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Creating the «Home reading» course for university students

The present paper represents the author's approach to creating material for the «Home reading» course. Having analyzed different views on the problem of correlation of reading with other language skills, the author emphasizes the importance of fiction for teaching professionals. The article describes the general advantages of this course for language specialties, sets the main goals such as development of comprehension of the language, expansion of the students' vocabulary, improvement of speaking skills and critical thinking. The development of critical thinking in conjunction with the expansion of vocabulary is especially important, since this technology contributes to the implementation of a competence-based approach in teaching students. The possibility of displaying in the process of reading foreign language literature, the close interdependence of the language, history and culture of a nation is emphasized. The author presents recommendations on the selection of a fiction and on the stages of text processing for the purposes of the course. The result of the work is the synthesis of various types of tasks, reading methods and course objectives into a single system of exercises. These tasks are aimed at developing the skills of prepared and unprepared oral speech, critical analysis of information, and subsequently, in professional activities. Specific examples of exercises are given with explanation of their outcomes.

Keywords: reading, ESL, fiction, comprehension.

The popularity of extensive reading nowadays faces a considerable decline. There is no surprise, as so many contemporary activities can be considered more engaging and joyful. However, another problem we deal with is the transfer of priority from fiction literature to non-fiction, specifically to the books that are sources of professional information. Well-known language tests, such as IELTS and TOEFL, are focused on the evaluation of the ability to read scientific literature or business correspondence. Consequently, preparation for these tests does not require reading famous novels and analyzing characters' motives; students concentrate on academic vocabulary, explicit constructions and unambiguous details from the text. We come to the fact that a book now is squeezed in some rigid framework, and work with such texts, is guided by certain schemes. The purpose of this approach is noble: it aims at facilitating communication and information sharing on the multinational scale. Once the English language became international, and now it is time for the dry, predictable format becomes international too. The position is perceived as the best choice because of the evident logic of the composition.

We cannot oppose the obvious benefits of a functional approach to reading. On another hand, some researches point out the correlation between reading and creativity. Hein Broekkamp, Tanja Janssen, and Huub Van Den Bergh in their study «Is there a relationship between literature reading and creative writing?» have conducted an experiment which has shown that «positive relationship exists between literature reading and creative writing ability» among students [1; 281]. According to the results of their research, students who read more fiction tend to perform better both in reading and creative writing than poor readers.

Lancia, for instance, reported that young children spontaneously borrowed literary elements of stories they had read previously, weaving them into their own stories [2]. In general, Groeben in the work «Literary creativity» tells that there are theoretical reasons to expect a mutual relationship between the ability to read literature and the ability to creatively express ideas in writing [3].

The need for creativity is unquestionable. Sternberg discuss the nature of creativity and its importance in intelligence [4; 12]. N. Jausovec and K. Jausovec examine the mind and creativity in education [5]. According to Brundrett, creativity theorists have advocated for teaching for creativity at all levels of education and training [6].

Speaking about reading as a skill, authors of «The TKT Course» Mary Spratt, Alan Pulverness, Melanie Williams distinguish several reading subskills which have their functional features. They are:

- Scanning;
- Skimming;
- Reading for detail;
- Extensive reading;
- Intensive reading [7; 21, 22].

Orientation to the functional use of skills has long been prevalent in the education system since the primary outcome of education is the function, helped to train the student. As a result, a student should be able to solve successfully issues related to the interaction with the text, text analysis, extracting and processing information.

Thus, we believe that the course of «Home reading» (also known as the practice of reading fiction) allows combining creativity and functionality in teaching. Working with fiction is very different from working with a business letter created from a template. It is true that any work of art has such essential components as plot and climax, main protagonists and antagonists, a problem, etc. However, the variety, with which an author can handle these components, is incredibly extensive so that reading fiction can become a severe challenge for ESL (English as Second Language) students. Finally, we consider it essential to point out such phenomena as subtext and supertext, access to which some readers may lack due to the poor vocabulary, inscrutable allusions, or merely the absence of critical thinking.

Reading of fiction demands a great deal more than useful reading, i.e., understanding of conflicts and motives, empathy, learning the story lesson, judgments and evaluation, and so much more. However, all those reading subskills can be correctly applied to home reading lessons. Competently composed work always can give the opportunity to implement each of the methods of learning in practice, mainly under the engagement that a good story evokes.

Although home reading course presents a wide variety of benefits, we specify the following objectives:

- to improve comprehension of literary texts;
- to develop the ability to analyze and think critically;
- to broaden vocabulary on various topics;
- to improve speaking skills, especially the ability to express an opinion and describe events.

Although the comprehension and expansion of vocabulary are the key achievements of the course, we want to pay particular attention to the development of critical thinking through reading. It has been almost 30 years since developing critical thinking skills, and critical disposition have become a primary goal in higher education. It is the analytical mindset that is credited with good functionality within society, evaluation of the validity of available information, and making better personal, business or leadership decisions. As Halpern says, developing critical thinking skills are essential to help students «know how to learn and how to think clearly» [8; 451]. Speaking broadly, teaching critical thinking helps students to «make purposeful judgments about what to believe or what to do» [9; 3].

If we synthesize teaching reading subskills, goals of the course, and teaching of critical thinking, as the output, we get a specific pattern that can be used to make a course of home reading lessons. This template is best applied to novels of medium size, as they fuel students' constant interest and desire to read further, while small stories tend to be bizarre and do not provoke strong empathy.

The starting point of creation of the home reading course plan is always the choice of a literary text. Choosing a novel, you should focus on the age and ability of students. The subject matter of the story should not be too difficult for the average student in the group. We urge to the preference of the classics, since it is often the source of the more ample language, though modern literature can be included as it appeals to the young readers.

It is crucial to check how often the teacher has to consult with the dictionary during test-reading of the text. Most likely, if you search for a word in the dictionary a couple of times per page, it is the C1 level. As a rule, classical literature is very rich in vocabulary which is rarely found in the usual wordlist for ESL student or even IELTS. If you do not use a dictionary, then the text is appropriate for the level B1-B2.

When text is selected, it is to be divided into digestible portions according to the weekly schedule of the course. For students, it may be enough to read six thousand words a week. The teacher can break this amount into two parts or assign all six thousand words for reading at once. The main rule is that students understand the text on their own; though considerable assistance would be presented by a list of new vocabulary provided as support for each part of the book.

Since the vocabulary is the main component of the course, enough time is dedicated to the analyses of lexis of the chosen text. Taking into account the teacher's need to return to the material every time the course is lectured, it makes sense to process the version of the novel carefully and select all the words or expressions that are probably unfamiliar to students directly in the text. During the test reading, it is necessary to highlight not only new words but also allusions or historical aspects, which may require clarification. On the way, it may be sensible to underline collocations or even sentence patterns that you would like to emphasize because of how it is presented in the context. It can be a polysemous word, a word with prepositions, and a

phrase. The process of the test reading is vital as it allows picking the material with which the teacher and the students will work throughout the course. For example, highlighted new words could be combined into lists with added definitions. These lists, issued together with the chapters assigned, will significantly help students when reading, and then they can form the basis of the material for a quiz.

Simultaneously with the selection of vocabulary, there goes another process — the choice of material for the development of critical thinking.

At home reading, you develop critical thinking mainly by asking the «right» questions. These questions relate to the links between events and characters; they require complex multi-level analysis of the information presented in the text. Still, such issues do not have a universal answer and can be a reason for debate. Examples of the questions for critical analyses are: why do characters feel this way, why do they act this way; can we believe this; what are the reasons for this information to be in the novel, etc.

After the text is analyzed by this method, one can say that the primary material for work is ready.

Although one exercise can develop several skills at once, we can distribute them along the course’s target areas. Thus, each activity aims at reaching specific goals of the course. Some exercises are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1

Course goals

Course goal	Exercises
comprehension of literary texts	reading at home or reading in the classroom to find examples and other information;
ability to analyze and think critically; ability to express an opinion and describe events	discussions, recitation, essay, pro/con game, debates; composition of theme tables, mind maps, schemes;
broaden vocabulary on various topics;	exercises on words translation; sentences and collocations composition; searching for definitions; search of particular words in the text; choice of prepositions;

Due to their focus on functionality, reading subskills do not require specific tasks but certain types of information. Therefore, we highlight those components of the text that match certain subskills. These components are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2

Subskills and tasks

Subskill	Explanation	Target components and tasks
scanning	reading for specific information	dates, names, places, particular language used for description
skimming	reading quickly for the idea	main events and characters in the chapter, certain events, their causes and consequences; supporting facts
reading for detail	read every word in order to know every piece of information	a description of appearance, clothing, actions, behavior; explanations and motivations
extensive reading	reading of long pieces of text when attention varies	full text for reading at home; separate piece of text for review
intensive reading	used to examine language	new words, prepositions, equivalents to certain new words, patterns of syntax

These tables are generally conditional because all the tasks and all reading subskills tend to overlap frequently and develop several skills at once. We show this with the example of specific tasks below, compiled for work with the novel «To Kill a Mockingbird» by Harper Lee.

The novel «To Kill a Mockingbird» is not only a source of vocabulary, a syntax challenge, and a beautifully built plot but also a guide to the historical insight of America of the 30s of the 20th century. The novel gives as well as a rich moral component since the main character Atticus Finch is a real example of a worthy man, almost a gentleman.

Most of the tasks are divided into two broad categories: those that carry out analysis of the plot, and those that concentrate on vocabulary and speech.

The first task after reading is a check of general comprehension. Questions may be as follows:

1. *Where are the chapters set?*
2. *Who are the major characters of the episode?*
3. *What are the main events of this part of the novel?*

These questions are universal and can be present in any lesson after reading a new chapter. Here we see the opportunity of development of speaking skills and urge for skimming as students would have to revise the text.

Another type of questions is more meticulous and focus on a deep comprehension of the text. Answering them requires the application of detailed reading. Students need to operate with specific fragments from the book to answer such questions:

1. *Why does Scout fight with Cecil Jacobs?*
2. *What was Atticus nickname when he was a boy?*
3. *When Francis talks to Scout, he reveals some unpleasant opinions of the family considering Atticus's branch. About what is it?*
4. *How do black people of Maycomb compensate the unavailability of hymn-books?*

Questions on critical thinking have already been mentioned above; they require a profound understanding of the text, the ability to understand the subtext and to make connections between the ideas that the author indicates. For instance:

1. *How do you think, what attitude Scout has to Miss Moudy?*
2. *Scout claims that «Dill could tell the biggest ones» (lies) she ever heard. What does it mean?*
3. *How do you think, why Dill lies so much?*
4. *How do you think, why Atticus let Scout overhear the conversation with his brother?*

Such questions develop students' ability to express their point of view and support it with facts.

Underestimating the importance of group assignments in this course is hard. They create the atmosphere of a book club, where students share their opinions with each other and feel more freedom in this communication. Table 3 demonstrates the group task.

Table 3

Group tasks

Working in groups of 4, students prepare a list of characters of the novel they have read so far. They discuss characters' features, (what do we know about them?), write them down and tell each other what character they like the most and why.	Students analyze society of Maycomb. They outline the basic social stratification (levels) of families in Maycomb based on the first three chapters they have read. Depending on their choice, students create a map or a table to visualize the stratification. At the end students present social level they distinguish and justify their opinion.	Teacher organizes students in groups by asking them to agree or disagree with the statement: «Good people must never tell a lie». Students can stand in three groups: agree, disagree, and not sure. After forming the groups, everyone is given an opportunity to explain their position.
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In general, group tasks provoke the development of speaking, and with some specific assignments, such skills as scanning and reading for details are required as well.

For the practice of new words, there is also a vast variety of tasks. It may be:

- creation of definitions or guessing words by definitions;
- the composition of sentences, speed composition of sentences, or the composition of sentences with a random combination of new words;
- card games or mahjong games, charades, «the hanged man» activity;
- dividing the words into groups, such as «law», «manner of action», «verb», «emotions», etc.

Students should have at least four exercises to practice the new vocabulary. In the case of the study of new words, not only practice is essential, but also the frequency of the appearance of words, both in the novel and in the exercises. During just one course, it is impossible to teach students every word; nevertheless, the result can be considerable.

Written assignments in home reading lessons also help students practice all the material they learn. The writing skill receives comparatively less time, but depending on the participation of the group, part of the tasks can be modified into an original letter or essay. For instance:

Fifty words story: write about a dare that went wrong but can use only 50 words to tell the story. Usage of the new vocabulary is compulsory.

Such a task gives practice for both grammar and vocabulary. Bearing in mind the connection between reading and creative writing, we can expect students to attempt imitating the novel in their stories.

In the case of teaching future translators, one can always arrange translation exercises. With this purpose, we use some syntactic patterns from the novel; several sentences are translated into Russian and changed so that it resembles the original. Students' task is to find the correct sentence pattern to apply in the translation of the sentences back into English. For example:

1. Он появлялся постепенно. (*We watched Dill emerge by degrees.*)
2. Голодные, они заглотили всё, пережёвывая передними зубами, что было их привычкой. (*Dill devoured it, chewing with his front teeth, as was his custom.*)
3. В её словах была обычная приятная сухость. (*Atticus's voice had its usual pleasant dryness*)
4. Мы могли бы сбежать, но бежать нам некуда. (*Maybe he doesn't have anywhere to run off to*)
5. Я знаю, как он ведёт себя, когда напьётся. (*know how they do when they get shinned up*)
6. Она закрыла газету, решительно сложила её и кинула на стол. (*He closed it, folded it deliberately, dropped it in his lap, and pushed his hat to the back of his head*)

In parentheses there are fragments of the original English sentences, which students are supposed to find and use for translation. Applying to scan, it helps to see these fragments.

Another written assignment involving critical thinking is an essay. The chosen novel engages a lot of social problems and personality problems, moral and ethical problems of society. It provides a fertile field for discussion. A topic of an essay can be put as follows:

At the lesson, students write an essay of not less than 200 words. They are obliged to use at least five vocabulary words from the previous chapters. Theme:

«Reasons and consequence of the crime Mayella Violet Ewell have committed.»

When writing essays, students should consider the circumstances of the case of Tom Robinson. We advise paying attention to the nature of Mayella, her living conditions, and her family. When considering perjury, students should be reminded that during the timeline of the novel, the mores of the US were marked by great racial discrimination, especially in the South.

In the conclusion of the essay, students can come to their own decision as to whether Mayella is guilty of anything.

When writing such an essay, students need to not only use the new vocabulary but also carefully re-read fragments of the text, read for details, to provide an answer based on the facts.

Referring to listening, we think that «Home reading» course hardly can considerably influence this skill. However, the creation of tasks for the development of the ability is possible. In the case of «To kill a mockingbird», the teacher can use fragments from the screen adaptation of the book, or use audio books shared on the Internet in abundance. As assignments, students can listen to a chunk and guess the particular moment in the chapter they have read. Sequential translation is involved if teachers tell students to translate a fragment of audiobook orally. Here, the memory of the learned words goes into action. Another interesting task is to listen to a characters' speech, and then read it with the same intonation. It includes the phonetic aspect; students better feel the syntactic structure of the sentence and the connection of ideas in complex sentences and even paragraphs. Creating assignments for understanding audio details is less advisable, as students usually already know the answers after preliminary reading at home.

The last, but not the least important tasks are those that involve the cultural component of the book. In the case of «To kill a mockingbird», we can identify a particular part — historical and cultural allusions.

For example, the following allusions can be extracted from just one chapter of the book:

1. *Blackstone's Commentaries: One of the most important books ever written on British law.*
2. *Bootleggers: people who make and / or sell illegal liquor.*
3. *Bread lines: During the Great Depression, thousands of people relied on charitable organizations for meals and would line up for simple meals often of bread and soup.*
4. *Brown's Mule: a brand of chewing tobacco.*
5. *Castile: a type of soap, originally made in Spain*
6. *Garden of Gethsemane: the place where Jesus went to pray on the night before his crucifixion.*

7. *Hoyt's Cologne: strong, lasting cologne, originally made in Germany and popular during the first part of the 20th century.*

8. *Sit-down strikes: During the Great Depression, sit-down strikes became a real force in labor relations in the United States. Unlike «regular» strikes, workers in a sit-down strike would literally «sit down on the job»; that is, they would refuse to leave the building until their demands were met.*

9. *Lydia E. Pinkham: a maker and manufacturer of patent medicines in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of Pinkham's medical concoctions were aimed at women, and the majority of them contained liberal amounts of alcohol.*

10. *Reconstruction: the period of time, roughly between 1867–1877, when the Southern states were reorganized and reestablished after the Civil War.*

A variety of exercises is possible when you want students to pay more attention to the cultural component. A teacher can put allusions on the cards without clarification and invite students to pull out one card randomly; students may merely give explanations to the suggestion on the map or even try to remember at what point in the narration the thing was mentioned.

The variations of exercises and skills we employ in the course are incredibly significant. The level of difficulty can be moderated by the language level of the chosen book. At any level, every task we have mentioned serves the objectives of the course, which were discussed above. As one would expect, reading and discussion of the material correctly develop language skills. Oral exercises, discussions, retellings, and answers to analytical questions lead to the improvement of speaking. Without reading at home, a student is not able to participate in classes. The personal words list that a student compiles and hand over for verification is a great way to ensure attentive reading. The weekly quiz helps to monitor the success of vocabulary learning. Use of the full potential of the course requires a proper and thorough organization.

Experience shows that starting a course is better with a text of smaller volume and complexity, and then move on to a more complex one. We have to notice that when running from a smoother passage to «To kill a mockingbird», the first paragraph already made students feel insecure due to its complexity. Some encouragement helped to ensure them not to give up and proceed. It may be complicated to explain to modern students that they should always be ready to face some difficulty at a new stage.

Analyzing the beginning of the course, we notice the following. At first, it can be difficult for students to understand the connection between sentences, both because of grammar and because of vocabulary. They need to be supervised in how to work with the text while reading. The teacher could show them: how to allocate unfamiliar words in the book so to return to them later; how to highlight difficult and incomprehensible moments; how to mark facts, names, and places to find them quickly during a discussion.

Further, the practice shows that students, reading a significant novel for a while, begin to recognize words that appear earlier; students tend to like adding such words to their speech. There are fewer errors in the choice of tenses and students learn to correct themselves. The implementation of indirect speech is required almost at any lesson, and on a full scale, so even those students who have problems with this particular grammar improve significantly.

Lively discussions on the topic are the generally a distinctive feature of the course that students love. For example, there were heated debates on a statement from the book: «*People in their minds never took pride in their talents*». The discussions went beyond the audience and continued between students even after the class.

There are usually less strong students in a group who do not keep up with the progress of the other students. Those who have a lower level may find it difficult to cope with questions of critical thinking, thus for them, items of a common understanding are designed. Moreover, such students try to write quizzes better to reach the average grade.

In conclusion, home reading is not a particular discipline. This course does not develop specific professional skills; it is a general course that prepares the mind and language skills for further fruitful work. The objectives of the course, if achieved, contribute to the student's future performance. Students perceive lectures easier, extract the most critical information and retell material successfully; it becomes easier for them to handle unfamiliar words, and accurately express their position on senior courses.

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Т.В. Марышкина

Университет студенттері үшін «Үйде оқу» курсы жасау

Мақалада «Үйде оқу» курсына арналған материалдарды авторлық көзқарас тұрғысынан беру қарастырылған. Әртүрлі тілдердегі басқа тілдердегі қарым-қатынасқа қатысты ой-пікірлерді әртүрлілікте зерттей отырып, автор арнайы мамандарға арналған көркем әдебиетін бағалайды. Мақалада тіл мамандықтарына арналған осы курстың жалпы артықшылықтары сипатталды және оның негізгі мақсаттары айқындалды: тіл түсінігін дамыту, сөздік қорын кеңейту, сөйлеуді, сыни ойлауды дамыту. Студенттердің оқу үрдісінің құзыреттілігін жүзеге асыруға мүмкіндік беретін технологиялық әдіс ретінде танымал сөздік қорын кеңейтуге байланысты критикалық ілгерілету. Тіл, тарих және мәдениетаралық өзара әрекеттесудің шет тілдегі әдебиеттегі оқу үрдісіне шығарып көрсетуге мүмкіндік берді. Мақалада автор өнер туындысын таңдау туралы ұсынысты бере отырып, курстың мақсаты үшін мәтінді өңдеу кезеңдерін көрсетті. Жұмыс нәтижесі әртүрлі түрдегі синтез ретінде қолданылды, әдістерді алудың нақты тәсілдерін құрады. Бұған дайындық және нақтыланбаған онтайлы нәтижелерге арналған нәтижелер, ақпараттың талдауы және, кейіннен, кәсіби қызмет. Сонымен қатар мақалада жаттығулар мен нәтижелер бойынша нақты мысалдар келтірілген.

Кілт сөздер: оқу, ESL, фантастика, түсіністік.

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Составление курса «Домашнее чтение» для студентов университетов

Статья представляет собой авторский подход к созданию материала для курса «Домашнее чтение». Проанализировав различные взгляды на проблему связи чтения с другими навыками владения языком, автор подчёркивает важность художественной литературы для обучения специалистов. В статье описаны общие достоинства этого курса для специальностей, развиваемые навыки и раскрываются основные его цели, такие как развитие понимания языка, расширение словаря, улучшение разговорной речи и критического мышления. Развитие критического мышления в совокупности с расширением словарного запаса особенно важно, так как эта технология способствует реализации компетентного подхода в обучении студентов. Отмечена возможность показа в процессе чтения иноязычной литературы в тесной взаимосвязи языка, истории и культуры нации. Автором даны рекомендации по подбору художественного произведения, приведены этапы обработки текста для целей курса. Результатом работы стал синтез различных типов заданий, методов чтения и целей курса в единую систему заданий. Эти задания нацелены на развитие навыков подготовленной и неподготовленной устной речи, критического анализа информации. В статье приведены конкретные примеры упражнений и ожидаемые результаты.

Ключевые слова: чтение, ESL, художественная литература, понимание.