

DISCURSIVE PROSPECT OF USING LITERARY TEXTS TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

PERSPECTIVA PROSPECT DISCURSIV AL ANALIZEI TEXTULUI LITERAR ÎN DEZVOLTAREA COMPETENȚEI DE COMUNICARE ÎN LIMBA ENGLEZĂ

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Rezumat. Articolul prezintă unele aspecte metodologice ale analizei textului literar în dezvoltarea competenței de comunicare în limba engleză din perspectiva discursivă. Studiul valorifică potențialul didactic al textului literar în procesul de studiere a limbii engleze, evidențiind necesitatea utilizării unui input eficient în clasă care să faciliteze dezvoltarea abilităților de comunicare a cursanților. Textele literare reprezintă o resursă productivă pentru crearea strategiilor și sarcinilor utile pentru a favoriza gândirea critică, creativitatea și abilitățile discursive. Totodată, sunt identificate activități metodologice optime aplicate în baza textului literar desemnate pentru generarea eficienței actului de comunicare.

Cuvinte-cheie: perspectivă, text literar, comunicare, limbă, sarcină

In the complementary volume of the CEFRL, published in 2018, the literary text is treated as an authentic text in the same way as the non-literary one, and the exploitation of the literary text in the process of studying the English language becomes a pressing necessity.

The literary text is a valuable work tool for the development of extra-linguistic skills, such as the inter-multicultural educational aspect, the formation of the set of own values, the training of the ability to work and think independently etc. The teaching staff must show themselves as intellectuals with a set of cognitive, aesthetic, epistemological, ethical, moral, intercultural skills, etc. The advantages of working with literary texts in learning a foreign language are long-lasting and really valuable. They are multidirectional in ensuring quality within the (post)university training of the future specialists [5].

The use of the literary text in the English classroom serves as a suitable practice for the interpretation process, on which the comprehension of all communicative acts is based. In particular, the linguist E. Coșeriu considers the text a space where the functional property of the language is asserted. The vision of the great linguist confirms the thought that the literary text is an expression of the use of the language in its multitude of expressive capacities [ibidem].

The problem of the literary text, treated through the prism of didactics, can be delimited according to the accessibility and formative features that can be established through the relation of their values and textual structure with the formal models that cultural institutions canonize, as well as with the ideal educational model [3].

In a specific literary context, the signs of the language become polysemantic in an indispensable way, since the literary text is autonomous and depends, in fact, on the economic and social evolution. Changing reality by describing it is the primary function of literature. Respectively, the type of the literary text is a dynamic one, structuring itself in the plane of the narrative, within which it is articulated as an exposition in discourse, i.e. as a discursive element. The socio-textual analysis method consists of two mechanisms: explanation, which clarifies the relationships that can be established between the text structures and extratextual ones, which are ideological, historical, political or social (extratext) and comprehension, which involves a thorough textual analysis of the internal structures of the text: language, space, composition, characters, time and themes (intratext).

The view of the French linguist É. Benveniste influences the approach to the literary text and contributes, through his theses, to the emergence of new didactic approaches. Therefore, didactics acquires an enunciative aspect and rather explores the conditions of text production or its context [1].

The researcher M. Bakhtin distinguishes the text as an intersection complex space of heterogeneous discourses. This fact unquestionably highlights the place of the society and history in the critical analysis of the text, as any speech or discourse is influenced by the social factor [6].

In this light, pragmatics emphasizes the discourse reflexive and interactive side, on reforming the institutional aspect of the language activity. The pragmatist D. Maingueneau notes the fact that literary pragmatics is a valuable field for the development and exploitation of new textual potentials [7]. The textual structure is not autonomous, but related to a cultural-enunciative activity through which it communicates with us in time. An important role in the discursive activity is played by the strategy of decoding/receiving and interpreting the message, as well as the implicit (unspoken) content revealed by the mediated interaction. Thus, the texts change their location, they pass from the book into the student's life, transforming his thinking and vision. Obviously, all the components related to the aesthetics, stylistics and construction of the text bring an enormous contribution to its cultural efficiency. We reiterate that literary texts are not a means of learning the culture of a language, but of learning about other cultures through language. Therefore, the text requires an update in discourse, otherwise it remains locked in the book, lifeless [4].

Therefore, the textual analysis gives priority to textual dynamics, expressed in the manner of the social functioning of the analyzed texts. It highlights the way in which social actions are carried out: which political and social categories are targeted, in which way they form a certain audience and how they communicate with it, the kind of rhetorical organization, the way of convincing and arguing a certain social vision [10].

The optimal identification of the applied methodological activities based on the literary text generates the efficiency of the literary text as a beneficial resource for the development of the communication competence. In order to intensify the students' interest and motivation, to increase the involvement degree in carrying out tasks and learning situations based on the literary text, the teaching staff are obliged to demonstrate passion and enthusiasm in the process of carrying out the didactic approach.

The tasks, activities and strategies used are diverse in nature and have significant importance in developing the components of the communication competence. They can be optimized through reception, mediation and production activities which are applied differently

to the 3 stages of the communication competence development process: pre-task, task-cycle and post-task.

At the Pre-Task stage (exploration of the context or pre-reading) - the stage preceding the work with the literary text, the teacher elaborates a series of tasks/refreshing situations, preparation or introduction to ensure adequate and deep reception of the given text. The purpose of this type of activity, at this stage, is to facilitate the comprehension of the text. The activities at the Pre-task stage contribute to the students' preparation and orientation for independent understanding, propelling thinking and curiosity, motivation, the desire to discover certain things in the respective text [9].

Also at this stage we may use learning situations intended for the construction/initiation of new knowledge, as valuable tools useful for solving subsequent situations. Mediation activities might be applied at all stages, to explain concepts, notions related to possible sociocultural knowledge. The respective stage aims at studying the discursive specificity of the text, namely, the context, the conditions of the text's production. Therefore, we may use descriptive tasks.

Examples based on an excerpt from *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen:

Task: Define the concept of "culture" and describe its role in the formation of human behaviours and attitudes.

Task: Explain the essence of the sociocultural norms and values of the 19th century. Identify efficient ways to address them.

Task: Name three good manners of a young man at a party from the present times and three good manners specific to the social context of the 19th century.

At the Task-Cycle stage, students become familiar with the structural and content elements of the text. It is the stage at which the literary meaning of the text is received and mediated. Tasks based on contextualized problem solving, investigation and discovery of meaningful solutions, interactive learning are applied.

The discursive tasks at this stage, used both in the process of developing the sociocultural and pragmatic-discursive components of the communication competence, aim at categories of structural levels of the language, such as the identification of the lexicon and terminology, the use of specific grammatical forms called discursive resources (nominalizations, markers of position, amplifiers, euphemisms, rhetorical questions, politeness formulas, impoliteness, temporal and modal deixism, stylistic figures, enunciative clues - deictics, verbs, evaluative modalizers; referential clues - analysis of semantic fields, nature of arguments; organizational clues - connectors); description of prototypical textual sequences (description, explanation, narrative, argumentation); the overall functioning of the text – identification of the theses addressed, analysis of assumptions, intentions, allusions, enunciation system, emotive language, classification of textual markers, research of multimodal elements or markers of subjectivity and evaluation.

Emerging from the peculiarities of discourse, namely situationality, in the process of the discursive approach to the literary text, it is exploited the methodological potential of the communicative situation. It can be achieved through a wide range of tasks and discursive strategies. Thus, there can be proposed a varied range of tasks, gradually distributed, from simple to compound, and they involve the transition from analytical thinking to discursive actions, namely to the production of the English speech.

As a result, students apply these discursive strategies in much more complex situations, in everyday reality, calling on the skills developed in the classroom.

Task-based learning involves the examination, exploration, through concrete actions, specific real-life situations, in authentic learning contexts.

Based on the characteristics of the discourse, a set of tasks characteristic to discursive strategies can be used in the process of discursive approach to the English literary text, which favor the enhancement of students' English language proficiency: narrative, descriptive, explicative, argumentative, modal.

For this stage, learning situations through discovery, problematization and cooperation were analyzed through narrative, descriptive, argumentative discursive tasks and didactic strategies such as: Discussion, Star Explosion, Cube, Spider Technique, Agenda with double notes, Dialogue, Clustering, Multi-process Querying, etc. Ex.:

Task: In pairs, make up a dialogue between Mr Bingley and Mr. Darcy a week after the ball. Reproach something to Mr Darcy for having behaved rudely and proudly at the party. Mr Darcy gives possible answers for excusing himself. Use the connectives: firstly, by the way, nevertheless, in spite of, at length, moreover, consequently.

The integrative tasks have as their starting point a problem-situation, a question to which the student tries to find the solution. Teachers propose production and mediation activities. The tasks go through all 3 mentioned stages. The teaching staff sets the task, the students plan its implementation and finally present it to their peers. Ex:

Task: Paraphrase the quotation: "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield," said Mrs. Bennet to her husband, "and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for." What was the life aim of a mother in the 19th century? Is it actual for nowadays parents? What socio-cultural hints does the quotation reveal? Include your thoughts on a poster and share it with your classmates.

Through discursive strategies of +, the teaching staff help the student analyze the semantic fields, decode the message, make the pragmatic-semantic analysis of the text, differentiate the socio-cultural specificity and accept the relativity of the socio-cultural value system in general.

Task: Work in groups. Think of the following conflictual situations and make up a 8-line dialogue, using at least 5 connectors from the list below. The victim shall insistently accuse the guilty who defends himself. Both parts shall be as polite and assertive as possible to mediate the conflict. Remember the politeness expressions of addressing and apologizing. Use the connectors:

Connectors: by the way, despite of, as if, unless, however, in spite of, yet, otherwise, on the one/other hand, in this case, in other words, for instance, therefore, due to, consequently, furthermore, (un)fortunately etc.

The Post-Task stage aims at reviewing the results and drawing conclusions that complete the didactic route of the discursive approach to the literary text.

The application of argumentative and modality, evaluative discourse tasks at this stage make the student judge, express himself, relate, argue, describe, compare, value his opinion, negotiate, make connections and elaborate thoughts, a fact which generates discussions of a diverse nature through the application of didactic strategies of a problematic type, role-play, case study, debates, conceptual maps, the analysis of the student's experiences in accordance with the facts described in the text, the development of a webquest or mini project, graphics or posters. Ex:

Task: Make a Project on the role of dance in the society of the 19th century, referring to the text. Find pictures, different types of dance, their origin and significance in those times.

Identify some types of dances which can be practised nowadays. Illustrate them in a Power Point Presentation.

Role-play activity. Task: Work in pairs. According to the form of addressing in the text (Mr., Mrs., Lady, Sir) and its literary style of writing, try to make up a 8-line dialogue (on any topic) appropriate to the way of discussing the upper class of the 19th century. You can use expressions from the list below.

The described discursive tasks help the student express opinions, point of view, request information, make invitations, offers, ask for permission, make reproaches, objections, approve, accuse, deny, accept, etc., in situations that it generates necessary and useful skills in much wider social situations.

In literary texts we can find a significant number of elements of a country's culture, being the means by which culture is known. The authors of literary texts, who live in different countries, certainly capitalize on different sociocultural values and norms. These types of texts expose students to situations taken from everyday reality, giving them the opportunity to cultivate their sociocultural awareness by becoming more empathetic, tolerant and respectful. In the process of interpreting the literary text and analyzing the language of the text, what it expresses, students can develop their communication competences, previously obtained through a cultural transfer.

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