

the ESP., São Paulo, n.18, 79-81, dez.1987

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE LITERARY TEXT?

Helena Maria Gramiscelli MAGALHÃES - Universi
dade Federal de Minas Gerais

Rosa Maria Neves da Silva - Universidade Fede
ral de Minas Gerais

RESUMO

O artigo propõe a elaboração de um plano de curso que inclua textos literários num sentido amplo à luz das técnicas do ESP. Discute a questão dos marcadores textuais para distinção entre textos científicos e literários, o padrão organizacional, o tamanho do texto. Acompanham sugestões de textos trabalhados.

Ever since we contacted ESP we have been stricken by the fact that literary works have somehow been avoided in the composition of ESP courses whereas technical/scientific texts (or scitech texts as we will call them from now on) have been privileged.

To begin with, what we have called literary works so far imply - in a broader sense - writings either in prose or poetry including music as well.

When comparing both the scitech and the literary text (or litext), one may notice that the former presupposes some specific features not commonly found in the latter. Such features which involve structural and contextual aspects

of language, characterize the literary text as unmarked in relation to the markedness* of the scitech piece. Markedness enables the reader to identify and visually detect certain lexical and structural chunks thus helping, as well as leading, him to become a contextual guesser. However, the difficulty for the reader to become a contextual guesser. However, the difficulty for the reader to become a contextual guesser in face of an unmarked text may have been one of the reasons for keeping the litext apart from the core of ESP courses as ESP is mainly aimed at the immediate understanding of the holistic aspect of a text comprehension. By extension, the subject-matter of a text would be its nucleus filter.

No literary text allows for such an organizational pattern. Moreover, it develops its own pattern concerning mood, tone and genre, so that two literary pieces may or may not, for example, carry the same mood while scitech texts most of the time are assumed to share certain markers which characterize them as 'neutral'. Neutrality may even be responsible for the lack of ideology - this a claim on part of some scholars involved with reading skills.

A second reason that may be considered as responsible for the exclusion of the litext from ESP courses is the approach used to

* Markedness may be recognized by for example, typical affixes, repeated structures of modification, etc.

develop the introductory reading procedures. Whenever dealing with the scitech text, the whole of these procedures seem to flow naturally inducing both teachers and students to work easily with non-linguistic devices, titles and previous knowledge leading to pertinent prediction. This occurs because the scitech text helps the reader visualize the above mentioned markers thus surmounting any sort of comprehension difficulties.

Whenever dealing with the literary text one has to account for the fact that prediction is to be faced differently from that used for the scitech text. It is our opinion that litemap introductory reading procedures should draw far more attention to details such as authorship, extralinguistic devices and titles whereas previous knowledge of the subject is not often to be expected. Authorship, for example, may enable the reader to make out the writer's involvement with reality and life. Titles may be subjective, metaphorical, poetical, and usually do not help detect the subject matter developed in the litemap.

Scitech texts seem to be more 'concentrated' and 'compact' than litemaps. Those are seen as isolated from one another, non-ambiguous, while litemaps belonging to a specific genre, carrying a distinguished style, not being "clear", provoke a number of subreadings.

Litemaps can create on the reader a critical eye to subjectiveness, style, mood, tone or bias as it may be used for any kind of isolate reading comprehension such as critical, affective, or literal reading.

One may claim, however, that the instrumentality of ESP does not go as deep as the subreading we are proposing and that scitech texts - to which ESP strategies have been applied - lack the above mentioned features. Besides, extralinguistic devices play a major role in the exploitation of the litext. Music, for instance, provides good examples: rhythm, sound, emotion, the singer's voice, the band performance and types of instruments, all of them seem to join and arouse the reader's interest. According to Ray Williams, interest should be the first of what he calls the 'ten top principles' to be fulfilled in any text selection. His assertion conforms to our opinion that the litext may be attractive to students of advanced high school levels provided its variety of subject and form. Concerning those students, needs analysis has come to prove the acceptability of such pieces as teenagers' interests display a whole range of topics while, suprisingly to many, expect and accept different forms. One should not forget that curiosity is also a decisive factor in arousing interest!

In any case, text selections including literary pieces must account for the students' age and social, cultural and personal maturity. As for the text itself, the level of difficulty in relation to vocabulary usage and sophistication of form besides length - this one a crucial aspect - should always be a concern of the teacher's. As for the length of the passage to be selected - although we must admit that a longer text provides the

r
d
-
f
s
s
m

e
f
a
th
th
to
f
wh
Or
ar
Br
da

ab
of
bc
hc
le
in
vi
tr
co
Th
ed

ES
pr

reader with various attractive features which depend on the reader's objectives and taste - we have come to the conclusion that it must fit the time span of the class so that the subject to be read would not be split into small pieces which could either sound meaningless or lead to uninterest.

We also advocate that the Brazilian educational reality should induce teachers to favor reading needs rather than the speaking activity. Supporting such an assumption is their use of the English lexicon together with their cultural environment traditionally tending to an overall view of the world and finally their immediate professional needs which lead inevitably to the reading ability. One should remember that speaking English or any other language in Brazil has not been a Brazil requirement for most professions or daily life.

Anyway while giving priority to reading abilities one way allow for the development of some secondary skills which will enable both students and teachers to fulfill the holistic aspects of education through language learning. Through secondary skills we mean to induce students to have their own critical view on other people's civilization, culture tradition and history which will naturally come out from their thinking and questioning. Those skills cover their needs on the cultural, educational and ideological levels.

On the traditional communicative level, ESP strategies applied to the litext may provide some ground for conversation, writing

or listening comprehension although not as a primary goal. Indeed it does.

To sum up, we have felt that what may be an argument against the literary piece seems not to be the text itself but the well-known struggle between generalization and specialization which tends to reach most of the activities of the world surrounding in such a way that the immediate goals of any enterprise - speed and short term results - seem to exclude any need for indepth activities.

To prove our point we suggest three literary pieces to be used in the classroom:

1. 'Shy Moon', a song composed by Caetano Veloso.
2. 'My Watch', prose, written by Mark Twain.
3. 'Status Symbol', a poem, written by Mari Evans.

Two of those follow this paper as samples to be used by teachers interested in testing the applicability of the proposal.

SHY MOON

Caetano Veloso

Shy moon
Hiding in the haze
I can see your white face
Hope you can hear my tune

Shy moon
Why didn't you stop her

Don't you know suffer
And you'll watch me cry soon

Shy moon
Glow through the pollution
Find me a solution
I'll wait on the high dune
Shy moon

SHY MOON

I. PRE-TEXT ACTIVITIES

1. Você sabe o que quer dizer 'moon'? E 'shy'? Explique. Onde você já viu o título acima?
2. O que você sabe dizer sobre o autor? E a melodia?
3. Por que Caetano Veloso teria escolhido esse tema? E o ritmo?

II. SKIMMING

5. Observe as repetições da letra e o título. Por que você acha que o autor fez uso da repetição?

III. SCANNING

6. Procure no texto:
 - a. as rimas;
 - b. as palavras cognatas;
 - c. onde o autor diz que espera que a lua o escute;
 - d. onde o autor afirma que sofre.

IV. TEXT STUDY

7. Procure no texto palavras que pertençam à mesma família gramatical de:

shy (1. 1) -
hope (1. 3) -
pollution (1. 7) -

8. A quem se referem no texto as palavras:

I (1. 3) -
your (1. 3) -
my (1. 4) -
her (1. 6) -

9. Que palavra no texto traduz a idéia do tempo em que a ação ocorre?

10. Numere a segunda coluna de acordo com a primeira observando o significado mais adequado ao contexto.

- | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------------------------|
| 1. shy (1.1) | () | humilde, tímido, triste |
| 2. haze (1.2) | () | neblina, colina, areia |
| 3. tune (1.4) | () | voz, som, melodia |
| 4. watch (1.8) | () | brilho, claridade, luz |
| 5. cry (1.8) | () | lamentar, chorar, gemer |
| 6. glow (1.10) | () | relógio, observar, ver |

11. Procure o único conetivo do texto e explique o tipo de conexão expressa por ele.

12. Uma das expressões abaixo se refere ao tipo de poluição apresentada no texto.

Qual é?

sonora - do ar - da água - visual.

V. TEXT COMPREHENSION

13. Pelas palavras usadas, como você classificaria o texto: romântico, alegre, triste, irônico.

14. Por que o autor diz que a lua é tímida?

15. O que se pode entender a partir da palavra 'solution'? (1.11)

16. Duas das palavras abaixo parecem ser as mais importantes do texto. Quais são? lua - branca - sofrer - poluição - solução - alta.

17. Qual a mensagem do texto?

18. Para que tipo de público você acha que a canção foi feita?

VI. POST-TEXT ACTIVITIES

19. Fale da sua posição em relação a te
mas românticos.

STATUS SYMBOL

Mari Evans

i
Have Arrived

i
am the
New Negro

i
am the result of
President Lincoln
World War I
and Paris
the
Red Ball Express
white drinking fountains
sitdowns and
sit-ins
Federal Troops
Marches on Washington
and
prayer meetings...

today
They hired me
it
is a status
job...
along

with my papers
 They
 gave me my
 Status Symbol
 the
 key
 to the
 White... Locked
 John

c
 m
 I
 a
 b
 c
 d

STATUS SYMBOL

from I AM A BLACK WOMAN.
 New York: William
 Morrow and Co., 1970.

IV
 a
 ca

I. PRE-TEXT ACTIVITIES

1. Quais são na sua sociedade os marca-
dores de status social? 1.
2. Há na sua sociedade o preconceito ra-
cial? Justifique. 2.
3. Como você acha que um poeta negro en-
cararia a questão do status social numa socie-
dade branca? 3.
4. Qual a sua opinião sobre o uso da poe-
sia para denunciar a questão do preconceito
racial? 4.
5. 5.
6. 6.
7. 7.
8. 8.

II. SKIMMING

5. Comente a apresentação gráfica do
texto. V.
6. Observe o uso da letra minúscula na
grafia do 'I' e maiúscula na grafia do 'They'.
Como você interpreta esse uso? Por extensão, Ne.

On.
 to.

comente as demais ocorrências de maiúsculas e minúsculas.

III. SCANNING

7. Procure no texto:

- a. menção a situações históricas;
- b. onde o autor aponta o símbolo básico de sua ascensão social;
- c. onde o autor menciona sua condição de símbolo renovador da sociedade;
- d. onde o autor ironiza o símbolo de status dado ao Novo Negro.

IV. TEXT STUDY

8. Numere a segunda coluna de acordo com a primeira observando a tradução adequada para cada palavra.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| 1. drinking fountains (1. 13) | () | deram emprego |
| 2. sitdowns (1. 14) | () | trancado |
| 3. sit-ins (1. 15) | () | documentos |
| 4. prayer meetings (1. 19) | () | encontros |
| 5. hired (1. 21) | () | banheiro |
| 6. papers (1. 26) | () | orações |
| 7. locked (1. 33) | () | conferências |
| 8. John (1. 34) | () | escondido |
| | () | jornais |
| | () | bebedouro |

V. TEXT COMPREHENSION

9. Por que a autora se intitula 'O Novo Negro'?

10. Você detecta alguma ironia no texto? Onde?

11. O que você acha que simbolizam os fatos históricos citados?

12. Você observa algum tipo de preconceito no texto? Justifique.

13. Compare a situação de pretos e brancos no texto.

14. O poema transmite sentimento(s) de:

a. alegria	c. orgulho	e. tristeza
b. medo	d. ironia	f. bom humor
		g. humilhação?

Justifique.

VI. POST-TEXT ACTIVITIES

15. Comente sua reação pessoal em relação ao poema.

16. Que tipo de mensagem o poema sugere?

17. Na sua opinião qual a palavra mais importante do poema?

18. Quem você acha que é Mari Evans?

REFERÊNCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

- FRIEDMAN (1980). *Teaching Reading and Thinking Skills*. New York: Longman.
- GOLINKOFF, R.R. (1975-6). "A Comparison of the reading comprehension process in good and poor comprehenders". In: *Research Quarterly*, XI/4: 623-59.
- HOLMES, John (1983). "Ensinando professores a ler: o problema da compreensão de textos acadêmicos". *Cadernos PUC*, São Paulo: EDUC.
- ROBINSON, P. (1980). *ESP (English for Specific Purposes)*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

- SILVA, Rosa Maria Neves da (1984). "A língua para fins específicos e o texto: uma experiência pessoal". In *The ESpecialist*, 20: 32-8, São Paulo: PUC.
- SMITH, F. (1978). *Reading*. London: Cambridge U. Press.
- WIDDOWSON, H.G. (1979). "Process and Purpose in Reading". In: WIDDOWSON, ed. *Explorations in Applied Linguistics*.