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FORMS OF TEACHER-PUPIL INTERACTION IN LITERATURE LESSONS

Viktor F. Chertov (a)*, Alla M. Antipova (b), Viktor P. Zhuravlev (c)
*Corresponding author

(a) Professor, Head of the Department of Literature Teaching Methods, Federal State-Financed Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education «Moscow State Pedagogical University», M. Pirogovskaya, st., 1h, 1b, Moscow, 119991, Russia, victorchertov@mail.ru*
(b) Professor of the Department of Literature Teaching Methods, Federal State-Financed Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education «Moscow State Pedagogical University», M. Pirogovskaya, st., 1h, 1b, Moscow, 119991, Russia, antipovaalla@mail.ru
(c) Professor of the Department of Literature Teaching Methods, Federal State-Financed Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education «Moscow State Pedagogical University», M. Pirogovskaya, st., 1h, 1b, Moscow, 119991, Russia, vzhuravlev@list.ru

Abstract

This article offers an analysis of the most widespread forms of interaction between teacher and pupil in literature lessons; insight is provided into the forms of collaboration (the co-creation between readers, interpreters and producers of literary works; the co-creation between the executant and director of a project, the 'author–reader' relationship and co-authorship) and the rivalry (generational conflict, conflict of interests, conflict of values, competition and contests) between teacher and pupil in the literature-studying process in schools.

Comparison of domestic and overseas schools have shown that the problems of effective interaction between the teacher and pupils are the subject of lively discussion for pedagogues who pay particular attention to describing specific forms of this interaction. If foreign publications more often than not cover collaboration and co-authorship, including the social, psychological and legal aspects of this issue, then the publications of Russian pedagogues, aside from the examination of the same problems, also describe the programmes aimed at bringing about productive interaction between teacher and pupils, which form part of the training in pedagogical establishments.

This article examines the issue of the programmes at teacher-training colleges oriented towards effective communication and towards the directing of the creative and research projects of schoolchildren. These programmes for teachers comply with the requirements for pedagogues in the regulations prescribed in the Professional Standard for Teachers (2013) and in the system for the professional training and further development of teachers.

Keywords: Literature lessons, collaboration, co-creation, rivalry and conflict.

1. Introduction

The substantial changes that have taken place in recent years in the reading and reception of works of fiction by young readers find themselves the centre of attention of pedagogues, psychologists and specialists in librarianship and bibliology and are discussed at representative international forums dedicated to the problems of reading and studying literature at secondary schools. These issues are directly linked to the question of the specifics of communication in the modern information society, which makes it all the more pertinent to analyse forms of teacher-pupil interaction: something that should be directed at schoolchildren's successful socialisation, at their preparation for not only effective collaboration and partnership but also for their going out to work against the background of potential rivalry, at the development of corporate culture and at their maintaining of leadership qualities. This underlines the particular role of a teacher-philologist in meeting the challenges of literature teaching, which according to national tradition have always been linked to the goals of personality development and the nurturing of patriotic citizens (Chertov, Antipova & Manykina, 2017).

An analysis of contemporary overseas researchers and pedagogues bears witness to the great interest shown in those problems that are of concern to Russian academics too. Thus, there are series of works dedicated to the joint research activity of educators and pupils in secondary schools and colleges (Muntner, 2008; Payne, 2005, Professor, 2017*)*. Researchers point out the range of problems connected with such a form of interaction between teacher and pupil as co-authorship and also point to the issue of protecting the intellectual property of young co-authors, high school pupils and students (Nishikawa, 2014). The monographs and articles of pedagogues and psychologists examine the changes that have taken place in the relationships between teachers and pupils in the learning process (the first, and subsequent, years of working together) and then once the process has been completed (Gehlbach, 2012) and also describe those roles that fall to the teacher using collaboration in teaching in their lessons (Tinzmann, 1990). What is also becoming a separate subject is that of the interaction between teachers and parents (Starr, 2015). The collaboration between teacher, pupils and parents is also present, in particular, in the example of reading fiction and is valued as an important means of forming schoolchildren's reading skills (Erdem, 2015; Jackson, 2010; Werner, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

Experience of studying literature in modern Russian and overseas schools enables a conclusion to be drawn concerning the timeliness of posing the problem of interaction between teacher and pupils and not only in the wider overall didactic plan but also in relation to individual school subjects. Literature is one of the core subjects in Russian schools. Its main component, which is works of Russian and world literature, not only open up the richest possibilities for bringing about collaboration and co-authorship but also permit elements of rivalry and competition and conflict situations, including the inevitable conflicting points of view, evaluations and interpretations arising from the reading and discussing, analysis and interpretation of artistic works.

3. Research Questions

In this article, the authors discuss the specifics of interaction between teacher and pupil in literature lessons and the training of teachers in the various forms of interaction with those subject to the educational process.

4. Purpose of the Study

An analysis of the main forms of teacher-pupil interaction in literature lessons.

5. Research Methods

The main research methods became the analysis of literature and publications in the media dedicated to these issues selected by the authors of this article as well as the studying of pedagogical experience (conversations with students at teacher-training colleges, pupils, teachers and parents), which enables conclusions to be made about the most typical trends in the development of the different forms of interaction between teachers and pupils in the modern information-based education environment.

6. Findings

Social psychology talks of two major forms of interaction between parties to communication: 1) *collaboration (cooperation)* and 2) *rivalry (competition)* (Enciklopedicheskij slovar', 2013). It should be immediately pointed out that both these forms come in many shapes and sizes and that they feature in both joint activity and communication between teacher and pupil in literature lessons, in the preparation for them and in the work done outside of class (individual work with pupils and parents, project activities, out of school activities etc.).

Collaboration as a form of interaction (more or less actively) emerged at every stage of the development of Russian literary education. Testimony to this is borne, in particular, by the history of the literary meeting at Moscow University's hallowed lodgings and by the experience of the work done together by pedagogues and pupils on literary collections and miscellanies at the end of the 18th and start of the 19th centuries, by the practice of conducting literary discussions at university-preparatory schools in the 19th and start of the 20th centuries and by the so-called cooperative pedagogy developed in Soviet schools in the 1970s and 1980s, which was connected to the innovative teachers movement, many of whose principles had been borrowed from classical pedagogical works. In the last decade, learning technology in collaboration, creative workshops etc. has started to be widely used in teachers' working practice.

Considering that literature lessons for the most part examine and analyse works of fiction and the results of creativity and that in Years 11–13 it is also a matter, with an awareness of the historical literary background, of the creative journey of the writer, literary schools, trends and styles, it is not only the concept of 'collaboration' that is widely used in material on teaching methodology but also that of 'co-authorship'.

First of all, this is *the dialogue between the writer and the reader, between the different interpretations of a literary work.* Without such co-authorship, a conversation about literature is impossible; and attempting to build such a conversation on any kind of serious academic foundations

cannot work. On the contrary, it will simply be a conversation about what has been read. This conversation is only partially connected with teaching and nurturing goals. In contemporary literature textbooks and methodology guidebooks, there are a wide range of exercises aimed at comparing points of view and interpretations of literary works, which lead to discussions and arguments with the author, critic or commentator. The leading role, it goes without saying, is played here by the teacher, even in instances where the discussion is conducted in keeping with the exercise outside of the lesson (on social media, for example).

Secondly, it is *the co-creation by the teacher and pupils* that emerges both in the process of analysing the literary text, selecting and considering the materials for the lesson and in the work done together on research and creative projects, the scenarios for out-of-school activities and the putting together of magazines, yearbooks, websites etc. (and in such cases, the teacher performs the role of leader and organiser, who is able to entrust different types of activities to pupils). This form of interaction between teacher and pupils is developed and described in particular detail in methodological science (Merkin, 1995; Romanicheva, 2016) and is present in the experience of leading Russian language and literature teachers (Chertov, Antipova, Belousova & Zhuravlev, 2018).

Thirdly, there is *the co-authorship of pupils in group activities*, which can also transpire (for example, in senior classes) without the direct participation of the teacher, the results of which can sometimes be a nice surprise for him or her and an indication of how effective the work previously carried out with the pupils has been (for example, an electronic album of poetry as a present to classmates or the teacher for a special occasion). It is indicative that in the last two finals of the Russian 'Teacher of the Year' contest, group activities figured in practically all the lessons, which one could even see as being something of an extravagance, or a temporary infatuation of young teachers with this way of working, in large part to the detriment of frontal instruction of the class and to working individually with different pupils.

A special role in bringing about collaboration between teacher and pupils (both in Russian schools and schools abroad) is played by the parents. Contact with parents and organisation of collaboration of pupils and teacher with the parents is what modern textbooks are aimed towards. Thus, in literature textbooks we have compiled for secondary school, there are special exercises 'Together with Elders' that pupils complete with elder brothers and sisters, parents and other relatives. These individual or group exercises (at the pupil's discretion) involve consulting the experience of elders as readers and spectators and take us back to the lost tradition of reading at home and discussing what was read, for example:

1. Share your impressions of the drama by A. N. Ostrovsky *The Storm* with your elders. Ask them how they saw Katerina's story when they were of school age and how they see it now in the context of their life and reading experiences.

2. Which literary works and films about the Second World War would you recommend to your classmates? In completing this exercise, draw on the experience of your parents, other relatives and elder friends as readers and viewers.

3. Visit with your parents and friends the Museum to L. N. Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana. What did it tell you that was new to you about the personality of the author of *War and Peace*?

Rivalry as a form of interaction in a literature lesson (and overall in the pedagogical communication between teacher and pupil) ideally should not, it seems, be contemplated. However, the lessons of literature are the same as the lessons of life; so, isolated cases of rivalry are not only permissible but also even necessary.

It is impossible to avoid *conflict* as one of the indispensable companions of rivalry (conflict of interests, conflict between generations and points of view etc.). A typical example of conflict in a literature lesson features in the film *We'll Live till Monday* (directed by S. Rostotsky in 1968). The literature teacher does not accept the position of the one of the pupils' free compositions on happiness. As a result, all the essays on this subject by the pupils are burnt by one of their classmates. Quite a few such conflicts occur in literature lessons. They are often written about in memoirs, but it is rarer for them to become the subject of discussion of academic discourse.

Polls, which were conducted by us in 2017, of young Russian Language and Literature teachers among the students at the Moscow State Pedagogical University's Institute of Philology working in schools enable us to speak of the prevalence of conflicts connected with reading, preparing homework, carrying out written work and evaluating said work. In particular, this concerns classes and groups with a multi-ethnic composition. That said, the students point out that what worries them most of all are the conflicts not with the pupils themselves but with their parents. They feel themselves to be woefully underprepared precisely for dealing with the parents despite this set of issues being covered by the university's course on pedagogics and teaching methodology.

The presence of an element of *competition* in literature lessons is completely natural, which reminds us of the well-known inscription beneath the portrait of V. A. Zhukovsky given by him to A. S. Pushkin: 'To the victor-pupil from the defeated teacher'. Those in question more often than not may not even be aware of such competition, but this competition may also make its way into the activity programme of a teacher (for example, when reading and discussing contemporary literature's latest offerings or when setting up discussions on social media, where generally it is a matter not of teacher and pupil but of people on an equal footing, concealed behind usernames).

The situation whereby there is a duel between teacher and pupil arises not only when they take part in certain creative contests: the performing interpretation of a literary work (dramatic recitation) or the response to a new work of literature, cinema or theatre that has created a stir with the public. More often than not, such a situation is possible in a literature lesson during the collective search for an answer to a problematic question (Marancman, 1977). To answer such a question, it is frequently necessary to display a certain depth of general cultural background and a degree of erudition. In those measures referred to, the teacher usually finds himself or herself in the stronger position, but situations may arise where the pupil turns out to be better qualified in the issue in question than the teacher. So, for example, the pedagogue A. N. Semyonov suggests comparing two responses from contemporaries of A. S. Griboyedov on the language he uses in the comedy *The Woes of Wit*: the critic N. A. Polevoy, who reproached Griboyedov for his verse saying that it lacks harmony and purity and that there are expressions in the play that jar on the ears ('little darky', 'cheeses off', 't' barbers' etc.), and the critic N. I. Gretsch, who highly valued the language and verse of the comedy: 'Wonderful verse, a faithful depiction of society's characters and peculiarities, lofty feelings of love towards the motherland and entertaining situations — this play weaves

all of this together'. Among the questions driving the discussion between those who agree and those who disagree with the opinion of this critic or that critic, there is also this: 'But do these words "jar on the ears" of the reader at the end of the 20th century? What do you think and why?' (Semyonov, 2015).

The attempt to answer the question posed leads inevitably to arguments about the language of today's literature and about the language of the youth of today and elder pupils. And here the situation can arise whereby it is not those who greatly value classic literature but those with a great knowledge of young people's slang who feel themselves to be in a strong position and who for a certain amount of time feel as if they are ahead in the debate (and a debate is always a duel). The competent teacher does not allow the situation to intensify and lead to anything approaching conflict. It is necessary not to turn the particularly staunch advocates of contemporary slang into opponents, but to organise them into a group of allies by suggesting that they work on the subject for a collective research project 'Speech characteristics of the young protagonist in the literature of our time'.

The methods teachers employ in preventing conflict or in resolving conflict situations have not lost their relevance in our times. These methods should in any case be directed towards effective interaction and collaboration, even in those instances where the modern sociocultural situation and information-based educational environment put the pedagogue in the position of 'defeated teacher', which can happen on occasion while searching for information, making presentations, installations etc. Ideally, the teacher should still emerge the victor, soberly analysing and evaluating his or her work and that of his or her pupils, encouraging and supporting the genuine 'literary Mozarts' (Shcherbinina, 2016) while bearing in mind the numerous instances of overexaggerating the creative potential of young authors and of parental vanity and holding in check those innovations, which often arrive to secondary schools in large part on the pretext of their compliance with the interests and desires of the upcoming generation.

The training of teachers in bringing about productive collaboration in students, in supporting their activeness and independence, in developing their creative abilities and in establishing their contact with students of different ages and with their parents is a relevant objective of pedagogical education. For this to be realised effectively, training in colleges needs to be constructed based on meeting professional challenges, applying teaching technology that contributes to the effective assimilation of professional competencies and to the changing of the character of interaction between educator and student, and on developing new approaches towards assessing the results of assimilation of the educational programme.

In the process for training future language and literature teachers in the Moscow State Pedagogical University, a core role is played by methodological courses and modules (Methodology of Teaching Literature, The Contemporary Literature Lesson, Theatrical Pedagogics, Multimedia Technology in Literary Education etc.). Studying them, in particular, involves the use of the technology of problem-based learning, collaborative learning, conducting seminars in the form of dialogue etc. While solving methodological problems, students design lessons in terms of their communicative focus as well as testing them in the form of role-playing games. In both lessons and during their assessment, students make successful use of cases based upon video lessons, extracts from fictional and non-fictional prose (diaries or memoirs), journalism and periodicals.

The students' training programme includes two innovative disciplines: Speech Practice and Reader's Practice. These are aimed at developing creative abilities of students, forming their own

interpretations of literary works and embodying them in expressive reading and written texts of varying types and genres.

An important role in the professional and personal development of future teachers and in the forming of their professional competencies is played by the experience of taking part in creative contests (oration, recitation etc.), in drama groups, reading societies etc.

In the process of pedagogical practice, students not only plan and conduct lessons. The students also participate in creating scenarios for out-of-class and out-of-school literary events, readers' blogs, magazines, yearbooks, theme-based exhibitions etc., which enables them to strengthen their theoretical training, develop their professional skills and evolve an individual way of communicating.

7. Conclusion

Rapidly developing forms of communication are opening up new possibilities in the achievement of objectives in teaching and nurturing, in involving pupils in reading and in the development of a reading culture in literature lessons. Further research into the forms of interaction between teacher and pupils in the literary education process has indisputable potential connected to the analysis of the modern-day context and the nuances of collaboration (co-creation and co-authorship) and of rivalry (competitiveness) in parties to communication beyond the literature lesson: in libraries, literary museums, the theatre and social media, to name but a few.

Acknowledgements

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