

# USE OF READING MATERIALS IN THE TEACHING THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE

Preliminary communication

UDC: 372.461:371.3

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## Abstract

Developing reading skills is a long process that is "perfected" by reading. Reading assignments appear as means and contents for reading practice, the use of which implies a high degree of independence in reading. Literary works with different formats are used in the teaching in Macedonian language, such as literary contents in the textbooks and reading assignments for extracurricular independent reading.

The subject of this research is the use of reading materials in the teaching in Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the nine-year primary education. The purpose of this research is to make a content and structural analysis of the reading assignments, as well as to examine the attitudes of the teachers about the use of the reading assignments in the teaching.

The conclusions lead to a recommendation for reconsideration of the possibility for the Reading assignment to receive a new program status in an independent Program Area, in order to define more clearly the objectives and to increase the number of teaching hours intended for processing the reading assignments.

In the program area Reading, literature and reading assignments, the exact number of teaching hours for the realization of the reading assignments is not indicated. The analysis of the reading assignments in the first two educational cycles leads to the final conclusions according to which it is necessary to increase the number of compulsory reading assignments, which means to increase the number of hours for their analysis. The conclusions indicate that teachers need to strengthen the pedagogical competencies and to build consistent didactic support for the analysis of reading assignments.

An important conclusion is the need for more comprehensive research to examine the program setup of program areas that are closely correlated with the research problem, re-examination of the offered reading assignments; stimulating students' interest in reading; opportunities to actualize reading on a daily basis; the availability of reading assignments; encouraging a successive approach to reading assignments.

**Keywords:** reading assignments, curricula, reading, competencies

## Introduction

The use of literary works in teaching is a complex and multi-layered process. It primarily stems from the specificity of the literary work, but also from the didactic procedures needed for effective discovery of artistic values. At the same time, they should be appropriate to the opportunities and needs of the students for whom the literary works are intended.

There are many ways or possibilities to use literary works in teaching, some of which are more or less conventional. Namely, despite the fact that literary works are used in the teaching in Macedonian language, as literary contents in textbooks in Macedonian language or as reading assignments in the same subject, in our country there are studies that show that literary works can be used very successfully in other subjects.

It is evident that the literary works and their use in teaching are located in the program areas: Listening and speaking, Literature and Reading, literature and reading assignments, for the realization of which the largest number of teaching hours is provided. All this points to the importance of these program areas and the importance of literature and reading, i.e. "reading" without which their use would not be possible.

## Children's literature and its meaning

Literature is an integral whole of many components and produced works, the fruit of the creativity of the artistic word and the creative potentials of the author. According to Spasevski (2007, 20) "artistic literature is a synthesis of thematic-motive authorial perceptions permeated by personal creative thoughts, creatively concentrated through the structure of the composition of the literary work through appropriate developmental stages."

According to Dimova (2011, 17), reading contributes to cognitive, social and emotional unloading, where the reader at some point escapes from everyday life, dives into the fictional world without borders, observes problems and desires of fictional characters, enters a stage of development that is already gone or, looking at the fate of others, can forget about their own difficulties.

It is known that contact with literature for children and young people can promote the development of their own I. Young readers who are looking for their own identity, while reading, encounter many life events. Meeting different characters in literature allows contact with different ways of thinking. In the fictional world, a variety of problem-solving strategies can be implemented without consequences. Thus, reading becomes an exercise for the mind, whereby the reader gets the opportunity to observe his own environment from several perspectives.

According to Nikolih (1979, 259), the teaching approaches through which students come to initial knowledge of the literary work, begin with independent reading of the reading assignment by students; then the student is taught through the work through

an analysis supported by examples from the content and ends by making his own conclusions about the artistic value of the work.

Literary works contain great emotional potentials, because art of any kind, even literature, is created on an emotional basis. On the other hand, many psychological theories suggest that the emotions of the author, ie the literary character, evoke emotions in the reader. "That emotions can 'distort' perceptions where the negative emotional states and reactions are much lower than the threshold for recognizing critical words, ie those words to which the respondents give a negative connotation, where the galvanic reaction of the skin is much stronger, and critical words are often read incorrectly, skipped, etc." (Tofovikj- Kjamilova, 1994, 46). This means that negative emotions significantly reduce the ability to properly perceive critical words.

### **Reading as a language skill**

Reading is one of the most important activities of a person living in the modern world. According to Tomevska-Ilievska (2020, 115), a large number of printed materials of various types are sources of information. But reading certain types of texts with an artistic character can develop a special pleasure, conveying the emotions of the author. Reading also enables educational improvement, in the broadest sense of the word. Undoubtedly, this activity is one of the basic learning tools. Therefore, a good reader should master the technique of reading well and read quickly and efficiently. Reading is an activity that in formal educational terms can be termed as developing a culture of reading.

### **Extracurricular reading and its meaning**

Reading is a developmental process that requires a lot of time, persistence and perseverance. During the period of basic literacy (in the first and second grade) reading exercises should be organized daily. The teacher should assess the reading level of the student through daily assessment.

Reading the reading assignments is an independent activity of the students, they read the reading assignments at home and that is why this reading is called extracurricular reading. These extracurricular activities are a continuation and supplement to the teaching of Macedonian language in primary education. This way of assignments that are given to the student, are in order to develop intellectuality and their greater independence. The most effective way to achieve these goals is the book, although nowadays it is not the only source from which they read, get information and supplement their knowledge. In fact, students read and get information on a daily basis through the media: the daily press, radio, television and the Internet. The teacher has a big influence, before they start the extracurricular reading, because he should guide students how to use the books, diary and information available on the Internet. Through extracurricular reading, the love for the book should be developed, and it also depends to a large extent on the correct attitude and approach of the teacher,

who should encourage and develop that love and interest in the book and reading in children, because he should be a lover of reading and be an example to the students, according to Delceva-Dizdarevic (2003, 245-248).

### **Subject of research**

The use of literary works in general, and their use in teaching implies that the consumer has developed reading skills. It is not possible to use literary works and literary contents without possessing elementary forms of these skills. Because reading is taught by "reading", in the context of developing and perfecting this skill to the level of independent extracurricular reading with an understanding of what has been read, literary works have the function of means of developing reading skills.

In the teaching of Macedonian language, literary works with different formats are used, such as literary contents in the textbooks and reading assignments for extracurricular independent reading. In the process of the student's entry into the world of literature, the didactic principle of going from the easier to the more complex is strictly observed. This refers to the literary contents in the textbooks, as well as to the reading assignments that are provided by the curriculum for the subject Macedonian language. The significance of this process is determined by the fact that it is given dignity in a special program area that is represented in all departments of the nine-year primary education and always with the largest number of teaching hours. However, in this context a special situation arises in which, although the common denominator of the individual program elements in this area is the artistic literary expression, no special distinction has been made between literature and reading assignments. In spite of the fact that the reading assignments are integral literary works of a larger volume, where there are reading assignments with a lower degree of integrity, collections of short stories, poetry collections, and at the beginning of the use of the readings and only one fable from those collections, they do not have didactic support, nor a guide for their use in teaching. Because reading a textbook is extracurricular reading on its own, it requires a high degree of motivation of the students, encouraging them to read during the reading of the work, directing and maintaining a constant interest. Such complex requirements that arise from the specificity and layering of literary reading assignments, its aesthetic, ethical and emotional potentials, indicate the need for revision of the way of use of literary works in teaching.

The subject of this research is defined as the use of literary contents and reading assignments in the teaching of Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the nine-year primary education (from the first to the sixth grade).

### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research is to make a content and structural analysis of the reading assignments, as well as to examine the attitudes of the teachers about the use

of the reading assignments in the teaching in Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the nine-year primary education.

### **Research tasks**

1. to examine the representation of the genders, types, genre and authorship of the reading assignments used in the teaching of Macedonian language (from the second to the sixth grade);
2. to analyze certain literary elements of the reading assignments used in the teaching of Macedonian language (from the second to the sixth grade);
3. to examine the attitudes of teachers about the use of didactic models in the process of preparation and motivation of students to read the reading assignments (from the second to the sixth grade);
4. to examine the didactic competencies of the teachers for using the reading assignments in the teaching (from the second to the sixth grade);
5. to examine how much the reading assignments (from the second to the sixth grade) have educational potentials and have a positive effect on the students;
6. to examine the attitudes and educational needs of teachers for the didactic treatment of reading assignments in teaching (from the second to the sixth grade) and
7. to examine the teachers' attitudes about the compatibility of the individual literary elements with the students' interest in reading the literary contents and the reading assignments in the teaching (from the second to the sixth grade).

### **General hypothesis**

It is assumed that there is a need to change the content and structural arrangement of the reading assignments in the teaching of Macedonian language from the second to the sixth grade.

### **Research methods**

The research uses several research methods, primarily the analytical-synthetic method with elements of inductive-deductive procedures; content and structural analysis; content analysis and generalization method.

### **Research techniques**

Several types of techniques were used in the research, as follows: content analysis of the program areas Listening and speaking, Literature and Reading, literature and reading representation in the Macedonian language curricula from the first to the

sixth grade; content analysis of the reading assignments on the subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles and survey - scaling when examining the attitudes of teachers.

### **Research instruments**

The following instruments were used in the research: checklist for analysis of the reading assignments in the teaching of Macedonian language and a questionnaire - scalar for examining the attitudes and opinions of the teachers for the treatment of the reading works in the teaching.

### **Population and sample of the research**

The research covers several different samples, namely intentional, appropriate and stratified sample, as follows:

1. a sample of all compulsory and elective textbooks for all grades from the first two educational cycles of primary education;
2. sample of grade teachers from the first to the fifth grade;
3. sample of Macedonian language teachers from the sixth grade (subject teachers) - a total number of 112 teachers from several primary schools in the area of the city of Skopje.

### **Analysis of the use of the reading assignments on the subject Macedonian language in the first and second educational cycle of the nine-year primary education**

According to the data obtained from the analysis of the characteristics of the reading assignments from the first two educational cycles, it can be concluded that in the ratio of compulsory and elective reading assignments it is in a ratio of approximately 1:3 in favor of the elective reading assignments. This is understandable, because in this way the opportunity is given for greater choice and satisfaction of students' interests through the opportunity to independently make the choice of appropriate reading. But, here the question arises, as well as whether this actually happens in practice, given that students, firstly, are younger; secondly how can they make the choice independently, when they have not previously read the textbooks, ie they do not know the reading contents. In view of these arguments, a conclusion can be drawn which needs to be seriously reconsidered, that in fact the teachers themselves are the ones who choose the reading assignments from the offered list of electoral reading assignments!?

The number of compulsory reading assignments from the second to the sixth grade is gradually increasing, a maximum of four reading assignments in fifth and sixth grade. If to these numbers elective reading assignments are added the in both

cycles of two literary works, then the maximum number of reading books to be read during a school year is six, ie 0.66 reading assignments each month of the school year. This is an extremely small number of reading assignments, so it can be concluded that there is a need to increase the reading assignments, especially because in the second grade the number of elective reading assignments is reduced to one.

Regarding the authors of the reading assignments, the research shows that the number of domestic and foreign authors is almost equal 28 respectively 25, which gives opportunities for students to get acquainted with domestic and foreign literary works.

The relatively small representation of the poetic reading assignments in relation to the prose reading assignments is noticeable, 10 respectively 43. In the first two educational cycles of primary education the novels are most present, 25 - mostly in the sixth grade, even 9 or 36% of the total sample of reading assignments. Considering that in the first four grades the number of reading assignments in the form of novels is almost more than twice as small, in relation to their representation in the fifth and the sixth grades. This phenomenon has a logical setting, because it is in these two departments that the teaching goals in the Program area of Reading, Literature and Reading assignments are complicated. It is obvious that there is no regularity in the representation of lyrical songs in the individual departments.

This confirms the fifth special hypothesis according to which in the teaching of the subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the primary education are used reading assignments from different genre and gender, different types of domestic and foreign authors.

During the analysis of the literary elements in the reading assignments in relation to the topic, results were obtained according to which in general it can be concluded that most of the topics refer to the life of children 57.78% and family life 17.78%, with which can be said that 3/4 of the topics are from the immediate life and environment in which the children live. The topics are realistic, as much as 44.44%, with no regularity. This is also logical given that the topics arise from the child's life (family and child life). Fantastic topics are represented by 55.6%, with the highest representation of 36% in the fifth grade, which is to some extent illogical, because the percentage of fantastic topics in the sixth grade drops to 16%.

Most of the actions according to the analysis of the localization take place at more distant localizations, and slightly less than half of the actions in the reading assignments take place in the children's close environment. The differences in terms of the actions that take place in the city and in nature are not significant, 48.89% respectively 42.22%.

In all reading assignments the story is continuous and easy to understand, with the exception of two reading assignments in which the story is more difficult to understand. It is usually long, which is understandable given that the most common form of

reading is the novel. All reading assignments are interesting to read according to the assessment, and 19 reading assignments or 42.22% have fast actions. Thirty-six (36) reading assignments, ie 80% of them are amenable to problem analysis.

During the analysis of the characters in the literary works, the balanced distribution of characters of different ages is noticeable, whereby, according to the researcher, most of the characters 43 or 95.56% are characterized as positive characters. This distribution is quite understandable if we take into account that positive characters are models with which young readers identify.

This can confirm the special seventh hypothesis according to which reading assignments have educational potentials and have a positive effect on students.

The emotional potentials of the reading assignments are evaluated by the researcher, in order to examine the possibility of their influence on the emotional development of the students, as well as the emotional experience in general, which develops when reading certain reading assignments.

The grading scale is numerically expressed with grades from 1 to 5 (the grade is from 1 as the lowest grade and 5 as the highest grade). The grade 1 indicates that when reading the reading assignments the student does not arouse any feelings, does not encourage empathy and identification with the main character of the work. Grade 2 assesses the insignificant impact of the content of the work on the emotions of the student who reads it. Grade 3 evaluates the content that by reading it would arouse at least some emotions in the students and would encourage them to think - how the character will behave further, feeling those emotions. Grade 4 evaluates the content of the reading assignment that would arouse greater feelings and would develop greater empathy for the character whose actions aroused emotions in him.

From the obtained data it can be seen that the reading assignments have very high emotional potentials, because the lowest average grade is 4.00 in the second grade, and the highest grade 4.50 is in the fifth grade. This means that literary works with high emotional potentials are selected for reading assignments.

This confirms the fact that in the analysis of ethical values even 47 reading assignments or 85.45% are very amenable to ethical evaluation (ethical analysis). This confirms the seventh hypothesis with which reading assignments have educational potentials and positively affect students.

Regarding the ethical evaluation, which is also done by the researcher, the grades are given for how the ethics in the student's reading assignment develops values for proper, good behavior, shows him how to distinguish good from bad actions, personalities, to reveals the positive qualities, the good deeds, to identify with them and apply them, and to criticize, reject, reject the bad, incorrect, evil ones, etc. The rating scale is expressed with attributive properties, namely "much", "little" and "not at all".

According to the obtained data, it can be concluded that even for 25 reading assignments or almost half of the reading assignments, four teaching hours are needed



for the analysis of the reading assignment. If we add to this number the number of reading assignments that require three teaching hours, it can be seen that the analysis of as much as 87% of the total sample of reading assignments requires more than two teaching hours, which in teaching practice usually happens. Namely, most of the reading assignments are realized in two teaching hours. This confirms the fourth special hypothesis according to which it is necessary to change the program status of the reading assignments in the teaching and the number of hours provided for their realization.

### **Concluding remarks and recommendations**

Through the summative evaluation of the examined target group - the teachers, in relation to the attitudes about the educational potentials of the reading assignments, about the didactic treatment of the reading assignments in the teaching and the interest for reading the reading assignment by the students, the following findings are indicated:

- teachers have positive attitudes about the educational potentials of reading assignments, which can confirm the seventh special hypothesis;
- the interest in reading the reading assignment depends on the creative approach of the teachers in the treatment of the individual reading assignments and
- there is a need to change and strengthen the didactic treatment of reading assignments in teaching. It certainly requires further development and strengthening of teachers' competencies to use literary works in teaching.

As a recommendation from the research, the need for further development of the didactic support in the processing of the literary contents in the second educational cycle is noted. Thus, it can be concluded that the literary contents represented in the textbooks for the subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education are always accompanied by appropriate didactic support for their use in teaching. The remarks made by the surveyed teachers refer to the need to strengthen and build consistent didactic support for the analysis of reading assignments in the form of manuals and worksheets for students.

The research raised a number of additional questions regarding the reading assignments. Namely, according to the given list of compulsory and optional textbooks from the second to the sixth grade, it can be seen that in each grade, in addition to the mandatory textbooks, there is a list of optional textbooks. According to the indicated number of optional textbooks that need to be processed throughout the school year, a selection of textbooks should be made. However, there are no guidelines according to which a selection will be made from the offered elective readings. In this context, the question arises: if, hypothetically, it is thought that the students themselves should do it, but how can they be expected to make a choice, when they are at a young school

age, ie they are in a period when they are linguistically literate and how to expect a choice to be made, when students are not familiar with the contents of the reading assignments?

Furthermore, the question arises whether the teacher has enough available teaching time, provided with two teaching hours for processing one reading assignments? On the other hand, according to the obtained results, there is a need for mandatory insertion of a preparatory stage which has an extremely major role in arousing the interest of students in reading the reading assignments.

There is a need to strengthen the pedagogical competencies of teachers for quality analysis of reading assignments, which requires serious extensive teaching preparation.

As an important conclusion, the reading assignments and the immediate implementers - teachers, impose the need for more comprehensive research to examine the quality of the program setting of program areas that are closely correlated with the research problem, reviewing the offered reading assignments, regardless of whether have the status of compulsory or elective; stimulating students' interest in reading reading assignments and literary contents included in the textbooks.

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