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Multicultural literary education and its didactic aspects

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Abstract

This conference paper deals with the problems of implementation of multicultural education to the literary educational process within the frame of the elementary schools. Theoretical bases include discourse about the interconnection possibilities of both educational areas, presentation of conceptual framework of multicultural literary education together with determination of methodical pillars that are fundamentals for effective realization of multicultural education during the work with literary text. At the same time the paper brings results of qualitative research survey focused on content analysis of selected reading book editions in light of their multicultural aspects. The aim of this research survey is to find out which literary texts could become the tools of the multicultural education. During the research data material is being coded and on the basis of this code the categorization system of literary texts with multicultural subject matter is created and the system is applicable for the environment of secondary education.

Keywords: multicultural education, literary education, elementary school, categorization

1 Introduction

Multicultural education as a pedagogical reaction to constantly increasing cultural heterogeneity of our living space is an integral part of every modern and present educational activity. The multicultural education is embodied in the environment of Czech elementary school and its curriculum documents for several years and it represents a primary educational factor in the area of students’ multicultural competency development. Its sectional and universal nature requires concretization of possible teaching application within the frame of particular subjects so that its progress is conceptual, systematic and effective. An appropriate area for implementation of multicultural education themes to the education is for instance a connection of its contents with the activities taking place during the literary educational process that means realization of multicultural literary education. Its conception has not been established yet within the environment of the Czech Republic, it is necessary to systematize both theoretical and didactical base of this boundary discipline to be effectively applied.

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to the practical education. On the basis of theoretical analysis of relevant professional resources we present initial conception of the subject focused on the general didactic framework and the main methodical pillars. Original character of the multicultural literary education leads us to the strong belief that its improvement must be preceded by the analysis of supportive curriculum in the form of the texts contained in the reading books. Analysis primary output is a categorization system of the literary texts with the multicultural themes. This system represents one of the basic didactic supports of the multicultural literary education.

2 Theoretical bases

The second part of this paper summarizes the basic theses that were used as the fundamentals for formulation of research objective. We present initial principles of the multicultural literary education, define enculturational and formative function of the both disciplines and the main methodical pillars. We as well deal with the particular multicultural literary texts, their classification and the contents of the reading-book selections.

2.1 Literary education and its multicultural aspects

As confirmed by U. Abraham and M. Kepser (2005), the literary education provides individual personal development, perception of the perspective of the other individuals and at the same time supports processes of socialization and enculturation, consequently cohesion of the individual with the culture. At present we can observe the tendency based on the stress of educational, esthetical and other functions of the literary education. At the same time the stress is put more and more on the strengthening of the relation between literary education, ethical education and further areas of formative character. Considering the integration of the sectional themes to the curriculum frameworks for the education system of the elementary schools there is a possibility to connect literarily pedagogical education with its contents. Literary education thus can systematically and on a long term basis contribute both to the development of the student’s identity and to the positive course of the socialization and enculturational processes.

Enculturation and inchoative together forms an essential fundament during the application of the multicultural themes to the literary education classes. We assume that their relation is based on the principle of mutual dependence. Cognition of cultural artefacts (it means during the enculturational process) serves as a basis for influencing and formation of the personality of the individual who, through this activity, becomes a part of the surrounding cultural context and shares it. At the same time the individual perception of own life circle with its specific form of social values, respected values and preferred values and standards is developing. Work with the artistic text, poetical or prosaic, allows us to recognize axiological preferences of the present young generation (Vala, 2010). Literary work through its nature, that consists in art reflection of reality, presents potential models of life situations and lays a possibility of reader’s understanding, perception and evaluation, namely from the point of view of his own life and reader’s experience. Literary socialization is to be occurred (Dawidowski, 2006).

2.2 Multicultural literary text

Art texts and activities based on their interpretation are the core of the multicultural literary education. If we understand the art as one of the cultural factors, it is possible to regard any art text as a cultural artefact on whose basis the fulfilment of the goals of the multicultural education can be reached. Even though this determination is from the certain point of view very generalizing and simplistic, Ch. Dawidowski and D. Wrobel come to the finding that the beater of the multicultural manners in literary education is not just the literary text but mainly multiculturalization of the reader’s and interpretative procedures when work with any literary text (Dawidowski, Wrobel, 2006). The multicultural education content consists not only of the literary text but as well of the national works of art that are viewed from the multicultural perspective. However, among these and other authors
we can find different definitions of so-called multicultural literature and distinct conception of the literary texts with multicultural themes classification. It is obvious that each literary text can be perceived on the basis of its multicultural character but there are works of art that are explicitly connected to the multicultural education themes whether in light of topical, linguistic or other subject matter.

Multicultural literary texts classification is presented for example by D. Wrobel (2006). His sorting system includes five text categories: picture books which intermediate encounter with the different worlds, literary texts of foreign authors introducing the different culture, literary texts about the culture that is perceived as foreign, historical texts and texts intercepting conflicting image of own country. Different conception of the classification is presented by K. Esselborn (2007): linguistic and literary multiculturalism, thematic multiculturality, multicultural curriculum vitae of the authors, texts with the themes of cultural contacts and cultural distance and literature intercepting individual multicultural experience of the migrants and exiles in comparison with collective experience of the foreign cultures. We can find other classification for example in the publications of M. Cai (2002) or R. W. Dasenbrook (1987).

Within the framework of our research we also focus on the formation of similar categorization system of the literary texts with multicultural themes whereas we proceed from the analysis of the texts contained in the reading books and that are used by the elementary school students. We take into account historical, social and political context of the country and respect present educational requirements.

2.3 Initial methodical pillar

Multicultural education efficiency depends on the choice of the methodical methods and on the form of didactic tools, particularly textbooks. We presume that the fundamentals of effective realization of multicultural education when working with the literary texts are these methodical pillars that will allow viewing the literary text from the multicultural perspective:

- **Experience**: basic principle is the perception of the artistic text through the experience that is connected to the emotional experience, is a source of motivation and allows elimination of initial barriers and experiencing of hitherto unknown, new situations. It is at the same time a mean of deeper insight into the meaning of literary message.

- **Communication**: In particular, multicultural education, by its conception, affects the area of interpersonal relationships and that is why the choice of the methods should reflect the reality and support its development in the positive direction. Methodology based on the principles of dialogue and discussion is thus essential. We also understand the communication as a communication between the student/students and the artistic text (Rusňák, 2009) or (Gejgušová, 2009).

- **Critical thinking and constructivism**: critical thinking is very closely related to the multicultural education. If the multicultural education is a pedagogical reaction to the world heterogeneity it is necessary to lead the students to be able to handle the diversity. Critical thinking as an ability to evaluate the different alternative points of view and possibilities, to adopt a decision and ground the decision on the arguments (Grecmanová, Urbanovská, 2007) is a mean that makes the perception of varied and constantly changing life reality easier. Pedagogical constructivism, based on the construction of perception on grounds of own train of thoughts, is a fundament for critical thinking methods.

- **Activity and creativeness**: both elements represent requirement of productive and activation methods that are predominating in the multicultural education in all phases of educational process. Due to the creative methods the readers can find their way both to author's artistic intention and to themselves (Vala, 2012) or (Hník, 2007).

2.4 Reading book from the perspective of multicultural education
Reading book is a basic teaching aid in the literary education and represents a specific textbook type both from the content perspective and from the perspective of its position and function within the school education system. In the context of modern age and present education requirements of the society the new dimensions of usage of the reader texts are discovered. Specific position of the reading book within the system of the didactic tools is given mainly by its universal nature. The fact that the reading book contains the literary texts with various topical orientations enables connection of the literary education with other subjects of formative character.

There still remains the question of what texts should be contained in the reading books to provide a teacher the possibilities of the systematic application of the multicultural themes to the lessons. It is necessary to keep the interconnection between the curriculum documents, supportive curriculum and the lessons. Herein we however meet the principal problem because the multicultural education does not have stabilized conception as a result of on-going revision of the multicultural theories. We can observe a step back from the so-called culturally standard approach that emphasizes group specifics, differences between people and the need of their recognition for the purpose of improving of the relation between the cultures. Disadvantages of this approach are replaced by the transcultural model which proceeds from the experience of the individuals and builds on the mutual individual interaction. It does not assign a substantial meaning to the membership in the certain sociocultural groups but still does not talk against its existence (Moree, 2008). We tend to the fact that the running conceptual change of the multicultural education is also going to affect the spectrum of the literary texts that can serve as a mean to the fulfillment of its objectives. On the basis of the culturally standard approach the literary texts remain the tool of the multicultural education and the texts give students the information about the specifics of the different cultures (ethnic, racial, religious or others), but newly without its disproportionate accenting and dogmatization which can lead to fixing of the stereotypes and prejudices. Modern transcultural conception then enables looking for the multicultural elements contained in the literary works with the themes of diversity in its general conception, in the literary texts intercepting concrete situations of intercultural coexistence that present artistic images of the personal experience of the individuals, or in the literary extracts containing problematic phenomenon such as discrimination, intercultural conflicts etc.

3 Research objectives

We take the given theoretical bases into account during planning and realization of the research survey through which we react on the absence of the research analysis of the relation between textbooks content elements and key topics of the modern age, where the multiculturality undoubtedly belongs to. We form the main objectives of the research survey as follows:

- to determine how are the multicultural education themes reflected to the reading books for the upper primary schools, it means what types of the literary texts with multicultural themes the reading books contain;
- to determine percentage proportion of the literary texts with the multicultural themes in the analysed reading book editions;
- on the basis of the content analysis to create a categorization system which is created according to the didactic means (literary texts) contained in the most frequently used reading book series at the upper primary schools and is also adjusted to the Czech historical and social context and present educational requirements. Categorization system is going to provide a needed didactic framework for activities that connect the multicultural and literary education.

4 Research methods

For consideration of the multicultural education reflection within the framework of the reading books used for the upper primary schools we selected a qualitative method of the content analysis. We are aware of the fact that
content analysis can be classified as qualitative or quantitative research. The difference between the two approaches is based for example on the method of data gathering. While quantitative research is preceded by the concept of the categorization system (on the basis of existing theory) and that is not consequently being changed and that serves as a source for organization of the data material, the process of qualitative research is reversed – data material is encoded and on the basis of this code the categorization system is created. Because our main objective is to create the categorization system that will be substantiated by the data and that will be based on the present social context and on the contemporary education requirements, we choose the quantitative procedure.

Reading books content analysis consists of the following steps:

- **Segmentation**: data classification into the sections (analytical units).
- **Encoding and categorization**: marking of the data segment (reading book text) by the code. We proceed from the open encoding (localization of the theme and assignment of the marking pursuant to the list of the preliminary codes with a view to the thematic disclosure of the text), over axial encoding (monitoring of the relation between the categories on the basis of theoretical knowledge, its further classification or compounding to the more general categories) up to the selective encoding (it starts at the moment of stabilization of the categories and we look for the cases that illustrate the given topic). As a result of this stage there is a text collection with the codes and categorization system that is substantiated by the data itself and by its analysis and it does not proceed only from the presumptions based on the knowledge of the known theories (Hendl, 2008).
- **Graphic and tabular presentation**: data acquired from the previous research stages are summarised through the tables and graphs. We proceed from the given categories and we numerically express the frequency of occurrence of its representatives. At the same time we record the occurrence of monitored texts in the particular reading book editions.
- **Closing interpretation**: detailed analysis of the results in light of enhancements that the results bring.

Research sample: In case of qualitative research the selection is purposeful. In our content analysis we focus on the selections of the reading books for the upper primary schools. The selection is based on the list of the text books approved by the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic. We also react to the present situation at the schools and within the research sample we as well integrate the reading book series that do not have the approval endorsement but they are still being used at the elementary schools. We always include the compact reading book series of the particular publishing companies (it means the reading books for the sixth to ninth year of the elementary school, consequently for the students at the age of 11 to 15) in the selection file. Research sample contains reading book editions of these publishing companies: Fraus, Prodos, Fortuna, SPN, Alter, Moby Dick, Nová škola, Tripolia, Scientia.

5 Research progress and its results

During the segmentation we defined the basic analytical unit which is the reading book text (didacticated extract from the artistic text) and in case of poetry it is a poem. This phase bears information that is in light of our research needed for encoding.

During encoding we relied on the list of the codes that was subsequently extended in the course of analysis. We consequently aggregated the codes according to the similarity (relation) into the more general categories. There were created the stable categories that enabled selective encoding. Encoding was proceeded according to the following categories (with code example):
- literature of the different cultures and minorities and literature considering the minorities and other cultures (for example Vietnamese fairy tales, Romany fairy tales, literature with themes of different religions etc);
- literature picturing the encounter of the different cultures, nationalities or religious groups (for example coexistence of Czech people with the minorities, coexistence of the different cultures, conflicts between the cultures, discrimination etc);
- literature with themes of dissimilarity (for example outsiderism, otherness, disabled people etc);
- literature with holocaust themes (Romany holocaust, Jewish holocaust);
- literature with themes of travelling and discovering of new countries and cultures (travelling, book of travels).

Through the encoding of the literary texts we acquired the data of the nonnumeric nature. These figures were brought under the so-called enumeration – we numerically expressed the frequency of occurrence of the monitored artistic texts within the analysed reading books. The acquired data show following tabular and graphic presentment that is annotated.

Table 1. Frequency of occurrence of the literary texts with multicultural themes in the selected reading book editions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading book series</th>
<th>6th year</th>
<th>7th year</th>
<th>8th year</th>
<th>9th year</th>
<th>Total number of the texts</th>
<th>Total number of the texts with multicultural themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute frequency</td>
<td>Relative frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prodos</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortuna</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPN</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPN 2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moby Dick</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alter</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripolia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nová škola</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 1. Occurrence of the texts with multicultural themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Selection</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPN2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraus</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nová škola</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientia</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prodos</td>
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<td>Alter</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPN</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripolitania</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortuna</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Table 1 and graph 1 present the partial results of the content analysis. The value of the absolute frequency shows how many texts with the multicultural themes are contained in the reading books – in proportion to the total number of the texts. Values oscillate between 64 and 31 texts. During the research survey we also consider the percentage of these texts in proportion to the total number of the literary texts contained in the reading book series. Calculation of the relative frequency will allow us to compare the character of the multicultural profile of the analysed reading book selections. Comparison of the relative frequencies of the texts with multicultural themes refers to the proportion of the multiculturality within the given reading book edition in relation to the texts of different character (national literature, literary texts with the different than multicultural themes etc). Acquired values occur in the interval from 9.3 to 20.1 %.

Concept of the categorization system of the literary texts with the multicultural themes, which is directly based on the research, is also part of the primary outputs of the reading book selections content analysis.

The following types of the artistic texts can be classified as the literary texts with multicultural themes:

- **Literature of the different cultures and minorities and literature about the minorities and different cultures.** This category involves fairy tales and legends, story prose with a child character or poetry for the children, exceeding to the literature for adults. Work with these texts mainly mediates the encounter with the different cultures, their traditions and values. At the same time it enables the students to see their culture from the different perspective, because it often leads the readers to the comparison of their own cultural characteristics with the culture of different nations.

- **Literature intercepting the encounter of the different cultures, nationalities or religions.** Literary works that belong to the second category intercept intercultural encounter, namely harmonious coexistence and mutual enrichment or possible multicultural conflicts and barriers. These literary works carry out the informative function and they can meanwhile influence the students’ attitudes, enable to realize the complexity of the interpersonal relationships, develop the ability to make intercultural contacts, sense for the toleration and understanding of the equivalence of the cultures, nationalities and religions etc.

- **Literature with themes of holocaust** forms the independent category as it is very specific and thematically unique. The topic of war suffering of the Jewish people considerably entered the literature.
for adults and literature for children. Reading of the books about holocaust (not only about Jewish holocaust, but for example about Romany too) enables to demonstrate the tragic consequences of the interpersonal intolerance, mainly through the life stories of the real people who became the objects of slaughter just because they were from the different ethnic origins.

- **Literature with themes of difference:** there are the literary works intercepting the encounter with the otherness in meaning to foreignness and difference. Modern literature for adults and also the literature for children offer a lot of titles intercepting the otherness, whether in the sense of cultural otherness, outsiderism (for example handicapped characters, migrants etc) or in the sense of image of the lives of fantasy creatures differentiating from the surrounding world of their external or internal feature difference. However, sensitive didactic approach will help to use these literary works for formation of the student’s ability to be well informed about the plural world, not to give in to the xenophobic tendencies and prejudices, to tolerate the differences and to perceive them as an asset and a source of enrichment.

- **Literature with themes of travelling, discovering the different countries and cultures.** This category includes for example book of travels literature. Art books of this kind will provide a space for enlargement of the knowledge about the different countries and their cultures.

Graph 1 presents frequency of occurrence of the particular categories in all analysed reading books. Graphic representation proves that the largest proportional representation (frequency of 272) is presented by the texts belonging to the category 1 – it means to the literature of the different cultures and minorities and to the literature about the different cultures and minorities. The 1st category is followed by the 5th category with the frequency of 68 (literature with themes of travelling and discovering of the different countries and cultures) and the 2nd category with the acquired frequency of 62 (literary texts intercepting the encounter of different cultures, nationalities or religions). The smallest proportional representation (42 texts) belongs to the 4th category (literary texts with holocaust themes) and the 3rd category with the frequency of 39 (literary texts with themes of otherness). Prevailing values of the first category refer to the overall domination of the culturally standard approach which is oriented on the individual groups (ethnic, national, religious and others), and presentation of their culture.

Graph 2. Frequency of observance of the particular literary texts with multicultural themes categories

![Frequency of observance of the particular categories](image)

6 Conclusions

In this conference paper we focused on the treatise on the possibilities that are provided by the multicultural education for the work with art text. Multicultural literary education is conceived as a boundary educational area which is based on the common encultural and formative function of the both disciplines. Selections of the methods during the work with the art text and reading book content, which the students work with, are the main
factors that significantly influence its character. On this account we aimed our professional considerations to the formulation of the elementary methodical pillars of the effective multicultural literary education. We also dealt with the determination of the multicultural literary text. Classifications, which are mentioned in the text, served as the inputs for our research survey and at the same time provided us the precious information during the process of the code list creation. The paper produced results of the reading book selections content analysis.

The concept of the categorization system, which is a primary output of our research survey, is not a final scheme without the possibility of its further additions and amendments. We neither consider the individual categories to be closed and we admit that they are in the certain aspects blending together and that many books are in light of their themes on the margin between them. Our objective is not a strict and definitive classification of the literary works into the particular categories but mainly an effort to point out the significant options, which are provided by the literature, to at least partially systematize this educational area and to motivate the teachers to retrieval of the further literary texts with the multicultural themes. We assume the categorization system to be one of the most important didactic supports during the implementation of the multicultural themes to the literary education classes, namely in phase of planning or practical education.

References