

Eva Skopečková

Literature Class: Ways to a Unique Literary Experience?

*To teach is to be battered
Scrutinized, and drained,
Day after day. We know this.
Still, it is never said.
(Jane Tompkins)*

Abstract

The present study examines the current state of literature teaching, mainly with respect to tertiary education, including the dominant issues in this field, recent trends as well as major difficulties and concerns influencing and shaping the literature class. The field of literature teaching has been influenced by literary scholarship that has undergone remarkable development and offers plenty of theories and approaches to literature, but also by various educational theories. Particularly, the study introduces the basic theories of literature teaching connected with certain pedagogical inventory that are applied in the literature class and consequently focuses on the underlying principles of reader-oriented approaches to literary text based on Wolfgang Iser's reception theory that are in terms of literature teaching and students' motivation to read literature of great importance. Nevertheless, despite the influence of various educational theories it is still important to stress the fact that literature

represents a highly specific phenomenon that will always require a very careful and particular treatment.

Key words: literature teaching, reception theory, reader, Wolfgang Iser, educational theories

1. Introduction

Jane Tompkins, a Professor of English at Duke University and one of the leading literary scholars, summarizes in this poem about the “*bravery of teachers*”¹ her experience, thoughts and opinions on the teaching profession. In fact, using these few lines she was able to express the feelings and anxieties many teachers and especially literature teachers encounter *day after day* in the classroom. Literature teaching involves not only perfect command of the subject field – including literary scholarship as well as a ceaseless study of the constantly growing body of world literature, which is an almost impossible task – but also truly keen personal involvement and enthusiasm of the teacher to be able to help students discover and explore the tremendous wealth of interpretations and meanings offered by literary texts. What is more, at university level the feeling of pressure becomes even more intense since literature courses become more and more specific requiring broad as well as really deep and profound knowledge of the particular topic, the number of students grows and the circumstances become more complex influenced by further academic requirements and concrete conditions. Elaine Showalter, a Professor of English at Princeton University, talks in terms of literature teachers about seven types of anxieties² teachers might experience. These concerns or even feelings of fear and uneasiness are directly connected with the belief of many teachers (and not only them) that to be a good teacher and keep one’s *authority* one must not ever lose face and be always sure what to answer or how to resolve a difficult task. This strange and completely mistaken feeling of absolute correctness and sort of omniscience inevitably leads to frustration and pressure. Showalter distinguishes seven sources of these worries and teaching troubles spanning *lack of training, isolation, teaching versus research, coverage, performance, grading* as well as *evaluation*³ However, despite these anxieties and poten-

1) Tompkins 1996, 90.

2) Showalter 2003, 3.

3) *Seven types of anxieties: “lack of training”, i.e. lack of teaching experience and methodological background when one actually starts teaching; “isolation”, i.e. the need of teachers – especially those entering the profession – to be in contact with other teachers and share experience; “teaching versus research”, i.e. the ongoing conflict between teaching and scholarly publication, Showalter comments: “We call teaching our jobs, but we call our research our work. And the two conflict for our attention and our time” (Showalter 2003, 11); “coverage”, i.e. a burning issue to cover the enormous quantity of lite-*

tial pitfalls teaching is still not only one of the most exhausting but also one of the most rewarding professions and fortunately there are still many people who believe that it is worth trying *day after day*.

Nevertheless, is it then possible literally to get out of this vicious circle of fear and frustration? Are there any guidelines how to tackle these anxieties and help our students find a way to a unique literary experience without threatening one’s mental balance? The aim of this study is to examine the current state of literature teaching, especially literature teaching in higher education, and introduce basic principles of particular approaches to literary texts and methods of teaching that seem to offer a possible framework or inspiration to help overcome at least some of these concerns and teaching troubles looming over the the literature class.

2. Literature Teaching – Theories and Methods

Before discussing the individual theories and approaches to literature teaching, it is important to define the very concept of literature and the role of literature in education and eventually the mutual relation of literature and education. However, already the definition of literature seems to represent a sort of tough assignment, since even after hours and hours spent theorizing and going through plenty of primary as well as secondary publications in order to propose a working definition of literature (to bear in mind whenever one starts a literature class) the result will most probably be not really satisfactory.

There have been many attempts to provide readers as well as scholars with an adequate and possibly generally acceptable definition of literature. Nonetheless, these attempts have always reflected a particular point of view or a particular theoretical approach and therefore such definitions might be often somewhat contradictory. Generally speaking, these explanations and descriptions oscillate between two extreme poles,⁴ i.e. approaches defining literature as an utterly autonomous whole, which cannot be reduced to a mere expression of a particular ideology and which do not correspond to concrete logical notions, or on the contrary, approaches defining literature as heteronomous entities reflecting historical consciousness, which can be explained and decoded by means of exact terminology. Despite

rary publication; “performance”, i.e. though teaching one is in fact performing in front of a group of students, a less sympathetic and enthusiastic audience that you first have to address and engage and if you succeed, also educate; “grading”, i.e. how to motivate students and show them how to improve without punishing and categorizing them; “evaluation” since it is very difficult to cope with even a tiny hint of critique after one has tried so hard, especially if it contains very personal comments (Showalter 2003, 3–20).

4) Zima 1998, 15–16.

these apparent differences and diverse attitudes to literature, it seems that all of these more or less successful definitions lead to one inevitable conclusion: literature represents an enormously varied and complex concept and the effort to define it is a never ending and highly complicated process resulting on the one hand from a particular attitude or theory approaching it and on the other hand from the very heart of literary work.⁵ Therefore, it seems sensible to avoid these extreme positions and to start with the distinguishing of literary and non-literary texts focusing primarily on the very heart of literature, which makes a text a literary one. The very essence of any literary work consists namely in its aesthetic function, i.e. in its ability to “*release the whole of it as well as its individual parts from the usual context*”⁶ and to establish completely novel and unprecedented relations.⁷ This distinguishes then literary texts from non-literary factual texts, which on the contrary try to “*describe and if possible also bring about concrete life situations*”⁸ and lead to concrete comprehensible conclusions. Literature can be then seen as a “*singular and wholly autonomous phenomenon*”,⁹ whose aim is rather the process of searching and discovering itself than some sort of final and incontrovertible conclusion and clearly definable ascertainment. This incompleteness and *multivocality* resulting from the very essence of literature seems to represent the basis for the specificity of this phenomenon¹⁰ and might be perceived as sort of cornerstone for further definitions, descriptions and analysis of literature including literature teaching.

As implied above, apart from the definition of literature it is essential to consider also the role of literature in education, the mutual relation of literature and education as well as the main reasons for the teaching of literature. Ronald Carter

a Michael N. Long¹¹ describe with this respect three basic models.¹² These models reflect particular learning objectives as well as educational goals¹³ including possible tasks and roles that literature might play in education and entail also specific pedagogical techniques and methods that will be described later in the text. Naturally, these models represent a generalisation of the most frequent tendencies concerning concrete educational goals and therefore should not be seen as *mutually exclusive* and rigid systems, but rather as open subsets of a larger whole, in which literature and education meet and influence each other.

The first one is called *the cultural model* and perceives literature as a sort of accumulation of national wisdom and cultural heritage. Following this model, education is seen as a means of making the most significant thoughts and ideas encoded in literature (in a particular way, in a concrete historical and cultural context) available to students. Students are informed about the development of literature, about individual styles and genres and last but not least, they have an opportunity to compare their own cultural tradition with the tradition of someone else. Within the framework of the cultural model, students are taught how to interpret and appreciate a literary work as a product of a particular time, cultural and historical tradition and an artistic expression of a concrete author. In terms of pedagogical techniques and methods, the cultural model is closer to the teacher-centred and rather “*transmissive pedagogic mode*”¹⁴ which focuses on the text as a product about which students learn to acquire information.¹⁵

The second model, called *the language model*, focuses on language and the use of it. Consequently, literature is seen as an opportunity to offer students access to a really innovative and highly creative use of language, which can be in such a form and amount hardly found in real life situations. This approach foregrounds the importance of the gradual language development believing that the exposure to such a varied

5) Skopečková 2010, 19.

6) Nezkusil describes the aesthetic function of literary texts and refers to Jan Mukařovský and his concept of work of art (Nezkusil 2004, 26).

7) Following this approach, the very heart of literature consists in its aesthetic function, i.e. in a function that draws our attention not only to that what the literary text says, but also how it is said and how we as readers are able to understand it. Here Zima refers to Jan Mukařovský and his notion of poetic language. Contrary to disciplines preferring observable and undeniable facts leading to unambiguous conclusions, there is literature presented as a space offering its reader rather constant searching and discovering, uncovering of new relations and new meaning (Zima 1998, 196).

8) Nezkusil 2004, 26.

9) Nezkusil 2004, 79.

10) Skopečková 2010, 22.

11) Ronald Carter, a Research Professor of Modern English Language at University of Nottingham focussing on the field of applied linguistics, and Michael N. Long, teacher and the author of numerous publications relating to teacher training and curriculum design.

12) Carter and Long 1991, 2–11.

13) The term educational goal is used here to suggest a broader and more complex aim of education compared to a learning or educational objective, which is more concrete relating to the performance and results of a pupil or student (Průcha 2005, 18–19).

14) The transmissive mode or “the transmission theory of teaching” is an approach that is primarily about the transferring of knowledge from the teacher to the student (Showalter 2003, 28).

15) Carter and Long 1991, 8.

language material will undoubtedly have a positive effect. The language model is logically connected with language-based approaches that put the main emphasis on the language use. Therefore, it is more student-centred and activity-based¹⁶ trying to activate students using various activities and tasks relating to language in particular literary texts. In terms of literature and particularly foreign language literature, the application of the language model seems to draw certain parallels with the principles of the communicative approach.¹⁷ This focus on language connected with the study of literature might, however, cause certain conflict bringing against each other the specificity of literature as described above and the interest in the language use typical of the (foreign) language classroom.

The personal growth model on the other hand sees the main goal of literature teaching in helping students to establish and foster a permanent and committed relationship with literature showing them that literature cannot only teach them something, but offers also emotional satisfaction and inspiration. Proponents of the personal growth model "try to help students achieve an engagement with the reading of literary texts"¹⁸ that will last for their whole lives and that will reach beyond the classroom. This approach, however, does not develop only the relationship of students to literature, but by means of an intense experience they go through while reading literature it helps them to gain an insight into their own being, being as individuals, being as a part of larger communities as well. Similarly, the personal-growth model is more student-centred since its aim is to "motivate the student to read by relating the themes and topics depicted in a literary text to his or her own personal experience."¹⁹ Students should not really analyse the text in terms of language or particular style, but rather try to personalize the topic of the text and compare it with their own experience and perhaps also evaluate.²⁰

In other words, teachers – more or less consciously – tend to choose particular approach adopting certain reasons for the teaching of literature and apply it in the

16) Activity-based learning focuses entirely on projects, games and arts and crafts compared to the more traditional, knowledge-based teaching approach (Thornbury 2006, 3).

17) The communicative approach is also known as communicative language teaching (CLT). It is an umbrella term used to describe a major shift in emphasis on language teaching that occurred in Europe in the 1970s, i.e. a shift away from teaching language systems in isolation to teaching people how these systems are used in real communication (Thornbury 2006, 36).

18) Carter and Long 1991, 3.

19) Carter and Long 1991, 9.

20) Teachers should encourage here students to "evaluate what they read so that they learn to distinguish for themselves great literature from less successful examples" (Carter and Long 1991, 9).

classroom. They follow certain pedagogical theories and choose certain techniques and methods to achieve a concrete learning objective as well as educational goals. To complete the discussion concerning theories of teaching with respect to the literature class, we could add further divisions, e.g. the traditional opposition of teacher-centred²¹ and student-centred²² approaches representing always one of the two basic perspectives in the classroom or some further categories covering other angles and aspects of the process of literature teaching, such as subject-centred²³ approaches or an interesting category invented by Elaine Showalter the so called eclectic approach.²⁴ Nevertheless, the main point is that all of these approaches to literature teaching are to some extent influenced by educational theories. After all, teaching of literature combines literary scholarship and certain amount of pedagogical skill since one of the tasks of the teacher, university teachers including, is also to think about the way to make the material accessible to his or her students.

3. Language Pedagogy and Literary Study: Influence and/or Interference

Moreover, due to the interconnectedness of literature teaching with the issue of reading and comprehension or interpreting of literary texts it is also influenced or at least inspired by theories concerned with the development of language skills and the process of reading in particular. From the psycholinguistic point of view, reading is seen as a process during which the reader almost simultaneously visually perceives the

21) Teacher-centred approaches are concerned with the teacher and his or her activities and roles in the classroom, i.e. what should the teacher do to facilitate the process of learning of his or her students. The teacher's personal involvement and presentation of particular topics might stimulate and motivate students to read really attentively and keenly and to develop a life-long passion for reading of literature. Often the teaching is compared to a sort of performance stressing the instructor's speaking and acting abilities, along with his intellectual ones (Showalter 2003, 32).

22) Student-centred approaches observe how students learn and what should be done to maximize the process of learning. In the literature class, teachers try to give students more opportunities to explore the literary texts by themselves, to find their own ways into the text and express their opinions and judgements openly.

23) Subject-centred approaches put the main emphasis on the content, the subject itself. Applied to the literature class, students get certain information about literary works, their authors, etc. leaving them often with the somewhat misleading impression that the discussed material provides the only correct answers relating a topic, a literary text.

24) Eclectic approaches might be seen as "the most widespread theory of teaching literature", since many teachers do not really have a concrete theory and just try "to make use of whatever will do the job" (Showalter 2003, 37).

written text and decodes the encoded information.²⁵ In other words, it is a process that on the one hand consists of visual perception and identification of language means, i.e. their recognition followed by the comprehension of their meaning, and at the same time includes the interpretation, i.e. the understanding of the sense or message of the read material.²⁶ Not only the first,²⁷ but also the second part might cause sometimes difficulties too, especially concerning literary texts, where this constant search for meaning and attempts to discover new relations and possible reception represents one of the main features defining literature, as described above. Moreover, some literary texts and their interpretation represent a *hard nut to crack* even for experienced scholars. Therefore, methods and techniques offered by educational theories concerned with reading and especially the reading of foreign language literary texts often inspire teachers of literature as well.²⁸ Nevertheless, as indicated above, the focus on language and its development in connection with literary study might also pose certain problem. The unfortunately common belief that “*principles formulated for education in general, or foreign languages in particular, can be extended unchanged to the literature class, on the assumption that this, too, is a subject on the curriculum and is an instance of language use*”²⁹ is, however, completely misguided. Such an approach is harmful with respect to the concept of literature, as defined above, and leads to the neglecting of features which “*mark literature as a discourse and an area of study demanding different techniques of description and different pedagogical approaches.*”³⁰ Language pedagogy and various educational theories have definitely influenced also the literature class and represent undoubtedly an excellent source of inspiration for literature teachers. Nevertheless, the literature class

25) Hendrich 1988, 224–225.

26) Choděra 2006, 78.

27) *The first part might be logically complicated by the language of the read material. Consequently, the reading of foreign language literature is definitely influenced or even part of educational theories relating to foreign language learning (Skopečková 2010, 56–67).*

28) *For instance the individual stages in reading, i.e. pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stage, each connected with particular inventory of methods and types of activities; methods how to cope with difficulties with the comprehension of a text; models of reading, i.e. top-down, bottom-up and others; theories focussing on the differences between reading in mother tongue and in a foreign language, etc. (Skopečková 2010, 56–67).*

29) Cook 1994, 255.

30) Cook 1994, 251.

and the foreign language class are not the same, each has a different focus, different goals and objectives and though the individual methods and approaches might interplay, they should not override each other. This is particularly true in terms of university programmes relating to the study of foreign languages, where language and literature studies have its rightful place and are inevitably in a close contact. Especially at university level, students should be given a chance to discover and fully realize the specificity of literature, the incompleteness and multivocality of literary works, which offer a unique opportunity not only to read and analyse a literary text, but also to explore the reception and interpretation of it enjoying the never-ending space opened to its readers to search for the sense of the literary text. Despite the fact that the literary text is usually in the foreign language that students study and that definitely reading in a foreign language helps to improve the language skills, this aspect should never be too intense to prevail in the literature class, but should rather represent an inseparable but at the same time somewhat minor part of a literature class covering foreign language literature.

Nevertheless, is it then possible to avoid this dangerous interference and at the same time present literature to students in a way that will motivate them and make the literature class really enjoyable and meaningful? Literary scholarship offers fortunately plenty of theories teachers might use or at least be inspired by. Unfortunately, it often seems rather difficult to decide which of these theories to choose to comply with the educational goals and learning objectives of the literature class and at the same time to respect the specificity of literature. Recently, teachers of literature started more and more often to choose and apply reader-oriented approaches,³¹ which in many respects seem to fulfil the above mentioned goals and criteria. These approaches “*allow students more latitude in responding to what they read and encourage varied responses.*”³² This *latitude* and openness towards the natural multiplicity and multivocality of literature and mainly the unequivocal foregrounding of the reader’s role or – to use the preferred literary term – reader’s reception makes this approach apparently an ideal one to choose in the literature class to overcome the above mentioned problem areas.

31) *The term reader-oriented theories is often used to refer to theories introducing the reader into the process of reading and interpreting of a literary text. The term reception theory or reception aesthetics is connected with Konstanz School of literary studies and Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss and more or less corresponds to the American term Reader-response criticism (Sawyer 2004).*

32) Tucker 2006, 340.

4. Reader-oriented Theories – Reception Aesthetics

Reader-oriented theories, in contrast to theories complying with Hegelian aesthetics, but also in contrast to Kantian-oriented theories³³ (referring to Zima's division of approaches to literature), perceive literature as this autonomous and multivocal work of art that cannot be reduced to one definite and seemingly *correct* explication. Moreover, reader-oriented approaches introduce the *reader* into the process of reading and interpreting of a literary text, which, as implied above, makes these theories basis of many modern approaches to literature and literature teaching. As far as the individual reader-oriented theories are concerned, it is important to realize that there are several such approaches, which can be partly or even completely (again with respect to concrete conditions and goals) applied in the literature class. The introduction of the reader and the stressing of the importance of the text's reception (following these approaches even more important than the text itself) was something radically new. Consequently, such an approach gave rise to more than one school and theory in terms of literary scholarship³⁴. Nevertheless, the aim of this study is not really to present and discuss the role of reader-oriented theories with respect to literary scholarship, but rather to draw parallels between these theories and the teaching of literature. In terms of lite-

33) As mentioned above, Petr V. Zima explains issues relating to literary scholarship as a movement between two rather antagonizing positions and the individual schools and theories move either to or from one of these poles. On the one hand, there are theories following Kant's aesthetics perceiving literature as a completely autonomous unit, which can be hardly defined and described, but rather enjoyed in terms of "uncommitted delight". On the other hand, there are Hegelian oriented theories, where literature only reflects particular ideology or "historical consciousness". The first group of theories is represented by e.g. Russian formalists, Prague structuralists or New Criticism, but in many respects also reception aesthetics, i.e. reader-oriented theory that likewise sees literature as a multivocal phenomenon, but they include the reader into the process of interpretation, which is not included in the above mentioned Kantian-oriented approaches. The other pole is mainly connected with Marxist theories (Zima 1998, 15–17).

34) The development of reception theory (1960s and 1970s) is connected with basically two most important centres, i.e. Konstanz and Baltimore. In 1952 the Belgian literary critic Georges Poulet arrives at John Hopkins University in Baltimore and applies phenomenological view on literature. J Hillis Miller and many others were influenced by him and his ideas. Konstanz School of literary studies is inevitably connected with Wolfgang Iser foregrounding mainly Husserl's phenomenology and Ingarden's literary aesthetics and Hans Robert Jauss focussing on Gadamer's hermeneutics. As implied above, the term reader-response criticism is often used as a synonym or even hypernym often with respect to concrete authors.

ature teaching it is particularly Wolfgang Iser's reception theory³⁵, one of the basic and often referred to reader-oriented theories, that seems to be able to meet the concrete educational goals and at the same time emphasise the multivocality of literature, the impossibility of its violent reduction to only one valid interpretation and above all it is an approach focusing on the reader and his or her reception of the literary text. What is more, the application of the basic principles of this theory in the literature class does not involve hours of study and theoretical lecturing, but rather an insight into its concept of the process of reading and the *reception* of the literary text.

5. Wolfgang Iser and reception theory

Wolfgang Iser's³⁶ reception theory was influenced by particular philosophic movements as well as the cultural and historical context, in which it originates. One of the most important aspects characterizing the first half of the 20th century was the situation in Europe after the First World War. Europe was literally in ruins, materially as well as spiritually. The traditional system of (Western) values was shaken and desperately needed redefinition. Edmund Husserl's³⁷ phenomenology should have represented this sort of remedy and introduced a completely new point of view. It focuses rather on our subjective experience and our consciousness rejecting the belief that things exist on their own and that there are certain undeniable facts relating to them. The only thing we can be sure about is how these things *appear* in our consciousness.³⁸ The phenomenological perspective influenced many other movements and disciplines, including aesthetics. Perhaps the most important representative of phenomenological aesthetics was Roman Ingarden,³⁹ who introduced the basic phenomenological premises

35) To support this argument, in 2007–2009 an action research project was carried out at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague aimed at the creation and gradual improvement of a model seminar on Literature Teaching, in which the researchers/teachers used Wolfgang Iser's reception theory as the basic approach to derive the individual methods and techniques from. The research project was particularly aimed at the use of foreign language literature in the EFL classroom reflecting the specific aspects of the didactics of literature as well as the principles of ELT methodology, etc. (cf Skopečková 2010).

36) Wolfgang Iser, a German literary theoretician and one of the founders of Konstanz School of literary studies and reception theory (founded in the 60s and 70s of the 20th century).

37) Edmund Husserl founded phenomenology in the early years of the 20th century. He was, however, also influenced by the ideas and work by Franz Brentano and Bertrand Bolzano.

38) Phenomenology from Greek *fainetai*, i.e. to appear (Anzenbacher 1991, 49).

39) Roman Ingarden, a Polish philosopher, aesthetician and literary theoretician, whose work was dominantly influenced by Husserl's phenomenology.

into aesthetics. Ingarden's definition of the concept of work of art distinguishes between the structure of the work of art on the one hand and reader's reaction on the other. In other words, the literary work of art is created by certain language patterns that are unambiguous and can be defined as well as by certain multivocal phenomena that can be *concretized*⁴⁰ by the reader. Following Ingarden's concept, the literary work of art is a multilayer and multivocal construct that contains certain degree of indeterminacy that is in the course of reader's aesthetic experience filled in by concrete meaning, i.e. concretized. This is the basic principle defining also Wolfgang Iser's reception theory. In compliance with Ingarden, he accepts the determinacy of a sequence of *schemata*⁴¹ that prevent the reader from certain arbitrariness. In contrast to Ingarden, however, Iser stresses the creative role⁴² of the reader during the act of concretization and puts the reader in the foreground of the whole process of text reception. The *act of concretization* is seen as an aesthetic and creative process during which the reader actively constitutes the sense⁴³ of the literary work of art. Following reception theory, reading – in contrast to the traditional notion of reading as a cumulative, one-way process – is understood as a highly dynamic and complex movement going back

40) *In brief, the process or act of concretization can be defined as a process that takes place during the reading of a literary text and during which the reader concretizes the literary work, i.e. fills in the indeterminacies that the work of art contains and actualizes one of the potentials included in the work of art (Ingarden 1989, 329–334).*

41) *"[...] the structure of the literary text consists of a sequence of schemata [...] which have the function of stimulating the reader to constitute the totality of which the schemata are aspects." In other words, the literary text consists of certain language material creating particular schemata and structures that cannot be ignored during the process of concretization, i.e. they represent the unambiguous and definable aspect of the literary work of art (Iser 1980, 227).*

42) *Iser describes the mutual relation or even communication effect emerging between the text and the reader. This makes Iser's approach different from Ingarden's concept of concretization, who considers the role of the reader as rather a passive one, not as an interaction between the text and the reader. The "places of indeterminacy" are following Iser not only some blanks that the reader mechanically fills in, but offer readers much more creative space (Iser 1980, 170–179).*

43) *The act of concretization and the gradual constituting of sense is realized on three levels: repertoire (the paradigmatic aspect, i.e. the system of literary as well as non-literary conventions, norms and values), strategies (the syntagmatic aspect, i.e. "the links between the different elements of the repertoire") (Iser 1980, 86) and realization, which is in fact the constitution of the sense of the literary work (Iser 1978, 274).*

and forth at the same time⁴⁴. Reception theory literally discovers the reader⁴⁵ and makes the individual experience and understanding of a literary text a legitimate counterpart of any literature interpretation.

Accordingly, if we perceive literary texts as a sort of specific phenomenon characterized by its instability and multivocality that in fact gains its final shape first in contact with a concrete reader, likewise any activity connected with literature, including literature teaching, has to contain certain aspects of this sort of endless searching and potential discovering. Every reader has got a different repertoire of experience and will read a literary text in a unique way reaching an individual interpretation of it and it would be definitely wrong to present the reading of literature like a process crowned always by only one possible solution. On the contrary, it is essential to show students of literature courses that there are always more ways to approach and interpret a particular literary text and to help them to cope with this lack of definiteness. What is more, the teacher in the literature class should help students find satisfaction in this constant searching showing them that they are capable of discovering the sense of the literary text again and again. Reception theory undoubtedly offers each literature teacher enough inspiration, support as well as sort of *substance* and will help them make the reading in the literature class not only more enjoyable, but may show them how to lead their students to a *unique literary experience*.

44) *Reading in reception theory can be described as a process which the reader enters with certain expectations, presuppositions and sort of pre-understanding, which help the reader to assess and understand that what he or she reads in the text. In the course of reading, the reader corrects and modifies these expectations with respect to that what he or she finds out on the following page. In other words, our original ideas create a referential framework, which helps us to understand that what we read, but these new facts may retrospectively alter the original understanding (Eagleton 1983, 77–78).*

45) *Reception theory discovers the reader as a real being, where each reader concretizes the text on basis of his or her own experience and expectations, as well as the reader as an ideal construct. Iser defines this reader as the implied reader, i.e. it is "a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him" (Iser 1980, 34). In other words, the real reader realizes only some of the options offered by the text in compliance with his or her own experiences and expectations, whereas the implied reader realizes all crucial options, which are somewhere in the background and may disturb the synthesis created by the reader.*

References

- ANZENBACHER, Arno (1991): *Úvod do filosofie*. Praha: SPN.
- CARTER, Ronald and LONG, N. Michael (1991): *Teaching Literature*. Harlow: Longman.
- COOK, Guy (1994): *Discourse and Literature: The Interplay of Form and Mind*. London: Oxford University Press.
- EAGLETON, Terry (1983): *Literary Theory – An Introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- HENDRICH, Josef (1988): *Didaktika cizích jazyků*. Praha: SPN.
- CHODĚRA, Radomír (2006): *Didaktika cizích jazyků*. Praha: Academia.
- INGARDEN, Roman (1989): *Umělecké dílo literární*. Praha: Odeon.
- ISER, Wolfgang (1978): *The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Becket*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- ISER, Wolfgang (1980): *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- NEZKUSIL, Vladimír (2004): *Nástin didaktiky literární výchovy (čtyřletá gymnázia a třídy víceletých gymnázií). Z praxe pro praxi*. Praha: Pedf UK.
- PRŮCHA, Jan. (2005): *Česko-anglický pedagogický slovník*. Praha: ARSCI.
- SAWYER, John F. A. (2004) *The Role of Reception Theory, Reader-Response Criticism and/or Impact History in the Study of the Bible: Definition and Evaluation* (<http://drchris.me/bbibcomm/files/sawyer2004.pdf>, 6 July 2013).
- SHOWALTER, Elaine (2003): *Teaching Literature*. Malden: Balckwell.
- SKOPEČKOVÁ, Eva (2010): *Literární text ve výuce anglického jazyka. Specifické aspekty didaktiky anglicky psané literatury ve výuce anglického jazyka v kontextu současných proměn české vzdělávací soustavy*. Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita.
- THORNBURY, Scott (2006): *An A-Z of ELT. A Dictionary of Terms and Concepts \used in English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- TOMPKINS, Jane (1996): *A Life In School: What the Teacher Learned*. Cambridge: Perseus Books.
- TUCKER, Lois P. (2006): Liberating Students through Reader-Response Pedagogy in the Introductory Literature Course. In: Patton, K. Venetria (ed.): *Background Readings For Teachers of American Literature*. Boston: Bedford/St Martins, s. 339–347.
- ZIMA, Petr. V. (1998): *Literární estetika*. Olomouc: Votobia.

Resumé

Tato studie se zabývá současným stavem výuky literatury, zejména na vysokoškolské úrovni, tj. zásadními otázkami, trendy, ale také těžkostmi, které utváří současnou podobu výuky literatury. Výuka literatury je na jedné straně ovlivňována vývojem v oblasti literární vědy, kde se nabízí celá řada teorií a přístupů k literatuře, ale také různými teoriemi z hlediska vzdělávání a vlastní výuky. Studie seznamuje se zásadními teoriemi týkajícími se výuky literatury, které jsou spojené s určitým inventářem pedagogických technik a metod aplikovaných v reálné výuce. Autorka představuje nejpodstatnější teorie spojené s touto problematikou, tj. teorie orientující se na tzv. kulturní model, jazykový model nebo na model sledující v první řadě rozvoj osobnosti jedince, a v souvislosti s tímto základním rozlišením uvádí také přístupy vycházející spíše ze zaměření na samotného učitele, jeho role a aktivity ve výuce, či naopak na role a aktivity studenta. Především pak

představuje přístupy k literatuře orientované na samotného čtenáře, zejména recepční teorii Wolfganga Isera, která svým důrazem na čtenářovu úlohu při recepci a interpretaci literárního díla představovala v rámci literární teorie skutečně nový a neotřelý přístup. Iserova recepční estetika je však významná také s ohledem na její možné uplatnění ve výuce literatury a zvláště pak v souvislosti se zvýšením motivace studentů číst literaturu, neboť toto uvedení čtenáře do procesu interpretace a recepce literatury a s tím související postavení vlastní čtenářské zkušenosti a individuálního chápání literárního díla na roveň s jakoukoli jinou literárněvědnou interpretací díla vytváří ideální podmínky pro práci s literárním textem ve výuce. Nicméně navzdory těmto vlivu různých pedagogických a literárněvědných teorií, je stále důležité zdůrazňovat fakt, že literatura představuje vysoce specifický fenomén, který bude vždy vyžadovat pečlivé a specifické zacházení.