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Serbian Language Teaching in the Function of Stimulating Primary School Pupils' Reading Interests

Extended summary

Identification and development of interest for reading at younger school age is important for developing affinity towards literature as a form of art. In the paper, the author focuses on the evaluation of Serbian language teaching as one of the factors that contribute to motivating, guiding and encouraging pupils to improve their reading skills.

Teaching literature as an important factor in developing not only motivation for reading, but also reading skills, continually gives rise to the issue of finding the ways in which pupils will gradually grow to like books and learn from them. Different teaching strategies can contribute to achieving these goals. In this sense, research findings of studies dealing with the development of reading interests in the function of improving motivation for reading and reading competencies imply that it's necessary: (a) to provide teaching incentives directly related to pupils' reading interests, in order to provide access to a variety of material for reading and directing pupils' attention to certain characteristics of the text (genre traits, topic, content, characters); (b) to enable pupils to independently choose reading content and to respect their choices; (c) to enable an exchange of experience, interaction and collaboration in pupils' reading activities.

In this regard, the possibility of providing teaching incentives for developing pupils' reading motivation and satisfying their reading preferences through teaching activities is considered. For the purposes of this paper, the importance of text localization and consideration of the genre peculiarities for encouraging reading interests of the lower primary school pupils were highlighted. The choice of research factors was influenced mostly by the convenience of teaching interpretation of the genre and localization for motivating reading interests and devel-

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oping reading habits, as well as their mutual conditionality – the genre is one of the parameters that condition the possibility of localization of the text.

In the process of encouraging pupils' reading interests during teaching, the key role belongs to teacher who should first learn more about the reading interests of pupils in order to help them read at a higher level and understand the texts more effectively. Another important role of the teacher is to ensure a systematic development of pupils' reading motivation, which includes both motivational and cognitive factors whose joint action is one of the ways of improving pupils' reading achievements.

Since the theoretical and empirical data indicate that by appropriate teaching methods pupils' reading interests can be awakened and developed, among other things, by the localization of text within broad textual units and/or wider content and conceptual context, as well as by designing creative teaching literature based on pupils' genre interest, and given the importance of the role of teachers in this process, their opinions on the importance of teaching in the function of motivation for reading were examined.

The influence of teaching literature in the lower grades of primary school on pupils' reading interests was tested by interviewing primary school teachers (N=312) from 33 schools in the city of Belgrade and 10 administrative districts of the Republic of Serbia. The research tasks were designed to examine teachers' attitudes towards: (a) the influence of literature teaching on pupils' reading interests; (b) the contribution of text localization to fostering pupils' reading interests; (c) the contribution of the analyzing the genre particularities of texts to the development of pupils' reading preferences.

The research results show the teacher's prevailing opinion that teaching literature has a lesser impact on pupils' reading interests. On the other hand, teachers value highly the methodological procedures related to the convenience of localization of certain types of text for encouraging pupils' reading interests. They also think that the consideration of the peculiarities of the text genre is a teaching incentive that somewhat contributes to the development of reading preferences, although the genre peculiarities are one of the parameters of its convenience for localization.

The responsibility for encouraging reading interests and developing reading habits lies not only on schools. This problem must be given considerable attention outside of the school system too, which implies the necessity of cooperation between institutions – libraries, cultural centers, educational system. The results of this research open questions about the role of teachers and the quality of teaching literature for the purpose of encouraging and developing pupils' reading interests. Bearing in mind that the efficiency of educational work is assessed by the level of development of reading interests, it is necessary that all participants in the teaching process endeavour to design a creative and challenging environment which will, by means of knowing, encouraging and developing pupils' reading interests, satisfy their needs for development by reading and through reading.

Keywords: reading interests, teaching literature, text localization, genre particularities, pupils, primary school teachers.

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