

USING LINGUISTIC SOFTWARE NOOJ IN DESCRIBING PRESCHOOL AND YOUNGER SCHOOL CHILDREN'S CROATIAN LANGUAGE VOCABULARY

Katarina Aladrović Slovaček

University of Zagreb, The Faculty for Teacher Education



INTRODUCTION

- Croatian language acquisition process has been **recorded in CHILDES**, the world's database of children's language (only 3 children)
- Some **other sporadic research** of kindergarten and preschool children's Croatian language acquisition has been done which has resulted in broadening the knowledge about the process of Croatian language acquisition up to the start of school education.
- the project '**Developing preschool and younger school children's vocabulary**' was started with the goal to **describe preschool and younger school children's vocabulary** and possible influence of different **linguistic and extralinguistic factors** on this process



LEXICAL DEVELOPMENT

- lexical development is the most dynamic part of the **linguistic development**
- it is constantly exposed to frequent **qualitative and quantitative changes** of different intensity depending on the specific period of life
- vocabulary teaching has **long time been neglected** in traditional teaching and more time in language teaching has been paid to learning grammar (Duan & Da, 2015)
- the aim of Croatian language teaching – **enrichment of vocabulary**, but we do not have strategies for it (it is depending on teacher)
- acquiring of words depend on **linguistic and extralinguistic factors**
- **linguistic factors**: number of letters or syllables, pronunciation, writing, morphological characteristics, syntax, connection with other words, connection with context
- **extralinguistic factors**: education of parents, gender, place of residence



LEXICAL DEVELOPMENT

- language acquiring - **reading**
- every day a child **learn 2-3 new words** (during a year 1000 words)
- the process of acquiring depends on context (Scott, 2005) – **global and local context**

Estimation of vocabulary size in L1:

- pre-school children (6 years) 4.000 – 6.000 word families (root words)
- adolescents (18 years) 17.000 – 19.000 word families
- vocabulary growth during education: 500 – 1.000 word families per year
- age is more significant predictor of vocabulary size than school year (Coxhead, Nation, Sim 2015)



READING - VOCABULARY

- Some research (according to Duan and Da, 2015) shows **that an adult learns 70 new words while reading**, and a student learns 16% of new words in a text.
- **PIRLS research (2011) shows that Croatian students have a well-developed strategic competence in the reading process, but also that they do not really like reading as an activity.**
- **PISA - 15-year-olds - three dimensions: text type (continuous, intermittent), reading aspect (finding data, interpreting, thinking, evaluating) and situations (public, general, private)**
- Croatia ranked 30th (out of 60), and the results show that 80% of Croatian students are to some extent able to use written texts in order to develop their own knowledge and potential and better participate in the knowledge society.



LEXICAL ENRICHMENT

- **knowing a word** – knowing a word form, meaning and usage passively and actively (Nation, 2001); learning all its normative forms and usage (Udier, 2009)

Expansion of a child's vocabulary takes place in the following hierarchical order:

- language input (grown-up speakers, spoken language, written texts)
- factors pertaining to personal experience (age, prior knowledge)
- acquisition of the denotative meaning (individual, mental lexicon)
- processing into the general lexicon (creation of a lexical norm)

- **LEXICAL ENRICHMENT**: word density, word diversity and sophistication
- **VOCABULARY** - the prediction of language development



CURRICULUM

- The **newly-adopted Curriculum for the School Subject Croatian Language** (2019) identifies development of lexical competence as one of the outcomes within the framework of the domain “Language and Communication”.
- Nevertheless, this document fails **to define the exact strategies** that teachers can use to achieve this objective, which means that accomplishment of this outcome depends on the creativity and **skills** of teachers themselves.



VOCABULARY

- important role in language acquisition since vocabulary knowledge is the foundation for **the insight into knowledge of language** (vocabulary development is **the indicator of language knowledge and the basis for developing communicative competence**) (Alquathi, 2015).
- the **vocabulary size** is a predictive factor for the later syntactic development and verb morphology development (Peter, 2019)
- numerous definitions of vocabulary exist and it is most often defined as the total number of words that a person knows and can use in various contexts or the total number of words in vocabulary, i. e. the list of words and their meanings
- resulting from this definition is the division into **receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge**
- Receptive vocabulary knowledge implies recognising and understanding words in context, produce words in speaking and writing, i. e. in productive language activities (Alqahtani, 2015; Allman, 2005)



METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE:

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

SCHOOL CHILDREN - 63 % boys 37 % girls; 2 primary schools in the middle of Croatia

- 75 % SSS, 20 % VSS or VŠS and 5 % OŠ

INSTRUMENTI

- **questionary and written works** (3. i 4. r. – raspravljajući tekst – *Zašto volim/ne volim zimu*, 5. r. – *Moje najdraže putovanje*)



PROBLEMS

- 1) to establish a correlation between cognitive processes (verbal cognitive ability, nonverbal cognitive ability, attention, memory) and linguistic factors on the grammatical (phonological, morphological and syntactic), orthographical (writing words) and semantic level (word meaning, relations between words, visual representation of words and their phraseological associations)
- 2) to establish a correlation between social factors (environment, gender and parents' education) and vocabulary development among preschool and younger school children



