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**Multilingual educational trajectories in the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Two autobiographical accounts**

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The history of education in various parts of what is now Croatia during the Austro-Hungarian period, above all the primary school system, has been extensively written about in the Croatian language area by people involved in the system itself (teachers, school supervisors), writing at the time when the system was still in place, as well as historians throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was extremely important for the history of education, because at that time the foundations of the modern educational system were laid. The Empire was characterized by societal multilingualism, which produced some side-effects revealing linguistic relations as hegemonic relations. Power hierarchies were communicated via language functions as only the more privileged languages allowed an individual full access to all spheres of society, so such languages usually have to be learned by all at least as public languages. Recent scholarship devoted to the culture of the Habsburg Empire within post-colonial theory has exposed Habsburg Austria as an inner colonial space with a linguistically and ethnically German (and during the Dual Monarchy also Hungarian) centre and Slav periphery in which different Slav cultures and languages functioned as an internal Other or the „stranger within“, surviving mostly in the private realm.

In southeastern part of the Empire, in the Adriatic area German as the official language of administration competed in education with the Italian language as the language of everyday life in urban centers, while in the Hungarian part of Fiume Hungarian became an additional public language with more prestige and more power association. Through education processes, by attending Italian, German or Hungarian schools, Croatian and other Slavic children were introduced to the hierarchical separation of public and private language spheres, developing at the same time high plurilingual competencies.

The possibilities or limitations that the existing educational system posed for individuals were rarely scrutinized (having in mind the educational standards of the time, particularly for girls or the general level of illiteracy). Personal accounts on the matter are quite rare and, where available, are often fragmentary. This paper will analyze autobiographical

accounts and compare the educational trajectories of two persons from two different parts of the Monarchy: Antonio Martecchini from Dubrovnik (born in 1832) and Alberta Širola (pseudonym) from Rijeka, (born in 1889 as an illegitimate child). These two stories and perspectives offer an interesting insight into educational and linguistic practices during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, revealing two quite different personal gender and class specific experiences.