THE INITIATION OF THE READER-STUDENT IN DISCOVERING SELF-IDENTITY BY STUDYING THE LITERARY TEXT (SECONDARY EDUCATION)

Loredana Eugenia IVAN[*]

Abstract: *Culture is important in setting up human person's identity, in intellectual, emotional, spiritual and self-development.*

Keywords*: discovering self-identity, initiation of the reader-student.*

We shall begin this intercession by presenting the historian and literary reviewer Nicolae Iorga's opinion about the individual cultural development "A person's culture is formed, firstly, through reading. That is why, from early childhood, it is important to love books, to read them, to keep them with care as we do with our most valuable possessions" (www.wikipedia.ro)

Cultural competence is an important aim for today's school curriculum, especially for its highly significant role in the building of the individual identity, which is represented by intellectual, affective and moral development. Thus, by reading literature, by the superior understanding of the values in the literary texts, the reader is introduced in the spiritual horizon of the community he/she belongs to and the discovery of one's identity is made through dialogue with the former generations and with contemporary authors. For the student reader, but also for the modern man, reading a book represents an efficient way towards cultural values, offering an essentially important method of professional growth and permanent cultivation.

Reading introduces us and "maintains us inside the intimacy of literary creation, in the modernity of scientific and technical texts, representing an essential method of training, and tends to become an absolutely necessary technique of informing and documentation" (Șchiopu, 2009, p.58).

The French psycho-pedagogue Gaston Mialaret notes-"reading is an activity of integrative decrypt of a text, of understanding the studied text, of examination and appreciation for the quality of the text, opportunity for most efficient intellectual actions" (Mialaret, 1981, p.110).

In the context under analysis, the literature class must become "a space of initiation in the reading of the literary text, a space which talks about the actual reading of the text and the text itself and also a space of initiation in culture" (Pamfil, 2008, p.140).

In his recent work "A History of Reading", Alberto Manguel writes an important idea for the present study –"in ever y literate society, learning to read represents an initiation, a ritual escape from a state of dependence and rudimentary communication" (Manguel 2011, p.89). A person able to read has access, due to books, to collective memory, becoming familiarized with the common past, which is renewed every time by the student- reader through reading. The cultural competence has an approximate determination, respectively a list of attributes, being defined as "the capacity to integrate and rank knowledge and, of course, to use knowledgebase in a

[*] No. 1 Secondary-school of Mioarele, Argeș, ivanloredana92@yahoo.com

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productive way" (Moles, 1974, p. 345). It contains the most important basic knowledge in several fields of activity; it incorporates the small encyclopedia presented by obligatory education. Inside the ensemble of basic knowledge we may find "knowledge related to the truths of the respective society; knowledge belonging to the *sapiential heritage*, including proverbs, aphorisms that gather at one place the century-old experience of the collectivity; a list of *revered personalities* forming together a consciousness of the uniqueness and solidarity in the society"(Cornea, 1998, p. 90).

Hereby, we can affirm that, reading the literary texts from the national literature and not only, represents a direct and complex way of forming and delineation of cultural competence and of national identity, because cultural and spiritual messages transmitted by literature are a reflection on human condition, a reflection on the world and the written testimony of an époque.

Culture is widely understood as a system of values, a system of symbols and beliefs, a system preserved and permanently developed by the individuals from a community .These aspects are pursued by the school curriculum, having an important role for the initialization of students' identity, in their intellectual, personal, affective and moral development.

The school curriculum sets some essential aspects: "In order to form a literary culture and an affective and coherent universe, it is desirable for the student: (a) to understand the significance of Romanian language and literature in the delineation of national identity and the integration in the context of universal culture; (b) to internalize the cultural values, the national and universal values, values disseminated through language and literature, as a premise of self development from intellectual, moral and affective point of view; (c) to structure an axiological coherent system, a foundation for an autonomous and independent personality, dynamically integrated in the society; (d) to develop the skills of receiving the written and oral messages, to develop sensibility and interest for reading literary and non- literary texts; (e) to understand the main modalities of understanding and interpreting literary and non- literary texts*"(National Curriculum, School Program for 5th to 8th grades, The Language and Communication Curricular Area,2009.)*

Analyzing the school curriculum one can observe the first three objectives that aim to form essential cultural representations, and the next two objectives express the idea of the reading act in terms of *attitudes, motivations and skills*. The Middle School teacher has a great responsibility ,"to bring to the literary class the remote stakes of the curriculum , the literary texts being chosen taking into account their relevancy from cultural, esthetic and congruency to the student's expectation horizon points of view"(Pamfil, 2008, p. 22).

In the context under analysis, we must refer to several aims of the Middle School curriculum that emphasize *"the initialization of the students in the horizon of major culture through the acknowledgement of well known values of Romanian and universal literature in the lists of suggested texts – creations signed by Mihai Eminescu, Ion Creangă, I.L. Caragiale, George Cosbuc, Ioan Slavici, Tudor Arghezi,Vasile Voiculescu, Mihail Sadoveanu, the Novels about king Arthur, Biblical Parables…"-"expressing feelings and attitudes connected to the problems in the text (for example, the student will be capable of identifying the ethic and cultural values in a text, expressing his/her own impressions and preferences)"*.

Sketched from the perspective of these essential requirements, the literature class must become a place of initiation in reading , a place of initiation in the reading techniques and a place of initiation in culture, a place in which the student analyses and

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interprets the text itself and the act of reading a literary text. In this way, the literary creation "contributes to the *development of reading competence*, offering support for applying and forming understanding and interpretation strategies, also representing *an aesthetic object recorded in the cultural memory"*(Eftenie, 2008, p. 176).

The shaping force of folk literature represented by doina, incantations, proverbs and sayings (the aphoristic genre)-or the acknowledgements about the social and spiritual existence of the individual from the Biblical Parables signify together forms of folk wisdom, moral and religious beliefs.

Literature represents a significant manifestation on the national culture and a complex way of tracing cultural competence. The books of literature "allow us to speak with our *remote*, through the principle of *un-remoting*", one of the principles that form the basis of reading (Liiceanu, 2001, p. 172). All these bring before the student "principles, values, themes, styles shared by his fellow men, allowing the student to integrate in a spiritual community, the function of literature having the same value as socio-human subjects"(Manolescu, 2009, p. 94). However, the difference is due to "the complexity of imaginary worlds, that bring passions, emotions, happenings and destinies into the scenery" (Eco, 2004, p.159). The literary text proposes us an imaginary world that addresses our soul and mind, which implies the existence or practice of different ways of reading: a participative reading and a reflexive one. Within *participative reading* the dialogue with our *remote* represents "passionate participation to the intellectual and sensory experience that takes place in the literary text" (Starobinski, 1985, p. 41).

George Călinescu, in his work *The History of Romanian Literature* wrote "man in folk poetry is par excellence a social being and the temporary alienation from his close human society brings yearning, a complex and indefinable feeling specific to our language and folk creation: Green leaf from the poplar tree/In the heart of the woods/Lays the bridge of yearning" (1964, p.142). Impulses and advice coming from folk wisdom and life experience are found in proverbs and sayings, representing implied meanings, poetic forms of manifesting folk wisdom discovered by the student reader with help from the teachers.

Literature constitutes a significant manifestation of national culture and a complex form of defining cultural competence. A literary work constitutes a stimulating factor for reading, because it allows the student reader to "integrate in a spiritual community rooted in history" (Pamfil, 2008, p. 24).

Analysis of text constitutes "a didactic strategy through which students learn the way in which they can understand, they can interpret and appreciate the literary text taking into account aesthetic criteria and its particularity"(Goia ,2008, p. 151). Students must "read the literary text according to several methodological criteria, reading criteria with formative-informative value" (Eftenie, 2008, p. 193). These methodological criteria take good account the following guiding principles that teachers must apply: "the principle of simultaneous analysis of the connections between content and expressivity; the principle of differentiated analysis of every text, thinking about its uniqueness (descriptive poetry, social poetry, etc.) ; after analyzing the text, synthesis must follow; the principle of direct contact with the literary text, researched through a permanent dialog/heuristic conversation between students and teacher; the principle of active participation of the students to the analysis of the text'(Conea, 2008, p. 174).

The epic literary text has a decisive shaping force which acts on teenagers and consists of fulfillment commitments that it offers and the accessibility of its discourse.

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Even situated in real time and among events, the student has a familiar relationship with the world of the action and the capacity to give it a meaning:"the world presented in every narrative work is a temporal world […[Time becomes human as it is articulated in a narrative form; the other way around, the story becomes significant as it draws the traits of temporal experience" (Ricoeur, 1999, p. 17) The epic text contains patterns of significant articulation of events, models from the perspective of who we can understand and interpret the real world.

Researchers pointed out the forms of enjoyment that the epic text makes possible:

-"the joy of knowing and researching new territories, that can be realized through an important journey which prolongs and fulfills the limited experience of reality;

'"the joy of seeing known truths being confirmed, of finding evasive thoughts or indistinct feelings written with clarity"

"the joy of compensating one's inadequacy in the external world; to forget it by diving in a different universe or to find corrective solutions by consulting these worlds" (Dumortier, Plazanet, 1990, pp. 9-18).

It is essential to discuss here the canonic narrative structure, represented by the short story and called *narrative thinking.* The concept of *narrative thinking* was first introduced by Bruner, and, together with *logical and scientific thinking* represents "two ways in which human beings focus knowledge about the world and organize immediate experience of this world" (Bruner, 1996, p. 50). By the means of logical-scientific thinking, the student transacts and analyzes the information, by the means of narrative thinking the student elaborates meaning and significance.

The theory of narrative thinking merges to" activating cultural competence by focusing on literature and on the development of thinking, the narrative texts being useful during Middle School, at the forefront of literature classes." (Crăciun, 2011, p. 185).

Knowledge through literature is a special kind of knowledge, literature belonging to arts, and this is why "the investigation and analysis of the literary phenomenon is made by specific means , which are different from those used in language study, because literature cannot be taught, it is *received,* using as a specific means "*artistic intuition*"(Parfene, 1999, p. 112)

In the last few decades, in the didactics of Romanian language and literature two directions were developed in the field of literary text study:"one focusing on the *discovery of the structure and the hidden meaning of the text*" idea that has resulted in the use of commonplace analysis, and the other direction, developed from receiving theories implies using *the affective reaction of the student reader, using the meaning built by the reader while reading"* (Pamfil, 2008, p. 71).

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*** *http//.www.wikipedia.ro* aceesat în 20.05.2015.

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