



## TEACHING READING AND WRITING TO FIRST GRADE STUDENTS FROM 1982-2007

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### **Abstract:**

Literacy lessons for the first grades in Kosovo are realized with the help of the "ABC Book". This book aims to enable students to identify and learn letters, sounds, vowels and consonants and to pronounce them correctly, according to the spelling norm. The focus of this study will be: the ABC Books of Qamil Batalli from 1982 to 2007. According to the elaborated content, we will see in how many parts are these ABC Books composed of. Do they have a preparation period and what is its effect on preparing students for reading and writing? The didactic course of one lesson, here I will focus on methods of teaching reading and writing, forms of teaching letters, order of reading and writing, type of writing, etc. The research is a study that describes and compares all these components from one ABC Book to another. On this book depends the success of mastering reading, writing and elementary knowledge, paving the way to a more perfect culture. Will it be easy or difficult for the students to do the reading and writing, this part is on the responsibility of the ABC Book.

**Keywords:** : sound, letters, reading, writing, ABC Book

### **1. Teaching reading and writing to first grade students from 1982-2007**

Teaching reading and writing to first grade students from 1982-2007 was realized through the ABC Books of author Qamil Batalli. These are the longest-lived ABC Books in the history of Kosovo. The first ABC Book of 1982 was allowed to be published by the Elderly Education of the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo (Batalli, 1982). This ABC Book with the same headings and without change has been published for several years as: II edition in 1983, III edition in 1984, IV edition in 1985, V edition in 1986. (Nimonaj, 2014). Whereas in 1987, the new edition comes out with different covers than the one in 1982. The difference between these two ABC Books is because the ABC Book of 1982 which was reprinted until 1986 had 95 pages and the ABC Book of 1987 with 103

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pages, and the difference between them is only within these eight pages, everything else is the same. This ABC Book was used in our schools in Kosovo until 2002.

The ABC Book of 2003 allowed this text to be published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Prishtinë. This ABC Book was used by first grade students until 2007.

During this study, ABC Books will be referred to as:

- a) The ABC Book of 1982, and
- b) The ABC Book of 2003.

Such a division is made with the aim that the ABC Books published from 1982-2002, have no differences between them, so in the analysis we will describe both the ABC Books of 1982 and the ABC Books of 2003. The ABC Book of 2003 differs greatly from the ABC Books of 1982 such as: methods, forms, exercises, activities, course of lessons, etc.

Regarding their structure, the ABC Books consist only of two parts: Pre-ABC Book and the reliable ABC Book (the part where the sounds/letters are processed).

Our study will focus on these two parts. In the following, we will analyze the contents and results that are intended to be achieved in the section of the Pre-ABC Book, going to the ABC Book in which we study the methods and forms of teaching sounds/letters, the order of reading and writing, the phonetic structure of sounds, graphic similarity of letters, type of writing, didactic course of lessons, etc.

The ABC Books end up with sound/letter processing and have no separate parts for the reinforcement of reading and writing. Students developed these two skills later one in the textbook for first grade.

## **2. Pre-ABC Book from 1982-2003**

The Pre-ABC Book is part of the ABC Book-program, which prepares the students with some essential skills to help them work with ABC Book favoring literacy. While working in this section, it is intended to acquire some habits for children of this age such as:

- Development of speech,
- Enrichment of vocabulary,
- Improvement and refinement of Albanian language spoken structures,
- Development of some of the necessary motor skills for the literacy process etc. (Gjokuta, at al., 2012).

Through this period, the teacher also controls and helps students develop these skills. The Pre-ABC Book is a necessary period due to the fact that the level of children coming from different families is not the same and a small number of them have been part of preschools institutions especially during these years when these ABC Books were used. For the inclusion of children in preschools institutions from 1981 to 2001, see Table 1.

**Table 1: Inclusion of children in preschools institutions from 1981 to 2001.**

No.	Year	Number of children
1	1981	6.023
2	1986	10.051
3	1996	8.076
4	2000	4.851
5	2001	5.224

Source: Some aspects of efficiency in Kosovo education, 2000, p. 72

After the last war in Kosovo in 1999, precisely in 2006, the Kosovo Assembly approved the Law on Preschool Education no. 02/L52 which is also the first law on preschool education in Kosovo after 1999. In 2011 with the decision of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Framework of Pre-University Education Curriculum of the Republic of Kosovo is approved. Preschool education according to the Curriculum Framework covers ages 0-5 years, while pre-primary education covers ages 5-6. The Strategic Education Plan for Kosovo 2011-2016 foresees that all children aged 5-6 years will be included in pre-primary education by 2016 and that 35% of children aged 0-5 will be included in various forms of preschool education (MEST/b, 2011, p. 58). During this period from 1982 - 2007 we find that these Pre ABC Books have been a facilitator for most students in crossing from family life to school life, with duties and obligations.

The Pre-ABC Book of Qamil Batialli is found in two forms: The Pre-ABC Book a part of the ABC Book and Pre-ABC Book a special book. In the following we will see the contents of these Pre-ABC Books for preparing the children to work with the ABC Book.

### **3. Pre-ABC Book of the year 1982**

This Pre-ABC Book is part of the ABC Book and covers 17 pages. With its content the Pre-ABC Book aims at adapting, developing communication skills, motor skills and knowing the notions of sound, syllable, word and sentence. Pre-ABC Book influences the development of speech through these learning units such as: "Kids and School", "Getting to Know Classroom", "Student's Breakfast", "Raven and the Fox" tales, "the Goat and the cubs", where children based on pictures narrate and create different stories about the topics mentioned. Also, the Pre-ABC Book has influenced the development of motor skills through these contents such as: different schematic drawings, hand muscles exercises, students' work in the garden, the drawings are with letter elements, which provides the opportunity to create different things and exercising the little muscles. Some pages in Pre-ABC Book give importance to acquainting students with the basic (without definition) concepts of the words, the sentences as an integral part of the thought, the highlighting and difference of the sentences, words, the syllable, the idea of the syllable, the syllable term, the thought construct (synthesis of word, sentence), exercises about separating words into syllables, correct pronunciation of words and their separation into syllables and sounds, (Batialli, 1982). In general, this ABC Book has been described as "*according to the experts' evaluation it is a new quality compared to the same previous texts*" (Berisha & Iljazi, 1982).

#### **4. Pre-ABC Book of the year 2003**

This Pre-ABC Book is separate from the ABC Book as a special book, which has a greater number of contents and activities. The contents of this Pre-ABC Book are aimed at adapting, developing communication skills, motor skills, providing the ability to distinguish difficulty in spelling and recognizing certain notions. Lessons that influence speech development were: "Students talk about themselves and others", "My family - jobs and responsibilities", "Naming objects, things and living beings", "Students' breakfast", "In class", "Marushi and the flowers of Arjeta", "For beautiful teeth", "House pets", "Mountain animals", "With what travels a human", "the Goat and the cubs", "Distinguish the colors", "For what kind of work are these tools used for?". These contents influence the formation of the notion of the word and the sentence "The fox and the raven, what are they doing?" (When we have a thought, we call it a sentence), "What kind of work are the children doing?" (each work done by the children, we say it with one sentence), "To distinguish syllables (the word "top" has one syllable). The Pre-ABC Book also influences the development of motor skills through these tasks: "Draw by model", "Draw a house part by part", "Draw and paint", "The hand is held freely", "the hand is exercised slowly", "Points become lines". The Pre-ABC Book goes on to recognize some sounds/letters and their graphic and phonetic distinction "distinguish the sounds" (find words with sounds "I", "LL", and "dh"), "distinguish sounds **r** and **rr**", "the sounds **q** and **ç**" (find words with the sounds **q** and **ç** and practice their pronunciation), "Fruits are delicious, pronounce properly" (find other words with sounds **gj** and **xh**, practice their pronunciation). The task of this whole period is to prepare children with some essential skills of their general physical, mental, linguistic formation, etc. (Gjokutaj, 2001). The Pre-ABC Book of the ABC Book of the year 1982 has fewer activities and exercises than the ABC Book of 2003 which requires more time, is more versatile in terms of the activities, knowledge, skills and expressions that children will achieve. Based on what was presented above about pre-school education in Kosovo, we can say that Pre-ABC Book has been an important part and help to first grade children who have not been part of pre-school institutions.

#### **5. Methodic and didactic dimension of ABC Book**

From the Pre-ABC Book as a preparatory period, students move on to ABC Book, which is the main part where the Albanian language begins to be systematically learned through beginners' literacy exercises. The ABC Book comprehensively teaches students to read stories, various literary and non-literary texts, to write short texts, sentences, words, and various exercises of analytical, synthetic, and creative character. (Gjokutaj, 2012). The first ABC Book that helps children in the process of learning these life skills has its advantages and difficulties associated with adapting this text to the age and understanding of children, preparing them in advance, using methods, forms and many more. During the analysis we will see that these two ABC Books differ from one another as to the methodological dimension and didactic course of the lessons etc.

### **5.1 Methodic dimension**

The methods of sound/letter processing in the 1982 ABC Book are: the analytical-synthetic method and in some cases the natural sound method. The application of the analytical-synthetic method in the ABC Book is faded not by all steps, the letters/sounds are given priority. The students are taught to read and write only with the sounds of the learned letters, the author used the method of writing texts with these letters. These ABC Books have no exercises that assure the teacher that the student distinguishes very well the new elaborate sound and letter (hand and print letters) from other sounds and letters (Shkurti, 2001).

The 2003 ABC Book is designed with analytical-synthetic methods, normal word method, global method and natural sound method. In this ABC Book there are no texts with the developed letters, but there are also previously unlearned letters within the text. This phenomenon occurs from the beginning to the end of the ABC Book. So reading is based on intuition and the process of perception. The analytical method is found at the beginning of the lesson, where the new sound/letter is developed. The analysis starts from sentence to word, word to syllable, from the syllable the sound/letter is distinguished to be learned. In the ABC Book, the sound/letter learning consists of two pages, on the first page a new sound/letter is developed, based on the analysis method, and on the next page there are exercises to reinforce reading/writing thought the synthetic and analytical methods.

Exercise pages have many tasks that require from students to: connecting syllables, by reading; read words and underline syllables; connect the syllable with the word that has that syllable; connect syllables that form words; sort syllables by meaning; divide the word into syllables, etc.

#### **A. Forms of sound/letter processing**

Forms of sound/letter processing, in the 1982 ABC Book, letters are taught in monographic and group form. The monographic form is applied in several versions such as: one letter with one graphic mark (uppercase print letter), one letter with two graphic marks (uppercase and lowercase print letter) and one letter with all graphic marks (two graphic marks of print letters and two hand letters) within one class hour. Whereas in terms of group form, two letters with one graphic mark or two letters with two graphic marks are taught within one class hour.

In the 2003 ABC Book, the letters are taught in monographic form, each accompanied by a complex form. In one class hours, the graphic marks of printed and hand letters for one sound/letters are learned. However, students are also in touch with all the letters, based on the complex form also including unlearned letters. It is thought that the complex form enables first-graders to continue to learn letters and reading and writing, from the grade they reached before they came to school (Krasniqi, 2002). Analyzing from the historical perspective of preparing these children for first grade, we think that this form does not respond to children who were not part of preschool institutions, because they are at once in contact with a number of unknown letters,

which should be read and written, because the ABC Book offers parallel reading and writing.

### **B. Reading and writing order**

Reading and writing order, at the 1982 ABC Book, reading and writing are combined. *"Combined reading and writing lessons ensures greater graduality and maturity in learning. It prevents overloading of students without sufficient preparation and without knowledge of letters and reading and writing."* (Krasniqi, 2002). This is justified by the fact that pre-war pre-school education in Kosovo in 1999 did not include children, so the ABC Bok was mainly adapted to those children, where at first the students only read and then later began to write hand letters. The 2003 ABC Book enables reading and writing lessons in parallel manner. The parallel manner of learning to read and write has also been difficult, as they have been obliged to learn 36 letters with four graphic characters.

### **C. Phonetic structure of sounds**

Phonetic structure of sounds based on the phonetic structure of sounds, it turns out that one has to learn sounds which are easier to pronounce, such as vowels since they are easier to pronounce than consonants (Kryeziu, 2011). In the ABC Book of 1982, of the first ten sounds/letters that are processed six are vowels (**A, I, N, E, Ę, U, R, M, O, T**). Also in the ABC Book of 2003, the first ten sounds/letters are six vowels (**A, I, N, E, U, R, M, Ę, T, O**). *Graphic similarity of letters*, letters that have graphical similarities should be taught best with some distance between them so that children do not get confused. "The more similar the two lessons are, the greater the retractable inhibition, the more the new lesson removes the old. (Juniku, 1994). We find differences in the graphic similarity between the two ABC Books of Qamil Batalli. In the ABC Book of 1982, these letters are taught close to each other that have graphic similarities as: "E and Ę, **b** and **d**, C and Ć". Whereas in the second ABC Book these letters with graphic similarity are in the middle of another letter such as: "**b** and **d**, have the letter "F" in the middle, and "C and Ć" have the letter "S" in the middle. So in the second ABC Book we see that there are fewer cases of graphical similarity.

### **D. The graphic structure of the letters**

The graphic structure of the letters, while working with these ABC Books the author has also paid attention to these components. The uppercase printed letters are taught at the beginning of the ABC Books. Uppercase printed letters are easier to write because they have easier graphical structure. The advantage of learning uppercase printed graphic signs is because they provide a gradual increase in difficulty and respect the proximo-distal developmental laws. The 1982 ABC Book teaches these uppercase signs as: "**A, I, N, E, Ę, U, R, M,**" to which the author points out *"The first eight letters will be uppercase, only of uppercase form, and this should be taken as one of the indications that we are respecting the child's psycho-physical powers"* (Batalli, 1982). The science of psychology says that children should be given the opportunity to use thick paintbrushes, large-diameter pencils and pens, large formats of drawing paper, dough and other materials with

which they can exercise their physical and motor skills (Woolfolk, 2011). Whereas in the 2003 ABC Book the letters "A, a and I, i" were used with the two graphical printed uppercase signs, while all other letters were learned with the four parallel graphic signs within one hour.

### **E. Type of writing**

Type of writing, all ABC Books aim for students to form regular, readable and comprehensible writing. During the analysis of the ABC Books we see that we have different writing patterns for the two ABC Books. In the first ABC Books, students are taught to write straight and with lines of the same thickness, the writing is connected and done with the drawing rather than the pencil tip. They have no elements of calligraphy. The second ABC Books shows more importance to the calligraphy, the writing model given in the ABC Book is of the same thickness, has a sharp incline and calligraphic elements.

### **5.2 Didactic progress of the class lesson**

The way the classroom is organized, how the academic objectives, in this case, of the initial literacy, are realized, depends also on the didactic progress of a classroom lesson on the acquisition of the initial literacy. Classes in ABC Book can be sound/letter processing, repetition and reinforcement, checking and evaluation of students, etc.

In the 1982 ABC Book, the sounds/letters are composed in monographic form and places - places with simple group form variants. In this ABC Book the sounds/letters are processed in three groups. The first group consists of eight sounds/letters "A, I, N, E, Ę, U, R, M". The lesson time for mastering these sounds goes through three steps. The first step, the theme is presented, the second step, the letter is presented (uppercase printed graphic sign). The third step, reading the text. The lowercase printed marks and hand graphic signs for these eight sounds/letters are learned later in group form, through the same steps.

The second group consists of the following letters: "L, K, H, P, J, D," which are taught with the four graphic signs for two class-lessons. The first hour goes through four steps: the first step, the presentation of the topic through photography, which is mainly related to words that have the sound/letter in their body to be processed. The second step, recognizing the two printed graphic signs. The third step, reading the text. Step four, recognizing the lowercase hand graphic sign. In the second lesson the handwritten graphic sign is taught.

The third group includes all sounds/letters from "F to the last letter of the alphabet Z", for one hour the four graphic signs of the letters are taught, with the four steps mentioned above, but in the fourth step the handwritten uppercase sign is also taught, whereas on the second lesson, reading and writing is reinforced for the learned sound/letter. In the press of the time as to the difficulty of these ABC Books we quote "... I would say that she is very busy right now. Thus, during one hour students have to learn a letter in four ways, which is too much for their psychophysical level" (Iljazi, 1982).

In the 2003 ABC Book, the letters are taught in three groups. In the first group, the lesson goes through three steps. The first step, the conversation about the illustration of the lesson. The second step is the analysis of a sentence, which leads to the specification of the sound to be learned. The third step, reading the textual part for the learned sound/letter, is thus taught: "A and I" only with the two graphical print signs. In the second group, the "N and E" sound/letter is processed through three steps as in the preceding sound/letter, while in the fourth step, the two graphic hand signs at the end of the lesson for the letters "A and I" together and for "N and E".

The third group consists of all the other letters of the alphabet with a four-step progression, where at the end of the class the two graphic hand signs are taught for the letter to be processed.

The didactic progress of the classes in these two ABC Books varies, in the first ABC Book the author has attempted to have a gradual increase in difficulty, beginning with the first set of letters where only uppercase graphic print signs are taught, at the second group the lowercase hand sign, and at the third group all graphic signs are learned, where students may have passed their first writing difficulties. The 2003 ABC Book followed the learning progression with all graphical signs for one hour, except for the first four letters. This practice of graphical sign learning seems to be a challenge even though a large number of students may have been in preschool or have grown up in an environment with more opportunities to prepare for first grade.

## 6. Conclusion

We see that Qamili Batalli's ABC Books have been teaching students in Kosovo to read and write Albanian language for two and a half decades. We have the first Qamil Batalli ABC Book which was used from 1982 to 2002, which accompanied the scholars in the darkest period of education in Kosovo. During these years in the Albanian education and school occurred the exclusion and closure of educational institutions, the usurpation of all areas dedicated to education, the organization of home-school teaching, etc. Serbia also changed the law on all levels of education by transferring powers to the Serbian authorities. The political, educational, social circumstances, the closure of the printing houses, the financial impossibility, are the determinants for this ABC Book to remain one of the longest-lived ABC Books in the history of ABC Books in Kosovo.

In analyzing the ABC Books we have drawn some conclusions. For the 1982 ABC Book we can conclude:

- The ABC Book enables teaching with the teacher at the center,
- The ABC Book has very few exercises with sounds, syllables, words and sentences,
- The ABC Book does not require students to do the following: compare, manipulate, solve puzzles, cut with scissors, glue, and model, decorate and complete the parts that the drawing requires,
- They do not offer differentiated lessons, the content is the same for all students,



- The application of the analytical-synthetic method is very superficial,
- The ABC Book has letters with graphic similarities and are taught close to each other,
- In the ABC Book at first it worked with the letters that have simpler graphical structure,
- Reading and writing only with the sounds and letters learned has adapted to the children of those years who were very few in preschool education.

As for the second ABC Book we can say:

- They have a didactic progress during lesson that goes mainly through the steps of the analytical-synthetic method,
- The student is active throughout the class and is in the center,
- Requires students to have preschool education,
- There is a longer and more comprehensive preparation period,
- The ABC Book gives attention to calligraphy.

These ABC Books have historical relevance for teaching children to read and write over a period of 25 years and will remain important educational documents in the history of Kosovo's education.

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