

**COLOUR NAMING DIVERSITY IN DESCRIPTIONS BY
YOUNGER SCHOOL CHILDREN**

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Summary: In the phase of language acquisition process that starts when a child reaches the first year of age and lasts until the third year when a child has gained command over the basics of the mother tongue, nouns and verbs are the most important parts of speech that children use in the process of communication. Language acquisition will depend on a number of factors: a child's gender, the number of children in the family, a child's environment, the media they consume, the way older members of the family speak to the child, attending kindergarten, parents' education and the organic idiom that a child is exposed to. At that early age a child names everything that surrounds them thus gaining knowledge about the world around them. Colours are a part of a child's world and after naming things and people, the child starts acquiring the names of primary colours. In the same way, if a child is learning a foreign language, one of the first words to be learned are the names of the colours so the content of numerous cartoons intended for nursery school children is connected with colours. With time, a child expands their vocabulary acquiring new words, listening to stories and especially fairy tales that are rich with various adjectives and colour names in denotative and connotative meanings. It is interesting that children often use colours to describe people, exterior and interior space both in speaking and writing. Even though their knowledge about colours increases with age, in the active lexis there are very often only basic colours: blue, red, yellow, brown, black, white and green. Therefore, it is the goal of this research to examine how younger school children (7 to 10-year-olds) use colours in their descriptions of people, exterior and interior space. The research was made in the form of an experiment taking place in the Croatian language (mother tongue) lesson during which the students had to

activate the lexemes connected with colours using texts about colours and language play. After that, the students wrote compositions in which active use of colours in written expression was tested. The research confirmed the expectation that students use up to five basic colours in their speech and a small number of different adjectives which implies that younger school children's vocabulary size is getting smaller despite numerous spoken language impulses that children today receive.

RAZNOLIKOST UPORABE IMENA BOJA U OPISIMA UČENIKA MLAĐE ŠKOLSKE DOBI

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Sažetak: U procesu usvajanja jezika u jezičnoj fazi, koja započinje kada dijete navrší prvu godinu, pa sve do treće godine, kada dijete ovlada temeljima materinskoga jezika, imenice i glagoli temeljne su vrste riječi koje djeca koriste u procesu komunikacije. Usvajanje jezika ovisit će o mnogim čimbenicima: spolu djeteta, broju djece u obitelji, okolini kojoj je dijete izloženo, medijima koje dijete konzumira, načinu obraćanja starijih ukućana, uključenosti u dječji vrtić, obrazovanju roditelja te organskom idiomu kojemu je dijete izloženo. U toj ranoj dobi dijete imenuje sve što ga okružuje te na taj način upoznaje svijet oko sebe. Boje su sastavni dio njegova svijeta te vrlo brzo nakon što imenuje određenu stvar ili osobu započinje usvajati imena osnovnih boja. Jednako tako, ukoliko dijete uči strani jezik, jedan od privih poticaja usmjeren je ovladavanju imena boja pa su tako i mnogi crtani filmovi namijenjeni djeci jasličke dobi sadržajno povezani s bojama. S vremenom dijete proširuje svoj vokabular usvajajući nove riječi, slušajući priče te osobito bajke koje obiluju raznolikim pridjevima i uporabom boja u denotativnom, ali i konotativnom značenju. Zanimljivo je da djeca boje često rabe u opisu osobe, vanjskoga i unutrašnjega prostora, kako u usmenom, tako i u pisanome obliku. Iako svoje znanje o bojama s godinama proširuju, vrlo često u aktivnom leksiku ostaju prisutne tek temeljne boje: plava, crvena, žuta, smeđa, crna, bijela i zelena. Upravo zato cilj je ovoga istraživanja ispitati koliko djeca rane školske dobi (7. - 10. godine) u svom pisanom radu koriste boje u opisu osobe, unutarnjeg i vanjskog prostora. Istraživanje će biti eksperimentalno tako što će se učenicima održati jedan sat Hrvatskoga (materinskoga) jezika koji će aktivirati lekseme vezane uz boje uz pomoć tekstova o

bojama i jezičnim igrama. Potom će učenici pisati sastavke kojima će se provjeriti aktivna uporaba „boja“ u pisanome izrazu. Istraživanjem je potvrđeno da će učenici u svojim radovima upotrijebiti do pet osnovnih boja te vrlo malen broj različitih pridjeva, što upućuje na sve siromašniji rječnik djece mlađe školske dobi unatoč brojnim poticajima kojima su djeca današnjice izložena.

1. Introduction

The world we live in is changing at a rapid pace, which implies inevitable changes in the education system as well. We became acutely aware of this fact in 2020, when all activities in the world seemed to stop and the process of transferring the whole education system into online environment started. However, even before that time, the effects of globalisation and digitalisation had been reflected in the education, the same as we now all feel the consequences of the pandemic that has lasted for two years and has not been stopped yet. Since the goals of education are to acquire knowledge and prepare students for life and labour market, it is exceptionally important that the education system adjusts to changes and keeps pace with the contemporary processes in the world. That requires developing innovative content, flexibility, high level of motivation, curiosity and, most of all, creativity.

Two reforms of the primary school education have taken place in the Republic of Croatia in the last twenty years. One of them was completed in 2006, resulting in the National Plan and Programme, founded on the defined educational goals and outcomes for every teaching unit. The previous Teaching Plan and Programme was reduced, and new teaching approaches were incorporated in the new one, with a strong focus on the student. The content of the subject *Croatian language as mother tongue* was reduced to a slight degree, in relation to the 1999 Teaching Plan and Programme, and its focus was changed to emphasise intra- and interdisciplinary content relationships and to open possibilities for raising the awareness of the importance of learning and gaining knowledge of one's mother tongue as the foundation for acquiring content and being competent in all other subjects (Pavličević-Franić, 2005). These changes were encouraged by research as well (Miljević-Ridički et al., 2000), which showed that students have negative attitudes towards Croatian language classes, and that the subject is at the bottom of the list of favourite subjects, together with Mathematics. Further research indicated that Croatian language teaching was more focused on acquiring language theory in the areas of orthography and grammar than on applying the acquired knowledge on concrete examples (Pavličević-Franić, 2011). Better results were obtained after the pilot study, reducing

teaching content and introducing the communicative-functional approach into Croatian language classes, which was reflected in the research (Pavličević-Franić and Aladrović Slovaček, 2011) showing that Croatian language was now in the middle of the list of well-liked subjects, even though students still had better results in language theory than in applying their knowledge in concrete examples, i. e. they did considerably better in tests of linguistic knowledge than in those of communicative skills in Croatian language (Aladrović Slovaček, 2019). Considering the obtained results, it became obvious that the process of the education reform needed to continue. The National Curriculum Framework as a working proposal was defined in 2010 and the concept of Croatian language teaching underwent considerable changes. A lot of work was invested in this document until its final version in 2019, when it became the curriculum of the Croatian language subject. This document was first experimentally implemented in about 80 primary schools in 2017, and then, from the beginning of the school year 2020/2021, in all primary schools in the Republic of Croatia. In this document Croatian language, as a school subject, is divided into three domains: language and communication, literature and creativity and culture and media. Significant changes were made in the domain of language and communication with regard to the previous documents and language teaching was founded on developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in equal measure. Two additional outcomes, one regarding grammar and one concerning vocabulary development, were added. Teaching practice, up to that moment, had been approaching language skills unevenly, and the results of the research conducted on the issue of spoken and written communicative competences were not satisfactory (Aladrović Slovaček, 2019), so that better results in acquiring the content of mother tongue (Croatian language) were expected after this change. This was indicated in the results of the conducted standardised tests in the reading competence PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2018) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, 2011) which showed that Croatian students use some good reading strategies, but have difficulties with different types of texts, motivation for reading and understanding the content they read. The results of the written essay, which is a part of the national graduation exam in Croatian language, were also poor since the average score of students in the final grades of secondary schools was 53% (2021). Moreover, they exhibited poor vocabulary, restricted sentence structure and numerous orthographic errors (Aladrović Slovaček and Vukić, 2016; Aladrović Slovaček, 2019). Therefore, it is expected that the changes in the education system, which resulted in the changed structure of teaching Croatian as a mother tongue, will have a positive influence not only on students'

knowledge, but also on their motivation for reading and writing as basic language skills in the literacy process and their acquisition of other learning content. Numerous factors determine developing writing skills, starting with reading and understanding the text linguistics as well as the rules of orthography and grammar. Furthermore, there is knowledge about the text structure and text types and the ability to observe and understand the world that is also needed. Lexical diversity (as the ratio of the number of entries and the number of occurrences) in the use of adjectives as parts of speech that help us describe people, space and emotions is an indicator of the high level of reading competence, vocabulary richness and highly developed language-communicative skills. It is, therefore, the goal of this research to examine the concrete usage of adjectives, their diversity and their influence on the quality and content in younger students' written texts.

2. Acquiring vocabulary and adjectives as parts of speech

Around the age of three, a child has acquired the basics of their mother tongue and from then on, their vocabulary is growing exponentially. Around the age of four, a child's vocabulary has about 4 000 words and starting school, at the age of six or seven, about 10 000 words. Various factors influence a child's vocabulary development: language environment, family, the number of children in the family, textbooks that a child is using, reading habits and other (Pavličević-Franić, 2011). A school-age child expands their vocabulary with approximately 500 to 700 new words in a year (Aladrović Slovaček and Agić, 2019), and in order to retain a word in the mental lexicon, a child needs to repeat it from 7 to 10 times in different contexts (Pavličević-Franić and Aladrović Slovaček, 2017). Analyses of children's vocabulary show that the most frequent parts of speech are nouns and verbs, which at the same time indicate vocabulary richness (Cvikić, 2008), followed by adjectives, which are defined as words that describe nouns, express various qualities of living beings, things and concepts and are divided into descriptive, (express properties), material (expressing materiality) and possessive/proper (express belonging) (Barić et al., 1997). As open-class words, adjectives are declined in Croatian language, they denote the gender and number and have three forms of comparison (Težak and Babić, 2009: 115).

Lots of stories and fairy tales are read to kindergarten children with the goal of encouraging vocabulary development and acquiring new and different adjectives. Still, primary school children use five to nine different adjectives in their active vocabulary when they write a description of a person or a space (Cvikić and Aladrović Slovaček, 2016). It is interesting that the mentioned

research (Cvikić and Aladrović Slovaček, 2016) shows that the most frequent adjectives that younger school children use are *lijepo* (nice/beautiful) and *dobro* (good), so it could be concluded that everything is nice and good to children and they do not distinguish between expressions like: lovely, wonderful, adorable and excellent etc., which implies a rather restricted vocabulary.

In the linguistic sense, adjectives are in Croatian language classes taught from the third grade of primary school, when students combine nouns and adjectives to create a more lively and complete picture in spoken and written discourse, describing characters and objects, creating simple monologues and dialogues. In the first grade, adjectives appear on the communicative level as parts of speech, when a child expresses their thoughts, wishes and needs. In the second grade, adjectives also appear on a communicative level when children use them in short spoken and written descriptions. In the third grade, adjectives are learned in a linguistic sense: descriptive, material and possessive/proper, and special attention is given to writing proper adjectives and orthographic rules for writing proper adjectives, whereby students are expected to recognise adjectives as parts of speech and use example adjectives in written (compositions, descriptions, letters) and spoken texts (short descriptions, discussions, messages, notices).

In conclusion, if students are to produce descriptive texts, 'the idea that describing is important should be developed as well as students' observation and expressing skills' (Visinko, 2010: 45). Pavličević-Franić (2005) explains that, when it comes to lower primary school grades, concrete content from students' immediate social environment should be selected and presented clearly. In such a way, spoken/written language will express everything that is seen, heard, tasted and experienced. Therefore, teaching Croatian language should be based on developing perceptive abilities (observing skills), cognitive abilities (analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstraction, generalisation, logical deduction) and language-communicative abilities (spoken and written expression) that are best reflected in the written work revealing vocabulary diversity, sentence structure, grammar and orthography knowledge and skills to produce a text on a structural and content level.

3. On writing as a language skill in Croatian language teaching

Croatian language classes are founded on developing all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, in equal measure (Pavličević-Franić, 2005). Speaking and listening are skills that are acquired, rather than learned, in a spontaneous way through being exposed to favourable conditions and

encouraged, whereas reading and writing are skills that need to be taught, learned and practiced (Jelaska, 2005). Since the research part of this paper is based on descriptive texts, the language skill of writing will receive more attention. 'Writing is a complex productive activity that requires knowledge of the writing system and acquiring grammatical and orthographic rules of a certain language' (Pavličević-Franić, 2005: 98). Čudina-Obradović (2000) also defines writing as the most difficult and challenging communicative skill, which could be explained by the fact that, for productive writing, one has to choose the right words and abide by the strict grammatical and orthographic rules (Aladrović Slovaček, 2019). In order to successfully record a language content, as Pavličević-Franić (2005) explains, one must understand it and be able to transform it into written form. Writing is based on a system of signs and signs are most often letters. Writing skill will evolve into creative expression (creative writing) only after the writing system has been acquired and automated.

The process of systematic teaching starts when children start school. In the initial period of primary school education, learning written language is connected with learning spoken language. With regard to developing general literacy, Pavličević-Franić (2005) describes three basic stages in teaching language expression: acquiring capital and small letters, writing shorthand and longhand, mastering the writing technique, orthographic rules and norms of the written language and developing creativity in writing. The author Visinko (2010) claims that presentation approach is prevailing in Croatian language teaching, which means that the teacher is the main source of knowledge about the structure and the stylistic properties of a text type. The teacher gives students instructions about how to write a text and, after they have written it, the teacher corrects it. This approach is four times less effective (Visinko, 2010) than the interactive approach which is considered the most efficient (students work in small groups, doing tasks and practicing writing, and then discuss the text that they have produced), and it is also not as successful as the free approach, in which a student independently and freely creates a text with the support and help from the teacher or other students in accordance with their needs. The author Nikčević-Milković (2017) points out, that in first four grades of primary school, the emphasis should be on language expression, especially on mastering reading and writing, and that creative value of children's written work should be in focus, since children create their messages individually. Such a way of expression is age-related and a child will use techniques expressing themselves in accordance with their level of mother tongue knowledge. Since children gladly speak and write about what they love and what interests them, the most

appropriate content of their written text are their personal views and experiences, so children should be encouraged to express themselves writing in a simple and spontaneous way. The goal of this research was, therefore, to examine the use of adjectives in descriptive texts, and so its results are expected to show in what way and how often they use adjectives and what is their lexical diversity of adjectives.

4. RESEARCH

4.1 Research goal, problems and hypotheses

The primary research goal was to analyse students' written work on a lexical level, and in accordance with the research goal, the following problems were defined:

1. To examine lexical density and diversity of adjectives in all four text types: description of a person, photograph, interior and exterior space
2. To examine the ratio of open-class words: nouns, verbs and adjectives in the total number of type-tokens
3. To examine the frequency and lexical diversity in the use of adjectives, especially in using the names of colours as adjectives
4. To examine if there is a difference in the use of adjectives regarding gender and text type (description of a person, photograph, interior and exterior space)

Regarding the primary research goal and problems, the following hypotheses were determined:

H 1 – It is expected that lexical density and diversity will depend on the type of the text that students wrote.

H 2 – It is expected that most words will be nouns, followed by verbs and then adjectives.

H 3 – It is expected that students will rarely use the names of colours as adjectives and that adjectives will frequently be repeated in the text.

H 4 – It is expected that girls will more often use adjectives than boys in their written work. Moreover, it is expected that adjectives will appear in equal measure in all four text types – descriptions.

4.2. Sample description

For the purpose of this paper, two parts of research were conducted among third grade students in primary school, that are from 9 to 10 years old. 29 students participated in the first part of the research and 43 students in the second part. The first sample contained students from the City of Varaždin area, 13 girls and 16 boys. In the second part of the research, 22 girls and 21 boys from the Zagreb area (the Republic of Croatia) participated.



Picture 1: Photograph used in the research

Source of the photograph:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/features/photography/colorful-travel-around-world/> (17th May, 2020)

In the first part of the research, the examinees had a picture providing an impulse for them to structure their description. The photograph was downloaded from the website of the National Geographic (Picture 1) and is, regarding its content, suitable for activating students' interests. At the beginning of the lesson, a short motivational conversation was conducted with students, after which they started creating their individual descriptions.

In the second part of the research, students wrote three written works in the course of one week in Croatian language classes: a description of a person, a description of exterior space and a description of interior space. For each class, a motivational conversation was conducted with students, after which they wrote their descriptions, without a picture prompt.

The texts were transcribed and entered into the programme for linguistic text analysis - Sketch Engine and then into SPSS programme for statistics, in order to compare the results. Kolmogorov z test showed that data were evenly distributed ($p < 0,05$), which is the reason why methods of parametrical statistics were used for processing data.

4.3. Results and discussion

Content and linguistic analysis showed that the examinees write the longest descriptions of a person, using the most number of sentences in these descriptions, followed by interior space, whereas the numbers of tokens in descriptions of exterior space and a photograph do not differ significantly, if we consider the length of the descriptions. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference if we consider the type of text, but is mostly between 0,29 and 0,31 (the closer the score is to 1, the greater the lexical diversity, that is, the greater the number of low-frequency words). However, lexical density (as a ratio of the number of self-meaning words and the number of occurrences), differs statistically significantly, considering the type of text, i. e. it is significantly bigger in the description of a photograph in relation to other descriptions. It is assumed that the reason for the bigger number of content words is the impulse, i. e. the photograph itself, which certainly helped students to be more concrete, writing their descriptions. (Table 1)

TYPE OF TEXT	Tokens	Lemas	Different words types	Lexical density (generally)	Lexical diversity (generally)
Description of person	3354	541	881	0.61	0.30
Description of inside space	1446	233	384	0.60	0.30

Description of outside space	1288	212	364	0.58	0.29
Description of photography	1289	267	402	0.66	0.31

Table 1: Lexical characteristics of texts

Students wrote five to eight sentences in their written work, depending on the text type. They used the fewest sentences describing the photograph and the most describing the person. Their sentences contained from 8,12 to 8,9 words, which shows that there are no significant differences when it comes to length, but the sentences are similarly long, which is in accordance with the students' stage in language development. Since children in the third grade of primary school are 9 to 10 years old, the number of words in their sentences is +/- one word, with relation to their age (Pavličević-Franić, 2005), which is completely in line with their developmental stage. The third column in Table 2 shows the frequency of conjunctions in texts. The most frequent conjunctions, used by examinees in all text types, are *i* (and), *da* (in order to), *jer* (because), *a* (and), *ali* (but) and *što* (that/which), which means that examinees mostly use additive and oppositive coordination and dependent clauses of purpose, time and reason, as well as noun clauses (Table 2).

TYPE OF TEXT	Number of sentences	Number of words in sentence	Conjunctions
Description of person	8	8,12	i, da, ali, što, jer, ili pa, kada, zato, dok...
Description of inside space	6,36	8.90	i, jer, kao, da, a, što, kad, ali
Description of outside space	6,32	8,8	i, jer, da, a, što, te, kad, ali
Description of photography	5,31	8,37	i, jer, što, te, a, ali, kad

Table 2: Syntactic structure of the text

With regard to the obtained results, the first hypothesis, that lexical density and diversity will depend on the type of the text that students wrote, is partially confirmed. As already emphasised, there is not a statistically significant difference ($p > 0,05$) in the measure of lexical density, whereas there is such a difference in relation to lexical diversity.

The second research goal was to examine the proportion of the open-class words: nouns, verbs and adjectives in the total number of tokens. On average,

there are about 25,79 % nouns in the texts, 19,80 % verbs and 11,88 % adjectives. It is interesting that there is the least proportion of adjectives in the texts describing a photograph (Table 3). Examinees used three adjectives in a text on average, whereby the proportion of adjectives is higher in descriptions of the interior and exterior space in relation to other types of the text.

TYPE OF TEXT	Share of nouns	Share of verbs	Share of adjectives
Description of person	24,23 %	20 %	9,6 %
Description of inside space	27,56 %	18,76 %	15,74 %
Description of outside space	26,54 %	17,34 %	14,35 %
Description of photography	24,83 %	23,12 %	7,84 %
Mean	25,79 %	19,80 %	11,88 %

Table 3: Percentage of using nouns, verbs and adjectives in four type of texts

This data is consistent with the data obtained in the research conducted by Cvikić and Aladrović Slovaček (2016), according to which, the total number of adjectives used in students' written work is not large. Their results showed that the most frequent words used were nouns, followed by verbs, pronouns, adjectives and, eventually, numbers. According to the research conducted by Baričević (2008), the proportion of adjectives in a connected text in Croatian language is 7,8 %. Along with the first hypothesis, that the most frequent words in students' work would be nouns, then verbs and adjectives, and it is precisely the usage of these three open-class words that indicates the level of lexical development and competence, in relation to other parts of speech, especially the closed-class words, that are indicative of the grammatical development (Cvikić, 2008).

The third research goal was to examine the frequency and lexical diversity in the usage of adjectives, especially in using the names of colours as adjectives. The examinees mostly use descriptive adjectives (78 %), and 19 % possessive/proper adjectives whereas only 3 % of the used adjectives describe

material. The most frequent adjectives are: good (*dobar*), blue (*plav*), brown (*smeđ*), narrow (*uzak*), tall/high (*visok*), nomadic (*nomadski*), family (*obiteljski*), Arabian (*arapski*), big (*velik*), endearing (*drag*) and open (*otvoren*) (Table 4). It is interesting that there are three possessive adjectives: *arapski* (Arabian), *obiteljski* (family) and *nomadski* (nomadic), which the examinees used mostly for describing a person, choosing one of the characters from books for obligatory reading they had just read.

DIVERSITY OF ADJECTIVES (Croatian – English translation)	FREQUENCIES
Dobar (good)	37
Plav (blue)	24
Smeđ (brown)	16
Uzak (narrow)	13
Visok (tall)	12
Nomadski (nomadic)	11
Obiteljski (family)	10
arapski, velik (arabic, big)	9
Drag (nice)	8
Otvoren (open)	7
težak, poseban, crn, malen (heavy, special, black, small)	5
roza, mlad, kratak, tradicionalan, lijep, kamen, žut (pink, young, short, traditional, beautiful, stone, yellow)	4
dug, sličan, svjež, sav, čudnovat, sretan, bijel (long, similar, fresh, all, strange, happy, white)	3
maštovit, dobronamjieran, srebrn, tvrdoglav, afrički, zanimljiv, zabavan, zadovoljan, lagan, zlatan, neobičan, miran, hladan (imaginative, well-meaning, silver, stubborn, african, interesting, fun, satisfied, light, golden, unusual, calm, cool)	2
ružičast, crno-plav, zeleno-plav, tirkizan, zlatno-smeđi, plavo-smeđi, crveni (pink, black-blue, green-blue, turquoise, golden-brown, blue-brown, red)	1

Table 4: Frequency of adjectives used in descriptions

32 % of the used adjectives were those naming colours. The most often used colour is blue followed by brown and then black, pink, yellow and white (Table 5). Interestingly, the examinees also used combinations of colours, like black-blue, green-blue, golden-brown and blue-brown. The use of the

colour blue was probably affected by the same colour dominating the photograph that the examinees were describing.

DIVERSITY OF ADJECTIVES	FREKVENCIES
Blue	24
Brown	16
Black	5
pink, yellow	4
White	3
multicolor	2
pink, black-blue, green-blue, turquoise, golden-brown, blue-brown, red, colorful, beige, green	1

Table 5: The frequency of using colours as adjectives

The described results confirm the third hypothesis, that students rarely use the names of colours as adjectives and that adjectives are frequently repeated in the text so that lexical diversity is not really significant. Because of that, we can talk about not so rich vocabulary.

The fourth research goal was to examine, whether there is a difference in the usage of adjectives regarding gender and text type (description of a person, photograph, interior and exterior space). T-test showed that there is a difference between boys' and girls' results, but there is no statistically significant difference ($p > 0,05$) since lexical diversity and lexical density do not differ significantly in these two groups, even though girls use somewhat more words, and consequently more types, in their texts. However, T-test showed that girls use significantly more adjectives in their writing in comparison with boys ($p < 0,05$) (Table 6).

	GIRLS	BOYS
Tokens	2495	2305
Words	2126	1980
Sentences	253	239
Different words	776	702
Adjectives	275 / 94	244 / 82
Lemas	488	434
Lexical diversity	0.36	0.35
Numbers of word sin description	8.4	8.2
Lexical density	0.62	0.61

Table 6: Data on lexical characteristics with regard to gender

The analysis of the used adjectives was conducted in relation to the text as well. The results show that the highest number of different adjectives was found in the descriptions of a person, followed by the description of the photograph and then interior and exterior space. It is also interesting that most descriptive adjectives denoting colours were used describing people, their number was smaller in descriptions of the photograph, and there were even fewer in descriptions of interior and exterior space. (Table 7) The reason is probably the way in which the research was conducted.

DESCRIPTION OF PERSON	DESCRIPTION OF OUTSIDE SPACE	DESCRIPTION OF INSIDE SPACE	DESCRIPTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY
323 adjectives 107 different words	196 adjectives 38 different words	188 adjectives 35 different words	103 adjectives 25 different words
brown – 18 blue - 8 black – 5 pink – 4 silver – 2 gold – 2 pink – 1 black-blue – 1 turquoise – 1 white – 1 green-blue - 1 green – 1 gold-brown – 1	red – 4 yellow – 3 blue – 2 green – 2 multicolor – 1 black – 1 beige – 1	white - 3 black - 2 red - 1 green - 1 multicolor - 1	blue - 16 narrow – 13 little - 5 stone - 5 old - 4 yellow – 4 happy - 4

Table 7: Use of different adjectives and colour adjectives regarding text types

The least number of adjectives is used describing interior and exterior space. Describing a person, students use colour words, both for appearance and personality, whereas when describing interior and exterior space, they are focused on the content of the space and less concerned with complementing nouns that they use with descriptive and possessive/proper adjectives. They mostly use descriptive adjectives with nouns in common word combinations.

Regarding the obtained results, the fourth hypothesis, that girls will use adjectives more often in their written work and that adjectives will appear in all four text types – descriptions, in equal measure, can be partially accepted.

5. Conclusion

Our students' written expression skills are evidently weakening and there is certain economising in communication (say more with few words), both in spoken and written discourse. It is, therefore, the goal of this research to examine the presence of adjectives in written descriptions of younger school-age students. The research showed that adjectives are in the fourth place in descriptions if we consider the open-class words, while 3rd grade students use three adjectives on average in a descriptive text. They use most adjectives describing a person and fewer adjectives describing a photograph maybe because they can choose person and they know something about her or his and photography is in one way very limited with colours, space and roles. Moreover, the examinees use a wide colour spectrum in their descriptions and a great number of colour adjectives occurs only once in a whole group of texts. Girls use more words than boys in their written descriptions and there is a significant difference in the usage of adjectives, i. e. girls use adjectives more often than boys. The described results are in line with research that has, up to now, shown that the presence of adjectives in the written work corpus is about 7 % and students use a wide variety of them, regardless of the type of description they write. Even though changes in the education system showed in which direction language skills should be developed, especially writing, the results of this research show the importance of reading and talking to young children, directing their conversations and encouraging them to play with language and expand their vocabulary as it is researched earlier (Aladrović Slovaček, 2018) . The writing skill is equally important, so systematic writing practice should be a part of everyday activities, aiming to improve this skill. Only through systematic writing practice, reading and encouraging active listening we can expect our students to be more successful in their writing and our younger school-age children to have a richer vocabulary, because in that period the foundation for mother tongue is built, both in linguistic and communicative sense (Pavličević-Franić, 2011).

Finally, it can be said that the results of this research showed how many third-grade students use adjectives in their descriptions, mostly in the description of a person, where the largest number of different words for colors can be found. We find a slightly smaller number of adjectives in the description of the interior and exterior space, with the fact that students use more different words for colors in the description of the exterior space. It is interesting that we find the smallest number of adjectives, and then also words for colors, in the description of the photograph. It is assumed that this is because photography, by choosing colors, characters, space, defines the words to be used and reduces linguistic creativity. From the above, it can be concluded that the description of an imaginary space that is not defined by a picture encourages a more extensive expression without limitations. This fact points

to changes in the stimulation of written expression, for which ready-made stimuli in the form of photographs, drawings, films and paintings are often taken, and this research shows how this is just as limiting as writing essays that are always linked to the same literary works with an exact predetermined structure (an example is the state matriculation exam in the Croatian language) where the students' creativity does not come to the fore, and the purpose of the written work is to encourage creative expression and thereby strengthen language competences, both spelling, grammatical, stylistic and lexical.

It should also be noted that there are limitations to this research, namely the number of students who participated in it and the fact that they were all from the same age group. However, the results of this research imply changes in the motivation for creating descriptions and point to changes in teaching and encouraging writing as a creative language activity in the Croatian language subject.

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