnost gymnaziálního vzdělávání*, Semily, Státní okresní archiv, 2000, pp. 42-48; O. Kádner, *Vývoj a dnešní soustava školství*, Praha, Sfinx, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 232-280, and K. Vymětalová, *Více nebo méně latiny?*, «Historica olomuncensia», vol. 47, 2014, pp. 117-145; K. Řezníková, *Študenti a kantoři za starého Rakouska. České střední školy v letech 1867–1919*, Praha, Libri, 2007, pp. 16-31, pp. 55-58; J. Valenta, *Střední všeobecně vzdělávací*, in J. Cach, J. Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848–1914*, Praha, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990, pp. 35-94; J. Valenta, *Vývoj středního všeobecně vzdělávacího školství*, in R. Vaňová, K. Rýdl, J.

After the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the local debate on the reform of the secondary school was therefore largely influenced by the pedagogical tradition, reform ideas from abroad, and was also determined by the new conditions of the newly established state⁶. Here, too, the question of the Latin language and its position within secondary education was a major source of debate within the reform, and it polarised the discourse itself. Many questioned the usefulness of Latin in everyday life, highlighting the underachievement of pupils, which did not correspond to the time spent. Gradually, Neo-Humanism lost its meaning and classical culture ceased to be seen as an essential component of the culture of the time. Increasingly in this period, real subjects and modern languages were gaining in importance, displacing «the useless Latin». The aim, content, method and general meaning of this language were therefore the subject of much debate, and it was also criticised for being too “grammaticalised”. Although the number of Latin lessons was constantly reduced, there was no radical restriction of Latin. Many have therefore sought to eliminate or restrict it altogether, which has led to a kind of controversy over the Latin language in secondary schools. The struggle over Latin was thus part of the broader issue of secondary schools reform and was therefore linked to a number of other issues. Two groups were pitted against each other: proponents and opponents of the classical languages, who presented their respective positions or solutions⁷.

Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách*, IV. díl – 1. svazek. *Problematika vzdělávacích institucí a školských reforem (obecné školství 1848–1939), (střední školství a učitelské vzdělání 1914–1939)*, Praha, Univerzita Karlova, 1992, pp. 189–192; D. Kasperová, T. Kasper, *Reforma školy v ČSR jako úsilí učitelstva o reformu společnosti a národa*, in T. Kasper, D. Kasperová, D. Panková, (edd.), „Národní“ školství za první Československé republiky, Praha, Academia, pp. 161–166; J. Valenta, *Problematika cíle a výuky latinského jazyka na gymnáziích*. Diploma Thesis. Katedra věd o antickém starověku, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, Praha, 1978, pp. 14–17; J. Čeněk, *Střední školství, jeho vývoj a jeho problémy*, Praha, B. Kočí, 1926, pp. 36–44, 52–55; *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy: elaborát pracovní komise při poradním sboru pro školskou reformu*, Praha, Státní nakladatelství, 1925, pp. 11–17; F. Drtina, *Ideály výchovy, soubor programových a historických statí z pedagogiky*, Praha, Jan Laichter, 1930, pp. 149–175; J. Šlegel, *Vládní anketa o reformě střední školy*, Praha, Časopis pokrokového studentstva, 1908, pp. [5]–48.

⁶ The Czech school reform in the elementary schools dealt with: D. Kasperová, T. Kasper, E. Šmelová, *Transfer as a basic characteristic of Czech school reform – the interwar Czechoslovak education reform movement and its resistance to «best practices» from abroad*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIX, n. 2, 2024, pp. 161–181; M. Panková, T. Kasper, D. Kasperová (edd.), *Meziválečná školská reforma v Československu*, Praha, Academia, 2015.

⁷ Kádner, *Vývoj a dnešní soustava školství*, cit., pp. s. 239–240; O. Kádner, *Základy obecné pedagogiky*, Praha, Unie, 1925, Vol. II, pp. 651–662; Valenta, *Problematika cíle a výuky latinského jazyka na gymnáziích*, cit., pp. 27–70; Vymětalová, *Více nebo méně latiny?*, cit., pp. 117–145; Kasperová, Kasper, *Reforma školy v ČSR jako úsilí učitelstva o reformu společnosti a národa*, cit., pp. 161–166; *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., pp. 20–22, 36–41; Valenta, *Vývoj středního všeobecně vzdělávacího školství*, in Vaňová, Rýdl, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách*, IV. díl – 1. svazek., cit., pp. 188–294; J. Čeněk, *Organisace našeho středního školství*, «Věstník československého pedagogického ústavu J. A.

During the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, many proposals appeared that attempted to address the question of the status of Latin. The authors were individuals, various experts, associations, as well as the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment. However, finding answers was not easy, as evidenced by the outcome of the reform of the secondary school itself, which ended up as a sort of compromise between two opposing views. In this debate, the proponents of classical languages tried to justify the importance of Latin. They pointed to the various advantages that Latin brought with it in contrast to other living and modern languages or other subjects. At the same time, they were forced to argue that the study of Latin could also have practical benefits. Opponents, on the other hand, tried to point out the limits of classical languages, especially Latin. The arguments presented by the apologists of classical languages could be divided into two groups and concerned two goals of classical languages: their importance in terms of formal education (henceforth formal education) and in terms of their cultural significance. Latin was taught in several types of secondary schools, it was one of the general education subjects through which higher general education was attained, and in several faculties a matriculation in Latin was also a condition for admission⁸. All this added to its value.

1. Methodological approach and questions

This study focuses specifically on the question of formal education and Latin, an unexplored phenomenon. The controversy over the ratio of humanities and real subjects was based on theories of formal and material education⁹,

komenského», vol. 1, n. 2, 1923, pp. 35-38; *Výsledky ankety ministerstva školství a národní osvěty z roku 1919 o reformě střední školy*, Praha, Státní nakladatelství, 1922; A. Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR. Význam klasického vzdelania*, «Historia scholastica», vol. 10, n. 2, 2024, pp. 227-261.

⁸ More on the debate on Latin, the reform of secondary schools or individual proposals can be found here, for example: *Návrhy na reformu střední školy*, Praha, Ústřední spolek čes. Profesor, 1919, pp. 5-[13]; M. Weingart, *Prohlášení české sekce*, «Věstník českých professorů – část pedagogická», vol. 26, n. 3, 1919, pp. 104-105; *Návrh na reformu střední školy*, «Věstník českých professorů», vol. 27, n. 1, 1920, pp. 1-3; J. Lameš, *Výsledky ankety Historického klubu*, «Věstník českých professorů», vol. 27, n. 2, pp. 79-84; O. Kádner, *Vývoj a dnešní soustava školství*, Praha, Sfinx, 1931, Vol. II, pp. 73-125, and B. Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, Praha, Profesorské nakladatelství a knihkupectví, 1937; Valenta, *Vývoj středního všeobecně vzdělávacího školství*, in Vaňová, Rýdl, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách*, IV. díl – 1. svazek., Praha, Univerzita Karlova, 1992, pp. 188-294; Valenta, *Problematika cíle a výuky latinského jazyka na gymnáziích*, cit., pp. 85-171; Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR. Význam klasického vzdelania*, cit., pp. 227-261.

⁹ The term «material education» was understood as knowledge or acquired substance of learning – the content of education.

which in turn determined the goals and objectives of secondary schools and the related content of education. Indeed, classical grammar schools were based on the idea of the formal educational value of classical languages¹⁰. By the term «formal education theory» we will understand the movement that was based on the belief that the main goal of education is: «to develop in a general way the pupil's abilities – memory, sensory, intellectual, emotional, volitional abilities»¹¹.

However, it was often also understood restrictively as the so-called intellectual education or training of mental capacities. At the same time, different authors used different terms¹², which caused terminological problems in the treatment of the topic. In this study, therefore, we will use the term formal education in its broad meaning. The acquired skills were subsequently supposed to help them in solving tasks in everyday life. This consequently implied that some subjects had a special formal educational value that was attributed to classical languages, especially Latin. Unlike other subjects, therefore, Latin gained a prominent place in the curriculum of grammar schools. However, this idea was questioned even before the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic and reappeared in connection with the question of the Latin language. The dispute therefore involved the question of which language should be the focus of formal education, or whether it must necessarily take place only in the context of classical language teaching. Thus, many have tried to answer whether or not formal education is possible on the language of instruction (mother tongue) or on modern living languages. At the same time, the existence of formal education as such was also questioned and the inter-relatedness and indivisibility of the two types of education was stressed. And meanwhile, others have tried to justify why Latin is the most appropriate, but also its prominent place and role in the context of this type of education.

The aim of the present paper is to try to reconstruct, through a critical discourse analysis, how Latin has been perceived by different parties in terms of formal education in secondary schools¹³. The paper will try to present the problem of formal education in secondary schools in relation to Latin. It will present what the advantages of Latin were presented by the proponents of classical languages and will equally try to bring closer the argumentative back-

¹⁰ Valenta, *Střední všeobecně vzdělávací*, in Cach, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848–1914*, cit., pp. 75–78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹² Logical training, rational training, thought training, mental skills training.

¹³ By the term secondary schools we will understand: classical, real, reform real grammar school and real school with Czechoslovak language of instruction. However, we will not deal with these secondary schools, as Latin was not taught at these schools and their graduates were not eligible to study at universities. On the other hand, we will touch on the real schools as well. Although Latin was not taught at them, they represented a kind of counterpart to the classical grammar school. In the same way, it was possible to take the school-leaving examination at the above-mentioned secondary schools.

ground of the opposition party. The study situates the phenomenon in the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) and focuses geographically on the debate that took place in the territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia¹⁴. It looks at the issue under study in the context of the reform of the secondary schools that was taking place at that time. The work is based on a critical study of contemporary documents and the contemporary press. So far, we do not find any work dealing with the topic defined in this way¹⁵. The key work is a study entitled *Latin as a subject of debate in the context of secondary school reform in the First Czechoslovak Republic*, while its author did not elaborate on the question of the formal educational significance of Latin and the related debate¹⁶.

2. *The question of formal education and the role of Latin*

Josef Valenta pointed out that the dispute over the ratio of humanities and real education had its theoretical background in the question of «formal and material education»¹⁷. The very notion of «formal education» appeared in the late 18th century among Kant's followers and the Neo-Humanists. Therefore, in connection with the aim of education, the so-called material and formal education was discussed in that period. «Material education» was understood as knowledge or the acquired substance of learning. The pupil was thus to acquire a great deal of knowledge necessary for practical life. If too much emphasis was placed on the content of education, this was so-called didactic materialism. At the same time, the contents themselves were regarded as intellectual power, without considering the way in which the knowledge was acquired¹⁸. Formal education was understood as:

¹⁴ Because in the territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia the discussion about the secondary school reform was also centered. We have not included the territory of Slovakia because the Slovak education system had to solve its difficulties at first.

¹⁵ The question of formal education was touched upon by J. Valenta in one of his chapters. See Valenta, *Střední všeobecně vzdělávací*, in Cach, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848–1914*, cit., pp. 75–78.

¹⁶ Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR. Význam klasického vzdelania*, cit., pp. 227–261.

¹⁷ Valenta, *Střední všeobecně vzdělávací*, in Cach, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848–1914*, cit., p. 75.

¹⁸ O. Kádner, *Základy obecné pedagogiky*, Praha, Unie, 1925, Vol. I, pp. 182–193, and Valenta, *Střední všeobecně vzdělávací*, in Cach, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848–1914*, cit., pp. 75–78.

The training of mental powers, general rational culture, mental dexterity or independence, or the possibility of applying acquired rational faculties in other branches of human activity¹⁹.

The acquisition of these skills was to have an effect in practical life, even if the knowledge was forgotten. It was the classical grammar schools that were built on the idea of formal education, with Latin playing a big role in this regard. If too much emphasis was given to this, it was a so-called didactic formalism which reduced the substance to a mere means to acquire the mental powers it favoured²⁰.

According to the idea of formal education, not all subjects mediated formal education to the same extent. As a consequence, some subjects and their curricular material acquired a certain superiority and consequently dominance in the curriculum because of their formal educational value²¹. According to this theory, only those subjects were important where the pupil worked independently and where the method was more important than the content itself. Hence, classical languages (especially Latin) and mathematics were considered the best mediators of formal education, where students could acquire it the most. The goal of mathematics was therefore not based on mastery of mathematical operations. But by practising them, the pupil was to acquire a skill which was to help him not only in mathematics but also in everyday life. In the same way, the essence of Latin was not based on its acquisition by the pupil but was to be a tool for the pupil to exercise at the same time his intellectual, aesthetic and willpower abilities. These were exercised, for example, by analysing sentences or by searching for the complex and subtle interdependencies of the individual members of a sentence, but also by pupils trying to grasp the meaning of Latin texts. Classical language classes thus forced pupils to think, to analyse the concepts that make up the content of words, to practise translating them into their mother tongue, which required complex comparisons in the search for the relevant expressions, while at the same time pupils had to be sensitive to the different shades of meaning of the terms in question, they had to be attentive to synonyms, etc.²². All of this could then be put to practical use in their lives. Classical grammar schools in particular became the centre

¹⁹ Kádner, *Základy obecné pedagogiky*, cit., p. 183.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-193; K. Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», vol. 3, n. 4, 1925, pp. 120-124; O. Chlup, J. Uher, J. Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, Praha, Novina, 1940, Vol. III, pp. 173-174; Valenta, *Střední všeobecné vzdělávací*, in Cach, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848-1914*, cit., pp. 75-78; J. Hendrich, *Úvod do obecné pedagogiky*, Praha, Profesorské nakladatelství a kníhkupectví, 1935, pp. 74-79.

²¹ «The formal value of a substance was seen in the fact that certain abilities, which I acquire in the study of a certain substance, I can use in another case». See O. Chlup, J. Uher, J. Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, Praha, Novina, 1939, Vol. II, p. 487.

²² A similar view was also held by Hegel, according to whom one learns logic at the same time through grammatical education.

of formal education, where a special formal educational value was attached to classical languages. Pupils thus learned things that were not immediately perceptible to them, but on the other hand, through them they developed skills that would help them in everyday life²³.

When we think about the specific place of classical languages in grammar schools, tradition played a role, since they were based on Latin schools. In addition, the classical languages provided a certain aesthetic-educational dimension for the students through ancient literature, and the students were also introduced to ancient society in the same way. All this gave them added value in contrast to mathematics. The subjects that were considered the least formally educational were those in which the pupil only had to learn certain knowledge and did not require independent work – these were mainly the natural sciences. The neo-humanism on which Austrian education was built supported precisely the formal education theory. It also served as an argument for the study of classical languages, which were thus considered the best vehicle for formal education. In practice, the emphasis in grammar schools was on language teaching, with the consequence that attention to other types of teaching was absent. But pupils in grammar schools also had to acquire a lot of other knowledge. Material education therefore often led to encyclopaedism²⁴.

But more and more voices were raised that questioned the nature of formal education. Some dismissed the notion altogether, pointing out that it was impossible to separate formal and material education. The formal educational value of classical languages was also questioned. Many argued that modern languages could take over this role and that real subjects should also have their place. They thus pointed to the limits of formal education based only on the teaching of classical languages. According to them, a variety of material is essential for the development of all mental abilities, because the transfer of training²⁵ to other activities, disciplines or situations is limited by the degree of their relatedness or similarity²⁶.

²³ Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., pp. 120-124; Chlup, Uher, Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, cit., Vol. II, pp. 486-487; J. Uher, *Hlavní zásady didaktické*, Praha, B. Kočí, 1926, p. 51; Chlup, J. Uher, J. Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, Praha, Novina, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 564-569; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., p. 126; Hendrich, *Úvod do obecné pedagogiky*, cit., pp. 74-79; Valenta, *Střední všeobecné vzdělávací*, in Cach, Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848-1914*, cit., p. 75-78; F. Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi: přednáška, kterou konal ve Filosofické jednotě 4. a 11. února 1919*, Praha, B. Kočí, p. 4.

²⁴ Valenta, *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách III. 1. část 1848-1914*, cit., pp. 75-78; Uher, *Hlavní zásady didaktické*, cit., pp. 51-53; Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., pp. 120-124, and Hendrich, *Úvod do obecné pedagogiky*, cit., pp. 74-79.

²⁵ The transfer of training was identified with the notion of the formal price of a content: «the latter, is seen in the fact that certain abilities, which I acquire when studying a certain content, I can use in another case». See Chlup, Uher, Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, cit., Vol. II, p. 487.

²⁶ O. Kádner, *Základy obecné pedagogiky*, Praha, Unie, 1925, Vol. II, pp. 187-188; Kramář,

The issue of formal education has resurfaced in the context of the reform of the Secondary Schools, in which the dispute over the status of Latin was addressed. Latin was taught at classical grammar schools, real grammar schools and real reform grammar schools and was an essential component of secondary education. The school-leaving examination in it was often a ticket to university studies. However, the question was raised whether Latin was necessary for the acquisition of higher general education, of which formal education was a major part²⁷. Traditionally, the proponents of classical languages presented those classical languages, especially Latin, were the most suitable for formal education, based on previous experience and tradition. Thus, they tried to emphasize the importance of Latin for the acquisition of a general education²⁸. Many of them also tried to justify their claims. On the contrary, the opponents questioned the traditional position of the classical philologists and relied on new knowledge, the needs of life and modern times. Formal education, based on classical languages, was, in their view, outdated and losing its relevance. They could no longer sustain themselves in an age when modern culture was developing, while the natural sciences and modern languages had also acquired an educational effect. Classical languages were therefore in decline and losing their unique position. They were to be replaced by the language of instruction and modern languages. Some opponents were of this view despite recognizing their formal educational value²⁹.

Already shortly after the formation of the First Czechoslovak Republic, various opinions emerged in relation to Latin in the context of secondary schools from the perspective of formal education. Already the *Union of Mathematicians and Physicists* [*Jednota matematiků a fyziků*], in their proposal for the reform of the secondary schools of 1919, based the formal education on the mother tongue in combination with the modern language, and did not

Úvahy o střední škole, Praha, Nákladem Časopisu pokrokového studentstva, 1902, pp. 12-18; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., pp. 125-127; Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., pp. 120-124; Hendrich, *Úvod do obecné pedagogiky*, cit., pp. 74-79; Chlup, Uher, Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, cit., Vol. II, p. 487.

²⁷ Uher, *Hlavní zásady didaktické*, cit., p. 52; *Pracovní komise při poradním sboru*, «Věstník československého pedagogického ústavu J. A. Komenského», vol. 1, n. 9-10, 1923, p. 160; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě, konaná ve dnech 8. až 12. dubna 1929 v zasedací síni senátu Národního shromáždění v Praze*, Ministerstvo školství a nář. osvěty, 1929, p. 199, pp. 204-205; B. Bydžovský, J. Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, Praha, Státní nakladatelství, 1925, p. 9; F. Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, Praha, L.K. Žižka, 1923, pp. 3-4.

²⁸ Both goals of Latin (formal and cultural meaning) were, according to the proponents of classical languages, generally educational.

²⁹ Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., p. 123; Velemínský, *Zásadní otázky reformy školské*, «Národní osvobození», vol. 2, n. 75, 17.3.1925, p. 6; *Výsledky ankety ministerstva školství a národní osvěty z roku 1919 o reformě střední školy*, cit., pp. 68-69; B. Trnka, *Může zůstat střední škola klasickou?*, «Národní listy», vol. 65, 11.5.7.1925, p. 11; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., pp. 224-226.

consider Latin as a general education subject³⁰. Similarly, at a meeting of the Secondary School Advisory Board in 1921, the issue was raised. The provincial school inspector Zdeněk Frant, who was present, was of the opinion that formal training could be mediated in the mother tongue and in the modern language³¹. Also, some of the questions asked in the ministerial inquiry, the results of which were published in 1922, sought an answer³². This is equally evidenced by the debate that erupted after the publication of *the Secondary School Bill* (1925)³³. In the *Explanatory Memorandum* accompanying the *Bill* (1925), one can read that the authors were opposed to the special formal educational value of Latin. In their view, it was a question of method and they saw no problem in allowing this original role of the classical languages to be taken over by a language of instruction, supplemented by modern languages. At the same time, they presented their view that all subjects participate in formal education. During the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, there were voices for Latin to be transferred to the higher department of the secondary schools within the grammar schools branch. Latin would thus lose its general education character and become only an elective subject, preparing for specific fields of study. The real reform grammar schools, where Latin was already taught as part of Grades V–VIII, were put forward as a model here. However, the practice and results in these types of grammar schools did not correspond to expectations³⁴.

Opponents of the classical languages thus questioned the special formal educational value of Latin. They held that all other subjects also contributed to formal education and therefore wanted to shift the focus of the formal education to the language of instruction and modern languages, which were more useful for practical life. However, apologists for classical languages disagreed with similar claims. They considered classical languages, especially Latin, as the best means of formal education and tried to justify it as well.

³⁰ *Návrhy na reformu střední školy*, cit., pp. 5-10.

³¹ *Část informační*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», vol. 3, n. 13-16, 1921, pp. 101-110.

³² *Výsledky ankety ministerstva školství a národní osvěty z roku 1919 o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 61, p. 69, pp. 74-75.

³³ *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy: elaborát pracovní komise při poradním sboru pro školskou reformu*, Praha, Státní nakladatelství, 1925.

³⁴ Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR. Význam klasického vzdelania*, «Historia scholastica», cit., pp. 227-261; *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 52; *K návrhu osnov*, «Střední škola», vol. 6, n. 5, 1926, pp. 219-223; Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., pp. 120-124; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., p. 135.

3. *The Latin language as the best means of formal education*

The opposite position was advocated by the *Union of Classical Philologists* [*Jednota klasických filologů*], calling for Latin to be taught from the 1st grade, thus giving Latin an important place in the acquisition of higher general education. On the question of the formal education, they held the traditional position. According to them, it was to be built mainly on Latin (but also on Greek). In addition, they also wrote a short justification of why they preferred Latin in the question of formal training compared to other subjects³⁵. Today it is possible to find only fragmentary information on this issue³⁶, on the other hand, it is certainly worth mentioning František Novotný³⁷, who wrote several papers attempting to justify the importance of Latin (but also Greek) as a general education subject, its role in conveying the formal education, but also its importance from the cultural point of view³⁸. In the following, we would like to try to present the argumentative backgrounds of the different, opposing sides.

One of the advantages that Latin had, according to its proponents, was its difference and distance from Czech. These formed the basis for the grammatical method used in the teaching of the classical languages, which was based on the analysis and translation of sentences. They spoke of the differentiation of Latin in terms of grammatical language level. In the first place, it should be said that Latin was distinguished, unlike modern living languages, by a richer morphology. The living languages were poorer and simpler in morphology and means of expression. Similarly, they perceived the superiority of Latin in terms of its syntax. The features of its composition, such as closedness and looser word order, therefore presented greater opportunities reasoning about syntactic ratios. When working with a translation, the pupil practised logical exercises by which the learner built up a «subconscious foundation of judgment»³⁹. No other language possessed them to such an extent. Latin had another advantage in its looser vocabulary. On the basis of the position of a word in a sentence, it was not possible to deduce anything about its function. It was the pupil's task to find this out by thinking. In many modern languages, for example, the falls of nouns formed by suffixes were absent because they

³⁵ *Návrhy na reformu střední školy*, cit., pp. 10-[13]; *Odpověď klasických filologů*, «Věstník českých professorů», vol. 27, n. 2, 1920, pp. 75-79; *Výsledky ankety ministerstva školství a národní osvěty z roku 1919 o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 69.

³⁶ See the individual links in the references.

³⁷ F. Novotný was a university professor of classical philology at Masaryk University in Brno.

³⁸ Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., and Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., and *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., pp. 199-206.

³⁹ Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 9.

had disappeared. It was quite different in Latin, which contained many declensions, conjugations, manners, tenses and falls. The pupil therefore had to think, work independently and pay attention to the various case suffixes, look for the subject and the adjective when translating into the classroom language. We can simply say that he was learning to recognize grammatical categories⁴⁰. The authors of the *Notes on the Bill* therefore gave as an example that it was easier for a beginner to translate with the help of a dictionary from the modern language than from Latin⁴¹. In addition, the proponents also pointed to the thinking reflected in modern languages, which made them closer to the Czech language. F. Novotný, according to whom even a lesser degree of knowledge of the language would be sufficient for a pupil to understand a text in modern languages, but this would not hold in the case of classical languages⁴². All this, according to them, disadvantaged modern languages and, on the contrary, favoured Latin, which, by its very nature, forced pupils to think much more and taught them independence. It should be noted at this point that there are hardly any references where the opponents of the classical languages oppose or attempt to justify the modern languages from this point of view. The authors of the *Explanatory Memorandum* (1925) did not think that classical languages were different from modern languages⁴³. But we can mention, for example, Bohumil Trnka⁴⁴. He pointed out in his paper that all languages (except related languages) have ways, albeit different, by which they explain sentence relations or grammatical categories. As an example, he pointed out that the 1st and 4th case of a noun in English differs in its position in a sentence. He identified this as analogous to the means by which a given relation is expressed in that language and that in Latin was expressed by the suffixes of the various declensions. At the same time, he considered the simple construction of the English language to be advantageous because it enabled the pupils to penetrate stylistically into the language. Pupils were consequently also to improve their style, which he understood as an expression of independent logical thinking⁴⁵. But what was pointed out was the remoteness of Latin, but also of Greek. In both cases they were dead languages. They considered the ancient culture and the means of expression of these languages as something too distant for the

⁴⁰ *Odpověď klasických filologů*, «Věstník českých profesorů», vol. 27, n. 2, 1920, pp. 75-79; *Část informační*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», cit., p. 109; Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., pp. 25-27; Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., pp. 6-8; A. Kolár, *Jest možná nová metoda ve vyučování latině?*, «Střední škola», vol. 7, n. 3, 1926, pp. 106-107; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 226; J. Novák, *Formální stránka návrhu na organisaci obč. a střední školy*, «Věstník československých profesorů», vol. 30, n. 19, 01.6.1923, pp. [329]-333.

⁴¹ *Poznámky k Návrhu zákona o střední škole*, [s.l.], [s.n.], 1925, p. 8.

⁴² Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 6.

⁴³ *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 52.

⁴⁴ B. Trnka was an associate professor of English philology at Charles University in Prague.

⁴⁵ Trnka, *Může zůstat střední škola klasickou?*, «Národní listy», cit., p. 11.

pupils and consequently they lost interest in it. The proponents, on the other hand, saw its remoteness as meaningful, which made some kind of emotional attachment to the language absent and the pupils had an objective relationship to it⁴⁶.

Certain ideas for the defence of Latin could have been stimulated by the fact that in the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic more attention was to be paid to the language of instruction (Czechoslovak). It was to be the centre of secondary education⁴⁷. Latin, however, had a higher time allocation as opposed to the language of instruction. This could probably have given the impression of its superiority or importance⁴⁸. In this context, therefore, we can understand some of the statements of the apologists of classical languages. In addition to justifying the number of lessons based on the need to achieve the stated objectives in relation to the difficulty of the languages in question, they pointed out that Latin lessons were in fact mother tongue lessons. The focus of the Latin lessons was on translation, as a result of which the pupils were constantly working with their mother tongue as well. Latin classes were also a place where pupils learned to express themselves not only correctly but also beautifully. And it also provided a foundation to facilitate the study of other languages, French being the main one⁴⁹.

Opponents of the classical languages suggested that Latin should not be one of the subjects necessary for a general education. Latin was to become an elective subject, which pupils would voluntarily choose within a single branch in the upper classes. The teaching of Latin was to begin from the fifth grade. One of the arguments was that pupils were more mature at that age and thus

⁴⁶ *Odpověď klasických filologů*, «Věstník českých profesorů», cit., pp. 75-79; *Část informační*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», cit., p. 109; Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 6, pp. 9-10; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 204; Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., p. 123.

⁴⁷ *Výnos č. 25.552 6/1919*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», vol. 1, n. 1-17, 1921, p. 38; *Část informační*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», vol. 6, n. 4, 1924, p. 174, pp. 178-179; *Návrh učebních osnov*, Praha, Státní nakladatelství, 1933, p. 19, p. 219.

⁴⁸ For example, Latin was taught at the Czech classical grammar schools and real grammar schools, adding up the weekly number of hours for all 8th grades to 45 hours. On the contrary, the language of instruction (Czechoslovak) was similarly calculated at 29 hours. See *Výnos č. 25.552 6/1919*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», cit., pp. 38-41.

⁴⁹ Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., p. 29; Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 9; *Návrhy na reformu střední školy*, cit., p. 11; V. List, *Naše střední škola*, «Střední škola», vol. 3, n. 2, 1922, p. 61; *Část informační*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», cit., p. 109; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 201, p. 203; V. Kubelka, *Příspěvek k reformě střední školy*, «Střední škola», vol. 2, n. 2, 1921, p. 70; *K návrhu osnov*, «Střední škola», cit., p. 221; *Výnos č. 25.552 6/1919*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», cit., pp. 38-41; J. Brant, *Z pedagogické praxe II*, «Střední škola», vol. 3, n. 4, 1923, p. 159; Čeněk, *K reformě střední školy*, Praha, Státní nakladatelství, p. 14.

the teaching should be more successful and therefore faster. At the same time anticipated an increased number of Latin lessons. The sub-commission set up for the language question within the working commission on school reform was of a similar mind. In its proposal, the Commission did not introduce Latin in the first four grades of the common core of the normal school. In addition to the above-mentioned ideas, it justified its claims, for example, by the practical need to master living languages in particular, while also putting the circumstances of the state into perspective. The formal education was based on a methodologically deepened teaching of the language of instruction, while it was to be partly supplemented by modern languages. Furthermore, according to the authors of *The Explanatory Memorandum* (1925), there was no formal education among pupils in the lower grades. In justifying this argument, the authors mentioned the results of modern experimental psychology (without citing specific research or sources), which claimed that it occurred only after puberty⁵⁰. Until then, language learning was based on mechanical memorization and on the imitation method. Furthermore, it is supposedly only possible in children who are philologically gifted⁵¹. Experiences at reform real grammar school and secondary school professors teaching Latin at reform real grammar schools shared their experiences through statements or papers. In them, they also refuted the opinion of the opponents⁵². At the same time, the proponents of classical languages considered the teaching of Latin within the early years to be an advantage, precisely because the pupils at that age used the pupils' mechanical memory. Consequently, «the training of higher judgment» could take place in the higher grades. In addition, pupils reportedly showed an interest in Latin at a young age. According to them, the interest for teaching the basics of Latin faded at the age of puberty. Similarly, they were of the opinion that if pupils started to learn basic Latin at this age, while at the same time being overloaded with a higher number of lessons, the achievement of formal education would not occur. Latin would lose its general educational function⁵³.

Advocates of classical languages also pointed to the importance of Latin

⁵⁰ *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 52.

⁵¹ Bydžovský, Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, cit., pp. 1-[12]; *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 52; Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR. Význam klasického vzdelania*, cit., pp. 227-261; *Návrhy na reformu střední školy*, cit., p. 7; *K návrhu osnov*, cit., p. 221; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., p. 89; B. Bydžovský, *Reforma, pracovní škola a latina*, «Tribuna», vol. 7, n. 54, 2-5.3.1925, p. [1]; *Část informační*, cit., pp. 172-177; *Pracovní komise při poradním sboru*, cit., pp. 156-161.

⁵² Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR. Význam klasického vzdelania*, cit., pp. 227-261.

⁵³ *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., pp. 202-205; *K návrhu osnov*, cit., p. 220; E. Čapek, *100 hlasů o střední škole*, Praha, Nové Čechy, 1930, p. XLVII; Adamčíková, *Latinčina ako predmet diskusie v rámci reformy strednej školy v 1. ČSR*.

(Greek) for the study of various scientific disciplines, as it was considered an international scientific language. Latin terminology played an important role here. Pupils were introduced to it as part of their studies at university across many disciplines, while secondary school was intended to prepare them for further studies⁵⁴. Opponents, on the other hand, presented possible solutions. For example, the *Union of Mathematicians and Physicists* felt that Latin terminology could be occasionally reinforced. But there was also a suggestion to enable the study of Latin, for those who had not learned the language, by introducing optional lessons in Latin terminology for the purpose of further study⁵⁵.

Indeed, we can see that apologists for classical languages have tried to put forward many and varied arguments, arising mainly from the nature of that language. These were intended to show that there are several reasons which make Latin, as opposed to other languages, the most appropriate medium of formal education.

4. *The question of the method and objectives of individual languages*

The biggest objections from the proponents of classical languages to modern languages in the matter of formal education concerned the issue of methods and goals. *The Explanatory Memorandum* stated that by deepening and changing the method, it would be possible to convey formal language education also through a language of instruction supplemented by a modern language. Comparisons, which had previously been made on classical languages with the language of instruction, were to become important. The focus of comparison was now to be applied mainly within the language itself and only supplemented by the modern language. This was also suggested, for example, by the 1925 proposal⁵⁶. F. Novotný questioned the comparison within the language. He thought that for a conscious knowledge of one's own language, comparison with a foreign language is necessary, arguing: «(...) the deeper

Význam klasického vzdělání, cit., pp. 227-261; J. Novák, *Jazykové vyučování na střední škole*, «Národní osvobození», vol. 2, n. 87, 5-29.3.1925, p. 5.

⁵⁴ *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 201; Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 69.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52; Bydžovský, Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, cit., pp. 6-7; *Část informační*, «Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty», cit., p. 176; *Poznámky k Návrhu zákona o střední škole*, cit., pp. 7-10; Čeněk, *Základní směrnice návrhu reformy středoškolské*, «Střední škola», vol. 5, n. 3, 1925, p. 150; Čapek, *100 hlasů o střední škole*, cit., p. 42; J. Novák, *Pracovní škola*, «Tribuna», vol. 7, n. 52, 3.3.1925, p. [1].

and more thorough the knowledge is to be, the deeper and more thorough the comparison is needed»⁵⁷.

The impetus for such comparisons is, in his view, provided by translation. The latter is typical of the method used in the teaching of classical languages and not of modern languages⁵⁸. Jan Čeněk and Bohumil Bydžovský⁵⁹ disagreed, however. In support of their position, they recalled the words of Prof. František Drtina. The latter asked in this context which foreign language the Greeks were educated in, since no one doubted that they consciously knew their language⁶⁰.

Proponents of classical languages agreed that formal education is a question of method but also pointed out that it is questionable whether the method of modern languages and language teaching in secondary schools is appropriate for this, while at the same time pointing to their defined teaching objectives. Their aim was not the acquisition of the languages in question. They were intended to convey formal language education as well as contact with ancient culture. In the classical languages, the analytical (grammatical) method was used. Formal language education in the teaching of classical languages was based on this method. This was based on the analysis of sentences. However, the analysis of individual sentences occupied an important place in the context of translation from classical languages into the language of instruction, and vice versa. Some referred to translation as a «laboratory of language teaching». Translation activity led students to make comparisons and taught them to correlate concepts with words and words with concepts. In this way, students learned to recognize concepts, but it also created opportunities to bring back to words their meanings⁶¹. According to the classical languages, the classical languages, especially Latin, were best suited for this. Latin was compelled to do this by its very nature (by the properties of its syntax and morphology), but it was also designed for this purpose within the framework of secondary education and had a corresponding method for doing so. Similarly, many others considered classical languages to be the best means of formal education, a role they felt neither native nor modern languages could assume⁶².

Modern languages had a completely different goal and method. These had

⁵⁷ Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., p. 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ J. Čeněk was a high school professor, director of a secondary school, and also a member of the advisory board at the Ministry of Education and Science. B. Bydžovský was a high school teacher and later a university professor of mathematics at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Charles University.

⁶⁰ Bydžovský, Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, cit., p. 6.

⁶¹ Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., pp. 7-10; Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., pp. 16-24; *Poznámky k Návrhu zákona o střední škole*, cit., pp. 7-10; Novák, *Pracovní škola*, «*Tribuna*», cit., p. [1]; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 217.

⁶² *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 20.

the aim of practical mastery of the language and at the same time the pupils were learning about other cultures. In their teaching, the mediating and direct method was preferred. The direct method was understood as a means by which the pupil was to learn a language by a process similar to that by which he learned his mother tongue. It was mainly a conversation in the language without being based on grammatical rules. The grammatical rules were derived by the pupil himself after he had learned to use them. In the mediating method, grammar is in the background – it is only an occasional aid. Translation in this method had a place, though a subordinate one. After all, it would mean that modern languages would be diverted from their original teaching aim⁶³. If Latin were to be replaced by a modern language in the context of formal training and comparison, it would mean, according to the advocates of classical languages, leaving the analytical method on the margins. F. Novotný did not radically reject the fact that modern languages could also participate in formal language training. However, he also pointed out that in their case sufficient time would not be created for sentence analysis, because this was prevented by the primary goal of modern languages: to have a practical command of the languages in question, but equally by their defined teaching methods. Thus, the question was whether it would be possible to achieve formal education in teaching modern languages. The grammatical method would be carried out where it is neither entirely necessary nor natural, while at the same time being subordinated to the methods of modern languages, with the consequence that formal education would also disappear. However, B did not agree with this. Bydžovský with J. Čeněk. They pointed out that even in the teaching of classical languages the analytical method was not constantly paid attention to, because the pupils would lose interest in such teaching, but that it had another aim besides formal education. They also pointed out that it is possible to translate in the teaching of modern languages as well⁶⁴. However, this was not mutually exclusive because the second goal of classical languages was also related to translation.

5. *Latin teaches independence and logical thinking*

Secondary schools were also criticized for too much passivity of pupils during the period. Latin classes in particular were perceived as a place where

⁶³ Kolár, *Jest možná nová metoda ve vyučování latině?*, cit., p. 105; Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., pp. 16-24.

⁶⁴ Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 9; *Poznámky k Návrhu zákona o střední škole*, cit., pp. 7-10; Bydžovský, J. Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, cit., pp. 6-7; Čapek, *100 hlasů o střední škole*, cit., p. CVI.

pupils were overburdened with too much memorisation and were not active. The response to this situation in education was to emphasise the need to activate pupils within the teaching process and to turn away from purely reproductive and mechanical methods. The idea of the “active school” was increasingly coming to the fore, with its associated emphasis on working methods, teaching was to be based on the pupil’s interest. Its essence was that the pupil should arrive at knowledge through his own independent work, or by verifying or confirming it. The active school was related to pedocentrism, where the personality of the pupil was an important aspect of teaching. The pupil’s physical and mental development was to be taken into account and the pupil was to be the centre of the school’s work. The working methods were intended to involve pupils in the learning process and thus to arouse their interest in the subject. Pupils were also expected to perform better and their acquired knowledge was to be more lasting. Such methods were intended to lead pupils to independence. The teacher was only to give direction and pupils were to draw on their own experience, observation or knowledge. In the same way, these methods were supposed to individualise teaching. They provided opportunities for pupils to learn to work independently with school materials, which was believed to prepare them for university studies, and it also taught pupils to recognise the relevance of the curriculum in the context of everyday life. However, the question at the time was to what extent the curriculum of the secondary schools allowed the introduction of working methods⁶⁵. In this context, therefore, we can probably see another set of reasons put forward by the proponents of classical languages.

They tried to point out that in Latin classes pupils were encouraged to work independently. The grammatical method and the fact that pupils translated independently in class, not working with ready-made translations, played a big role here. F. Novotný also presented the Latin lessons, as well as the Greek lessons, as practical lessons in which the pupils were forced to work and practise constantly. He also claimed that such a working method was inexpensive, as no aids or special facilities such as laboratories were needed. Moreover, according to him, the results of Latin lessons left a lasting mark on education⁶⁶. Josef Pečený stated that every Latin teacher should strive not to employ the

⁶⁵ *Návrh učebních osnov*, cit., pp. 208-209; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., pp. 182-189, pp. 191-196; *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., pp. 37, 57; Bydžovský, *Reforma, pracovní škola a latina*, «Tribuna», vol. 7, n. 54, 5.3.1925, p. [1]; Chlup, Uher, Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, vol. I, cit., pp. 277-279; B. Bydžovský, *Do druhého desetiletí*, «Věstník pedagogický», vol. 6, n. 8, 1928, p. 283.

⁶⁶ Novotný, *Latina a řečtina na střední škole: příspěvek k diskusi*, cit., p. 30; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 201; Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit., p. 10; *Poznámky k Návrhu zákona o střední škole*, cit., p. 9.

pupil's memory but his judgment when teaching grammar⁶⁷. Emil Čapek⁶⁸ in turn compared translating classical authors to an active school⁶⁹. This was an attempt to point out that the teaching of Latin offered an unpretentious activation of pupils to independent activity within the teaching process at an individual level, with the aim and method of the language naturally leading to this.

One advantage of Latin in particular was stressed in connection with the formal education: through it pupils were to learn logical reasoning. The proponents of classical languages saw a correlation between grammar and logic. What was important here was the relation of word to concept. In general, students were encouraged to think constantly, thus exercising them in thinking. This was also seen as one of the lasting results of Latin teaching, which pupils could later use in practical and everyday life. This was particularly related to the method on which the teaching of Latin was based. Translation and analysis of sentences, but also comparison, played a major role. It taught students to work with abstractions such as: subject, object, affirmative, negative, cause, purpose, condition. Through translating, the pupils carried out logical exercises, which constituted an important basis for the acquisition of judgement. In addition, pupils were learning categories of thought or logical categories⁷⁰. Vladimír List, a professor at the technical college, believed the ability to reason correctly could be acquired in two ways at school. One of them was represented by mathematics and geometry. The other way was Latin grammar, the aforementioned analysis of sentences played a large role, where pupils were taught the laws of thought⁷¹. The opinion that classical languages were a suitable means of training thinking and logic was shared by physicians, or rather the professorial staff of the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University was of the same opinion⁷².

6. Doubts about changing the focus of formal education

The new tendency to shift the focus of the formal education from Latin to the language of instruction in combination with the modern language raised

⁶⁷ J. Pečený, *Jest možná nová metoda ve vyučování latine?*, «Střední škola», vol. 7, n. 5, 1927, p. 227.

⁶⁸ E. Čapek was an educator, commenologist, writer, editor and publisher of the periodical *Nové Čechy* [New Bohemia].

⁶⁹ Čapek, *100 hlasů o střední škole*, cit., p. LXXXII.

⁷⁰ Novotný, *Střední škola bez klasických jazyků?*, cit.; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 209; *Poznámky k Návrhu zákona o střední škole*, cit., p. 7; *Odpověď klasických filologů*, «Věstník českých profesorů», cit., p. 75; Čapek, *100 hlasů o střední škole*, cit., p. 57.

⁷¹ List, *Naše střední škola*, «Střední škola», cit., p. 61.

⁷² *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 209.

many question marks. Some had doubts and pointed out the possible risks involved. This question was particularly raised by the 1925 bill. For example, in the newspaper «Národní listy» we find an article in which the author expresses some distrust about the planned changes from the aforementioned draft. Latin was no longer to fulfil the role of the formal education, but that of a language of instruction supplemented by a foreign modern language. He was also critical of the restriction of the Latin language to only the upper classes of the gymnasium branch. He reflects, however, on the differences between the students at real schools and grammar schools, who should have been equally gifted but who did not achieve the same results in their mother tongue despite having equally qualified teachers⁷³.

Another author pointed out the many shortcomings of the *Bill* (1925) and the *Explanatory Memorandum* (1925). Among other things, that they are rushing to reform without waiting for the results of the experimental schools from Karlín and Smichov⁷⁴. He also warned readers that such changes may have some consequences. In case the authors of the Law and the *Explanatory Memorandum* are wrong and the change in formal education does not bring the promised successes:

What if the mere assertion of the explanatory memorandum that the formal language training, which has hitherto been the task of Latin, can be taken over by a methodically deepened teaching of the language of instruction, is not confirmed? Will Latin be introduced again? And who will replace the formal language training that the explanatory memorandum itself considers desirable for the experimental generation?⁷⁵

Josef Novák⁷⁶ also thought similarly, recalling the absence of experience with this method, whereby, in his view, the Reform Commission took responsibility for the cultural level of the intelligentsia by offering untested means. J. Novák therefore recommended that the method should be tried out first, but that the original method should be retained for the time being⁷⁷. The same opinion was shared by Otakar Kádner⁷⁸, who also suggested that the planned changes should be tested first. He also mentioned the experimental schools of Karlín and Smichov, and we learn from him that these experiments were prematurely terminated. He stated that parents had some distrust in these schools and they had few students enrolled. In addition, they were often attended by

⁷³ KSG, *Nad svícem a pod ním*, «Národní listy», vol. 65, n. 75, 17.3.1925, p. [1].

⁷⁴ The reform proposal of the Union of Czechoslovak Mathematicians and Physicists with a non-Latin basis was to be tested at these schools.

⁷⁵ SH, *Reforma a restrikce*, «Lidové noviny», vol. 33, n. 86, 18.2.1925, p. [1].

⁷⁶ J. Novák was probably a high school professor of classical philology.

⁷⁷ Novák, *Klasické jazyky v reformním návrhu střední školy*, «Střední škola», vol. 5, n. 4, 1925, p. 216.

⁷⁸ O. Kádner was a professor of pedagogy, classical philologist. He was also the director of the Czechoslovak Institute of J.A. Komenský.

weak students who were apprehensive about Latin⁷⁹. It was therefore bold on the part of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment to make such a radical and untested change. However, this was not carried out in the end because the bill was not finally passed.

7. *The argumentative premises of the opponents of classical languages*

It is noticeable, then, that there have not been many references that have attempted to refute the arguments of classical language proponents from the formal education perspective. Although the opponents did not respond with counter-arguments, this does not mean that they did not also try to justify their position. However, the reasons they put forward were often not directly related to the formal education issue. They justified the removal of Latin from the portfolio of general education subjects in secondary schools primarily by the need to reform secondary schools. It was about considering the personality of the pupil, for example. Respect for the pupil's physical and mental development or talents. It was also pointed out at the time that many pupils did not have philological talents and which, in their opinion, could not be recognised at a young age. Therefore, they asked to delay the pupil's decision on the direction of study. They also pointed to the absence of the importance of Latin for practical life, whereas there were other "more useful" subjects for which space had to be made. But at the same time, based on pedagogical and psychological knowledge, it was necessary to reduce the number of lessons. They also argued for various examples from abroad, where the teaching of Latin was absent altogether, or also reduced to the upper grades. In this way, they wanted to show that Latin was not necessary to acquire a general education. The need to allow pupils to transfer between different types of schools was key, and so the question of a common core was also discussed. Here the obstacle was mainly Latin, which differentiated the different types of secondary schools. Retaining Latin, which had a relatively high lesson allocation, meant continuing to leave modern living languages in the background. These, unlike the classical languages, had some practical application⁸⁰. In this context, attention was also drawn to the conditions of the state, especially its geographical location or economic conditions. The First Czechoslovak Republic was a multinational state

⁷⁹ Kádner, *Vývoj a dnešní soustava školství*, cit., pp. 106-108.

⁸⁰ *Část informační*, cit.; *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., pp. 246-248; Bydžovský, Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, cit., pp. 9-[12]; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit. pp. 85-89; *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 40, pp. 51-54; Kubelka, *Príspevek k reformě střední školy*, «Střední škola», cit., p. 70.

and the state language was not one of the world languages. Hence, according to the authors of the *Explanatory Memorandum* (1925), there was a need to know at least two world languages and the basics of one Slavic language⁸¹. All these circumstances were therefore subsequently reflected in the requirements for language education. This led to demands to remove compulsory Latin from secondary education. In addition, one can even find references to the fact that the proponents were accused of ignoring modern pedagogical knowledge or trends⁸². The opponents of classical languages also brought various arguments concerning the cultural aspect of classical languages. For example, they made suggestions that ancient culture should be taught in the mother tongue or tried to present it as too remote and thus incomprehensible to pupils. At the same time, they pointed out that little attention was paid to the connection between Latin and modern culture at the time⁸³.

In terms of the formal education issue, opponents have often merely pointed out that it is possible to shift the focus of formal education to the language of instruction in combination with the modern one. In this respect, they saw great advantage in replacing the impractical Latin with another subject that was also useful. They saw no problem in restricting it to pupils who chose their own course of study and reducing it to teaching it in the upper classes. They thought that pupils would nevertheless acquire a sufficient level of Latin for further studies. Their idea was based on the fact that with a change and deepening of method this was possible. However, at no point did they give specifics⁸⁴. Nor did the *Union of Mathematicians and Physicists* present any arguments in their proposal to justify their position of transferring the focus of the formal education to the language of instruction and modern languages⁸⁵. According to J. Čeněk, the apologists of classical languages were only trying not to make the teaching of classical languages very limited, when they themselves knew that their teaching was already on the decline. In his view, they were merely repeating a “superstition” about the formal educational value of Latin. They did not address the question of the practical application of Latin

⁸¹ *Důvodová zpráva, in Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy, cit., p. 40, pp. 51-54; Trnka, Může zůstat střední škola klasickou?, «Národní listy», vol. 65, 5.7.1925, p. 11; F. Benák, Socialism a boj kulturní, «Akademie», vol. 23, n. 11, 1919, pp. 403-404; Bydžovský, Čeněk, Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů, cit., pp. 6-[12].*

⁸² Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, «Věstník pedagogický», cit., p. 124; Velemínský, *Zásadní otázky reformy školské*, «Národní osvobození», cit., p. 6; Čeněk, *Střední školství*, «Naše doba», vol. 32, n. 7, 04.1925, p. 435; Čeněk, *Střední školství*, cit., p. 435; Benák, *Socialism a boj kulturní*, cit., pp. 403-404; Trnka, *Může zůstat střední škola klasickou?*, cit., p. 11.

⁸³ Čeněk, *Základní směrnice návrhu reformy středoškolské*, cit., p. 151; Benák, *Socialism a boj kulturní*, cit., pp. 403-404; Trnka, *Může zůstat střední škola klasickou?*, cit., p. 11; Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, cit., p. 123.

⁸⁴ Bydžovský, Čeněk, *Odpověď k „Poznámkám“ klasických filologů*, cit., pp. 6-[12]; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., pp. 85-89.

⁸⁵ *Návrhy na reformu střední školy*, cit., p. 7.

in modern secondary schools and did not think about the possibilities of new directions for the teaching of classical languages, considering the life and conditions of the state. Although they acknowledged the formal importance of Latin, they attributed this to its method and not to the nature of the language itself⁸⁶.

Explanatory Memorandum (1925), however, stated that only pupils with philological aptitude were able to understand the subtle relationships between thought and expression, according to the results of modern experimental psychology, and that this occurred only after puberty⁸⁷. However, they did not state what specific knowledge they were interested in or from what source. It was also often pointed out that formal training, based on the teaching of the Latin language, was held only by the power of tradition⁸⁸. The ministerial councillor Karel Velemínský is a certain exception. He referred mainly to various authors, each of whom in some way questioned the formal education or at least limited it. Mostly, however, he brought in new findings from the field of psychology. In particular, he mentioned the American psychologists Thorndike and Woodworth and one of their experiments. His results were subsequently applied by Thorndike to other areas of mental activity. At the same time, he took the position that the transfer of training, although possible, was limited because he assumed the existence of common elements in content (mathematics and physics) or procedure (experimental method – typical of the natural sciences)⁸⁹. Consequently, this was also supposed to limit the effects of formal education, appropriated mainly by classical languages, and thus shake their primacy in education. From this point of view, therefore, K. Velemínský considered the idea of formal education as obsolete. He therefore considered the possibility of replacing classical languages with modern ones. At the same time, he stressed that the medium of logical training was not only language teaching but also needed to be supplemented by mathematics and science subjects⁹⁰. B. Bydžovský, who also referred to new research results, mentioning also Thorndike. These, according to him, were supposed to deny the formal educational value of Latin, but he was not entirely precise. They only limited the formal meaning, which even he himself eventually admitted⁹¹.

It should also be mentioned that in the 1939 *Pedagogical Encyclopaedia*, under the entry *Transfer of Training* [*přenos výcviku*], one of his experiments

⁸⁶ Čeněk, *Střední školství*, cit., pp. 432-436; Čeněk, *Základní směrnice návrhu reformy středoškolské*, cit., p. 150.

⁸⁷ *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 52.

⁸⁸ Velemínský, *Zásadní otázky reformy školské*, cit., p. 6; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., p. 86; *Důvodová zpráva*, in *Návrh zákona o reformě střední školy*, cit., p. 52.

⁸⁹ See Hendrich, *Úvod do obecné pedagogiky*, cit., pp. 76-77.

⁹⁰ See closer: Velemínský, *Formální vzdělání*, cit., pp. 120-124; Chlup, Uher, Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, cit., Vol. II, p. 487.

⁹¹ *Anketa ministerstva školství a národní osvěty o školské reformě*, cit., p. 248.

is also mentioned. Although a different experiment was given as an example, it had identical results to the one mentioned above. He thus questioned the transfer of training altogether, with the result that it should not have been taken into account in the selection of the subject. Naturally, this was to undermine the privileged place of classical languages in secondary education, which was based on this formal educational value of theirs. It meant that by learning Latin, the pupil was acquiring knowledge of that language. These could be helpful at most in the study of a related language. He ruled out that the study of Latin would be useful in the study of the natural sciences. On the other hand, we read in the same place that English psychologists pointed out that Thorndike's attempts were directed only to the perceptual domain but failed to penetrate into the complex mental functions. Supposedly, other, higher and more complex functions are involved in the analysis of a Latin text⁹². Probably in this context, J. Novák that the advocacy of classical languages corresponds to experimental psychology⁹³.

It can therefore be seen that opponents of classical languages have not responded with counterarguments concerning formal education. Rather, they tried to justify their position by the need for reform and by pointing out the uselessness of Latin for practical life. At the same time, it was not clear at the time whether or not Latin thus had any formal educational value. The new approach to the formal education question did not have proven experience or any results to fall back on. Latin was therefore certainly favoured in this dispute by its long tradition and experience, since the classical grammar schools were founded on the idea of formal education, based on the teaching of Latin. Also contributing to this was the more systematic approach in the argumentation of the classical languages' advocates. The practical importance of Latin was generally only felt in cases where Latin was necessary for further studies or for the pursuit of certain professions. These were mainly the study of classical philology, history or philosophy, which was a relatively small circle of people. In the context of the constant emphasis on the need for education to be useful for life, the advocates of the classical languages sought to show, through the struggle over the formal educational value of Latin, that this was also where its practical importance lay. They thus attempted to broaden the narrow view of the practical significance of Latin by emphasizing its value for formal education, which was to be manifested in practical life.

⁹² Chlup, Uher, Kubálek (edd.), *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, cit., Vol. II, p. 487.

⁹³ J. Novák, *Etika a reforma střední školy*, «Střední škola», vol. 3, n. 4, 1923, p. 154.

Conclusion and discussion

The present paper has attempted to present a discourse analysis of Latin in terms of its importance in mediating formal education. It is an unexplored phenomenon that has not been treated by anyone so far. In the period in question, the value of Latin was generally acknowledged in that its lessons were a space where the pupil's skills were to be shaped and developed, which could then be applied by the pupil in everyday life. This also gave it a leading position in the secondary school curriculum, unlike other subjects. This thesis was questioned even before the establishment of First Czechoslovak Republic and reappeared after the establishment of the republic in the discussion on the reform of secondary schools. In that period, pedagogical and psychological knowledge grew, and many political and social changes took place, which increasingly called for modernisation, democratisation and reform of secondary schools. Education also had to consider the need to prepare graduates for the labour market, and national culture was becoming an important means of education. The pedagogical trends of the time also played a significant role. The need for the usefulness of education in schools was increasingly emphasised. All this in turn influenced the requirements for education itself, not least the question of Latin.

The new reform requirements wanted to make room for "more useful" subjects, such as modern languages or science subjects, which have grown in importance in recent years. But this has been hampered by the "unhelpfulness" of Latin, with the result that it has become a focal point of division and one of the most contentious issues in secondary school reform. It led to a kind of struggle over the Latin language, which was also a dispute over the ratio between the humanities and real education. The latter had its theoretical background, however, in the theory of formal and material (more practical) education. The advocates of classical languages therefore had to defend the place of Latin in secondary schools as a general education subject and equally to justify its usefulness for practical life. In this context, therefore, the proponents of classical languages sought to present Latin as the most appropriate means of formal education. They believed although students would forget the knowledge of Latin, nevertheless the subject was supposed to teach them certain skills which they were to make use of in everyday life. In so doing, they were expanding the previously narrow understanding of the practical importance of Latin. On the other hand, the opponents of the classical languages tried to introduce a new approach and shift the focus of the formal education from Latin to the language of instruction in combination with a modern (more useful) language. At the same time, they reminded that all subjects are important in the transmission of formal education and that it is not possible to separate material and formal education. They therefore demanded that the formal cost of a substance or subject should be disregarded in the selection process, which

was to lead to the abandonment of compulsory Latin. The more important criterion was to be the usefulness or application of the material or subject to practical life.

The Latin Apologists had a long tradition and experience of teaching Latin. On the other hand, Neo-Humanism and ancient culture were no longer seen as an essential element of the world of the time. They therefore had to defend Latin and its place in secondary education. We can see, therefore, that their argumentation is much more rigorous and systematic. In justifying Latin as the best medium, they proceeded from the natural nature of the language and pointed to its morphology and syntax. They also approached that one of the main tasks of Latin was aimed at conveying the formal education, and therefore the whole methodology of teaching Latin corresponded to this goal and was directed towards it. The grammatical method, used in Latin classes, led pupils to work independently and taught them to analyse and think, while all the time pupils were working with their mother tongue. From this point of view, therefore, they drew attention to an entirely different goal of modern languages: to have a practical command of the language. This was matched by the different methods that led to the achievement of that goal. As a consequence, it was questionable how the modern languages (and the language of instruction) were to replace Latin when the analytical method was not the key and dominant method in their teaching. At the same time, it should be mentioned that the critics of the classical languages wanted to make a change, but this was untested and there was no experience to fall back on.

In the end, however, the radical elimination of Latin was not enforced, but the number of Latin lessons was reduced and it was not taught until the third grade. Although the focus of the formal education was eventually shifted to the language of instruction, the *Dérer's reform* still retained Latin as a compulsory subject alongside it, which was also to continue to mediate the formal education. The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment did not make the intended and bold change, and thus in a way compromised on the issue of formal education. At the same time, it thus indirectly acknowledged the importance of Latin in the acquisition of higher general education, and its value and the importance of ancient culture were equally acknowledged⁹⁴.

But all this shows us that finding the answer was not at all easy or straightforward. Moreover, the whole discussion makes us wonder to what extent it is possible for education to be merely practical. And more generally, what role and what place should humanity have in education, a question that is still relevant today.

⁹⁴ *Návrh učebních osnov*, cit., p. 19; Bydžovský, *Naše středoškolská reforma*, cit., pp. 140-141, p. 158.