Integration in the Creative Approach to Required Reading

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-07-29**

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU

UČITELJSKI FAKULTET

ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

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DIPLOMSKI RAD

INTEGRATION IN THE CREATIVE APPROACH TO REQUIRED READING

Zagreb, lipanj 2019.

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(Zagreb)

DIPLOMSKI RAD

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Tema diplomskog rada: Integration in the Creative Approach to Required Reading

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Zagreb, lipanj 2019

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ABSTRACT

Integration in the Creative Approach to Required Reading

Required reading is an important aspect of teaching literature in the subject of Croatian Language and Literature. Its primary task is to develop and support the student's motivation and love for reading by providing encounters with valuable literature. Required reading methodology has been unaltered for a long period of time, so there is a need for new and more efficient ideas. Creative approach to required reading is a concept which promotes innovations in literature methodology, with the student's motivation and curiosity as its starting point. One of its principles is integration – a constructivist approach which advocates meaningful linking of knowledge and skills from different areas across the teaching and learning process. Ideas of integrated approach were established within the constructivist movement, starting at the end of the nineteenth century, and they are still relevant in contemporary educational trends. Integration is a complex organisational form, so the teaching practice may need concrete guidelines for its implementation. Apart from giving an overview of integration theory, its development and characteristics, this paper will try to explore the possibilities for organising integration based on required reading. It considers the integrative potential of literature in the light of diversity of its artistic and informational components, and links it to general terms of organisation and realisation of interdisciplinary teaching. The study will also present a proposal of an integrated teaching unit based on a required reading work for the fourth grade of primary school – *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren. The main idea of this work is that exploring the integrative possibilities of literature could be an accessible and valuable starting point for making progress in teaching practice.

Key words: creative approach to required reading, integration, teaching literature, *Pippi Longstocking*

SAŽETAK

Integracija u kreativnom pristupu lektiri

Lektira je od izuzetne važnosti u poučavanju književnosti unutar nastavnog predmeta Hrvatski jezik i književnost. Njezina primarna zadaća jest razvijanje i poticanje učenikove motivacije i ljubavi prema čitanju, kroz pružanje mogućnosti za susret s vrijednim književnim djelima. Metodički pristup lektiri već je godinama nepromijenjen, stoga postoji potreba za novim i učinkovitijim idejama. Kreativni pristup lektiri je koncept koji promiče inovacije u metodici književnosti čije su polazišne točke učenička motivacija i znatiželja. Jedan od njegovih principa jest integracija – konstruktivistički pristup koji zagovara smisleno povezivanje znanja i vještina iz različitih područja unutar procesa poučavanja i učenja. Ideje integriranog pristupa utemeljene su unutar konstruktivističkog pokreta još s kraja devetnaestog stoljeća, a relevantne su i u suvremenim obrazovnim trendovima. Integracija je složen organizacijski oblik, i zato učiteljska praksa zahtijeva konkretnije smjernice u njenom ostvarivanju. Osim pregleda teorije, povijesnog razvoja i obilježja integriranog pristupa, u ovome će se radu istražiti mogućnosti organizacije integracije na temelju lektire. U radu se promišlja o integracijskom potencijalu književnosti u svjetlu raznolikosti njezinih umjetničkih i informativnih sastavnica, te se ostvaruje poveznica s općenitim pojmovima organizacije i ostvarenja integriranog poučavanja. Također, predstavit će se i prijedlog integriranog nastavnog plana temeljenog na lektirnom djelu za četvrti razred osnovne škole – *Pipi Dugoj Čarapi* spisateljice Astrid Lindgren. Misao vodilja ovoga rada je da bi istraživanje integracijskih potencijala književnosti moglo biti pristupačno i vrijedno ishodište za ostvarivanje promjena u učiteljskoj praksi.

Ključne riječi: kreativni pristup lektiri, integracija, poučavanje književnosti, *Pipi Duga Čarapa*

1. INTRODUCTION

From the first days of one's education, there is an aspect which is present almost throughout the whole process of lifelong learning – encounters with literature. The history of school is based on books – poetry, fables, religious writings – works which have not even been intended for educational purposes, but very soon became foundations of literacy, which has led to discovering and developing more complex aesthetics and structures of the written word.

Teaching and learning through literature is one of the most important segments of primary education, whose aims are numerous – developing literacy skills and aesthetic perception, fostering imagination, critical thinking and curiosity about the world. For a long period of time, an important part of teaching literature in Croatian schools has been organised in the form of required reading. It usually refers to a list of literary works suggested for each grade or educational cycle, which are to be read and interpreted during the school year.

Required reading is meant to provide a valuable encounter with a literary work as a whole – discovering and exploring the diversity of its artistic and informational components. Therefore, its main aim is to support reading habits and develop motivation and love of reading in general.

Although the aims of required reading bear a great responsibility for development of students' literary competences, the practice reveals a lot of issues which in many cases stem from lack of students' motivation or superficial classroom interpretations of required literary works. There is a need for innovative and more creative methodological ideas, which would shift the concept of required reading from a demanding and often dull monthly task, as perceived by many young readers, to a motivational experience which inspires the interest for reading and general curiosity.

Creative approach to required reading (Gabelica & Težak, 2017) is a methodological concept which develops motivational activities which support the whole reading process realised within the educational context. Some of its starting points are the student's curiosity, immersion in the reading process, interactivity,

multidimensionality and integrative possibilities of activities which follow the pre-reading motivation, reading phase and post-reading reflection.

Moving further from traditional subject-based approaches, contemporary education based on the 21st century skills requires integration of diversity of areas, skills and competences. Realising the need for new methods, in teaching literature but also in other areas, this thesis will explore the concept of integration as one of the principles of the creative approach to required reading – understanding literature as a foundation for meaningful learning based on interrelations of different subjects, skills and competences.

The first part of the thesis will give a theoretical overview of the concept of required reading, as well as its definition and role in the national educational documents. It will also provide an explanation of the current required reading methodology in relation to the issues of practice based on research, and complement it with a thorough explanation of the creative approach to required reading and its principles. The following part of the work discusses the concept of integration, from its historical, scientific and organisational perspective. The possibilities and characteristics of the integrated approach will be further considered through possibilities of teaching literature. Finally, the last chapter will offer an example of a required reading unit based on *Pippi Longstocking* by A. Lindgren, which will try to implement the ideas of integration and the creative approach to required reading.

Perceiving children's literature as a source of diverse possibilities, this thesis will try to present it as a valuable and accessible starting point in creating and developing innovative teaching methods and ideas.

2. REQUIRED READING – DEFINITION AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

Croatian word *lektira* is most commonly associated with a list of literary works that should be read and analysed throughout a certain educational period. Still, this expression has a much broader meaning. The word itself originates in the Latin expression *legere*, which means *to read*. Therefore, *lektira* can be understood as any kind of text intended for both educational and non-educational reading purposes, and this definition may be crucial in forming perspectives in approaches used in teaching language and literature. It means reading it its most natural form – as a source of both information and enjoyment. Although it is often perceived as a school requirement which has to be fulfilled, assessed and graded, it should primarily be understood as a medium for developing and encouraging interest in reading in general (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p.12).

Having its original meaning in mind, if we translate Croatian word *lektira* into English expression *required reading*, we can observe that it may not be an ideal equivalent because the word *required* implies its obligatory nature. Still, since it is an educational and methodological concept which is specifically related to the Croatian educational context, we will use this expression, but also strive to point out the importance of understanding its broader meaning in creating and implementing innovative teaching perspectives and approaches.

2. 1. The Role of Required Reading in National Documents

The idea of required reading originates from the Age of Enlightenment, when the only role of children`s literature was to be didactic. During the history of Croatian education, there had been many changes in the approach to required reading. Some programs had defined lists of authors and titles for each grade, while others only proposed genres appropriate for certain age or gave the full authority of choice to the teacher. The changes in programs also reflected changes in the socio-political context of the country (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p.16-17).

At the moment, Croatian educational system is on the verge of another extensive reform, with the experimental phase of the new Curriculum implementation. The National Plan and Program, introduced in 2006 and still used by schools which have not entered the experimental phase of the reform yet, is about to be replaced with the new National Curriculum. Ever since forming its first version, the Curriculum Proposal, this document has faced many critics and subsequent alterations. All of those changes have affected the role of required reading, as well as its possible perspectives and methodological approaches.

The National Plan and Program defines teaching Croatian as a mother tongue through four components: Croatian language, linguistic expression, media culture, and literature (MZOŠ, 2006, p. 25). Required reading is a part of the literature component, presented in the form of a list of literary works for each grade, some of which are obligatory while others are optional. The number of works suggested for reading depends on the grade; for example, four works should be read in the first grade, five in the second, and seven in both third and fourth grade (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p.23).

The National Plan and Program describes the general aim of the Croatian language as a subject – enabling and developing all kinds of linguistic communication appropriate for students in primary school (MZOŠ, 2006, p. 25). This document also defines specific tasks for each of its four components. Thus, besides providing opportunities for reception of valuable literary works, the literature component should develop literary needs and habits and encourage autonomous reading (Ibid., p.25). Although such broad definitions seem to leave enough scope for teachers' choices of literary works and teaching methods, some authors have raised their doubts concerning the obligatory number of works for each grade (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p.23). Furthermore, according to the practice based on the National Plan and Program, it has been observed that required reading takes approximately two lessons per month, very often organised as a lesson block of 90 minutes, which may be not enough if the aims and tasks of the document are to be realised.

The Curriculum Proposal for Croatian Language presented a slightly different concept of the subject, which has remained after the changes and in the last, official version of the National Curriculum. It divides the subject into three domains: Communication and Language, Literature and Creativity, and Culture and Media. In the explanation of

the domain of Literature and Creativity from the Curriculum Proposal, it is pointed out that reading, besides its educational element which is usually strongly pointed out in the school context, should provide multi-directional interaction with texts, enjoyment, as well as encourage various reflections in young students (MZO, 2016, p. 4). The name of the domain itself directly relates literature to the creative process, which draws attention to the importance of seeing literary works both as products of this process and as stimuli for it.

The upcoming educational reform aspires to change some of the shortcomings of the previous document, such as lack of teachers' autonomy and flexibility in choosing the literary works for their students. Therefore, the new Curriculum Proposal presented a new perspective towards the role of reading in general, which directly influences changing the definition of required reading. Instead of lists of books for every grade, this document provides a list of proposed literary works for comprehensive reading (Ibid., p. 292). The list had an open form, with no works defined as obligatory, containing most of the works from the previous document as well as many contemporary authors and titles. Instead of a set of works for each grade, it is divided into cycles which correspond to educational periods. For example, the first cycle represents works appropriate for the first and second grade, while the second cycle refers to the third, fourth, and fifth grade.

An interesting instance that indicated the change is a different expression used in the new document. Replacing *required reading* with *comprehensive reading*[1] reflects the shift in the general perspective – understanding the use of literary works as a medium for developing an interest in reading, instead of seeing it only as a part of school obligations which result in assessing and grading. Unlike the National Plan and Program which shortly describes tasks of teaching literature in general, the Curriculum Proposal gave a more detailed explanation of the purpose of teaching literature, as well as of the role of comprehensive reading. According to its authors, teaching literature should provide encounters with certain cultural elements and in that way enhance their

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[1] Although the Curriculum Proposal uses the new expression, in this work we will use the phrase *required reading*, since the practice may not accept the change in expressions so soon. Still, we refer to the same concept.

understanding in everyday context, as well as give opportunities for the reader's self-development and broadening of their perspectives (Ibid., p. 292).

The Curriculum Proposal also defined specific criteria used in creating the list of suggested books. As stated in the introduction to the list, the first criterion is the cultural value of the chosen literary works. The second criterion is suitability of books for students' independent and autonomous reading. The next guideline is suitability according to the age and general experience of the students, and the last one is diversity of representatives of Croatian and world literature as well as variety of genres (Ibid., p. 292).

The Curriculum Proposal did not prescribe the number of works for a certain cycle, but advises that students of the first four grades should read from six to ten literary works from the provided list (Ibid., p. 287), and that each student should read at least one work of free choice per year. Teachers should also encourage free reading choice on a daily basis (Ibid., p. 47, 55, 63, 75). The document also points out the importance of consensus between the teacher and the students in choosing the works from the list, focusing on their students' interests.

Despite the detailed explanations given in the Proposal, this document (especially the required reading list) has faced strong criticism, which resulted in a completely new concept of required reading in the National Curriculum published in 2019 (MZO, 2019). The new document suggests reading ten works in the first and the second grade, and eight in the third and fourth, but the list for the first and the second cycle contains only eight works. All contemporary works are removed, and optional reading is left to be the teacher's free choice, without any suggestions. This new concept immediately raised many negative reactions, and the general perspective on required reading in such a situation is still not very clear. Still, comparing the previous and the new document, we can notice that the new approach to required reading (or literature teaching in general) puts strong emphasis on autonomy and independence – for teachers, but what is even more important, for students. This new viewpoint could lead to better achievements of the general aim of teaching literature. Still, there are many questions that could arise from the practice influenced by the previous programmes, assessment requirements, need for expert assistance, possibilities of certain schools, as well as social expectations.

Since the concept, position, and attitudes towards required reading may be undergoing many changes in the following period, it is important to consider its main role – providing valuable and motivating encounters with literature.

2.2. Methodology of Required Reading

According to Lučić-Mumlek (2002), required reading implies both classroom activity, and the student's extracurricular work – reading and activities done at home. Since the beginning of primary education is marked by the development of basic reading and writing skills (the process which can last during the first three years), this affects the choice of methods which can be implemented as well as the amount of the students' independent work. Still, every approach should enable the student's creative expression, in its full diversity (Lučić-Mumlek, 2002, p. 43).

There are also differences in the reception possibilities of students of different grades. Children of the first and second grade tend to focus on the sound, rhythm, and melody of words. They also give more attention to the story as a whole. Towards the third and fourth grade, students develop the ability to make logical connections, can focus on more details and understand some abstract concepts, such as basic literary tools (Lučić-Mumlek, 2002, pp. 20-23). Those possibilities, as well as the students' own interests, should serve as guidelines in choosing literary works.

Besides the description of its aims and tasks, the National Plan and Program did not give any specific guidelines for required reading or teaching literature in general. On the other side, in the chapter entitled *Learning and Teaching Croatian Language*, Curriculum Proposal defines the fundamental approach to teaching literature. It values emotional, aesthetic literary experiences which should encourage critical thinking, problem solving and creativity; pointing out the importance of strategies and methods which lead towards this achievement, enabling the student's personal and creative expression (MZO, 2016, p. 287).

Many methodological aspects of required reading have been present in our educational system in the same form for a long period. The students' task has mainly been to read required books at home, and then involve in a classroom discussion or sometimes in a kind of written examination. A dominant method for interpreting and assessing

required reading tasks are reading diaries. They usually consist of a student's notebook in which they write facts about the book they are reading, such as notes about the author, characters, main theme, time and setting, short plot descriptions, their opinions, etc. In most cases, these notes serve as a basis for discussion and interpretation in class, and are assessed and graded by the teacher. Besides reading diaries, some teachers use required reading workbooks created by schoolbook publishers.

2. 3. Attitudes Towards Required Reading and Problems in Practice

Technological development, media influence, and expectations of modern society are constantly reflecting on education and determining its changes. Numerous projects for encouraging reading habits and culture, initiated not only in our country but on the international level, imply that reading culture could be facing a crisis. Even if educational programs and experts are emphasising student creativity, independence, and personal experience as a starting point in literature teaching, the practice that has been fixed for years might not be effective in the modern context.

When it comes to required reading, research has shown that, from the perspective of students, there may be a general negative attitude towards it. According to Gabelica and Težak (2017), some of the main causes for this issue are the aforementioned lists of works which can be too extensive, insufficient time for required reading lessons, the obligatory nature of reading lists, lack of diversity in topics and genres, grading, and uninteresting methodological approaches in teaching literature in general (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p. 19).

A study from 2014, with a sample of 361 students of primary schools in Zagreb (fourth, sixth, and eighth grade) and 114 teachers from the whole country examined the students' reading habits. They were analysed from the aspects of digital media influence, general reading habits, attitudes towards required reading and students' opinions about changing approaches in required reading lessons (Ibid., p. 89). When asked about their interest in reading, half of the examinees claimed that they "liked to read", while the other half answered with "sometimes". This may seem as a good indicator, but when it came to required reading, 45% of the students claimed that they

disliked it. It was also noticed that the frequency of library visits is equivalent to the amount of required reading organised per month, which implies that required reading may in most cases be the only encounter with a literary work as a whole (Ibid., pp. 91-92).

Similar indications were noticed in the answers of teachers, who in majority agreed with the aforementioned fact, as well as in seeing the inadequate number of required reading lessons as a general issue. On the other hand, the teachers' answers have been much more inconsistent and divided in terms of grading and assessment of required reading, and perhaps most importantly, in their attitudes towards developing and using new, creative methods in required reading classes (Ibid., p. 106).

Many problems in the practice of required reading can be recognised in the methodology of teaching, especially in the use of reading diaries. The concept of writing down certain details from the story as well as the reader's thoughts and opinions, is surely valuable, but it should only come after deeper experiencing and understanding of the book. In our practice, reading diaries are much different from this ideal form. Due to the lack of time for required reading lessons, many teachers see checking the facts presented in this way as the most efficient assessment and grading method of required reading tasks. While the lessons mostly contain discussions about the literary work, there are not many activities that would make required reading much more interesting than any other lessons (Ibid., p. 47).

The mentioned research has shown that 53% of examinees claimed that they perceived reading diaries as the most demanding aspect of required reading. Furthermore, many students and teachers associate required reading lessons with memorising and writing down mere facts about the books, while there is almost no time to discuss their opinions and experiences. There are also issues with students copying the tasks (Ibid., pp. 95-96). Insufficiently developed basic literacy skills, which are often the case in the first years of primary education, can also present a difficulty in requiring students' independent work.

Another problem in the approach to required reading is grading, which was still expected by the previous program. While summative assessment can be used in checking factual knowledge, the tasks defined by the program, such as developing reading needs and habits, require other kinds of knowledge, which reflect higher

thinking levels such as conceptual or metacognitive knowledge. If the students are asked to give their opinion about the literary work, this could hardly be measured by a scale of grades from 1 to 5.

The authors of the new curriculum have understood this issue, so the Curriculum Proposal describes some general guidelines for assessment and evaluation in Croatian language as a subject. It states that the student's independent choice, opinions and habits (the outcomes) concerning comprehensive reading should be assessed only formatively (MZO, 2016, pp. 290-291). Other levels of acquisition, which refer to any kind of classroom presentations, can be graded, but do not have to be (Ibid., pp. 47, 55, 63, 75).

We can notice that the study has shown many inconsistencies both in the teachers' and the students' opinions about required reading, and that the new program has presented more detailed advice for improvements in its methodology. Still, it only means that the problems in the approach have been detected, not solved. In addition to all the changes in the education program, there is a need for creating innovative and more creative principles and methods in the approach to required reading and teaching literature in general, as well as a demand for further education of educational practitioners.

3. CREATIVE APPROACH TO REQUIRED READING

Quite intensive discussions and attempts for change, which resulted in enforcing the experimental stage of the new educational reform, reflect the need of taking a new turn in educational perspectives, not only following European or global trends, but understanding our specific social contexts and their requirements. Our education still relies on many traditional approaches, such as frontal work, summative assessment, or appreciation of intellectual achievements before the artistic. However, current issues show that, besides cognitive achievements, the emphasis in new approaches has to be put on creativity.

3. 1. Creativity

Creativity as a concept has many definitions and social interpretations. Many experts agree upon understanding creativity as a skill which has to be developed (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p.130). Miroslav Huzjak (2008) defines it through two elements: seeing, experiencing, and using things and concepts in a new, extraordinary way; and producing new and different ideas (Huzjak, 2008, p. 31). He explains that in order to develop creative thinking skills, the learner needs an "enriched" environment – a diverse and interesting surroundings which creates challenges for the child's development (Huzjak, 2006, p. 243). In the school context, such surroundings are ensured by providing variety of challenging learning materials and sources, sensory activities, lots of communication possibilities and a motivational and encouraging social atmosphere.

Some authors claim that in the student-centred educational context creativity does not necessarily mean developing ideas or solutions which are completely new. Students, especially younger ones, are not aware of how much they learn from their everyday sociocultural context, and use this knowledge in their creative processes. For example, a student can link familiar information in formulating a definition of a concept which already exists in practice or science. Although the product is not new, the process is creative because it has included the student's divergent thinking, knowledge and individuality (Lučić, 2005, p. 133).

Creativity in terms of transforming existing ideas and finding new solutions requires divergent thinking, often neglected in the school context which usually highlights the value of convergent thinking. On the other hand, when discussing the changes in this aspect, the focus is usually on the students. Of course, their needs have to be the starting point, especially given the change in new generations, but it could also be important to think about the teachers and their own creative needs which would support their professional and personal development. The discussion about the need for creative approaches is omnipresent, but the practice could agree that professional education in this aspect is still not sufficient. Therefore, creative ideas should be shared. The process of teaching and learning should enable creativity for all of its participants. Such an approach can open a dialogue which becomes a foundation for further development of new ideas.

3. 2. Principles of the Creative Approach to Required Reading

Required reading is usually seen only as a part of the subject of Croatian language, but if we consider its main goal – developing the love of reading – we realise that working with literature in this context can go much further that the borderlines of a subject. Observing the existent methodology of required reading lessons, it can be noticed that, despite each literary work is different and therefore needs a different approach to its interpretation, the majority of teachers still use reading diaries with the same tasks for each book. The unique nature of every literary work implies that there is a need for diversity of strategies and methods which would support developing its full potential.

Creative approach to required reading is thoroughly explained in the work by Marina Gabelica and Dubravka Težak (2017), who have based their book on their own research, teaching experience, and literature study. The concept relies on five principles, which explain the approach to required reading lessons and certain literary works.

The principle of the art of words explains the importance of seeing a required reading work not as a template for teaching, but primarily as a work of art with all its unique characteristics and possibilities of interpretation. Those characteristics depend on the

work's genre which, during interpretation, should be taken into account before the topic of the work. This statement is contained in the principle of genre.

The next premise is the principle of immersion – the condition crucial for a complete literary experience and creative process, which is enabled through creating an encouraging atmosphere before, during, and after reading. The principle of curiosity, conceptualisation, integration, and correlation explains that the required reading activities have to enable students to become intrinsically motivated, active explorers of the literary work. Required reading works have to be understood in their holistic, conceptual nature, and as such, open a lot of possibilities for correlation and integration with other fields and subjects.

The last guideline, the principle of hands-on literacy and interactivity, points out that required reading activities should not be based on cognitive skills, but that they should engage as many senses, intelligences and skills as possible.

Deliberating these five statements, the teacher can become aware of more possible problems arising from the existing methodology. If reading diaries serve only for noting facts about a certain work, this kind of approach to it completely lacks the artistic experience. Constant breaks in the reading process needed for note-taking certainly distort immersion. Ninety minutes of required reading lessons per month may not be enough if the teacher would like to organise diverse and interesting activities as well as a literary discussion. This list of issues could surely go on.

3. 3. Activities in the Creative Approach to Required Reading

The principles of creative approach to required reading support a holistic perspective of a literary work, which consists of encouragements for the reader's motivation and openness for learning and new experiences. The authors of the concept claim that "… required reading can and should be integrated and correlated with other educational (and everyday) content…" (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p. 166). Reading a book achieves its full sense if the reader remembers the work, and can relate to it in different situations. Therefore, reading promoted in the school context should be supported by activities which provide intrinsic motivation.

Traditional required reading methodology (e.g. reading diaries or tests) in many cases supports extrinsic motivation, usually in a form of teacher's positive feedback or a grade. Although such motivation may be important, developing interest for literature as the main aim of required reading needs the reader's intrinsic motivation, which should be supported throughout the whole process of reading. In light of this idea, creative approach to required reading explains four kinds of motivation: motivation for reading in general, motivation for reading a specific literary work, motivation during reading, and motivation after reading (Ibid., p. 168).

Although the school program offers many possibilities for encountering literature, in order to develop and sustain motivation for reading and literature in general, the students need to realise the sense of reading. In primary education, young readers are developing their reading circuits (Ibid., p. 170) – the process which begins with recognition of visual symbols (letters) and leads to their semantic understanding. Therefore, important steps in motivation for reading are activities which enable exploring the language and wordplay, which can support the readers' awareness of reading processes and strategies. Motivation for reading in general is also supported with incorporating literature into everyday classroom routines (e. g. organising 10-minute independent reading sessions), as well as relating and integrating literature with the school content. Teachers should also consider evaluation and assessment methods, which should follow each student's interests and personal progress.

Since required reading is usually a monthly task, students could need specific motivation for each book. Gabelica and Težak point out the importance of creating an atmosphere of excitement about the new title. It can be realised through setting interesting questions or challenges which students need to respond to before encountering a certain book. The teacher's attitude in giving suggestions is very important, but there is also a lot of potential in the students' suggestions.

Creative approach to required reading strives to transfer the reading process from the student's home (where they sometimes lose motivation or lack support) to the classroom, enriched by diverse activities and their teacher's support. Reading can still be a challenge for primary grade students, and there are some works whose understanding has been a problem for many generations, so the teacher's reading aloud or storytelling can be of great help in sustaining motivation during reading. Some

techniques, such as reading in sequels or the *cliff-hanger* method (Ibid., p. 203), can create excitement and positive expectation. Sharing the reading experience, through discussions or various kinds of note-taking, also gives opportunities for raising awareness of reading strategies.

Every book has its own potential to remain in the reader's memory. Interpretation of a certain required reading work cannot be complete if the book is not related to the student's everyday life. Creative approach to required reading promotes a specific way of organising after-reading activities in the form of activity centres. Organised as learning stations within a classroom, they link the different aspects of a literary work with various skills or other school content. For instance, the theme and characters of a book can become an inspiration for creative writing, drawing, or painting, or further exploring of other literary or online sources. Activity centres enable the students' responsibility and mobility within the learning process, as well as meaningful correlations (Ibid., p. 225). After-reading activities can also contain various projects based on certain aspects of a book.

Creativity in the approach to required reading means constant change and innovation, not only in the students' knowledge and perspectives, but also in method development. Since every literary work is unique, the writer's creative process can be seen as an analogue to the interpretation process, which should also be unique and multidimensional. Practitioners may become aware that teaching literature crosses the borders of Croatian language as a subject, and that if there is a need for a holistic approach to a literary work, it could indicate the need for another progressive attempt – integration.

4. INTEGRATED TEACHING APPROACH

The need for progress in education is not a phenomenon strictly related to our recent society which is becoming aware of the problems in this system. Many alternative pedagogic concepts, formed not only in the modern times but over 200 years ago, show that there have always been certain difficulties which had to be overcome and expectations and requirements of society which needed to be fulfilled. The system of grades, subjects, and lessons has existed since the 17th century ideas of Jan Amos Komensky, but its shortcomings were noticed numerous times.

Modern society, greatly influenced by globalisation, requires development of flexible and holistic knowledge supported by creative skills and values based on openness to new experiences, dialogue, diversity, and lifelong learning. Regarding education, strict division of knowledge into subjects may not correspond to these requirements. Nevertheless, extreme changes in any field have never appeared as an effective solution.

The possible solution could be found without making quick and drastic alterations or implementing completely new programs. Even if school requirements could be too extensive, they may still have positive sides – their versatility and diversity. An abundance of information and sources can enable discovering correlations between fields and subjects, which makes the learning process meaningful.

When it comes to teaching literature and required reading in primary schools, the existent methodology may be a problem. Still, if literature is understood not only as a set of educational texts, but as a work of art which links creative process, richness of information, and personal experience, it may become a foundation for generating connections in knowledge and learning in a meaningful, natural way – the integrated approach to teaching.

Integrated teaching, sometimes referred to as integrated curriculum, interdisciplinary curriculum, correlation, thematic teaching, etc., represents a holistic outlook in the teaching and learning process. It can be defined as "… planning and organising of teaching and learning which links diverse subjects, disciplines and fields, with its general aim of developing thorough understanding of certain content, along with

mastering skills of reading, mathematical, natural science, computer and artistic literacy, as well as critical and creative thinking skills." (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 22-23).

4. 1. History of Integrated Approach

One of the greatest pedagogical challenges, present from the changes in educational perspectives at the end of the 19th century, is the transition from the transmission of knowledge directed by the teacher to the student's active generation of comprehension and understanding. This period of history of education is known for concepts such as project method, free school movement, group work (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 10), and names such as Pestalozzi, Tolstoy, and Dewey (Lučić, 2005, pp. 12-13). All these ideas are contained in the ideas of the Constructivist movement and experts on thematic planning of the 20th century.

4. 1. 1. Constructivism

Despite still being present today, the system based on grades, subjects, and lessons has been questioned through many innovative pedagogic concepts. This shift in the viewpoint, which puts the student as an individual who creates its own knowledge in the centre of the teaching and learning process, is thoroughly explained through the constructivist theory. With its epistemological, ontological, and psychological aspects, this theory has found its implementation in didactics (Matijević, Rajić & Topolovčan, 2017, pp. 39-42).

Although it is mostly related to the 19th-century Progressive Pedagogy movement and names such as Dewey, Petersen, Freinet, Montessori, or Steiner, some authors claim that Constructivist ideas have been present throughout the history of philosophy, in various courses which reflected on possibilities of knowledge generation and formation (Matijević, Rajić & Topolovčan, 2017, pp. 39-40). From the psychological aspect, Constructivist perspectives were founded on theories by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, and focus on the learning process (Ibid., p.46). Nowadays, the benefits of this approach have been confirmed by achievements of neuroscience (Ibid., p.59).

From the aspect of didactics, Constructivism deliberates teaching and learning process, classroom organisation, as well as teaching strategies and methods. The greatest emphasis is put on the student's own activity in the learning process. As the name of the concept implies, knowledge should not be transmitted, but "constructed" through the student's interaction with the environment. According to the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, Constructivism points out the importance of both student's independence and an encouraging social environment (Ibid., p. 51-53).

Regarding strategies and methods, students should have opportunities to learn in wholesome, authentic situations, which require critical thinking, exploring, problem-solving, and playing. Because of the importance of the social aspect, collaborative learning and dialogue between the students and the teacher have an important role, and should lead to the establishment of democratic values.

Learning should be a challenge which leads to new experiences and changing perspectives (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 13). Some of these methods are specific for reform pedagogies, for example, students' independent handcraft activities in the Montessori or Waldorf approaches, developing entrepreneurship skills in Celestin Freinet's pedagogy, or project teaching in John Dewey's system.

Constructivist theory alters the role of the teacher. Instead of being seen as transmitter of knowledge, the teacher becomes the organiser of the learning environment and the student's support. The student and the teacher learn together, respecting each other's thoughts and opinions. Such a process naturally leads to reflecting the learning process and its outcomes.

In their proposals for adapting the traditional classroom to constructivist principles, Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) among other things point out the following: special time for reading, student's independent choice of materials (books, topics, team partners, projects), self-assessment and formative evaluation, active and respectful communication (p.14). Having in mind the aims of teaching literature, it can be concluded that authenticity, student autonomy, and dialogue advocated by Constructivism correspond to the idea of their achievement.

4. 1. 2. Ideas of Thematic Teaching

Despite the progressive movement of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, following developments of certain scientific fields, education has sustained teaching in strictly divided subjects. The activity of the student still lacks support in many mainstream education systems. However, during the seventies, eighties, and nineties, many practitioners recognised this issue and returned to the ideas of reform pedagogy from the beginning of the century (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 12).

One of the most representative experts of this period is an American pedagogue Herbert R. Kohl. In his work *The Open Classroom: A Practical Guide to a New Way of Teaching* he criticised some aspects of American education, and pointed out the gap between children's thinking processes and the strict separation of fields and disciplines within the school context. His ideas are comparable to those of John Dewey, who claimed that the student's individual interest has to be the starting point of any teaching process, instead of the traditional beliefs in the teacher as the only figure of authority and control.

Similar thoughts appeared not only in the USA, but also in the European and South American contexts. The concept of generative themes appears in the theories of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and German expert Jurgen Zimmer. In his system of adult education, he developed the idea of a thematic universe – a complex of interrelated generative themes (themes which can create subthemes with their own tasks and activities). While working with adults on developing literacy, he realised that the best learning context is the one which contains situations and activities which are familiar and natural to the learner. Zimmer defines such learning contexts in the education of children as children's life-like situations – diverse instances specific for a child's life experience. Still, those situations are intertwined with the experience of adults, and such challenges can enhance learning (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 10-11).

During the 1920s, education in Soviet countries introduced the idea of complex programs. This approach was based on integrating content within three fields – work, nature, and society. The autonomy of certain subjects was lost, and learning was organised around themes which comprised certain aspects of all three areas. However, those programs have shown themselves as ineffective, not establishing many natural

links between the content. They also did not meet the former program requirements, so they were soon abandoned (Rosandić, 2005, p. 32). This specific case could imply the need to consider the aims of certain programs, and their compatibility with the associated sociocultural, but also global contexts.

All these concepts, created within the Constructivist theory, emphasise the importance of student individuality, autonomy which has to be developed and encouraged, and holistic learning contexts which correspond with natural thinking processes.

4. 1. 3. Ideas of Integration in Croatian Education

Educational trends based on ideas of subject interrelations have also been present in some of Croatian educational directives. Rosandić (2005) mentions art education programs from the 1960s created by teams of interdisciplinary experts. National plans from the 1980s have tried to classify subjects into fields based on the principle of integration. For example, one of them was the field of linguistics and art, which contained the mother tongue, foreign language, literature, music, and visual arts (Lučić, 2005, p.169).

Ideas of integration are also present in the recent educational changes. The recently created National Curriculum (2017) points out the importance of an interdisciplinary approach which would support the students' holistic development. Therefore, it tried to structure the existing subjects into seven areas: linguistic-communicational, mathematical, natural-scientific, ICT, social-humanistic, artistic, and physical health area. Apart from that, the document defines inter-subject themes, defined as interdisciplinary content which should enable development of general skills and competences. They are: personal and social development, health, sustainable development, learning to learn, entrepreneurship, use of IT and communication technology, and civic education (MZO, 2017, p. 24). Exploring and discussing inter-subject themes can support efforts in students' holistic education, but also be beneficial for the development of school communities.

The mentioned changes within the educational system are surely valuable, since there is a need for new and modern perspectives. Still, the main issue of those national definitions is the lack of concrete examples, methods and equipment in practice. Observing this short historical overview of integration ideas, both in the global and

national context, it may be concluded that teachers, with their creativity, knowledge and effort, bear a great responsibility in the realisation of the new ideas.

4. 2. General Characteristics and Aims of Integration

The methodology taught in recent programs of teacher education is gradually changing by trying to focus on links within the school content. The ongoing reform is encouraging development of a more holistic approach to learning process. Although such ideas have been present and researched for a long time, the actual situation in practice is quite different. The focus is mostly on the content which has to be learned, knowledge is still divided into subjects, and the teacher is almost always the centre of classroom attention. The main issues of the traditional approach are the focus on cognitive aims and factual knowledge and the lack of student motivation.

Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) state that the integrated approach, as opposed to the traditional one, changes the aims of the teaching and learning process. Since integration holds a holistic perspective on the participants of the learning process, its aims are not only cognitive, but also affective (emotional) and social. Its focus is on enabling the development of the student's autonomy and self-regulation in the learning process, which results in higher motivation for learning. As it gives equal importance to both factual and procedural skills, it requires higher thinking processes and develops metacognition (Ibid., p. 58-75).

Integrative teaching is an interdisciplinary, cross-curricular approach, in which the learning process is based on a certain content unit – a central theme or interdisciplinary plan. The central theme should be based on national educational requirements, but it should go beyond the traditional classifications of subjects or disciplines. The teacher carefully plans the sources and activities which enable the students' autonomous participation, taking their interests into account. At the end of the exploration process, the students present their work, analyse it, and evaluate it.

Besides providing thorough exploration of a certain topic, learning based on an interdisciplinary plan gives the same importance to the content which has to be learned as well as the skills which will be developed throughout the process. The focus is on research skills – asking questions, defining the problem, data collection, organisation

and analysis, and presentation of new findings. The requirements of the integrated approach cover a wide variety of communication forms, from dialogue between the teacher and students to reading, writing, and exploring technological sources during data collection and analysis. Such a learning process also fosters developing presentation skills, and promotes respect and collaboration throughout diverse social learning forms (groups, pairs or individual work) (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 24-25).

Observing the practice, it can be noticed that many teachers, especially younger ones, tend to perceive frontal instruction as a very effective method of keeping discipline, as well as less demanding to organise. One of the strongest differences between the integrated and traditional approach might even not be creating links throughout the content, but the new roles of both teachers and students. The teacher is not the main authority and control figure, but becomes the one who organises and plans such a learning situation in which the students get their own responsibility for the learning process – through choosing their topics of interest, activities, materials and methods. The traditional approach requires less of the teacher's activity at home, but more during the lesson, because of extensive instruction. On the other hand, the integrated approach requires thorough and detailed planning before, and more students' activity during the lesson, while the teacher monitors the learning process and gives support if needed (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 23).

Instead of ready-made sources and adjusted situations which simulate real-life experience, integrative teaching ensures a natural learning context. For example, when learning about the topic of spring flowers, the class can visit nearby fields or woods in the appropriate time of the year, where they will observe the newly-grown flowers, read a poem which mentions them, and upon their return to the classroom, create posters in which they will show what has been learnt. Such a theme can integrate nature science (observing plants and changes in nature), literature (reading and interpreting a poem), and language (respecting language conventions in writing texts for their posters). Surely, such a project would require more time than an ordinary lesson, but in this way the student can get enough time for deeper investigation and understanding of a certain topic.

With respect to the authenticity and meaningfulness of the learning process, as well as motivation and interest of all its participants, it can be noticed that the integrated approach has the potential to take a step towards approximating school context to the society. Due to its multidisciplinary outlook on knowledge, it requires more collaboration between teachers, parents, and social communities, which can be realised through various projects, excursions, visits etc. Such an open perspective helps us understand that education is not something valuable exclusively for the students' future, but that it should be seen as an integral part of society in all of its dimensions.

4. 3. Scientific Foundations of the Integrated Approach

All aspects of human development – physical, mental, social, emotional – are intertwined and dependent on each other. Since the child's development is most intensive in the preschool and primary education periods, the school should create an integrated program which would follow and support its progress (Walsh, 2003, p. 231).

Many discoveries in developmental psychology imply that children's thinking processes and possibilities are much different than those of adults, and that should be seen as a potential in creating effective classroom contexts. While adults, due to their life experience, have developed the ability of abstraction, children perceive the world holistically. Lučić (2005) claims that "The fact that the child comes to school fascinated with the concept of entirety is completely neglected." (p.110). The traditional system tears this entirety into subjects, often relies on verbalism, and requires continuous sitting and quietness. Such behaviours are not natural to a child, who is used to being active. Much research has shown that children, in order to learn, need holistic contexts which are close to their experience (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 17).

The ideas of the aforementioned psychologists whose ideas helped forming the Constructivist theory, Piaget and Vygotsky, also support the concept of integration. Together with Inhelder, Piaget explained that a child is centred – it can focus only on the one aspect of reality, and is not able to make connections between different

characteristics, even those of the same object. In order to discover those connections, the child needs to make changes on objects in their surroundings and observe them. Lev Vygotsky emphasised the importance of social surroundings in the learning process. His concept of the zone of proximal development describes the difference between the level in which the student is able to solve a task independently, and the higher level which has to be achieved. In this achievement the student receives help both from his teacher and his colleagues.

Another important concept is the theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner. While traditional instruction supports mostly verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, integration of different fields and subjects opens possibilities for developing other aspects of intelligence such as musical-rhythmic, visual or kinaesthetic. Through the integrated approach the child can develop their dominant sides, but it should also get the opportunity to try out learning in many different fields (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 16-19).

Development of technology has enabled thorough research of brain activity, and there are many attempts for implementing neuroscience findings in pedagogy, although still in their beginnings. Research has shown that about 70% of the total amount of synapses is formed through the preschool period. The optimal process of their formation requires the stimulation of different brain regions, which should come from different senses (Rajović, 2017, pp. 22-25). In this way, different brain areas are integrated, which enables thorough memorisation, faster information processing and retention of knowledge (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 19). Primary education period may come at the end of this intensive development, but rich sensory stimulation is still very important. Unlike the traditional approach which focuses mostly on auditory and visual stimulation, integration can enable rich stimulation of other senses in their natural interaction with their surroundings. Integrative teaching has the potential to establish synergistic thinking – common activity of lower (e.g. memorisation of facts) and higher thinking processes (such as deep understanding, concept forming or pattern recognition) (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 19-20).

Emotional excitement of the brain has a great influence on the learning process, both in a positive and a negative way. In well-planned activities, curiosity, collaboration,

and activity usually create very positive impacts. Teachers' experience shows that students' activity during an integrative learning process positively reflects on their motivation (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 18-19). The integrated approach can at times enable extraordinary activities, such as visiting cultural institutions or inviting guests who present interesting topics, and such events can be the cause for positive excitement and spark children's interest.

An action research of certain integrated models, conducted by K. Lučić (2005) has shown mostly positive impressions of students, teachers, and parents. Many students perceived such a learning process as enjoyable, and many parents recognised the change in their children's attitude towards learning. However, the teachers' impressions were more diverse. Many of them appreciated the holistic approach to a student's development and interests, and found inspiration in the integrated model. Still, many were aware it requires more development and support (both educational and financial) from the educational system in general (Lučić, 2005, pp. 254-256).

Although there are many scientifically proven benefits of the integrated approach, there is surely a need for further research, especially that of the practice, as well as education of teachers and material support of schools. Still, since organisation of teaching and program requirements is much more flexible in the first four grades of primary school, integration is surely worth attempting.

4. 4. Types and Levels of Integration

In order to be effective and meaningful, integration requires thorough planning before implementation. Although complete integration is a great challenge (even unnecessary in certain situations), this approach has different forms and levels – from those appropriate for traditional time-limited lessons, to organising integrated days, weeks, or projects. Although this concept is only starting to find its way into practice, ideas of integration and correlation can be found in general teaching methodologies which have been present for a longer period.

Generally, integration can be realised within two dimensions: the level of content and the level of organisation of educational process (Rosandić, 2005, p. 29). Integration of content means discovering and taking advantage of natural links between fields of

knowledge, which can be organised in a single class, by only one teacher. On the other side, integration in organising the educational process means collaboration between teachers, school staff (team teaching), as well as communication with parents and members of the broader community.

The theory of methodological systems introduced by Dragutin Rosandić defines the system as a set of specific interactions between components of teaching and learning process: content, student, teacher, organisational forms, methods and media. Throughout history, teaching was mostly based on systems which put the role of teachers in the centre and require students' reproductive knowledge, such as dogmatic-reproductive or reproductive-explicative system. In accordance with accepting modern theories and approaches which emphasise the student's activity, there has been a shift towards the use of forms such as problem-solving system, communicative system, open system, or system of correlation and integration.

Theory of cross-curricular links explains the importance of linking the content of different fields in order to overcome fragmentation of knowledge often caused by school subjects (Bežen, 2008). It can be implemented through the system of correlation and integration, included in a single lesson, or serving as a base for creating new didactic complexes consisted of related subjects, for instance language and arts (Rosandić, 2005).

Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) define three levels of integration, some of which can already be found in the traditional approach: correlation, thematic teaching, and project teaching.

4. 4. 1. Correlation

Meaning of the concept of correlation is slightly different in general understanding and in its application to teaching. Derived from Latin *com* – with and *relatio* – relation, correlation means a connection or mutual relationship between two or more instances. In this way, the value of one of the instances can be predicted based on the values of other instances (Salopek, 2012, p. 8). This general meaning can be implemented to understanding of any phenomena that have an interrelation and affect each other.

As a teaching approach, correlation is the "weakest" form of integration (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 30). It usually refers to discovering and emphasising concepts which exist in different subjects. For instance, it can be learning about the names of settlements or streets in a Croatian Language lesson (an orthographical aspect), and in Natural Science lesson (a geographical aspect). This kind of correlation is called inter-subject correlation. The other type, regarding the aspect of subject, is intra-subject correlation – connection between different concepts within the same subject or discipline. An example for this type can be learning multiplication based on addition.

From the aspect of correlation depth, there is thematic (topical) and structural correlation. If a mutual theme is the starting point for integration, such as the topic of summer in natural science, art, and poetry, this is a thematic approach. This type of correlation is the most common in planning integration teaching, and it can be very accessible, since sometimes even a very familiar topic can provide many possibilities of student's expression, understanding, and acquiring new knowledge.

If the basis of correlation is an idea or a concept, we are talking about structural correlation. Focusing on structures, the teacher can take a step further from the obvious (a certain topic or a motif) and help students to discover underlying interrelations which can be even more meaningful. For example, the concept of rhythm is maybe not immediately obvious to a child, but the teacher can help in pointing it out in music, movement, visual art, nature, mathematics and language. Huzjak (2016) claims that correlation based on topics leads to poorer teaching results, and sometimes even superficial comprehension and stereotypical behaviour (p. 87). The structural approach also enables translation from one mode of expression to another, for example, from words to movements or colours. In this way, learners can become aware of this "hidden" relations and meanings, which could have positive influence on motivation.

In order to be effective, meaningful, and motivational, both thematic and structural correlation have to be thoroughly planned. Although it is the first level of integration, finding concepts which correlate within the school content can be a good starting point for more complex attempts of integration.

4. 4. 2. Thematic Teaching

What most educational practitioners associate with integration is actually thematic approach – its most common type. While correlation integrates only certain concepts, thematic teaching starts with a central topic which becomes a foundation for integrating multidisciplinary content. The main difference between the traditional and thematic teaching is the approach to acquiring knowledge and skills. From a traditional perspective, acquiring skills is an aim in itself, which is usually done through specific practice. Thematic teaching, on the other hand, enables learning opportunities which require the use of certain skills while exploring and acquiring factual knowledge. It can be explained through the example of teaching reading: in traditional school it would mean practising reading (e. g. reading aloud), while in thematic teaching it would be included in the students' own work on finding information about the given topic (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 31).

Although it requires a high amount of the student's independent work, thematic teaching has to be based on national requirements. The aims of a certain national program or curriculum have to be a foundation for integrating content from different subjects or fields of knowledge.

Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) define three levels of thematic teaching: mechanical, content, and conceptual integration (p.32). Although often present as an attempt of connecting the content, mechanical integration implies false understanding of integration. It means connecting based only on a common motif. That motif can be present, for example, in songs, poems, or movements that children learn about, but it is only superficial and does not provide deeper understanding of the content. This is also called "themes of convenience"– topics such as animals, monsters, cars, etc. which usually lack scope for development of more meaningful ideas (Lipson, 1993, p. 260).

Content integration is the most appropriate, as well as the most common form of integration. It means organisation of teaching and learning process based on a certain topic with clearly defined aims which are compliant with national requirements. If planned well, this approach provides acquisition of rich factual knowledge which is intertwined with practical use of various skills (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 32). Simultaneous use of different skills while exploring a certain topic helps the

student understand the relationship between content and process (Lipson, 1993, p. 253), and that fosters development of learning strategies in general.

Central themes in concept integration are usually more complex that in content integration. They can be ideas, processes or attitudes – topics which require even deeper deliberation, understanding and generalisations. Such topics provide many possibilities, but they are often more appropriate for older students.

4. 4. 3. Project Teaching

Organising a project is the highest level of integration, which requires the maximum of students' activity, independence and autonomy. It includes planning, execution, and the final product. The whole process is not directed by the national educational aims, but develops from the questions and interests of students. It has to be limited in time and defined in the aspect of content, and its product (e. g. school newspaper, a class performance, growing a school garden) has to be appropriately presented in the end. Because of the high level of student activity and their autonomous exploring, it is sometimes called the immersion model.

A project is developed in three levels. During activities of the first level, learners deal with the factual knowledge through collecting information about the topic or idea the project relates to, which can be done through reading, exploring Internet sources, interviews, excursions, etc. The next level includes processing of discovered information, conducted through methods of analysis, classifications, brainstorming, finding patterns, or interrelations. The last stage of a project comprises the factual and conceptual knowledge acquired in previous phases, which should result in the synthesis of ideas, creating a product, its evaluation and presentation. The possibilities of each stage should be organised according to the students' age and their possibilities (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 50-54)

4. 5. Organisation of an Integrated Teaching Unit

4. 5. 1. Creating an Interdisciplinary Plan

The first step in creating an integrated teaching unit is choosing its central theme. This choice should be carefully guided by the students' characteristics, needs, and interests,

as well as the general educational requirements and outcomes. These parameters should be defined at the beginning, and serve as important reminders during the whole integration process. To ensure meaningfulness and effective implementation, this step should be a part of monthly planning (Salopek, 2012., p. 9). A well-structured monthly plan provides a detailed, but still controllable and flexible time frame.

When the theme is defined, the teacher (sometimes together with students) creates a network of ideas linked to the theme. It is usually done in a mind map form: the theme is written in the centre, and all the participants can add their ideas around it, trying to discover common characteristics (Walsh, 2003, pp. 243-244).

The next step, done by the teacher, is defining the main aims of the unit. The aims should direct and control the course of the integrated unit in all of its phases. The integrated approach values both declarative and procedural knowledge, so the interdisciplinary plan should enable their meaningful development. When defining the aims, Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) propose considering the following aspects: the stage of the students' development, their knowledge base, connections between teaching content and everyday life, and the desired students' knowledge, abilities, and comprehension at the end of the process (p. 38).

There are some common mistakes which often occur during the planning phase. One of them is the aforementioned mechanical integration, which will not enable effectiveness of the process. When defining the central topic, it is very important to point out that integration should not be the purpose in itself. Some themes will enable integration of every subject of a primary grade, while others will link only two or three disciplines, but still be effective, motivational, and close to the real life experience (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 41). Furthermore, although it should be highly motivational, an integrated unit must not only be seen as fun. It can happen that activities and tasks do not have any educational significance, or that they are too challenging for the students (Brophy & Alleman, 1991, p. 49). The teacher's expectations have to be realistic, but also allow for the students' complete engagement.

4. 5. 2. Sources and Materials

Teaching and learning in traditional methodology is based on the sources provided by official school publishers: textbooks, workbooks, or other kinds of ready-made tasks

and activities. Teachers, students and parents often encounter drawbacks of such sources, for example, extensiveness of information, emphasis on factual knowledge, lack of flexibility and creativity, as well as issues of financial nature. The integrated approach provides a different perspective on the choice and use of learning sources, which in this case should foster authenticity, both of information and student's learning style.

In addition to textbooks, students should be provided with a variety of books from different fields, general literature such as encyclopaedia or dictionaries, as well as digital sources (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 100-101). Through the use of such materials, students obtain not only factual knowledge, but also develop research skills and digital competences. Apart from the materials used in class, certain parts of integrated lessons can be organised as field work: through excursions, visits, and meeting the local environment and community.

Many practitioners could perceive the need for such material as a problem due to insufficient school equipment, which is surely a frequent case. There is also a question of teachers' readiness and competence in using such a variety of sources, as well as security issues in the aspect of using digital media. This is why integration requires stronger cooperation with the wider school and social context, such as the library (Ibid. p.101), subject teachers, and other school staff, parents, or professionals from different fields.

According to one of psychological fundaments of integration, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, the teaching and learning process should recognise and encourage strengths of each student, but also help develop their weaker sides. While traditional methods support mostly the auditory or visual learning style, modern methods should also provide the opportunity for the effective use of other learning styles (such as tactile, kinaesthetic or integrated), and respect the unique characteristics of every student. Therefore, learning possibilities should be differentiated, in order to enable the achievement of the main learning goal to every student. Differentiation can be implemented through adapting content, learning process and evaluation, according to individual student's needs (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, pp. 88-94).

In order to make the use of classroom materials more logical and effective, there is a possibility of organising learning centres. In her work, which promotes the ideas of the *Step by Step* project, Kate Walsh (2003) suggests organisation within the following six centres: literacy centre, writing centre, nature centre, mathematics or manipulative resources centre, art centre, and centre for dramatization and creative games (p. 64).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in their approach to required reading, Gabelica and Težak (2017) defined activity centres, dividing them into three main groups: literary work centres, hands-on literacy centres, and centres for integration and correlation. This concept is slightly different from the Step by Step learning centres, because of being related to a certain required reading literary work. Still, since they use the same principles, they can be understood as an effective integration of different subjects and fields, and can also be implemented in the approach not only to a certain literary work, but also in other topics which are appropriate for integration.

It is important to point out that establishing learning centres should not be only the teacher's task, but that it should be a responsibility of the whole class. Through organising centres, students learn how to use their materials and take proper care of them. This organisation process also has a social aspect, since it requires a lot of quality communication during classifications, demonstrations, or decision making (Walsh, 2003, pp. 65-66). Such attitude towards common agreements and respecting needs and interests reflects on the whole process of organising integration.

4. 5. 3. Phases of an Integrated Unit

One of the often-encountered problems of traditional teaching planning is organising 45-minute lessons. This presents an obstacle in teaching many subjects, especially those which require student's independent work, immersion, and creative expression. Interdisciplinary plans represent more complex teaching units which comprise more extensive knowledge as well as required sources, and such a time-restricted form is, therefore, quite insufficient for achieving the desired aims.

Although many teachers see the traditional time frame as a restriction, if we want to implement integration, teaching primary grades can actually be flexibly organised. The required time depends on the level of integration. While correlations can be highlighted within a classical 45-minute lesson, thematic units can be included in

blocks of at least two lessons (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 98), or realised as an integrated day (Salopek, 2012., p. 9). If implemented at its highest level (project teaching), integration can require a longer period – a week or even a whole month.

The first phase in organisation of an integrated teaching unit is the aforementioned choosing of the central theme, followed by planning related tasks and activities which should lead to aim achievement. The next step is its realisation in the classroom. Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) define its three sub-phases: zero, first, and second.

Sub-phase zero usually contains activities which should help relating the students' existing knowledge to the central theme. It can be done through methods such as brainstorming, classroom discussion, or an excursion (Ibid., p.46). This period should inform the students about what will be explored, awake their interests and motivate them to set their own aims. The teacher should consider their initial reactions as guidelines for further actions within the unit, especially during the following step, the first sub-phase. It represents a time for students' questions about the theme, which are supported by the teacher's ideas. All those questions and ideas are to be organised, and followed by systematic exploring the theme and collecting relevant information. The second sub-phase links obtaining information and comprising it into forms which can be displayed: theme maps, graphical, written or art reports etc. During the sub-phases of realisation, the teacher provides support by providing and organising materials, encouraging higher thinking processes, and generating ideas and giving advice on specific skill use (Ibid., p. 47).

After the exploratory phase, the student's work should be appropriately presented. The presentation can be performed on the classroom level, but it can also be shared with other students, parents, or other members of the local community (Ibid., p.48), which brings out the social aspect of the learning process. By drawing greater attention to a quality presentation, this approach ensures respect for each student's efforts, which could make a positive influence on their feeling of responsibility and further motivation.

4. 5. 4. Evaluation and Assessment

Since the process of organising and realising an integrated unit relies on setting specific aims, it also requires evaluation of what has been done, both from the teacher's and the students' perspective.

Focusing on both the process and the product of learning, the integrated approach requires assessment methods different from the traditional system of grades – authentic assessment. This concept includes collecting variety of information about the student's progress – done by the teacher, but also based on the student's own reflection. It can be conducted through note-taking, specific, task-related check-lists and rubrics, and occasional teacher-student conferences. There are also assessment maps – collections of the student's accomplished tasks and projects. Traditional "paper-and-pencil" tests should be used only for measuring the student's individual progress, not as an indicator of the class's average (Walsh, 2003, pp. 82-88).

A very important aspect of authentic assessment, as well as integrated teaching in general, is the student`s self-evaluation. Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) claim that "… one of the important aims of integrated teaching is developing habits of thoughtful work – reflective learning" (p.114). Students' maps are an especially efficient tool for self-assessment. In this way, all of the student's progress is vividly displayed, and the teacher can raise the student's awareness of what has to be improved as well as their strengths and talents, and track their own progress (p.115). Such an approach should also guide the student in setting his or her own further learning goals (Walsh, 2003, p. 87).

Evaluation of the students' work should help the teacher's own self-evaluation. It can be useful to compare the effectiveness of the integrated unit with similar realisations within the traditional approach (Čudina-Obradović & Brajković, 2009, p. 49). At the end of the process, the teacher should get an overview of the aims that were or were not realised, which can open new questions and ideas for further planning.

5. INTEGRATED APPROACH IN REQUIRED READING

5. 1. The Integrative Nature of Literature

Literature is a complex, multidimensional form of both communication and artistic expression. It serves as a transmitter of information, ideas and concepts, while its creation relies on certain artistic forms and conventions. The variety of forms it can take always implies on the uniqueness of its author, which affects the reception and responses of the reader, complex in the same way. One of the most influential literary concepts, reception theory presented by a German philosopher and literary theoretician Hans Robert Jauss, places the reader in the centre of creating the aesthetics of a literary work. This theory points out the dialogue between the literary work and its recipient, which is explained as a creative process that establishes the work's historical, cultural, and aesthetic value (Lučić, 2005, p. 26).

Jauss also defines the horizon of expectations – the concept which explains the relation between the reader's existing literary experiences and every attempt of their broadening. If a certain literary work presents a challenge for the reader's existing horizon of expectations, its aesthetic and artistic value is higher (Ibid., p. 26-27).

Perspectives on literature which are frequent in the school context often firstly point out its didactic or informative role. Especially in primary school, literature does not always enable the reader's aesthetic and deeper interpretative experience, but it is very often used primarily as a teaching tool for achieving other aims, such as improving reading skills, learning grammar rules, or obtaining facts important only for a specific lesson. National programs and curricula highlight the importance of the artistic approach, but in practice it is very often reduced to interpretations which lack time and depth. There is no much scope for a thorough and meaningful student's reception, and even if it broadens their horizons of expectations to a certain extent, this is often restricted by other program requirements. Required reading is a good example of these issues. Although it is meant to be a medium which serves for awaking interest and love for reading, learning, and broadening one's perspectives, choices and methodological approaches to required reading are often directed by concerns about its didactic aspect.

In its nature, literature is integrative. In the reader's mind, words can form vivid pictures, diverse sounds, rhythms, and melodies, or they can awake emotions which inspire a certain form of the reader's own expression. Literature can provide encounters with artistic structures and rich factual information; it transfers certain cultural and moral values, leads to understanding thinking processes and helps forming a critical mind. Therefore, a holistic approach and independent immersion into a literary work within the educational context could be a starting point for quality integration, bringing out a diversity of possibilities, both for the teacher and the student.

5. 2. Integration and Correlation as Principles of Creative Approach to Required Reading

In many cases, the practice of teaching literature in primary grades often relies on discussing the characters and the plot or learning about certain literary tools, as well as the students' shorter interpretations. This approach is useful, even infallible, when it comes to developing literary analysis skills and introducing new concepts, which are frequent requirements in primary grades. Still, if such methodology is constant, all the other possibilities comprised in a certain literary work (especially if it is a book intended for holistic reading and interpretation) remain undiscovered. Such an approach can cause monotonous, even predictable lessons, which can greatly influence the student's general impressions of literature.

One of the aforementioned fundaments of creative approach to required reading is the principle of curiosity, conceptualisation, integration, and correlation. Its starting point is the fact that a literary work is a holistic creation, comprising much more than mere facts about the plot and the characters, which therefore requires a wholesome interpretation, stemming from the reader's own interest (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p. 150). Experiencing a literary work should be related to a broader experience of life, where ideas and concepts reflected in a certain book are real – of course, to the extent appropriate to its receiver.

Usual methodological procedures in teaching literature, such as the interpretative-analytic system, define motivation as the first step in encountering a literary work. It

is often organised within the first few minutes of the lesson, containing an activity or short discussion which leads the students to the topic or the main concept of the literary work. Still, the recent methodological systems do not define specific needs for retaining motivation during and after the encounter with the literary text.

On the other side, a holistic experience of a literary work cannot be realised without the reader's underlying curiosity, which needs support before, during and after the reading process. Curiosity is crucial not only for a meaningful encounter with a literary work, but for the learning process as a whole, since it enables immersion in the content of learning and a wholesome interaction with it, guided by intrinsic motivation (Ibid., p. 151).

Gabelica and Težak (2017) define three kinds of curiosity, seen as processes within the school but also real-life context. The first one is the broadest – the curiosity based on observing the environment. Observed within the educational context, this kind of curiosity will be awakened if the learning environment provides interesting content, sources, and materials (Ibid., p.153). In terms of reading, if the students experience such curiosity, they could turn to literary works in order to find out more about the topic they are interested in. This aspect of curiosity implies the need to shift the limits of the traditional classroom by opening it to the real world and life experience.

The next type of curiosity has a different direction – curiosity about the world based on an encounter with a text. Every book that the students read can be a source of interesting and valuable information, which can provoke interesting questions about different topics. Those questions can be used as inspiration for the reader's further research (Ibid., p. 157).

The third kind of curiosity is specifically related to the reading process – the curiosity about the text itself. The students can express the wish to know more about the plot, characters, writer's style, or any other characteristic of the text. Awakening this kind of curiosity is also the teacher's responsibility. When reading and exploring the text in the classroom, students should be confronted with questions which lead further from the obvious facts about the text, encouraging them to think critically and constructively.

Recognising the students' curiosity awakened by a literary work can lead to the process of research. Subsequently, a thorough research of a certain topic goes beyond a single subject or a field – it requires meaningful correlation or integration. Taking into account the need for a holistic approach to a literary work as well as student's interest as a crucial momentum, we can see that encountering literature, especially through required reading as a set of thoughtfully chosen and easily available books, could be a very valuable fundament of quality integration.

5. 3. Diversity of Themes – Diversity of Possibilities

As a part of the national educational directives, required reading lists serve as teachers' primary guidelines in choosing literature for their classrooms. Analysing the works for the first and the second cycle contained in the National Plan and Program list (2006) Curriculum Proposal (2016 and 2018) and the new Curriculum (2019), we can notice a valuable thematic diversity (Kralj, 2019).

The suggested required reading works can be divided into the following thematic circles: everyday life (such as school, friends, play), general life values (friendship, kindness, courage, acceptance etc.), changes (growing up, forming identity, social issues etc.), family, environment, adventures, and school. Most of those topics are understandable and relatable to young readers, and often have much in common with the content of various lessons.

Some characteristics of genres and themes of the required reading books could be especially valuable when considering the integrated approach. Picture books, which are the most frequent form in the first cycle, can provide many integration possibilities due to their multidimensional form which comprises visual and literary elements. Analysing newly-published works added in the Curriculum Proposal list has revealed themes which were not present in the earlier works, such as social issues, developmental difficulties, or cultural diversity. Such books can be useful for realising the aims of inter-subject themes, for example Personal and Social Development, or comparing those stories with a possible problem situation in the classroom. The lists also contain different works of the same author, which can be useful in organising integration in the form of an author study.

Although the situation in practice shows that teachers tend to keep the same choices of required reading works for longer periods of time, this diversity of themes and genres implies on the need of their re-thinking and reconstructing, as well as adapting them to the educational needs and interests of students.

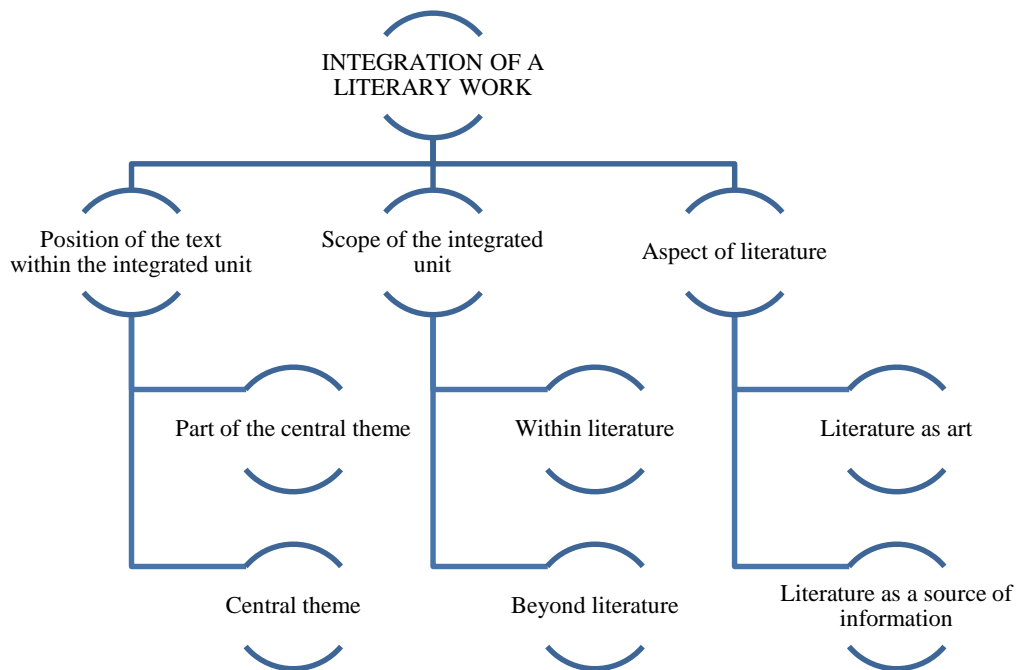## 5. 4. Dimensions of Integration in Required Reading

Croatian Language as a school subject consists of the linguistic and literature dimensions. As such, it already implements integration by means of intra-subject correlation. It is usually realised through using shorter literary works as a foundation for teaching grammar, orthography, or some other aspect of the subject. Still, in such circumstances, these correlations often appear only stated in the lesson plan, and the focus remains mostly on the cognitive outcomes related to acquiring linguistic knowledge. In this way, integrative potentials are not always fully developed during lessons.

When it comes to required reading, research in teaching practice has shown that in most cases it has its conventional methodology and system of evaluation. This established approach usually sets the required reading work apart from the rest of the subject's content, let alone other subjects. Still, as required reading works are meant to be read and interpreted holistically, they have a potential for developing diversity in the approach to teaching literature which will respect its integrative nature.

Integration which includes literary works can be observed from the three following dimensions, considering:

1. the position of the literary text within the interdisciplinary unit;
2. the scope of the interdisciplinary unit; and
3. artistic or informational aspect of literature.

Figure 1. Dimensions of integration based on a literary work

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                    INTEGRATION OF A
                     LITERARY WORK
        ┌──────────────────┼──────────────────┐
  Position of the text   Scope of the integrated
  within the integrated unit      unit        Aspect of literature
        │                  │                  │
  Part of the central theme  Within literature  Literature as art
        │                  │                  │
     Central theme      Beyond literature   Literature as a source of
                                               information
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When organising integration with literature, one of the first steps should be defining the role of the chosen text within the unit. It means that reading and exploring a certain text can be one of the parts of the integrated unit, or its theme can become central, with all the interdisciplinary activities organised around it.

The next two dimensions refer to the integrated unit with the literary work as its central theme. Thinking about the scope of the unit, integration can take one of the following directions: within literature, or beyond literature. The first one explores connections and interrelations of different literary work, while the second is much broader – it links the theme or a concept discovered in a literary work to knowledge and skills from other fields and subjects. Further consideration of the unit's scope reveals the third dimension – focusing on the artistic or informational aspects of the literary work.

Every realisation of an integrated unit begins with defining its goals. If the teaching objective is to learn about literature, common links will be searched for within the field, and if the goal is to teach and learn about content from different subjects, the literary work is a starting point of going further. Still, the characteristics of the text which define it as a work of literary art should not be neglected.

5. 3. 1. Integration Within Literature

Starting points for integrating within literature can be found in certain literary concepts, such as theme, genre, author or style. This kind of integration still stays within the borderlines of the subject of Croatian Language, but what makes it valuable is providing deeper understanding of the subject's content. Furthermore, it focuses on literary expression (both of the reader and the author), and has strong potential for developing generalisation and conceptualisation skills.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, thematic integration is the most common form of integration. Rosandić (2005) defined it as the system of thematic circles (p. 30), which can be realised in integrating not only literature, but also other forms of artistic expression. Focusing on integration within literature and considering the lists of suggested required reading works, we can notice many common topics or other characteristics which can become the basis for planning integrated units. Many books talk about, for example, relationship with parents, questions of growing up, environmental issues, friendship etc. In this way, more works can be integrated about the most prominent theme they contain. Such thematic similarities should be taken into account when creating yearly plans for each class, also because of possible integration with other subjects (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p. 179). Although it observes a certain theme from a literary aspect, this approach gradually opens perspectives towards other disciplines.

Apart from thematic study, some authors also suggest author study and genre study (Martinez, Yokota, & Temple, 2017, pp. 176-181). Such approaches can be understood as a segment of theoretical-methodological integration (Rosandić, 2005, p. 30). This type of literature integration enables establishing an approach to a literary work in terms of understanding the underlying theories and methods of its creation. In its full realisation it mostly refers to higher stages of education, where the students have the ability to comprehend such abstract concepts and where knowledge is more extensive. Still, studying the work of the same author or books which belong to the same genre can develop the ability to perceive certain distinct qualities, such as playfulness and nonsense in Pajo Kanižaj's poetry or characteristics of detective fiction in the works of Erich Kästner. Discovering similar characteristics in this way becomes a foundation for understanding the abstract ideas of style and genre.

Rosandić (2005) also mentions literary-historical integration. This type is present in higher education, where literary works are studied within the artistic epoch they belong to, and can also be linked to other artistic forms. It requires thorough understanding of literary and historical concepts, so it would not be appropriate for primary education. Still, attempts of appropriate introducing of some segments of certain artistic epochs integrated with other fields of art could be an interesting challenge.

5. 3. 2. Integration Beyond Literature

Although explaining that integration within literature mostly remains inside its own subject, it is important to be aware that although having a planned structure, any kind of integration creates opportunities to open multidisciplinary perspectives. Subsequently, there is a slight difference in integration *within* and *beyond* literature, regarding their starting point and direction. Integration *within* links more works to a certain theme or a concept focusing on the literary aspects, while integration *beyond* uses a literary work for deeper understanding of other subjects.

Prior to everything else, integration has to be meaningful. Creating an interdisciplinary unit including knowledge and skills from as many subjects as possible can be useful because of the natural links, but it could also be ineffective because of an inappropriate level of complexity, information overload, as well as meaningless mechanical integration. When it comes to required reading, the teacher should always consider one of the most important guidelines in teaching literature – that every book is a unique work, and therefore requires a unique approach. The same guideline should be taken into account when organising interdisciplinary units based on a literary work.

When exploring diverse integrative possibilities which a book can bring and taking into account the current organisation of subjects in primary grades, it may be useful to define areas in which subjects could be divided. Understanding literature as a work of art or as a source of facts and information can help forming meaningful complexes which could facilitate integration.

5. 3. 3. Literature as Art

Any form of artistic creation relies on human expression of feelings or viewpoints. An atmosphere which awakes certain emotions can be felt encountering a book, a dance performance, or a musical piece. Apart from the affective expression, which is usually the starting point of artistic creation, different arts have the same underlying structures. For instance, the concept of contrast can be found in both music and visual art. Different arts comprise both the expression and structural rules, but also take different aspects of time and space, which sometimes overlap. Visual arts as well as the written word exist in space, while sounds or melodies and spoken words are formed in time. The development of the artistic perspective relies on holistic exploring and understanding of the connections between various forms of artistic expression.

Although art is omnipresent in our sociocultural context, understanding it needs to be developed and supported. In our subject-based educational system, aesthetic education is realised through the subjects of Music, Visual Arts, and some elements of language and Physical Education. In the field of language, understanding words as art through the aspect of literature can open many possibilities for integration. Every literary work, whether it is as emotionally expressive as a poem or as concise and informational as a newspaper article, follows certain artistic rules or conventions in its style and composition. Those characteristics can become visible if presented through an integrative approach – structurally, creatively, or based on reception.

It may be very important to point out that understanding art in general means moving further from the obvious theme of a certain work, and exploring what is underneath – relations and structures. Common artistic structures enable translation from one medium of artistic expression to another, which is explained through the concept of structural correlation. Therefore, when it comes to integration of artistic disciplines, structural correlation can enable much deeper understanding of the content than thematic integration. Discovering structures within a literary work could definitely be a valuable challenge.

On the other side, there are some characteristics of children in primary education which can specify the direction in organising artistic integration. Aged from six to ten or eleven, they are only starting to develop abstract thinking, and both their perception and expression are holistic. Even if the focus should be on the structures and relations,

the methodology and activities should enable students' emotional engagement and multidimensional expression. Therefore, apart from structural correlation, there are some other types such as creative (productive) and reception correlation (Rosandić, 2005, pp. 258-259), which could be more appropriate for younger students.

Creative correlation enables exploring of the artistic process, and it can be realised through observing how a certain literary work inspired the creation of another artistic work (Ibid., p. 258). For example, encountering a film based on a book (which is, unfortunately, often wrongly used as a substitute for reading) can help the students to discover specific characteristics and elements of both modes of expression.

Reception correlation concerns the differences in perception of various art forms. The perception of an art form depends on the receiver's receptive skills, and if encouraged properly, it can become the basis for creating a different art form – the translation from one reception code to another (Ibid., 259). It can be used in the student's own expression, when one type of art form serves as an inspiration for their independent creation of another.

Interesting ideas about integration of literature and other forms of art which relate to the aforementioned types of correlation can be found in the work of Kata Lučić (2005). Her methodological concept of teaching literature is based on the principle of intertwining words, pictures and music, in order to form a complex which "encourages associations, memories, feelings and imagination, creates a positive atmosphere and a different perspective on life within the given school context" (p.199). With reference to some of the previous national programs which tried to implement the idea of integration (Lučić, 2005, p. 195), she talks about the linguistic-artistic area of primary education, which links the subject of Literature with Music and Visual Arts.

Word, picture, and music are the foundations of Lučić's methodological concept. All of them enable communication and expression, and follow similar conceptual structures. Words are the dominant form of communication, both in a sociocultural environment and a literary text. Within the school context, we can discern between the student's natural speech and standardised or poetic expression taught through language and literature, all of which are equally important for the student's development. Although verbalisation usually has the primacy in literary interpretation, children should be provided with many different modes and possibilities of expression.

Research on the child's drawing has shown that drawing or painting are not only products of the child's activity, but primarily their processes of communication. A picture as a form of visual representation can often support what the younger student cannot easily put in words. Music, with its focus on the present, can help in creating an atmosphere needed for a deep experience, while supporting auditory perception. Enhancing musical experience or supporting other ways of expression can be realised by passive listening, in which the music accompanies other activities, or active listening which puts focus on certain musical elements.

The idea which connects these foundations is the student's expression. This is especially important in the primary education, where their expression skills should be developed more intensively. Another important aspect is imagination, which is strongly present in the primary grades, together with beginnings of abstract thinking development. Therefore, students' immersion in the creative process should be respected.

Lučić's synesthetic approach to teaching arts can be realised on three levels: combining all three art forms, combining two art forms (literature and music or literature and visual arts), or using one art form as a stimulus for reception of another (Ibid., p. 195). In every case, words (literary texts) are its basis for interpretation, while music or visual arts serve as additional possibilities of expression.

5. 3. 4. Literature as a Source of Facts and Information

Reading in order to find relevant information is an important literacy skill. Through exploring a quality literary work, the reader is faced with a unique complex of information. Various facts, patterns, ideas, and concepts contained within the book`s setting and characters form its own microcosm, which, sometimes in an unconventional or fantastic way or sometimes realistically, reflects the real world. Literature is primarily seen as art, and this component is pointed out in the educational context, but literary texts often enable a variety of other information belonging to many other fields of knowledge which can open ways for integration. If the reader is motivated for exploring the book and the variety of details which have formed its story, reading which is led by curiosity has the potential to become one of the most natural ways of learning.

In their work *Thinking and Learning Through Children's Literature* (2017), Miriam G. Martinez, Junko Yokota and Charles Temple argue that literature needs to find its place in content areas and forming cross-curricular units. "A single book can be used to develop a concept, initiate interest in a topic, launch a project, or generate questions about a subject." (p. 187). They claim that textbooks, which are the most dominant teaching material and usually provide a concise overview of a certain theme, often lack depth of information as well as rich literary structures and vocabulary. Therefore, children's literature, which presents certain content in a way that is understandable and relatable to young readers, can be a great support in sparking curiosity and motivation for learning, as well as provide the reader with a sophisticated form of language. Required reading works, which are meant to be read and interpreted as a whole, can be seen as a valuable material for content integration already available to every teacher.

Topics of books suggested for primary grades cover a wide range of topics, many of which are present in a young reader's everyday life, but also bring a lot of information which relate to the school content, with many opportunities for its broadening. For example, many stories deal with themes from the subject of Natural Science, such as environment care in *Pismo iz Zelengrada* by Nevenka Videk or life in the past described in *Vlak u snijegu* or *Družba Pere Kvržice* by Mato Lovrak. There are books whose themes can be the basis for discussing possible issues in the students' lives, such as developmental difficulties or social differences. Literature can also support inter-subject themes defined by the curriculum, such as personal and social development or civic education. Possibilities for organising integrative activities, workshops or even long-term projects are numerous.

Martinez, Yokota and Temple (2017) mention a concept called literature-based inquiry units, developed by Nancy Roser and Susan Keehn. It consists of three phases: a whole-class read-aloud, discussion in smaller literature circles, and sharing questions and conclusions with the class. During the whole process, the students are focused on questioning the given theme, supported by diverse literary resources (pp. 192-193). Challenging the students to learn guided by their own questions enhances their curiosity.

There are some further methodological concepts which use literature as direct media for developing certain competences and knowledge. The program called Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) created by John T. Guthrie links reading with development of research skills. According to its authors, this concept uses reading in activating the student's background knowledge and development of skills such as questioning, summarizing, organising, and structuring of information (Guthrie, et al., 2004, p. 405). The starting point of the CORI process is the content – a set of information (provided in a literary text) which has to awake the reader's curiosity in order to be thoroughly explored. In the following phase of the process the initial text is linked with other texts which provide additional information concerning the theme, and its exploration requires skills such as aim formulation, categorisation, or abstraction. The last phase means summarising the information and its presentation (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p. 153). Since it requires the use of various sources, the CORI strategy implies valuable and meaningful integration possibilities which emerge from the young reader's curiosity.

Project teaching as the most complex level of integration can be especially valuable in learning based on literature. If required reading is organised once or twice per month, a certain literary work can inspire a project which can last for a longer period of time. In such a case, reading the book is the zero-phase of the project, which results in defining the main idea of the project. The discovered idea will be explored in the further phases of the project – planning, further research and presentation of the final product.

Reading supported with such activities enables the students to use important literacy and research skills and competences, as well as develops critical thinking. Literature used together with the school content presents the importance of reading as one of the crucial aspects of lifelong learning.

5. 5. Some Organisational Suggestions

The integrative approach always strives to expand the strict and often non-flexible structure of the traditional lesson, and if we consider all the integrative opportunities provided by literature, the borders of possibilities are even further.

Reading the chosen text is the starting point and, according to the principles of creative approach to required reading, at least a part of it should be done in the classroom, together with the teacher or as a student's independent task. Taking this into account, together with the organisation of other activities, an integrated unit based on required reading may take much more than a 45-minute lesson – a day or even a few days. It can also be a possibility for organising a project which can last for a longer period of time, also in a combination with traditional lessons with content which is not integrated.

As explained by Čudina-Obradović & Brajković (2009), quality integration requires a clear theme and meaningful activities usually chosen and planned by the teacher, but also the scope for student's own questions and participation in formation of the unit's aims, according to their age and possibilities. Integration based on required reading can also follow the authors' phases of integrated unit: choosing the theme and planning activities, introduction into the unit, questions-phase, exploratory phase and final presentation.

A specific organisational outline of creative approach to required reading are the aforementioned activity centres (Gabelica & Težak, 2017, p. 225). They are suggested to be offered during the interpretation of the literary text, but they could also serve as motivational activities.

The authors suggest division of activity centres into the following three groups: literary work discovery centres, hands-on literacy centres, and centres of integration and correlation. Although the latter focuses on integration possibilities, the whole concept is based on the idea of integrating literary competences with a wide range of content and skills from other subjects and fields of interests, as well as practical everyday life skills.

The first group, literary work discovery centres, provide possibilities such as a centre for exploring the story, the characters, the structure of the work, its genre or language, as well as drama expression. Hands-on literacy centres include activities such as handcrafts, building, experiments, board games and puzzles, or various sensory activities. Centres for integration and correlation focus on linking the literary problem to certain elements of other subjects, such as music, visual arts, movement or mathematics.

When organising activity centres, it is important to consider their meaningfulness and relevance within the main theme. The authors also suggest covering all of the three groups of activities, in order to ensure diversity of perspectives (Ibid., p. 227).

Thinking about principles and organisational suggestions of the creative approach to required reading, we can conclude that integration and correlation are its crucial elements. Every literary work is multidimensional both in its artistic and informational aspect, so moving further from traditional interpretation of required reading works can support the students' motivation for reading and foster their curiosity for learning in general.

6. ASTRID LINDGREN: *PIPPI LONGSTOCKING* – AN EXAMPLE OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY REQUIRED READING UNIT

The world-famous children's classic written by the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking*, has been a part of Croatian required reading lists for a long period of time. The story about an extraordinary, imaginative, impulsive but kind-hearted girl covers many themes which are interesting to young readers, but also provide valuable food for thought for the adult ones. Friendship, travelling, courage, creativity, as well as freedom and carefreeness of childhood are only some of them.

Although *Pippi* is often present in the school context, a book with such a diversity of topics can be a great challenge to a young student who has to read it at home, as the traditional methodology usually requires. A 90-minute literature lesson cannot easily make use of all the possibilities that the book brings, so the solution to this could be found in one of the principles of the creative approach to required reading – integration.

This chapter will suggest an interdisciplinary plan which takes *Pippi Longstocking* as its central theme. With reading the episodes of the story as its starting point, the plan leads beyond the literary aspects, integrating elements of mathematics, natural science, arts and physical education, as well as certain aspects of the inter-subject themes *Personal and Social Development* and *Use of IT and Communication Technology*. This integrated unit follows the model of integration phases and their organisation presented in *Integrirano poučavanje* by Mira Čudina-Obradović and Sanja Brajković (2009), and its activities are based on the creative approach to required reading. It is appropriate for the fourth grade of primary school.

6. 1. Aims of Integration

The central theme of this unit is the title of the book itself, so the primary focus of the whole unit is exploring *Pippi Longstocking* from a literary perspective. Being the integral aim of required reading in general, supporting the student's motivation and

love for reading is also the starting point and the most important aspect in defining the aims of this unit. Still, the integrative approach requires a definition of sub-aims for each of the included areas.

The following thematic network shows all the areas of integration. As mentioned, with the literary work itself as the central theme, the primary aim of this unit is encouraging reading habits and supporting the students' motivation for reading.

Figure 2. Thematic network

Apart from its literary aspects, this interdisciplinary plan integrates seven different subjects: Croatian Language, Natural Science, Mathematics, Physical Education, Music, Visual Arts and two inter-subject themes, *Personal and Social Development*

and *Use of IT and Communication Technology*. The aims of each integrated area are based on learning outcomes from the national curricula for each of the subjects.

Aims in the field of Croatian Language and Literature start from the student's expression of literary experience, which is further developed in understanding elements and characteristics of the literary text, and finally realised in their creative expression within activities which include speaking, writing or artistic expression. Certain activities also provide reactivation of grammar knowledge and communication skills, such as demonstrative adjectives or paraphrasing the events from the story.

Integration of Mathematics provides an opportunity for revision of content, in this case, units of mass conversion. On the other hand, Natural Science activities offer extension of the usual content for the fourth grade, in the form of learning about foreign countries and wild animals. Activities integrating Physical Education support development of motoric and functional skills.

Activities which include Visual Arts expression require the effective use of an already familiar art technique (pastel), as well as understanding the concept of contrast and its specific types, and implementing it in their work. Integration of Music supports knowledge about basic musical and expressive components of a composition, information about a composer, and a possibility to encounter and interpret traditional world music. The latter also brings a cultural component.

Integration of the inter-subject theme *Personal and Social Development* is visible throughout the whole integrated unit. Diverse forms of social interaction (whole-class activities, groupwork and individual work) enable multidimensional communication which requires collaboration, mutual respect, and tolerance. The unit's tasks also support the student's responsibility and learning skills. At the beginning of the unit, the students are given check-lists with tasks they have to fulfil – classroom activities and independent reading tasks. Each student collects tasks and materials in a map, to have it ready for the presentation and evaluation phase. They also get self-evaluation charts, which will help in following of their own progress as well as the teacher's final evaluation. In this way, the students take the responsibility for their own learning process, while the teacher is provided with rich feedback about each part of the unit.

Figure 3. Student's check-list

	THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR MAP	Done
WEEK 1	*What do you want to discover in this book? What would you like to know about Pippi?* – 3 questions.	
	The Strongest Boy/Girl in the World – a photo of your group work	
	A Recipe	
	The favourite part from chapters you read at home (Part 1) – A short description and a drawing	
WEEK 2	The favourite part from chapters you read at home (Part 2) – A short description and a drawing	
WEEK 3	The favourite part from chapters you read at home (Part 3) – A short description and a drawing	
WEEK 4	Exploring the characters – a handout	
	Colours and Shapes of New Words – a pastel painting	
	Melodies of Southern Seas – a musical task	
	Another task from an activity centre of your choice	

Several activities cover the inter-subject theme *Use of IT and Communication Technology*. Through working with QR codes and online search engines, the students have the opportunity to develop their digital competences, responsibility, and a critical approach to online information sources.

6. 2. Structure of the Integrated Unit

Since Pippi is an extensive literary work with a plot rich with details whose reading requires more time, this integrated unit is constructed as a whole-month project. The introductory phase, as well as the most of the reading phase, takes part during the first three weeks, and they can be realised parallel to the usual teaching plan for the rest of the subjects. Post-reading activities (exploratory phase) and the presentation phase are realised at the end of the final week. Integrative activities are included in all of the phases.

Figure 4. Interdisciplinary plan for *Pippi Longstocking* – An Overview

	ACTIVITY	CLASSROOM ORGANISATION	AREA OF INTEGRATION	TIME
INTRODUCTORY PHASE	**1.** **Let`s meet Astrid and Pippi!** - *General information about the author and the main character* - *Predicting and brainstorming about the story*	Whole-class activity		
	2. **The Strongest Girl/Boy in the World** - *social aspect; brainstorming*	Group work (3-4 students)	Civic Education/Personal & Social Development	
	3. **Pippi's Pepparkakor Biscuits** - *Units of mass conversion activity* - *sensory activities*	Individual work	Mathematics	
	4. **Fika & Swedish Music** - *learning about a Swedish cultural concept* - *listening to a musical piece by Hugo Alfven*	Whole-class activity	Music	
READING	**Part 1:** *An Extraordinary Girl* Chapter 1 – *Pippi Moves into Villa Villekulla* Chapter 3 – *Pippi Plays Tag with some Policemen* Chapter 11 – *Pippi Celebrates Her Birthday*			WEEK 1
	Part 2: *Pippi's Everyday Adventures* Chapter 2 – *Pippi is a Thingfinder and Gets into a Fight* Chapter 10 – *Pippi Acts as a Lifesaver* Chapter 17 – *Pippi Goes to the Fair*			WEEK 2
	Part 3: *Pippi's Journeys* Chapter 25 – *Pippi Goes on Board Again* Chapter 26 – *Pippi Landing* Chapter 27 – *Pippi Talks Sense to a Shark*			WEEK 3
EXPLORATORY PHASE	**1.** **Exploring the story** - *discussion about the plot* - *creating a classroom chart*	Whole-class activity		WEEK 4
	2. **Exploring the characters** - *Croatian grammar: demonstrative adjectives* - *characterisation*		Croatian Language (grammar)	
	3. **Exploration centre:** Travelling the World with *Hoptoad* - *QR codes activity (countries of the world)*	Activity centres	Natural Science	
	4. **Exploration centre**: Animals from All Around the World - *gathering information from online sources (animals from the story)*		Natural Science	
	5. **Hands-on literacy centre**: Become a sailor! - *making basic sailing knots*			

	6. **Music centre**: Melodies of Southern Seas - *encountering traditional music of Pacific islands*		Music	
	7. **Visual art centre**: Colours and Shapes of New Words - *translation from verbal language (written nonsensical words) to visual language (pastel painting)*		Visual Arts	
	8. **Don't Touch the Floor!** - *obstacle course*	Whole-class activity	Physical Education	
	9. **The Thingfinder's Quest** - *creative uses of everyday objects*			
PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION	1. **Be like Pippi!** - *a classroom poster*	Whole-class activity		
	2. **A Letter in a Bottle** - *students' feedback about the integrated unit*			

6. 2. 1. Introductory Phase – Pre-reading Motivation

The pre-reading phase introduces the students into the context of the literary work, as well as a part of the Swedish culture. Its four activities should raise awareness of specific details of the story (certain traits of the main character and the topic of travelling), and activate and upgrade the students' knowledge of subjects of Mathematics and Music. The introductory part also ensures the time for children's predicting and brainstorming about the book's plot and idea, and this will also be presented in the last phase of the project.

The first activity starts with the teacher's short presentation of the author, followed by a picture of the main character. In this activity, each student should form three questions which they would like to find the answer to while reading, and which they will include in their maps.

The following activity integrates the theme of Personal and Social Development, by focusing on ideas such as strength, responsibility, and bravery. After guessing about

Pippi, the students are told that she was "the strongest girl in the world". In groups of three or four, their next task is to draw a picture of a boy or a girl, and write things they associate with being the strongest child in the world. The activity is followed by a short discussion. The teacher should take photos of each group's work, which they will print and include into the students` maps.

The next activity links elements of mathematics (exercises with units of mass conversion) with practical basic baking skills, which include sensory activities. As Pippi and her author come from Sweden, they loved baking traditional Swedish biscuits – *Pepparkakor*. Each student is given a sheet with the *Pepparkakor* recipe (Cottage in the Oaks, 2011), whose ingredients do not have the same weight units, so their task is to convert everything to grams. The teacher prepares the ingredients, which can be weighed according to the correct recipe. This step provides an opportunity for sensory exploration of the ingredients. If possible, further steps (kneading the dough, cutting biscuits, and baking), can be done supported by the school kitchen staff or parents.

Figure 5: The *Pepparkakor* recipe

Pippi's Pepparkakor Biscuits

This recipe is a bit unusual! In order to weigh your ingredients easily, convert all the possible unitis of mass into grams!

50 dkg of flour

20 dkg of butter

1 egg

170 000 mg of sugar

10 dkg of molasses

½ spoon of salt

5000 mg of cinnamon

3000 mg of ginger

a pinch of cloves

1 spoon of baking soda (dissolve in 1 spoon of water)

Cream together the butter and sugar. Add the molasses and egg, then stir in the remaining ingredients until well blended. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours.

Preheat oven to 180 degrees. Roll the dough to ½ cm thickness on a lightly floured surface. Cut into hearts with a heart cookie cutter and place on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake for 8-10 minutes or until edges begin to brown.

Enjoy!

The final activity of the introductory part is organising *Fika*, a popular Swedish coffee-break concept, which is complemented by listening the music of Swedish composer Hugo Alfven. If possible, in the classroom or with some help from the school kitchen, the teacher and the students make some tea, sit in a circle, and take time to listen to Alfven's *Swedish Symphony No. 1*. After listening, they talk about the characteristics of the composition, such as atmosphere, tempo, dynamics, and performers. The relaxed and positive atmosphere created by this activity is a transition to the next phase – reading the selected episodes from the story about Pippi.

6. 2. 2. Reading Phase

The episodical structure of this book holds a valuable potential for whole-class read-alouds. Nine chapters chosen for reading in the classroom form three thematic groups, and each group is to be read in one week. The first reading block, *An Extraordinary Girl*, introduces the readers to Pippi's everyday life and personality. The second part,

called *Pippi's Everyday Adventures*, focuses on Pippi's specific personality traits, such as bravery, dedication, and creativity. The last reading block, *Pippi's Journeys*, deals with Pippi, Tomi, and Annika travelling to Gula-Gula island. The chosen chapters are listed in the chart below (Figure 6).

The first group of chapters is read after the introductory activities. In this way, the teacher should awake the student's motivation for further discovery of the book. Reading the rest of the chapters is the students' independent task, which they can do at home or during reading time in school if it is organised, in the following four weeks. Before each read-aloud (except the first) there is a short discussion about the chapters which the students have read by themselves, based on the theme of each reading block. In this way, the teacher ensures both support in the reading process, as well as enough time for the students' independent work.

Figure 6. Weekly reading assignments

	READING ASSIGNMENT	DONE
WEEK 1	Chapter 4	
	Chapter 5	
	Chapter 6	
	Chapter 7	
WEEK 2	Chapter 8	
	Chapter 9	
	Chapter 12	
	Chapter 14	
	Chapter 15	
WEEK 3	Chapter 16	
	Chapter 19	
	Chapter 20	
	Chapter 21	
	Chapter 23	
WEEK 4	Chapter 28	
	Chapter 29	
	Chapter 30	
	Chapter 31	

During the read-alouds, the students can sit in a circle. In order to sustain the motivational atmosphere, every read-aloud can be organised as *Fika*, where the reading experience can be enhanced with background music – works from the opus of Hugo Alfven, such as *Swedish Rhapsody* No. 2 and No. 3.

6. 2. 3. Exploratory Phase – Post-reading Motivation

Post-reading activities are a combination of whole-class activities and activity centres, which integrate knowledge and skills from subjects of Croatian Language, Natural Science, Visual Arts, Music and Physical Education. This phase consists of three parts: two whole-class activities which focus on the story and the characters, five activity centres and two outdoor activities. In order to ensure enough time for students' reading, they will be realised in the end of the last week of the project.

The first activity concerns exploring the story. The teacher shows a big poster with a chart, which has columns with following titles: *What did Pippi, Tomi, and Annika discover, Places they visited, Adventures they had, People they helped.* In a classroom discussion, the students remember and share about events from the story related to each of the columns. Their ideas are written in the chart.

The next whole-class activity refers to characterisation, integrating some Croatian grammar. Each student gets a handout with pictures of Pippi, Tomi, and Annika, and a list which contains various demonstrative adjectives. The task is to choose four adjectives which describe each character, and write them under the pictures on the handout. Each student has to think of a sentence for each character in which they will use one of the chosen adjectives, which has to apply for themselves (e. g. *I'm as loyal as Tomi when I help a friend in need*.). This exercise may also raise their awareness about relating to the characters' personalities. The handout should be included in the map.

Figure 7. Characterisation task[2]

Cheerful
Loyal
Polite
Unique
Fair
Brave
Imaginative
Creative
Self-confident
Talented
Playful
Strong
Generous
Peaceful
Humble
Gentle
Determined

(© imago / United Archives)

Tomi   Pippi   Annika

_____   _____   _____
_____   _____   _____
_____   _____   _____
_____   _____   _____

I am as _____ as _____ when
_____.
I am as _____ as _____ when
_____.
I am as _____ as _____ when

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[2] Picture retrieved from <https://www.promipool.de/stars/so-sehen-pippi-langstrumpf-annika-und-tommy-heute-aus> (Gertzen, 2018)

The next part of the exploratory phase is organised in activity centres. Each centre has instructions for its task. Music and Visual Arts centres are obligatory, while two exploration centres and the hands-on literacy centre are optional. Apart from the obligatory centre, each student has to choose at least one more, and keep the record of the given tasks in their maps. These activities integrate Natural Science, Music, Visual Arts, IT competences, and handicraft.

There are two exploration centres, where students can learn about countries that Pippi visited or animals which are mentioned in the book. In the first one, *Travelling the World with Hoptoad,* there are small paper flags of countries which Pippi travelled to on the table – Portugal, Egypt, Kongo, South Africa, Indonesia, India, China, Australia, and New Zealand. Each student has to choose three flags and scan the QR code on their back in order to find out certain details about the country, such as its full name, continent and capital.

Figure 8. Exploration centre task: *Travelling the World with* Hoptoad[3]

[3] Picture retrieved from <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/countries/southafrica.html>

In the second exploration centre, called *Animals from All Around the World*, the students are given names of the animals from the story (macaque, horse, pearl mussel, chimpanzee, tiger and boa constrictor) on the task handout. Their task is to type their names in an online search engine (such as Kiddle.co), and complete the task by drawing the animal and writing down the required details about it, such as where it lives or what it eats. In addition to upgrading the students' knowledge of natural science, these activity centres also support the development of their IT competences.

Figure 9. Exploration centre task: *Animals from All Around the World*

BOA CONSTRICTOR

What does it look like?

Where does it live?
_____

What does it eat?
_____

Its natural habitat:
_____

The activity centre named *Become a Sailor!* includes a handicraft activity. The students are offered colourful pieces of thick strings, together with instructions how to make basic sailor knots. The knots which students succeed to make have to be included in their maps.

The Music activity centre, *Melodies of Southern Seas*, gives the students an opportunity to encounter traditional music of Pacific islands. This centre requires a sound source such as headphones (more than a pair if possible), in order to ensure undisturbed listening. Each student takes a few minutes to listen to the given playlist, which is followed by answering the questions on the handout. The questions refer to the music's atmosphere, tempo, dynamics, performers, and student's own associations awoken by the music. The desk in this activity centre can be decorated with pictures of Pacific motifs and sea shells.

Colours and Shapes of New Words is a Visual Arts centre which is based on translation of verbal language into visual language, and using contrast in painting with pastels. The activity is related to the part of the story in which Pippi invents a new word – "spunk". On the desk there is a box containing pieces of paper with nonsensical words, such as "asteriel", "kaenis", "veakar", "tianari" or "nelaris". The student's task is to pick a word and design its appearance, in a form of pastel painting. In their work they have to focus on one of the three types of contrast: warm-cold, light-dark, complementary contrast, or chromatic contrast. Each of the contrast types is explained on a paper which can also be found on the desk. The paintings have to be included in the students' maps.

Two final whole-class activities of the exploratory phase include movement, so they can be realised in the school gym, school garden, or even during a short classroom excursion. The first one, called *Don't Touch the Floor!* integrates an element of Physical Education – the obstacle course. As its name says, the activity is inspired by the game which Pippi, Tomi, and Annika played at Pippi's birthday. The obstacle course consisting of the usual gym equipment such as gymnastic beams, mats, skill spots, Swedish ladder, ropes etc. challenges the students to pass it without touching the floor. The second activity, *The Thingfinder's Quest*, can be realised outdoors, during a short walk in the school garden or school surroundings. Just like Pippi in the book, the students and the teacher have to find an everyday object and think of its possible new uses. This activity supports the students' creative thinking, but also introduces the idea of upcycling.

The exploratory phase is complex and includes diversity of activities, so it could require a full school day. Still, the provided activities integrate skills and knowledge from four different subjects which would otherwise be organised as separate lessons.

6. 2. 4. Presentation and Evaluation

The final phase of the integrated unit includes sharing of what has been learned, as well as the teacher's and students' feedback. The whole-class activities of this phase can be organised in the same day as the exploratory phase activities, but the teacher`s evaluation would surely take more time.

At the beginning of the final phase, the teacher and the students refer to the questions they had in the first phase, before knowing the story of *Pippi Longstocking*. After reading the book and doing all the activities, students share their answers and impressions in a classroom discussion. This discussion serves as an introduction in making a classroom poster, entitled *Be Like Pippi!* In the middle of a large poster paper, the students draw the picture of Pippi. Each student, as well as the teacher, has to think of something they liked about Pippi, and write it around her picture on the poster. That could be sentences such as "Love your friends!", "Cheer up someone who is sad!" or "Dare to go on an adventurous journey!". The poster will be displayed on a visible spot in the classroom. This activity activates the ideas and information the students have acquired during the project, as well as encourages them to relate to the character by making valuable and inspirational decisions.

The final classroom activity is called *A Letter in a Bottle*. Each student is asked to bring a small plastic bottle to school. The class sits in a circle, and if possible, the teacher puts a large piece of blue fabric in the middle, which represents the sea. Each student has to write a letter which describes their impressions about the whole project, put it into the bottle and "throw it" into "the sea". The teacher will collect them and read the letters. In writing them, they have to complete the statements or questions such as "Which part of the story did you like the most?", "Something new I learned is…", "Something I still want to know is…", "Which activities did you like the most?" and "Something I would like to change is…". The teacher's final evaluation consists in comparing the letters with the students' maps and self-evaluation charts.

The self-evaluation charts consist of statements concerning the student's reading process and their engagement in the classroom activities. The students have to estimate their degree of agreement on a Likert scale with degrees ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement).

Figure 10. A student's self-evaluation chart

At the end of our exploring the story of Pippi Longstocking, please tell me what you think about the tasks you had to do, our classroom activities, and your own progress. Grade these statements according to the numbers described underneath.

1 I strongly disagree	2 I disagree	3 I'm not sure	4 I agree	5 I strongly agree
I was reading with interest.	1	2 3	4	5
I was able to understand everything I read.	1	2 3	4	5
I had enough time for reading at home.	1	2 3	4	5
Our classroom activities were interesting.	1	2 3	4	5
Our classroom activities were demanding.	1	2 3	4	5
I managed to fulfil all the required tasks.	1	2 3	4	5
I enjoyed cooperating with my colleagues.	1	2 3	4	5
I had good support from the teacher.	1	2 3	4	5

The final evaluation of the integrated unit has both summative and formative aspects, and covers different aspects of the assessment in the included subjects. The teacher takes into account the tasks which the students collected in the map, their engagement observed during the classroom activities, their comments from *A Letter in a Bottle* activity, and their self-evaluation charts.

Evaluating the objectives of required reading is based on students fulfilling the reading assignments as well as their overall engagement in the classroom activities, and these objectives (being the crucial ones for the unit) require both summative and formative grades. Assessing the activities whose tasks have to be included in the maps depends on the scope of the task. For example, fulfilling the tasks of the Music and Visual Arts activity centres can yield a numeric mark, according to the objectives of each subject – accurate analysis of the components of the composition, or skilful use of the pastel technique and understanding the concept of contrast. On the other side, tasks which integrate grammar, mathematics and natural science (less extensive ones) will be assessed only formatively. Formative approach is also present in assessing physical activities and inter-subject themes, and relies on the teacher's continuous observation and note-taking.

The students' reactions during the realisation process, their feedback, and their self-evaluation should be the primary guidelines in rethinking this form of integration, as well as the starting point for all further attempts in such an approach.

The process of evaluation requires thorough organisation and individual approach to every student. Although only certain parts of the unit enable numeric marking, every aspect of integration is important and valuable in observing the students' progress in learning and acquiring new skills. Still, developing reading habits and love of reading should be crucial in every perspective on this interdisciplinary plan.

7. CONCLUSION

As changes and diversity of the contemporary society are multidimensional and dynamic, education is faced with a great need for innovative ideas which could meet the new requirements, such as creativity and critical thinking. The Croatian educational system is on the verge of important reform, and the practice is asking for concrete methodological ideas in every aspect of the teaching profession.

When it comes to teaching literature, the age of information overload and media diversity demands holistic approaches to literary works, vastly different from traditional interpretations. This is especially relevant for the concept of required reading, which is meant to be a medium for developing the student's motivation and interest in reading. Creative approach to required reading is a methodological outline which uses principles of students' curiosity and immersion, artistic and genre determinants of literature, and finally, ideas of correlation and integration, in creating and developing activities which support motivation during the whole reading process.

As one of the principles of the creative approach, integration refers to intertwining of different skills, school subjects, and areas of knowledge in order to ensure more meaningful and natural learning process. Beginnings of the integrative approach can be found in Constructivist ideas, starting with reform schools from the late 19th century onward. With its holistic approach to learning, the scientific background of integration can be tracked in concepts such as multiple intelligences theory, and corresponds to the recent findings of developmental psychology and neuroscience. Integration respects the possibilities of young learners who are fascinated by the concept of a whole, in opposition to strictly fragmenting the knowledge and skills into subjects. In its organisational aspect, it exists on a continuum ranging from correlation as its simplest level to thematic or project teaching as the most complex forms. Through the phases of defining its aims, planning, exploration, presentation, and evaluation, integrated units support higher thinking skills, the student's own responsibility for the learning process, and foster creativity and motivation.

Interdisciplinary units are surely an organisational challenge, but literature could provide a good starting point for their realisation. In its nature, literature is integrative.

It comprises a variety of artistic elements and concepts, inspires expression, but also provides a rich factual foundation which is always multi-layered. When considering required reading as a choice of literary works which should be interpreted as a whole, integration in any of its forms could seem as a logical solution. A literary work can be the central theme itself or only one of its parts; integration of literature can be realised *within* literary concepts only, or it can go *beyond*, exploring its artistic or informational components.

The exemplary integrated unit based on *Pippi Longstocking* has tried to link the organisational guidelines of the interdisciplinary approach together with methods of the creative approach to required reading, integrating subjects of Croatian Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Science, Physical Education, Music, Visual Arts and inter-subject themes of *Personal and Social Development* and *Use of IT and Communication Technology*. It was designed as a whole-month project, and realised through whole-class activities, activity centres and students' independent engagement. Its activities should support pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading motivation, as well as the student's self-evaluation and the teacher's thorough assessment.

Realising meaningful and effective integration requires thorough knowledge, good organisation, but also experience. Although in many cases it may seem that schools lack ideas, sources, or materials for such an approach, it may be important to consider what is already at hand. Therefore, required reading works as an existing set of ideas could be an accessible starting point, with numerous possibilities whose exploration can go beyond the classroom walls, and turn the occasional dull reading into the most natural learning process led by curiosity.

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IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA

Izjavljujem da sam ja, Katarina Kralj, samostalno provela aktivnosti istraživanja literature i napisala diplomski rad na temu: *„Integration in the Creative Approach to Required Reading".*

Katarina Kralj

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