

THE ROLE OF THE LITERARY TEXT ON THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

One of the most important didactic means in the foreign language teaching is the literary text. It's analysis would be necessary from different points of view. The literary text should be a means of vocabulary enrichment, a means of making the student more familiar with that language and means of evaluating a writer's art in his own native language. The literary text, should connect the linguistic and cultural aspect, because the literary text is part of the cultural inheritance of a nation. One general aim is to promote the study of foreign literature as enjoyable and (inter)culturally significant. The classroom is inevitably a culturally heterogeneous setting since its elements are already socialized subjects. Instead of its limiting role of supplying knowledge, the classroom ought to foster reading critically through a pedagogy of questioning the text, searching for and building textual meaning. Literary texts are related with two distinct concepts of culture; a product of high culture on the one hand, on the other, enabling insight into otherness, used as a source informing a more anthropological perspective. The traditional literary focus (on the topics of literary texts and biographical and historical information) should be broadened and conscious intercultural reflection promoted. The purpose then is to provide the learner's interaction with the text, with another society and culture while encouraging intercultural understanding and communication.

Key – word: *literary texts, intercultural learning, foreign language, language-and-culture*

Nowadays, the use of literary texts in foreign language teaching is an important area under discussion. The literary text is an indispensable and inevitable element in a language class because of its particularity and for this reason a selection which is as appropriate as possible in accordance with the age and language level of the pupils and students requires a special attention.

By tradition, it was thought that a literary text in a foreign language could be used to enrich the vocabulary, to make the student become acquainted with the foreign language and especially to appreciate the art of a writer in original version and his/her contribution to the literary tradition. Actually, due to the teacher's skill and sensibility, this dynamic activity of learning a foreign language is perfectly accomplished. However, the literary text can not be turned into a tool that accomplishes only a specific purpose, such as specification and acquisition of certain grammatical structures or expansion of lexical knowledge. It is an integral part of foreign language didactics that provides the student (based on the ability of understanding and observing) with certain literary issues as well, it makes the student see the connection of the language with the cultural aspect, given that the text is part of the cultural heritage of a nation.

The texts are not read only because we are imposed by some predefined rules or programs, the teachers themselves must demonstrate that they carry meaning and value, they must show that the literary text is many things at the same time, it is multidimensional: not only language and history, but also a way of thinking and living. To enjoy reading the text means to be involved in its fable, to experience the pleasure of fear feeling caused by certain scenes, the pleasure of crying for the ill-fated love of a character, the feeling of co-pain for the tragic hero or the punishment of the evil character's figure. As a result, the first aim of literary education is to arouse students' enjoyment in this kind of text. Pupils and students often do not realize that they have a real need for literature and exactly to discover that in present and past literature. They can find many answers to questions arising from their conscience, which means to identify a second aim of this literary education. At this point, it is worth mentioning that the main aim remains the skill of reasoning, i.e. the development of critical sense.

The pupils and the students should feel motivated by this important didactic tool and everything included in such a class, for the reason that "... If you fail to catch students' interest and imagination you have lost the rest of the class. Regardless of how important the content may seem to the teachers, or how competent students are, if their interests are not stimulated during the early stages of learning, they will not be steered to develop an understanding of the content ... A motivated student gains knowledge and new communication skills faster than one that is not motivated. "¹ Teaching a pupil or a student how to read a literary text means to discern within this text some formal features, which would constitute the glottodidactic aim of literature teaching.

¹ Orlich, Harder, "Strategjitë e të mësuarit", Eureka, Tiranë, 1995, fq 126

To achieve better analysis of a literary text and attain the intended results in students it is necessary to carefully follow certain steps.

Reading is definitely the first important step that allows us to get acquainted with text, i.e. the overall understanding of what is narrated, described, argued, etc. At this stage, students can work in small groups in order to cope more easily with the possible grammatical or lexical difficulties (syntax structure, words which are no longer used, or transformations of words which are still used), which are also more frequent if the text belongs to a distant time. These difficulties can slow this first reading of the text, but the use of the dictionary and the assistance of the teacher can help in solving lexical difficulties, and paraphrasing (or transcription of poetic prose in a text) can help in solving the syntactic difficulties. Paraphrasing is the preparation moment for analysis, and it is also a good grammar exercise that enables the students to reconstruct what they had already understood. Paraphrasing should be considered only as a starting point and not as a destination.² To overcome semantic difficulties it is necessary to move to a second phase that consists of a **deeper reading** which is accompanied by the assistance of the teacher as well, who can formulate appropriate questions and activities, encourage students to be able to highlight key elements, which exactly constitute the object of the discussion. Analysis enables the students to think and express themselves as clearly as possible. The language used in text analysis should be clear and as accurate as possible. Students become fluent in communication and feel urged by the argument that the text provides them in order to steer discussions with one another, to interpret according to their original way of expressing certain text parts loaded with meanings, literary figures and fixed structures of the language.

Linguistic analysis of a text is almost always a significant level of analysis that despite helping in its as accurate as possible interpretation, also plays an important role in improving students' language skills. They are also acquainted with the so-called literary language, different from dialect language, the language of poetry and that of prose, with different linguistic experiments (as happens in Pascoli) etc.

In spite of linguistic and stylistic analysis, the text requires semantic analysis as well. The greatest difficulty relates to the polysemy of the text, which means that the text presents other meanings, though not hidden, besides the one that is easily understood and which can also be obtained by means of paraphrasing only. Good knowledge of textual semantics, ranging from paraphrasing, provides the achievement of two objectives: on the one hand, the reading of the text which should be as correct as possible and the help of some historical-philological elements can assure us that the wide range of interpretations is not expanded to arbitrariness or caprice; and on the other hand, the confrontation between archaic and modern language, as well as between literary and everyday vocabulary boost language skills even more, reconstruction ability in syntax and argumentative domain, and certainly enriches students' vocabulary.

In the early years of foreign language study, the foreign language students must be provided a complete and correct language in both spoken discourse and written discourse, later they must show that they are able to face the scientific and abstract discourse as well, expressing themselves convincingly through arguments. Therefore, in this sense, the students need to be able to acquire the cultural as well as the problematic aspect of the language.

² Serafini, Barbieri, *Segnalibro*, Bompiani, Milano, 2006

The analysis of the text enables the real discovery of and **knowledge** about **other cultures** and complements the cultural data derived from non-literary texts. A piece of the foreign literature is always an open window in our brain, from where we can enjoy what is different from ours. "... to enable a connection between two different civilizations is something very good, to enable a connection between the two worlds is a perfect thing" states Aime Cesaire in *Discorso sul Colonialismo*. Consequently, this type of recognition is a contact with a people of a different civilization, which always evokes curiosity to uncover, interest to know more in-depth about it and fun to further enrich our cultural knowledge. This is obtained completely naturally by pupils and students studying foreign languages, who according to personal choices possess an extra tool in comparison to the others, i.e. the foreign language. They understand that language is not just rules and grammar but also pleasure which increases gradually.

A final element, extremely necessary in the analysis of a literary text is **context**. In order to understand the text, we often find it logical to refer to the totality of the author's poetic reflections. For example, if we refer to Italian literature we can distinguish such contexts as: the issue of being classical or romantic of Leopard, the poetics of "fanciullino" of Pascoli, the verism of Verga, etc. Other times, we can appreciate the artistic context part of which a literary production is, as is the case of the 1900 avanguard, but political situation can be especially important to shed light on the text, as in the case of such intellectuals as Ungaretti, Serra's Jahier and their attitude toward the first world war. This would represent an additional layer of analysis and meaning of this textual typology.

The importance of the presence of this text in foreign language teaching found in Balboni³, one of the best scholars of foreign language didactics, a double justification:

- a. In any textual taxonomy, the "literary text" is defined as different from other types of texts, and to ignore this kind of text, according to him means to carry deficiencies in language skills as an essential component of communicative competence.
- b. And secondly, in any functional pattern even the "poetic function" appears with different names; to ignore this feature means to have deficiencies in pragmatic and functional development.

Finally, reflections lead to: the necessity of teaching the text, specifically during the class of foreign language teaching; its integration in the basic syllabuses of foreign languages, always determining their selection depending on age and level of students.

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