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The Concept of Composition Instruction in the Žofková–toži?ka Textbook Within the European Context of Interwar Reform Pedagogy

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of composition instruction in the Pracovní učebnice jazyka českého (1933–1938) by Lidmila Žofková and Bohumil Toži?ka and situates it within the broader European context of interwar reform pedagogy. Drawing on all four volumes of the textbook series, the analysis argues that this work represents one of the most substantial Czech efforts to implement modern didactic principles inspired by pragmatism, pedocentrism, and the activity school movement. The comparative framework focuses on principles central to reform pedagogy, including pragmatism, child centredness, authentic text work, and activity based learning, which link the textbook to the ideas of John Dewey, Ellen Key, Leo Tolstoy, and Adolphe Ferrière. The textbooks systematically develop pupils' communicative competence through text based activities, observation, text transformation, and the integration of composition with reading, reflecting modern principles of language skills integration. The study also highlights the educational aims of the textbooks, which mirror the democratic and ethical ideals of interwar Czechoslovakia. The analysis demonstrates that the Žofková–Toži?ka series is a significant example of how Czechoslovak education creatively adapted European reform pedagogical ideas and how these influences shaped the teaching of composition. The study contributes to international scholarship by offering a rare Central European case that illustrates how global reform pedagogical ideas were translated into mother tongue instruction. The research is being conducted at the Department of the Czech Language, Faculty of Education, Charles University, and was supported by the Charles University Grant Agency (GA UK), project no. 606525.

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