Text Difficulty in Czech Natural Science Textbooks for the Fourth Grade

Abstract

The paper focuses on the assessment of text difficulty in six contemporary Czech science textbooks for fourth graders. Text analysis followed the authors' own methodology. The results obtained reveal varying text difficulty between individual textbooks. Only textbooks by the Alter and SPN publishing companies comply with the difficulty scale for fourth-year textbooks and may be recommended for teaching.

Keywords: natural science textbooks for the fourth grade, text difficulty, syntactic factor, semantic factor

Introduction

Without a doubt, language represents the most important medium in primary school instruction. Education at the primary school level cannot be imagined without vocabulary-based printed information (Selander 1990; Shepardson, Pizzini 1991). Along with teacher presentations, textbooks act as one of the primary sources of information which channel school education at primary schools (Polaková 1992, Sikorová 1998). The quality of school education is therefore to a great extent conditioned by the qualities of textbooks as learning mediums. If textbooks are created without the prior objective assessment of the suitability of their language structure and text content for the respective level of pupils' linguistic competence, textbooks of inferior didactic quality may be produced (Olechowski 1995, Zujev 1995).