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викладач англійської мови та літератури
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Автентичні тексти класичної англомовної літератури як засіб формування соціокультурної компетенції та джерело виховання

Стаття присвячена актуальним проблемам формування соціокультурної компетенції учнів у сучасному світі. Автор підкреслює важливість вивчення оригінальних текстів класичної літератури англійською мовою для усвідомлення особливостей менталітету народу, мова якого вивчається. Розглядаються шляхи розвитку аналітичного мислення учнів, що відповідають вимогам комунікативного підходу до вивчення іноземних мов. Сформульовано професійні вимоги до викладачів англійської літератури мовою оригіналу та критерії відбору текстів для прочитання. Авторка статті описує інструментарій аналізу текстів, випробуваний на практиці. Навчальний процес розглядається як джерело творчості вчителя та учнів під час вирішення комунікативних ситуацій, запропонованих англомовними письменниками. Особлива увага приділяється вихованню загальнолюдських моральних цінностей під час прочитання та аналізу автентичних текстів.

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Acquiring Socio-Cultural Competence and Fostering Cultural Values through Target-Language Literature Studies. Developing Senior Pupils' Analytical Thinking in the Process of Belles-lettres Interpretation. Surface and Underlying Thought Contents

According to the National State Program in Education, Ukrainian pupils should be provided with the opportunities of continuous self-perfection, intellectual and cultural potential of our compatriots being the highest value of the nation. The contents of education which inevitably influence the process of upbringing should be aimed at moulding an all-round-developed personality of a pupil.

The problem of self-perfection is closely related to the abilities at studying. An all-round-developed personality is supposed to be well-read in sciences and the humanities. This takes time, effort, motivation and a potential of physical health. We do realize that in this modern world computers help save time and computer skills are exceedingly important, but they are certainly not enough to educate a harmonious personality, the ambivalent influence of the computer being much talked about. Taking into consideration the fact that the world around us is changing all the time and at a great speed, our pupils vitally need to acquire such qualities and such knowledge that would defend them from constant stresses – those resulting from false life choices and the destructive feeling of being lost. It is certainly not an easy task.

The one solution to the problem formulated above is that younger generations should find out more about the experience accumulated by previous generations: more from the treasury of the humanity – immutable, of proved worth and valid enough to be trusted.

That is true about *the invariable cultural values*. The way to accumulate and hand down the latter is *language*. Thus, studying one's first language and foreign languages appears to be enormously important for a modern pupil.

The value of studying foreign languages in fostering the most important of the positive personality features is difficult to overestimate. It is commonly evident that multilingual people are more inclined to building up relationships characterized by mutual understanding and tolerance when they partake in private, social or international communication. Because studying a different language is an opening into a different – another – cultural reality, one's *life experience 'units'* double as the result of regular analysis and comparison every time one faces a differing detail in the way of life and understanding its values. Hence – *a higher level of psychological development*: more responsibility for one's deeds and words, a habit of analysis and a critical view on one's own beliefs and stereotypes, an impetus to self-improvement.

Studying a different language system is inseparable from studying a different culture, and, what is more, is senseless without such studying. An awareness of a foreign cultural reality lies within the scope of **social and cultural competence**.

The notion of *social and cultural competence* is a constituent of *communicative competence* which is called attention to in the contents of the foreign language studies schemed for all Ukrainian schools. Among the reasons which give grounds for such educational policy is the fact that the field of international relations is no longer relevant to professional diplomacy only. The problem of 'the Earth's ball ever becoming smaller', i.e. the growing opportunities of international communication between people from different fields, demands that *customarily educated individuals* should be taught to represent their nations appropriately as well as understand foreigners in a qualified way. It goes without saying that more mutual understanding would make this world safer. So, a lot of hard work is to be done by the teachers of such future (and present) communicators.

We have given reasons above why it is important to prepare pupils for the socio-cultural dialogue. Now let's dwell on the means to facilitate our practice.

One can find a convincing guide to the system of education and its contents as revealed in **Ukraine's Education Law** and **the State Standard of Foreign Language Studies**. According to what the educational authorities state in the documents and in the detailed comments to them [7, p.43], acquiring socio-cultural competence involves **country-studying and linguistic country-studying**, these - in their turn - consist in knowledge on history, geography, economy, state system, typical household peculiarities, customs and traditions, conventional native speakers' behaviour schemes, as well as the meanings of facial expression and gestures accompanying speech. Thus, the pupil is to be given a complete system of ideas (the so-called *background knowledge*) making it possible for language units to be readily linked *to the same information both by the language learner and the native speaker for adequate comprehension* [7, p.43]. According to P.Galperin, '... It is the development (interiorization) of

... attitudes, perceptions, and outlook that underlie the acquisition of the **target-language consciousness** by [the] learners of a foreign/second language' [2, p.197].

The *standardized school programs for foreign language learners* in Ukraine are designed in such a way that socio-cultural competence is supposed to be acquired *within the frame of* communicative competence. The materials offered by the authors of our text-books (predominantly short basic texts) give enough valuable information to help the teacher forward socio-cultural knowledge to their pupils – thus fulfilling the demands of the *communicative approach*. However, such information is often mainly *factual*, the communicative situations created on the basis of such texts being rather 'dry'. The pupils do compare their native and foreign reality details, yet their interest grows slowly, especially with senior pupils who tend to be very 'difficult to impress' these days.

With Ukrainian specialized and Classic schools the situation is better: they usually have an opportunity to offer *special country-studying courses* to their pupils. This raises interest in foreign studies – and a number of students name such courses among their favourite subjects. The problem here lies in an undisputable fact that – again – the main part of the information given is factual, suitable for future travellers to the countries described, and if teenagers are not going to travel to the target language countries in the near future the knowledge is very soon lost.

Here stands up the necessity for the author of this article to claim that without a deep insight into foreign mentality the studies of all kinds of factual material on a foreign country's reality will be unproductive. According to one of the greatest writers of American literature Mark Twain, 'observing a foreign reality has no significance without *absorbing* it'. By 'absorbing' this well-known author of the article "What does Paul Bourget think of us?" (exactly on our subject of understanding a different culture) meant '*subconscious perception of a foreign nation's life during many years*' [9,p.92]. Because 'It is first of all the cultural-historical-traditional factor that sets behavioral norms and standards [2, p.197].

What gives us and our children the opportunity to find ourselves exposed to such 'absorbing'? *It is certainly the habit of reading and thinking over the best foreign literature creations.* The habit that should be developed at school. The author of this article has got experience in teaching *a course in English and American literature* to senior Classic school pupils. Here are some considerations about the importance and peculiarities of such studies drawn from practice.

Besides the invaluable quality of literature – read in the original – to enlarge one's vocabulary, it gives us ready communicative situations to be discussed – in case the problem raised on its pages leaves not a single person indifferent. For that reason we ought to be very strict about choosing authors and books (extracts). Another unsurpassed man of American letters – Jack London – while dwelling on the power of literature *to mould philosophical and analytical thinking* of the reader warns us against false book choice: '...you should never feel awkward about not reading an uninteresting story to the end... you are pressed for time...**read only the best...**' [9,p.108]. Being scrupulous about choosing curriculum

material for reading implies attention to the text being *within the pupils' abilities and age needs* so as not to hinder motivation. We shall thus meet the demands brought about by the didactic *feasibility principle* [7, p.49]. The vocabulary of the texts should correspond to *the lexical minimum standards* [7, p.92].

During the Foreign Literature lessons that are conducted in the pupil's first language our children study a number of novels/poems by English - as well as other foreign authors - in the translation. Unfortunately, our colleagues teaching the subject have got rather strict regulations as to which authors and texts should be chosen. They often do not have any choice at all, the program in Foreign Literature studies being often subject to quite debatable changes. For example, how could one explain the reasons for reading up on 'The Perfumer' by Patrick Suskind in high school? The question is difficult to answer. Moreover, such disputable literature creations can do irreparable harm to a teenager's psychology that is unstable because it is still in the process of development. '*Modern life and modern reality are very puzzling. The task of the writer is to explain something useful to the reader – not to confuse him even more...*' Such is the warning by John Fowles, one of the most talented modern British writers. That warning should be considered by the teachers as well.

Another questionable point is that a number of methodologists engaged in working out foreign literature studies targets support the idea that literature should be taught mainly as a *variety of art*, its *didactic role* being only secondary. However, the author of this article is among the supporters of a different opinion. It is common knowledge that in spite of the fact that a number of the XX century writers claimed they practiced '*art for art's sake*' (e.g. Oscar Wilde) everything they wrote *reflected* their contemporary societies' spirits and morals as well as *influenced* them considerably. For according to *Ernest Miller Hemingway*, 'The task of the writer is invariable. He changes, but his task remains the same. It is always in writing truthfully and, on understanding where the truth is, expressing it in the way to penetrate the reader's consciousness and *become part of his own experience*' [9, p.284]. One more American writer Frank Norris in his article 'On the Novelist's Responsibility' while dwelling on the same subject indicates, '*... we don't speak here of the aesthetic interest – that is to care about for artists ... and experts... We secure life interest here... [9, p.133]*'. Beginning with its folklore foundation – where all the roots of literature tradition rest – literature *has always been didactic*, its aesthetic quality being its *natural strength*. Luckily, the State Program in Foreign Languages does not restrict the teacher as to which writers and books to choose while enforcing the pupils' communicative skills, the educators thus having *a privilege of creative freedom* in selecting materials for our Literature Spots.

On stating that our main interest in studying literature is '*life interest*', i.e. in our case *its socio-cultural and life experience value*, let us now talk of our teaching strategies. First and foremost – one should bear in mind that studying literature presupposes learning about *both prose and poetry*.

Despite a very tenacious – though fully unjustified – stereotype existing among modern schoolchildren about *school program poetry* being 'dull', 'out-of-fashion' etc. – for us to overlook its *great importance in forming socio-cultural competence* would be a great

mistake; while schoolchildren's beliefs are sure to result from their being forced to learn some poems by heart – from generation to generation – the choice of the poems being at times far from well-founded. In his article 'Social Significance of Poetry' Thomas S. Eliot insists that since the dawn of humanity's history people's social life has been supported by *didactic poetry* (the term '*didactic*' here means both '*transmitting information*' and '*moralizing*'). For example, Greek drama developed from the foregoing religious rites and remained a formal public ceremony connected with social events. To these days while listening to a psalm in the church we are still dealing with didactic poetry [9, p.161]. What is more, Thomas S. Eliot understands the social significance of poetry in *a much broader way*. 'Everyone knows that much of its meaning is lost in *prose* after it has been translated. But this loss can't even be compared with that in *poetry*. The fact poetry has a much deeper connection with its 'native soil' is evident from the histories of the European languages... Since the Early Middle Ages Latin was the language of philosophy, theology and science, and remained so for centuries. *The transformation of folk tongues into literary languages was motivated by poetry. And it is only natural if we consider that the main aim of poetry is to express feelings and emotional experience; feelings and emotions are unique unlike the ideas that are shared by everyone. To express your thoughts in a foreign language is easier than to reveal your feelings. That is why no art defends its national features as strongly as poetry does' [9, p.164]. The language structure, the rhythmical organization, the phonetics, the idioms used – all express the national character of the people speaking this language [9, p.165]. *Cultural (spiritual) communication between peoples is impossible if not a single person is ready to learn a foreign language well enough to feel it...* [9, p.169] '. In other words, Thomas S. Eliot speaks of acquiring target-language consciousness through studying and understanding foreign poetry. A very special *ability at 'feeling' the language* develops because '*... poetry is speech for the sake of speech and the beauty of speech...*' the way George Santayana, another outstanding American poet, explains it [9, p. 111]. We shall emphasize one more time here that - whether we are studying poetry or prose – the proper choice of the curriculum material is the most important matter.*

Our principle target in teaching *literature* is achieving close *understanding*. That is impossible without a deep insight into it. While thorough studies will not be productive without *motivation*. We believe that pupils should be taught a complete mechanism making it possible to disclose the *author's message*. The teacher should always bear in mind that his/her students study their native and foreign literature in their native tongue, and senior pupils are supposed to be already familiar with the notions of *plot and plot structure, the system of images (the main and minor characters), different narrative methods, external and internal conflicts, setting, the author's attitude, the author's mouthpiece* and other, so there is nothing too difficult about that. Our task is only pointing to the corresponding notions in the target language, thus expanding both the pupil's vocabulary and his outlook. We should not, however, overload the pupil with irrelevant information. Every new notion is to as if 'emerge' in its turn to help 'us understand what is going on there in the story'. Thus making our studies 'more serious' raises respect to the subject. Motivation can also grow if we imply that we trust our students to be intelligent readers able at understanding *the secrets encoded by the authors*. A remark like this is sure to help, '*Some read only to learn what happens next. But a skilled reader discovers what*

lies beyond the surface contents. He understands all the implications encoded in the story... In other words he looks for and understands what is known as 'the underlying thought contents' of the literary work, which convey its message' [6, p.80].

Analytical intelligence is an important quality not easy to acquire. However, developing analytical thinking is not only about mathematics. As far as we can observe, analysing texts is all about asking *apt* questions and answering them. Logical reasoning here goes in close association with *creativity* in discussing and solving problems. And with every literary work the paradigm is unique, thus making it possible for every personality type to realize him/herself and reveal their tastes and preferences.

Interiorizing cultural values of a foreign culture through literature never alienates pupils from their native land – because the invariable cultural values are shared by all the nations of humanity. *'Could one think of anybody more Greek than Odysseus? Anyone more German than Faust? A more typical Spaniard than Don Quixote? Of a person more British than Jolyon Forsyte? But everyone of them is an original archetype...meaningful for all the nations and times' [9, p.176].*

Continuous self-perfection does not mean anyone becomes perfect in the end. But in case one deviates from the direct way to its goals and becomes disappointed, there should be some *reference points* guiding him/her back to him/herself again. Those are proven cultural values. One is sure to recognize them – *because they are always there.*

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