

## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, children grow up learning about the environment in school and at home. For example, many households participate in their community's recycling programs, and such households are raising eco-conscious children, perhaps without even recognizing that they are doing so.

While a transition to a more eco-conscious lifestyle might not be seamless, it is far easier than many might suspect and even easier for children who have yet to develop a lifetime of habits that might not be so eco-friendly.

There are additional lessons about conservation that parents can impart. For instance, when grocery shopping, always make a list before leaving the house and explain to children that you do this so you would not have to make two trips to the store and waste petrol that the second trip would require. In addition, encourage children to turn the lights off when they leave a room to save energy.

To maximize their contribution in maintaining today's natural environment, parents and pedagogues raise future generations in a manner to be well informed and ready to solve all possible problems that might arise in that generation's environment.

**Keywords:** eco-conscious, habits, nature, primary school, education

## ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

Napjainkban a környezetvédelmi tudat kialakításának fontossága egyértelművé vált. Sokan a jövő generációjának, azaz a kisgyermekek szokásainak és hozzáállásának megváltoztatását tartják kulcsfontosságúnak, hiszen a gyerekek óvodás, illetve kisiskolás korban még igen fogékonyak az őket körülvevő természet hatásaira, így náluk a környezetbarát szemlélet sokkal könnyebben és hatásosabban kialakítható, mint a felnőtteknél. Ennek megvalósításában a szülőnek, de a tanítónak is kiemelekedő szerep jut. Ahhoz, hogy környezettudatos szemléletet tudjanak kialakítani a gyerekekben, nekik maguknak is hasonló szemlélettel kell rendelkezniük, és ugyanilyen fontos az is, hogy jó példával járjanak elő. Éppen ezért a családoknak jobban oda kell figyelni a mindennapos környezetvédelmi szokásaikra, az ivóvíz és a hulladékkezelés kérdésére, az élő természettel való kapcsolatra.

Vizsgálatunk célja feltárni, hogy a vajdasági magyar ajkú, alsó tagozatos diákok tudása és szokásai mennyire mondhatóak környezettudatosnak, és hogy ezen szemlélet kialakításában milyen szerep jut a családnak, illetve a tanítónak.

**Kulcsszavak:** környezettudatos, szokások, iskoláskorú gyermek, nevelés, természet.



### **Major Lenke**

University of Novi Sad  
Hungarian Language Teacher  
Training Faculty, Subotica  
lenkemajor@gmail.com

### **Horák Rita**

University of Novi Sad  
Hungarian Language Teacher  
Training Faculty, Subotica  
horakrita83@gmail.com

## **THE ECO-FRIENDLY HABITS OF LOWER GRADE PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN VOJVODINA**

*A vajdasági alsó tagozatos diákok  
környezetvédelmi szokásainak vizsgálata*

*Ispitivanje navika u zaštiti životne sredine  
kod učenika nižih razreda u Vojvodini*

### **Introduction**

The importance of forming environmental consciousness has become evident nowadays. It is assumed that the habits and attitudes of the future generation, i.e. that of children should be formed towards a positive direction, since children of school and pre-school age are very receptive towards nature that surround them, therefore the establishment of environmental conscious thinking is more likely to be achieved in comparison to adults. *Fűzné* (2002) regards Environmental education to be more complex than the Education of Environment and Nature Protection since the former not only deals with the protection of the environment and nature, but also with the formation of appropriate environmental culture among pupils.

The formation of eco-friendly behavior is influenced not only by teachers but also by pupils' family (parents). To succeed in the formation of the idea related to sustainability among pupils teachers as well as parents need to have the appropriate knowledge at their disposal and also set an example for their pupils/children. *Kopnina* claims that positive attitudes towards environment can be the most successfully achieved in childhood (*Kopnina*, 2011). *Mikházy* (2006) believes people and families should pay more attention to their everyday environmental habits, the issues of drinking water and waste. Environmental consciousness and eco-friendly behavior are based on attitudes and emotional relations towards nature.

Regarding the topic whether environmental protection can be taught or not *Nahalka* (1997) believes that 2 different viewpoints dominate the scientific literature. According to the first, knowledge transfer bears importance, i.e. members of the future generation need to have deep and contemporary knowledge regarding the topic and issues of environmental protection since their eco-friendly behavior is based on this

knowledge. The second view regards human behavior and responsibility to be of key importance. The goal is to change environmental attitudes and form such behavior that can change the status of humanity within the bio-sphere. *Major* (2012) also believes that Environmental Education should not only focus on knowledge transfer, but rather on the widespread formation of environmental attitudes. Regarding the status of environmental education *Fűzsné* (2007) claims that some teachers inform their pupils only about issues that concern humanity and nature with the perspective that future generations will be able to handle the inherited environment which is loaded with problems resulted by the inappropriate treatment of the environment.

*Sobel* (1996) believes that one should rely on children's instinctual inner motivations to support the formation of their environmental conscious behavior (*Sobel*, 1996). Children should spend as much time as possible in nature in the company of eco-friendly adults, i.e. children should enjoy themselves in nature, have a good time, take to it and later focus on nature's problems.

### **Aims**

The aim of the study is to explore how eco-friendly the Hungarian lower grade primary school pupils are, how much they know about environment protection and what role their family and teachers play in the formation of environment conscious behavior.

### **Sample and methodology**

The sample of the research consists of 12 primary schools in Vojvodina, to be specific 256 lower grade primary school pupils. The research was anonymous, conducted by the method of questionnaire. The items included by the questionnaire can be grouped into three sections: what do schools do in the interest of the environment protection, what do children know about environment protection and what do children (and their family) do in the interest of environment protection.

This paper presents a segment of the research. The items included by the questionnaire which will be analyzed are the following:

- Match the data with the appropriate World Environment Days.
  - What can you do to protect Our Planet?
  - What pollutes air the most? What do you think?
  - What does 'smart shopping' mean?
  - From an eco-friendly perspective, which type of wrapping is the best?
  - If you do the shopping, do you have a sachet on you?
  - Do you use energy-efficient light bulbs at home?
-

## Results

The majority of the pupils (more than 70%) is aware of the various World Days and also knows their dates owing to the teachers' work and their eco-friendly attitude. Supposedly, pupils did not learn about World Days from TV or their parents, but most probably they learned about them during their school activities with the contribution of their teachers, excursions, quizzes, etc. Fűzné (2007) claims that environmental protection programs related to various World Days should be organized in a festive mood, with the purpose of avoiding the degradation of environmental pollution and its issues by enlisting the problems and organizing quizzes that focus only on the theoretical aspects of environmental pollution and protection. Teachers should try to trigger responsibility and knowledge among their pupils having achieved an affectionate relationship with the topic among pupils (Figure 1.).

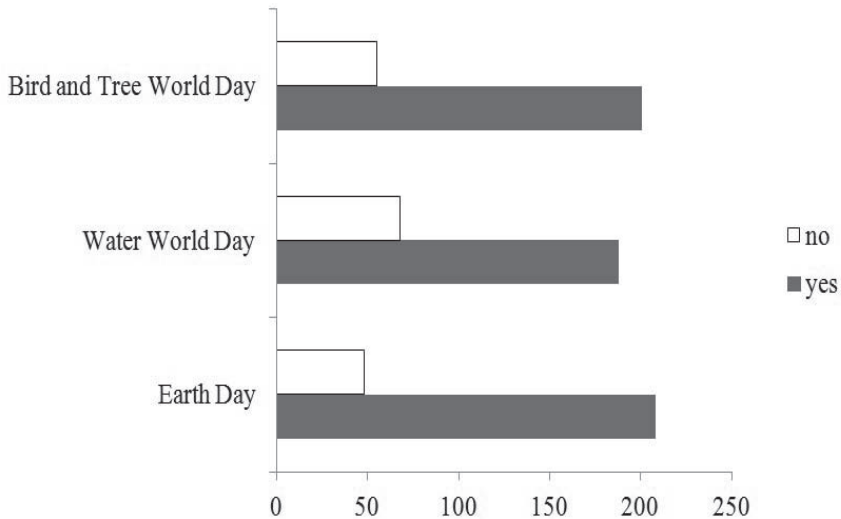


Figure 1. Match the data with the appropriate World Environment Days.

The 67% of the children knew that tree planting, sparing electricity and recycling are important for the protection of our environment and that if these conditions are respected we act eco-friendly (Figure 2.).

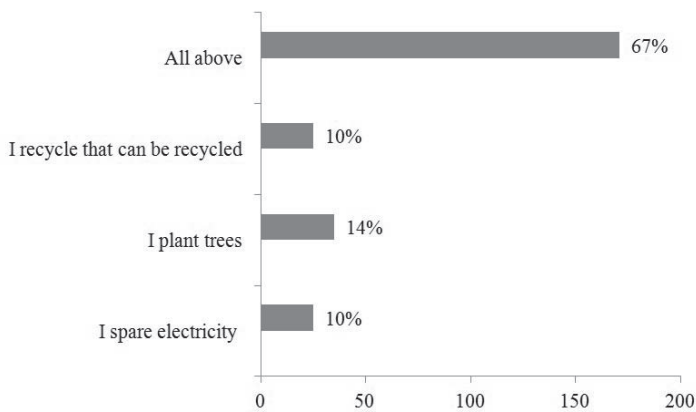


Figure 2. What can you do to protect Our Planet?

Almost the 80% of the primary school pupils know that cars pollute air the most, while 20% of the pupils believed that public transportation pollutes air the most. Supposedly they learnt about the eco-friendly features of public transportation during their school activities (Figure 3.).

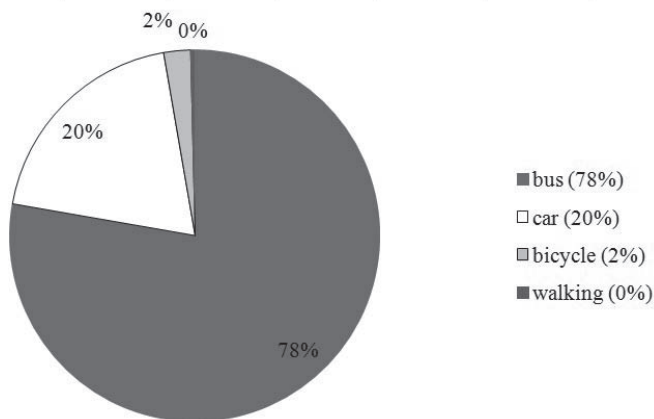


Figure 3. What pollutes air the most? What do you think?

The 65% of the children knows what the concept ‘smart shopping’ means. We can assume that they learned the meaning of the concept from their teachers or pre-school teachers (Figure 4.).

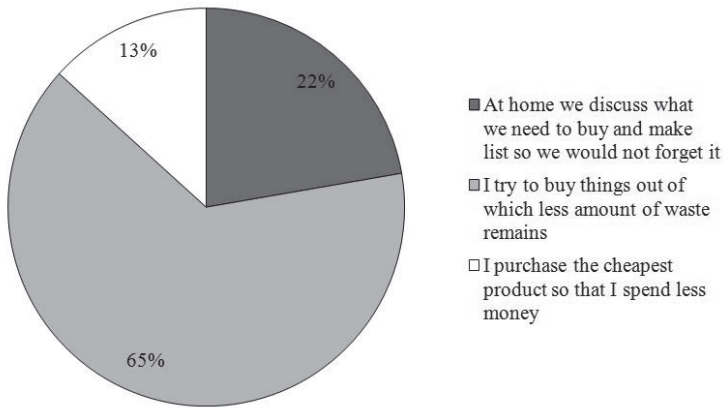


Figure 4. What does 'smart shopping' mean?

The 70% of the pupils believe that the returnable glass bottles are the most eco-friendly. Unfortunately, the 15% of the subjects assumed that plastic bottles are the best wrapping tools. Their false knowledge might correlate with the fact that plastic bottles occur almost everywhere, which can easily suggest the positive and advantageous use of theirs (Figure 5).

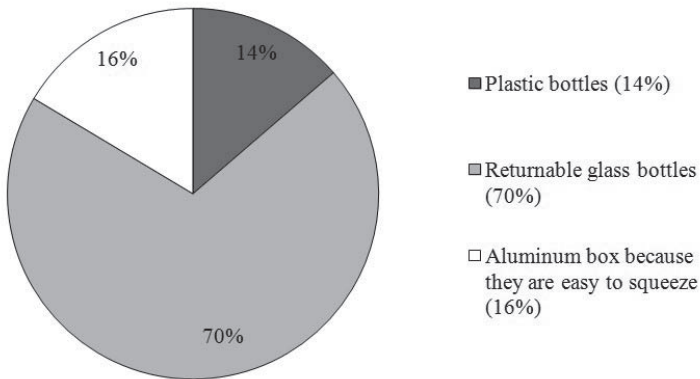


Figure 5. From an eco-friendly perspective, which type of wrapping is the best?

The next question aimed at the examination of children's shopping habits, to be specific whether they take a plastic bag or a bag with themselves (and how often) when they go shopping. The 32% of the pupils take a bag or a plastic bag with themselves, the 1/3 of the subjects believe it is pointless since plastic bags are for free at shops. Parental influence (such as setting an example or the lack of it) has a huge influence

on this eco-friendly behavior among pupils. It is promising that 36% of the children remember to take a plastic bag with themselves, however, we still cannot speak of a well-formed habit or routine, but it is surely a basis for the further development of eco-friendly behavior (Figure 6.).

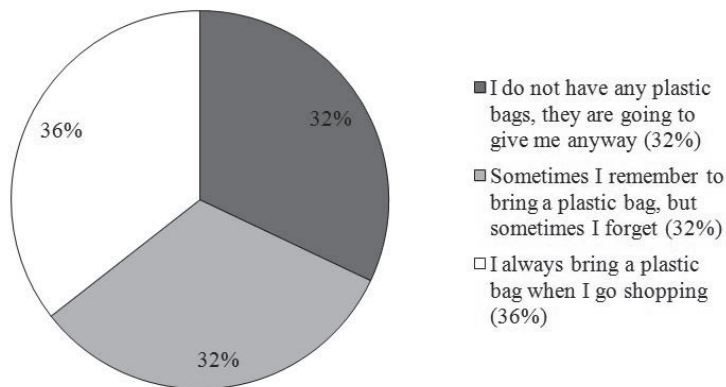


Figure 6. *If you do the shopping, do you have a sachet on you?*

The question whether energy efficient light bulbs are used at home aimed to reveal the environmental attitudes of the pupils' family and parents. The analysis of the questionnaires show that in the 68% of the pupils' homes use such light bulbs (Figure 7.).

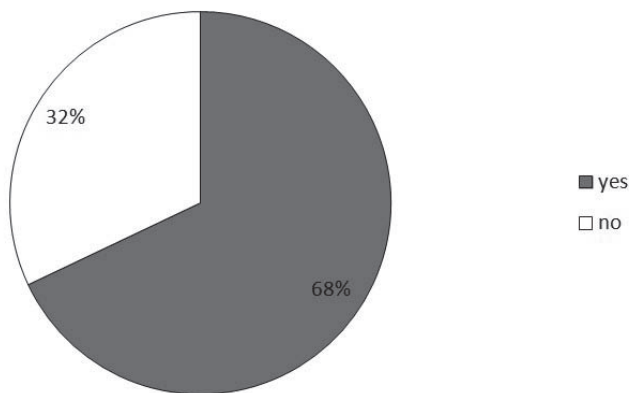


Figure 7. *Do you use energy-efficiency light bulbs at home?*

## Conclusion

On the basis of the analyzed questionnaires it can be concluded that teachers focus on environmental education during their teaching processes. Children are aware of

the various world days of environmental protection which is most probably the result of teachers' positive attitudes towards environmental protection. The majority of the pupils (more than 70%) knows that cars pollute the air and also know what smart shopping means. Similarly, the 70% of the subjects can successfully define what waste and rubbish is as well as renewable energy (Horák, 2013a, 2013b). We believe that parents and teachers should both participate and contribute to the formation of eco-friendly behavior and positive attitude towards nature among pupils. Approximately the two-third of subjects could differentiate eco-friendly wrapping material from those that pollute the environment. Regarding the use of plastic bags, the one-third of the pupils bring their own plastic bags when doing shopping, while another one-third of the children admit forgetting bringing plastic bags with themselves. This later group falsely assumes that it is needless to bring their own plastic bags since shops are going to provide them with plastic bags anyway. The use of energy-efficient light bulbs as well as collecting rubbish selectively (Horák, 2013a) reflects the eco-friendly attitudes of parents.

On the basis of the research results, one can conclude that the positive attitudes towards environmental education can be detected among schools, teachers and parents. The formation of positive attitudes towards nature and environmental protection among pupils of this generation is highly likely to be achieved which can ensure the appearance of future generation who care about nature, act eco-friendly and behave as conscious consumers permanently.

## References

- Füzné Kószó Mária (2007): Földanya tiszteletére, Iskolakultúra, (17. évf.) 8-10. sz. pp 193-196.
- Horák Rita (2013a): Az also tagozatosok környezettudatos magatartása, Miskolc, in press
- Horák Rita (2013b): Környezetvédelem a vadászati iskolák alsó osztályaiban. Tudományos diszkurzusok vajdasági magyar tudóstalálkozó 2013. Szabadka. In press.
- Kopnina Helen (2011): Kids and cars: Environmental attitudes in children. Transport Policy, Vol. 18.,pp. 573–578.
- Major Lenke (2012): A környezeti nevelés szerepe a környezettudatos magatartás formálásában, Iskolakultúra, Vol. 22., pp 67-79.
- Mikházi Zsuzsanna (2006): A környezetvédelem és a környezeti tudatformálás összefüggései. XII.Nemzetközi Környezetvédelmi és Vidékfejlesztési Diákkonferencia, Mezőtúr.
- Nahalka István (1997): Tanítható-e a környezetvédelem? Új pedagógiai szemle, Vol. 47., pp. 125-132.