ABSTRACT. This paper deals with the model of mother-tongue learning and teaching in Slovenia. Although Slovenia itself is a young state (12 years), the Slovene language has played an important role in Slovene national identity throughout the centuries Slovenes lived under foreign dominations. As a result, Slovene as mother tongue became a sacred icon as reflected in mother-tongue education. Under the influence of new didactical research in the 1980s, the conditions became favourable for modernising the curriculum. Since 1998 new curricula have been implemented in which communicative approaches have become prominent in language, grammar and literature curricula and teaching.

KEY WORDS: communicative approach, curricula, goals of mother tongue education, Matura examinations, Slovene as subject, Slovene as teaching language

1. INTRODUCTION

It has always been very important to set goals for mother-tongue education. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, the richness of our language makes our worlds rich and vast. The mother tongue gives students not just another school subject, but also a language for teaching language. The mother tongue gives students a vast, rich and firm foundation to create professional and technical worlds. How to achieve this aim has been a constant didactic question. This article deals with mother tongue education and elementary and secondary curricula in Slovenia. Slovene can be studied as a mother tongue in both the Faculty of Arts and teacher education faculties, but as a rule not as technical language in other faculties.¹

In Slovene society, mother tongue has always been a strong link

¹ Efforts by Slavists have been made in vain to implement the Slovene language as a technical study in Faculties like Science, Humanities etc. The importance of language, especially technical language competence has been understood in the newly established Faculty of Humanities in Koper. Their curricula includes the subject Academic Writing (in Slovene). Slovene as a subject is also used in the Police Academy and the High School of Administration, each of which provide professionally oriented higher education.
between Slovene people and their national identity. A brief review of Slovene history and language education offers a sense of what Slovene as mother tongue means to Slovenes.

2. **A Brief Historical Background**

Since the 8th century when Slovenes lost their principality of Carinthya, they have been dominated by other nations who often imposed their mother tongue. The Slovene people never lived under the same foreign reign simultaneously, but were split between Romanic and Germanic counties.

The rise of Protestantism led to standardizing the Slovene language. In 1550 Primož Trubar published the first Slovene book, *Catechismus and Abecedarium*,\(^2\) a textbook for religion and learning to write and read in Slovene. In 1584 Jurij Dalmatin translated the Bible into Slovene\(^3\) and Adam Bohorič wrote the first Slovene grammar.\(^4\) During the period of Protestantism, the first school using Slovene as the teaching language was founded. After the defeat of the Protestants in the 17th century, the language of teaching reverted to German. Towards the end of 18th century, Maria Theresa introduced compulsory elementary schools in which the Slovene language could be used to help pupils to learn German. Slovene was used in religion classes. Under the Napoleonic reign in the Illyrian Provinces, Slovene was introduced into schools as the language of education.

Only after the March revolution of 1848 did the Slovenes develop a strong national awareness and, among other political rights, demanded equal status with German as their mother tongue. As a result, the monarchy gave greater autonomy to the regions to determine the language of education. The Slovene language was gradually introduced into schools, first into the compulsory years of schooling. The first secondary grammar school with Slovene as a teaching language was not established until 1905.

In the second half of the 19th century, Slovene as a standard language was modernised and evolved, supported by theoretical works on the

\(^{2}\) Primož Trubar: *Catechismus In der Windischen Sprach ... Anu kratku podvucene s katerim vsaki človek more v nebu priti.* 1550.

\(^{3}\) Jurij Dalmatin: *Biblja, tu je, vse svetu pismu.* 1584.

\(^{4}\) Adam Bohorič: *Arcticae horulae Succi Sivae, De latinocarniolana literatura, ad latinæ lingvae analogiam accomodata.* Wittenberg, 1584.