

READING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES AT THE LEVEL OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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Abstract: We all agree that reading has a decisive role in enriching and developing students' knowledge for the activation of vocabulary, for the growing taste for reading, for beauty, developing imagination, the power of comparison. Through reading the children get to know more characters, go through many stories, identify themselves with the characters and learn to support their point of view. The issue of educating the taste for reading is extremely delicate, the demarcation between tools offered by the school and the pleasure of reading, which is much more difficult to obtain through standard methods in the classroom. Teachers in general and teachers of a foreign language in particular can only contribute to the formation of this passion, they can help children become autonomous readers. Didactic games remain active methods that contribute to the full development of the child's personality.

Keywords: reading, active vocabulary, foreign languages, creativity

1. Introduction

Reading and communication are fundamental to the life, language and culture of a society contributing equally to the shaping of social life, to the affirmation of the individuals' professional and social level, to increasing the capacity of adaptation and the enrichment of their motivational and attitudinal universe. The development of a nation reflects faithfully the level reached by the people who speaks its language, as the degree of each individual' culture is reflected precisely through his / her oral or written expression.

According to Beatrice Mikulecky (2008:1), „Effective reading is essential for success in acquiring a second language. After all, reading is the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning: using textbooks for language courses, writing, revising, developing vocabulary, acquiring grammar, editing, and using computer-assisted language learning programs”. As a tool that develops the possibility of communication between people, echoing thinking and language, reading finds its meaning in the educational aspects involved: cognitive aspect - the reading students enrich their knowledge about the world, about reality; educational aspect - reading contributes to educating children in ethical and aesthetic dimensions; formative aspect - reading results in the formation and strengthening of intellectual work skills, develop critical thinking, imagination, self expression, more effective relationship with others.

Reading is an intellectual act essentially requiring that students should be guided and supervised by school and family. Since the early years of school, when the taste for reading is formed, it remains a lifelong useful habit, which reaches its peak at tertiary level (Dejica-Cartis, D. & Dejica-Cartis, A. 2011; Dejica-Cartis, A. & Dejica-Cartis, D.

2013). Once formed, the taste for reading can turn into passion. Passion for reading can harmoniously be correlated to the organic, passion for study.

Students' reading is an essentially intellectual act guided and supervised by the school and the family. Ever since the early years of school, when the taste for reading is formed, it can be turned into a lifetime habit.

To this end, activities in a foreign language can effectively combine exercises of written and oral communication, for students to formulate and express their ideas, write the correct spelling, to develop a plan, a letter, a request, a description, to discuss a text they have read or listened to, submit a story, etc. It is necessary, at the same time, to pursue their training for independent intellectual work, creating skills to use books, dictionaries, and other instruments of intellectual labour as well as to train them in group activities, thus facilitating the exchange of ideas and the ability to express themselves in front of a group.

We all agree that reading has a decisive role in enriching and developing students' knowledge for the activation of vocabulary, for the growing taste for reading, for beauty, developing imagination, the power of comparison. Through reading the children get to know more characters, go through many stories, identify themselves with the characters and learn to support their point of view.

2. The enrichment of active vocabulary in the foreign language for secondary school children

The richness of a language consists, in particular, in the multitude of words and in the variety of its vocabulary. Moreover, all the changes taking place in society are reflected directly or indirectly in the vocabulary, the latter being, between the areas of language as a system, the most dynamic and most subject to external extralinguistic influences.

A particular concern which we must bear in mind is to track the active vocabulary enrichment of school-age children. In this regard, Robert Dottrens (1970) wrote that: "the ideas, knowledge, feelings are expressed by means of words, speech or through translation in writing. Making children speak their native language correctly and understand it well is to serve both the individual and society".

According to some studies devoted to vocabulary enrichment (Day, R& Bamford, J., 1998, Nation, I.S.P. 2001 and Banciu, V. & Chirimbu, S. 2015), at the beginning of school life, the child has a relatively rich vocabulary (approximately 2 500 words) and masters the practical rules of correct usage of words in speech. During secondary school, the reading-writing ability starts being formed, which will lead to a linguistic progress in general. Literary readings increase the possibilities for both oral and written expression.

Thus, until the end of primary school the main vocabulary fund will have almost 5000 words, of which more and more are entering the active language learner's set of used items. The students' vocabulary development is carried out mainly in the process of learning Romanian language and literature, but also in the context of other school activities and areas of interest, namely in the framework of other disciplines, that child will get acquainted with a new terminology that differs from one area to another, so that the student's language of classes I-IV enriches, diversified and is progressively and permanently improved.

Language development is done, however in the context of various extracurricular activities as well (celebrations, trips, visits, meetings, etc.).

At the beginning of primary school you can find significant differences from one child to another, in terms of language development. They are due, on the one hand, the intellectual capacity of the child, and on the other hand, environmental influences on family or other groups. One may experience some errors in pronunciation and writing, which can be removed through the work of teaching and learning, through various methods. The teacher must know the ability of each student in all aspects of the language, both phonetic and grammatical, lexical and stylistic level.

The optimization of verbal behavior of children, namely the cultivation of communicative skills are pragmatic conditions that favour the success of the school integration of children.

Development of the means of communication in young school-age children, their language, is so inextricably linked to the process of social integration, to the ways social integration takes place that the child's language is richer, better structured, more nuanced, according to his / her ability to participate in the system of social interactions, i.e. its readiness to develop and to integrate into a new system of relationships .

Progress in assimilating and in language development, which implicitly determines better communication, is based on successive acquisitions to be completed and merged with each other. There have been described (referring the assimilation of a foreign vocabulary) four stages: raw elements in communication, the multiplication of these elements of communication that are used separately, the presence of summaries, the presence of specific grammatical forms specific to adult language.

Therefore, the role of the teacher in the preparation and future development of pupils is to deal with the problems of vocabulary in the classroom, the formation of effective verbal conduct through:

- developing and enriching the vocabulary;
- properly learning the words;
- skill formation of verbalizing one's own experience;
- development of the capacity to tell some stories, in conjunction with experienced events;
- cultivation of skills related to using proper language, expression in sentences;
- cultivating skills to speak using nuanced expressions, linguistic construction.

Language is a complex function, which is not linked with necessity. "There is a language of gestures, mimic, eyes, fingers, music, art, dance, etc. In a broad sense, there is a whole language of the means used to communicate ideas, feelings, that we do understand using our mental and sensory opportunities. " (Dottrens, 1970:79).

Misuse of language may result in a material and direct penalty: those who does not know how to make themselves understood, shall bear the consequences.

An effective method in learning a foreign language is group work, an effective way of addressing the issues related to how the students express themselves, share their thoughts, opinions, discuss a problem and identify solutions or new perspectives. The teacher stimulates discussions between students, expressing concern, supporting certain points of view and combating other, arguing and counterbalancing, which will

track not only the students' thinking, but also upon their social training. Reading from young ages is aimed at enriching vocabulary. This is achieved only when all the words read refer to clear and precise ideas. Therefore, a requirement of the manual is to include words whose meaning can be grasped by children without excessive difficulty.

3. Vocabulary in a foreign language and the communicative-functional model

The foreign language teacher must make a list of common mistakes in the language where it works, to be concerned about permanently correct expression skills, according to the norms of literary language, and the students, in turn, must be aware of the importance of language for communicating. At the same time, the teacher will be concerned to endow students with training and supervision of expression, so that students become aware of their own training and development.

In accordance with the principles of model-functional, communicative language functions are as follows:

- *Communication function* - aims at the exchange of ideas and mutual understanding;
- *Cognitive function* – refers to the development thinking, knowledge of reality, enrichment of knowledge;
- *Emotional-affective function* - creates emotions through message content and form of address;
- *Expressive and artistic function* – aims at creating aesthetic emotions through the suggestion of expressiveness of the language;
- *Regulatory function* - determining which aims, by influencing a person's behavior or conditioning.
- *Ludic function (game)* - takes place through specific communication levels of the game.

It is necessary also to take into account the fact that students may not have a correct expression, expressive and suitable, in the absence of significant lexical acquisition in terms of quantity. Therefore, proper and thorough learning of words and qualitative development, functional vocabulary is ensured by setting up a procedural design through the following methodological sequences:

- using the term back in concrete situations of life;
- use the new word in a communication or in a context where it does have, every time it is used, a specific meaning;
- the term can be extracted from context and explained by synonymy or antonymy;
- use of the term in many contexts, with its non-figurative meaning.

4. The intensification of the capacity of the students

The words have a flexible shape type with which they are entered in the dictionary (nominative singular words hereby disclaims, infinitive at the present tense). To make possible the communication during the speech of the words type shape is changed. It is known that a large proportion of the words do not have a single lexical meaning, but two or more meanings. In such cases, one of them is the most

widespread and most commonly, and is called the lexical meaning of the word, and other lexical meanings.

The accumulation and enrichment of vocabulary, grammatical layout improvement, increasing the capacity of the student's own speech re are little by little approaching adult speech. At the same time as the interest for literary expressions and figures of speech are developing, the child begins to feel the need for lengthy and independent reading, for selecting terms and phrases, constructing sentences and creating puns.

5. The training and educating of children's creativity of language

Reform means creativity, which means finding new means for each lesson, the student's placement, involvement in the activities, especially those related to the game. Taking into account the objectives of instructive-educational, didactic games within hours of foreign language represents an efficient activity, "which makes accessible the assimilation of knowledge, deepens, improves and supports the educational process". Thus we could enumerate such games as:

- *grammatical correctness observation games* (formation of the plural nouns and adjectives, using the logic of simple and developed sentences);
- games intended for the skills of using the correct parts of speech into speech;
- *syntactical games*, aimed at constructing proper sentences;
- *phonetic/phonological games* intended for referral, that the correct sounds and handwriting, has several diphthongs, of syllables;
- *games for observing the lexical appearance* (diminutive, antonyms, homonyms, impromptu writing, Word family), contributing to the enrichment of vocabulary, the understanding and use of the meaning of words.

6. Types of reading in a foreign language at secondary level

6.1. Reading groups

The class is organized into groups (3-8 groups, depending on the number of children in the class) and you can select as many texts as groups were made. Each group read a particular title, each child in the group being offered a copy. Books may be chosen by the teacher or students. Students read individually taking notes related to various things that have attracted their attention: a sequence which causes them a certain reaction, a question, a link with a living etc. At the end of the reading or during it, the students are consulted and discuss the work. In the end, each group will make a project in which they will write their own opinions related to the text read.

6.2. Reading workshops

Reading workshop is a key tool used with much success in the school of Western Europe which can be applied to any discipline.

The teacher shall choose a literary text which is not very long, or just a fragment (a chapter or an episode), according to the appropriate age category that fits

the children in class. Then he / she shall distribute copies of the text to each student participating in the activity. The class is organized into groups that will work in workshops. According to the text (prose or poetry, longer or shorter), you can organize different workshops, of which we suggest, the following targets:

- Workshop on illustration - students illustrate a certain a text, then a comment and justify the choices made.
- Workshop on summary making - students propose a summary of the text read, according to established conventions, and will edit it.
- Personal opinionsworkshop - students remark what they liked and what they didn't like in the text, bringing the arguments for the choices made.
- Anticipation-workshop students propose another end of the work or, if the text is an excerpt from a wider, make assumptions about the ending;
- Text transformation workshop-may propose to pupils with imagination in the group to change an element or more of text (character, place, time, action) and to rewrite the altered text
- Loud reading workshop-group of students propose a dramatization of oral reading text on the roles.

Reading workshops can be organized, depending on the course objectives and propose. In this way students can examine the vocabulary work, figures of speech, etc.

First, the students read the text silently, then work individually or in groups in a workshop. It is important that within each group (heterogeneous in terms of value) each student to take responsibility, higher or lower, depending on their skills. Teamwork leads to the organisation of the group and the motivation of the weakest students. Finally, each student will be contributing to this collective work-which will end by exposing images by reading the works of each workshop in part. All material written by the students will compile a portfolio of the activity, which is included in the school library, can be available for consultation and research to every child, at any time.

6.3. Personal / Individual Reading

Within the classess of literature (reading), the didactic approach always entails the establishment of clearly defined objectives, however, beyond these goals measurable and measured within the course, the teaching must go into the extracurricular universe of each student to form a habit of reading books and other than those required or recommended to school. Therefore, the teacher must guide all students towards reading, at first through suggestions, then through the intermediation of the loan from the school library. The teacher will suggest children to keep a reading log, a diary where they write the books they have read, and personal impressions about the readings made, etc. This checkbook of the reading process can also be used in the context of reading clubs when they bring into question the issues related with the previous reading notes.

Of considerable importance are the interpretations of the texts read in class or at home, and the teacher can initiate a free discussion often in the form of feedback shared and reflected from elements of the text. These items can be analyzed within a work or may be regarded comparatively at the crossroads of several texts.

Exchange of ideas on literary topics, will homogenize the group by deleting the differences and oppositions of the students. Everybody can say their opinion as long as it relates to the story of literature and ideas are argued. Students are not involved in

a competition, but by listening to others' opinion and participate in expressing their own opinion.

The performance obtained in the result of a whole school year of these reading activities will be significant. Thus, it will be noticed that students will improve the way they receive a text, achieving certain literary reflexes and gaining the ability to make connections between works; gradually they will not only produce a summary of the story but will announce personal opinions concerning the text, analyzing the facts, they will begin to issue comments on some choices made by the author (enunciation, characters, point of view), voicing approval or disapproval.

7. Conclusions

Ever since the late 19th century, the need has been felt to give up the tendency of using training processes focused on the transmission and assimilation of knowledge, or imitative learning, in favour of the organization of the training process - oriented towards action, towards acquiring knowledge through one's own effort and the will of the one who teaches.

Teaching models such as the story, description, reading, etc. have been replaced with active forms of learning based on mental operations, investigative actions, learning by discovery etc.

The issue of educating the taste for reading is extremely delicate, the demarcation between tools offered by the school and the pleasure of reading, which is much more difficult to obtain through standard methods in the classroom.

Teachers in general and teachers of a foreign language in particular can only contribute to the formation of this passion, they can help children become autonomous readers.

Didactic games remain active methods that contribute to the full development of the child's personality. Organic integration of the game structure learning of school children is likely to contribute to the achievement of major objectives for the development of the personality of the child.

We believe that teaching game-used both as a method and as a process, within classess of foreign language are an asset enriching vocabulary and achieving a perfect concordance between the process of knowledge, learning and the atmosphere of the game. This leads to growing interest, curiosity, good dispositions, relaxation and satisfaction as a result of the discovery of the correct response, boosts attention, causes a strong affective of the pupil participation, stretches the horizon of knowledge.

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