INSIGHT INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE LITERARY WORK THROUGH STRATEGIES - PARTICIPATIVE AND REFLECTIVE READING

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Abstract: *Reading is a journey of initiation through the world of literary texts which gives the student reader the possibility to think, to be creative, to activate his brains, to penetrate the world imagined by the author, to recognize and to imagine the situation or method that will guide him from the natural category of learning to text analysis and interpretation.*

Keywords: *simulated worlds, participative reading, reflective reading.*

Training *reading skills* should be a major cultural objective whose achievement depends on the decisive role of school in increasing motivation for reading, improving quality of message understanding and openness to different approaches, views and strategies to understand and interpret the literary texts.

To increase the ability of plural approaches of texts is to multiply the chances for an individual to understand himself and the others. (Cornea, 1998, p.11)

Reading is a journey of initiation through the world of literary texts which gives the student reader the possibility to think, to be creative, to activate his brains, to penetrate the world imagined by the author, to recognize and to imagine the situation or method that will guide him from the natural category of learning to text analysis and interpretation.

The present work aims at a theoretical and practical approach to develop the student's reading skills, seen as a search and analysis of the internal dynamics of the literary text, as a capacity to design and give rise to some *lumi simulacru* (simulated worlds). The literary text involves an imaginary world addressing to the soul and mind, which implies the existence or practice of different reading strategies. According to the most representative specialist in the hermeneutics of the times, Paul Ricoeur, the literary text is open to many possibilities for understanding and interpretation, to many interpretative perspectives that place and classify the student *in medias res* (*in the middle of things, in the middle of the text analysis).*

The reading skill / reading competence mentioned by Professor Paul Cornea in his work *"Interpretation and rationality"* (Cornea, 2006, p.32) is the total knowledge of reading, understanding and interpretation of literary and non-literary texts.

The current curricula of the compulsory Romanian educational system consider the following aspects in guiding reading, understanding and interpretation practices:

a) outlining some approaches that aim at awakening the student's interest and initiation in reading (and not getting interpretative performance);

b) using all dimensions of the literary text and not just the aesthetic ones: - literature power to convey spiritual messages (literature as a reflection of the world and the human condition) and spiritual messages (literature as written evidence of the ages) (*Curricula,*1998, p.164).

The following definitions of the term *reading* capture some of its important aspects. Therefore, according to Gabriela Duda reading is "the main form which

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organizes the reception of a literary work, with a procedural character in which the acts of perception have a very important place" (Duda, 2006, p.223)

The French pedagogue Gaston Mialaret states - "Reading is an integrative activity of deciphering a text, comprehension, examination and assessment of the quality of a text, the occasion of effective intellectual action" (Mialaret, 1981 p.110).

According to Robert Scholes reading is "an intention to overlap the other; it is a first step in thinking and communication" (Scholes, 1985, p.78). Reading starts with the eyes "the most penetrating of our senses is the sense of sight" said Cicero adding that "we remember a text easier and faster if we read it, than when we only hear it" (*apud*. Manguel, 2011, p.52)

The pedagogue Ioan Cerghit states - "reading, *as a fundamental technique of intellectual work*, fulfills multiple functions: enlightenment, proper learning (training and self-training) information and documentation" (Cerghit, 2006 p. 174). Reading a book is for the student and the modern man an effective way of accessing to cultural values, providing him with a key method of professional development and continuous cultivation. This introduces us and "keeps us in the privacy of the literary creation, the concurrence of the scientific and technical texts; it is an essential method of training and tends to become an absolutely necessary technique of information and documentation" (Șchiopu, 2009, p .58). Reading is a crucial tool in the acquisition, training concepts and acquiring expertise.

Students' performance in national and international examinations that verify the interpretation and comprehension skills in various texts makes reference to B. Schwartz's words - "... there is a real gap between knowing how to read and knowing how to learn, knowing how to exploit readings, i.e. serving you well of this specific means, the printed text "(Schwartz, 1976, pag.157). Therefore, we should consider " to nurture the students' reading skill, an active attitude during reading and the gradual assimilation of complex and correct skills of self-instruction by reading" (Cerghit, 2006, pp. 181).

According to the most representative specialist in the hermeneutics of our times - Paul Ricoeur - the literary text is open to many possibilities of understanding and interpretation, to many interpretative perspectives which place possibilities the student reader *in medias res*, in the core of the text analysis.

The literary text involves an imaginary world of the soul and mind, which implies the existence or practice of different reading strategies: a participatory reading (innocent) and a critical reading (reflexive).

According to Alina Pamfil, participatory reading or innocent reading means "connivance with creative subjectivity, immersion in the imaginary universe and identification with fabulous creatures dwelling it" (Pamfil, 2008, p.24). We may add that this encounter with the literary text becomes a way to research and explore the world, and thus a *cathartic experience*. This experience can be "transposition of the spectator from his pragmatic universe to the situation of the hero, since by tragic concussion or comic satisfaction he obtains purification from his own passions" (Cornea, 1998, p.199.)

Both Tudor Vianu and Roman Ingarden highlighted the importance of the first revealing contact with the literary work, when the student is highly fascinated by it. This moment of "consensual and sometimes unconscious slipping under the influence of admirable exteriority begins with a strong excitation, an escape from indifference, a sudden sympathetic impetus" (*apud*. Cornea, 2006, p. 174)

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Both Matei Călinescu and Paul Cornea the original sequence or the beginning of the literary narrative is a strategic place whose importance should not be ignored by authors or readers. The authors are aware that the first contact with the literary work is often decisive, trying to convince by its statements and incite by its announcements. The student readers should be aware that in order to place themselves in a world shaped differently from the daily reality, they should pay close attention to the first sentences.

For example, in the story "*Iapa lui Vodă*" from the book "*Hanu-Ancuţei*" by Mihail Sadoveanu, studied in the seventh grade, after introducing the student reader in the atmosphere of the place, the narrator-author brings to the fore a character who, by the pleasure of sitting down with others and inciting them to tell stories, becomes the soul of the group of nine passengers who arrived at the inn. A differently shaped and a magical world is what we encounter in Sadoveanu's story which, as Nicolae Manolescu said "stops time, creating around the individual - teller or listener - a place full of magic and a universe that protects him."

Another literary text that introduces us to "three different worlds" and makes us return to the great age of childhood is "*Florin writes a novel*" by Mircea Cărtărescu, which is also studied in the seventh grade. The narrative is based on the frame story by successive insertions: *romanul haiducesc* whose action is set in the Middle Ages is inserted in *Florin's story* that introduces the reader to a reality closer to our days, and this in turn is included in the *text of the manual prepared by writer Florescu.*

Other original sequences "envisage a reading protocol by suggesting an emblematic design of the symbolic cipher of the work" (Cornea, 1998, p.185). For example, in the novel "*Morometii*" by Marin Preda, the initial sequence introduces a symbolic referent, a background against which the student reader will assess the global significance of the book. „În câmpia Dunării, cu câţiva ani înaintea celui de-al doilea război mondial, se pare că timpul era foarte răbdător cu oamenii; viaţa se scurgea aici fără conflicte mari. Era începutul verii. Familia Moromete se întorsese mai devreme de la câmp…". ("*In the Danube plain, a few years before the end of World War II, it seems that the time was very patient with people, life flowed here without major conflicts. It was early summer. Moromete family returned early from the fie*ld ... "). The meaning of the text as a whole is that the family drama is the time that lost patience "the exit from patriarchality and the entry in the terror of history, of immersion from the mythical to the secular time" (Manolescu, 2006, p.49.).

Penetrating the literary reading, constructing meaning and attributing meanings, the reader student produces more articulated representations similar to simulated worlds populated by beings, things or events. The outcome of the understanding "the mental image, the whole under whose likeness appears the work with its achievements, but also mutilations committed by the reader during the reading" was named by Roman Ingarden *imaginative embodiment.*

We can say that by participatory reading, our dialogue with the one far from us is more than closeness, it is "passionate participation to the sensitive and intellectual experience which flows through the literary work" (Starobinski, 1985, p. 172)

The second type of reading, the critical (reflexive) one implies the presence of "the sight above that includes the text aesthetically, as a verb and as a form" (Pamfil, 2008, p.24) In the context under consideration it is necessary to make a distinction between *reading* and *interpreting*, which are different working strategies in the literary text.

In the work "*A citi, a reciti. Pentru o poetică a relecturii*", Matei Călinescu made the distinction between *reading* and *interpreting* - "To read is to go through the

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lineal text, stopping the effort at the end; to interpret is to re-read the text several times to master it in detail" (Călinescu, 2007, pp.28-32). Professor Paul Cornea states "reading is hasty, available for emotional investment, sensitive to anecdotal, concerned especially with "what" is happening; interpretation is careful, cautious, critical to the text and wants to clarify "why" and "how" is happening" (Cornea, 1998, pp.210-213).

Returning to the strategy we are interested in – *critical, reflective reading, the sight above* or *outside text coverage* – specialists in didactics noted that it envisages a linguistic component, a textual component and a component of meanings. The linguistic component of the literary work involves the phonetic, spelling, lexical and grammatical levels. The textual component of the literary work aims at the overall architecture of the texts, their narrative, descriptive and argumentative structures. The component of meanings aims to shape possible meanings – the meaning of the title, the meanings of the characters' names, their actions, the relationships between characters, etc.

The student's reaction to the text depends on how the teacher prepares and motivates him for the reading techniques. Seen from the perspective of modern scholars "the student reader is immersed in the literary text and forever beyond it" (Iser, 1985, p.49). Critical reading "is subjective, because it depends on the reader's knowledge, his skills and motivation, and objective, because it is directed and guided by the text to be interpreted" (Barthes, 2006, p.53).

The subjective dimension of the literary text interpretation is the determination of meaning by the student reader, whereas the *intersubjective dimension* assimilates and exploits its interpretation when shared with the others. The intersubjective dimension is "highly important for specialized hermeneutic approaches, represented by the teacher of literature as a mediator between the literary text and students" (Eco, 1996, p 163). In this work of mediation, the teacher "puts his own interpretative subjectivity in dialogue with his students' subjectivity" (Bernaz, 2008, p. 77). The role of the student is to follow the opening of the literary text, "to make the dialogue regarding the text an integral part of the present and future creative life of the community" (Valdes, 1989, p. 286).

This type of reading requires an active reader "a reader who takes part in the validation and production of the literary meaning of the text, making it a place of interpretative cooperation" (Eco, 2007, p.).

Ion Coteanu stated that "the interpretation of a literary work must answer three fundamental questions: What does the work say? How does it say it? Why does it say so and not otherwise?, which are interrogations about the object, manner, cause and effect" (Coteanu, 1986, p. 18).

Constantin Șchiopu states that "the completion of the interpretation is done in several distinct stages: introductory, proper, concluding" (Șchiopu, 2008, pp. 45-47). The introductory stage has the following objectives:

- "*stimulating students' curiosity* by asking questions like: What news do I find studying this text? What distinguishes the literary text to be analyzed from the already studied one?;
- *raising awareness for reading* the fragment or the literary work: What is the fate of the character? How to resolve conflicts? What is the author's attitude regarding the issue approached?;
- *the creation of a psychological influence* to introduce students into the atmosphere of the literary text: the awakening of emotions and their focus on the literary text;

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- *clarification of issues related to social, historical, cultural, economic, and political issues* of the era in which the author lived that generated the work or is described in it;
- *explanation of key terms and philosophical concepts* present in the work;
- *reconstruction of the work genesis* or the author's way from inspiration to fulfilment of the creative act: dating of the work, explaining the sources;
- *highlighting some aspects of the author's biography*, necessary to receive the literary work "(Șchiopu, 2008, pp. 45-47).

In the model proposed by R. Scholes (1985, pp. 21-29) reading is considered a process by which the reader draws his own text:

(1) "*text in text production*" - innocent reading;

(2) "*text about text producti*on "- interpretative reading;

(3) "*production of text against the text*" - critical reading;

For example, the classical ballad "*Paşa Hassan*" by George Coşbuc is inspired by an episode of the battle of Călugăreni, narrated by Nicolae Bălcescu in his work "*Românii supt Mihai Voievod – Viteazul*". The battle between the two armies acquires a symbolic meaning through dedication, bravery and love of country shown by the Romanians led by the brave ruler. The confrontation of the two leaders leads to the award of meanings for the behaviour of both characters.

The poem "*Scrisoarea a III-a*" by Mihai Eminescu includes four pictures in a vibrant tone of patriotism emanating strong meanings: the first picture suggests allegorically the power of the Ottoman Empire by the young Sultan's dream; the second shows the figure of the wise ruler Mircea cel Bătrân, the third depicts the Battle of Rovine, the fourth evokes a moment of calmness.

The strategies that accompany the reading of these two literary texts lead to students' creativity by making analogies: * Compare the artistic ways in which the Battle of Rovine is presented to those used by George Coşbuc when depicting the Battle of Călugăreni in the ballad " Paşa Hassan". An example of strategy that aims to produce *a text against the text* can be represented by such creativity exercises as - Perform another end of the novel "Baltagul" by Mihail Sadoveanu; Imagine Goe's travel through Bucharest etc.

"*The art of reading is the art of thinking*" says Emile Foguet and for reading to become an active and effective working technique it must rely on specific skills formed from an early age in readers: "*the skill to understand reading properly"* refers to the discovery of ideas that express the essence, reflections on the text read, giving meaning and significance to facts and ideas contained in the text; "*the skill to research* unusual *facts"* that may be exploited in new situations; easiness in interpreting the means of expression used by the author of the text, "*the skill to note"* in a practical and useful way the data assimilated during the reading, by vocabulary notes, critical assessments, summary sheets, reading records etc. (Cerghit, 2006, p.175).

The Romanian language and literature teacher should show systematic and constant concerns about the identification / discovery of difficulties in understanding and interpreting the literary texts, in order to take immediate action to overcome and resolve them. In this manner, their pupils can achieve notable progress in exploiting the literary reading from multiple perspectives.

In conclusion, the two types of reading - participatory and critical - are two different approaches of insight into the imaginary universe of the literary text. Each type of reading involves a combination of various strategies and working techniques, which,

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if well prepared and guided by the teacher of literature, will lead to improved understanding and interpretation of the literary text.

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