

Literacy Competence Formation of the Modern School

Lela Tavdgiridze

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, 6010, 35, Ninoshvilist, Batumi, Georgia

Abstract

In 2006 45 countries carried out the international literacy survey which revealed that the majority of 9-10 years children have not proper basic reading skills. Georgian children also took part in the survey. The fact that I work with future teachers, who have to teach children to read and write, led me to become interested in this issue. Literacy is the basis in the formation of multi-educated personality. The national curriculum puts important tasks for school by foreseeing the aims of general education and public requirements, in order to develop students' literacy competence. Literacy includes different kind of skills such as reading, writing, processing the information, ideas and opinions, decision-making and problem-solving. Students' writing and reading skills development is becoming an important part of modern school education. Native language program is beyond the scope of these skills, therefore it joins to subject departments responsibility. This includes enrichment of training programs with the new methods and a wide variety of reading materials. Any subject teacher should use the methods, strategies and activities that develop reading and writing skills and can provide with literacy-oriented environment.

Keywords: literacy, modern school, competence, reading strategies, text comprehension

1. Introduction

Literacy is the basis in the formation of multi-educated personality. The national curriculum puts important tasks for school by foreseeing the aims of general education and public requirements. School graduates should possess nine priority cross-cutting competences, which are crucial for establishing the proper place in the modern world of self-realization. Priority competences include the basic knowledge and skills that can be provided by teaching all subjects acquired by national curriculum. These competences are: literacy, media literacy, digital, quantitative, multilingual, ecological, semiotic, learning to learn, social and civic.

2. Research Problem and Objectives

„In the traditional sense, literacy implies the ability of using a language for developing reading, writing, listening skills. Nowadays its content includes more. In the modern sense, literacy includes reading, writing, processing the information, ideas and opinions, decision-making and problem-solving skills on the basis of the knowledge that a person acquires lifelong “– note from national curriculum (National curriculum, 2014:31). “Literacy is defined as the value regarded by the public and / or opportunity for individuals to understand and use valuable forms of written language.” We read in the report prepared by the National Examination Center (Elbakidze, 2013:1).

Naturally, at any school teacher herself should possess appropriate skills of writing and reading methods. One part of society has a mistaken opinion about the use of reading and writing strategies. They think, that development of reading and writing skills should be performed only in their native language. „Reading and writing is the most powerful pillar not only of the native language and literature, but also of any subject program. The student's academic performance largely depends on how much effective reader the student is” (Papava, etc., 2010:6). Effective reading skills in all subjects are foundation of learning and academic success, as the students in different subjects have to work with different types of texts. Teaching reading is beyond the scope of the native language program and is joined to subject departments. The majority believes that literacy implies for a child to read fiction as much as possible, to be aware of the well-known local and foreign writers and poets, and to be able to quote their appropriate citation. In fact, literacy is the art of text relation, knowledge of reading strategies, getting the information and its management, and it is not oriented on static knowledge. Therefore, literacy is fundamental to students' success, its lowest level directly reflects the results of various courses. “If students are not able to understand non-fiction texts and process information, - for example, a mathematical condition - they will not be able to solve the problem. On the other hand, if students have not developed logical thinking, it will be difficult for them to group the information and establish logical links within the text, for example, to find the correct answer to the questions” (Elbakidze, 2013:17).

Teacher Professional Development Research Analysis shows that if a child is 9 years old and basic reading skills are not yet properly established, the subsequent academic performance will be in great peril. Most children who are not successful in reading are unsuccessful students up to the end of the school period. It is possible to improve reading skills after completing primary education, i.e. primary and secondary levels are extremely important. This implies training program enrichment with the new methods, strategies, a wide variety of reading materials (Papava, etc., 2010: 6). According to PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy

Study), literacy level of adults in Georgia is below the average. In Primary classes according to reading and understanding of the content Georgia ranked 37th among 45 countries. According to the studies, the schooling rate in Georgia has one of the last place in the world.

2014 Year in Georgia was "Literacy Year". However, in general literacy level is measured only by reading / not reading process. Correspondingly, the problem still remains a problem. Our education system is still focused on the large amount of information. However, other options are generally used to measure the level of literacy (Macharashvili, 2015:31).

PIRLS Tests check reading comprehension skills - how much a child can understand, realize the different types of information from the text, if he/she can make connection with the different parts of the facts and opinions in the text and make conclusion, see the cause and effect, understand the main idea of the text. Accordingly, if we, the teachers and parents are anxious about children's literacy and information literacy rate in general, it would be logical, if our children are not forced to absorb, but use reading comprehension, discussion and making conclusions.

3. Findings and discussions

How to raise the literacy rate among adults? How to develop the students reading and writing skills? The first thing is to change the government's attitude towards literacy. It's a nice step forward, that the legislation was reflected in the formation of literacy competence, but this is not enough. Professional standard point indicating that the teacher knows the writing and reading strategies for the development and effective use of the learning process, means that the teacher should have, at least, the relevant theoretical knowledge. In the teacher-training curriculum, teaching methods of writing and reading skills are essential not only for the primary teacher, but also for the basic and secondary level teachers. Higher education institutions which provide the future teachers with reading and writing strategies give not only theoretical knowledge, but also teach them in practical learning process. Future teachers will have the necessary knowledge and skills to support students' literacy level. "The process and quality of teaching is directly related to the quality of education, how the teacher teaches, is linked to how the student learns," said education expert Nino Elbakidze. For improving University teacher competence, teacher training programs have included training on "didactics issues". Its purpose is to teach the students the student-centered teaching / learning issues, new teaching approaches, principles, strategies, evaluation methods and develop their use of teaching skills. Georgia has accumulated reading and general literacy level rising oriented pedagogical knowledge and experience. Several programs were implemented which helped the teachers to achieve important strides in reading techniques. Training programs are being implemented, a special literature is printed (a small number). For enhancing the teaching process, the teacher's specific models and their practice approbation is necessary. For rising students' literacy level, teachers' professional development activities, targeted at the most important direction, should be the students' writing and reading skills development. Professional development activities are important, but not sufficient, if they are not taking into account the future of teacher education programs. In other words, for universities that prepare future teachers students' writing and reading skills, in the development of university education, will be very important. Literacy-oriented schools are gradually emerging in Georgia. (Elbakidze, 2013:17)

4. Methods

For development of the country, we urgently need literate future generations. In 2006 Georgia took part in PIRLS's study. This study is held once every 5 years. According to 2011 data, in Georgia literacy rate is improved by 4 % in comparison to 2006, although it is still below the international average score by 12 units. Future research is planned in 2016. Let's see what this study will reveal.

At the question how to make children like reading process, an experienced teacher, the specialist, the trainer replied to us: " In this process a very important role has not only a teacher but also parents and family. The teacher must correctly select the literature, especially in the primary school, as it is an example for the child. As for parents, they have a crucial role, because if they cannot ensure the child's enticement in reading books, at least they should not hinder the teacher in this process. In obstructing we mean the execution method, when the main leverage are books, for example, in exchange for the performance of any desire they offer to read a book, etc. Any coercion causes reflection and thus, perhaps, recalls the child's aggression. It would be great if the child's parents will be an example for reading books and even if they do not have desire, they still can sit at home with a book in hand, just for showing their child how they are interested in this activity. When a child sees a parent in this condition it becomes a normal thing for him/her, and in this case it is much easier for a teacher to reach the final result (Tabukashvili, 2014:1). The majority of the surveyed teachers think that it is essential for teachers to read all the modern age-appropriate literature, in order to be prepared for students help. Motivation is also important, as long as the teacher suggests to read the book to a child, he has to introduce pupils and students high-quality information about the work and motivate him/her to read it. It is noteworthy that there must be drawn boundary between what you offer for boys and for girls in order to make the book interesting and

attractive for them.

The same survey indicates that reading lessons play very positive role in this process, which has been made compulsory in schools. The more informal atmosphere can help the teacher to have a better result. Format can be held both with the children sitting in a circle, as well as by taking them to nature, changing the environment, etc. It is also important for any educational institution, to create school literacy promoting environment, to form a "Friends of the Book Club", reading corners. At our University there are so-called "Reading Corners", where students spend their free time. They read desired and interesting literature and have a rest. And finally, the most important, any subject teacher in the classroom should skillfully employ the methods, strategies and actions to encourage writing and reading skills development and they should organize the literacy-oriented environment at schools.

5. Results

Consider strategies, which are effective for use in the primary schools for making adults effective readers and "writers", strategies that are effective in high school and strategies, which are provided in the teaching process in BSU by studying the course "Didactics fundamentals". Strategy "Reading in pauses" encourages the reader to understand the texts in-depth. They develop critical thinking, study asking the questions around the text, expressing assumptions and arguments. This method allows any student to understand and process even difficult texts. In addition we arise their motivation to read the text. I divide a text into several parts with the key issues for the reader to report on the pre-suppositions of the given topic. Before reading the text I briefly review the author's writing style and other works. Give instructions to the students to stop at every pause in the text during the reading process. After reading the first section of the text they look for contrasts, stress the importance of foreign words and extract the most important facts. It is important to ensure that the student have read the text attentively. After reading I discuss the following questions: What are the contrasts? Who can explain? Please paraphrase this part of the text. Then I ask students to express their preliminary assumptions on developments of the following section-what do you think will happen? How will the events develop? What indication do you have for this? Give arguments.

They read the text up to the second pause. Then follows discussions, I listen to their expectations about the events developed in the following part. After processing the text parts, I ask the questions: What is the main idea of the text? Is there any different opinion? How do you assess the developments in the text? Why do you think so? By using this method, the students develop ability of working independently over the book, reading the text thoughtfully, discussing the main points, expressing hypotheses, making conclusions and summarize reading, logical thinking, and respect the views of others by using listening skills (Papava, Kikvadze, 2007:14).

Reading comprehension and developing personal approach promotes reading strategy called "Bilateral daily record". Before reading we divide notebook paper into two parts. I give instructions, on the left column they can put phrases that impressed them, on the right side they can put personal experience, or the attitude of the selected phrase, in relation with the problem. It can be a story from their own experience, negative or positive emotions. Right column can be filled with questions such as: Why have you chosen this section? Does it remind you anything? In order to illustrate the point, I do it first myself, and then I ask them to continue the work over the text independently and make notes with comments. After reading the text to the end the volunteers present their work. By this method, students will be able to work independently over the book, read and analyze the text, discuss and write their opinion, make conclusion and summary, listen to the other students' opinion and respect them. By this method, students will be able to select important information from the text, to classify them.

For diversity of independent reading, one of the effective method is "Lost Words". We offer to read the text with omitted words. They read the text carefully and fill in the blanks. They work individually, then they discuss each other's works in pairs. There are often different versions of filled texts. Then we read the right variant of the text. We discuss interesting structures, explain why they have chosen this one: what are advantages. By using this method, we activate knowledge, understanding, comprehension. Everyone is involved in the text processing and what is the most important - we raise literacy. I explain these methods to students - how they can use them. Both strategies can be used in teaching various subjects: humanitarian, technical, science, social, etc.

6. Conclusion

At the end of the semester, we carried out a survey: Which lecture was interesting for you? Why was it interesting? Which method was used at the lecture? We made a survey among 100 students: 60 freshmen, 40 sophomores. According to 70% of respondents the most interesting were the lectures held in dialogues, with problem statement, and not only with a variety of teaching methods. When asked how many courses are held in this lecture form, students named only 3 from all 6 term courses. So the research proves the necessity of teaching reading and writing strategies. We should use variety of reading and writing methods in the teaching process for future teachers in order to show students the advantages and disadvantages of each method, the use of

their phases. By using these and other methods they will be able to plan lessons effectively, diversify the teaching process, promote literate generation, motivation, knowledge acquisition and this contributes to the formation of various competencies. Generally my research field is didactics. In the future I will carry out survey to identify what writing and reading strategies are used by our university professors. At the end of the next academic year I will also conduct a survey among students to reveal what methods are used by lecturers to raise their literacy competence.

References

1. Elbakidze, N. (23 May, 2013). We and our literacy. [Online] available: http://mastsavlebeli.ge/index1.php?action=page&p_id=19&id=231.
2. Macharashvili, T. (2015) wigniереba. [Online] available: <http://4p.com.ge/wigniереba/>.
3. National Curriculum, (2014). Tbilisi.
4. Papava, P., Natsvalishvili, N., Makharoblidze, N. (2010) Effective methods of reading. Tbilisi.
5. Papava, P., Kikvadze, I. (2007). Methods of reading and writing, "School-family-society", Tbilisi.
6. Tabukashvili, N. (2014), 3607 Reading and adults – Advice for parents and teachers. [Online] available: <http://edu.aris.ge/news/kixva-da-mozardebi-rcevebi-msoblebsa-da-maswavleblebs-2.html> (18 October, 2014).