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TEACHING READING
TO ADVANCED FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Nauczanie sprawności czytania uczniów na poziomie zaawansowanym
Tematem artykułu jest sprawność czytania, która jest ważnym elementem kompetencji obcojęzycznej. Przedstawiono dwa podejścia stosowane w badaniach empirycznych dotyczących czytania: perspektywę psycholingwistyczną i socjolingwistyczną, wraz z wybranymi modelami teoretycznymi stosowanymi w każdej z perspektyw. Omówione zostały także różne rodzaje czytania, które mogą być celem nauczania języka obcego w warunkach szkolnych, takie jak: czytanie „globalne" i czytanie „lokalne" oraz czytanie wybiórcze tekstu i czytanie „dokładne", polegające na bardziej wnikliwej analizie tekstu. W dyskusji podkreślono rolę czytania krytycznego, które zdaniem autora artykułu powinno być głównym celem w nauczaniu uczniów o zaawansowanym poziomie kompetencji językowej. Przedstawiono zarówno przesłanki teoretyczne tego rodzaju czytania, jak i przykłady ćwiczeń, które mogą być stosowane w pracy dydaktycznej.
Słowa kluczowe: sprawność czytania, czytanie krytyczne, nauczanie sprawności czytania, uczniowie na poziomie zaawansowanym

1. Conceptualisations of reading

In a psycholinguistic perspective reading is viewed as a cognitive process. It consists of two levels of cognitive processing: lower, which involves letter identifica-

tion, word recognition and syntactic parsing and higher, which entails discourse processing and the activation of content knowledge and the knowledge about text characteristics. Both levels enable the reader to construct his/her representation of the text. An interesting psycholinguistic model was suggested by van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), who claim that text information is represented in memory at three levels: surface form, propositional textbase and situation model. The surface form refers to the representation of the exact wording and syntax; the propositional textbase corresponds to a multileveled, locally coherent propositional network of semantic text information and the third level, the situation model, depicts real-life situations presented in the text as perceived by the reader, i.e. the reader's interpretations of the text. In other words, the surface form processing results in understanding words and sentences in the text, the propositional textbase processing enables the reader to reach a literal level of understanding the text and developing the situation model facilitates constructing the reader's individual evaluation and interpretation of the text.

Psycholinguistic research focuses on the reader and the way he/she constructs a representation of the text in his/her mind. Studies investigate a variety of factors that can contribute to the reader's attempts to understand the text, such as the role of schemata, later conceptualized as background knowledge (e.g. Anderson, 1978; Carrell, 1983; Clapham, 1996; Liu *et al.*, 2009), metacognition (e.g. Carrell, 1989; Kusiak, 2001). Within this theoretical perspective, reading is often presented as a cognitive process that involves strategic problem solving (e.g. Olshavsky 1976/1977). It is assumed that readers encounter problems when reading texts, be it difficult vocabulary, unknown syntactic structures or new ideas. When copying with the text, they apply various strategies to construct their representation of the text, i.e. to understand the text. Introspective research, such as think aloud studies (e.g. Kusiak, 2013), look at the strategies readers apply when reading various types of texts.

As regards instruction, reading classes aim to teach learners good reading strategies. Students are encouraged to activate their background knowledge before they begin to read the text. It is believed that raising readers' awareness of the strategies they use and their own styles of reading can also bring positive results. The effectiveness of strategy training has become the subject of investigation (e.g. Kusiak, 2003; Yang, 2002).

Another theory that has been influential both in teaching and research is a socio-cognitive perspective. Johns (1997, p. 3) claims that "texts are primarily socially constructed", which for both researchers and reading instructors means extending a concept of schema knowledge and the role of the reader suggested by the psycholinguistic perspective. Comprehending the text does not mean only activating one's background knowledge and applying appropriate reading strategies. The reader should be able to understand an implied message shared by the members of the social group to whom the text is addressed. This will prepare

the reader to respond to the text in a culturally specific way. McCormick (1997) in her social-cultural model of reading views reading as a cognitive activity that occurs in social contexts. Reading is an interaction between the ideology of the reader and that of the text. Both the text and the reader have their general and literary repertoires which are derived from their society's literary and general ideologies. In the reading situation an intersection of repertoires occurs. It may happen that the reader will deliberately choose to read "against the grain of the reading that the text seems to privilege" (McCormick and Waller, 1987, abstract), which will enable him/her to explore the differences between his/her repertoire and that of the text.

To understand better the role of cognitive and cultural factors in reading, let us discuss an interesting distinction into comprehensions vs. interpretations suggested by Urquhart (1987). Urquhart (1987) claims that comprehension is a state of achievement, a product of reading in a reading situation organized in the classroom stimulated by the teacher's questions or more often reading comprehension tasks. By contrast interpretations are different readings of the same text, variations brought about in the reading product on account of different schemata (different repertoires). Readers from different cultures (either ethnic or professional) will understand the same text differently; the same reader at different times with different knowledge will read the same text in a different way. It is important to emphasize that conventional tests cannot make allowance for individual interpretations; instead they test a product of understanding (comprehension), which is controlled by specific test tasks.

Studies on text production and comprehension influenced by the socio-cognitive perspective focus on e.g. the socially constructed nature of the reader (McCormick, 1997; Smagorinsky, 2001), writing as a socio-cognitive process of knowledge construction (Zalewski, 2004) and critical reading in FL education (Wallace, 2005).

2. Teaching reading to advanced EFL learners

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the issue of teaching reading in a very detailed manner. Since this article focuses on teaching reading to advanced learners of English as a foreign language, only the information which the author of this article considers essential for this group of learners will be discussed below.

In discussions concerning teaching reading skills, it is very useful to refer to taxonomies, which list and group language subskills that are activated in the process of reading. A taxonomy of reading subskills suggested by Urquhart and Weir (1998) seems appropriate for our discussion (see Table 1).

Table 1. A taxonomy of reading subskills as suggested by Urquhart and Weir (1998, p. 123)

	Global	Local
Expeditious	Reading quickly (skimming) to identify discourse topic and main ideas. Search reading to find quickly and comprehend information relevant to the reader's predetermined goals.	Scanning to locate specific information, such as symbols, names, dates, figures or words.
Careful	Reading carefully to establish accurate comprehension of the explicitly stated main ideas the author wishes to express; propositional inferencing.	Understanding syntactic structures of sentences and clauses. Understanding lexical and grammatical cohesion. Understanding vocabulary, e.g. deducing meaning of lexical items.

The authors distinguish four main types of reading: expeditious global, expeditious local, careful global and careful local. Expeditious global reading entails reading quickly for the gist of the text, while expeditious local one – reading quickly to find specific pieces of information, such as numbers or figures. Careful global reading means processing the text slowly to develop an accurate comprehension of the ideas that are explicitly stated in the text. The taxonomy suggests one more ability – careful local reading, which involves understanding grammar structures and vocabulary that appear in the text. Although the taxonomy is very comprehensive, it does not include one more type of reading that seems important for advanced foreign language readers – critical reading.

3. Developing critical reading skills: theoretical background

The section below presents several ideas how to develop critical reading skills. The discussion is illustrated with the examples of tasks that can be applied in teaching advanced learners.

Critical reading, recently referred to as critical literacy, is an ability to participate actively in the process of reading. Dechant (1991, p. 453) claims that "critical reading demands that the reader evaluates, passes personal judgment on the quality, logic, appropriateness, reasonableness, authenticity, adequacy, value, relevancy, timeliness, accuracy, completeness, and truthfulness of what is read." According to McCormick (1997) and Johns (1997), this way of reading entails comprehending a text and linking it with one's own personal world and awareness of factors (including social factors) that influence the process of writing a text and factors that influence how the text can be read. A critical reader is aware of his/her own worldviews and ideas while constructing his/her comprehension of the text and consequently – sensitive to how the interaction

with the text may influence his/her position as the reader. It means that he/she is aware of consequences of decisions that he/she can make in relation to his / her interpretation.

Many reading experts, e.g. Alderson (2001), consider developing critical reading a crucial part of advanced students' reading education. Dechant (1991) calls the most advanced level of reading - evaluative comprehension or critical reading. She suggests that teaching critical reading embraces practicing the following abilities:

- making evaluative or critical judgments about the content of the text;
- evaluating or passing personal judgments on the relevancy, adequacy, validity, logic, accuracy, truthfulness, and reliability of what is read;
- recognizing the author's intent or point of view;
- distinguishing facts from opinions or from fiction;
- questioning the writer's purpose;
- detecting the use of propaganda techniques;
- distinguishing between propaganda and bias;
- evaluating the source of the material.

Undoubtedly this list can serve as a very helpful source in developing syllabi for advanced learners of English.

In critical reading instruction, it is of paramount importance to present reading as a social, critical process and to encourage students to take an active role in the ongoing interaction with the text. It is also essential to discuss texts as social and cultural artefacts created in social situations, not only as sources of grammar and lexical exercises. Very clear clues of how to teach critical reading in an institutionalized setting can be found in *Critical reading in language education* by Catherine Wallace (2005). This publication is an interesting report of the author's endeavors to implement theories of critical reading in the classroom context. Another useful source of exercises accompanied by student-friendly theoretical explanations is suggested by Scott Thornbury (2005) in his book *Beyond the sentence*. Both authors develop critical perspectives to textual analysis by drawing on Halliday's systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1994), particularly on the Hallidayan functions – ideational (corresponding to Field of discourse), interpersonal (corresponding to Tenor of discourse) and textual (corresponding to Mode of discourse). Below a selection of activities taken from the two publications is presented.

Wallace (2005, p. 39) suggests a very concise framework for a critical analysis of texts based Hallidayan functional grammar. The framework is presented in the form of three sections, each related to Field, Tenor and Mode respectively. It contains sets of questions that students should ask themselves to analyze the text from three different perspectives.

To understand ideational meanings of the text, i.e. Field of discourse, readers look at how the writer of the text describes what is going on in the text, i.e.

what the text is about. The reader analyses participants, processes and circumstances described in the text. He/she seeks answers to the following questions:

- What/who is talked about? What / who are the major participants / the minor participants and the invisible participants? How are the participants talked about, e.g. what adjectives or nouns collocate with them?
- What verbs describe what kind of processes?
- How are circumstances indicated, e.g. by adverbs or prepositional phrases?

Additionally, learners investigate causation of the text by answering the questions:

- How is causation attributed? Is agency made clear, i.e. who did what to whom? Are actors in subject position?

An analysis of interpersonal meanings, i.e. Tenor of discourse, requires reflecting on how the writer indicates his/her relationships with the reader and what his/her attitude to the subject matter of the text is. This task means looking for answers to the following questions:

- By means of what personal pronouns does the writer refer to self, subjects and the reader?
- What mood is selected – declarative, imperative or interrogative?
- What role does modality play in expressing a degree of certainty or authority?
- What language (adjectives, adverbs, nouns) is used to indicate writer attitude to his/her subject matter?

An analysis of textual meanings (Mode of discourse) entails inspecting how the content of the text is organized. The text should be discussed in terms of its semantic structure, overall organization, theme and cohesion. The following questions will facilitate the analysis:

- Is the text narrative, expository or descriptive, as indicated by the use of tenses?
- How is the text organized? What larger parts can be it have?
- What information is presented as the one for first position at clause level and the level of the whole text?
- How does the text hang together as a text?

It is crucial to note that all the discussions should lead to one more important question: What effect do the writer's choices have on the reader?

The Hallidayan framework discussed above can be used in a number of ways. It could serve as the material to introduce learners to the idea of describing language in terms of its social purposes. It can be also used as a point of reference during the course which engages learners in a number of tasks. It can be also given to students as a homework at the end of the course, which means that after completing a set of exercises students can be asked to analyze an text of their own choice following the questions in the framework.

4. Developing critical reading skills: sample tasks

Below a selection of activities which can help students to read texts in a critical way and acquire reading skills necessary to do the homework is presented. The main aim of the exercises is to facilitate the learners' understanding that "[a] text becomes intelligible only when it is placed within its context of situation" (Thornbury 2005, p. 97), the maxim which applies both to the understanding and to the production of texts. The exercises are grouped to underline their main goals.

4.1. Raising the awareness of context, text type and text

Students learn about the concepts of co-text and context. Learners are to realize that there is a direct relationship between the grammar and lexis of a given text and the kind of text (genre) a particular text represents. They are also to see that the genre is a reflection of particular context factors, such as the purpose and topic of the text as well as the audience it addresses. An example of such a task is a discovery activity in Thornbury (2005, p. 87). The exercise instructs students to predict text types in context, e.g. to think of texts that can be found inside a bus or in a magazine targeted at teenage girls. Students are also supposed to think about differences and similarities between these texts. Another useful exercise suggested by Thornbury (1997, p. 122, 123) involves finding in a given text words that refer to the text itself (co-text) and the words that direct the reader beyond the text, to the real world (to the context in which the writer is situated).

4.2. Developing an understanding of cohesion and coherence

The main aim of this type of tasks is to introduce to students the concepts of cohesion and coherence. A good introduction can be reading a text that is cohesive but not coherent (e.g. the one suggested by Thornbury 1997, p. 251). It may encourage students to "feel" that coherence is a less defined (if compared with cohesion) quality of the text. Other more traditional exercises instruct students to identify in the text the ways that make the text cohesive – learners find examples of lexical, grammatical and rhetorical cohesion (e.g. Thornbury 2005, p. 167).

4.3. Genre analysis tasks

Thornbury (2005, p. 101) advises that a genre-based approach "begins with the analysis of representative examples of a text genre". Students read a text and discuss the function of the text, its intended audience and its role in the target culture. Then they look for more examples of the text type. An alternative activity can be to contrast the text with the texts that would share some generic features with the text but which would also have some differences. For example, students can compare an entry from a children's encyclopedia with the one from an ency-

clopedia written for academics. A useful exercise could be "experimenting" with the genre; learners can be asked to reproduce a given genre by changing certain aspects of the genre.

5. Conclusion

Teaching reading to advanced learners of English is not easy. Activities that promote critical reading are still very rare. Coursebooks used in teaching reading often contain tasks that instill in students a conviction that reading in a FL is an objective act, and as such should be practiced and evaluated at least in an institutionalized setting. The tasks described in this article present an interesting perspective of developing reading skills, different from the one propagated by most coursebooks. What are the advantages of teaching critical reading to this group of students?

There are a number of benefits that critical reading classes can offer to students as readers and foreign language learners. First of all, critical reading classes are different from traditional reading classes and this difference can make them attractive to students. Motivation and interest can encourage learners to participate in the course. The aim of a critical reading course is not to promote reading coursebook texts for one "universal" comprehension but to encourage readers to read and interpret texts as products of culture. An undeniable advantage of such classes is that critical reading classes encourage students to communicate and exchange opinions about the texts they read. Discussions about texts enable students to integrate knowledge from various academic courses, such as descriptive grammar and language of media courses. Halliday's (1994) systemic-functional grammar seems a very useful tool for text analysis in the classroom. It allows for depth as well as breadth of analysis; analyzing Field, Tenor and Mode of texts serves to interpret the social context of the text and facilitates readers' understanding that language cannot be divorced from the context which produces it.

There are, however, some problems that teachers should be prepared to face. It may happen that although students find critical reading tasks interesting as class activities, they are not prepared to work on their own and analyze texts as homework assignments. This situation would require from the teacher introducing additional exercises which could help the class to revise some material necessary to discuss texts, e.g. very basic information about types of phrases and their syntactic role and meaning in a clause. All in all, despite difficulties that teachers and learners may encounter, developing critical reading skills appears a valuable idea that can be implemented either in the form of a separate course or as additional exercises accompanying any course that engages students in reading.

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