Innovative Methods of Teaching in the Literary Education

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Abstract

In this paper, we present partial results of a research investigation focused on the factors that influence the integration of innovative methods into the teaching of literature education at the lower-secondary school. In the paper we present the results of part of interviews with two groups of respondents - 1st year bachelor's students and 2nd year master's students at the Department of Czech Language and Literature at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc. We present interview data on innovative methods. We investigated students´ preconceptions about these methods as well as their knowledge of specific methods and how they learned about them. Our findings point to a certain inadequacy in the disciplinary-didactic preparation of future teachers and to the current state of teaching literature education in primary and secondary schools. The findings correspond with the findings of another research that are carried out in this field. Data collection was done through structured interviews and data analysis was coded according to grounded theory.

Keywords: innovative methods, literary education, lower-secondary school, research investigation, university students

1. Introduction

The transformation of society associated with the change of the political establishment in Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1980s was also strongly reflected in the approach to the Czech educational system and to individual educational disciplines. According to experts, literary education was to become a full-fledged education based on an aesthetic approach, on the aesthetic-educational nature, on pupils´ direct reading experience with the text or on a focus on literary works [1].

In this paper we present the results of interviews with students of Czech Language and Literature who are trained for their profession at the Department of Czech Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education of Palacký University in Olomouc. The focus of the interviews was, among other things, to find out to what extent the tested students are familiar with the so-called innovative teaching methods, which we perceive as practices that relate to didactic interpretation of the text and which in a certain way activate students in the sense of constructivist learning at the expense of the transmissive transmission of knowledge. In the context of literary education, Hník [1] perceives so-called innovative methods as practices that lead to teaching literary education in a reading sense, whereby "it is based on the artistic text and its interpretation, on the reading experience [1, p. 84]." The reader-centered subject, a fundamental building block of literary education as it is currently conceived by the discipline of literature didactics, also works with the concept of creation, which is an integral part of the didactic interpretation of a literary text. However, the innovative conception of teaching literary education does not eliminate the doctrine; it should be conducted in terms of cognition of the work, not cognition about the work (compare [1]).

We are particularly driven to carry out the research investigation by the fact that many of the professional and disciplinary-didactic knowledge and skills that teacher education students acquire as part of their graduation from the relevant courses are not applied to the educational process at the level of education for which they have been awarded the qualification, for various internal or external reasons. This statement is supported by several informal interviews with graduates of some study programs of the Department of Czech Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education of Palacký University in Olomouc. We are convinced that based on the results of the research it will be possible to implement certain forms of targeted intervention focusing on the transfer of competences acquired by students from the academic sphere to practice. The aim of the research investigation is to determine which factors enter the transfer of disciplinary-didactic knowledge, based on which it will be possible to take certain measures in the sense of possible cooperation between academia and schools, in the line of further education of teachers from practice or in the circle of certain transformation of the content of relevant disciplinary-didactic subjects taught at pedagogical faculties of Czech universities.

In this paper we present the results of interviews with two groups of university students focusing on their knowledge of innovative methods as described above. For the sake of completeness, we present examples of methods that fulfil the concept of innovative approach to literary education. Hnik [1] lists, for example, text completion, inspired creation, retelling a story, summarizing the main situation of a lyric text, paraphrasing the narrative, imitating the

narrative style, reconstructing the record, creating an outline, entering someone else´s point of view (someone else´s role) - changing focalization, considering textual variants, condensing, and reducing content, comparing texts, and working with the title of the book.

As it follows from the outlined above, the mentioned methods, corresponding to the innovative conception of literary education, fulfil the concept of creative (literary) expressivity, which "is one of the ways to a meaningful literary education that will also fulfil the reading and communicative conception of the subject [1, p. 71]."

The results presented in this article represent the first output of the present research investigation. We believe that the selected student statements represent an interesting insight into the issue, especially with an emphasis on the necessary change in the approach to teaching literary education. We are convinced that unless there is a change in the range of preconceptions of future teachers (not only) of literary education, but the desired change in educational reality will also not occur. Therefore, the partial results of the conducted research investigation can be seen as a certain base that can to some extent point out the limits in students´ preconceptions in the given area, based on which targeted intervention in the given area can take place.

2. Research methodology

2.1. General background of research

When studying the results of published research that are related in some way to innovative methods of teaching literature education, we did not find any findings that would point to innovative methods of teaching literature education in relation to their knowledge by prospective teachers.

In general, the need to transform didactics in the context of contemporary social changes is addressed by Martinazzo [2] or Okhrimenkova and Radyginova [3]. Several experts have addressed the methods of critical thinking that are related to innovative methods, in correspondence with different aspects of education. Recent ones include Brookfield´s *Teaching for Critical Thinking* [4] or Chatfield´s publication [5]. Developing students´ critical thinking through literature is addressed, for example, by Li and Liu [6], Azizi, Azizi, Lewandowska, Gosteva, and Majda [7], and Marsuki, Amrilizia, and Habiddin [8].

The research presented here builds on the results of studies that have dealt with the constitution of a separate disciplinary didactics of literature in the conceptual sense and those that have been centered on the identification of the integration of innovative teaching methods into real educational practice at different levels of education. Among these, we can mention, for example, Ondřej Hník´s research [1], which investigated the experiences of first- and second-year university students in teaching literature. The central question was "How did the teaching of literature take place at the second level of primary school and at secondary school?" The results of the research investigation can be summarized in the statement about "the absence of a reading experience [1, pp. 23−25]." The sample of 203 respondents in the first phase of the research (2009−2010) demonstrated similar findings, which we summarized with the phrase "absence of reading experience." Hník continued to interview students in 2011 and 2012, when a total of 191 statements were collected.

Similar research was carried out by Věra Radváková [9] as part of her dissertation, Text Integration at the Grammar School. A total of 1,478 students from four- or eight-year grammar schools participated in the research. "Our research has shown that very little attention is paid to working with text in school teaching. The text has still not become the basis of even literary teaching in grammar school. Teachers seem to be afraid of basing entire literature lessons on the interpretation of texts, even artistic text is not regularly used in literature classes [9, p. 152]." We are of the opinion that the conclusions of these two selected research investigations can be seen as evidence of a certain degree of non-integration of innovative teaching methods into literature education at various levels of education in the Czech Republic. However, the researchers did not investigate which factors influence teachers´ decisions not to integrate these teaching methods into the educational process at the respective levels of education.

2.2. General background of research

The research question of our qualitative research is: *In what ways do teachers in primary schools use innovative methods in teaching literature education?* Due to the nature of the research question, we chose a structured interview consisting of 11 questions as the method of data collection. Another reason for choosing this method was the number of researchers. Four researchers were involved in conducting the interviews, so we chose a structured type of interview so that the gist of the information obtained would be consistent and suitable for comparison. Each of the four researchers conducted ten interviews. They met with the participants in person and in an online setting.

2.3. Research sample

Qualitative research was conducted with two groups of respondents. The first group consisted of teachers of Czech Language and Literature with

different lengths of teaching experience working professionally at the lower-secondary schools in the Olomouc Region. The second group of respondents were students of teaching programs of the Department of Czech Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education of Palacký University in Olomouc. Due to the focus of the paper, we present here a selection of respondents from among the students.

The students were chosen by random selection. Through the university system, the respondents were filtered and then a random simple selection (drawn names) determined those who were interviewed. If any selected respondent declined to participate in the interview, the selection process described above was repeated.

The number of students who were interviewed was determined using the formula for determining the minimum number of respondents for a qualitative research investigation, $Nmin = 0.1*\sqrt{number}$ [10, p. 26 (compare [11]). We based this on the number of students who started in the academic year 2021/2022. year of the bachelor´s degree in Czech Language and Literature with a focus on education and the 2nd year of the follow-up master´s degree in Teaching Czech Language and Literature for the lower-secondary schools, in full-time form. We deliberately eliminated students of combined forms of study of the respective study programs because many of them are already working in pedagogical practice, so the results of the research could be distorted by this fact.

The minimum number of respondents required was set at 1 male and 1 female from each study program. We decided to conduct the interviews with double the number of respondents. Thus, interviews were conducted with a total of 8 respondents. The choice of the year affiliation of the students is deliberate. We are convinced that those from the first year of the bachelor´s degree in Czech Language and Literature with a focus on education do not possess professional knowledge of the didactics of literature, thus their preconceptions with which they enter their chosen studies are greatly influenced by the way literature was taught in the primary or secondary school they attended. The students from the latter group have already taken a two-semester course in Didactics of Literature and have also completed an internship as part of their studies. To a certain extent, it can be said that they will be entering their teaching practice, in which they have had the opportunity to try out different methods and forms of teaching, with slightly distorted ideas in terms of the ideal literary education lesson.

2.4. Data processing

We chose grounded theory as our method of data analysis. We draw on the grounded theory of Corbin and Strauss and use the three recommended coding steps. Three researchers (coders) conducted the analysis. Each of the coders conducted the interviews they conducted. All interviews were analyzed as follows:

Each coder read his/her interviews three times and created base codes for each talk. Researchers coded arbitrary sections of the speeches. All researchers met and compared their chosen codes. They discussed the wording of the codes and modified them to make as many codes as possible the same. They were able to unify most of the codes as the teachers often answered the questions in very similar ways.

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Subsequently, each coder conducted a distillation of their interviews for the other coders to proceed to the next step of analysis, categorization. Simplification meant listing the codes for each question and citing the sentence or part of a sentence to which the code belonged. Coders followed a uniform system of labelling the relevant lines on which the quotation was located for ease of retrieval in case of confusion or discussion.

The other two steps in data processing, axial and selective coding, have not yet been implemented. Creating categories of codes will help in a subsequent step to reveal relationships between codes and new relationships in their occurrence. From the recognition and naming of these relationships, we will then formulate insights that will form a new theory.

2.4.1 Data processing - Summary: We chose grounded theory as the method of data analysis. We draw on the grounded theory of Corbin and Strauss [12] and use the three recommended coding steps. Three researchers (coders) conducted the analysis. Each of the coders conducted the interviews they conducted. All interviews were analyzed as follows:

1) Open coding

Each researcher read their interviews several times and created codes for all interviews. Researchers generally coded entire interviews, with one to three codes appearing in response to a single question. All researchers then met to compare their codes and agree on the wording of the base codes. This was done based on narrowly worded questions to which participants answered very similarly.

Table 1. Selected codes

traditional approach	does not actively seek further training opportunities	working with available materials	discover the idea in the text
passive learner	actively seeks further training opportunities	interest in reading	text from the reading book
active learner	inspiration from colleagues	promoting reading habits	extra-curricular reading
derived definition	inspiration from university teaching	the teacher prioritises	the personal dimension of reading
custom definitions	inspirations from the internet	time consumption	development of the pupil´s personality
surface work with text	inspiration from further education	specifics of the class	development of aesthetic sense

After the first coding session, there was 60 % agreement across the codes. After discussion, the codes were modified and unified so that they could be used for all interviews.

After adapting the codes to specific interviews, coders shared the coded interviews with each other with selected quotes that the researcher considered pivotal.

2) Axial and selective coding

Categorization, i.e., axial coding, has only been done by one researcher. By comparing the codes and looking for relationships between them, several categories emerged. The other two researchers supplemented the categorization made with their observations and added additional data fragments from their interviews. From the exploration of the relationships between the categories, new cues emerged, and by continuously comparing and emerged, and by continuously comparing and returning to individual codes and data fragments, new theory emerged. This process was completed when neither researcher added new notes to the categories.

3. Research results

In this paper, we present the findings of a part of a structured interview conducted with two groups of students. This is in knowledge of innovative methods in the teaching of literature education and how they are introduced to them. We were interested in the students´ responses to the three questions:

1) How was the teaching of literary education in the second level of primary school and in secondary school?

2) What do you imagine by the so-called innovative methods of teaching literary education?

3) What innovative methods are you familiar with? (you don´t have to actively use them, just knowledge is enough)

Respondents from the 2nd year of the follow-up master´s degree answered the first postulated question quite uniformly, in the sense of "I imagine the opposite of what I experienced. And in fact, anything other than what I have experienced. I can already see it being taught differently in primary schools. The innovative thing is to involve the kids as much as possible; the action should be shifted to the pupils. And giving them responsibility for learning." Another respondent characterized these methods as "practices that lead to the development of pupils´ reading competence".

First year undergraduate students reported, for example, "some improvements, upgrades. Something that takes the teaching to some other level, something that is maybe more effective, they also emphasized the elimination of frontal learning, playing different games and group teaching or some changes, well it´s more for the pupil then, that it shouldn´t just be about the teacher, it should be about the pupil. Even like what is going to be read, considering what books the pupils are going to choose as well."

As can be seen from the above, our assumption is confirmed that the upper year students are to some extent influenced in their answers by having taken the Didactics of Literature Education course, which is particularly evident in their knowledge of methods (see also below) and in their critically attuned comparative way of perceiving the teaching of literature education as they did. On a theoretical level, they are equipped with arguments as to why literature education should be conducted in accordance with the current knowledge of the discipline´s didactics. Bachelor students base their answers not on theoretical knowledge but on their own experience, on their feelings and personal ideas why and how literature teaching should be done differently. They emphasize greater involvement of

Table 2. Innovative methods for teaching literature

Method	Number of responses	2nd year of continuing studies		1st year of bachelor studies
Quintuplet	2	1		0
Insert	1	1		0
Text prediction	1	1		0
Character motivation	1	1		0
Entering the role of the author	1	1		0
E-U-R	2	2		0
Finishing the text	1	1		0
Discussion	1	0		1
Alpha box	1	0		1
Text retelling	1	0		1
Upgrades	1	0		1
Methods of critical thinking	1	0		1

The responses of both groups of respondents to the first two questions are presented in a table for clarity (see Table 2). All the respondents from the second year of the follow-up master´s degree was introduced to the methods mentioned above while studying at university in subject-oriented courses. None of the respondents indicated that they had been introduced to any of the methods that can be classified as innovative as a pupil in primary or secondary school. Again, our assumption that the methods of teaching literature education currently used by teachers in primary or secondary schools are somewhat rigid is confirmed, even though there is a wide range of courses and seminars on offer in teacher training where teachers can learn about the application of innovative methods.

The group of respondents from undergraduate education had most often been introduced to these methods on the Internet in social groups where teachers exchange their experiences, or on websites focusing on critical thinking methods. The answers show that students are not familiar with the concept of innovative methods and the intention of using them, but they are aware of their existence and are able to infer that they are methods that will enrich teaching, which is welcome.

3.1. Respondents' ideas about innovative methods

Respondents' ideas about what innovative methods are can be divided into three groups. Some of the respondents provided a so-called derived definition, reflected on the term innovative methods, and described the term using other terms, it seemed that they had not encountered this issue in the past. The second part of the respondents described the term briefly and correctly, gave a so-called basic definition, these respondents gave the impression that the term was familiar to them. The third part of the respondents formulated a so-called elaborate definition, adding to the basic information details about what innovative methods develop, this group gave the impression that they had encountered the term commonly, knew it well and had already thought about its meaning.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented partial results of qualitative research oriented towards identifying factors that influence the integration of innovative methods into the teaching of literary education at different levels of education. We present data from interviews with students of the 1st year of bachelor´s and 2nd year of the follow-up master´s studies at the Department of Czech Language and Literature at the Faculty of Education of Palacký University in Olomouc.

Data collection was conducted through structured interviews, which were recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researchers. To analyze the interviews, we used the grounded theory method according to Strauss and Corbin [12].

The findings of the research point to a certain inadequacy in the disciplinary-didactic preparation of prospective teachers. As we have already mentioned in the discussion, this situation may be due to several factors, especially two-cycle education or some intentional or unintentional adoption of literary teaching patterns from primary or secondary school.

The results of the research also indicate significant differences in the knowledge of the concept of innovative methods between the two groups of student respondents tested. In most cases, undergraduate students were influenced by preconceptions adopted from their teachers from lower levels of education or by the semantic meaning of the term innovative. The members of the group of respondents who were attending the second year of the follow-up master´s program at the time of the research investigation were already familiar with the concept of innovative methods to a certain extent (on a theoretical level) and were able to mention specific methods.

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