

The Role of Text in Enriching Vocabulary and Acquiring Cultural Elements in Early School-Age Children

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Abstract

The fundamental goal of mother tongue instruction in early school age is the development of communicative competence, that is, enabling pupils to communicate in everyday life situations. Research conducted with Croatian pupils over the past decade shows a decreasing motivation to master language content, increasingly poor functional literacy, and emerging difficulties both in reading comprehension and in active speaking, as pupils find it harder to formulate their thoughts and lack the words to express them. The process of vocabulary acquisition is the most dynamic process of language development, as we acquire vocabulary throughout our entire lives. This is precisely why it is important what pupils read and how much the texts and content they read motivate them to develop reading habits and competencies, since through reading a pupil acquires 500 to 1,000 new words per year. Furthermore, in the texts they read, pupils learn about the world in which they live, cultural specificities, values, and norms, and they develop their imagination. Therefore, this paper will present a study conducted with primary school pupils (ages 8–10), who will be offered five different functional texts to read. After reading, the pupils will complete a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire on their attitudes toward the text. The data obtained will show pupils' attitudes toward the functional style of texts and indicate which texts pupils receive best at the level of vocabulary and the acquisition of cultural values and norms, as well as which texts encourage further reading habits.

Keywords: Croatian Language; Functional Texts; Lexical Competence; Motivation; Reading Habits