

**THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN PUNCTUATION AND
ORTHOGRAPHIC MARKS IN TEACHING
THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY
EDUCATION**

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Abstract

Bearing in mind that the primary education is the basement for gaining and developing the students' language and orthographic literacy teaching students about the relevance of the punctuation and orthographic marks as two separate categories of marks that differ according to their use in the written text and their classification (some punctuation marks can also be used as orthographic marks) is very important. The Macedonian language coursebooks for nine-year primary education are written according to the Teaching curriculum, therefore it is extremely significant for the Teaching curriculum for the nine-year primary education to be written in a way that clearly reflects the importance of these two categories of marks and indicates the difference between them and this should be done in accordance to the Orthography of the Macedonian language in order to improve the quality of the course books and to preserve the orthographic norm. Consequently, the objective of the paper is to examine and describe whether the difference between the punctuation and orthographic marks is indicated and whether the classification of these marks is done properly (according to the Orthography), both, in the Macedonian language teaching curriculum and the Macedonian language course textbooks for the nine-year primary education. Therefore, this research has a qualitative paradigm (analysis of content) and descriptive design. The methods used to collect and process the data and scientific conclusion are analysis and synthesis. The analysis demonstrates the necessity of an urgent revision of the Teaching curriculum because the existing content regarding these two categories of marks and their classification is not precise and correct. This affects the quality of the coursebooks which need to be revised too, because they also contain inconsistencies and incorrect information that especially refer to the classification of these marks.

Key words: *Punctuation and orthographic marks.*

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1. Introduction

The native language, which is a basic means of communication in every country, provides a sense of belonging because it is a mark of the people's national identity. Thus, the aspiration for correct use of the orthographic rules leads to preservation of the essential assets of the language and to successful expression in writing. In the Macedonian language orthography, there is a distinction between punctuation and orthographic marks. That is, the classification of the marks in these two categories is done according to their use. The category of punctuation marks consists of marks that are used for separating sentences and parts of them as well as for indicating pauses and intonation. In other words, they help in shaping the thoughts in a more specific manner. This category includes the following marks: period, comma, semicolon, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, ellipsis, parentheses, dash, single quotation marks and double quotation marks. On the other hand, the category of orthographic marks includes some of the punctuation marks, such as: period, colon, ellipsis, dash and parentheses but with the uses that refer to separate words and not sentences. The other orthography marks are the following: hyphen, apostrophe, asterisk, grave accent and accent mark (Orthography of the Macedonian language 2007: 114–153).

Both, the manner in which the teaching process is realized and the materials intended for primary education, shape and affect on the entire personality of the students. Moreover, the significance of the teaching process for the subject Macedonian language in primary education is immeasurable because, the Macedonian, as a native language, is used as a basic means of communication in the country, meaning that it provides native language literacy and basis for the other subjects. Thus, with the Macedonian language teaching process, students should get acquainted with the functioning of the Macedonian standard language system, which would allow them to assimilate and implement the standard norm of the language in all aspect of life.

In the Macedonian language teaching process, the difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks is not given the prominence it deserves and they are often treated as something that is not so relevant to the teaching process. So far research projects that deal with this topic have not been conducted yet.

The objective of the paper is to examine and describe whether the difference between the punctuation and orthographic marks is indicated and whether the classification of these marks is done properly (according to the Orthography), both, in the Macedonian language teaching curriculum and the Macedonian language course textbooks for the nine-year primary education.

Consequently, three questions arise regarding the objective of the paper: the first, whether the difference between the punctuation and orthographic marks is indicated, both, in the Teaching curriculum for primary education and in the Macedonian language course textbooks in accordance with the Orthography, the second, whether the Macedonian language course textbooks are written according to the directions given in the Teaching curriculum, and the third, whether the classification of these marks is done properly in the Teaching curriculum and in the Macedonian course textbooks for primary education, again taking into account the Orthography (2007: 114–153).

2. Methodology of the Research

In light of the paper's objective, i.e. to answer the previous questions, this research has a qualitative paradigm (analysis of content) and descriptive design (therefore the findings are given in a narrative way and not in tables) and the sample consists of Teaching curriculum and Macedonian language course books for nine-year primary education. The methods used to collect and process the data and scientific conclusion are analysis and synthesis. Firstly, there is an analysis of the content of the Teaching curriculum for nine-year primary education, made and approved for usage by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development in Education of the Republic of Macedonia. Secondly, there is an analysis of the content in the Macedonian language course textbooks used by both, teachers and students, for the nine-year primary education, that is, from the first to the ninth grade, also approved by the above mentioned institutions. In the analyses, the rules regarding these two categories of marks, in the Orthography of the Macedonian language, from 2007, XVI altered edition are taking into account. The analysis demonstrates the necessity of an urgent revision of the Teaching curriculum because the existing content regarding these two categories of marks and their classification is not precise and correct. This affects the quality of the coursebooks which need to be revised too, because they also contain inconsistencies and incorrect information that especially refer to the classification of these marks, the students' knowledge and also leads to neglecting the orthography of the Macedonian language .

3. Results and Discussion

First, the results of the analysis of the Teaching curriculum for nine-year primary education in the Republic of Macedonia and the discussion of the collected data are presented, and then the results of the analysis of the Macedonian language course books and the discussion of the findings are given.

3.1 Teaching Curriculum

3.1.1 In the *Teaching curriculum for first grade* (2007), there is not a content that refers to punctuation and orthographic marks. In first grade, the aim of the educational process is to work on general students' literacy, so it is understandable why such content is not present in this Teaching curriculum.

3.1.2 In the *Teaching curriculum for second grade*, in the section 'Initial reading and writing' and the subsection 'Goals', it is stated that students should get acquainted with certain punctuation marks, their function as well as their correct use in reading. Further, in the subsections 'Contents' and 'Terms' the following marks are listed: period, comma, question mark and exclamation mark. In the subsection 'Activities and methods', there is a suggestion for using exercises that imply identification of the mentioned punctuation marks and their use in reading (2007: 6). Additionally, in the section 'Language' and the subsection that refers to the teaching goals, there is a goal which indicates that students should be equipped with the knowledge for use of certain punctuation marks for writing, and in the subsections that refer to contents and terms the same marks are listed. Also, the same exercises are given in the subsection 'Activities and methods' (2007: 9). As we can see, second grade is the period when students get introduced to the basic punctuation marks that are used in short sentences which reflect the students' everyday

activities, i.e. they learn how to use the appropriate mentioned marks when posing questions, exclaiming, finishing the sentence and listing.

3.1.3. In the *Teaching curriculum for third grade*, in the section 'Language', there are also goals which refer to punctuation marks. Namely, it is stated that students should know the function of certain punctuation marks and they should also know how to use them correctly in writing and reading. In the subsection 'Contents' and 'Terms' there is a list of the following punctuation marks: period, comma (for listing), question mark, exclamation mark and colon. The suggestions in the subsection 'Activities and methods' recommend exercises that imply identification and use of the listed punctuation marks (2007: 6). It is obvious that the Teaching curriculum for third grade is enriched with the punctuation mark colon which is quite appropriate because the students are supposed to list things in their class activities.

What we can conclude, according to these three curricula, regarding these marks is that only a several punctuation marks should be taught by the end of third grade, and only with their basic use, which is understandable when taking into account the students' age. Although, two of the listed marks in these teaching curricula (period and colon) could also be used as orthographic marks, depending on their use, apparently, the teaching goals in these teaching curricula refer only to punctuation marks, so there is no distinction between the punctuation and orthographic marks.

3.1.4 In the *Teaching curriculum for fourth grade*, in the section 'Language', in the subsection that refers to goals, one of the goals indicates that students should know how to use double quotation marks when setting off names of institutions, streets, magazines and books in a sentence. In the subsections that refers to contents and terms there is the following information: 'Orthographic marks: double quotation marks'. In the subsection 'Activities and methods' there is a suggestion for exercises that imply identification and use of double quotation marks for writing names of streets, magazines, books and so on (2009: 12). This is not a correct information, because according to the *Orthography of the Macedonian language* (2007: 141–143) double quotation marks is a punctuation mark and not orthographic one, and it is clearly stated in the *Orthography* (2007: 142, 389 a) that double quotation marks are used as punctuation mark to set off titles of books, newspapers, magazines, associations, hotels, companies, brands, schools and so on. It is clear that this Teaching curriculum attempts to introduce the students to the orthographic marks and this indicates that the students are going to be informed about the difference between the orthographic and the punctuation marks. But, unfortunately, there is no distinction between these two categories of marks, and it is obvious that students continue learning the punctuation marks.

3.1.5 In the *Teaching curriculum for fifth grade* (2008), there is not a content that refers to punctuation and orthographic marks. So, it is not clear why there has been a hiatus in the educational process regarding these two categories of marks, especially when bearing in mind that in sixth grade the students continue to learn new punctuation and orthographic marks without being reminded of the already learned marks. In this sense, the gap between fourth and sixth grade, which refers to these two categories is unjustified.

3.1.6 In the *Teaching curriculum for sixth grade*, in the section 'Language', there is information that only refers to punctuation. Namely, the teaching goals refer to knowledge about the correct use of the punctuation marks for direct speech, and in the

subsections 'Contents' and 'Terms' there is a list of the marks that refer to direct speech: period, comma, question mark and colon. In the subsection that refers to activities and methods, there is a suggestion for using exercises for correct use of the listed punctuation marks in writing (2008: 10). Even though in the *Orthography* (2007: 143–147), it is clearly stated that the dash is also a punctuation mark used for direct speech, as it could be noted, this Teaching curriculum does not mention its use for that purpose.

It is expected that the Teaching curriculum for sixth grade will introduce the difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks, because the students are more mature and can accept more complex content, but it is clear that by sixth grade the teaching process only revolves around certain punctuation marks

3.1.7. In the *Teaching curriculum for seventh grade*, in the section 'Language', there are goals which refer to the difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks and to the correct usage of certain punctuation marks. In the subsection 'Contents', it is stated: 'The use of the punctuation marks: dash, hyphen, parentheses, asterisk, apostrophe', and in the subsection 'Terms' it is written: 'Punctuation (term) Punctuation marks'. In the activities and methods exercises for correct use of the listed punctuation marks in writing are suggested (2008: 9). This information is wrong because hyphen, asterisk and apostrophe belong only to the category of orthographic marks and there is no information about the above mentioned difference. According to the *Orthography of the Macedonian language*, the other two marks (dash and parentheses) can be used as punctuation and orthographic, but this Teaching curriculum does not provide information which will show this distinction. This can confuse the teachers because they will not know whether to teach about these two marks as punctuation or as orthographic ones. However, this Teaching curriculum is the first one which clearly stresses out that there is a difference between the punctuation and orthographic marks. In conclusion, at this level of their education, the students are still not aware of the mentioned differentiation of the marks which influence their basic language and orthographic literacy.

3.1.8 In the *Teaching curriculum for eighth grade* (2008), there is not a content that refers to punctuation and orthographic marks. Here, again we face a gap referring to these two categories of marks which is neither expected nor accepted. In this period of students' educational process, they are mature enough to comprehend the difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks and their correct usage. Still, the motivation for this gap is not clear. The relevance for proper acquisition of the orthographic and punctuation marks and the difference between them are crucial for the students' language literacy. It can be concluded that at this age the students are about to finish their primary education and still unaware of the fact that in the Macedonian language two types of marks exist (orthographic and punctuation), and that some marks can belong to one of the category or to both of them.

3.1.9 In the *Teaching curriculum for ninth grade*, the section 'Language' and the subsection 'Goals' contain teaching goals that refer to the difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks and their correct usage. In the subsections 'Contents' and 'Terms', particular marks are not listed, and in the subsection 'Activities and methods' there is only a suggestion for exercises that refers to their correct use without reference to any of them (2008: 8). This Teaching curriculum also just indicates the difference between these two categories of marks, but it does not offer a classification of the marks according to the two categories. What we could say is that the motivation for

this solution in this particular Teaching curriculum is not clear again. We saw that in the Teaching curriculum for eight grade there is a gap, i.e. the content referring to the two categories of marks does not exist. Though this is the second Teaching curriculum where the difference between the two categories of marks is pointed out, nothing crucial, regarding their classification and their usage is really said, and the students actually finish the primary education without proper knowledge of this issue.

At the end of this section, we can say that it is obvious that, according to the Teaching curriculum from first to ninth grade, the students should be acquainted only with the basic usages of the following marks: period, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon and double quotation marks, dash, hyphen, parentheses, asterisk, apostrophe, as punctuation ones. At a first glance, it seems that students are introduced to a sufficient number of marks listed in the Orthography of the modern Macedonian language. But, bearing in mind the first question regarding the paper's objective, it could be concluded that though, both, the Teaching curricula for seventh and ninth grade point out that there is a difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks, yet the difference is not clearly indicated (insufficient examples that illustrate the usage of the mentioned mark as orthographic or punctuation ones). Moreover, the Teaching curriculum for seventh grade provides wrong information, i.e. it enters confusion (the marks are listed as punctuation ones) and though the difference between orthographic and punctuation marks is indicated, it does not show that some of the marks could also be used as orthographic ones, depending on their usage. The Teaching curriculum for ninth grade also points out the difference between these two categories of marks. Unfortunately, this Teaching curriculum does not provide examples for the usage of particular marks, regarding these two categories. It is well known that the nine-year primary education guarantees the basis on which the students' language and orthographic literacy is built. Thus, the Teaching curriculum for primary education should not allow the presence of this serious mistaken and imprecise information and this shows that there is an urgent need for further activities that should be undertaken regarding the issue: The Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development in Education of the Republic of Macedonia should immediately revise the Macedonian language teaching curriculum for primary education in order to provide quality of the coursebooks, of the teaching process and of the students' knowledge, as well as to contribute to the preservation of the Macedonian orthographic norm.

3.2 Course Textbooks

3.2.1 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for first grade*, there is not a content that refers to punctuation and orthographic marks (Strezovska et al. 2008). We can conclude that this is done in accordance with the directions in the Teaching curriculum for the first grade, and it is appropriate taking into consideration the students' age.

3.2.2 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for second grade*, three marks are given: the period with its use at the end of declarative sentences (Krtolica et al. 2010: 54), the question mark at the end of interrogative sentences (Krtolica et al. 2010: 61), and the exclamation mark at the end of exclamatory sentences (Krtolica et al. 2010: 86). The marks are not named (as punctuation or orthographic), and we assume that this is done again bearing in mind the students' age, though the Teaching curriculum for second grade named them as punctuation marks. This course book does not provide information

regarding the comma, which is listed in the Teaching curriculum. Thus, this course is not completely in accordance with the Teaching curriculum.

3.2.3 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for third grade*, the period is classified into the category of punctuation marks and two of its uses are mentioned: for indicating the end of declarative sentences and for abbreviating certain words. In the part 'New words' it is stated that students meet with the term punctuation mark for the first time (Sinadinovska et al. 2008: 18). Further, in this textbook there is an explanation about the basic use of the question mark (Sinadinovska et al. 2008: 33) and the exclamation mark (Sinadinovska et al. 2008: 39) which are also named as punctuation marks. But, the information in this text book regarding the second use of the period (for abbreviating some words) is wrong. Namely, according to the *Orthography* (2007: 148, 401 a), the usage of the period for abbreviating certain words refers to the period as orthographic and not as a punctuation mark. Moreover, it is not clear why the authors introduce the use of the period to abbreviate certain words when it is not mentioned in the Teaching curriculum for third grade, as well as why the usage of the comma and colon are not mentioned in this course book, though the Teaching curriculum for third grade gives direction for their use, so this course book as the previous one is not completely in accordance with the Teaching curriculum. The omission of the comma in the course books for second and third grade is unjustified, because at this age the students are often involved in activities to list things and to use these marks.

3.2.4 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for fourth grade*, there is a title that refers to orthographic marks. Under the title there is a poem 'Where does each mark stand' in which several marks are mentioned, and for some of them their usage is given: period (ending a sentence); comma; exclamation mark (excitement); question mark (questioning); colon (listing); double quotation marks (citing); hyphen (emphasizing); parentheses (further explanation). Further, there is an explanation about the use of double quotation marks (for setting off titles of institutions, magazines and books; and when citing a text written or said by someone) (Sevdinska & Nastoska 2010a: 46, 47). The wrong information here is in fact given in the title (orthographic marks), but the given marks in the poem are punctuation and not orthographic (the comma, the exclamation mark, the question mark and the double quotation mark belong only to the category of punctuation marks). Here, we see that the comma is introduced for the first time, though the Teaching curriculum for second and third grade suggested that the students should get familiar with it earlier in their education. The period, the colon and the parentheses could be punctuation and orthographic marks, but in the poem they are used as punctuation marks. Only the hyphen belongs to the category of orthographic marks. In the poem it is said that the hyphen is used for emphasizing, which is not correct because that use belongs to the dash as a punctuation mark (Orthography 2007: 140, p. 377 a). In addition, it could be noted that, in the printed poem, the authors use a dash and not a hyphen (Sevdinska & Nastoska 2010a: 46). This course book, repeats the basic marks mentioned in the course book for second grade and as obvious introduces students to new marks that are not mentioned in the Teaching curriculum for fourth grade (this is not in accordance to the Teaching curriculum for fourth grade). So again this course book does not explain the distinction between the punctuation and orthographic marks. In other *Macedonian language course textbook for fourth grade*, there is a content for which it is said that refers to orthographic marks. Further, this content consists of an explanation about the uses of double quotation marks: for writing titles of books, magazines; names of companies; citations and thoughts for other people (Atanasova 2009: 164). The second course book seems to be in accordance to the Teaching curriculum in sense that it mentions the quotation marks. But the given information about the quotation marks is

wrong as in the Teaching curriculum for fourth grade (double quotation marks belongs to the category of punctuation marks and not to orthographic marks). This can lead to a conclusion that the Teaching curriculum affects the author's comprehension of the difference between these two categories of marks.

3.2.5 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for fifth grade*, there is a content that refers to the punctuation marks in direct speech and the following marks are listed: colon, dash and double quotation marks (Sevdinska & Nastoska 2010b: 116, 117). This information is in accordance with the *Orthography* (2007: 143–147), i.e. the marks for direct speech belong to the category of punctuation marks. Though this course book offers correct information about punctuation marks used in direct speech, it is not in accordance with the Teaching curriculum for fifth grade which does not provide any information regarding these two categories of marks. Moreover, this course book introduces the direct speech which according to the Teaching curriculum for sixth grade should be introduced in sixth grade, so there is an obvious gap between the Teaching curriculum for fifth grade and the course book for fifth grade.

3.2.6 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for sixth grade*, there is a content that refers to the punctuation marks used in direct speech and the given list includes the following: period, comma, question mark and colon. Further in the text, there is an explanation about the uses of the listed marks. Consequently, this textbook provides information only about the punctuation marks for direct speech (Velkova & Jovanovska 2011: 36–38) and this is in accordance with the Teaching curriculum for sixth grade.

3.2.7 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for seventh grade*, there is a part that refers to punctuation and orthographic marks and this is in accordance with the Teaching program, which states that the students should be familiar with the difference between the two categories of marks. The book gives information about their use, i.e. for the punctuation marks it is said that 'are use for separating sentences and parts of them as well as for indicating pauses and intonation', and for the orthographic marks it is stated that 'are used for correct, orthographic writing' (Velkova & Jovanovska 2009a: 122). But, like the directions in the Teaching curriculum for seventh grade (both, the Teaching curriculum for seventh grade and this course book mention the difference between the two categories of marks for the first time), the explanation in this course book does not provide solid basis for grasping the difference between these two categories because the information for the orthographic marks does not make clear the distinction which would help students understand the difference more easily. Then, there is also an explanation about the uses of parentheses and dash as punctuation and orthographic marks (Velkova & Jovanovska 2009a: 122–123) and it is correct. However, the authors does not indicate information regarding the space between the dash and the adjacent text (should the dash be separated with space from the adjacent text or not) and in the given examples we can see that there are examples where the dash is separated with space from the adjacent text and examples where the dash is not separated with space from the adjacent text. Additionally, in one of the stated uses of the dash as orthographic mark (for connecting two terms), there is the example *Gordana Mitrevska–Stojkovska* (Velkova & Jovanovska 2009a: 123) which actually refers to the use of the hyphen between two surnames. Thus, the provided example is incorrect because the dash is not used for this purpose, i.e. between two surnames (Orthography, 2007: 150, 408 b). Further, there is explanation about the uses of the apostrophe and the asterisk classified as orthographic marks which is correct (Velkova & Jovanovska 2009a: 123). In other *Macedonian language course book for seventh grade*, there is a part for which it is said that refers to

the use of the punctuation marks. The given list includes the following marks: dash, hyphen, parentheses, asterisk and apostrophe. Further, there is an explanation about the use of the listed marks, (Dimkowska & Cvetković 2009: 163, 164). The first mistake in this course book could be found in the fact that the hyphen, the asterisk and the apostrophe are not punctuation marks, but orthographic marks. The second mistake is that the dash is not given with the uses which refer to the category of punctuation marks (as it is indicated in the above mentioned part), but only with the uses which refer to the dash as an orthographic mark. For the parentheses only one use is given and it is a use which refers to the parentheses as punctuation mark. The second course book is also in accordance with the Teaching program regarding the relevance of the difference between the two mentioned categories of marks, but as we can see the authors provide wrong information and do not classify the listed marks into these two categories properly and correctly. So, again, the content in the Teaching program reflects the teachers' more profound approach toward this issue.

3.2.8 In the *Macedonian language course textbooks for eighth grade*, there is not a content that refers to punctuation and orthographic marks (Bogdanovski, Bojkoska et al. 2009; Velkova & Jovanovska 2009b). This course book is in accordance to the Teaching curriculum. Still, one can not find an explanation about this gap between the grades, and, taking into account the students' age, it is more justified and appropriate to transfer part of the content from the fourth grade to the eight grade.

3.2.9 In the *Macedonian language course textbook for ninth grade*, there is a part which refers to punctuation and orthographic marks, in which, it is said that students should know how to make a difference between them, which is in accordance with the Teaching program, but the explanation does not demonstrate that difference in a clear manner. First, it is indicated that the punctuation marks are used for separating sentences and parts of them as well as for indicating pauses and intonation. Then there is a list which contains all of the punctuation marks: period, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, ellipsis, parentheses, dash, double quotation marks and single quotation marks. Further, it is stated that 'Some punctuation marks are used as orthographic marks: period, colon, ellipsis, dash, hyphen, parentheses, apostrophe, asterisk, grave accent, accent mark.' (Velkova & Jovanovska 2010: 46). But, there is no further explanation that would make clear which of the listed marks could be used as orthographic, thus the distinction between these two categories of marks is not precise and understandable.

Regarding the second question of the paper's objective, it can be concluded that the course books (first, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grade) are written completely in accordance with the directions given in the Teaching curriculum. The other one, as stated above, deviates from these directions in the Teaching curriculum in sense that, some do not introduce the student to the marks indicated in the Teaching curriculum (second grade), some introduce the students to marks not mentioned in the Teaching curriculum (third, fourth, fifth, grade). What we can see is that the content in the Teaching curriculum reflects the authors' standpoints toward the issue, i.e. the directions in the Teaching curriculum are unclear and the content in the course books is also unclear; the explanations in the Teaching curriculum are confusing and, accordingly, the content in the course books is confusing; the content of the Teaching curriculum is full with major mistakes and these mistakes find their place in the course books too. All this leads us to the third question of the paper's objective, i.e. only the two course books (seventh, ninth grade) indicate the difference between the orthographic and punctuation marks, but the

classification of these marks into the appropriate category is wrong. Apparently, the authors do not have the proper knowledge regarding the two categories of marks and that is the reason they have made many mistakes and have provided the students with the wrong and confusing information (insufficient examples, putting certain marks into the wrong category) which affect their language and orthographic literacy. We can come to a conclusion that the course books do not clarify the difference between orthographic and punctuation marks. Thus, again, The Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development in Education of the Republic of Macedonia should also revise the Macedonian language course textbooks for primary education in order to provide quality of the teaching process as well to contribute to the preservation of the Macedonian language orthographic norm.

4 Conclusion

When referring to the degree to which the difference between the punctuation and orthographic marks is indicated, from the analysis of the Macedonian language teaching curriculum and course textbooks for the nine-year primary education, it could be concluded that a little attention is given to this extremely important segment of the orthography. The analysis of the teaching curriculum for nine-year primary education shows that by sixth grade the following marks as punctuation ones should be learned: period, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon and double quotation marks. None of the Teaching curriculum from first to sixth grade provides information referring to the orthographic marks or information referring to the uses of the period and the colon as orthographic marks. In the *Teaching curriculum for seventh grade*, the difference between these two categories (punctuation and orthographic marks) is mentioned for the first time but the listed marks are incorrectly classified into these two categories. The Teaching curriculum for ninth grade also provides information regarding the relevance of the difference between these two categories of marks, but no particular marks are listed, and no classification of the marks according to the two categories is given. The analysis of the Macedonian language course textbooks, for the nine-year primary education, confirms that this issue is not treated in accordance with its importance. The difference between these two categories of marks is mentioned only in two course books (seventh and ninth grade) but the given explanations do not provide solid basis for grasping the difference between these two categories, meaning that the explanations are imprecise and difficult to understand.

When referring to the consistency in classifying the marks into the two categories, it could be concluded that the Teaching curriculum (for fourth and seventh grade) provides wrong information, i.e. the double quotation marks are classified as orthographic mark, and the hyphen, asterisk and apostrophe as punctuation marks. These mistakes are reflected into the course books, i.e. the uses of the period, the colon, the dash and the parentheses are not clearly distinguished, and therefore, these marks are not correctly classified regarding the two categories. Further in the textbooks, the comma, the exclamation mark, the question mark and the double quotation mark are classified as orthographic marks even though they are punctuation marks. The hyphen, the asterisk and the apostrophe are classified as punctuation marks though they belong to the category of orthographic marks.

The conclusion is clear and obvious: the Macedonian language Teaching curriculum and the Macedonian language course books for nine-year primary education are primary source of information in teaching the Macedonian orthography, thus they should be more

precise and offer correct information regarding the classification of the punctuation and orthographic marks

The findings of this research are extremely important, primarily for the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development in Education of Republic of Macedonia, because they are a key factor for the national education and should be aware of the low quality of the Teaching program and the course books they approve for use regarding these marks. Furthermore, they should be very careful when choosing experts in the field of Macedonian language to work on these documents. Then, it is important for the authors of the course books who should manifest a critical approach toward what they have written and aim to clarify things, not to make them more confusing and not understandable for students. Even more, they should constantly work on their own professional development and follow the rules of the Orthography of the Macedonian language, which gives the basics regarding these marks. Then, it is important to teachers who should demonstrate a high level of consciousness about the relevance of these marks and a critical approach toward the content in the Teaching program and course books, they should also be capable and highly competent regarding the knowledge of Macedonian language and constantly work on their professional development too. Finally, the research is also relevant for the students, because if they have correct and quality textbooks to learn from, they will get a clear picture for these marks and the differences between them, and that, of course, will improve their written expression, make them aware of the relevance of the Macedonian language and help them become citizens who will have a responsibility to preserve the language from any deviations that can influence the language orthographic norm.

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