

Using fiction in business English classes

What is meant by a creative language teaching? It is the creative use of written and spoken language, combined with an element of fiction. Business school students preoccupied with business English learning need some refreshing experience in their everyday classroom routine, some escape into real life. Not so many years ago there seemed to be a negative attitude to using fiction in the foreign-language classroom. It was regarded as a written form, far removed from everyday communication. Partly this was caused by the old fashioned grammar-translation method that was traditionally applied. But after years of discredit fiction is making its come back and is regarded as an effective way in depth of a foreign language.

Authentic texts mostly articles from “The Economist” or “The Financial times” have been used in communicative learning situations for years. But the texts are often rather short and supplied with carefully constructed information gap exercises to use both argumentative and descriptive language. But “survival” and business English don’t provide for more subtle and meaningful learning of a foreign language. American and English literature both represent a valuable source of literary texts. Literary texts can be carefully chosen and related to the business topics understudy, for example, “Quality” by J. Galsworthy (Market Leader. Intermediate. Unit 16. Quality), “Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats.’ by T.S. Eliot (Market Leader. Intermediate. Unit 5. Employment) or “A LA Carte.” by J. Archer (Market Leader Pre-Intermediate Unit 1 Careers), extracts from “The Genius” or “The Financer” by Theodore Dreiser are related to the topic money and banking and so on.

Literary texts help business school students cross the bridge between common knowledge and perfection providing examples of exquisite language; “disagreement exercises”; emotional involvement; cognitive stimulus; analytical experience; additional social historical and cultural information.

Literary texts provide innumerable examples of exquisite language usage, civilization knowledge and the very nature of literature with its ambiguity can easily provide a stimulus for expressing different opinions. Open-ended, multilevel literary texts will trigger the readers’ responses and function as “disagreement exercises” In literature there is no “correct” solution to how you experience a text, and a class discussion will be exciting communication.

Reading literature can provide a valuable analytical experience for future Mr. Lawyers and Marketers. There are different ways of reading literature: intensive and extensive. Goodman (1970) defines reading as a “psycholinguistic guessing game”. Most of us read just to enjoy a good story. This is true pleasure reading. If we create opportunities for students to *read fast and much*, they will be able to absorb new vocabulary and idioms, and new grammatical structures will more or less unconsciously become part of their linguistic competence. Extensive reading promotes better language and provides experience and pleasure.

The method of combining communicative approach with a literary text enables a teacher to create a world of fiction based on it. The method is based upon three main stages, each divided into two sub stages – all closely connected. They are called I-Model, because the subject, the “I” is in focus

THE I-MODEL

<i>Involvement:</i>	<i>Impetus</i>	<i>Input</i>
<i>Interaction:</i>	<i>Identification</i>	<i>Incubation</i>
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Integration</i>

An illustration of the method based on short story “Quality” by J. Galsworthy while analyzing modern approaches to the concept of quality (Market Leader Unit 16.).

Why choose “Quality” by J. Galsworthy. Firstly, it is perfectly suited for the purpose, namely, to discuss the topic of quality and the problems set out by the author, are still burning problems of the day in the context of CSR, consumer focus and global offensive against counterfeiting. Secondly, it is a part of literary heritage and an example of excellent language. Finally, the short story has tremendous emotional appeal to the reader.

Involvement: Impetus

The story “Quality” by J. Galsworthy should be introduced by saying a few words about its author, its social, historical and literary background in order to prepare the students mentally for the work to come. They can be given a task to define quality themselves and then offered three definitions from Market Leader. Intermediate. Unit 16 Quality p. 126 and p.128, namely, 1. *Quality means excellence*. 2. *Quality is the elimination of variation* 3. *Quality means consistency reliability and value for money*. After that they can be offered to choose the best one. The teacher could further challenge the group with the question “*Should companies produce masterpieces or their job is to please the market?*” helping them formulate individual positions clearly.

Input

After that each student is provided with the text to study individually (Much better to arrange this as a home task). An instruction might read as follows: "Read the text closely, then look it through once again and underline all the facts about the main character's conditions and their deterioration and all the facts about evolving quality of his product. Try to understand the author's message". Small vocabulary test can be offered at the check in stage to refresh author's vocabulary. After the test the teacher should give priority to various "display" questions (which require the student to focus on ideas explicitly stated in the text, namely, details, main ideas, comparisons, cause-effect sequence, main character's traits and so on.) in order to check their literal comprehension.

Predominantly such low level cognitive responses involve relatively simple grammatical structures. But at the initial stage these questions help to brush up the vocabulary of the text and refresh its context.

This input stage is aimed at understanding the contents and getting a grip of the life story of Mr. Excellence (Mr. Gessler).

Interaction: *Identification and incubation*

A possible introduction to this activity might run as follows: You are all Mr. Gessler's neighbors, customers and competitors. Talk about him and dramatic changes that have caught your eye and how these changes have been accumulating. One of you met him long time ago, one quite recently. Discuss his boots and their quality. *This session serves as an ice breaker.*

After the "as if" activity the students can be asked the following referential questions: Could you tell me why the author builds up these two paradigms bottom-up (Quality) and Top-down (Master's condition)? What's the author's message? What should their correlation be, if society appreciates quality? Preserving human and master's dignity in the world obsessed with money is an easy task, isn't it? What's special about author's style, language and mastery? How is emotional impact achieved? What would you do if you were his manager / trouble - shooter? What would be your pricing policy, market segmentation or promotion? And finally, "*Should companies produce masterpieces or their job is to please the market?*" which refers them again to the second definition of quality.

This stage predominantly depends on the creativity of the teacher and his or her ability to look at a phenomenon from different angles.

Interpretation. *Initiative and, integration*

This activity is supposed to be a writing task. The students might be offered to write an essay. "What would they do under the circumstances?" "Should companies create masterpieces or follow the trivial needs and tastes of general public?" or "What

do you think of Nikas. Safronov? Does he represent modern idea of quality?" *The intension is to focus on the link from the past to the present.* This task presents a real challenge as the students have to give their understanding of quality, offer their solution to this problem (find the universals) and clearly define their moral position.

In conclusion it should be stressed one more time that any high quality literary text will give us a universe with its own setting, characters and conflicts.

References

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Juristische Realien der BRD als Bestandteil der lebenslangen Nonstopfremdsprachenausbildung eines Juristen (zur Unterrichtserfahrung eines Deutschlehrers an der juristischen Hochschule)

Die Fremdsprachenausbildung als Bestandteil der beruflichen Kompetenz eines Juristen ist ein ständiges Thema der gegenwärtigen wissenschaftlichen Diskussion zur Juristenausbildung (Geistes-, sozial-ökonomische und naturwissenschaftliche Disziplinen an der juristischen Hochschule. – Materialien der unterrichtsmethodischen Konferenz, 14. April 1998. – Ekaterinburg: Verlag der Uraler Staatsakademie für Rechtswissenschaften, 1999, SS. 53, 64). Über die Rolle der Fremdsprachen in der Ausbildung und beruflichen Tätigkeit ist schon viel gesagt. Als Bestandteil der Juristenausbildung haben die Fremdsprachen einen festen Platz eingenommen. Die lebenslange Entwicklung der Sprachfertigkeiten, ihre adaptive Ich-Plastizität ist ein Unterpfand der erfolgreichen beruflichen Tätigkeit.