

The exceptional position of language in education consists in direct relations between higher mental processes and higher language functions. Thanks to this relation such mental processes as metaphorisation, reasoning, symbolizing, abstraction and generalization, which are essential for effective learning processes, are reflected in language forms and shaped into argumentative and poetic texts. These texts, either received or produced by the learners, become the goal for the educational treatment and make further development possible. Thanks to the mutual reinforcement of the mental activities manifested by a great variety of thinking skills and the higher language functions, which make it possible to deal with these skills, language acquires a pivotal position in the whole educational system.

The tight connection between the higher mental processes and the higher language functions is reflected in two distinct ways. Thanks to its capacity for objective analysis, organizing reasoning and critical argumentation, language becomes an effective tool in gaining knowledge, whereas thanks to the subjective aspect of language use, its capacity for metaphorisation, ambiguity, dynamic changes, and polysemy, language becomes a means of artistic production and poets' tool of creation. This duality of the nature of language and the complexity of its connection with the higher mental processes have to be reflected in the educational system.

In the broadest sense language acquires **the central position in three distinct educational domains**: (1) as an indispensable tool of gaining knowledge in all disciplines of general education, (2) as substance of literary production in the education domain of creation, and (3) as a means of changing the perception of the world by the development of the sensitivity to language itself. The domain (1) is concerned with gaining knowledge in an objective sense through constant challenge of existing theories about the laws of particular disciplines of the curriculum. The domain (2) is concerned with the development of the ability to use language for artistic purposes, e.g. poetry, drama, novels, essays, public speaking, etc. The domain (3) is concerned with the issues of the cultural background of the students, which is acquired together with the acquisition of the native language, and the cultural background of the second language, so as to educate a cultural person, someone who is able to engage in social interaction with people of different cultural background.

It follows that such a **broad range of disciplines with the pivotal role of language** requires an adequate capacity of language itself to be effective in this role. Such capacity can be achieved when language itself becomes a subject of educational treatment, according to the needs of the three fundamental educational domains. Hence, the postulate may be issued that there is need to grant the subject of language education, both native and second, a special position in the curriculum, i.e. the position of a working tool for all other subjects of teaching.

Professor Ryszard Wenzel (University of Gdansk)

ERL I 2016 Invited Speaker