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LITERATURE CIRCLES METHOD AS A TOOL FOR FORMATION OF STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE MOBILITY IN CROSSCULTURAL INTERACTION

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The following article examines two important components to aid students develop their English language oral skills and to enhance their understanding of literature and thinking skills. The first component is the use of the Question and Answer Relationship Format to help teachers elicit appropriate questioning and use strategies to understand literature and non-fictional text in a deeper fashion. The second component is the use of Literature Circles. This strategy, widely used in the United States, allows students to read fictional texts and discuss in depth all the components of a literary piece. Consequently, this technique also triggers students' oral skills while in the classroom. Such a method is ideal for English Language Learners from an intermediate to an advanced and near proficient levels in any educational context. Thus, the authors also share insights from their own classroom experience while using the aforementioned techniques.

Keywords: Literature Circles, QARs format, communicative mobility, crosscultural communication, Literal Comprehension, Interpretative Comprehension, Applied Comprehension.

Introduction. The key component of foreign language communication competence is a communicative mobility – the ability to react quickly in any situation of everyday and professional crosscultural communication. Among the characteristics necessary to respond to the requirement

of the modern society, there are foreign language communication skills, the ability to interact in diverse groups, to apply new forms of interaction, as well as the ability to use a foreign language to gain new knowledge about the world in general and in professional fields. This involves expanding

the range of possible situations of foreign language communication behavior.

Being in the constant search of methods and techniques to improve students' communication competence, teachers of foreign languages address to the best practices and approaches applied in L1 classes that have the potential to be adapted in the field of teaching EFL and ESL. The method of Literature Circles is gaining in popularity in English language classes as an effective way to increase motivation, to create authentic learning environment, to promote student engagement and collaborative learning, to develop critical thinking skills, etc. Its universal nature and obvious efficiency makes it a valuable tool for teaching English language in Ukraine at every educational level.

Literature Review. Being identified as a social activity, Literature Circles model bases on the theory of Vygotsky (1978) who suggested that modelling social environments in the class provide learners with an opportunity to apply higher levels of cognitive processing. A comparatively recent research conducted by Harvey Daniels links Literature Circles to the student achievements. The study is largely devoted to implementation of the method as part of L1 reading curriculum (Daniels, 2002). C.M. Martínez-Roldán and J.M. López-Robertson (1999) discuss Literature Circles as an effective tool for a bilingual classroom. The analysis of the researches (B. Burns (1998), M. Farinacci (1998), E.G. Brabham, S.K. Villaume (2000), Gilbert L. (2000), C. Peralta-Nash and J.A. Dutch (2000), P. Whitin (2002) on the effectiveness of Literature Circles, provided by ERIC Digest (2002) reveals the following three basic elements of the method: diversity, self-choice, and student initiative, and identifies it as an efficient vehicle through which students learn to think critically, express their ideas in oral and written forms, better develop their communication experiences and learn to adapt to different communicative situations and environment. Thus, Literature Circles have a rich potential to be implemented in EFL class at the university level as a tool to contribute to communicative mobility development.

Thus, **the aim of the article** is to reveal procedures and benefits of implementing literature circles in teaching English to improve students' communication mobility.

Main Body. Conversation and discussions are paramount aspects of a good communicative English class. Additionally, the use of content and academic language is essential. Thus, the use of Literature Circle Roles and the QARs Format (Question and Answer Relationship) tapping at the literal, interpretative and applied levels of comprehension as means to incorporate communicative discussions, academic language and a deeper analysis of literature is definitely an effective tool to enhance students' abilities.

The Question and Answer Relationship Format (QARs).

Initially, students can be scaffolded a Three-Level Guide to figure out the levels of reading comprehension (see table 1 below). In the first level, Literal Comprehension, readers can recognize the information which is explicitly stated in the text. Thus, the reader simply searches the text, "reading the lines" to confirm or refute the statements. At this level, the information is "right there" or "textually explicit", it is literal. Then, this level allows for little ambiguity; the facts, concepts or ideas are stated or paraphrased in the text (Raphael, 1982, Pearson & Johnson, 1972).

The next level, Interpretative Comprehension, readers can construct ideas or opinions that are based on the material read, but not stated explicitly in the text. Thus, during this level, readers are "reading between the lines". According to Herber (1978) "readers perceive the relationships that exist in that information, conceptualizing the ideas formulated by these relationships, and expressing these relationships in either written or oral form. The results are the development of an idea that is not explicitly expressed by the authors" (p. 45), as cited in Tama and McClain (1998). Simultaneously, Raphael (1982) describes this mental process as "Think and Search" so students look and gather the bits and pieces of information that support the ideas communicated in the text.

The final level, Applied Comprehension, consists of connecting and integrating the information, ideas and values from students' reading with their own experience or by applying these in other contexts. Thus, Pearson & Johnson (1972) define this process "reading beyond the lines", in which prior knowledge and experience relate to what one has read: That is when we see a relationship between the ideas acquired from other sources and the ideas derived from the reading selection (Herbert, 1978).

Table 1

Three-Level Guide to the QARs Format.

| Literal Comprehension – RIGHT THERE! | | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Goal | What to do? | The information is... | Example |
| Get the information in the text, easy to find | Read the lines | RIGHT THERE | What does the character look like? How do know that? |
| Interpretative Comprehension – THINK & SEARCH! | | | |
| Goal | What to do? | The information is... | Example |
| Integrate ideas, in the text, have to put different parts together | Read between the lines | THINK AND SEARCH | What is the personality of the main character? How do you know it? |
| Applied Comprehension – AUTHOR & YOU (ON YOUR OWN) | | | |
| Goal | What to do? | The information is... | Example |
| Express opinion, form new ideas. Answer not specifically in text. Can answer without returning to the story. Connect your experience to what you have read. | Read beyond the lines | ON YOUR OWN | What made the author write about this? How do you know? |

In order to operationalize and conceptualize the use of this technique, let us use one practical example as seen in this short paragraph: *Donna Smith, a 14-year old girl from Nevada, was very sick. She had a bad heart. "Donna needs a new heart", her doctors said. "She must have a new heart, or she will die soon". Julio Hernandez, 15, was worried about Donna. Julio was Donna's friend. He liked Donna very much. He liked her freckles, and he liked her smile. Julio didn't want Donna to die.*

Now, let us use the same paragraph to create different sets of questions tapping at the three levels of reading comprehension.

Literal Comprehension Sample Question and Answers:

➤ Write several sentences that describe what Donna's problem is.

- Donna is a very sick girl because she has a bad heart.

- She needs to have a new heart.

- The doctors say that if she does not find a new heart she will die.

- Julio didn't want Donna to die.

Interpretative Comprehension Sample Question and Answers:

➤ Write several sentences where you describe someone that had a similar experience to Donna's or Julio's.

- This story reminds me of a boy in the news who needed blood.

- The boy's parents were very worried because the boy could die.

- The parents were looking for someone to donate blood.

- The parents asked people on TV to donate blood.

- A rich man donated a lot of blood.

Applied Comprehension Sample Question and Answers:

➤ Write several sentences where you describe what experiences you think made the author in his life, to write about Donna's problem.

- The author wanted to talk about Donna's disease because maybe he had a similar experience.

- Maybe the author had a relative or friend who was very sick and died.

- Maybe the author got this idea from the TV or the news.

- Perhaps the author suffered for somebody and wanted to share his experience.

Notice the level of sophistication utilized in each question and the types of expected answers that can be projected based on the level of questioning. Thus, definitely we can see the continuum of student understanding from recalling information, to putting together bits and pieces from the paragraph itself to come to a conclusion, all the way to adding the students' experiences and background to establish their own opinions about the text. Thus, if teachers in the ESL or EFL classroom use this technique and nurture the types of questions used in here, students will be able to analyze not only fiction but also non-fictional texts including those that relate to real life information (e.g. labels, directions, newspapers, etc.).

Literature Circles

Literature Circles are "small peer-lead discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article or book" (p. 2, Daniels, 2002). Eventually, the group meets for a discussion and each member makes notes to help them contribute to the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with ideas to share. Essentially, each group follows a reading and meeting schedule, they have periodic discussion on the way through the book. Towards the end, the circle members can share highlights of their reading with the wider community and can even trade members with other finishing groups, choose additional readings and move to a new circle. (Daniels, 2002). Literature Circle participants have pre-prepared roles they can use to come together and discuss the chapter they had just read.

Some roles to be used during the workshop may include: The Discussion Director, The Connector, The Literary Luminary or Passage Master, The Illustrator or Art Director, The Summarizer, The Vocabulary Enricher, The Word Wizard or The Wild & Crazy Word Finder, The Super Story Teller, The Passage Performer, The Diction Detective, The Bridge Builder, The Reporter, The Travel Tracer, The Discussion Notetaking Graphic Organizer, the Double Entry Journal Role and the Researcher. Table 2 below illustrates some of the roles students can use for their discussion.

The process to implement books is best done if done in advance. It is possible to have each group read a different book or the same book as long as they reach the students interest. Also, make sure to use high interest topics, challenging books with well-developed characters and those books that will allow students to make connections with the material read. In addition, it is a good idea to have a schedule of dates prepared for each discussion session. Students can read silently in class or do their reading as homework assignment, read aloud to one another in different group configurations, but also read aloud in a teacher-directed reading center and listen to oral readings. It is also recommended to plan in advance for due dates to avoid falling behind in the discussions and organize your dates by chapters. The advantages of using literature circles in the classroom are also finding online a plethora of resources and printable ready to use lit circle roles. Descriptions and explanations are typically provided in the roles so that students know exactly what to do. Allow also students to take turn performing in different roles and depending on their engagement and performance in the discussion, you might assign students more than one role to have smaller groups.

Finally, Literature Circles combined with the QRAs Format are great teaching tools to engage students from almost all levels, starting at 3rd or 4th grade level all the way to university students learning a second language. These strategies allow students to actively participate, to conduct research, to learn new vocabulary, to implicitly learn grammar in English (or any other second language), to enjoy reading, to deeply analyze language, literary devices, make connections to themselves and to analyze the plot of any story or book in a deeper way. Moreover, the method has a pow-

Table 2

Definition of Some Literature Circle Roles
(Adapted from Literature Circles, 2010 by the College Board)

| Discussion Leader/Questioner/ Discussion Director: | Diction Detective: | Bridge Builder: |
|--|---|---|
| Your job is to develop a list of questions you think your group should discuss about the assigned section of the book. Use your knowledge of levels of questions to create thought-provoking literal, interpretive, and universal questions. Try to create questions that encourage your group to consider many ideas. Help your group explore these important ideas and share their reactions. You will be in charge of leading the day's discussion. | Your job is to carefully examine the diction (word choice) in the assigned section. Search for words, phrases, and passages that are especially descriptive, powerful, funny, thought-provoking, surprising, or even confusing. List the words or phrases and explain why you selected them. Then, write your thoughts about why the author might have selected these words or phrases. What is the author trying to say? How does the diction help the author achieve his or her purpose? What tone do the words indicate? | Your job is to build bridges between the events of the book and other people, places, or events in school, the community, or your own life. Look for connections between the text, yourself, other texts, and the world. Also, make connections between what has happened before and what might happen as the narrative continues. Look for the characters' internal and external conflicts and the ways that these conflicts influence their actions. |
| Reporter: | Artist/Illustrator/Art Director: | Double Entry Journal: |
| Your job is to identify and report on the key points of the reading assignment. Make a list or write a summary that describes how the writer develops the setting, plot, and characters in this section of the book. Consider how characters interact, major events that occur, and shifts in the setting or the mood that seem significant. Share your report at the beginning of the group meeting to help your group focus on the key ideas presented in the reading. Like that of a newspaper reporter, your report must be concise, yet thorough. | Your job is to create an illustration related to the reading. It can be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, flow chart, or other depiction. You can choose to illustrate a scene, an idea, a symbol, or a character. Show your illustration to the group without any explanation. Ask each group member to respond, either by making a comment or asking a question. After everyone has responded, you may explain your illustration and answer any questions that have not been answered. | When reading your Literature Circle novel, you will be expected to record entries in a double-entry journal. You may include interesting quotations from the text, questions about the text, and connections between the text and your own life. During your literature circle discussion, you will trade journals with another group member, and respond to his/her entry under the Peer Response. You may then use these entries as talking points within your group discussion |

eful potential to develop students' communicative mobility creating a fruitful and encouraging environment for natural interaction and collaboration.

Classroom Experiences & Reflections

Given our experience at the university level, we have encountered the use of these techniques rather useful to enhance and exploit our students' potential for oral skills in the classroom. For instance, we have used these techniques in two different contexts: students at Mykolaiv V.O.Sukhomlynsky National University who are becoming philologists, English teachers, interpreters and translators. The second context refers to students who are part of the Mykolaiv ACCESS Micro-Scholarship Program sponsored by US Embassy. These are students between ages 13-18 who are receiving English instruction.

Students in both contexts were given a book to read at home. The book called "The House on Mango Street" by Sandra Cisneros was utilized since it has a rich multicultural set of topics and allows for intercultural communication amongst students. The book author has a strong Chicano Latino background and is well known in the US for her books and short stories.

Upon reading the chapters of the book, each student was given a literature circle role-sheet so that they could complete their tasks and bring them for discussion during class. We found the techniques used rather helpful and influential in our students because we saw great language performance levels and tasks completed by them. We discovered that even the shyest students in our classes, definitely came to the classroom ready to discuss their an-

swers. Students were explained and helped in how to use the QARs and each one of the literature circle roles.

The great advantage of our interaction with students was the fact that students completed all of their assignments at home and came ready to discuss their findings. We were able to openly discuss and analyze the parts of the plot on the book we used. Students were able to make higher order thinking level questions using the QARs, they were able to analyze the characters, the events, the setting in the book, etc. In addition, they were able to make connections from their own experiences to the book we were using.

From the linguistic perspective, students were able to do in-depth analysis of language from the text by analyzing vocabulary, literary devices, learning new words, selecting phrases, sentences and even paragraphs relevant for fruitful linguistic discussion amongst all students in the classroom.

Finally, student engagement into the lessons increased dramatically since students expressed their confidence in understanding better and deeply the book they were reading, they felt personal connections to the book, they conducted research on topics from it, and they were able to communicate orally with more confidence as opposed to being asked directly by the teacher.

Thus, **in conclusion**, the authors highly encourage the use of both literature circles and the QARs in the EFL and ESL classroom. Despite the fact that these techniques were designed initially for elementary students in the US contexts, we have proven such techniques are rather beneficial in

the EFL setting, especially for university students and teenagers. Moreover, the use of multicultural materials is indicative of student engagement. The book we have utilized comes from a renowned Chicano-Latino writer, Sandra Cisneros, who brings topics from the Hispanic culture and community into English literature. Thus, our Ukrainian students highly connected with the book we have used along with the techniques of the QARs and the Literature Circles. The topics from the book

are rather rich and multi-cultural, they tap at real life situations from teenagers and have an emphasis on feminism.

In short, we highly recommend having a rich multi-cultural environment and intercultural communication through the means of using multi-cultural materials (a book or texts), along with appropriate techniques that enhance communication and higher order thinking processes: The QARs and the Literature Circles.

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МЕТОД ЛІТЕРАТУРНИХ КІЛ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ФОРМУВАННЯ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ МОБІЛЬНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ У КРОСКУЛЬТУРНИЙ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ

Анотація

У статті розглядаються два важливих компоненти, які сприяють розвитку навичок усного мовлення студентів, покращенню розуміння літератури та розумових здібностей. Перший компонент – використання формату «Взаємозв'язок запитань і відповідей», який допомагає вчителю виробити відповідні стратегії опитування для глибшого розуміння текстів різних жанрів. Другий компонент – використання літературних кіл. Ця стратегія, широко використовувана в США, дозволяє студентам читати художні тексти та детально обговорювати всі елементи літературного твору. Такий метод ідеально підходить для тих, хто вивчає англійську мову від середнього до просунутого рівня у будь-якому навчальному контексті. Автори також діляться ідеями з власного навчального досвіду використання зазначеного методу.

Ключові слова: літературні кола, формат «Взаємозв'язок запитань і відповідей», комунікативна мобільність, кроскультурна комунікація, буквальне сприйняття, інтерпретативне сприйняття, прикладне сприйняття.

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МЕТОД ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫХ КРУГОВ КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ МОБИЛЬНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ В КРОССКУЛЬТУРНОМ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИИ

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются два важных компонента, которые способствуют развитию навыков устной речи студентов, улучшению понимания литературы и умственных способностей. Первый компонент – использование формата «Взаимосвязь вопросов и ответов», который помогает учителю выработать соответствующие стратегии опроса для более глубокого понимания текстов разных жанров. Второй компонент – использование литературных кругов. Эта стратегия, широко используемая в США, позволяет студентам читать художественные тексты и детально обсуждать все элементы литературного произведения. Такой метод идеально подходит для тех, кто изучает английский язык от среднего до продвинутого уровня в любом учебном контексте. Авторы также делятся идеями из собственного учебного опыта использования данного метода.

Ключевые слова: литературные круги, формат «Взаимосвязь вопросов и ответов», коммуникативная мобильность, кросскультурная коммуникация, буквальное восприятие, интерпретативное восприятие, прикладное восприятие.