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Philological Readings

**READING COMPETENCE FORMATION OF UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS**

Tatiana V. Sapukh (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Department of English Philology and Methods of Teaching English, Orenburg State University, 13, Pobedy Avenue, Orenburg State University, Orenburg, Russia, tatsap@mail.ru

Abstract

Reading competence is the set of knowledge and skills that allow a person to select, understand, organize the information presented in printed (written) form, and successfully use it for both personal and public purposes. The paper is devoted to the urgent problem of the formation of reading competence within university students. The methods applied are literature analysis and action research into reading competence formation while teaching foreign language and literature to students of the Department of Philology and Journalism of Orenburg State University. The research demonstrates that the formation of the reading competence consists of several successive stages and is implemented under certain pedagogical conditions. Assessment of the reading competence is carried out according to the following five indicators, the presence of which requires a complete understanding of the text: orientation in the content of the text and understanding of its general meaning; identification of information; improvement (development) of interpretation; reflection of the content of the text; reflection of the form of the text.

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1. Introduction

Currently, there is a tendency for youth and students to lose interest in reading. This is due to the emergence and active development of new information technologies, electronic media, and the mass entertainment industry (Bogoudinova, Gejman, & Stavceva, 2014; Surkamp & Yearwood, 2018). All these factors displace reading, pushing it to the forefront in human life and society. But since reading plays an extremely important role, both for the full development of the individual and the country as a whole, it is necessary to make attempts to eliminate this problem.

If we consider reading as a social phenomenon, we can find a number of its specific features. Reading contributes to the formation of personality, full of intellectual and emotional plans, which is capable of development and self-realization. Reading activates the development of the most important socio-cultural qualities of the individual, which can be identified in the comparative analysis of people reading and non-reading. According to Plotnikov (1999), recognized authority in the field of sociology of culture and reading, people who read: can think within the framework of any problems, cover the whole and highlight controversial points; adequately assess the situation and find the right ways to solve them; have a good memory and are prone to creative thinking; their speech is beautiful, expressive and rich in vocabulary; freely formulate their thoughts and express them in writing; easier to interact in society; more independent, critical, have their own personal opinion. It is proved that the more cultural experience a person has, the richer and more expressive his language is (Plotnikov, 1999).

Thus, the culture of the individual depends on the reading culture, which reflects various aspects of the development of personality: psychological, ideological, philosophical and is an indicator of its holistic development (Kozyrev & Chernjak, 2007).

One of the key competencies, the formation of which requires a clear understanding of the requirements for relevant knowledge and skills, is reading competence.

For the formation of reading competence, it is important to create conditions for enhancing reader's activity, that is, to form the ability to apply knowledge and skills in practical experience, and thereby ensure the general cultural, cognitive and holistic development of the individual, in other words, to form competence.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. The concept of reading competence

In the late 70-ies of XX century in foreign scientific literature, the term "reading competence" has begun to be widely used (S. Ehlers, J. Hierzezik, G. Westhof, G. Wallenberg). The developers of the document "A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment" (2003), believe that communicative competence is carried out in activities aimed at generating and perceiving of texts on certain topics and in the corresponding field of communication using the necessary tactics.

As a result, communicative competence is manifested in the implementation of various types of speech activities, namely: in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Leading Russian methodists (L. I. Bim, N. I. Gez, N. D. Galskova) propose to distinguish between four components of communicative

competence, namely competence in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Thus, reading competence is one of the essential components of communicative competence.

Reading competence was considered by researchers in general linguistics, psychological and pedagogical aspects. The methodological basis for the study of reading competence was the psycholinguistic theory of speech activity (L. S. Vygotsky, I. A. Zimnyaya, A. A. Leontyev, S. L. Rubinshtein, and others), the main positions of the competency-based approach (O. D. Tomilin, I. D. Frumkin, B. D. Elkonin, etc.). Reading competence, according to these researchers, is an integrative personal characteristic, manifested in the ability of the person to read and use information extracted from the text in practical activities.

Under reading competence, after Razuvaeva (2010), we understand the set of knowledge and skills that allow a person to select, understand, organize the information presented in printed (written) form, and successfully use it for both personal and public purposes.

3. Research Questions

We are interested in the pedagogical nature of the concept of reading competence in general and the way it is formed within university students in particular. Another problem that demands our special consideration is how reading competence is structured. Moreover, we should determine the stages of reading competence formation and find out the indicators of the reading competence formation.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the concept of reading competence and the stages and indicators of its formation within university students.

5. Research Methods

Research methodology included literature analysis aimed at establishing key ideas about the concept of reading competence, action research into reading competence formation while teaching foreign language and literature to students of the Department of Philology and Journalism of Orenburg State University.

6. Findings

6.1. The structure of the reading competence

The reading competence of university students has a number of specific features. Due to its meta-subject nature, reading competence in the context of university education contributes to the formation and development of professional competence. In a modern university, reading competence becomes the basis for individual and research work of students (Babkina, 2016). In the information environment there are qualitative changes in the content of reading competence. The information environment contributes to the formation of new cognitive structures in the course of reading, which have both positive and negative impact on student's reading competence. The negative trends in the field of reading, due to the influence

of screen culture, include: the superficial nature of reading, the presence of semantic gaps, and incompleteness of the formed picture of the world. However, the positive impact of the information environment is the development of intuition, associative ways of perceiving information, spatial imagination, creative thinking, etc.

According to Razuvaeva (2010), the formation of reading competence of students is a "purposeful process of development of their reading motives and reading interests, the organization of the development of their system of reading knowledge and skills" (p. 68).

The following interrelated components are distinguished in the structure of reading competence:

- motivational (needs, reading motives, reading interests);
- cognitive (system of linguistic, country-specific knowledge, knowledge of the text, knowledge of yourself as a reader);
- activity (a set of skills: prognostic, analytical, interpretive and evaluative).

The motivational component is one of the main components of reading and includes motives, needs, interests, desires. Aware of the need for reading, the reader finds the information he is interested in, makes efforts for its qualitative selection.

The cognitive component is characterized by the ability to understand the lexical units of the language, to construct phrases according to the laws of grammar and semantics. This component includes language proficiency.

The activity component is determined by self-mastery of skills and abilities, allowing to solve various communicative tasks (Sapukh, 2016).

According to Klychnikova (1983), in the process of reading the stages of understanding assume first the perception of individual words and phrases, then individual sentences, as well as plans of communication: logical, emotional and motivational.

These categories reflect the nature of the literary text: the relationship between the characters, their demeanor, the author's position and revealed in the language characteristics, which are indicators of these relations. Consequently, they serve as reference points in extracting information from the literary text.

These actions contribute to the formation of semantic forecasting skills: to select distinct semantic information; to set events in an ongoing sequence; to distinguish basic facts from secondary ones; by context, grammatical structure, word-building elements to identify support-clues about the meaning of "semantic milestones". These skills are common for reading texts of various genres.

Characteristic features for reading literary texts are the skills of language forecasting: to identify landmarks that determine the relationship of the literary text, as well as the ability to find landmarks using "strong positions" that allow you to penetrate the actual content of the text. This group of skills is the starting point for penetrating into the semantic content of a literary text. The formation of these skills helps to facilitate and overcome difficulties that the reader experiences when perceiving the text (Dubova & Larina, 2018).

There are special techniques for the development of these skills, taking into account the features of the literary text and the alleged difficulties that students may encounter when "entering" the content and meaning of the text (Orlova, 2008). For example, techniques aimed at identifying modal words and phrases that express the semantic relationship of the text, are permissible to use when working with texts

with the prevailing difficulty, due to complexity of the content. Techniques aimed at identifying the "strong positions" of a literary text are objectively correlated with a group of texts that cause difficulties in connection with their genre conditioning. In the texts dominated by difficulties with the availability of the episodes, and author's lyrical digressions, i.e. branches from the main narrative line, it is important to use techniques aimed at finding supports (signal words and phrases that reflect the topic of utterance).

6.2. The indicators of the reading competence formation

The process of formation of students' reading competence consists of several successive stages (Krasnoshhekova, 2016) and is implemented under the following pedagogical conditions:

- preliminary diagnostics of the level of students' reading competence formation is carried out (taking into account the experience of their reading activity);
- the educational process is based on learner-differentiated approach, for which a system of multi-level assignments is developed, which allows to individualize the selection of tasks depending on the degree of formation of one or another component of reading competence and on the individual personal characteristics of students (type of temperament, nature of the course of cognitive processes, etc.);
- the teacher organizes pre-text work, which is aimed at updating the students' knowledge, necessary for a deep and complete penetration into the readable text and broadening the students' general outlook;
- text materials include texts of different genres: art, scientific, technical, official, business, everyday; and different types: instructions, announcements, menus, schedules, advertising;
- the reflexive position of students in relation to the reading activity is provided by the system of proposed tasks and keeping a reader's diary, which allows students to develop a trajectory of formation of their reading competence (Annenkova, 2016).

Assessment of the reading competence is carried out according to the following five indicators, the presence of which requires a complete understanding of the text: orientation in the content of the text and understanding of its general meaning; identification of information; improvement (development) of interpretation; reflection of the content of the text; reflection of the form of the text (Pletyago, 2016).

All highlighted indicators are interconnected: the successful formation of one depends on the formation of the other. Full understanding of the text involves achieving a certain level of competence of the student for each of the indicators. The level of competence is determined by the teacher's questions and settings for the tasks.

Orientation in the content of the text and understanding of its general meaning is revealed in determining the leading topic, a single goal or purpose of the text. To do this, the following tasks are proposed: to come up with a heading to the text, to express the general meaning of the text in one sentence, to explain the meaning of the prescriptions proposed in the text, to highlight the main components of the table or graph, to determine the purpose of the picture or map, the type of book edition and the nature of the texts included in it etc.

To determine the general understanding of the text, students can be asked to find the relationship between the part of the text and the specific footnote given to it by the author, part of the text and its general idea. From the key ideas of the text, you can suggest choosing the most general, dominant, which

will demonstrate the student's ability to distinguish main ideas from secondary ones or find them in the title of the text and the wording of its main topic.

It is advisable to determine the ability to find information in the text using specific questions, for which the student will need to "run through" the text with his eyes, understand its general content and begin the search for the necessary unit of information, which is sometimes expressed in a text in a different (synonymous) form than in the question .

The ability to interpret the text, determine its hidden meaning can be revealed if students are invited to compare and contrast the information contained in the text, find arguments in it to confirm the assumptions made, draw certain conclusions and formulate a conclusion about the intention of the author or about the conceptual idea of the text.

Speaking about the definition of the reflection of the content of the text, we can offer the student to connect the information obtained from the text with the existing knowledge obtained from other sources, evaluate the conclusions made by the author, based on his own ideas about the world around him, and find arguments in defence of his point of view.

Determining the reflection of the form of the text, the student needs to evaluate not only the content and meaning of the text, but also its form. Adequate development of critical thinking and independent judgments are necessary to comprehend this aspect of understanding the text. The student needs knowledge about the structure of the text, the features of the genre, the ability to recognize humor, irony, hidden meaning, the author's attitude to the problem presented in the text. For this purpose, tasks for critical analysis of the text, for the correspondence of the text to its purpose, stylistic commentary and several others are suitable.

7. Conclusion

Thus, indicators of the formation of reading competence of students are their ability to penetrate into the content and meaning of what they read and the analysis and interpretation of what they read. These characteristic skills, as they form, are superimposed on the skills already available in the students' experience in reading texts of various genres. They are transformed, reconstructed, complementing each other, and, ultimately, contribute to the formation of student's reading competence.

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