

## Provision of High Level of Language and Pedagogical Skills while Teaching the Literature in the Target Language

Ira DANELIA \*

### Abstract

Research indicates that at least four different kinds of knowledge are essential for expert teaching: knowledge of content (knowledge of the subject / discipline to be taught), pedagogical contents knowledge (methods of teaching of a particular subject), general pedagogical knowledge (general principles of instruction and classroom management), knowledge of learners and learning (psychological knowledge) [1]. Formation of three of these (except the last one) is the object of our paper.

**Key Words:** Provision, High Education, Language, Pedagogical, Skills, Literature, Learners

A good language teacher should, of course, first of all know the target language well (for a foreign language teacher this means the native-like level of language skills). This is unimaginable unless the teacher reads fiction in the target language [2]. Literature can foster emotional intelligence by providing vicarious emotional experiences that shape the brain circuits for empathy and help learners gain insight into human behavior and can promote language learning by enriching learners' vocabulary and modeling new language structures [3]. According to Goleman [4], emotional intelligence is an even more reliable predictor of academic achievement than intellectual development.

As language is inseparable from culture, teaching a language promotes teaching background information about English-speaking countries (if the target language is English). While dealing with the works of fiction this can be done in an easy and pleasant way. The possible tasks may include:

- 1) Say what you learned from the story about the traditions and life-style of the country, mention whether it enriched your understanding of American / British / some other English-speaking national character.
- 2) Find some interesting information about the author and his time, the history of creation of the story, etc.
- 3) Compare the values / the traditions / the lifestyles described in the story with those in your country; try to be tolerant when doing the comparison.
- 4) Read the story and prepare background information, using on-paper and on-line encyclopedias (find geographic names in it, then provide a map; find some historic events mentioned, names of famous people, books, journals, etc. and make a search); to stimulate students to do this time-consuming work we may hold a competition.
- 5) All sorts of individual / small group projects, as well as internet projects (see items 1-4).

Though working on a literary text should not be substituted by vocabulary and grammar study (as in this case all the spell of a work of art will be lost), some language (even linguistic) tasks will only contribute to better understanding of author's style, his / her goals of writing the work, etc. We would like to recommend such tasks as:

- 1) Find in the text synonyms / derivatives of the given word.
- 2) Explain the direct and metaphoric meaning of the words in italics.
- 3) Pay attention how the author uses polysemy to create impressive images (the use of pun).
- 4) Find in the text sentences with the given grammatical form, say whether its use is normative or stylistic.

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\* Ph.D., Sokhumi Branch of I. Javaxishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

- 5) Say who / what the narrator is. Find evidence in the text (does s/he use professional or teenagers' slang, does his / her speech reflect his / her age and gender or is it neutral, is his / her speech grammatically correct and sophisticated or primitive and containing many mistakes; is his / her speech emotional or "cold", etc.).
- 6) Characterize the typical sentence structures of the writer (long / short, simple / complicated); say how it influences the genre and literary trend peculiarities (e.g., psychologism, comism, love for visual details or triggering the reader make inferences, etc.; romanticism, realism, naturalism, modernism, etc.).
- 7) Find neologisms / archaisms in the text, comment on their number and make a conclusion – what impact does it have on the literary trend (e.g., high-flown and archaic vocabulary – romanticism) or literary genre (e.g., a science fiction story, naturally, contains a lot of neologisms).
- 8) Find key words in the text. Are they repeated many times through the story or does the author prefer to use synonyms of these words? How does it characterize the writer's style?

To develop the students' language (communicative) skills, the teacher may offer the following activities to his / her students:

I) To develop speaking skills:

- a) (In small groups) Discuss whether you would like to be in the major character's shoes. Give reasons.
- b) (In pairs) Describe the major / minor characters; if there is great disagreement of attitude towards the character between you, ask the teacher or one of your friends to be the judge.
- c) (Whole-class activity) Say if the story ends as you expected or differently. Suggest an ending you would expect or like.
- d) Share your feelings towards the events / characters / ideas of the literary work under study.
- e) (Whole class activity) Discuss the topic and the main idea (moral) of the story. Read out the sentences proving it. Say whether you agree with the author or not and give reasons. Is your disagreement of cultural or personal character?
- f) (Depending on the number of characters involved, whole class or small group; can be videorecorded) Role play (episodes): presenting characters.
- g) (If the book / story has a screen / television version) View a video fragment and say whether the film reflects the author's ideas, style, etc.
- h) (Whole-class activity) say what you especially liked / disliked in the story.

II) To develop listening skills:

- a) While watching your friends doing role play, mark down some language peculiarities (Did the vocabulary correspond to the author's style? Was the grammar used adequate? Etc.)
- b) Listen to actors performing a dialogue from the story (use video or audio recordings - today there are many "listening books" available), comment on their intonation and how it changes the meaning of the written text.
- c) Audiorecord student reading a couple of paragraphs from the story, then choose the best recording; explain your choice.
- d) Listen to a literary critic (real, if any recording is available, or teacher / one of the students recorded as if s/he is a literary critic); express agreement or disagreement.

III) To develop reading skills:

- a) (Before the story is studied – scanning reading; give students 3-5 minutes to look through the text) Judging by the title and a glimpse at the text that you had, say what kind of story is it (psychological, detective, humorous, life-story, love-story, etc.), what its topic is.
- b) (Skimming reading – after students read the story) Find sentences proving that ... (the tasks can be prepared both by the teacher and by the students; the second approach develops students' creativity).

- c) (Reading for deep comprehension): Explain how you understand this or that phrase from the story.
- d) Find the most beautiful / impressive episodes, sentences, explain your choice.
- IV) To develop writing skills:
  - a) A personal letter to a friend sharing the impressions of the literary work read.
  - b) Essay on a movie based on a literary work (how much it reflects the author's ideas).
  - c) Reproduction of the story "on behalf of" one of the characters.
  - d) Rewriting a story as a drama (play).
  - e) Writing a "continuation" of a story (a competition may be held).
  - f) Literary and stylistic analysis of the text.
  - g) All sorts of internet projects (a-e).

You can see how intertwined are in our tasks language, contents and stylistic analysis. Although stylistics entails linguistic analysis, it also develops the learner's literary competence. Some may argue that stylistic analysis is too intellectually demanding and time consuming, but the benefits of the approach are so great, that they, to my mind, outweigh these difficulties.

In the process of working on a literary text with students majoring in language and / or literature, we should as often as possible ask them to do a teacher's job. Sometimes it should be a good student or a group of students presenting the story under study to their friends: explaining the vocabulary, asking comprehension questions, analyzing the stylistic peculiarities, etc. Students can be asked to make up tasks on the literary text. After the teacher gets sure that the quality of tasks is acceptable, they may ask their groupmates to fulfill the tasks. Sometimes after working together with students on a literary text the teacher may ask them to prepare a test involving vocabulary, grammar, cultural, stylistic and / or contents questions. In tasks like letter-writing students can not only read, but also check each other's writing. If some competition is held students should be jury members (probably together with the teacher), to involve them in assessment process.

Most of literary works contain some pedagogical (educational) issues: relations between parents and children, adults and children, teachers and pupils, problems of upbringing, etc. It is useful to link students' knowledge on pedagogy with discussion of literary work's contents. It is a good pretext to let student speak / write about their teaching and upbringing viewpoints. In selection of stories to be read definite priority can be given to the ones having some pedagogical "load".

Thus, even based on this brief enough analysis and our teaching experience we daresay that in training a foreign language teacher this sort of unity may be achieved only through literature teaching. We have compiled a course book in home reading [5] and have carried out an experimental research [6] of the presented approach and have found it quite successful. We can conclude that fiction contains the cultural information that is essential for a language teacher / learner as well as exemplary vocabulary and grammar. It triggers a lot of debate (events, ideas, characters, author's style, etc.), thus developing both intellectual development and speaking (and listening) skills, analytical and synthetic treatment of material. It provides sufficient repetition and systematic teaching. If adequately carried out, it develops the pedagogical skills of the students: they practice to present to their friends the results of their home study.

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