

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

The Modern Textbook as a Laboratory of Creating a Morally Full-Fledged Individual

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Abstract

The article presents a concept of creating a textbook on literature for undergraduate Russian-Chinese languages major students, and therefore taking courses of Russian and Chinese literature. The relevance of the present research lies in the necessity to develop the strategy of moral education of the students undergoing professional training. The authors have used the activity-and-competence-building approach; they propose that the textbook should be regarded as a laboratory of creating a person's morality. According to the authors, a full-fledged moral person is an individual who strives for obtaining high moral qualities and who realizes the inconsistency with the ideal. The article demonstrates the samples of educational materials and tasks that will help the reader to come to certain moral conclusions and get a lesson in humanism, team spirit, patriotism, tolerance, etc. The authors show the use of comparative analysis, which creates an idea not only of the proximity of various elements of content and form in Russian and Chinese literature, but also of the similarity of moral criteria in assessing the personal values of two nations. Examples of texts taken from literatures of different countries and various time periods, possessing a certain typological similarity in the range of topics brought up by the writers, – these examples convince us that although ethical criteria, in contrast to moral laws, although they are based on them, but they possess an overtemporal nature, they are eternal, universal.

Keywords: Chinese literature, comparative analysis, individual, skills, modern textbook.

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Introduction

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In recent years due to the active introduction of online study mode, the changes in the methods of university teaching require serious attention to the textbooks and various additional materials used by the students. The requirements to the modern textbooks nowadays are directly connected with the competences that should be developed through the learning process in each academic major. And the materials of the textbook should undoubtedly combine universal cultural skills with professional ones. Their set, designed to determine the education process in, for instance, the Department of Oriental studies, demands that the students should master “the ability to work in team, be tolerant to social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences, the ability to take into consideration, in practical as well as in research activities, the specific characteristic typical of members of different cultures, possess the skills of conducting a productive dialogue based on the knowledge of one’s own culture as well as of that of the interlocutor; skills of tolerant perception of social, cultural, confessional differences, an integral system of ideas about national customs, traditions and realities of the country of the languages being studied” (Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education, 2014).

What does this competence-based paradigm require of the authors of the textbook? One of the concepts of creating practice-oriented textbooks is presented in E.G. Tareva and E.M. Kazantseva’s article (Tareva & Kazantseva, 2011). Asserting the need to use the activity-competence approach to the creation of textbooks for training bachelors, the authors demonstrate a certain methodology, revealing the content, methods, approaches, ways of presenting the material in the textbook. The authors rightly believe that “a new approach to creating a textbook for training a graduate is necessary for the formation of a unique educational value – that complex of competencies that meets his needs and allows him to find a place in a wide range of professional reality” (Tareva & Kazantseva, 2011). It is important to point out that the ultimate goal is not the implementation of the set of students’ skills, but the formation an individual, a graduate who “should be able to improve his knowledge outside the goal-oriented educational process, as well as awaken the desire to think independently in his students. After all, self-development is a never-ending process. This very quality makes the lifelong process of education the keynote of the entire educational system” (Tareva & Kazantseva, 2011), the ultimate goal of which is “the upbringing of curious, intelligent and empathic caring young people who will contribute to the further improvement and security of the world through by means of intercultural understanding and respect” (Bezukladnikov, Kruze, & Egorova, 2018).

Thus, the university textbook, ideally, should not only be one of the most important means of improving the students’ competence, it should also be able to form a set of certain moral qualities. The process of obtaining knowledge and mastering skills and abilities in certain disciplines, no doubt, should be combined with formation of young people’s inner world and the moral basis of their behavior. Teachers,

psychologists, education coordinators not only put the moral upbringing alongside with the development of intelligence, physical fitness, industriousness, aesthetic sensibility; they put it in the priority place among other goals of educational tasks (Xue & Jian, 2021; Goodman, 2019; Harrison, Burn & Moller, 2020). Scholars from various countries are gravely concerned about the decreasing role of educational institutions in the upbringing of key character traits of young people and it shows in the works of scientists from different countries: “Moral education should be placed in a prominent position in educational evaluation...” (Xue & Jian, 2021). Literature helps to “construe the challenge of moral education in a world, and at a time, in which self-centered, short-sighted and narrow-minded thinking dominates much of the socio-political landscape” (Splitter, 2020).

Purpose and objectives of the study

The pivotal role in this process should be given to the course of literature with its textbook, which in the tradition of humanistic education has always been considered as a textbook of life. “This means that today’s textbook must be instrumental, but not ‘informational’: the study of a literary text, which is backed by the textbook (and not merely by means of the textbook) assumes that the student will master the skill of working with any literary content (texts, abstracts of literary researches, various interpretations, etc.), and that the student’s immersion in this content (e.g. through the creation of problematic situations) will help to comprehend the text as a complex and stylistic harmony, and adopt it” (Romanicheva, 2018). The building of one’s character and morality through the lessons of literature reading and analysis helps to resolve a number of different problems. And this idea is international. For example, Scandinavian teachers ask a similar question: “How can Laxdaela Saga be used as a vehicle of character education for teenagers?” (Jonsson, Haroarson, Siguroardottir, & Joelsdottir, 2019).

Therefore, it is very important for the students to use the textbooks which initially contain these opportunities for the formation of a morally complete personality. And what is the definition of “a morally complete individual”? “The consolidation of individual norms and values, the formation of a certain attitude towards the world around a person gets his own internal criteria of assessing one’s behavior as well as that of other people, which to a lesser extent depends on the opinions and assessments of others, he chooses value-based goals and corresponding to moral norms ways of behavior, that is, he becomes a socially mature, independent person”, – this is the definition of an individual given in a modern book on psychology (Allakhverdov & Bogdanova, 2004).

In this regard we define the object of the study as forming the concept of creating a comparative textbook for students studying Russian and Chinese literature as a part of learning target language, in which the main tasks associated with the formation of human morality will have to be solved.

We will consider a morally full-fledged person a subject possessing an internally conscious complex of human qualities that help him regulate his own behavior and evaluate the actions of others. This set of moral qualities in each culture is fixed in morality and, unlike it, does not depend on political, social situations. Therefore regardless of personal qualities of any individual: innate or acquired abilities, temperament, character, this individual will base his behavior and his assessments of his or other peoples' behavior, on a certain set of moral guides that includes both respect for team spirit and individuality, the denouncing of gregariousness and extreme individualism, ability to manifest humanism and mercy, the comprehension of patriotism as a really intimate and not ostentatious feeling, rejection of bigotry, as well as tolerance, using a sense of conscience in assessing oneself and one's actions.

We believe, a morally full-fledged individual is a person who not only possesses knowledge about the world, which gives him the opportunity, existing in a multicultural space to find humane ways to realize his plans and ideas, but also a person who has absorbed the ideas of humanism, mercy, patriotism, collectivism, tolerance – all these important life values are necessary for a person's existence in modern society, and they can enter the minds of the younger generation when working with a right a textbook.

The upbringing of the individual's certain personal traits can be put into effect with the correct compilation and arrangement of educational material. "In addition to the analyses of the development of moral judgments, it is necessary to analyze how moral concepts are applied, and how moral considerations are weighed and balanced against other moral or non-moral considerations" (Turiel & Banas, 2020).

Literature review

While discussing the specifics of the formation of a morally full-fledged personality as a result of mastering the teaching materials of a university textbook, the authors of this article draw on their own experience when creating educational materials for both Russian students studying foreign (Chinese) literature (Kondratova, 2020) and for foreign interns taking a course on Russian literature. We will try to present and explain the concept of the textbook which will be based on a comparative analysis of literary works that raise the problems associated with forming a particular moral quality.

Selecting the material for the textbook, we came to the conclusion that it would not be quite right while giving students studying the literature of the country of the major foreign language an understanding of the literary process to immensely increase the list of authors and number of works. The textbook the teacher will use to reach the main goal should solve a number of multidirectional tasks – educational: to acquaint with the problems and artistic features of the best examples of national literature as well as of the peak points of the literary process of the country of the major language; using the principles of comparative analysis, show the genetic, typological, communicative connections of various phenomena of the literary process, identify intersections and borrowings at the level of content and form of works of various genres; aesthetic: to develop students' interest in reading, the ability to think independently, for personal interpretation of the text upon reading. And all these tasks should be united as the overall goal – the formation of a moral personality, the full value of which is realized in a consciously humane attitude towards the world. The work on literary categories in this case will take the form of deep immersion into the text, developing an idea of the unity of content and form in a literary work. The example of both the form analysis and the search for the moral idea is given in the article about the works of Mo Yan and his novel “Frogs” (Kondratova, Popova & Saltanova, 2020a).

The books that have passed the test of time contain moral lessons that are not just simply formulated and are didactic maxims. The world's great literature is able to convey the idea of the most important moral principles of the human interaction through the system of images, allowing foreign readers to come to a particular conclusion by themselves. “The native culture and a foreign one are closely interrelated (the foreign is perceived through the native, the native is redefined through the foreign) and thus determine the content of education which is designed to put into practice the dialogue of cultures and make it a dominant in the consciousness of the individual who perceives his own and foreign cultural realities” (Tareva, 2017).

Methodology

The methodology of our research is based both on theoretical and practical methods, and first of all, a comparative analysis of works of Russian and Chinese literature of different genres. Another one is a synthesis of aspects of the theory of literature, psychology, pedagogy and methods of teaching literature. A modern textbook, which, in our opinion, is a laboratory for the upbringing of a morally complete personality, should include material for analysis, with the help of which the authors predict certain situations that give readers certain moral lessons. In this article, we will present some specific examples of the textbook's content, designed to form a certain moral potential of the reader. This is especially important

because “in the current situation of socio-economic development and digitalization of society, the issue of moral standards is becoming especially relevant. Individualism, the principles of self-actualization, enrichment and autonomy are strengthening in the youth environment, the values of civic participation and moral identity are not developing” (Kislyakov, Shmeleva & Aleksandrovich, 2020). And the overcoming of these false values, in our opinion, is possible if, with the help of educational activities, we introduce young readers to thoughtful, slow and meaningful reading (Kondratova, Popova & Saltanova, 2020b).

Results

We believe that it is necessary to make a careful selection of literary works and text fragments for analysis, through the moral problems contained in them, the reader, who has become the interlocutor of the author of the textbook, comes to an understanding of the moral laws of human existence. Thus, when foreign students study Russian folklore they can be offered the Russian fairy tale “The Enormous Turnip”, which has a so-called cumulative composition. Such composition in fairy tales usually is addressed to the youngest readers, but we think that the one should begin acquaintance with great Russian literature from such fairy tales because they are, undoubtedly, the basis of it. “The Turnip” contains a very important principle of moral education, which unfortunately, somehow forgotten nowadays, that is, the strength of the team is great, and only being a team member one can achieve great results. Foreign students not only get acquainted with a whole set of heroes (grandfather, grandmother, granddaughter, a dog, a cat, a mouse), but also learn the function of the gradation technique, which means a gradual heightening of tension in the narration, and understand specific features of euphony in the text – assonances and alliterations, master their pronunciation. However, the main goal of working on this folk tale is to lead students to the conclusion on their own that the humankind opposed collectivism to individualism, thus showed the superiority of collective labor.

Tasks completing the work on the "Turnip" fairy tale should contain the possibility of dialogue, exchange of views focused no longer on the fairy tale itself, but on the principle of team spirit and how it is functioning the modern world. Students understand that the youth policy propagates both the idea of becoming a leader and reaching the set goals as a team. Folklore also praises both individual heroism and a collective approach to achieving goals. What is more important, more correct? – these questions can become subjects for discussion, they help to create problem situations in the classroom, but do not imply unambiguous answers. It is important that the foreign students get to understand that the team spirit, the spirit of collectivism is an inseparable part of the Russian ethnic mind, and the fairy tale in this case is an

illustration of this phenomenon.

The same idea can be found in Shi Nai'an's novel "Water Margin". Chinese students often cite this work as an example when they want to prove that there is certain typological likeness between quite a short Russian fairy tale "The Turnip" and one of the great Chinese novels of the Ming dynasty. Russian students while analyzing "Water Margin" should come to the idea of how important the strength of a team is (Kondratova, 2020). The novel tells the story of a gang of outlaws; in a way it resembles the stories of Robin Hood and Till Eulenspiegel. The Liangshanbo camp gathered a lot of characters who found themselves outside the state system, had encountered injustice of authorities; this camp is actually a kind of Utopia, an ideally organized a State where all men are brothers. The novel had long existed in the form of oral legends; in the written form in has several versions with different endings. The Russian translation made by A. Rogachev contains 70 chapters and has an optimistic ending: the heroes of the Liangshanbo are celebrating their triumph. However, the 110-chapter version shows a tragic ending. "The daredevils of Liangshanbo, in a moment of danger to the state, unite with the government troops, gain a victory and receive high government positions from the sovereign. And this is how their tragedy begins: when divided they no longer represent a formidable force, therefore the envious and dishonorable courtiers surrounding the kind and noble emperor easily destroy them one by one. The end of the story is both disastrous and didactic: the strength of people is in unity" (Kondratova, 2020).

Thus, the material for analysis and the series of questions, which lead to the creation of problem-based situations, the demonstration of far from unambiguous answers, laid down in the textbooks, helps to predict the formation of not only professional skills, but also certain moral qualities.

Another most prominent marker of a full-fledged moral person is the ability to express humaneness and mercy. The process of upbringing these important for a person qualities is connected with empathy – the ability to sympathize, empathize in situations that present an opportunity for the hero to choose between good and evil, the subsequent assessment of the character's actions. The textbook should provide the students with the opportunity to analyze the novel's fragments where such problems are raised.

In the textbook's "Literature of China" section devoted to Luo Guanzhong's novel "Three Kingdoms", the similar problem is solved when analyzing the image of Zhuge Liang. This character stands out against the background of other characters, even those for whom the author himself does not hide his sympathy, precisely because of his active humanism. The military adviser to Liu Bei, the sovereign of Kingdom of Shu, Zhuge Liang was sure that it is not the strongest who wins the war, but the smartest. To achieve the goal not by means of throwing into the battle a great number of soldiers, but using a cunning and ingenious

strategic plans – that was the tactics of this commander who was the best at his time. One of the important episodes about humanism and mercy of this character is the scene that describes Zhuge Liang's army conquering the Man tribes. Since the plot of the novel contains mythic elements, we have to take into consideration real and unreal motives of the hero's actions. Zhuge Liang's army could not cross the river because the spirits living in it required human sacrifice. The commander did not want to kill his soldiers who had won the victory, but at the same time he did not want to sacrifice the captured enemies either, because he understands the inhumanity of this act. The way out of the situation was found: instead of the Man soldiers' heads they threw big dough balls with meat filling into the river.

In Zhuge Liang, mercifulness and humaneness go together with the absence of vanity and ambition. And while vanity, as we know, is a real vice, worthy only of condemnation, ambition in many literary heroes is associated with the ability to take risks, heroism. The situations revealing the presence or absence of ambition in a character show us the moral basis of his nature. Testing a literary hero for ambition is one of the main ways in assessing his moral principles. Which type of character will draw the author's admiration? Is it a fearful and resolute man of great mind and ambition, who is confidently going to victory? Or is it a man indifferent to fame and honors, who can turn down the highest position while expressing a willingness to honestly serve his country and his sovereign? Zhuge Liang is exactly the second type. His refusal to Liu Bei's offer to become the emperor of Shu after Liu Bei death proves that for the writer who lived a thousand years after the events described in the novel, the paragon of humane and merciful military commander would be a man devoid of ambitions. The inclusion in the textbook the analysis of such episodes, as well as tasks involving an independent search for truth, is very important for the formation of ideal moral qualities of a person in nowadays when striving towards leadership, self-promotion, and the desire for fame has become essential for modern youth. One of Confucius's maxims could be used as an epigraph to the analysis of this scene: don't worry if people don't recognize your merits; worry that you may not recognize theirs.

The process of forming humane attitude towards the world, mercy as the basis of human interaction, opposition to ambitious, individualistic tendencies can be demonstrated by the examples taken from a textbook on Russian literature intended for foreign students. For them, the thorough analysis of carefully selected Russian classic works of literature, a detailed analysis of chosen fragments is a peculiar way of comprehending the Russian soul, forming a concept of the moral ideals of people who belong to a different socio-cultural environment. And following the study of works of Russian folklore, in our opinion, it would be good to offer foreign students to work on a great example of Ancient Russian literature such as "The Tale of Igor's Campaign", an epic poem written at the end of the 12th century by an unknown author. Analysis of the text gives readers the idea that the character of the protagonist is complex, ambiguous:

Prince Igor is brave, courageous. Although his army is not large, he goes to fight against the enemy. But the motive of this action of his cannot be regarded as moral. Igor is dreaming about glory, he is very ambitious, so he sets off on a campaign against the Polovtsians. He is ready to win or lose. He is reckless and has nothing but glory on his mind, therefore even nature, predicting by a solar eclipse that the campaign will end in failure, cannot stop him. Prince Igor has paid no regard to the sign of heaven, he goes far from his native land, and than nobody can help him. The price he will pay is enormous: his army will be defeated leaving behind lots of widows and orphans, the way to Rus' will be open for the Polovtsians, Igor himself will be captured and taken prisoner.

The unknown author condemns the hero; he puts words of reproach into the mouth of Svyatoslav, Prince of Kiev. The bravery of Prince Igor brought only grief and misery to the Russian land. What destiny does he deserve for his recklessness in the future? Chinese students who are often rather far from understanding the idea of Christian forgiveness, can be quite harsh in their judgment: Prince Igor deserves punishment, some even say death. The text abstract describing how Igor was welcomed in Rus' after his escape from captivity convinces them of the opposite: Motherland heartily welcomes her son who comes back home. He suffered a lot, therefore he deserves pity. Prince Igor has made a mistake, but any mistake can be forgiven. The analysis of this scene shows that Russian literature at the early stage of its history gave the most important lessons on morality: it warned against excessive ambition, taught mercy and the ability to forgive.

Discussions

Conscience is one of the most complex cognitive processes based on the personal value system. The psychic state that is metaphorically called "a guilty conscience" becomes a motive of actions of many literary characters. The characters realize their own imperfection, and this makes them reject the feeling of self-protection. Conscience requires from the characters, first of all, the responsibility towards their own vision of morality, makes them feel ashamed for not being consistent with the humanistic values regarded by the person as ideal.

A wide variety of examples of struggle between conscience and hidden desires of a person are depicted in many world literature works of various epochs. We can illustrate it by the play "The Injustice to Dou E" written by Guan Hanqing during the Yuan dynasty. An internal struggle is clearly noticeable in the souls of two main female characters at once: Granny Cai and Dou E. The women found themselves helpless in the face of evil Zhang nicknamed "Zhang the Mule" who after doing a good deed (he saved old Granny Cai when another man almost strangled her) immediately demands not just some kind of gratitude toward him,

but a real sacrifice: he wants Granny Cai and her widowed daughter-in-law to marry his father and himself. Granny Cai feels remorse because she cannot fulfill the demand of those who saved her life. The young widow Dou E tries to fight, she believes that an honest woman cannot marry for the second time, because that goes against Confucian norms. She feels ashamed for her mother-in-law who happened to be weak and ready to agree to this disgraceful marriage.

The medieval Chinese playwright Guan Hanqing divided the dramatic personae into those who can feel guilty, i.e. who are conscientious, and those who are sure of their own righteousness. Both Zhang the Mule and his father, governor Tao Wu, physician Sai Lu Yi, and Dou E's father – they all are opposed to female characters precisely by this criterion - the presence of conscience, that is the awareness of internal consistence or inconsistency with the ideal human behavior. It is conscience that makes Dou E take her old mother-in-law's, who treated her like her own, non-existing guilt upon herself and be sentenced to death. "The culminating scene in the play 'The Injustice to Dou E' is the execution of the young woman by beheading. Before the execution she reproaches Heaven for its injustice to her. She begs Heaven to prove her innocence with signs: her blood will not spill onto the ground, there must be heavy snowfall in the midst of summer during the execution, and there will be a drought for three years. And the just Heaven shows these signs to the people thus exposing the unfairness of the trial. In the play "The Injustice to Dou E" the Buddhist idea of retribution for committed sins is clearly visible. And, no doubt, many readers are still enchanted by the heroic image of a woman who obtained justice even after her death." (Kondratova, 2020).

The problem of conscience, the ability of a person to act according to its requirements, often sounds in literary works about women's destiny. In Russian literature one of the most popular dramas telling us about this problem is "The Thunderstorm" by Alexander Ostrovsky. No doubt, introducing foreign students to this masterpiece of Russian drama should go along with discussions about the inner motives of the heroine for her fateful act. It is not Katerina's conflict with the "dark kingdom", but her fatal passions and inability to live peacefully by committing an act that contradicts the heroine's own ideas about the norms of behavior, - this should be the subject of analysis on the pages of the textbook, prompting its readers to find themselves a way resolve complex moral issues. Why can Varvara live as she wants as long as everything goes on the sly, and Katerina can not do the same? Why did a morally chaste heroine commit an act that she herself considers sinful? What makes her sense of guilt even deeper? What is the author's attitude towards the heroine? To answer these questions, foreign students should not only make a retrospective journey into the history and learn about the patriarchal rules of family life of Russian merchants in the 19th century, but also have a notion of Christian virtues and Christ's Commandments. All these are necessary for the students in order to understand that the author does not blame the poor heroine, but feels pity for

her, and what he blames is the cruel and indifferent world that cannot forgive the sin of the repentant woman.

Going through the list of literary works in the textbook focusing on the comparative analysis of the most significant works of Russian and Chinese literature, the works that show the moral criteria of the individual's evaluation, we will have a close look at the novel "Journey to the West" by Wu Cheng'en, written during the Ming dynasty. This book, being one of the great works of Chinese literature, provides an excellent lesson in tolerance, because, in essence, an apology for Buddhism, it convinces that the three teachings Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are considered as a harmonious aggregate. Readers also see a common pantheon of gods, which in some episodes of the book unite in pursuit of a shared goal. Proving the humanity of Buddhist teachings, the need to strengthen the faith, which is the main motive of the heroes' pilgrimage to India for the sacred sutras, the book contains a lot of episodes demonstrating Confucian and Taoist virtues. For instance, in the image of the Tang monk Xuanzang, softness, weakness, indecision are exaggerated, which confirms the Taoist postulates "the soft can subdue the hard" and "use the weak to defeat the strong". The attitude of the Monkey King, or Sun Wukong, towards his subjects is the attitude of an ideal Confucianist ruler whose supreme duty is to care about his people. The analysis of such episodes presented in the textbook convinces the readers that tolerance for dissent was already recognized as important moral quality in ancient times, which means they have stood the test of time.

Conclusion

The selection of the material for a textbook is a very important stage in the process of students' education. While studying the architectonics of the literary works, the specific features of their narrative, analyzing the linguistic view of the writer's artistic world, the students will get valuable lessons in human interaction, and these lessons will not be presented in the form of boring edification and didactic maxims. The proposed situations of moral choice, the assessment of the actions and character of the heroes can refine the soul of a person, help to form the conception of the ideal and the vicious, the notion of the good and the evil. And no matter how paradoxical it sounds, but a morally full-fledged person is always far from the realizing his closeness to the ideal, on the contrary, he believes that he can be in no way compared to it, and constantly strives to reach it. This process, like Great Tao, has no beginning and no end.

Thus, the idea, the possibility of moral education should be incorporated into the textbook materials through the selection of texts for analysis, a carefully designed system of questions and tasks. In this case the comparative analysis becomes the most important method of forming in the students, mastering the literature of the country of the studied language, a concept of universal moral values; by means of the comparative analysis the students will see how literary works can create a certain model of a full-fledged

moral personality. Books that have become a textbook of life for many generations, today, when imaginary values in society sometimes dominate over eternal ones, require that the textbook be a good assistant for the teacher and an interesting interlocutor for the student.

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