



## Conceptual Article

# Innovative perception of literary education: Communication concept

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The paper presents a communication concept of teaching with a focus on teaching Literary Education. In the article, we present in more detail a research survey involving a total of 16 humanities teachers, which examined the current state of communication between pupils and teachers: the data were obtained from an analysis of teaching videos that preceded the observation of teaching. The analysis of the video recordings was supplemented by interviews with the teachers who led the lessons and student questionnaires, which served as a tool for data triangulation. Based on the analysis of the results, the authors present a generally tuned model of good educational communication, in the center of which should be a balanced distribution of power forces (i.e. the role of the teacher and the position of students). The implementation of the communication concept in real teaching can lead to a deeper and more comprehensive interpretation of artistic narratives, it can develop the pupil's personality and can enrich the teacher. The communication conception of teaching forms the starting point for an innovative conception of Literary Education, which builds on the thesis that text (artistic narrative) is in the center of literature teaching. It is the communication between the teacher, the pupil and the text that is the basis of creative literary expressivity, the *gros* of contemporary Literary Education according to the didactics of literature.

Keywords: Didactics of literature; Communication; Interpretation; Artistic narration

## I. Introduction

The main goal of the paper is to show the application of the theoretical concept of the communication concept of teaching limited to Literary Education. For this purpose, we base our ideas on the opinions of leading experts in the field of didactics of Literary Education - the current subject didactics of literature<sup>1</sup> is based on the communication concept of teaching (see for example Hník, 2012; Hník, 2017; Vala, 2011; Vala, 2015). The communication concept of Literary Education is based on the thesis that Literary Education is a kind of conglomerate of many components, the implementation of which affects of teaching literature, both positively and negatively (Nezkusil, 2004).

The second chapter of the paper presents the plan of the communication concept of teaching in connection with the constructivist approach to the transfer of knowledge and we present the communication concept in the connotation with Literary Education (see Jindráček, Škoda, & Doulík, 2015).

The third chapter presents a complex research survey, the aim of which was to find out how the communication concept of teaching is applied in a real educational situation, specifically in the lessons of Czech Language and Literature (native language), History and Civics. By including this chapter, we want to practically demonstrate the extent to which the theoretical framework of the communication concept of teaching in the real (learned) curriculum<sup>2</sup>, or in the choice of teaching methods, is being implemented. It is not the aim of our paper to present the mentioned research in detail, in the presented paper it is illustrative with respect to the aim of the paper, namely, to present the application of the theoretical concept of communicatively guided teaching in a Literary Education lessons. For this reason, we present the defined research survey thoroughly,

<sup>1</sup> The current subject didactics of literature builds on the reality of embedding literature in art. The teaching of the literary component of the educational field of Czech Language and Literature should be based on this premise, namely to perceive and present this area as an education (especially for reading) - it is the perception of Literary Education as an independent education (on the same level as, for example, Physical Education and Music Education) that is the main argument for the integration of communication (discussion, argumentation, etc.) as a key component of this field.

<sup>2</sup> For the differentiation of the curriculum and its theoretical anchoring (not only) in the Czech educational reality, see Skalková, 2007 or Greger & Černý, 2007.

we refer the interested party to the literature in which the research is described in detail (see Šed'ová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová, 2012).

The fourth chapter deals with the determinants of a good pedagogical situation in connection with the communication concept of teaching. We believe that various factors positively or negatively affect the communication atmosphere during teaching. We pay more attention to the teacher, as a key factor influencing the classroom climate in connection with a positive atmosphere in the area of expressing one's own opinions and the like (see for example Papaioannou & Kouli, 1999).

## 2. Communication Concept

Recipient's communication with the narrative develops the moral attitude of pupils, through artistic narratives pupils implicitly and explicitly build their axiological values (Jindráček et al., 2011). Ledebuchová (2004) characterizes the communication concept as reading 'art literature', in which will gain the ability to perceive and evaluate art as such (compare Artley, 1972; May, 1998; Moldanová, 2006; Wooster & Carson, 1982).

Communicative Literary Education should be based on pupil's active encounter with reading (Hník, 2012; Hník, 2017), which acts as the primary means of learning literature as a generally accepted cultural-historical canon, either through didactic interpretation or in the form of literary history and literary theory (Jindráček et al., 2011; Schofer, 1990).

The communication concept of education is based on pedagogical constructivism, which presupposes an active involvement of the pupil in the area of acquiring knowledge and skills. "Constructivism looks at the individual along the whole trajectory of their life, which means that the everyday experience that preceded learning in teaching is also important. Such knowledge structures are referred to as misconceptions, because they arise from their own experience and do not reflect scientifically shared explanations" (Steffe & Gale, 1995, p. 15 in Majlík, 2018, pp. 473–474; compare Richardson, 2003).

Šejtanić & Ilić (2016, p. 163) note: "Most of the interaction in the learning process is carried out through verbal communication between pupils and a teacher, but the teacher has different roles in relation to pupils. During communication teacher realizes educational, social and motivational role so that the term interaction is comprehended wider than the concept of communication".

Skálová (2005, p. 213) comments on the issue of text interpretation in the process of communicative conception of Literary Education in the area of the genesis of communication interaction in the process of education: "Dialogue is in Obert's<sup>3</sup> concept considered as a basic method of text interpretation in school conditions. However, the difficulty of this pedagogical dialogue arises from the fact that at one time the teacher must accept more pupil interpretations, creating a very complex communication between the pupils and between the teacher and the individual pupils. The position of teacher is 'first among equals'. In fact, in school conditions there is no single final or 'correct' version of the interpretation of an artistic text; on the contrary, it is didactically preferable to leave the problem as unresolved, or there may be more common interpretations in the conditions of the school dialogue". Dialogue teaching should form a central part of the interpretation of a work, in which the exchange of views between the participants in the communication (interpretation) should take place, the teacher's observation being one of the opinions. Burbules & Bruce (2001, p. 120) note that the "dialogue in the context of the pupil-teacher relationship dialogue tends to promote a situation in which any participant can raise certain types of question – including questions".

Vala et al. (2015, p. 29) on the perception of equality of opinion between learners and teachers<sup>4</sup> states that "the reception and interpretation of an artistic text are highly individualized in nature, yet some teachers react negatively to the pupil's perception of the text because they are uncertain and threaten their authority". Vala

<sup>3</sup> "Viliam Obert, born on February 9, 1940 in Veľké Ďure (Levice district), has taught eleven years at various types of schools. Since 1973 he has been a research worker at the Department of Slovak Literature and Literary Education at the Faculty of Education and at the Institute of Language and Literary Communication in Nitra. In the last years of his life he worked as a professor and head of the Department of Slovak Literature at the Philosophical Faculty of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. (...) In his articles and professional publications, he tries to apply the literary communication model to specific communication in the educational conditions of the educational process of the school" (Skálová, 2005, p. 211).

<sup>4</sup> Vala et al. (2015, p. 29) calls this concept as a "symmetrical model of communication".

et al. (2015, p. 28) further notes: “This approach is not very widespread, as in the current pedagogical communication the teacher is strongly dominated, and the structure of communication is significantly predefined”.

When we focus on teaching communication in literary lessons, very often there is a situation where pupils are given or dictated certain knowledge without dialogue or discussion. This approach is understandable given the above-mentioned oversizing curriculum. Teachers in most cases feel that all the curriculum (thematic units) must present to pupils, and in the context of educational reality very often there is a situation where teachers are forced to present pupils from lower grades, for example because pupils they were not acquainted. The teaching of Literary Education then degrades to the mere writing of teacher’s dictated knowledge that pupils memorize in order to obtain a good grade without understanding the issue without being actively (reader) acquainted with a work and reading it in a subsequent discussion. In our opinion, this leads to a split between the current theoretical direction of teaching Literary Education in the sphere of communication concept and educational reality.

According to Jindráček et al. (2011) to increase the interest of pupils (children) in reading and their well-founded selection of literary works.

“Didactic communication has the function of:

- Preparatory,
- supportive,
- developing,
- regulating but also
- interpretative motivational and
- substitute - helps the child to overcome unknown territory so that the pupil can continue his / her own aesthetic knowledge of the work” (Lederbuchová, 2010, p. 133).

“Didactic interpretation is a dialogical method in the concept of communicative Literary Education, which effectively combines didactic and aesthetic communication activities with respect to the level of the pupil’s reading and co-creates the quality of the aesthetic interaction of the pupil and its result (experience, reflection of its source) relation to the meanings of the text and the pupil’s reader preconcept - and other creative activities of the pupil that lead him to an aesthetic understanding of the text...” (Lederbuchová, 2010, p. 135; compare Tsankov, 2017).

However, according to Jindráček et al. (2011, p. 25) requires a series of “key assumptions”, the most important of which is “the need to always look at the student’s reading competence and consider it an important determinant of his / her reading”.

Jindráček et al. (2011, p. 27) emphasizes that “the communication situation of the reception, especially the (...) meaning of the text, the creative interpretation effort of the pupil (reader) and of course the actual result of the interpretation of the text”. Lederbuchová (2010, p. 114) emphasizes the importance of the communication conception of Literary Education in the process of reception of the work from the perspective of the reader’s personal development: “In the process of aesthetic communication The work of art as well as the curriculum should be connected with individual emotionally aesthetic experience and evaluation of its meanings. In the process of adequate reception, it is simultaneous with learning the text about the experience and interpretive evaluation processes of the reader, which he is aware of. If a pupil recognizes a literary text in the aesthetic sense, he learns the communication act between himself and art and he know himself”.

### **3. Research Dealing with the Communication Aspect of Teaching**

Šed’ová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová (2012) conducted research on the communication aspect of teaching. The main objective of the research was to provide a comprehensive report and functioning of the communication situation in real teaching. The authors of the presented research define educational communication as an exchange of communication between teacher and students which is “a type of communication that is different from normal communication in other environments” (Šed’ová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová, 2012, p. 51; compare

Spector, Merrill, & Bishop, 2014). According to the authors, the differences stem from a specific language and specific communication structure.

### 3.1. Methodology of the research

The research took place in the school year 2009–2010 and was attended by four elementary schools. At each school four teachers were involved (teachers of Czech Language and Literature, History and Civics), therefore, they were teachers of humanities-oriented subjects, in which communication as such should play a key role. The authors postulate the idea that humanities are based on interactive teaching communication (Šedřová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová, 2012). The resulting number of respondents was therefore sixteen.

Data collection took place at four elementary schools, two educational institutions in large cities were represented, a school located in a small town and a village school. The authors of the research do not claim a representative representation of teachers, and therefore their goal is not a general generalization of results, however, a considerable amount of data was obtained, based on which a relatively in-depth analysis of communication in teaching was undertaken (Rodriguezová, 2012).

The research took place in the seventh, eighth and ninth year of lower-secondary school. Data collection was carried out by a combination of several methods:

- (1) “In-depth interviews with teachers”;
- (2) “direct observation”;
- (3) “video studies”;
- (4) “pupil questionnaire” (Šedřová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová, 2012, p. 28).

Self-analysis of data collected through video recordings of lessons, which were preceded by direct observation in the classroom. There was also triangulation of data (interviews with teachers who led the lessons and student questionnaires).

An important part of the analysis of the results was to examine the structure of the questions asked by the teacher: their types are compared in relation to the specific subject and categorized on the basis of their structure (open and closed) or on the basis of their cognitive and receptive demands. Furthermore, students' answers are analyzed in terms of their form (closed or open) and cognitive demands. The result of this analysis is a proposal for a typology of student responses. An important result of the research is the differentiation of student speeches into student questions and student comments. “Pupils ask their teachers more specific, inquiring, explanatory and confrontational questions; their comments are characterized by a tendency to contextualization, a need for visibility and a need to show their knowledge” (Rodriguezová, 2012, p. 2).

### 3.2. Research results

The authors of the research (2012, pp. 265–266) summarize the main conclusions of the research as follows:

- (1) “Teachers are strongly dominated in educational communication. Their verbal activities fill three quarters of the time spoken. Pupils come to the floor relatively often, but their replicas are very short”.
- (2) “Communication in the classroom is predominantly interactive different speakers take turns. However, the structure of this communication is largely predefined. Most communication exchanges begin with the teacher question, continue with the pupil's response, and end with teacher feedback.”
- (3) “Nevertheless, there are communication exchanges initiated by pupils, but most of them are organizational issues. If the questions and comments of pupils are related to the subject matter, teachers respond positively to them in some cases and negatively in others. The negative reactions are usually earned by the utterances of the pupils in which they show that they understand the substance differently from the teacher.”

(4) “Teachers ask students mainly the closed questions of low cognitive intensity. They primarily ask about the facts that pupils should have learned. Teacher’s questions are very important because they directly control the cognitive activity of the pupil. The cognitive intensity of pupil’s answers corresponds almost perfectly to the cognitive intensity of teacher questions.”

(5) “Although students always try to respond adequately to a teacher question, they develop a number of strategies that allow them to answer the questions correctly without having the necessary knowledge.”

(6) “Feedback on student replicas is very poor in evaluation information; Pupils’ answers to closed questions are only sorted by right and wrong. The evaluation of answers to open questions is completely abandoned.”

(7) “Teachers have a keen interest in developing dialogue with pupils. They believe that this is the optimal method to ensure the effectiveness of teaching.”

(8) “However, the dialogical forms that appear in teaching suffer from a lack of emphasis on rational argumentation. In addition, there is frequent semantic noise, a situation where teachers and pupils use the same expressions but give them different meanings.”

(9) “Through communication, teachers manage their relationships with pupils. The most typical power constellation is power play, which is characterized by the authoritarianism of the teacher and the pupils’ distance to the teacher’s requirements. There is a clear symbiosis between power play and consistent maintenance of the IRF<sup>5</sup> structure.”

Table I

*Criteria for good learning situation (Adopted from Šed'ová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová (2012, p. 270)*

<b>Criteria for good learning situation</b>	<b>Educational communication model items</b>
power circulates between teacher and pupils	setting up interpersonal relationships
pupils and teacher share common goals	identifying pupils with teacher goals
the communication structure is flexible	communication structure settings
pupils’ speeches are developed and given a considerable amount of time	pupil’s communication space
teacher asks questions of an open higher cognitive level	setting the task situation
student’s responses are creative	cognitive pupil utterances

Based on the research, it is possible to contact with a bit of exaggeration that “didactic aspects of communication in school are always subject to social or regulatory objectives. It can be said with some exaggeration that having disciplined pupils is more important than having educated pupils” (Dvořák, 2012, p. 148).

The results of the research show that although the communication concept of (not only) Literary Education, which can be perceived as an imaginary higher degree of presentation of various knowledge to pupils, is currently being called for, Czech teachers are not ready to apply this approach to educational reality. Teachers are often unwilling to “descend to the power level of the pupils” or perceive the pupil’s replica curriculum as a waste of time, or they may be afraid of their own failure to communicate with pupils.

The results of the research showed that it is relatively difficult to fulfill the theoretical framework of the communication (dialogical) concept of teaching, even though the teachers themselves consider the application of this teaching method to be very necessary and effective. One of the main limits of the comprehensive integration of the communication concept into teaching is the fact that the classroom is a heterogeneous group, so it is very difficult to apply communication techniques to real teaching and at the same time meet the requirement for individualized teaching. In addition, dialogues are marked by so-called semantic noise, where different pupils and the teacher may perceive a certain concept differently, older pupils from a wrong answer or, in general, the reluctance of teachers to ask or answer questions. Every conversation started should be

<sup>5</sup> Initiating question of the teacher - replica of the pupil - feedback of the teacher.

concluded in some way, i.e. closed and summarized. Only when these preconditions are met will dialogue become an effective tool for achieving the desired learning outcomes. In practice, unfortunately, dialogue is something extra, a kind of extension of teaching (compare Rodriguezová, 2012).

### 3.3. The connection of research results with the teaching of literary education

If we relate the results of research to the teaching of Literary Education, it must be stated that if the teacher in Literary Education acts in the role of “unintelligible authority”, who is always right (it is not possible to have an equal dialogue) then it can not be fulfilled the concept of innovative concept of Literary Education. This concept builds on the connection of reading, creation and doctrine, while a certain “novelty” is represented by the equal position of creation, respectively creative literary expressiveness, which Hník (2017, p. 122) defines as “creation in the sense of creative (literary) student activity accompanied by adequate reflection”. Hník (2017, p. 122) argues for the existence of this category as follows: “Only in reflection does an adequate understanding of (experienced) content arise” and categorizes it into two areas, namely

- (1) “reflection on reading and reflection on creation” and
- (2) “reflection of one's own reading” Hník (2017, p. 122).

The first area of reflection is related to “the definition of reading as a full-fledged type of creative (literary) expressiveness” (Hník, 2017, p. 123). The reflection of one's own reading is based on the assumption that literary teachers will not only focus on reading, its reflection and certain interpretive activities, but also on “reading as a complex phenomenon, lasting value, long-term process and its reflection” (Hník, 2017, p. 123).

As can be seen from the citation, the main part of Literary Education should be reflection or reflective dialogue - however, this condition will be met only if there is a friendly, open and pleasant communication atmosphere in Literary Education classes (see Rarieya, 2005 or Kato & Mynard, 2015).

### 4. Determinants of Good Educational Communication

In the process of literary communication, the author and the text are the key factors. In this case, the reader takes the position of an agent, which the author perceives relatively passively (compare Kramsch, 1985).

The text acts as a certain fictitious agent, which is created “before the actual act of reading, does not reveal anything about the realized reception activity or the real meaning of the literary work” (Jindráček et al., 2011, p. 28). Representatives of the *Constance School*, H. R. Jauss and W. Iser, proceed from the thesis that “the text of a literary work is formed only by the creative activity of the reader and by the reader's concretization of literary artistic text, ie reading. innovations of its meaning” (Jindráček et al., 2011, p. 28). “If the meaning of the text is generated by the reader, it is clear that this meaning appears in the respective individual form”, that is, “the meanings of literary texts are not generated at all in the reading process” (Iser, 2001, pp. 40–41 in Jindráček et al., 2011, p. 28). Attributing the different meanings of narrative is addressed by the reception aesthetics, which is characterized by Kelly (1998, p. 11 in Čapková, 2015, p. 12) “as a coherent and innovative approach to literature”.

Lederbuchová (2010, p. 52) says that “a literary work is given on the one hand by a text created by the author, on the other hand by the reader's concretization of this text - the work is shaped, completed only in communication; the act of reading as a grasp of the meanings of the text is controlled by textual structures, but it is not fully controlled by them, because the reader transmits information about the achieved effect to the text by the reader, and thus there are constant innovations in understanding the text and its meaning”. This means that artistic narration assumes different meanings depending on the recipient's reading activity and its individual preconceptions: for example, knowledge of the topic, reading experience, education, and the like. Lederbuchová (2002, p. 173) further notes that “the reader is not a passive recipient, but also sends important information to the text structure about his or her reading expectations and how he understands the meanings (as interpreted). In the process of literary communication, the text is concretized by the reader - it acquires concrete contents and can thus fulfill its social functions and become a literary work”.

Jauss (2001, p. 14) comments on the reader's expectations: “The possibility of objectifying the horizon of expectations is (...) also given to historically less distinct works. For, in the absence of explicit signals, the

specific disposition to a certain work that the author expects to be made in his / her audience can also be inferred from three factors that can be generally assumed: first, known norms or immanent poetics of the genre; literary-historical surroundings and, thirdly, the contradiction of fiction and reality, the poetic and practical function of language, which is always given to the reflecting reader as a possibility of comparison. The third factor also includes the possibility for the reader to perceive the new work both in the narrower horizon of his literary expectations and in the broader horizon of his life experience”.

Lederbuchová (2004, p. 39) perceives the reader’s attribution of the meanings of the text and the author’s intention from the semantic point of view: “Disproportion between the author’s intention (the semantic gesture of the text) and the reader’s intention (the semantic gesture of reception). (Iser) is great at the children’s reader reception”.

Vala (2011, p. 11) states to the reception and interpretation of the literary work: “Every literary work begins to live its own life as it is published”. In the communication model of literary communication, as defined by Lederbuchová (1995, p. 29 in Jindráček et al., 2011, p. 31), the text is not a mere channel of the communication situation but becomes a distinct communication factor. The basis of didactic literary communication in the school environment is the relationship between teacher and pupil (Jindráček et al., 2011). Jindráček et al. (2011, p. 32) stresses that in the context of didactic communication, the artistic narrative, which is the center of education, cannot be perceived as the primary text but as the didactic text, the so-called **metatext**<sup>6</sup>. Jindráček et al (2011, pp. 32–33) are mentioned as the main factors influencing the reception of artistic narrative by primary school pupils:

- “Collective class”;
- “curricular documents”<sup>7</sup>;
- “Teaching methods and forms of work” and
- “specific objectives of the given literary lesson”.

“The choice of appropriate methods, as well as the selection of suitable artistic texts intended for didactic interpretation, have a fundamental influence on the effectiveness of the teaching” (Vala, 2011, p. 13). Lederbuchová (1997, pp. 16–21) defines the following determinants of didactic communication:

- “The meaning structure and potential content of the artistic text”;
- “level of reading competence of the pupil and his / her reading needs”;
- “the overall concept of Literary Education and the structure of its curriculum”;
- “the teacher’s literacy”;
- “teacher’s pedagogical communication skills with the pupil” and
- “set of didactic principles”.

## 5. Conclusion

In the article, we focused on the communication concept of teaching with emphasis on the lessons of Literary Education. We presented the most important factors influencing a good communication situation within the educational process and we presented in more detail the research that dealt with the real application of the theoretical basis of the communicative concept of teaching in selected humanistic-oriented subjects. Currently, the issue of the communication concept (principle) in teaching enjoys considerable interest in scientific research (see for example Adebayo, 2020; Lo & Hsieh, 2020; Qureshi & Zehra, 2020; Yang, 2020) - this fact is completely understandable to global events. We believe that teaching will move in the direction of developing the skills and abilities of students (especially communication) at the expense of memorable acquisition of information.

The communication concept of teaching is very current. Pupils should be able to listen, acknowledge other opinions, defend their opinion with appropriate and well-founded arguments, or accept another opinion as their own, based on critical thinking. It is the communication integrated into the educational process that can develop these skills in pupils. The communication concept should be an integral part of the so-called education

<sup>6</sup> Compare: “Literary artistic text at school (...) is referred to as metatext, i.e. the communication between the author and the teacher” (Jindráček et al., 2011, p. 32).

<sup>7</sup> The significance of the curriculum in the process of didactic literary communication is summarized by Vala (2011, p. 11): “School practice is based on a standard of education and training in a certain era, and this standard is nothing but a social and political convention”.

and humane-oriented subjects, which are in a way based on a comparison of different views (for example, possible causes of anti-Semitism in today's world, migration and related xenophobia, etc. versus description of fish construction in Natural Sciences).

The key factor in the communicative concept is the teacher. If the teacher holds the theory of the authoritarian position of the teacher, then he will require absolute silence in the classroom, even at the expense of less knowledge of students (see the results of research by Šed'ová, Švaříček, & Šalamounová, 2012). Communication concept is one of the prerequisites on which contemporary didactics of literature is based. This perception corresponds closely to the innovative approach to teaching Literary Education, which is based on a didactic interpretation of the text, which should be directed directly to narration - into the text itself. An important point in the application of the communication concept in the teaching process is the equality of opinion of pupils and students and the teacher. If this premise is fulfilled, pupils and students in Literary Education can achieve a higher level of understanding of the text, a deeper interpretation and so on. We are of the opinion that the path to real implementation of the communication concept in teaching is rather painful and has several partial questions and tasks ahead. The communication principle (not only) in teaching literature is, in our opinion, one of the ways to innovate contemporary teaching at all levels of institutional education towards the demands placed on citizens living in a democratic society of the 21st century.

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