

Innovative Teaching Methods in Higher Education

*S.SUDHARSHINI/BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN COMPUTER
SCIENCE/MANGAYARKARASI COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE FOR
WOMEN/MADURAI*

Abstract:

In the article, we present an innovative concept of teaching literature in the Czech Republic. First, we introduce the context of Czech didactics of literature, the development of the discipline as it is relatively new. We summarize the arguments for the innovative concept of teaching literature that is grounded in constructivism, student-centred teaching approach and the development of reading literacy. There are three key elements of this concept that should be equally present in literature classes –reading texts, learning facts and creation. The teaching approach of innovative concept is student-centred. The aim of literature classes which is to provide a space for individual reading experience and creative expression. We explain these terms in a context traditional teaching approach in literature classes. We also present a number of innovative methods of literature instruction mainly for lower-secondary schools (ISCED 2). These methods are designed to develop reading literacy in a broader way: to develop understanding of artistic texts and comprehension (cognitive), critical thinking and understanding of relationships and human experience (affective) which is exclusively present in artistic texts. This understanding of reading literacy is common in Czech education. These methods include key three elements of literature classes and take into consideration a student as an individual who is being educated cognitively and affectively.

1.Introduction

Teaching literature differ in particular nation. Even though there is not only national literature taught at schools in the subject of Literature or Language Arts, but world literature as well, there is a specific instruction used and specific teaching methods and approach in general. Nevertheless, there are many similarities and many ways to get an inspiration from each other's teaching cultures. In the Czech Republic, literature is a part of the main subject called Czech language and literature. At primary schools, the aim is to teach children how to read fluently and the content follows it. The great discussion has been developed lately around the content of literature.

Teaching literature essentially consists of two interconnected fields: literary science, which brings the content, and didactics of literature, which transforms the knowledge of literary

science into educational practices. The necessity of a connection of these two fields was already stated by Jurčo & Obert (1984, p. 9): literary science and didactics of literature are formed independently, but it is difficult to imagine didactics of literature without theory and history. Literary science deals with literature and arises from philology, it is an established discipline and consists of literary history, literary theory, comparative literature and literary criticism. The main goal and content of literary education is to provide students with artistic texts adequate to their cognitive abilities, reading skills and preconceptions. Preconceptions might also be observed within the students' perception of texts. For this purpose, artistic text belongs to the individual characteristics of each learning individual [and which] is the product of conscious and unconscious experiences, subjective psychological processes and personality dispositions (Jindráček et al., 2011, p. 79). The changes that students create based on the active transformation of their own concepts of the world are deeper and more permanent than the knowledge created by the mere transmission of ready-made knowledge and memorization. Preconceptions of reading influence reading in a fundamental way. They usually make reading easier for the student, but they can also hinder adequate communication (Lederbuchová, 2010, p. 123). Lindquist (2013, p. 32) comments on preconceptions in the field of the Shoah: Teachers should emphasize students' prior knowledge because all new knowledge is in some way shaped by the existing knowledge.

The importance of reading and individual reading experience is a key topic of Czech didactics of literature. In the following parts, we introduce what led the didactics of literature to be established as a separate discipline. Further, we summarize arguments for innovative concept of teaching literature and its aim.

2. Innovative concept of teaching literature:

Art is an expression of an individual. Literature is art expressed by words, the images and stories are mediated by texts. Literature as a school subject is, therefore, an expressive subject, and expressivity means creativity and creation itself. However, the research results outlined above show that literature classes remain a knowledge-based subject where literary science dominates over the space dedicated to creation. The key difference between the orientation to knowledge and expressivity of a subject is the way how students acquire content knowledge. The innovative concept of teaching literature is associated with the experience as the intermediation between the reader and the interpretation of the text. Within the framework of the innovative concept, the act of reading of texts (students themselves read the texts), and

creative activities with the texts (creative expressivity) should dominate (cf. Hník, 2007; 2012; 2017). This innovative concept does not distance itself from the transfer of a reasonable amount of knowledge from history and theory of literature. The balance of these components in the real curriculum ensures the presentation of literature as an aesthetic education. The traditional concept of teaching literature focuses on knowledge about literature while the innovative concept, in addition to the knowledge focuses an individual experience with art – reading the art and production of art.

3. An innovative concept of teaching literature:

A subject focused on readers Teaching literature should be perceived as a mean of educating students through reading artistic texts. The content of the subject is derived from the artistic text and its interpretation, from the individual reading experience. In the Czech context, there are two other terms used to describe this concept – interpretive because its integral part is an interpretation of artistic texts, and experiential because it depends on the reader's experience (Hník, 2017, p. 84). It is then the subject focused on readers.

Lederbuchová (1995, p. 19) adds to reader's perspective: Even today, many teachers and educators do not recognize the benefits of innovative concept of teaching literature focused on readers. It might be rooted in a traditional approach to teaching in general which is focused more on a teacher and a transmission of knowledge rather than a reader – a student, and their reading skills, reading preferences and overall development of student's personality. What connects both approaches, the traditional approach, and the innovative concept, is an artistic text. The differences between them are seen in the perceiving the role of the text in the educational process. The traditional approach to teaching literature might be characterized as learning about the texts, in which students are passive and they are introduced to the plot of the text, the author's life and basic interpretation of one or more texts written by the author. Hník (2007, p. 37) comments Lederbuchová (1995, p. 19) adds to reader's perspective: Even today, many teachers and educators do not recognize the benefits of innovative concept of teaching literature focused on readers. It might be rooted in a traditional approach to teaching in general which is focused more on a teacher and a transmission of knowledge rather than a reader – a student, and their reading skills, reading preferences and overall development of student's personality. What connects both approaches, the traditional approach, and the innovative concept, is an artistic text. The differences between them are seen in the perceiving the role of the text in the educational process.

The traditional approach to teaching literature might be characterized as learning about the texts, in which students are passive and they are introduced to the plot of the text, the author's life and basic interpretation of one or more texts written by the author. Hník (2007, p. 37) comments on this approach to the text that it only plays a role to support the teacher's literature lesson. Therefore, this approach cannot stand in subject focused on readers and individual reading experience, subject of art where a creativity must be present and used. The innovative concept of teaching literature perceives the artistic text as a central part. It needs to be read, interpreted, and discussed. Students get to know the text in an active and creative way, as constructivism shows to be the only effective approach to learning. Students (readers) co-create the meaning of the text and via cognitive activities they build the content, which requires a certain degree of interpretation. The interpretation of the text and related reading activities are one of the forms of creation and production. In this case, the text is not at the centre of teaching as an evidence or proof, but as an ever-living artifact, as an unexhausted creative force (Hník, 2007, p. 37).

The concept of the subject focused on a reader may be seen as the culmination of numerous discussions about the role of artistic texts in literature classes, from their functions of building certain national feelings through their use in linguistics to the basis of literature instruction. This approach to the text that it only plays a role to support the teacher's literature lesson. Therefore, this approach cannot stand in subject focused on readers and individual reading experience, subject of art where a creativity must be present and used. The innovative concept of teaching literature perceives the artistic text as a central part. It needs to be read, interpreted, and discussed. Students get to know the text in an active and creative way, as constructivism shows to be the only effective approach to learning. Students (readers) co-create the meaning of the text and via cognitive activities they build the content, which requires a certain degree of interpretation. The interpretation of the text and related reading activities are one of the forms of creation and production. In this case, the text is not at the centre of teaching as an evidence or proof, but as an ever-living artifact, as an unexhausted creative force (Hník, 2007, p. 37). The concept of the subject focused on a reader may be seen as the culmination of numerous discussions about the role of artistic texts in literature classes, from their functions of building certain national feelings through their use in linguistics to the basis of literature instruction.

4. Elements of the innovative concept of teaching literature:

Literature instruction in the Czech Republic usually consist of three elements: reading the texts, learning the facts, and creating text and/or with the text. In an innovative concept, these components work together. The mutual complementation of reading, learning and creation makes an aesthetic-artistic product of the reception of artistic texts for students. Only a connection of these three elements can help eliminate mentioned asymmetry between the knowledge and a low degree of experience and expressivity. According to Hník (2017, p. 41), the asymmetry is mainly between the memorization of theory and history of literature and the individual reading experience and student active creation. Through constructive activities, students get to know literature with aesthetic intentions. As Jurčo & Obert (1984) add, based on creative activities students acquire values, attitudes and shape their axiological values. One of the three elements of this concept of teaching literature is creation. In other words, creative literary expressivity which Hník (2017, p. 122) defines as creation in the sense of creative activity done by a student followed by adequate space for reflection.

A certain form of text creation is creative writing. Fišer et al. (2012) define a current goal of creative writing as a restoration of confidence in the written word and its appropriate, cooperative, non-manipulative use in communication. The training the text competence, the development of the speaker's receptive and productive skills, lead to the restoration of verbalized imagination, deepening the interest in the spontaneous expression of the speaker's emotions, knowledge and attitudes. Fišer et al. (2012) further state that creative writing supports the creation and development of strategies of effective textual communication. In addition, it develops the ability to search for information and formulate arguments as well which are key competencies for students to gain at school. The third element is learning the facts. Facts in literature classes are from the field of history and theory of literature, so called literary science. It consists of knowledge from reading and creation expressed by the knowledge of the cultural context. Hník (2017) recognizes two sources of this knowledge:

1. traditional teaching, where the student passively receives information from the teacher;
2. knowledge and skills that arose as part of the reflection of reading and creation.

5. Conclusions

Innovative concept of teaching literature has the roots in constructivism and student-centered teaching approach. Therefore, the main focus is on the students who are readers in this subject. That is the reason why the innovative concept is supported in theories of reading aesthetics and

theory of a process of reading and meaning-making. Innovative literature instruction consists of three elements: reading the texts, learning the facts, and creating text and/or with the text. In an innovative concept, these elements work together. In terms of reading, we talk about individual reading experience which is gained through student active reading of artistic texts. Learning is understood to be knowledge about the context of a certain text, author, and artistic period. Creation is described as a creative activity with texts such as interpretation. All these parts should be equally present in literature classes. As we want to educate students as whole beings, literature is a great tool. Czech research shows that most students in the lower-secondary schools not ready to work in literary education classes with methods of literary creative expressiveness (Hník, 2012; Jindráček et al., 2011). We believe that one of the causes of this situation is the fact that the teachers of the Czech language and literature do not know the methods, or how to incorporate them into literature classes for a certain year-class. Therefore, there is a huge need of raising awareness. We suggest that teachers are more active in gaining the knowledge about specific methods and the innovative concept of teaching literature and gaining the skills and experiences as well.

Acknowledgments

This contribution was supported by IGA project IGA_PdF_2022_002_Research into Factors Influencing the (Non)Integration of Innovative Methods into the Teaching of Literary Education at the Lower-Secondary Schools of Palacky University Olomouc.

References

Chaloupka, O. (2003–2004). [A Little Different About Literary Education]. *Cesky jazky a literature*, 54(4), 170–174.

Fiser, Z. et al. (2012). [Creative Writing In Literary Education As A Learning Tool]. Brno: mazyukrva university

Gejgušová, I. (2009). Interpretace uměleckého textu v literární výchově na základní škole [Interpretation Of An Artistic Text In Literary Education At Primary School]. Ostrava: fakulta ostrýke university. [Didactics Of Literature: Challenges Of The Field. From Texts Of An Artistic Nature To Didactics In The Field Of Aesthetic Education]. Praha: Univerzita Karlova. [Playful Interpretation In Reading And Hník, O. (2012).

In Wildová, R. et al., Čtenářská gramotnost a podpora jejího rozvoje ve škole [Reading Literacy And Supporting Its Development In School](137–147), Praha: Univerzita Karlova.

Pupil Reading And Didactic Interpretation Of An Artistic Text In Literary Education At The Lower-Secondary School And In The Corresponding Years Of Multi-Year High School].