LITERATURE IS BACK, IT IS BACK WEARING DIFFERENT CLOTHING…[1]

Abstract: *The role of the literature in strategies and methods regarding teaching/learning a foreign/second language has been variously interpreted over the past 100 years. There are a number of different reasons for using literary works in learning foreign language on the university level. Based on the strategies and methods regarding teaching/learning Romanian language at Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, teachers often use literature to assist the development of competence in the language. One of the reasons for including literary texts in the language teaching/learning curriculum is in order to teach "culture". It is claimed that studying literature enables us to understand the foreign culture more. The imaginary as part of the human cultural background in general, and the literature in particular provides the students with the achievement of "the fullest possible awareness of human relevance"*[2]*. Learning language through literature, especially in the third and fourth year of the university studies, in Belgrade, is a big step towards learning it well. Therefore, in teaching/learning foreign language on the university level language and literature should be constant interaction.*

Key words: *FL, literature, culture.*

Introduction

At the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade Romanian language is thought as a foreign language. Achieving as high as possible knowledge of language is the main goal in the teaching of FL[3] at the university level. But "the path to achieving goal is sometimes more important than the goal itself" (Huneke, Steinig, 1997:8 cited in Durbaba, 2011:7)

> Almost every teacher concerned with the working efficiency, inevitably, asks him/herself: What can I do for students to learn better? What kind of conditions will facilitate the desired learning? What methods are most appropriate for achieving the objectives? What didactic means are to be used? How to organize activities? These questions will lead you, ultimately, to the adoption of a strategy which addresses specific tasks of teaching and proper guidance for learning. Good strategic option is a milestone in "lesson design" and it plays, then, a decisive role in the organization and its realization. (Albulescu, 2008:9)

Course interconnection (permeating the language, literature, history and culture) when learning the Romanian language, a small number of students that leads to a more open and closer working relationships, speaks about a specific working methodology of the Group for the Romanian language, literature and culture at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade.[4] It is not our intention to speak about how to study

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[2] (Daiches, 1970 cited in Boyle, 2002:207).

[3] The term "teaching foreign language" refers to the subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than mother tongue is learnt in tutored setting

[4] See more in Dan, M. "Filološke studije na manjim grupama (na primerima nastave na Grupi za rumunski jezik i književnost) in *Savremene tendencije u nastavi jezika i književnosti: zbornik radova*, Beograd: Ministarstvo za nauku i zaštitu životne sredine: Filološki fakultet Univerziteta

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literature of target language. In this paper we will discuss about the correlation between language and literature and the possibilities of learning language through literature.

Brief History of Language Teaching Methods

The need for knowledge of other languages has always existed. Learning methods have changed over time and were related to the needs of society in a given period (Točanac, 2002:5). Chronologically, related to teaching/learning FL methods (Larsen-Freeman, 2001), there is: The Grammar-Translation Method, The Direct Method, The Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching. There is no exclusive mentioning of the role of literature of target-language in any of them, except in the Grammar Translation Method (also known as Classical Method). This method was used for purpose of helping students read and appreciate FL literature. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001:11) Also "it was thought that foreign language learning would help students grow intellectually" (*ibidem*). In an earlier period, when grammar-translation model was paramount, literary texts were the very staple of foreign language teaching, representing both models of good writing and illustrations of the grammatical rules of the language (Daff, Maley, 1992:3). During the late 80s literature of target-language started (again) to be one of the foreign language teaching resources. "For, if indeed literature is back, it is back wearing different clothing" (*ibidem*).

Language and Literature

When speaking about learning the mother tongue, especially in the primary school, language and literature are inseparable. Studies suggest that richer vocabulary in everyday communication, reading and writing are related.

Both literature and language teaching involve the development of a feeling for language, of responses to 'texts' – in the broadest sense of the word – in both written and spoken discourses (Long, 2000:42). According to E. Coşeriu, language and literature cannot be studied separately because they are "a unique form of culture with two different poles […] Literature represents functional completeness of a language" (Coseriu, 2005:400 cited in Toma, Munteanu, 2010).

> Language and literature are two separate phenomena, unsubordinated one to another, and, yet, in a relationship closer than it seems sometimes. Literature means "art in (through) word" and language, as I have already said, finds its superior value in artistic literature (Scorobete, 2000:101).

A student learning FL cannot feel the distinction between language and literature (it is felt only when learning language means learning grammar, and learning literature means learning history of literature) for whom literature is also language. His/hers first interaction with book, written in foreign language, is trying to translate it. But through the evaluation taken on the end of semester, we have noticed that students – readers speak and write better than students who are not reading as much. We consider that FL teaching and literature of the target-language should be linked and made mutually reinforcing.

Why Literature?

Whatever view we take of the nature of literature, there is clearly some phenomenon which is recognized by educational administrators and by the general

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public as an appropriate object for study in schools and universities (Brumfit, Carter, 2000:22).

One of the main courses (Faculty of Philology – Romanian language), in all four years of studying, is Romanian literature. Reading literary works is a major part of the course. The first two years, taking in consideration that the students are on the very beginning of learning the Romanian language, they are learning chronologically about Romanian literature, while reading books translated in Serbian language (in the first year). In second year they are supposed to start reading in Romanian language. The Romanian literature course is an interdisciplinary course, meaning that the Romanian literature is learnt in correlation with Romanian language and culture. In the terms of the language, literary texts offer genuine samples of a very wide range styles, registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty (Duff, Maley, 1992:6).

There are a number of different reasons for using literary works in foreign language teaching/learning. Essentially there are three types of justification for using literary texts: linguistic, methodological and motivational (*ibidem*). Based on the strategies and methods regarding teaching/learning Romanian language at Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, in third and fourth year, teachers use literature to assist the development of linguistic competence in the language.[1]

> Although the text being used are literary, and some of the responses of readers will be discussed in literary terms the prime intention is to teach language, not literature, and the texts may be used as contexts for exemplification and discussion of linguistic items which have no bearing on the value of the work as literature (Brumfit, Carter, 2002:25).

Students tend to have difficulties in translation, not because of lexical points or grammar, but rather because of nuances of meaning, related to the socio-cultural aspect of target-language. Therefore, one of the reasons for using literary texts is in order to include "culture"[2] in curriculum. Literature is one major aspect of culture. It is claimed that studying literature enables us to understand the foreign culture more clearly (*ibidem*). According to Brown "second language learning is often second culture learning" (1987:128). Learning about and accepting the culture of the target language is a motivator for learning language. Gardner uses the term "integrativeness", highlights the importance of openness to other cultures and often repeats that we will never really learn the language if we do not like the culture of the people whose language is taught. (Gardner, 2000:10-24).

The fact that literary texts are, by their very essence, open to multiple interpretation means that only rarely will two readers' understanding of or reaction to a giver text be identical (Duff, Maley, 1992:6). Discussing about books and/or segments of particular book, student can actively use the knowledge of FL vocabulary (communicative competence). Also "this 'genuine feel' of literary texts is a powerful

[1] Textbooks that can be used: Felecan, D. *Gramatica limbii române în contexte literare*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2007; Bota,I. S. *Unele probleme de sintaxă*, Editura Aeternitas, Alba Iulia 2005

[2] Culture is a complex concept, for ex. Brooks divides culture into five spheres: 1.biological growth, 2. personal refinement, 3. literature and fine arts, 4. patterns for living, 5. total way of life (Brooks, 1964:210); see more explanations in Thanasoulas, 2001

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motivator, especially when allied to the fact that literary texts so often touch on themes to which learners can bring a personal response from their own experience" (*ibidem*).

Conclusion

In our opinion if student wants to learn foreign language on the highest level possible, that cannot be achieved without intense reading of literature works and knowledge of the cultural and historical contexts of the target language. Learning foreign language through literature (in our case learning Romanian language) is a big step towards learning it well. As we have mentioned there are at least three reasons for learning language through literature. Therefore in teaching/learning foreign language on the university level language and literature should be in constant interaction.

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