

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

## Personality Development Potential of a Literary Text in Digitalized Teaching of RFL

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### Abstract

The relevance of using personality development potential of literary texts in order to form the necessary complex of knowledge about the most significant spiritual and moral values of the Russian people is due to the situation of a complete transition with no alternatives to teaching in a distance format at the preparatory faculty. The article examines the experience of using the potential of the texts from Russian classical literature for personal self-development and self-realization of foreign students at Russian as a foreign language lessons (pre-university stage) in conditions where direct immersion in the language is impossible. Such literary works allow foreign students to begin their acquaintance with Russian history and culture, to form basic ideas about the values of Russian society and the mentality of Russian people, to understand the degree of similarity and difference between Russian and native cultures, which generally contribute to their adaptation to Russian reality and integration into the educational multicultural space of the university. The approaches, the universal and specific requirements for the formation of an electronic educational course in RFL are presented. The course can be accessed in "Electronic information and educational environment of SWSU. SWSU's Courses" on Moodle platform. The platform thanks to its functional capabilities, allows to present educational material in various forms, to vary the methods of students' independent educational activities, to organize the necessary audiovisual support in mastering the Russian language within the elementary, basic and first certification levels (A1, A2, B1).

*Keywords:* literary text; personality-oriented pedagogy; distance learning.

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## **Introduction**

Until recently, in the organization of the educational process for foreign students at the stage of pre-university training, classical academic forms with face-to-face studies prevailed. And if the inclusion of elements of distance education for this category of students in the recent past was a subject of discussion, then the global situation with the COVID-19 epidemic left no choice and, in the conditions of interstate borders' closure, required a complete transition with no alternatives to teaching in a distance format at the preparatory faculty.

In the current situation the problem of foreign students' integration into the multicultural educational space of a Russian university requires new approaches to be found, since the problem of distance learning without direct immersion in the language environment, without constant direct contacts with native speakers has been added to the linguistic (differences in language systems) and the didactic (differences in pedagogical systems) ones. Psychological and technical difficulties such as feeling of isolation from classmates and teachers, a decrease in incentives to use the Russian language for communication, a decrease in motivation for learning, insufficient development of self-discipline, inability to concentrate due to distractions in the room not specially designed for study, lack of necessary equipment at home, unstable operation of devices, instability of communication with the Internet connection generate risks of reduction in teaching effectiveness, regression of previously formed skills.

The key methodological points for the teachers are not only students' motivation maintenance, help in their learning the algorithm of actions, use of the techniques and methods of work, tasks and exercises that contribute to students entering the educational space of a Russian university, but also the productive use of the personality development potential of literary texts in order to form the necessary complex of knowledge about a different mentality, about other forms of behavior – and that is the subject of our research. Working with Russian classical literature, reading authentic and adapted texts in Russian is a prerequisite for the successful process of learning Russian as a foreign language, especially if teaching is organized within the Humanities orientation of pre-university training in a distance format.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of the article is to study the possibilities of using the potential of a literary text for personal self-development and self-realization of foreign students at Russian as a foreign language lessons (pre-university stage) in the context of the education digitalization.

The tasks are as follows: researching the communicative aspect of e-learning, the interaction of teachers and foreign students in the process of reading literary texts in the framework of personality-oriented pedagogy; defining the role of teachers, most of whom are the representatives of 'book culture', in the context of the development of digital technologies and mediatization of education, taking into account the change in reading practices since the media turn at the beginning of the 21st century; stating the requirements for an electronic study guide on RFL.

### **Literature review**

Modern scientific and pedagogical thought is in search of the most effective methods of distance teaching of Russian as a foreign language, the creation of an educational and methodological base for e-learning. The concepts of 'digitalization of education', 'e-learning', 'digital educational environment', 'personality development potential of a literary text' are in the focus of attention of modern researchers. The problem of digitalization of higher education is reflected in the works of A.A. Vasilyeva, I.N. Potapova, I.V. Taratuta (Vasilyeva, Potapova & Taratuta, 2019), A.A. Gofman, A.S. Tymoshchuk (Gofman & Tymoshchuk, 2020; Tymoshchuk, 2020), M.A. Manikovskaya (Manikovskaya, 2019), D.A. Toropov (Toropov, 2018) and others. The prospects of 'book culture' in the context of mediatization of education, the personality development potential of the modern educational process are analyzed by K.G. Antonyan, N.A. Sokolova (Antonyan & Sokolova, 2019), E.G. Tareva (Tareva, 2007), N.V. Khodyakova, S.V. Petryakova (Hodyakova & Petryakova, 2017) and others.

In the scientific literature, digitalization is seen as a key trend in the development of education in a virtualizing society, and the role of 'education 2.0' is seen as a modern model of education, built on expert knowledge, creativity, interactivity and efficiency (Toropov, 2018).

Digital trends in modern Russian education impose practical requirements on the ethical image of media democracy and network rationality (Gofman & Tymoshchuk, 2020). Important issues in the context of the development of modern pedagogical technologies are the organization of the teaching process within the media environment, with the structuring and visualization of educational material, the most effective use of the possibilities of 'new media' and digital devices (Antonyan & Sokolova, 2019).

The problem of conjugation and interdependence of digitalization of all spheres of society and transforming education becomes a fundamental scientific task due to special circumstances (Manikovskaya, 2019). The digitalization of education has risks and negative consequences, such as possible dehumanization and instrumentalization of education, deformation of human identity, devaluation of traditional moral norms and principles leading to the destruction of the moral foundations of society (Manikovskaya, 2019).

Today the scientific and pedagogical community finds itself in a situation “when the ‘book culture’ and ‘book type of thinking’ generation of teachers is faced with the need to master digital technologies and digital environment at a time when the ‘digital native’ generation comes to schools and universities, for whom digital culture is not an object of learning, but a natural habitat from birth” (Antonyan & Sokolova, 2019). The lack of a well-grounded system of ideas about taxonomy, the specific content of personality development e-learning, about the logic (the stages) of such learning causes concern (Hodyakova & Petryakova, 2017).

The collapse of the literary-centric model of culture, the ousting of literature from the cultural space under the pressure of the audiovisual media has actualized the term ‘literary centrism’, which undoubtedly needs to be rebooted in the new digital era (Chernyak, 2019). A literary text that meets the principle of communicativeness and serves as a living model of verbal communication plays a special role in teaching foreign citizens cognitive strategies for extracting information from the text (comprehension strategies) (Bugaenko, 2020), contributes to the formation of adaptation skills for further education in monolingual, bilingual and multilingual audiences (Petrukhnina & Rodina, 2019).

It is necessary to take into account the stressfulness that accompanies the initial period of study of foreign students at a Russian university, due to a change in climatic conditions, as well as in the physiological state of the young people, the presence of a language barrier, a sharp limitation of previous social contacts and a number of other reasons (Stepanova & Kovaleva & Amelina, 2019).

The personality of the student, continuously developing in interaction with the educational environment of e-learning, goes through a cycle of four situations-stages: adaptation in the environment, identification with it; free choice in the environment, experiment with the environment; reflection of the activity in the environment and dialogue with the environment; creativity in the environment, personalization of the environment and self-change. Minimizing risks in an e-learning environment through pedagogical support leads to an increase in the personality development potential of the environment (Hodyakova & Petryakova, 2017). Based on the competence paradigm in education, when teaching foreign languages, the main thing is to form in a specialist - a graduate student of a non-linguistic university - certain personal properties and characteristics that ensure his readiness and ability to use the foreign language in professionally significant situations of intercultural communication (Tareva, 2007).

## **Methodology**

To achieve this goal, the following methods were used: cultural-philosophical analysis of scientific and methodological literature in order to consider the subject of the research in a scientific and socio-cultural

context, analysis and generalization of the results of pedagogical practice and scientific research, generalization of the experience of creating electronic textbooks on Russian as a foreign language. The research is based on the approaches used in the theory and practice of teaching languages: communicative, sociocultural, problematic, competence approaches. An electronic RFL course in Moodle LMS, implemented at the stage of pre-university training of foreign citizens at the South-West State University, serves as the material for the study.

## **Results**

The educational system of a modern Russian university, which is focused on global socio-cultural needs, is aimed at providing foreign students with the opportunity to form the reference parameters of a professional's personality, one of them is high-quality speech-thinking activity.

Studying Russian as a foreign language is most effective in an atmosphere of immersion in the language, traditions, culture, through communication with native speakers, through the ability to master real-life speech in different language situations. The research material of other scientists as well as our own shows that in the conditions of distance learning, when direct immersion in the language is impossible, other channels of perception and other methods come forward.

The possibilities of a literary text as a source of moral and linguocultural information for acquainting foreign students with the most significant spiritual and moral values of Russian people in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language are undeniable. The modern situation actualizes such an aspect of working with a literary text as the realization of the personality development potential inherent in it.

At RFL lessons at the stage of pre-university training, foreign students who have mastered the basic level of proficiency in the Russian language work with such adapted texts as "A Wonderful Doctor" by A.I. Kuprin (while studying participles, gerund), "The House with the Mezzanine" by A.P. Chekhov (while studying verbs of movement), "The Story of a Real Man" by B. Polevoy, "The Fate of a Man" by M.A. Sholokhov (while studying participles, gerund constructions, the ways to express temporary relations in simple and complex sentences), "Scarlet Sails" by A.S. Green (while studying the ways to express target, concession and cause-and-effect relations in simple and complex sentences), "The Young Lady-Peasant" by A.S. Pushkin (while studying the ways to express conditional, concessive and target relations), with the text fragments from the autobiographical book by I.S. Shmelev "Summer of the Lord", etc. At Literature lessons foreign students get acquainted with excerpts from the works of Old Russian and classical Russian literature of the 18th – 21st centuries. The program also includes Kursk regional component (works by N.N. Aseev, V.V. Borodaevsky, K.D. Vorobiev, E. I. Nosov). The linguoculturological aspect of reading

literary texts is of particular importance, and the writer's work is considered primarily as a phenomenon of Russian culture (Stepanova & Amelina & Kovaleva, 2019).

Personality development literary texts are the ones about philanthropy and mercy, one of which is A.I. Kuprin's work "A Wonderful Doctor", written in the genre of a Christmas (Christmas) story and dedicated to N.I. Pirogov.

The personality of N.I. Pirogov, a Russian surgeon and anatomist, professor, creator of the first atlas of topographic anatomy, founder of Russian military field surgery, founder of the Russian school of anesthesia, inspires and motivates many current and future representatives of the medical profession. The story, which foreign students of the preparatory faculty read in an adapted version, leaves a good impression on them. This can be judged by the answers to one of the post-text questions: "What have you learnt about this man - the wonderful doctor?": "I know that he is a good doctor and a kind person", "he helped the Mertsalovs and brought happiness to people", "I know he is a good doctor; he heals sick people, not wanting compensation, even if he is a professor" and so on.

This story makes foreign students (especially those planning further education in medical universities) think about the "greatness and complexity of their future profession", that "people will always expect miracles from them, both on holidays and on weekdays, and the ability to perform a great deed in relation to others is a professional quality necessary for a doctor" (Bezborodkina, 2018).

The fact that strengthened the impression of the perception of the story and the personality of N.I. Pirogov was the establishment by the Decree of President of the Russian Federation from June 19, 2020 of a new state award of the Russian Federation - Pirogov's Medal, the motto of this great man was "Mercy, Duty, Selflessness". Foreign students (and especially of biomedical specialties) watched with attention the news stories about the first holders of the award - the medical workers and volunteers who distinguished themselves in the fight against the spread of coronavirus infection. It was also interesting for them to learn that in certain situations defined by the statute of the medal, awards can also be given to foreign citizens for providing medical care in difficult clinical cases, treatment of especially dangerous diseases, active participation in the scientific activities of Russian medical organizations and other merits.

In a tense modern situation, when the historical truth is distorted, the course and the results of the Great Patriotic War (and World War II in general) are falsified, historical and political myths are created, it is difficult to overestimate the opportunity available to teachers to work with young people from different countries and continents to help them form an objective look at events so distant for them (territorially and historically) in the process of reading such texts as the adapted fragments of B. Polevoy's work "The Story

of a Real Man” and the text “Alexey Maresyev. The life of the real man”, M.A. Sholokhov’s story “The Fate of a Man”. The inclusion of illustrative material, presentations, fragments from documentary and feature films, video clips with songs of the war years into the structure of the lesson increases the information content of the material, enhances its expressive character. Visual images, artifacts of the war years from teachers’ personal archives create a special emotional and psychological atmosphere, contributing to the understanding of the historical context and, ultimately, the meaning of the work.

After reading the adapted fragments of the story by B. Polevoy “The Story of a Real Man” and the text “Alexey Maresyev. The life of the real man” foreign students of the preparatory faculty are asked to answer the following questions in writing: “Which book tells the story about the life and deeds of Alexey Maresyev? What happened to Alexey Maresyev on April 4, 1942? How many days did he crawl through the forest and the swamp to find people? What happened to Alexey after both of his legs were amputated? What did A. Maresyev do after the war? How do you understand the word ‘подвиг (a heroic deed)’? Why do you think B. Polevoy called Alexey Maresyev ‘a real person’?”

All questions are aimed at checking the understanding of the text’s contents, but the last two require the ability to reflect on moral and ethical concepts and formulate one’s own point of view. The answers of the students of the preparatory faculty (a group with biomedical orientation, citizens of Cameroon, Nigeria, Morocco, Syria, Thailand, 2019–2020 academic year, distance learning) show the extent to which they cope with the task: “A heroic deed is a valiant, important for many people action; a heroic deed is committed in difficult conditions” (the student on his own volition consulted explanatory dictionaries in Russian and found in them the meaning of the word ‘подвиг (a heroic deed)’, “I understand that a a heroic deed is to do something, both easy and difficult, with patience, diligence, courage and perseverance to achieve what you need. And get the desired result” and so on.

“I think that Boris Polevoy called Alexey Maresyev “a real person” because, - foreign students write, - despite the amputation of his legs he returned to his beloved work and continued to defend the Motherland”; “he was able to withstand a lot and go through a lot”; “he fought for his right to return to his beloved work, did not lose heart, but silently and stubbornly walked forward towards his goal”; “for some, this story would have sounded like a fairy tale, because Aleksey Maresyev did something that is almost impossible for others”; “he proved that determination and willpower are very important for a person”; “he fought to his last breath and was faithful to his work”; “He is not afraid of death and is very devoted to his nation”.

In the answers given, one can see the attempts to understand the author's, the Russian writer's point of view; the peculiarities of the national mentality of students; the desire to compare their ideas with universal human ideas and the desire to state their point of view, taking into account all the above factors - everything that demonstrates the process of using the potential of a literary text for personality development.

The teaching of the discipline "Literature", which is included in the list of curriculum disciplines for the additional general educational program of pre-university training of foreign students (the Humanities orientation), provides ample opportunities for using personality development potential of a literary text. The purpose of teaching the discipline is to familiarize foreign students with Russian literature and Russian culture, enrich their vocabulary through acquaintance with the best examples of Russian literature, develop their linguocultural and communicative competencies.

A team of teachers of the department developed and published the textbook "Literature", which is a part of the educational and methodological complex on Russian literature for foreign citizens of the preparatory faculty, who are enrolled in the educational program with the Humanities orientation. The materials of the textbook are also actively used in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language, since the textbook fully meets the educational aims of a student-centered learning process.

The textbook is a kind of anthology of Russian literature; it includes such sections as Old Russian literature, Russian literature of the 18th century, Russian literature of the 19th century, Russian literature of the 20th century. Each section contains original and adapted fragments of literary texts, theoretical information, necessary literary terms, biographical data of writers, questions and tasks on the material read. An important part in the structure of the textbook is the regional component, which reflects the peculiarities of the literary life of Kursk region. The works of classical Russian fiction selected for acquaintance and reading are socially neutral, interesting to read and have linguistic and cultural significance.

Studying literature necessarily requires relying on personal life experience, but this process also contributes to its accumulation. Acquaintance with the biographies of great Russian poets and writers, with their work teaches foreign students to analyze various situations, assess actions, characters, thereby developing their abilities for a deeper perception and understanding of the world, contributing to the formation of spiritual and moral values and the emotional sphere.

The purpose of the lessons and their tasks is to identify the potential of the literary word, develop the ability to analyze a literary text, feel the expressiveness of the author's language, penetrate the figurative system of the work proposed for analysis, and master theoretical concepts. Each lesson contains work with the text, as well as pre-text and post-text tasks.

At the pre-text stage, teachers conduct a thorough linguistic and cultural preparation for the perception of a literary text and give a detailed ethnolinguocultural commentary to it, since most foreigners have fragmentary ideas about Russian culture. A significant obstacle on the way to understanding the works of Russian literature is “insufficient knowledge of Russian history, an approximate (schematic, distorted) idea of the time reflected in the work, the way of life and the nature of the relationship between representatives of different strata of society in a particular historical period” (Tolstukhina, 2018), as well as the fact that foreign students do not have readers’ experience of perceiving the texts of Russian classics. Then in the sequence of work the students are asked to express their predictions as readers (to suggest what the text with such a title may be about), the skills of correct expressive reading with full understanding are worked upon. After reading the text, the students move on to the tasks aimed at understanding the problems raised by the author.

At present, the materials of the textbook “Literature” have been transformed into a special course in Moodle LMS, which is used for the implementation of an additional educational program for the preparation of foreign students at South-West State University. For easy navigation, a separate page in this electronic resource is devoted to a certain topic of the course. Taking into account the fact that students working with the course are outside the language environment and their language competence is not yet perfect (level A2), the structure of the topic includes, in addition to the text information and assignments, additional elements (that make it possible to remove certain difficulties in the educational process), namely: a dictionary of thematic vocabulary (preliminary work with which allows students to focus on the subsequent perception of the material, that is, on the acquisition of subject knowledge, and not only on the development of communicative competence), audio files for demonstrating and practicing the correct pronunciation of the lexemes used in the texts of the topic, as well as to improve listening skills, visual means (illustrations, photo and video materials). After each block of topics, stated by the course program, a test is given that checks the formation of subject competence and, with special settings, gives quick feedback (the number of points scored, indication of the correct and incorrect answers). Such an organization of the educational process ensures the students’ interest in the studied subject and stimulates their cognitive activity.

## **Discussions**

The analysis of the experience, accumulated over the last months of teaching, and the practice of the scientific and methodological community of Russian teachers shows that when designing an electronic textbook, it is necessary to take into account both universal and specific requirements. The well-known didactic and methodological requirements include compliance with the needs of the pedagogical process,

purposefulness, orientation towards learners, consistency and continuity of the material, communicative orientation of educational material, etc.

In relation to solving a specific problem - the use of personality development potential of a literary text in order to form professional mobility as a qualitative characteristic of a specialist - in the context of the digitalization of the educational process, it is necessary to comply with a number of specific requirements, which, in our opinion, are:

- 1) the use of problem tasks, the solution of which requires an independent search in various information sources for new, most relevant data, its processing and application;
- 2) the ensuring of interdisciplinary integration in the selection of problem educational material. This requirement is set by the very nature of professional mobility as a quality aimed at solving various kinds of problems by a specialist, due to the specifics of the professional sphere of his activity. The contents of general professional and special disciplines studied by a student can successfully serve as the basis for this kind of material;
- 3) the use of techniques that are problematic in nature, for example, games, in the electronic textbook on RFL. Their purpose is pragmatic: games imitate communicative situations of reality within certain didactic boundaries, thereby taking into account the age and personal characteristics of students, the level of competence in the field of professional activity, etc. At the same time, game techniques create a certain non-standard professional situation that requires making the right decision in a short period of time;
- 4) the need to remove the difficulties that arise when foreign students work on problem tasks. To do this, the structure of the textbook includes certain recommendations for their performance, for organizing and conducting a business game;
- 5) the attention to the rules of infographics, requirements for structuring and visualizing educational material on digital platforms.

## **Conclusion**

The issues of choosing and creating educational materials for teaching the Russian language to foreigners have always been and will remain in the center of attention of methodologists and teachers working with this group of students.

The study of any foreign language, of course, is characterized by text-centricity, and literary texts have a special didactic potential. They contribute to the development of communication skills, enrichment of oral and written speech of foreigners. The inclusion of works of Russian literature in the program of the initial stage of teaching RFL allows foreign students to begin their acquaintance with Russian history and culture, to form basic ideas about the values of Russian society and the mentality of Russian people, to understand the degree of similarity and difference between Russian and native cultures, which generally contributes to their adaptation to Russian reality.

The importance and necessity of electronic means in the modern process of teaching the Russian language can't be doubted. The relevance of using personality development potential of literary texts in order to form the necessary complex of knowledge about the most significant spiritual and moral values of the Russian people is due to the situation of a complete transition with no alternatives to teaching in a distance format at the preparatory faculty. In this regard, the adaptation of existing teaching materials and the creation of new resources that widely use literary texts for teaching RFL will contribute to the realization of the educational process in a distance format and will be able to ensure the favorable integration of foreign students into the educational multicultural space of the university.

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