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Orthoepy in the Curricula for Junior Grades of Primary School²

Extended summary

The starting point for the correct use of a language includes the correct articulation of all sounds of that language. It is generally believed that the child has mastered the articulation of all sounds in their native language by the time they start primary school, but the results of numerous studies show that this is not the case because there have been numerous recorded examples of atypical articulation which is not organic in nature. This indicates that we must work continuously on the correct articulation of sounds from the very first day of primary school. Therefore, this paper will examine how much attention is paid to this segment of orthoepy in the modern Serbian Language and Literature curricula for junior grades of primary school that have been in use since 2018/2019, beginning from the first grade. The aim of this research is to determine whether these curricula recognize the importance of continuous work on the correct articulation of sounds. The following research tasks arise from this research goal: 1) examine what teaching content referring to the correct articulation of sounds can be found in the reformed Serbian Language and Literature curricula from the 1st to the 4th grades; and 2) examine if there are, and if so, what kind of qualitative novelties referring to the articulation of sounds in the reformed curriculum content compared to the orthoepy-related content in the curriculum prior to the reform. The research utilizes the content analysis method. The object of the analysis is the Serbian Language and Literature curricula from the 1st to the 4th grade prior to the reform (Rulebook on the Curriculum and Syllabus for the First and Second Grade of Primary School, 2004; Rule-

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book on the Syllabus for the First, Second, Third and Fourth Grade of Primary School and the Curriculum for the Third Grade of Primary School, 2005; Rulebook on the Curriculum for the Fourth Grade of Primary School, 2006), and after the reform (Rulebook on the Syllabus for the First Cycle of Primary Education, and the Curriculum for the First Grade of Primary Education, 2017; Rulebook on the Curriculum for the Second Grade of Primary School, 2018; Rulebook on the Curriculum for the Third Grade of Primary School, 2019; Rulebook on the Curriculum for the Fourth Grade of Primary School, 2019). The results of the analysis show that after the reform, working on the pronunciation of sounds became a segment of the curriculum content for the first grade of primary school. Program content for the first grade thus includes “*writing and pronouncing problematic sounds that students may have difficulties with*”, and the examples include the following sounds: dž, šć, č, j, and lj. The Serbian Language and Literature curricula for the second, third and fourth grades of primary school do not include any orthoepy-related content that involves the correct pronunciation of sounds. A comparative analysis of the old (2004, 2005, 2006) and new curricula (2017, 2018, 2019) discovered that the situation was different before the reform, because the old curricula prescribed continuous work on the correct articulation of sounds. We have determined that all orthoepy-related curriculum content that involved practicing the correct pronunciation of affricates (č, ć, dž, and đ) and fricatives (h) in the third and the fourth grade was removed. Given the existence of numerous problems with atypical pronunciation of affricates and the specific mouth position required to pronounce h in many dialects of the Serbian language, as well as warnings of language experts that continuous violations of the pronunciation norm may damage its stability, one of the main implications of this paper is an attempt to reintroduce orthoepy-related content referring to the correct pronunciation of affricates and fricatives into the curricula for junior grades of primary school through curriculum modifications and/or addenda. This would help teachers, allowing continuity in the practice of correct articulation of sounds, because lack of practice causes atypical articulations that are not organic in nature to stabilize. In addition, the continuity of orthoepic exercises is necessary not only to improve the quality of pronunciation of sounds, but also to raise student awareness of the need to speak as correctly as possible, thus contributing to the preservation of our language’s orthoepic norm. Moreover, it would be useful to think about expanding the curriculum content by adding other ‘critical’ sounds which are commonly mispronounced. It is necessary to examine what practitioners think of this problem, which sounds are included in orthoepic exercises, and what kind of support to the correct pronunciation of sounds is provided by textbooks, so this can be an incentive for some future research.

Keywords: articulation, sounds, curricula for lower grades of primary school, orthoepy, Serbian language.

Sources

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