

Prospects of Using Foreign Language Texts of Literary Works in Teaching English at the University

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Abstract

At the present stage of the development of society, the need for the transition of the education system to a whole new level has become especially topical. Expanding cooperation with other states and strengthening of external links, the integration of all spheres of life makes foreign languages necessary in real human activities. This significantly changes the status of a foreign language, requiring the training of highly qualified specialists able to navigate the modern world. The relevance of the study is that foreign language literary works contain a significant explicitly and implicitly expressed culturological potential that foreign language teachers can use in the process of teaching a foreign language to students. The purpose of this paper is the analysis of the possibilities of using the cultural potential of works of foreign fiction to expand the language competence of students a significant part of whom will integrate themselves into the world scientific community in the near future. The paper shows that skills' development of cross-cultural communication, as well as the language competence of students are the part of the process of reading authentic artistic texts, so that they simultaneously begin to understand the possible difference between their native culture and other cultures, acquire the ability to overcome sociocultural differences taking into account some cultural and regional-specific features of different countries and mastering the common factors of text construction, its functions, and realizing its main lexical-thematic line. At the same time, reading teaching should be carried out taking into account the complexity of the selected texts and simultaneously teaching the recording of the reading, the fulfillment of various creative tasks for inducing independent conclusions and judgments.

Keywords: Creative tasks, Communicative competence, Culturological obstacles, Independent reading, Intercultural communication.

1. Introduction

Meeting changes in the system of higher education, the academic programs of foreign languages are aimed at forming professional language competence among students, which will contribute to their effective functioning in the cultural diversity of the educational and professional environment. Foreign studies of language education focus on two types of language competence in the study of a foreign language: linguistic [1, 2] and communicative [3, 4] ones. At the same time, communicative competence is considered to be formed if a graduate uses a foreign language in order to independently obtain and expand his knowledge and experience [5]. In this regard, the main goal of teaching a foreign language is the formation of communicative competence that is foreign speaking, which is understood as the ability to cross-cultural communication in a foreign language. Communicative competence includes, in turn, linguistic, verbal and sociocultural competences. Sociocultural component of teaching a foreign language involves the process of familiarizing students with cultural and personal characteristics, the manner of communication, the norms of communicative behavior and etiquette. The researchers reasonably believe that communicative competence includes several subcomponents, and one of the most significant and communicatively relevant ones is discursive competence, which involves knowledge of various types of discourses and rules for their construction [6] necessary for an adequate understanding of the text.

Discursive competence is a broader field of activity than the textual one (the ability to perceive, understand and generate the text); it also provides for a sociocultural register that is defined as a set of typical or specific speech formulas and communicative models or structures, i.e. those that concentrate in themselves the speech experience of communication participants [7].

The modern concept of foreign language teaching is characterized by the desire both to provide students with necessary linguistic means and to form their certain cognitive stock that would create a sense of cultural community with native speakers. However, learning actual facts and conceptual concepts of foreign culture, all that makes up socio-cultural competence, is carried out by a student who is a bearer of concepts, ideas and values acquired in the process of socialization in his/her own culture [8].

Thus, socio-cultural competence, the formation of which is considered today as one of the goals of learning foreign languages, actually turns into multicultural competence due to the inevitable interaction of native culture with the culture that is being studied. And, above all, this is due to the ability to read.

Reading as a type of oral activity is one of the most essential criteria for full mastery of a foreign language. The original text, especially the literary text, is a powerful means of ideological and educational influence on the reader. By means of the written text students study literature and culture of the people whose language they learn. Furthermore, teaching reading also has communicative, practical and professional-methodical goals and objectives [9].

Taking into account the fact that literary texts significantly increase students' interest in learning foreign languages, it is possible to create a pedagogical situation when a teacher preliminarily

analyzes the works that have not been previously translated into the national language, then briefly presents them to students to form a general idea, based on which students independently choose favorite ones, which will be further used during in-class and independent work.

Encouraging students to actively perceive information, fiction supports their interest in the learning process. Literary works stimulate thinking, evoking associations with personal life experience, affect students' feelings and emotions, contribute to the development of artistic taste. They introduce students to the "real ideal of language norm", enhance their speech culture, develop a sense of language, contextual guess. In general, it can be argued that literary works are a valuable material, based on which speech skills and abilities may be formed, especially in the process of reading and speaking.

2. Research Technique

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the methodology for the development of language competence, including the use of short stories by well-known English and American authors in classroom sessions.

Research design:

1. Tests at the forming and control stages of the experiment, including the fulfillment of 20 tasks aimed at testing intercultural competence (10 assignments), knowledge of intercultural facts (10 assignments). The indicator of the language competence of the student was the percentage of completed assignments, which determined three levels of the language competence: low level – 0-49% of the completed tasks, average level – 50-74% of the completed tasks; high level – 75-100% of completed assignments.

2. Forming experiment, including tasks for the development of intercultural competence of students on the basis of short stories of Anglo-American writers. The material of the assignments is taken from Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture [10]. Here are two examples of tasks expressed in English for developing students' intercultural competence (based on the story "The Waxwork" by A.M. Burrage).

Choose the correct item to complete the sentences.

1. Madame Tussaud's Museum in London contains the models of _____ people.

a) dead b) living c) both living and dead

2. The first exhibit of the museum was _____.

a) the model figure of Isaak Newton b) the bust of Mary Tudor c) the head of Marie Antionette

The task for assimilating intercultural realities, for example, is formulated as follows:

Do you know that:

• the word mall denotes different things in the UK and the USA?

The following are various occurrences of this word in British and American English (based on the story "A Pair of Silk Stockings" by Kate Chopin);

• the word rector has different meanings in different countries?

The following are occurrences of this word in different countries – England, Scotland, the USA (based on the story "The Open Window" by Saki (Hector Hugh Munro)).

The task of combining lexical units with its relevant information is based on the stories "Old Folks' Christmas" by Ring Lardner (ten-word combinations with the word "Christmas"), Lord Mountdrago by William Somerset Maugham (names of government posts in the USA and the UK), etc.

In the experimental study, second-year students of two academic groups with the same specialization consisting of 52 students took part. Among them, the experimental group (EG) was 25 people (first academic group), control group (CG) – 27 people (second academic group)

3. Results

As a result of the preliminary testing, 52% of EG students (13 people) and 55.5% of CG students (15 people) showed a low level of linguistic competence. 40% of EG students (10 people) and 37% of CG students (10 people) showed an average level. Accordingly, a high level was found in 8% of EG students (2 people) and 7.5% of CG students (2 people).

Teaching a foreign language in the EG was conducted by using exercises based on the development of intercultural competence and the assimilation of intercultural realities. At the final stage of experimental research, EG and CG students were retested. A summary table of the results of testing of EG and CG students before and after the experiment is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of the formation of intercultural competence (IC) for professional communication

IC level	EG before experiment, %	CG before experiment, %	EG after experiment, %	CG after experiment, %
Low	52	55,5	36	52
Average	40	37	30	40,5
High	8	7,5	24	7,5

Statistical processing of the results showed that there were significant differences between EG and CG after the completion of the pedagogical experiment. At the beginning of the pedagogical experiment, the features of EG and CG were the same and upon its completion they were different, therefore, it could be concluded that the changes in the EG were caused by the use of the developed exercises.

4. Discussion

Thus, the results of the research showed that although reading foreign-language works of fiction was usually considered a priority for students of foreign languages departments, but some carefully selected and shortened to 4-6 pages stories with an interesting dynamic plot could be very effective educational material for students of nonlinguistic majors.

It should be noted that according to the data of Russian researchers, in addition to culture-specific elements of the target-language country, and some significant advantages of these works for students (such as situational, unconstrained learning of lexical and grammatical material, and broad opportunities for expressing one's own opinion that ultimately leads to an expansion of the communicative competence of students), one should pay attention to the cultural potential implicit in these works [11]

Thus, the study of English short stories of famous English and American authors can be used in classroom classes to develop the language competence of students in all its types – lexical, grammatical, speech (in oral and written aspects) and sociocultural ones.

In selected stories, according to N.P. Chepel, some ethical and moral issues important for each nation should be solved, such as love for the country, abidance of national heritages, childrearing and development of their talents, identification of priorities and moral standards. When discussing these problems, in particular, answering the question: "What would you do if you were in the place of the main character of the story?" students should pay attention to their own differences with mentality, nationalism, value system and cultural stereotypes of the main characters in the stories, who are representatives of the foreign-speaking world. This establishes a firm life philosophy of future graduates and forms their intercultural competence [12].

Thus, students form certain cognitive equipment, create a sense of cultural community with native speakers, which, accordingly, can help them overcome some cross-cultural differences and defuse tension when in contact with native speakers.

Undoubtedly, the main factor that influences the development of linguistic competence in the use of foreign texts of works of fiction is the teaching of free reading, which provides for a full, deep and uninterrupted understanding of the authentic text of all styles and genres – artistic (prosaic, dramatic, poetic), journalistic and scientific ones. The teaching of reading at the university has a professional and methodological purpose. The process of preparation of a future graduate of the university in relation to reading includes the task of teaching effective methods of replenishing and updating knowledge of the English language.

The following professional abilities of students are formed based on the ability to read:

- 1) the ability to understand the original literary, socio-political and scientific texts with various communicative purposes (familiarization, general understanding, in-depth understanding);
- 2) the ability to divide the text into semantic parts, to identify the main content in each of them, to formulate "semantic milestones", to reveal the general idea of the text;
- 3) the ability to expressively read aloud in order to accurately transfer the aesthetic and substantive information;
- 4) the ability to adequately translate original texts in English into the native language [13].

The complexity of the problems formulated above points to the need to improve the forms, methods and techniques of teaching reading in English to students. Since the high level of the formation of skills of working with texts of different genres plays an important role in the process of self-education and self-improvement of a future teacher, the relevance of the issue of the importance of mastering this type of speech activity in the process of specialists training is obvious.

The text is a "material fundamental principle" of reading as a receptively directed type of speech activity. Text understanding is the main indicator of the performance of speech activity.

Lexical-thematic lines formed by a chain of phrases, in which semantically related words are found, take part in text structuring. By distinguishing a number of words related to each other by semantic dependencies or a number of phrases containing these words, we can obtain certain lexical-semantic subsystems of the text that carry out more or less independent semantic directions in it due to the fact that each of them reflects a definite sphere of reality. Among all these lines there is one that plays the role of the main thematic core of the text, subordinates and groups others around itself. Thereby it becomes possible to distinguish the main and secondary ones among them. Lexical-thematic lines differ from each other in their length and the number of words and phrases they cover. The text is conditionally divided both into horizontal and vertical lines that lie between lexical-thematic rows reflecting its vertical structure.

The main components of the structural organization of the text have a significant influence on its formation and semantic perception. Consideration of these factors is essential for methods of teaching foreign languages. Students should receive an impetus to achieve a common textual structural-semantic orientation that helps to switch its semantic perception into a plan of an image of the whole text (a term by A.A. Leontiev). Summarizing the experience of teaching reading in English, one can put forward the assumption of the presence in the text of one more structural feature that affects the way it is perceived. The authors mean "the presence in the text of the so-called "critical point", at which most readers pass from a lower to a higher level of understanding. It does not necessarily coincide with the culmination, but it is usually located closer to the beginning of the text. This point is characterized by the fact that it divides the text into two parts, which are fundamentally different from each other by the nature of their understanding by the reader" [14].

The influence of the "critical point" on the understanding of the text is manifested in the fact that at this point the reader begins to use a new procedure for processing the lexical-grammatical material and turns to the general textual content. "The presence of this point reflects one of the sides of the objective division of the text

into its structurally significant components, and the keywords, in which it finds its material expression, are of great importance. In case it is localized in the initial phase of the text, the semantic perception of the textual whole is greatly facilitated" [15].

Therefore, when preparing texts, it is expedient to conduct their structural analysis, one of the most important aspects of which is the identification of the critical point. The following techniques can be used to facilitate students' work on training tests: 1) putting keywords in the headline; 2) their preliminary interpretation (translation); 3) highlighting (underlining) them; 4) putting keywords closer to the beginning of the text; 5) when checking the focus should be on the nature and location of keywords that serve as indicators of the "critical point" of understanding.

Fiction texts used for teaching reading should: 1) contribute to the ideological and moral education of students; 2) have an educational and cognitive value; 3) demonstrate examples of using the standards of the learned foreign language; 4) represent various genres of fiction (poetry, prose, drama); 5) show the learned foreign language and literature in development, therefore a reading educational program should include literary works of different eras.

When choosing fiction texts for reading by years of study, it is advisable to adhere to the following methodological principles: 1) a principle of concentric repetition of vocabulary with due account for the level of language proficiency by the students of this year of study; 2) a principle of continuity in the genre and style of texts that are read.

The selection of educational materials is based not only on a linguistic approach, but also on culturally-oriented, communicative and personal-activity approaches, which makes it possible to use culturally valuable authentic foreign language materials.

Depending on the features and the sequence of teaching reading, the methodological framework can include pre-text, text and post-text exercises.

Pre-text exercises are aimed at: 1) awakening students' interest in the foreign culture; 2) motivating for reading literary texts (for example, by means of communicative, socio-cultural-oriented instructions); 3) eliminating country-specific, lingo-stylistic, structural-semantic difficulties of the literary text. Pre-text work is performed in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher.

Text exercises are aimed at forming the skills of recognition and perception of socio-cultural information in the process of reading literary texts in order to adequately understand them. The textual stage implies students' independent work by means of exercises given in advance. Attention should be paid to the "expression plan", as well as on the "content plan" of the text of a literary work.

Post-text exercises must perform both a monitoring function and a function of consolidation of the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities. In terms of the targets and objects of control, all post-text exercises can be divided into three main groups:

1. Exercises aimed at consolidating the background knowledge that was acquired during the performance of previous exercises and reading a literary work.
2. Exercises aimed at determining the level of formation and further development of skills and abilities to recognize and derive the socio-cultural information from a literary work.
3. Exercises aimed at deriving the socio-cultural information, interpreting a literary work and its understanding [16].

An important linguistic prerequisite for the successful implementation and selection of the literary textual material implies determining its complexity and taking into account its complexity/understandability for students. As is known, the complexity of the text is an objective, absolute, invariable characteristic, which is independent of the person who perceives it, manifested based on the analysis of objective givenness – the text.

A methodologist A.A. Mirolyubov considers the following as the components of the linguistic design of a literary work, which make up its additive complexity: "1) various lexical units, i.e. vocabulary of a literary work; 2) the ratio of various lexical units

to the total number of words in the text, i.e. an indicator of the expanded vocabulary of the text; 3) low-frequency lexical units in the key position; 4) lexical units with Romanesque suffixes, which usually express abstract concepts; 5) idioms, primarily deformed ones; 6) intensifiers; 7) descriptive adjectives and adverbs; 8) complex and heterogeneous syntactic constructions, complicated parentheses; 9) long sentences (more than 60 words), as well as 10) deviations from the lexical norm: slang, vernacular, jargon, professionalisms; 11) deviations from the grammatical norm; 12) deviations from the graphic norm" [17].

The additive complexity of the style of fiction can be determined by the number of such components as: 1) emotionally colored words (emotives) 2) tropes: epithets, comparisons, metaphors, metonymy, etc.; 3) figures of speech: antitheses, asyndeton, polysyndeton, parallelism, etc.; 4) poetic, pretentious vocabulary; 5) poetic structures, rhetorical decoration; 6) stylistic convergence – the accumulation of stylistic means (the same motive, mood, feeling, etc. are expressed simultaneously through several stylistic means).

The additive complexity of the linguistic design of literary texts is determined by the number of such components as: 1) proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, utterances, etc.; 2) prolonged (more than half a page) and "immense" (more than one page) paragraphs; 3) too detailed (more than 15-20 pages) descriptive fragments: scenes, paintings, portraits, characteristics, etc.; 4) too long logical or emotional reflections; 5) author's (indirect) narration, monologue; 6) inner monologue as special speech for a literary text.

Thus, the literary text is complicated due to the following reasons:

- 1) an increase in the number of some text components (various content words, realities, complex syntactic constructions, etc.);
- 2) an increase in the scope/extent of certain text components (sentences, paragraphs, descriptive fragments, author's story, etc.);
- 3) the presence in the literary text of components of a certain quality with increased information load (lexical units in a figurative sense, implications, an indirect method of characterization, etc.).

In practical classes on a foreign language in order to teach students to emphasize and write down the main provisions of the given foreign language text and appropriately transform its individual parts, the following tasks can be performed:

when working on literary texts a teacher proposes to divide the text into several parts in accordance with the main thoughts of the author of the text, then to convey the content of each of them with one or two sentences;

when working on literary texts used for home reading (stories, chapters of novels) students can write down the author's main thoughts, compose a short version of the text, select the main material from what is read, using the skills acquired when working with texts for translation.

We should add some more special moments: when studying the work of any writer, students first of all become acquainted with his biography, life activity; then analyzing several read books, one can draw a parallel between the author's life and the events or character traits of certain heroes; students also need to be able not only to retell the text but to do its lexical or stylistic analysis, to distinguish features of the author's styles and to easily cite examples from other works of fiction in the study of lexicology and stylistics.

Thus, reading fiction develops independent thinking and, relying on the content of the work, a number of creative tasks may be performed:

- 1) Retell the text on behalf of different characters – a student can fantasize, since the text does not always contain full information about the location and behavior of a certain character. A roundtable discussion about the actions of the main characters may be held;
- 2) Try to imagine the behavior of characters under changed conditions, for example, several years ago, or suggest what would happen to the characters if any of the events did not take place;
- 3) Write an essay about your favorite character, arguing your choice and using the appropriate lexical base;

4) Come up with the ending of the work, if the author enables readers to independently present the further development of events;

5) Find in the text and consider in detail the author's quotes that attracted attention and make a conclusion on how relevant they are in our time;

6) Reproduce separate scenes of a literary work in a sketch. This helps to improve speech skills.

5. Conclusion

Students' socio-cultural competence is formed based on their study of national cultures of countries, the language of which they learn. Learning a foreign language, they simultaneously begin to understand the possible difference between their native culture and other cultures and also acquire the skills to overcome socio-cultural differences and take into account cultural and country-specific peculiarities of different countries.

Reading authentic literary works is a means of forming socio-cultural and linguistic competences and one of the important communicative-practical goals of foreign language teaching at the university. In general, reading as a necessary element of teaching English fosters the ability to perceive and interpret works of art, express personal perceptions of them, arguing their thoughts and assessments; the attraction of an artistic text in the process of teaching the language develops visual thinking, creates moral and aesthetic ideals.

Short stories by famous English and American authors, which should address moral-ethical issues important for each nation, may be used in learning English to develop students' linguistic competence in a classroom environment. The results of the conducted research have shown that short interesting action stories about 4-6 pages are an effective educational material for students of nonlinguistic majors.

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