

ORTHOGRAPHIC COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS AT THE END OF THE FIRST GRADE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Summary – First grade pupils develop their language competence by learning how to write. One of the most important language competences in first grade are writing capital and cursive letters. Once they master the alphabet, pupils start to develop their orthographic competence by learning orthographic rules at the theoretical level (linguistic competence) and at the practical level (communicative competence). According to the Teaching plan and program (2006) first graders should know how to correctly write names, surnames, nicknames, names of towns they live in, and names of their streets. In addition to that they should know which punctuation mark should be placed at the end of a sentence (full stop, question mark, exclamation mark).

This article is a review of a pilot research by which the degree of orthographic knowledge and most common orthographic mistakes in the first grade of primary school in the knowledge and use of orthographic rules (capital and small letters, punctuation marks). The results reveal the degree of pupil knowledge, but also reveal common mistakes that pupils at that age make and which are not necessarily orthographic. The research was conducted at the "Bukovac" primary school in Zagreb based on the questionnaire which was completed by 60 first graders (N=60).

The article is a contribution to standardization at the beginning of education, since it will create a basic precondition for easier and more successful learning of orthography in the process of initial reading and writing in the first grade of primary school.

Key words: *language competence, initial writing, orthographic rules, orthographic errors, standardization in initial writing*

1. INTRODUCTION

Croatian language is one of the basic teaching subjects in schools. The Croatian language program is rich with language content, and the plan is rich in

the number of hours (in lower grades, according to the Croatian national educational standards (HNOS) – 4 hours per week). Considering that Croatian language is also the mother tongue, it serves as a communication basis for other teaching subjects. It is exposed to great expectations by parents, teachers, language experts, the wider community and the children who learn it themselves. The program covers four teaching areas: the Croatian language, literature, language expression and media. The highest number of hours is allocated to studying the Croatian language (language, grammar, pronunciation and orthography) (Pavličević-Franić, 2005). Because of the abundance of grammar and orthographic content in learning the mother tongue in first grade of primary school, it is necessary to teach the Croatian language in a meaningful and interesting way (especially through promotion of oral expression). In that way various language skills are promoted (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and attention must be given to vocabulary enrichment. All teachers involved in teaching the mother tongue have this as a task, as well as all linguists involved in developing textbook materials for elementary school.

The Croatian language is one of the fundamental school subjects in schools. The Croatian language program is rich with linguistic content, and the plan with the defined number of hours (in lower grades, according to HNOS – 4 hours per week). Considering that the Croatian language is also the mother tongue, it serves as a basis for communication for other teaching subjects. It is exposed to high expectations of parents, teachers, language professionals, the wider community and the children who are learning it. The program encompasses four teaching areas: Croatian language, literature, language expression and media culture. The greatest number of hours is allocated to Croatian language (language, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, orthography) (Pavličević-Franić, 2005). Due to the abundance of grammatical and orthographic content in teaching the mother tongue in the first grade of primary school, pupils should be learning the Croatian language in a purposeful and interesting way (especially by encouraging oral reports). This encourages different linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and emphasis must be placed on enriching vocabulary. That is the task that every teacher involved in teaching the mother tongue, and every linguist who is working on textbooks for lower grades of primary school should have.

It is important for a child to acquire language in order to establish communication with other members of the language community and society as a whole. This is the relationship between child and environment. In the first months of a child's life, a child uses voice, although at first they are only vowels. As a child grows, it adds consonants to the vowels which make pronunciation easier, such as p, b, m, t, d and makes syllables such as: ma-ma, ta-ta to which parents attach meaning, not children, with the belief that children create words. In language development we differentiate between:

1. prelanguage or prelinguistic period lasting from birth to the first year of life;

2. language or linguistic period which generally lasts from 3-3,5 years of life, although we acquire and develop language almost throughout our entire lives (Pavličević – Franić, D., 2005:42).

In the prelinguistic period, a child creates syllables, i.e., rhythmical logatomes¹. In the language or linguistic phase children create monosyllabic or disyllabic words acquiring particular types of mostly words with full meaning (autosemantic) words: firstly nouns and verbs, and then adjectives, pronouns and numbers (however, not in the mathematical sense). Later on they acquire adverbs and other words that show relations (grammar or synsemantic) word types (Pavličević – Franić, D., 2005:44). The number of words children acquire each year increases largely, so a child at the age of 1.5 years uses approximately a hundred words, at the age of two this increases to three hundred, at the age of three it uses around one thousand words, and at the age of four it uses around four thousand words. A child in its second year of life uses two-word sentences, which at the age of three expands to three word sentences and we can conclude that by the age of seven it will use seven word sentences, meaning that with each year a sentence is expanded by one word (Pavličević – Franić, D., 2005:45). A child in one of the two phases acquires the basis of the mother tongue, the first language of communication (L1). Some children start attending kindergarten at the earliest phases of development where they begin a systematic preparation for language learning through play and other forms of communication. Children attending preschool learn how to write (trace) shapes on paper (practice for initial writing), and even to write a letter or two (their own name), preparing for a systematic institutional learning of language which occurs in schools. In that way, children are prepared, at least partially for oral and written communication in their mother tongue.

2. ORHTOGRAPHY AS TEACHING CONTENT IN THE 1ST GRADE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

In order to communicate at several levels, children in first grade of primary school start learning how to read and write. Upon acquiring the writing of capital and cursive letters and making words from familiar letters, they start compiling simple sentences. In order to compile sentences, and to write individual words, it is necessary to have some theoretical knowledge of orthography, so that a word or sentence could be written according to the rules of writing in the standard Croatian language. The orthographic norm prescribes acquiring the graphic (letter) system and ways of recording language units into words, sentences or text (Pavličević–Franić, D., 2005:38). In written language realization this refers to learning the orthographic structure of a particular language. Each language has its unique graphemes which are written in different ways. Orthographic norms help

¹ Rhythmical logatomes – syllables without meaning which depict characteristics of real tonic words in their articulation and acoustics (e.g. nananaa, ninanena, lelela)

in solving orthographic doubts when writing graphic symbols, but also in correct punctuation, writing abbreviations, capitalization, borrowed words, connecting and separating words. Considering that for spoken language is the background for written language, learning orthographic norms presupposes knowledge of oral communication norms.

When referring to orthography, first graders encounter a number of obstacles in its usage (writing capital letters at sentence beginnings, writing names, full stops or exclamation points). It is important to learn the rules well so as not to make errors in writing. However, in spite of the learned rules which the majority of pupils can do, the application of the same is an issue. Any average pupil will know that a sentence begins with a capital letter, however, in a test it will usually be written with a small letter.

According to the Teaching plan and program (2006), pupils should acquire the following orthographic rules:

- a) writing capital letters at the beginning of a sentence;
- b) writing punctuation marks, question marks and exclamation marks;
- c) writing people's names, nicknames and surnames with an initial capital letter;
- d) writing names of towns, streets in the neighborhood.

However, even when orthographic rules are mastered, the majority of first graders have problems. In his article «The Problem of Variety and Standards in Initial Writing» prof. dr. Ante Bežen points to this problem. He emphasizes a negative effect of incomplete orthographic standard on the success in initial writing. A first grade pupil cannot understand why it is correct to write *neću* and *ne ću*, *strel-ica* and *strjelica*, nor should it be required by the teacher. However, the occurrence of such cases will have a very confusing effect on them, just as it has in adults. This hinders acquisition of a standard language as a system since it shows that that system in the area of orthography as one of the most visible aspects of language standards has not been set in its entirety. This should be a message to the language policy for setting unique orthographic standards for more successful learning of the standard language in schools from the very beginning. (Bežen, A., 2005:224). This fact is a motive for researching orthographic issues in first grade of primary school when basic literacy is learned and on which a person's literacy is built on.

3. RESEARCH

3.1. Research problem and aims

Children in the first grade of primary school should master orthographic rules to the extent of knowing how to write names, last names and nicknames of people; writing capital letters at the beginning of a sentence: writing capital let-

ters for names of towns and streets in their neighborhood, and using punctuation marks (Teaching plan and program 2006). It is a fact that children acquire that content in theory, however aren't skilled enough to apply them in every situation in practice. In accordance with that the aims of this research are formed:

2. research knowledge of writing capital letters in people's names, nicknames and surnames;
3. research knowledge of writing capital initial letters in names of towns and streets in the neighborhood;
4. research knowledge of writing capital letters at the beginning of a sentence;
5. research knowledge of writing punctuation marks at the end of a sentence: question marks, exclamation marks and periods.

In line with the aims, a hypothesis is set, that the majority of pupils, although familiar with orthographic theory about writing capital and small letters in people's names, surnames and nicknames, names of towns and streets, at the beginning of a sentence and punctuation marks, they do not apply the acquired orthographic rules in practice (concrete tasks).

3.2. Research sample and questionnaire

The questionnaire was made up in a way that an average first grade pupil can successfully complete it within 60 minutes. The selected topics chosen to question knowledge were related to everyday life and common communicative situations familiar to students. By analyzing the research results, I obtained data which I analyzed statistically and which approve or disprove the established hypotheses and research aims.

The questionnaire contained guided tasks which questioned knowledge of using capital letters at the beginning of a sentence, in people's names, nicknames and surnames, names of towns and use of punctuation marks: period, question mark and exclamation mark. In the first and third tasks, pupils had to write a guided essay which orthography was analyzed as well as the use of lexis, and syntax.

The research was conducted in three first grades of "Bukovac" elementary school in Zagreb at the end of the 2006 school year. The pupils responded well to the questionnaires, and the teachers were of great help in devising and realization of the research with their practical advice. In grade 1a twenty pupils filled out the questionnaire, of which there were 11 girls and 9 boys. In grade 1c twenty-two pupils took the questionnaire of which 12 were girls and 10 boys. In grade 1v twenty two pupils of which 12 were girls and 10 boys also took the questionnaire. In other words, the sample consisted of a total of 64 pupils which do not show a statistically significant difference in the results, so the total distribution of the frequency of orthographic mistakes will be observed so as to realize the aims of the research.

3.3. Research results

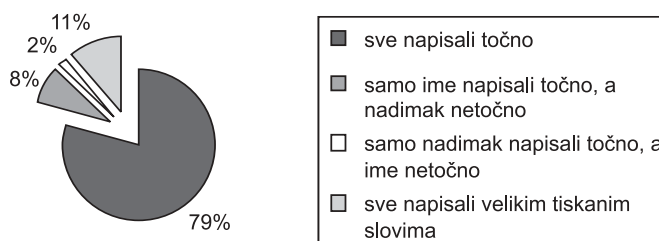
Knowledge of orthography and orthographic standards as a set of rules is characteristic to the development of language education. Since in grade one pupils only begin to systematically learn the mother tongue, it is expected that a child at that age has appropriate knowledge of basic orthographic rules which were tested using this questionnaire.

In the first task, where pupils had to write their names and nicknames, fifty-two of them (79%) wrote everything correctly. Five participants (8%) wrote their names correctly, but not their nicknames, and only one participant (2%) wrote his/her nickname correctly, but not the name. Seven (11%) participants wrote their name and surname with capital letters, so orthographic accuracy could not be tested here, and the task was not fulfilled. One participant made an orthographic mistake in writing the nickname using the letter *ć* instead of *č* in the word *Anči* (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of orthographic mistakes (writing names and nicknames)

DISTRIBUTION OF ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (writing names and nicknames)	
ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (according to the teaching program)	OTHER MISTAKES
incorrectly written personal names: 12% of participants	instead of Anči , the participant wrote her nickname Anći (mistakes in writing the sounds <i>č</i> and <i>ć</i>)
Incorrectly written nicknames: 18% of participants	
11% of participants wrote the names in capital letters and the orthographic rule could not be checked	

Graph 1. Distribution of orthographic mistakes in writing names and nicknames (in %)



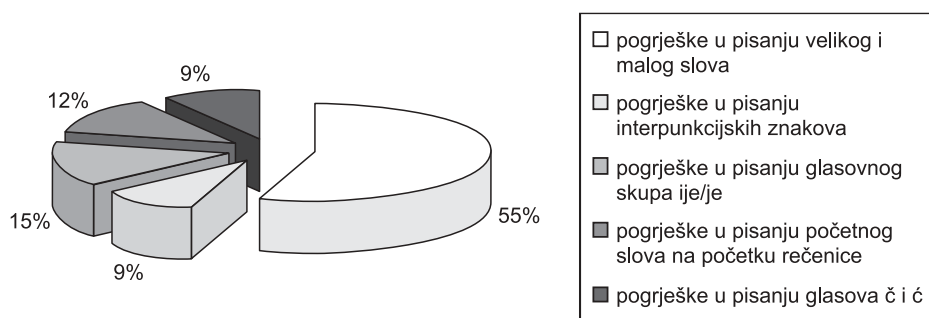
The first focused task was to write an essay about the city of Zagreb. IN this kind of connected text, seven participants (10%) wrote the noun Zagreb with an initial small letter. Ten participants, used the word Maksimir, most likely due to the closeness to where they live, and five of them (50%) wrote the word Maksimir with a small initial letter. One participant used the word Sljeme in his essay and

wrote it with a small initial letter. In addition to orthographic mistakes in writing capital initial letter, the participants made mistakes in using the sounds/letters č and ć, and in writing the sound groups ije/je (table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of orthographic mistakes – names of towns and parts of town and sentence beginning (Task 1)

DISTRIBUTION OF ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (task 1)	
ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (according to the teaching program)	OTHER MISTAKES
incorrectly written personal noun Zagreb 10% of the participants	Mistakes in writing the sounds č and ć: šećemo, dućan, iči (9% of participants)
incorrectly written name of a part of town Maksimir 50% of the participants	
2% of participants wrote the word Sljeme with a small initial letter	Mistakes in writing ije/je: ljep (15% of participants)
mistakes in writing the initial letter in a sentence, 12% of participants	Mistakes in leaving out particular sound and in exchanging places of sounds in words: srena (sretna); tat (tata); učitelice (učiteljice); crvke (crkve)
	Incorrectly written words: precesdnik (predsjednik) and kijosk (kiosk)
	Mistakes in writing words: Volinga (volim ga); ukojemu (u kojem)

Graph 2. Distribution of portions of orthographic mistakes (Task 1 in %)



In the second task, participants had to copy in cursive a sentence written in capital letters. This task seemed to be the easiest for the pupils since they only had to copy, however they made a lot of mistakes in the task. Nine participants (13%) wrote the word Samobor with a small initial letter. Thirteen participants (20%) incorrectly wrote the name of the town Split, and seven participants (10%) wrote the name Marina with a small initial letter (Table 3).

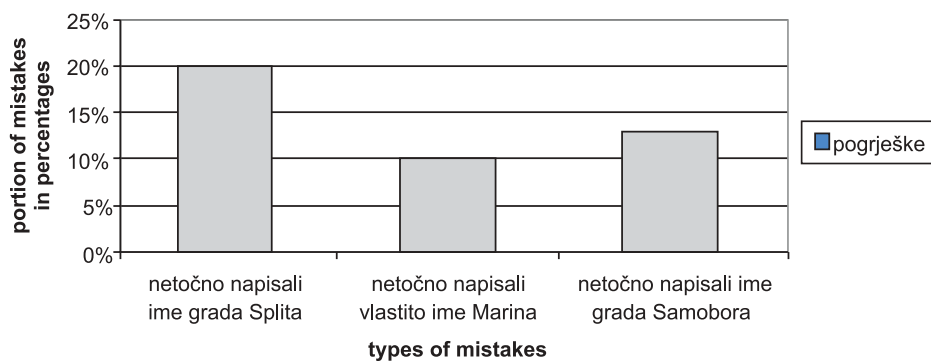
Table 3. Distribution of correct/incorrect answers (task 2)

writing the underlined word in the sentence	% of correct answers	% of incorrect answers
Ana stanuje u gradu <u>Splitu</u> .	80%	20%
Moja učiteljica se zove <u>Marina</u> i živi u Samoboru.	90%	10%
Moja učiteljica se zove Marina i živi u <u>Samoboru</u> .	87%	13%

Table 4. Distribution of orthographic mistakes (task 2)

DISTRIBUTION OF ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (task 2)	
ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (according to the teaching program)	OTHER MISTAKES
1. the name of the town Samobor was written with a small initial letter by 13% of participants 2. name of the city Split was written with a small initial letter by 20% of participants 3. personal name – Marina was written with a small initial letter by 10% of participants	None

Graph 3. Distribution of mistakes in the 2nd task according to the Teaching plan and program



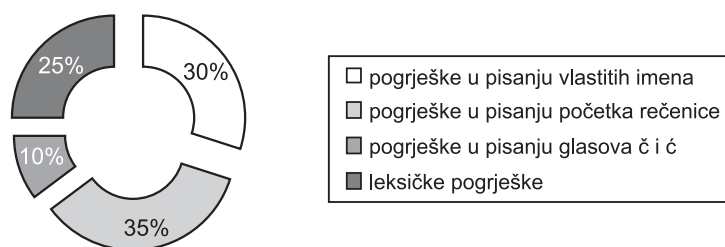
In the third task, as in the first, the pupils had to show their knowledge of orthography, sentence structure and use of lexis in a short essay on a given topic “My family”, they had to list, name and describe members of their family. The majority of the participants only listed members of their family with an occasional characteristic. Five participants (7%), wrote names of family members with a small initial letter, e.g. *mama sonja* or *tata miljenko*. Two participants wrote the nouns *mama* and *tata* with a capital initial letter, and their personal names with a small initial letter as shown in the following example: *Mama anita* and *Tata mario*. Punctuation marks are missing in five essays, and in seven essays the beginning of a sentence is not written with a capital letter. Two pupils made a mis-

take in writing the words *ispod* and *djed*. The first pupil wrote the word *ispod* as *ispot* (the voiced consonant was replaced by its voiceless pair). The second pupil wrote the word *bjed* instead of the word *djed*. This is most likely an example of an accidental mistake due to the similarity in pronunciation of those two sounds (both sounds are bilabial according to place of articulation). Two participants misused the words *djed* and *braća*. The first participant wrote *deda* instead of the word *djed* (from conversational language or regional language in the family). The second participant formed from the noun *brat* into a collective noun *bratovi* instead of *braća*, using children's analogy (*vrat* – *vratovi*) (Table 5., Graph 3).

Table 5. Distribution of orthographic mistakes (task 3)

DISTRIBUTION OF ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (task 3)	
ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (according to the teaching program)	OTHER MISTAKES
incorrectly written personal names , 30% of participants	mistakes in writing the sounds č and ć: kući, braća (10% of participants)
incorrectly written street name Prilesje , 2% of participants	
2% of participants wrote general nouns: <i>mama</i> and <i>tata</i> with a capital initial letter mistakes in writing the initial letter in the sentence, 35% of participants	Lexical mistakes (25% of participants): a) dropping of consonants (<i>obite</i> instead of <i>obitelj</i>) b) consonant exchange (<i>ispot</i> instead of <i>ispod</i> ; <i>bjed</i> instead of <i>djed</i>) c) wrong formation of hypocoristics (<i>deda</i> instead of <i>djeda</i>) and plural of words (<i>bratovi</i> instead of <i>braća</i>)

Graph 4. Distribution of portions of orthographic mistakes in % (task 3)



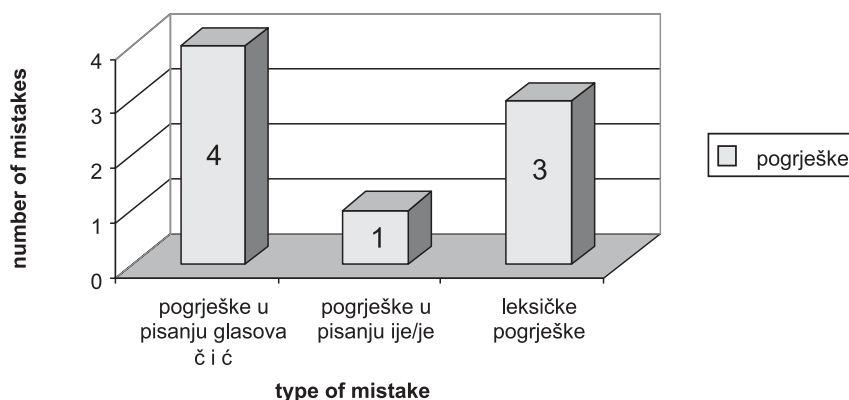
Task four was the most complex task, since the pupils had to answer a question. Each answer demanded the use of punctuation marks: exclamation mark, period or question mark. This task was the least successful task since only 36 participants (55%) used a punctuation mark correctly in at least one answer. Three participants (4%) used a correct punctuation mark in all answers and four participants (6%) used a correct punctuation mark in two answers. Thirty-four participants (52%) used the period as a punctuation mark correctly. Four participants

(6%) used the question mark correctly, and the same number (6%) used the exclamation mark correctly as a punctuation mark (Table 6., Graph 4).

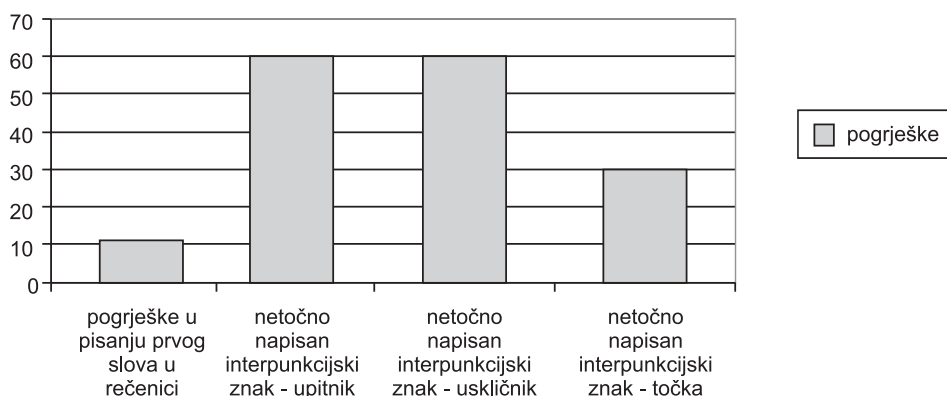
Table 6. Distribution of orthographic mistakes (task 4)

DISTRIBUTION OF ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (task 4)	
ORTHOGRAPHIC MISTAKES (according to the teaching program)	OTHER MISTAKES
incorrect use of punctuation mark – question mark 94% of participants	mistakes in writing sounds č and ć (ljubićasta, ružićasta, fučkam, učiteljice), 5% of participants
incorrect use of punctuation mark – exclamation mark 94% of participants	mistakes in writing ije/je , 2% of participants (bjela)
incorrect use of punctuation mark - period 48% of participants	lexical mistakes: one word: (molimvas, molimte) , 4% of participants

Graph 5. Distribution of orthographic mistakes (task 4)



Graph 6. Distribution of orthographic mistakes (task 4) according to the Teaching plan and program



Although the aim of this task was primarily to establish accurate use of punctuation marks, other orthographic knowledge could also have been tested. Eleven participants began at least one sentence with an initial small letter. Three participants merged two words into one: *molimvas* (repeated twice) and *molimte* (once). Four participants wrote the sounds (letters) *č* and *ć* incorrectly in the words: *učiteljice*, *ljubičasta*, *ružičasta* and *fućkam*, using the wrong letter. One participant made a mistake in writing *ije/je*, by writing the adjective *bijela* as *bje-la* boja.

The analysis shows that the mistakes were made in several areas: writing capital and small letters (beginning of a sentence, personal names, nicknames, writing names of towns, streets and familiar parts of town), writing *ije/je* (mostly in the words *bijel* and *lijep*, which are very often adjectives in that developmental period), writing sounds *č* and *ć* (names of colors, the verbs *fućkati* and *ići*, and the very frequent word – *kuća*) writing punctuation marks (!, ?, .). In addition to the mentioned mistakes, pupils also made mistakes in writing words (dropping of letters or exchanging letters) and in incorrect formation of new and unfamiliar words, that is, use words in accordance with meaning. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that 60% of participants acquired orthographic rules since they have either one or no mistakes in their answers. If we take into consideration the fact that at the end of the school year 96% of first graders passed the grade with an excellent overall grade, and that 80% of them have an excellent mark in the subject Croatian language, then these data actually describe the true state of orthographic competence of first grade pupils. Marks show that pupils are very competent in all areas of the Croatian language, including orthography. However, the results reveal a different reality. Perhaps such a high percentage of high marks can be explained by motivational marks in first grade of primary school, i.e. encouragement to like the mother tongue as a school subject and to continue learning it in further years based on the initial positive experience.

Orthographic competence is not the only competence that is acquired in the framework of the subject Croatian language in the first grade of primary school, however, it can be said that students have more difficulties in acquiring it since they only begin to learn big and small capital and cursive letters. Therefore, emphasis is placed on acquiring written symbols for spoken sounds (the process of coding and decoding). While writing, they are thinking about several things simultaneously: writing letters (neatness and accuracy), sentence formation (sense) and orthographic standard (capital and small letters, punctuation marks, etc.) (Ljubešić, 1997). Precisely because of that the second task in the questionnaire was the simplest for the pupils since they only copied and worried about accuracy. The fourth task was the most difficult since in addition to neatness and accuracy it demanded meaningfulness and accuracy in answers. At the end of the research it can be concluded that the majority of pupils have orthographic competence, however since the degree of content acquisition is not brought to a mechanical level, their further learning of orthographic standards and rules often causes “con-

fusion” in their heads which in higher grades indicates that students are not competent enough in orthography. However, that is a subject that requires additional analysis.

4. CONCLUSION

A large number of children who arrive to first grade of primary school in learning initial reading and writing, writing presents greater difficulty than reading, therefore, many children learn to read before they learn how to write. Writing requires great motivation, much greater than for reading (Ljubešić, Stančić, 1994). Developing writing skills is important for motivation in writing, and motivation leads to more frequent writing, that is, practice. Practice improves the skill which leads to a feeling of being competent. Therefore, motivation in the process of initial writing is important, however not sufficient. Through creative orthographic exercises, pupils should be encouraged to develop their language skill – writing (Čudina-Obradović, Mira, 2000:110). In initial reading children very often learn how to recognize symbols and can become very competent in separating each word into symbols (for example: V-J-E-S-N-I-K, and they read NOVINE), but they do not recognize letters and therefore do not know how to read those symbols as a whole. Because of that it is important to encourage language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in elementary grades, especially in the first grade of primary school so as children can more easily reach successful results in initial reading and writing and acquisition of content required for first grade in primary school. By encouraging language skills, a teacher motivates pupils and helps them use the language they hear and speak (a child’s idiom) in order to teach them the standard Croatian language. It is important to use the communicative competence with which a child comes to school in order to start developing linguistic competence, that is knowledge of language theory, however without stopping the encouragement for communicative competence which is an important factor in learning the mother tongue and which is set as one of the key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2005). Furthermore, it is important that teachers in teaching the Croatian language use knowledge of functional – didactic grammar, which is, as opposed to normative grammar, aimed at the development of communicative competence, learning language for the purpose of communication, based on promotion of language skills, usage regardless of mistakes and polyfunctional language teaching. That kind of grammar can be referred to as communicative grammar which takes into consideration a child’s psychological development, that is, abstract content such as grammar should be taught vividly, since a child up to the age of 12 is in a concrete phase, and only at the age of 12 begins to develop abstract thought. In order not to learn useless definitions by heart and their reproduction, it is necessary to teach children vividly, and use everyday communicative situations for the purpose of learning language (Pavličević-Franić, 2005).

Through writing and writing exercises pupils develop writing competence, develop orthographic competence which is, in addition to neat writing, an important segment in the process of writing. It is not irrelevant how a pupil will begin a sentence, write his/her name, where he/she will use a punctuation mark and which one. "Overlooked (allowed)" mistakes leave room for new mistakes. That is why orthographic competence is very important from the earliest age since it is built on in all grades of primary and secondary school. Orthographic competence is part of linguistic competence which a child starts to develop by coming to school and in institutional learning of a language. In first grade pupils should master writing cursive letters at a mechanical level. Letters are learned in first grade of primary school since in other grades more attention is paid to real orthographic issues. If that competence is not developed in grade one, mistakes will keep on occurring later on, and building on in higher grades will be more difficult. A question is posed – has the acquisition of language content remained at the level of theoretical memorization of orthographic facts or was there any influence on the development of an entire orthographic competence? Everything mentioned is evident in the written work of the participating pupils. Professionals in the field should respond to such and similar orthographic situations, so that the language policy could select unique standards which will make learning orthography and the Croatian language as a whole much easier (especially in first grade of primary school).

The research results confirm the set hypothesis and actually provide an additional direction to teachers teaching in the first grade of primary school showing how to practice grammar and orthographic content and how communicative competence should be improved and encouraged using various methods during Croatian lessons. Special emphasis should be given to encouraging language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The issue of orthography is visible in the results of this research as it demands special attention of teachers, linguists (specializing in early language development) in order for the results to influence changes in practice and so that orthography would not pose a barrier for pupils and teachers. Orthographic subject matter is a problem facing many pupils at all levels of education. Therefore, research of orthographic competence should be continued at other levels of education in order to affirm difficulties which students are facing. Those results would help in developing a Croatian language teaching program and its implementation in practice. The upcoming state exam (Matura exam) in grammar schools and in four-year vocational schools, as well as the "little Matura" exam in primary schools, demand a high level of knowledge of orthographic competence which is tested. Good knowledge of orthography at the end of particular levels of education in the Republic of Croatia are therefore expected.

Analysis related to teaching the Croatian language in first grade of primary school and the development of orthographic competence, bring forth the issue of non-standardized textbooks which pupils use in order to learn and develop their competences through practicing and filling in work materials they that accompany a textbook. These additional materials are a help to teachers, pupils and parents.

Initial writing can from the current state of voluntarism be elevated to the level of professional thought and scientific background as is present in other European countries and standard languages by determining elements which require standardization and applying them equally in teaching all students (Bežen, A., 2005:225). It is therefore necessary to conduct more research and analysis which would point out what and how to change and in which segments, so that learning the Croatian language is pleasurable to pupils and not “misery”. Standardization would undoubtedly help teachers, pupils and also parents.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWERS IN CURSIVE WRITING!

Your name and surname is

_____.



Your nickname is _____

1. WRITE A SHORT PARAGRAPH ABOUT THE CITY OF ZAGREB!

2. COPY THESE SENTENCES IN CURSIVE WRITING!

ANA STANUJE U GRADU SPLITU.

MOJA UČITELJICA SE ZOVE MARINA I ŽIVI U SAMOBORU.

3. WRITE A SHORT REPORT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY. WHO LIVES IN YOUR FAMILY? WHAT ARE THE NAMES OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS? (Write in cursive)

4. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS USING CURSIVE WRITING! (Write complete sentences)

What is your favorite color? _____

When you want your sister or brother to bring you something, how do you call them?

What question do you ask your teacher when you want to leave the classroom?

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