

Why Is Five Much More Than Four? On The Description of Numeral Words in Croatian as a Second and Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

Already at the very beginning of learning a foreign language, there is a need to use numeral words, regardless of which language it is. In three thousand most frequent words of the Croatian language (Moguš, Bratanić, Tadić 1999), there are some thirty numeral words very different in their grammatical properties. In Croatian, as in other Slavic languages, the issue of numeral words is a complex one and several morphological and syntactic rules should be mastered in order to be able to utter a simple sentence with such words. In addition, the knowledge of numeral words that the non-native speakers of Croatian have in their first language often does not correspond to what they need to know about numeral words in Croatian. Therefore, deviations in their interlanguage with regard to numbers are very frequent. In order to achieve better mastery over numeral words in Croatian as a foreign language, one first needs to describe them properly, hence this presentation attempts to answer certain questions about numeral words for the needs of Croatian as a foreign language, e.g. which words in the Croatian language can be included under numeral words, i.e. what the sub-types of numeral words are, which principles the authors of handbooks should be guided by in their description etc. We will briefly describe the classification and description of numeral words in contemporary handbooks of Croatian as the first language.

The paper is based on insights into numeral words in general and in the Croatian language (Huang et al. 2011; Musolino 2004; Tafra 1989, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011; Pišković 2011; Marković 2011, 2012; all contemporary grammar books of the Croatian language), on insights into interlanguage (Selinker 1992), on the need to teach grammatical rules directly (Novak Milić 2005), and on insights into the lexical approach in teaching foreign languages, with a particular emphasis on Croatian (Bergovec, M. 2007).