

Slovenian – The Language of Instruction in Higher Education

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————— 1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek – 1.01 Original Scientific Article —————

V 21. stoletju je vse več posameznikov dvojezičnih ali večjezičnih, medtem ko angleščina ostaja *lingua franca* tako v evropskem kot neevropskem kontekstu. V prispevku so nas zanimala stališča študentk in študentov predšolske vzgoje in razrednega pouka na Pedagoški fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani in Pedagoški fakulteti Univerze na Primorskem do slovenščine kot učnega jezika v visokem šolstvu. Po pregledu relevantne literature je bil za namen raziskave oblikovan anketni vprašalnik. Vseboval je 20 trditev, ocenjenih na petstopenjski Likertovi lestvici, izpolnilo pa ga je 154 študentk in študentov Pedagoških fakultet v Ljubljani in Kopru. Rezultati so pokazali pozitiven odnos do slovenščine kot učnega jezika v visokem šolstvu.

In the twenty-first century, an increasing number of individuals are bilingual or multilingual, while English remains the *lingua franca* in both European and non-European contexts. The present paper examines the attitudes of students of preschool education and classroom teaching at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, and the Faculty of Education, University of Primorska, towards Slovene being the language of instruction in higher education. Relevant literature was inspected and a survey questionnaire developed for the research. The latter contained 20 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale. It was completed by 154 students from the Faculties of Education in Ljubljana and Koper. Overall, the results show that students express a positive attitude towards Slovene as the language of instruction in higher education.

Ključne besede: predšolska vzgoja, razredni pouk, slovenščina, študenti, visoko šolstvo

Keywords: preschool education, primary teacher education, Slovene, students, higher education

1 Introduction

In modern society characterised by digitalisation and artificial intelligence as well as rapidly changing forms of communication, language culture is the key to creating high-quality and sustainable communication. According to Daneš (2006), language culture is the conscious cultivation of written language, and linguists, professional writers and the education system are its keepers. From the perspective of postmodern language policy values, language culture can be understood as a continuation of each previous period, characterised as an implicit language policy that is maintained through social practices although it sometimes works in opposition to language policy initiatives at the state level (Stabej 2006).

Success in language planning is influenced by language policy requiring a close link to language culture, with the role of authorities taking centre stage (Kalin Golob 2003: 255). Interest in language policy has been encouraged, among other things, by the establishment and expansion of the European Union, by increasing migration flows and the rise of English as a global language, leading to the study of multilingualism or plurilingualism, to linguistic rights of minorities and the management of linguistic diversity (Brezigar 2024). Internationalisation has become a mantra in higher education, and European universities are striving to manage the process of internationalisation, in which teaching in English plays a key role (Lasagabaster 2015: 256).

2 Internationalisation in higher education in Europe

It is widely believed that English language use is the key to internationalisation in higher education; English is considered the language of instruction which is why universities cannot avoid using it (Van der Walt 2013). This privileged position of English prevents the implementation of a truly multilingual language policy which would provide more opportunities for linguistic equity. Instead, it defers to the belief that “knowledge of English as the current world language is essential and perhaps even sufficient for greater social mobility in an increasingly globalised world” (May 2014: 373).

English also has a dominant position in the academic publishing sphere. Even academics outside the Anglophone sphere feel compelled to publish in highly significant journals with English as their official language. More than 90 percent of the information in the Science Citation Index (SCI) comes from English-based journals (Kirkpatrick 2011, in Lasagabaster 2015: 261).

English-medium instruction (EMI) is a common practice in the internationalisation process that universities are experiencing. This has led to

numerous changes related to teaching in educational institutions at all levels (Fortanet-Gómez 2013; Doiz et al. 2013: 213–221) and to the preparation of internationalisation plans and language policy documents that explicitly define the strategies that each university is advised to use. Socio-economic and political circumstances driven by the global initiative have reinforced the offering of studies in English at the level of higher education (Kuteeva 2019), and the introduction of English for the development of academic activity in general (Hultgren et al. 2015).

Indeed, the language competence of teachers is an important factor in the effective implementation of studies in English. Sufficient knowledge of the English language is a prerequisite for successful classroom communication practices that lead to the achievement of the goals of the study process (Murray 2015). Studies have shown that the success of studying in English depends not only on the teacher's language competence but also on the mastery of discourse strategies (Sánchez-García 2020: 131–150), pedagogical skills (Carrió-Pastor 2020) and intercultural competence (Maíz-Arevalo & Orduna-Nocito 2021).

On the other hand, some authors are critical of English as the sole or dominant language of instruction. Phillipson (2015) states that English is not the only language of higher education, nor should it be. It is also not on its own used “globally”. English is not an “inevitable” preference in continental European academia. In northern Europe, the language of presenting content in courses is English, while the local language is used as the medium of instruction and examination. This makes for a powerful integration of content and language learning. Phillipson (2015) claims that academic discourse tends to circumvent or downplay notions of linguistic imperialism or hegemony, resulting in the failure to see the expansion of English as one of the forces behind its increased use. Explicit language policies are needed to ensure a balance between English and other languages. For Phillipson (2015), the solution lies more in supporting other European languages against the tide of English use. In addition, Pennycook's book *English and the Discourse of Colonialism* (2002) reveals how the practice of colonialism permeated the cultures and discourses of both colonial and colonised nations, the effects still visible, even today. Rather than accepting the current popular view that English has become a neutral language of global communication, Pennycook argues that it remains a language to which colonial discourses still adhere, which makes it a language still laden with colonial meanings. Molino and Campagna (2014) conclude that there is an urgent need to consider the ideological implications of language choices in higher education, including those linked to what essentially remains a monolingual mindset, despite Europe's declaring of multicultural ideals.

3 Language planning in higher education in Slovenia

An important part of language planning in Slovenia is the language of instruction in higher education, defined in Article 15 of the new *Higher Education Act (ZviS-1)*, which came into force on 15 July 2025. The language of instruction at institutions of higher education in the Republic of Slovenia is Slovenian, and students in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to be educated in Slovenian at these institutions. Study programmes at institutions of higher education will continue to be conducted in Slovenian, with some exceptions that already existed under the previous legislation, namely, the study of foreign languages and literatures, joint programmes with foreign institutions of higher education, and parts of international student exchange programmes. Study programmes can be conducted in a foreign language if they are also conducted in Slovenian at the institution of higher education. All institutions of higher education are obliged to nourish the development of Slovene as a professional or scientific language by developing a strategy for the use of it and promoting its being used in scientific, professional and popular scientific publications, in the writing of scientific surveys, and in the compiling of terminological dictionaries as independent publications or as supplements to other publications.

The *Resolution on the National Language Policy Programme of the Republic of Slovenia 2021–2025* (2021), too, pays special attention to the language regime of higher education and science:

The Slovenian higher education system, in its basic formal legal document (the Higher Education Act), establishes Slovenian as the language of instruction in higher education and entrusts higher education institutions with the development of Slovenian as a professional or scientific language /.../ The field of science, which is inextricably linked to the field of higher education, is linked to the international space by the nature of its work. It is therefore crucial to establish a balance between the use and development of the scientific and professional Slovenian language and the use of foreign languages. (Resolution on the National Language Policy Programme of the Republic of Slovenia 2021–2025 2021: 43)

The objectives in the area of language regulation for higher education and science are as follows: maintaining the status of the Slovenian language as the official language and the language of instruction in higher education, enabling the free movement of students and professors, developing communication skills in Slovene for Special Purposes (SSP), and improving the position of Slovene as the language of science (2021: 44–46).

The *Development Strategy of Slovenia 2030* of 2017 recognizes culture and language as fundamental factors of national identity, making the development and preservation of the Slovenian language, culture and cultural and natural heritage one of its twelve goals.

The *Resolution on the National Higher Education Programme until 2030* (2022: 17) obliges universities to facilitate the development of the Slovenian language and specialised terminology, while the actors involved in internationalisation processes should ensure transfer of concepts and terminology into the Slovenian language, thus enriching it. When implementing a foreign-language study programme, the development of the Slovenian language and terminology in higher education and science should also be ensured by making study contents available also in Slovenian.

Only a few studies exist on language policy or the language of instruction at Slovenian universities. Three of them are especially worthy of mention. In his monograph *The Notability of the Slovenian Language* by Jesenšek (2024) argues that teaching in a foreign language reduces the quality of higher education and that classes in English will not improve the quality of Slovenian higher education. Jesenšek calls this process the imperialisation of language, where the laws of capital promote the use of a global language, facilitating financial investment and generating profit. Gajšt (2017) investigated the use of Slovene, the students' L1, in teaching and learning Business English in the doctoral program. The results show that, on the one hand, there is some inclination towards the use of L1 both in class and during the study of Business English. On the other hand, a preference for the use of predominantly (or exclusively) English in class is also present and is positively correlated with the students' level of proficiency in English. Kavalir and Poteko (2022) examined how often and in which situations university students in Slovenia use English, and what are their attitudes towards it compared to Slovene. The results show that Slovene still dominates in everyday communication, but English has become an essential skill that goes beyond the traditional function of a foreign language. In addition, many respondents already consider it an additional first language, with a sizable group reporting a preference for English as their language of personal communication.

4 Study

4.1 Aim

The aim of the present study was to determine students' attitudes towards Slovenian as a language of instruction in Slovenian higher education. The following research questions and hypothesis were established.

4.2 Research questions and hypothesis

RQ1: What are the views of students at Slovenian universities on the use of Slovenian and English as languages of instruction in higher education?

RQ2: How do students perceive the impact of English as a language of instruction on the quality of study, the competitiveness of universities, and employment opportunities?

RQ3: What is the relationship between English language proficiency and the use and understanding of specialised (ESP) terminology?

RQ4: How do students rate the linguistic and pedagogical competence of lecturers in teaching English?

RQ5: How much do students support the measures to maintain and develop Slovenian for Special Purposes (SSP) in the academic environment?

Research hypothesis

H1: Students are more in favour of Slovenian as the primary language of instruction than English.

4.3 Method

The descriptive and causal non-experimental method was used in the study.

Sample

The sample consisted of 154 students, 148 of whom were female (96.1%) and 6 male (38.9%). Of the respondents, 91 were under 20 years old (59.1%) and 63 were between 21 and 25 years old (40.9%). As regards their place of study, 79 of the respondents were from the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana (51.3%) and 75 were from the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska (48.7%). The field of study was preschool education for 113 of the respondents (73.4%) and primary education for the remaining 41 respondents (26.6%), with 43 respondents in their first year of study in the 2024/25 academic year (27.9%) and 111 in their second year of study (72.1%). 83 respondents had already attended courses taught in English (53.9%), while 71 had not yet attended courses taught in English (46.1%). With regard to language proficiency, 27 of the respondents rated their English proficiency as advanced (17.5%), 34 as advanced but without specialised (ESP) terminology (22.1%), 19 as advanced but without scientific

(ESP) terminology (12.3%), 18 as basic (11.7%), 54 as intermediate (35.1%), and 2 respondents (1.3%) rated their English proficiency as fluent.

Instrument

A questionnaire was designed based on an overview of relevant literature. It uses a five-point Likert scale on which respondents can indicate their agreement (5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – undecided, 2 – disagree, 1 – strongly disagree) with 20 statements about Slovenian as a language of instruction in Slovenian higher education.

Data collection and processing

The data were collected in February 2025 and processed using Excel and Jasp software. The results were subsequently interpreted on the basis of modern Slovenian and foreign specialised literature.

5 Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the participating students' attitudes towards the Slovenian language as a language of instruction in Slovenian higher education, along with descriptive statistics (Min, Max, M, SD)¹.

Table 1 Students' attitudes towards the Slovenian language as a language of instruction in Slovenian higher education.

Statement	Min	Max	M	SD
S1 Studies at Slovenian universities should always be conducted in the Slovenian language.	1	5	4.19	0.96
S2 Studies at Slovenian universities should also be conducted in Slovenian for foreign students.	1	5	2.71	1.11
S3 It is important that foreign students have an opportunity to learn Slovenian free of charge as part of Year Plus, while simultaneously fulfilling their obligations as part of their study programme.	3	5	4.45	0.62
S4 Due to the increasing number of foreign students at Slovenian universities, studies at Slovenian universities should be conducted in English in the future.	1	5	1.72	0.85

¹ Min = minimum, Max = maximum, M = mean, SD = standard deviation

Statement	Min	Max	M	SD
S5 If studies at Slovenian universities were conducted in English, this would increase the competitiveness of Slovenian universities in the European and global arena.	1	5	2.70	1.05
S6 If Slovenian students were to study in English at Slovenian universities, it would be easier for them to find a job abroad.	1	5	3.02	1.06
S7 If studies at Slovenian universities were conducted in English, Slovenian would become a second-class language.	1	5	3.47	1.16
S8 It is important for me to master the Slovenian language of the field of study.	1	5	4.86	0.41
S9 It is important for me to master the English language of my subject of study.	1	5	3.32	1.09
S10 Not all lecturers at Slovenian universities are qualified to teach in English or have sufficient knowledge of English.	1	5	3.91	0.92
S11 The quality of teaching is based on the high professional qualifications and scientific research activities of the lecturers, who are able to convey their knowledge to the students in a language in which they feel completely confident.	1	5	4.11	0.96
S12 Not all students at Slovenian universities speak English well enough to understand specialised (ESP) terminology.	1	5	4.53	0.72
S13 Machine translation from Slovene into English and vice versa (Online Notes) would improve the quality of study at Slovenian universities. For example, if a lecturer speaks in Slovene, a machine translation into English would enable foreign students to understand the content.	1	5	3.58	0.99
S14 I often use English when I read specialised literature and write seminar papers.	1	5	2.75	1.22
S15 The university also needs to develop specialised Slovenian special purposes (SSP) terminology, so students should be offered a course in Slovene for Special Purposes (SSP).	1	5	3.89	0.90
S16 English as a language of instruction improves my specialised (ESP) terminology.	1	5	3.24	1.15
S17 The use of English reduces the quality of discussion and participation in classes.	1	5	3.25	1.13

Statement	Min	Max	M	SD
S18 Classes in English should be optional.	2	5	4.35	0.75
S19 The content of the course is more important than the language in which it is delivered.	1	5	3.10	1.18
S20 Research has shown that the language of classes has a significant impact on the quality of learning outcomes and contributes to the students' cognitive and cultural development.	1	5	4.16	0.88

The respondents rated statement **S8** (it is important to master the Slovenian language of the field of study) the highest (**4.86**), while statement **S4** (due to the increasing number of foreign students at Slovenian universities, studies at Slovenian universities should be conducted in English in the future) was rated the lowest (**1.72**). Jesenšek (2016: 87) states that it is important to master Slovenian for special purposes in the subject of study. The reckless abandonment of Slovenian in the name of globalisation can have unintended consequences, since the loss of an important functional language genre such as the language of science and development of terminology also in Slovenian signifies the beginning of the end of a language.

In addition to statement **S8**, the respondents also rated statements **S12**, **S3**, **S18**, **S1**, **S20** and **S11** with scores above 4. Statements **S12** and **S3** were rated almost equally.

S12, which states that not all students at Slovenian universities speak English well enough to understand the specialised terminology, was rated **4.53**. If students have deficits in language skills, the outcome is far from optimal, and this is because the quality of learning decreases while never improving, and communication in the lingua franca is lowered to the level of makeshift, superficial communication for basic purposes, not allowing for the expression of complex ideas and concepts (Šabec 2016: 74). **S3**, which states that it is important that foreign students have the opportunity to learn Slovenian free of charge as part of the Year Plus programme, while simultaneously fulfilling their obligations as part of their study programme, was rated **4.45**. Year Plus is intended for international students in their first study year in a University of Ljubljana bachelor's or master's degree programme. Students can apply for Year Plus if they enrol at the University of Ljubljana by referring to the citizenship of their country of origin (Year Plus n.d.).

S18, which states that classes in English should be optional, was rated **4.35**. This corresponds to the stipulations of the Florence Resolution (2014):

Scholars should use their native languages and in addition languages appropriate to the context of their studies. It is not necessary to avoid English totally, but they should

consider the use of English to be only a secondary route for demonstrating the relevance of their arguments and findings. (Florence Resolution: Language Use in University Teaching and Research, 2014)

The respondents rated statements S1, S20 and S11 almost equally.

S1, which states that studies at Slovenian universities should always be conducted in the Slovenian language, was rated **4.19**. The results align with views such as those expressed by Jesenšek (2016: 15–16), who argues that the Slovenian language in higher education should not only have a formal role as the language of instruction, but should be understood as the fundamental element of national identity, cultural continuity and historical awareness. The university is not only a place where knowledge is distributed but also a place where the nation's cultural and social self-image is formed. If the university space were to allow the gradual replacement of Slovenian with English as the language of instruction, this would mean the loss of a deeper understanding of the Slovenian students' own history and culture.

S20, which states that research has shown that the language used in classes has a significant impact on the quality of learning outcomes and contributes to students' cognitive and cultural development, was rated **4.16**. The results correspond to Zlatnar Moe et al. (2016: 50), who found that insufficient competence in the mother tongue have an impact on language competence in the foreign language, i.e., insufficient language competence in the mother tongue has a negative impact on the production of texts (not only in the case of translation or summarising, but also in that of writing original texts) in the foreign language.

S11, which states that the quality of teaching is based on high professional qualifications and scientific research activities of the lecturers, who are able to convey their knowledge to the students in a language in which they feel completely confident, was rated **4.11**. The results align with Mata-lines (2023) who investigated the correlation between teachers' language competence and students' language competence, as well as that between teachers' teaching skills and students' language competence. The results showed that there was a significant relationship when teachers' classroom management, assessment and general teaching skills were correlated with students' language competence.

The respondents rated nine statements (S6, S7, S9, S10, S13, S15, S16, S17 and S19) with scores ranging from 3 to 4.

S10, which states that not all lecturers at Slovenian universities are qualified to teach in English or have sufficient knowledge of English, was rated **3.91**. The results align with views such as those expressed by Šabec (2016: 74), who believes that the quality of pedagogical work can only result from

high professional qualifications and prolific scientific research activities of the lecturers, who pass on their knowledge to the students in a language in which they feel completely confident.

S15, which states that the university also needs to develop Slovenian special purposes (SSP) terminology, in order for students to be offered a course in Slovenian for Special Purpose (SSP), was rated **3.89**, which is slightly lower than the rating for statement S10. The results correspond to the views of James Tomazin (2009: 178–179), who argues that introducing specialised terminology in programmes at all levels would have multiple benefits. Students would develop writing skills in their chosen profession at the beginning of their studies, while at the same time learning appropriate argumentation. Indeed, they would become skilled in the selection and possible creation of expressions/terms, which is important in the social sciences and humanities, as well as in the natural sciences.

S13 states that machine translation from Slovenian into English and vice versa (Online Notes) would improve the quality of study at Slovenian universities. For example, if the lecturer presents in Slovenian, machine translation into English would enable foreign students to understand the content. This statement was rated **3.58**. The results align with Šoltes et al. (2024). In an earlier study, Šoltes et al. followed two foreign students, one French and one Estonian, who used Online Notes, a system for automatic speech recognition and machine translation in real time. They followed classes in the Spatial Statistics course at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geodesy, University of Ljubljana, presented in Slovenian by Prof. Dr Goran Turk in the winter semester 2022/2023. In addition to the real-time transcripts during classes, the students also had access to video recordings of the classes, recorded by the lecturer beforehand. These recordings were equipped with automatically generated subtitles in English, provided within the Online Notes system. The students were generally satisfied with the real-time transcription system and believed that it enabled them to follow the classes; however, they felt that the videos with subtitles were key to learning and understanding the content.

S7, which states that if studies at Slovenian universities were conducted in English, Slovenian would become a second-class language, was rated **3.47**, slightly lower than statement S13. The results correspond to the Florence Resolution: Language Use in University Teaching and Research (2014), which states that the tendency to use English instead of the standard languages of respective countries in university teaching and research restricts the domains of these languages and their development, thus endangering the linguistic diversity of Europe. The latter, in turn, is essential for the cultural diversity and wealth of the European continent (Florence Resolution: Language Use in University Teaching and Research, 2014).

The respondents rated statements S9, S17 and S16 somewhat similarly.

S9, which states that it is important to master the English language of the subject of study, was rated **3.32**. The results correspond to those of Rintaningrum (2019), who argues that one reason students need proficiency in English is that they must be able to understand various reference sources. Tutorials, websites with data sources and many other academic materials on the internet are usually written in English.

S17, which states that the use of English reduces the quality of discussion and participation in classes, was rated **3.25**. The results align with views such as those expressed by Jesenšek (2016: 16), who argues that language in higher education goes beyond its purely communicative function; it is the bearer of conceptual thinking, cultural patterns and historical memory that cannot easily be replaced by a foreign language without losing some of its cultural specificity and authenticity.

S16, which states that English as a language of instruction improves special purposes terminology, was rated **3.24**. In this regard, the Florence Resolution (2014) observed the following:

EFNIL [the European Federation of National Institutions for Language] acknowledges the advantages of using English as an international medium of communication, especially in the so called ‘hard’ sciences, where even a simplified form of English can be helpful in explaining other international semiotic systems such as mathematic expressions, tables, chemical formulas and graphic designs. However, the use of other languages in these fields beside English must be encouraged, in order to allow those languages to continue to develop a high-level scientific discourse and to also publicise scientific problems and results to the general public. (Florence Resolution: Language Use in University Teaching and Research 2014)

S19, which states that the content of the course is more important than the language in which it is delivered, was rated **3.10**. The results align with the document Loud and Clear: Effective Language of Instruction Policies for Learning (2021: 14), which states that the language of instruction matters. Language is essential to learning, schooling and human capital accumulation. Instruction unfolds through language – written and spoken – in foundational learning and core academic subjects. Almost all schooling is intimately tied to language.

S6, which states that if Slovenian students were to study in English at Slovenian universities, it would be easier for them to find a job abroad, was rated **3.02**. The results align with the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019), which states that multilingual competence offers competitive advantages for both businesses and job seekers, provided it is part of a broader set of necessary skills. There is a positive correlation between foreign language skills and the likelihood of being in employment.

The respondents rated three statements (namely S2, S5 and S14) very similarly, with scores in the range between 2 and 3.

S14, which states that the respondent often uses English when he/she reads specialised literature and writes seminar papers, was rated **2.75**. The results align with the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019), which states that literacy competence and multilingual competence are recognized as part of the eight key competences in the Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning.

S2, which states that studies at Slovenian universities should also be conducted in Slovenian for foreign students, was rated **2.71**. The results correspond to The Higher Education Act (2025), which stipulates the following:

If a higher education institution performs a public service, the following may be implemented in a foreign language: study programmes in foreign languages, parts of study programmes if guest lecturers from abroad participate in their implementation or a large number of foreign students are enrolled in them, study programmes if these programmes are also carried out in the Slovene language at the institution of higher education. Foreigners and Slovenians without Slovenian citizenship may learn Slovene. (The Higher Education Act 2025: 7)

S5, which states that if studies at Slovenian universities were conducted in English, this would increase the competitiveness of Slovenian universities in the European and global arena, was rated **2.70**. The results align with the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 (2023: 3), which states that the internationalisation of Slovenian higher education and science will significantly contribute to strengthening the resilience of the Slovenian research and education community, its inclusive character, and its strong and active integration into the European Education Area (EEA), the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).

Statistically significant differences between specific groups of students involved in the study were also examined. The differences were tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. Statistically significant differences (at α , adjusted with Bonferroni correction ($p \leq 0.001$) for multiple comparisons) with small to moderate effect sizes were found between the following groups:

- (1) Study programme (primary school education $N = 41$ vs. preschool $N = 113$): for variables S10 ($p = 0.001$, $r = 0.341$, small effect) and S14 ($p < 0.001$, $r = 0.367$, small effect).
- (2) University (University of Primorska $N = 75$ vs. University of Ljubljana $N = 79$): for variables S10 ($p < 0.001$, $r = 0.312$, small effect) and S14 ($p = 0.001$, $r = 0.293$, small effect).

- (3) Year of study (first year N = 43 vs. second year N = 111): for variable S10 ($p < 0.001$, $r = 0.432$, moderate effect).
- (4) Attendance of English (yes N = 83 vs. no N = 71): for variables S14 ($p < 0.001$, $r = -0.397$, small effect) and S16 ($p < 0.001$, $r = -0.340$, small effect).

No statistically significant differences were detected for the variables gender (p ranging from 0.769 to 0.029; mean $p = 0.398$, $SD = 0.240$) and age (p ranging from 0.952 to 0.005; mean $p = 0.302$, $SD = 0.249$), as the p values do not reach the threshold of significance according to the Bonferroni correction ($p \leq 0.001$). This result was expected given the pronounced imbalance of the sample within these categories.

Table 2 Hypothesis 1 testing.²

	V	P	Rank-Biserial Correlation	SE Rank-Biserial Correlation	Lower	Upper
S1	9778	< 0.001	0.873	0.096	0.830	∞
S2	1825	0.998	-0.319	0.113	-0.475	∞
S3	10440	< 0.001	1.000	0.096	1.000	∞
S4	343	1.000	-0.932	0.097	-0.950	∞
S5	1564	1.000	-0.381	0.115	-0.530	∞
S6	2509	0.451	0.014	0.115	-0.175	∞
S7	4735	< 0.001	0.445	0.107	0.292	∞
S8	11325	< 0.001	1.000	0.094	1.000	∞
S9	3719	< 0.001	0.362	0.112	0.191	∞
S10	6538	< 0.001	0.862	0.106	0.810	∞
S11	6700	< 0.001	0.909	0.106	0.873	∞
S12	10583	< 0.001	0.972	0.095	0.962	∞
S13	4247	< 0.001	0.682	0.115	0.567	∞
S14	2847	0.992	-0.241	0.104	-0.395	∞
S15	6188	< 0.001	0.855	0.107	0.800	∞
S16	3377	0.008	0.261	0.113	0.080	∞
S17	3164	0.003	0.304	0.116	0.123	∞
S18	8988	< 0.001	0.987	0.099	0.983	∞
S19	3510	0.108	0.129	0.109	-0.050	∞
S20	7094	< 0.001	0.954	0.105	0.936	∞

² Statements in bold are those which indicate that a statistically significant increase from the tested value confirms the hypothesis.

The statistical analysis (Table 2) shows that hypothesis 1, which states that the participants in the study would, on average, express a fairly positive attitude towards Slovenian as the primary language of instruction, can be confirmed in principle, but with some reservations.

This conclusion is based on the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for questions 1–9 and 14–18, which relate, directly or indirectly, to the (non-) expression of support for Slovenian as the primary language of instruction.

The test was used to examine the alternative hypothesis that the median of the responses is greater than the value 3, which represents the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale used. The questions marked in green in Table 2 indicate a statistically significant positive difference from the tested value, supporting the alternative hypothesis, while questions marked in red indicate a deviation in the opposite direction (against the alternative hypothesis). Questions which showed statistically significant differences are additionally marked in bold in the table.

6 Conclusion

The research results, which show that students have a strong positive attitude towards Slovenian as the language of instruction, align with the new Higher Education Act (2025). This Act states that the language of instruction at higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia is Slovenian, and that students in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to be educated at Slovenian institutions of higher education. Furthermore, the results indicate that students do not strongly believe that conducting studies at Slovenian universities in English would increase the competitiveness of these universities in the European and the global sphere. While it is important for students to master their field of study also in the English language, it is even more important for them to master their field of study in the Slovenian language. The results are consistent with the Florence Resolution: Language Use in University Teaching and Research (2014), which states that the use of languages other than English in these fields must be encouraged, in order to allow those languages to continue to develop a high-level scientific discourse and to publicise scientific problems and results to the general public. The results also show that students believe that not all lecturers at Slovenian universities are qualified to teach in English or have sufficient knowledge of English. Accordingly, Phillipson (2015) states, it would therefore be better to support other European languages against the rise of English usage. In addition, the results show that students support measures to maintain and develop Slovene for special purposes in the academic environment, which is in alignment with *The Resolution on the National Higher Education*

Programme until 2030 (2022: 17), which obliges universities to ensure the development of the Slovenian language and specialised terminology.

Finally, the hypothesis that students are more in favour of Slovenian as the primary language of instruction than English has been confirmed. As Jesenšek (2016: 16) stated, language in higher education goes beyond its purely communicative function; it is the bearer of conceptual thinking, cultural patterns and historical memory, and cannot easily be replaced by a foreign language without losing some of its cultural specificity and authenticity.

Data Availability Statement

The article is based on data fully presented and discussed within the article itself; therefore, no additional data archiving is required.

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SLOVENŠČINA – UČNI JEZIK V VISOKEM ŠOLSTVU

V 21. stoletju je vse več posameznih dvojezičnih oz. večjezičnih govorcev in govork, angleščina pa v evropskem in izvenevropskem prostoru ostaja *lingua franca*. Evropske univerze si prizadevajo spodbujati proces internacionalizacije, v katerem imata angleščina in pouk v angleškem jeziku ključno vlogo. Angleščina ima tudi prevladujoč položaj v akademski založniški sferi. Tudi akademiki, ki ne delajo na anglofonskih univerzah, se čutijo prisiljene objavljati v visoko uveljavljenih revijah, ki so napisane v angleškem jeziku. Pomemben del jezikovnega načrtovanja predstavlja učni jezik visokega šolstva, zato so naju v prispevku zanimala stališča njegovih uporabnikov, tj. študentk in študentov predšolske vzgoje in razrednega pouka Pedagoške fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani in Pedagoške fakultete Univerze na Primorskem do slovenščine kot učnega jezika v visokem šolstvu. Jezik v visokem šolstvu namreč ni zgolj sredstvo sporazumevanja, temveč tudi temelj konceptualnega mišljenja, nosilec kulturnih vzorcev in zgodovinskega izročila. Tujega jezika zato ni mogoče preprosto nadomestiti, ne da bi pri tem izgubili del kulturne edinstvenosti in pristnosti. Za namene raziskave je bil po pregledu strokovne literature z obravnavano tematiko izoblikovan anketni vprašalnik, ki je vseboval 20 trditev na petstopenjski Likertovi lestvici stališč in ga je v celoti izpolnilo 154 študentk in študentov ljubljanske in koprške pedagoške fakultete. Rezultati so pokazali pozitivna stališča študentk in študentov do slovenščine kot učnega jezika v visokem šolstvu. Najvišje so ocenili osmo trditev, tj., da je pomembno obvladati slovenski strokovni jezik svojega študijskega področja (4.86), najnižje pa četrto trditev, tj., da bi moral zaradi vedno večjega števila tujih študentov na slovenskih univerzah v prihodnosti študij na slovenskih univerzah potekati v angleškem jeziku (1.72). Rezultati raziskave so potrdili tudi hipotezo, da študentke in študenti izražajo večjo podporo oz. so bolj naklonjeni slovenščini kot primarnemu učnemu jeziku kot angleščini.