



The Use of Lexicographic Resources in Croatian Primary and Secondary Education

Ana Ostroški Anić, Daria Lazić,
Maja Matijević & Martina Pavić

Institute for Croatian Language



eLex 2023: Electronic Lexicography in the 21st Century
27-29 June, 2023
Brno



Overview

1. Motivation
2. Structure and implementation of the survey
3. Participants distribution
4. Discussion of results
5. Conclusions

Background and motivation

- dictionary usage in the context of education: students as focus group
- dictionaries traditionally used (and studied) as reference tools and teaching aids in foreign language learning
- some studies emphasize their contribution to enhancing literacy and reading skills (e.g. Beech, 2010)
- children's dictionaries contribute to vocabulary learning and facilitate encyclopaedic and cultural learning (Tarp & Gows, 2012)
- explicit instruction in dictionary skills → improving reference skills (Lew & Galas, 2008)

Motivation

- the national curriculum for Croatian as L1: active use of a children's dictionary as a learning outcome as early as from the first grade
- 15-year-olds should be able to analyse the lexical-semantic relations between words using dictionaries

AIM – investigate the usage of dictionaries by teachers and students in primary and secondary education in Croatia

Do teachers use dictionaries in class today? What types of dictionaries? For what purposes?

Are there non-language teachers reaching for dictionaries as reference works?

Research questions

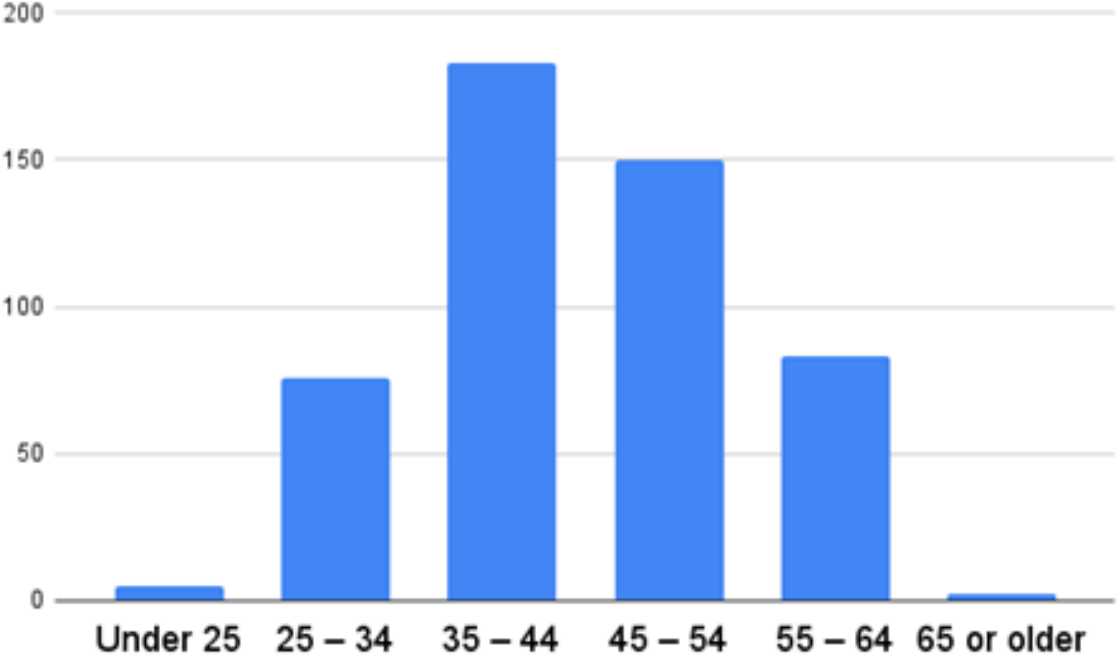
1. To what extent do teachers include lexicographic resources in their teaching practices, both during class preparation and in the classroom?
2. How do teachers perceive the relevance and accuracy of information provided by lexicographic resources in relation to the curriculum they teach? Are they happy with the existing resources?
3. How familiar are teachers with specialized dictionaries, databases, and other lexicographic resources?

Survey structure and implementation

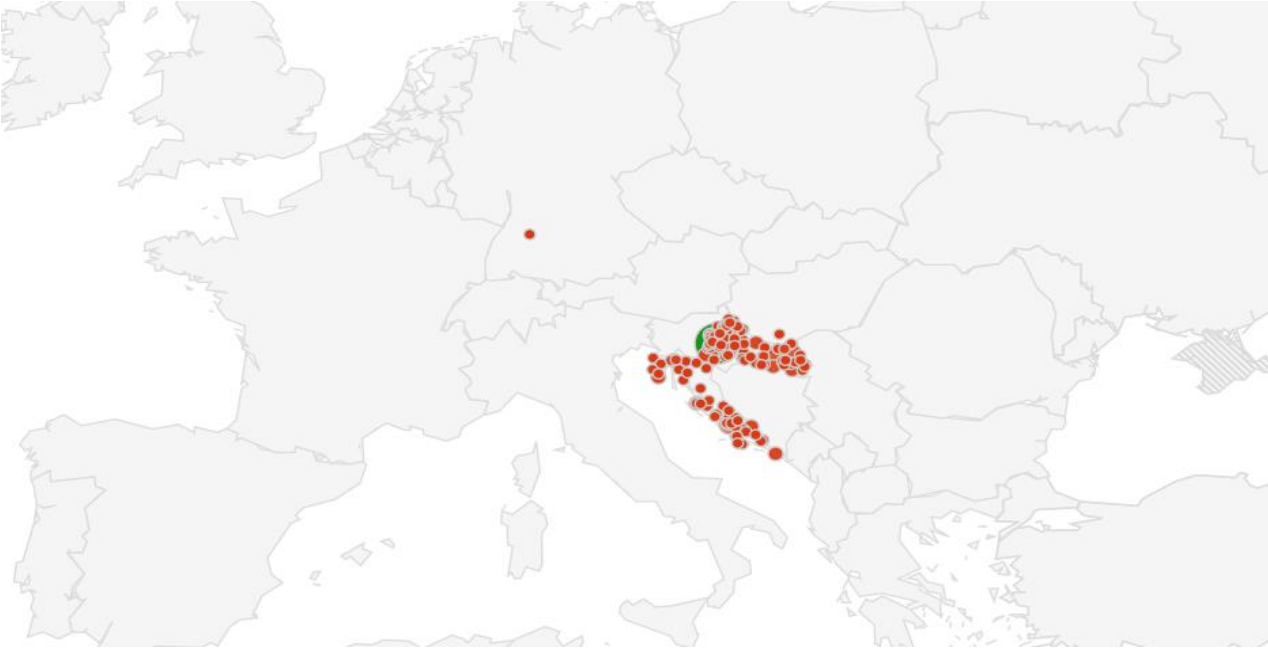
- 24 questions in 4 sections:
 - 1) personal information
 - 2) workplace information
 - 3) use of dictionaries when preparing classes
 - 4) use of dictionaries in class
- different question formats
- survey intended for teachers of ALL subjects
- pilot survey
- emails, Facebook teacher groups, Twitter, LinkedIn, personal contacts, letters to school principals (random selection)

Participants

the survey completed by **503 participants**: 89.1% identified as female, 10.5% as male



The age of respondents



Regional distribution of respondents

Participants

workplace

47.5% work in a primary school

50.3% in a secondary school

2.2%: both primary and secondary schools, a music school, or a foreign language school

work satisfaction

59.4% mostly satisfied

23.5% fully satisfied

13.5% satisfied to a certain extent

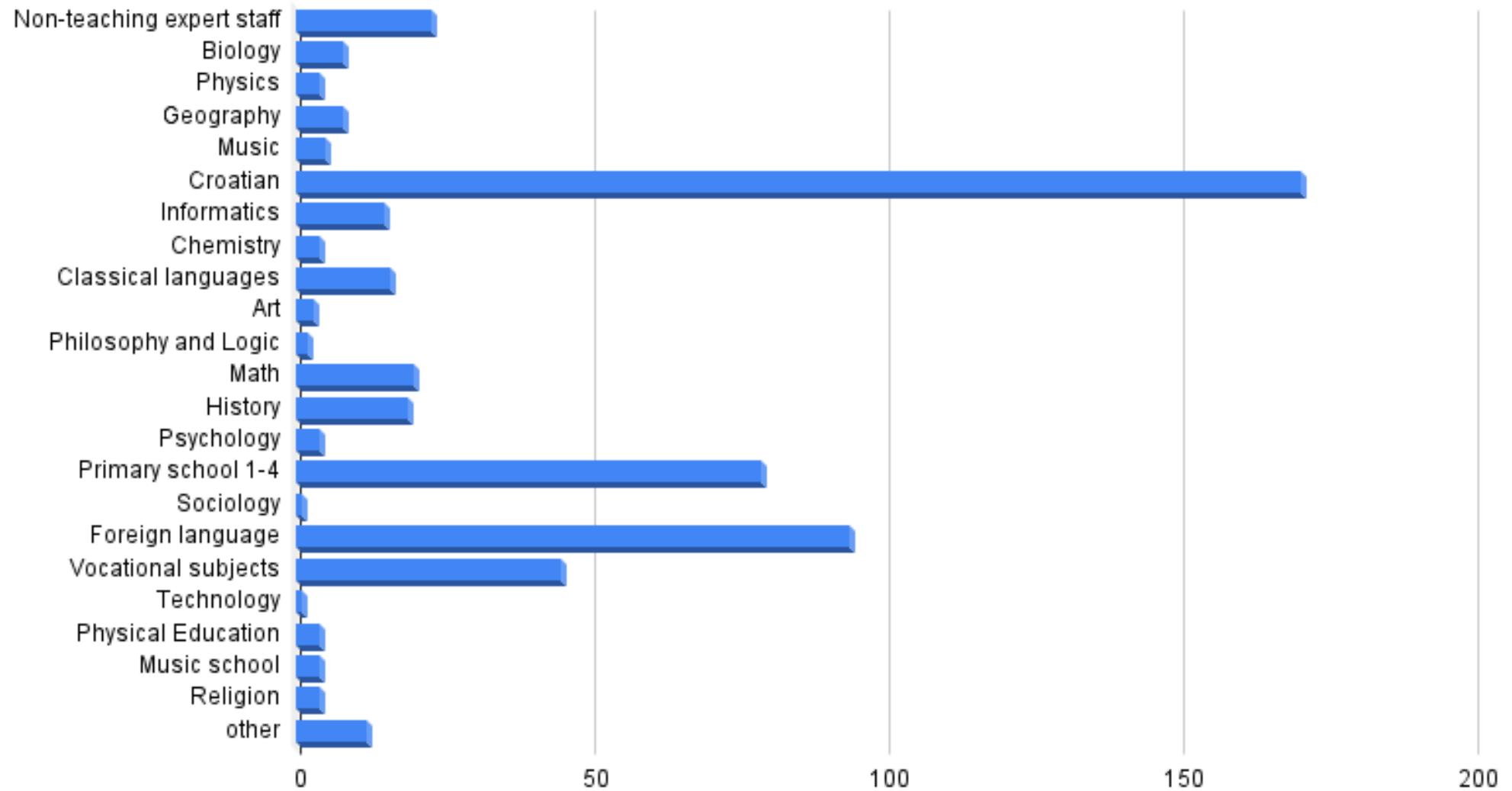
2.6% mostly not satisfied

1% not satisfied at all



Years of teaching experience

School subjects taught by respondents

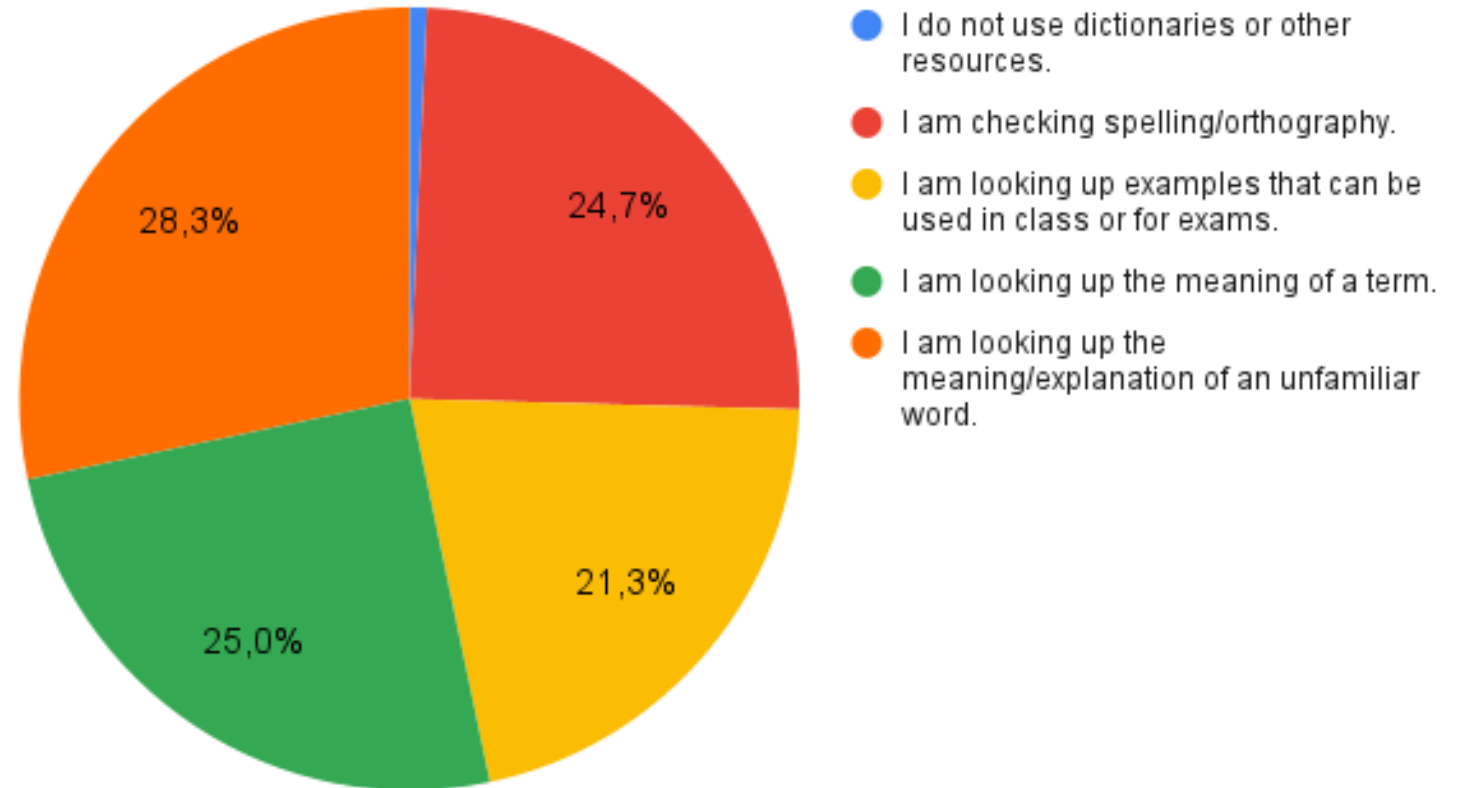


Substantial number of vocational subject teachers

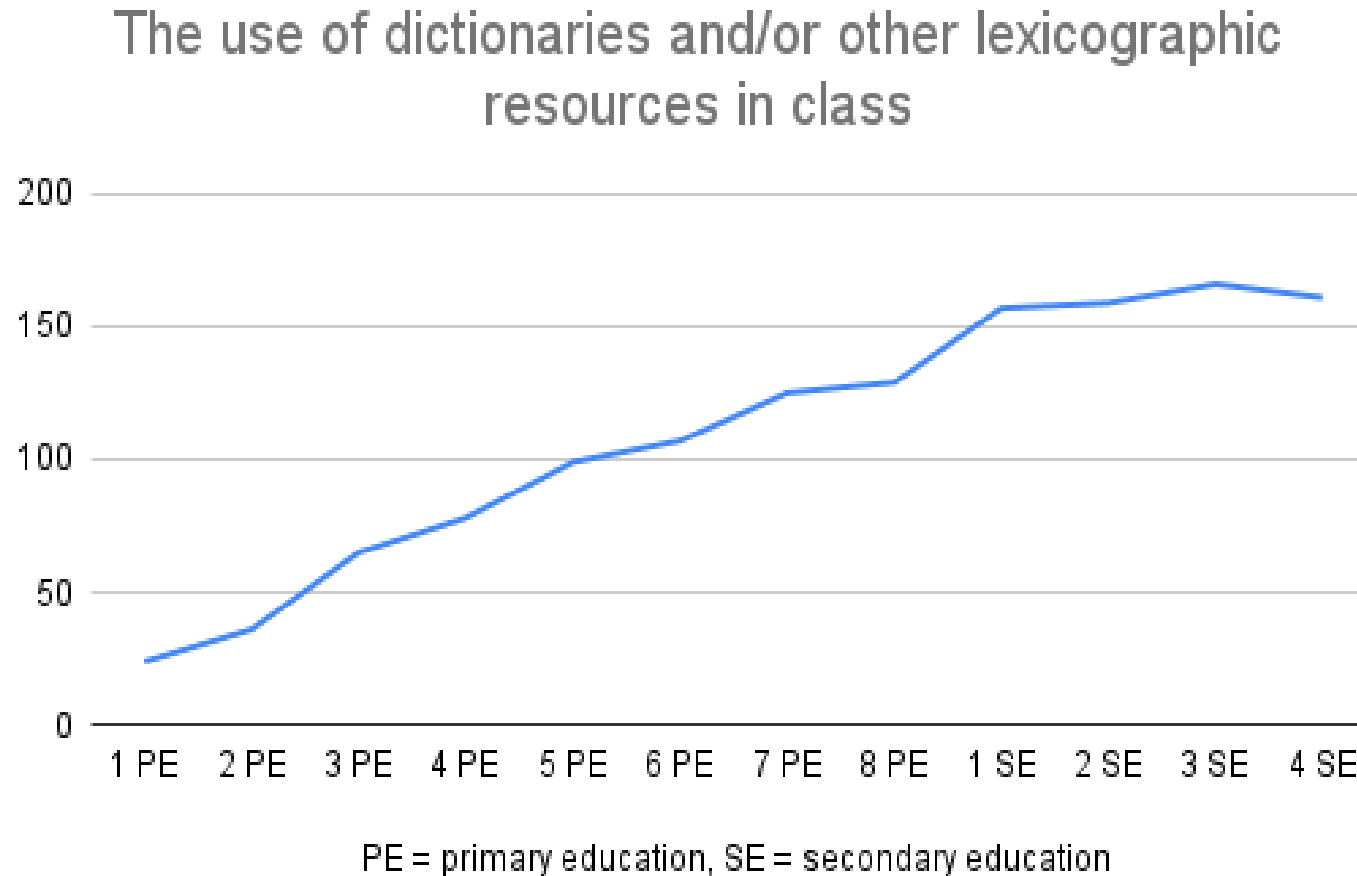
Using dictionaries in class preparation

- reported frequency of use of Croatian monolingual or foreign language dictionaries as expected
- 57.3% use contemporary Croatian monolingual dictionaries once a month or more frequently; 25% use English and other FL dictionaries about once a month
- 55.9% respondents regularly use Croatian specialized resources

Reasons for using dictionaries when preparing for classes

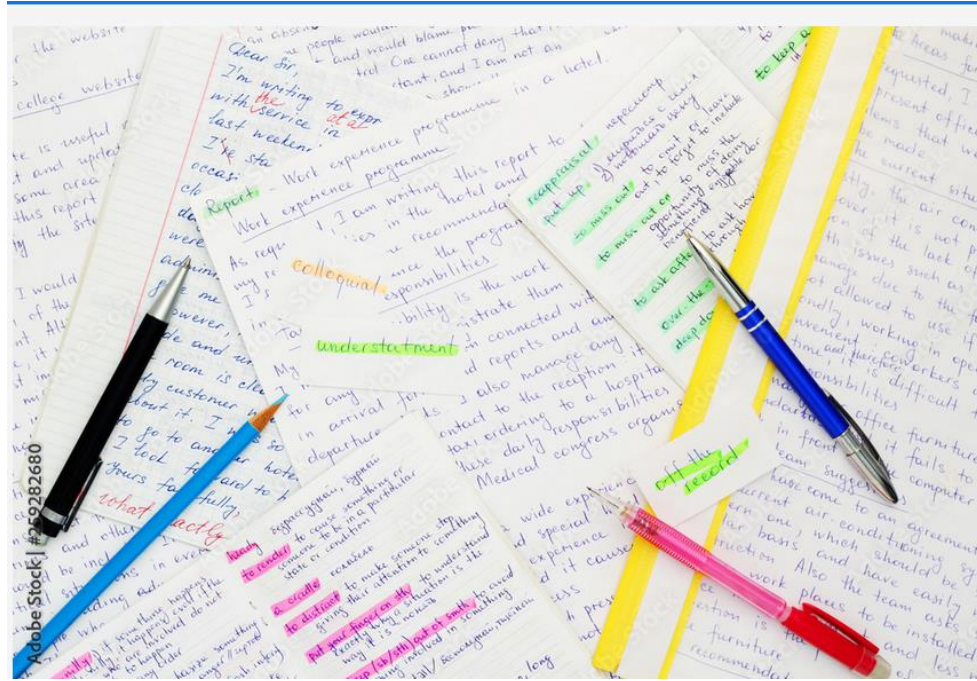
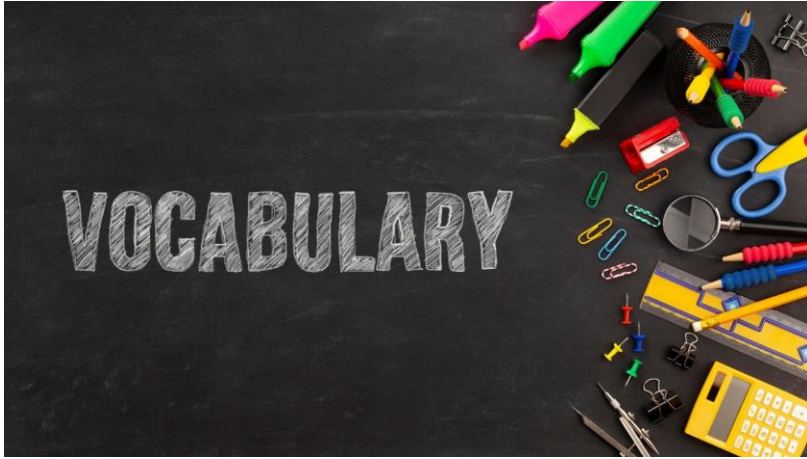


Using dictionaries in class



The use of dictionaries during class activities in primary and secondary education

Activities



Type of activity	Number of responses
looking up unknown words / definitions of words / comparing the meaning of words	158
looking up concepts / definitions of concepts	59
learning about the structure of lexicographical entry; forming a dictionary definition	44
searching for examples of usage	24
looking up grammatical categories, morphological features of words	24
checking spelling/orthography	24
searching for synonyms	17
assistance when writing essays and other assignments	15
searching for definition/explanation of terms	10
looking up foreign words; translation; Croatian word for a foreign equivalent	10
using new words in a text or in speech	9
looking up etymology of words	7
looking up meaning/explanations of phrasemes; collocations	7
searching for antonyms	6
reading for vocabulary enrichment	3
looking up accents and pronunciation	2
defining loanwords	2
looking up abbreviations	1
looking up archaic words	1
learning how to summarize and take notes	1
they did not participate	135
general positive reply	70
other (e.g. practicing language skills)	11
vague reply	11

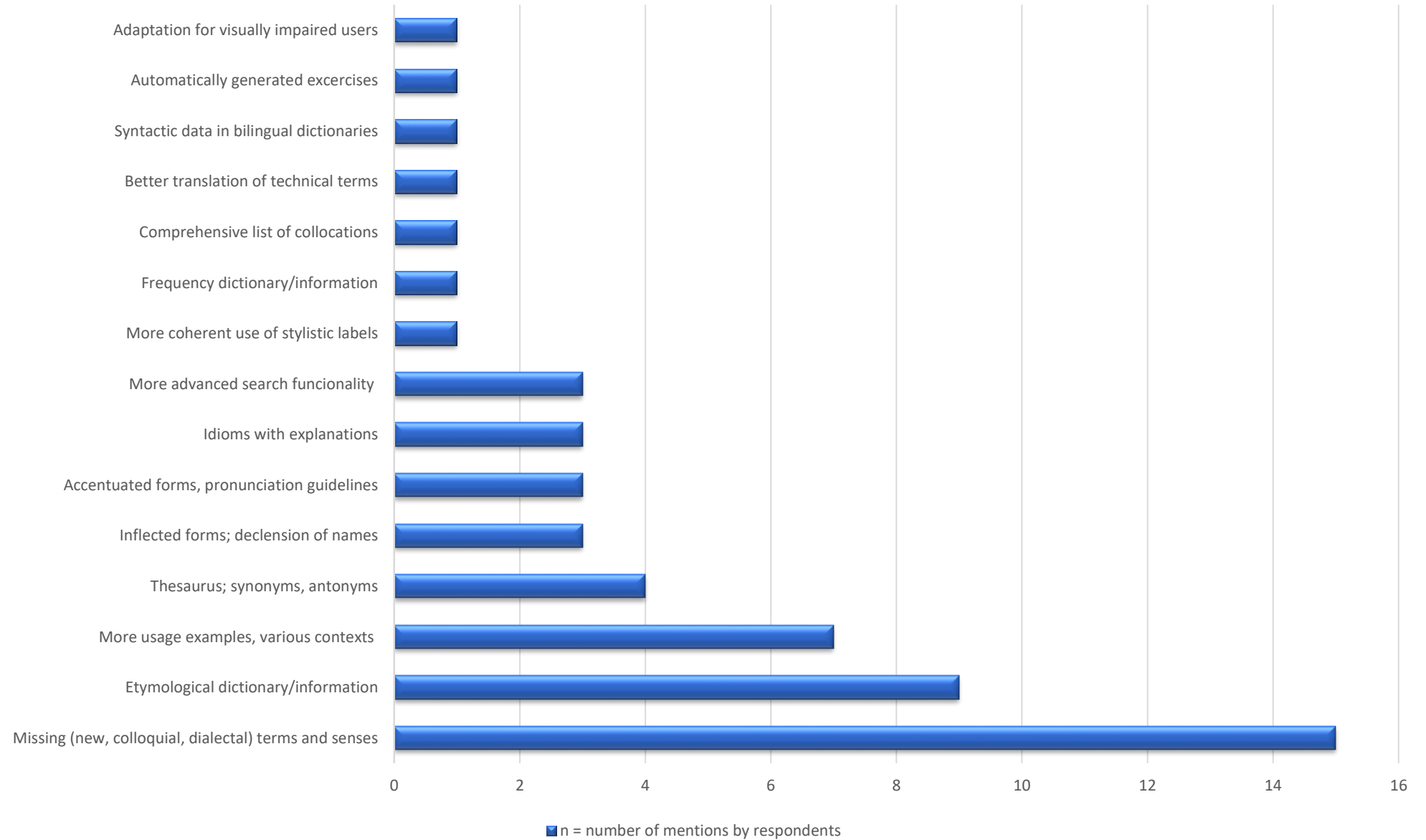
Table 1: Teaching and learning activities for which students actively used dictionaries.

Meeting user needs

criticism from respondents

- lack of certain types of dictionaries for Croatian: etymological dictionary, dictionary of synonyms, dictionary of idioms, frequency dictionary, thesaurus, specialized dictionaries within certain fields, good-quality bilingual dictionaries, etc.
- some of these exist in print form, but are often incomplete and outdated
- content of lexicographic resources is often too complex and extensive for school use (especially for primary school students), and possibly even for a wider circle of non-expert users.

Content and form: suggested improvements



Suggested improvements and additions to the existing lexicographic resources, primarily dictionaries.

Conclusions

qualitative analysis of open-ended questions:

- respondents generally satisfied with available resources, but would like “combined” resources
- major shortcomings include the lack of resources suitable for students at lower levels of education, the outdatedness or incompleteness of the existing resources, and technical restrictions of the resources
- common concern = lack of terms and senses in available resources, esp. in relation to newer concepts, technological innovations, and specific language variants (e.g. jargons, dialects, colloquial language use)

Future work

- several math teachers reported using lexicographic resources as reference tools for **definitions** of specialized mathematical concepts
- raising awareness about using terminological resources in teaching, particularly for preparing materials for primary education students
 - complex concepts, learning to formulate their own definitions
- enhancing children's categorization skills via improving definitional skills
- modifying and adjusting definitions of abstract or specialized concepts in textbooks and teaching materials

References

- Beech, J. R. (2010). Using a dictionary: Its influence on a children's reading, spelling, and phonology. *Reading Psychology*, 25(1), pp. 19–36.
- Boulton, A. & De Cock, S. (2017). Dictionaries as aids for language learning. In P. Hanks & G.-M. Schryver (eds.) *International Handbook of Modern Lexis and Lexicography*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.
- CEFR = Council of Europe (2018). *Common Europe Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors*. Strasbourg. <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989> (20 April 2023).
- Egido Vicente, M. (2022). Dictionaries in German and Spanish Primary Education Curricula: A Comparative Study. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 35(2), pp. 176–203.
- Kosem, I. et al. (2019). The Image of the Monolingual Dictionary Across Europe. Results of the European Survey of Dictionary use and Culture. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 32(1), pp. 92–114.
- Lew, R. (2015). Research into the Use of Online Dictionaries. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 28.2, pp. 232–253.
- Lew, R. & Galas, K. Can Dictionary Skills Be Taught? The Effectiveness of Lexicographic Training for Primary-School-Level Polish Learners of English. In E. Bernal & J. DeCesaris (eds.) *Proceedings of the XIII EURALEX International Congress*. Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra, pp. 1273–1285.
- MZO = Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja (2018). *Odluka o donošenju kurikuluma za nastavni predmet Hrvatski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije u Republici Hrvatskoj*. narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2019_01_10_215.html (20 April 2023).
- Müller-Spitzer, C. (ed.). (2014). *Using Online Dictionaries. Lexicographica Series Maior* 145. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Müller-Spitzer, C., Koplenig, A. & Wolfer, S. (2017). Dictionary Usage Research in the Internet Era. In P. A. Fuertes-Olivera (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Lexicography*. London: Routledge, pp. 715–734.
- Nied Curcio, M. (2022). Dictionaries, foreign language learners and teachers. New challenges in the digital era. In A. Klosa-Kückelhaus, S. Engelberg, C. Möhrs & P. Storjohann (eds.) *Dictionaries and Society. Proceedings of the XX EURALEX International Congress*. Mannheim: IDS-Verlag, pp. 71–84.
- Ostroški Anić, A. et al. (2023). The use of lexicographic resources in Croatian primary and secondary education – Survey Data [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7975264> (26 May 2023).
- Saleh, A. & Bista, K. (2017). Examining Factors Impacting Online Survey Response Rates in Educational Research: Perceptions of Graduate Students. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, 13(29), pp. 63–74.
- Tarp, S. & Gouws, R. H. (2012). School Dictionaries for First-Language Learners. *Lexikos*, 22, pp. 333–351.
- Tono, Y. (2001). *Research on Dictionary Use in the Context of Foreign Language Learning: Focus on Reading Comprehension*. Berlin/Boston: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Zerdeli, S. (2021). Teaching Dictionary-Using Strategies in Primary Educational System: An Empirical Research. *Journal of Modern Education Review*, 11(1), pp. 1–8.



Thank you!

aostrosk@ihjj.hr

This work has been supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project HRZZ-UIP-2017-05-7169 and by the Institute for Croatian Language under the projects Semantic frames in the Croatian Language and Mrežnik.