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Grammatical gender in Croatian as a second language

Abstract

Grammatical gender, as proven by many linguists, is a category manifested in agreement, while on the nouns themselves there is no marker which would classify them as such into one of the category forms of the gender category. The grammatical gender of the noun (controller) can with certainty be recognized only on the basis of its agreement with other words. However, the gender of the noun can be recognized in this way only by native speakers whose grammar is generative. For non-native speakers to be able to use gender correctly, i.e. to apply the rules of agreement, they first need to know (learn) the gender of a particular noun – their mastering of gender is, therefore, significantly different from the way that native speakers master gender. The presentation attempts to demonstrate the most appropriate approach to grammatical gender for Croatian as an L2.

In describing and teaching gender in Croatian as an L2, the approach to grammar should be a receptive one, i.e. from the point of view of non-native speakers. The presentation attempts to demonstrate that in Croatian as an L2 it is justified to describe and teach the grammatical gender in relation to the ending of the noun in its canonical form. The presentation shows how grammar books for non-native speakers are modeled after grammar books for native speakers and that there are hardly any differences in the approach to grammatical gender.

A new division of nouns into types will be presented, more appropriate for Croatian as an L2, according to the relationship between the gender, number, declension and sex of the person to which the noun pertains, in order to describe them more precisely for non-native speakers and facilitate their mastering of them.

The presentation also discusses the relationship between gender in Croatian and gender in the learners' first language.

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