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## Teaching Literature to Foreign Audience at the Stage of Pre-University Training

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### Abstract

The paper considers the problems of applying the Russian as a foreign language teaching technique for teaching literature at pre-university department. In spite of the reduced scope of additional educational program in literature as provided for by the new requirements, in this audience, studying the Russian writers' works corpus is coupled with difficulties of both linguistic and mental nature. The teaching starts in groups having A1 mastery level of Russian, and, alongside with the non-mother tongue, the attendees have to master a course of Russian literature ranging from folklore and Old Russian literature to that of the 20th century within an incomplete academic year. The specific character of students' audience and program requirements prescribe the necessary use of the main principles of RFL teaching – communicative, linguistic, didactic and psychological ones. The authors of the paper pay a special attention to practical application of the said principles giving numerous examples of study assignments and exercises of various types. The paper can be targeted to RFL teachers, students of philology and to everyone interested in problems of techniques of teaching literature in a non-mother tongues.

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*Keywords:* Russian as a foreign language; literature teaching techniques; communicative principle; social and cultural competency; text adaptation

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### 1. Introduction

The discipline "Literature" belongs to the federal component of the humanitarian profile pre-university study program for foreign citizens that provides for compulsory study of the Russian literature. On October 3, 2014, by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1304, new requirements for mastery of additional general

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education programs ensuring the preparation of the foreign citizens to mastery of vocational educational programs in Russian, including ones of humanitarian trend. The requirements for the discipline "Literature" (Order of the RF Ministry of general and vocational education dated May 8, 1997, No. 866) have changed essentially. The differences may be seen in Appendix A. First of all, this touched on the compulsory minimum content of this program. Previously, the attendees had to study an impressive list of topics including learning about the writers' biographies, detailed analysis of the content, composition, system of characters of key works of each literature period. Meanwhile, the practice of teaching shows that to master such scope of material was quite a difficult task for the preparation department attendees. The new requirements imply a more general familiarization with the main periods of the Russian literature and a concentrated presentation of the material on writers. With regard to this, the main focus is on the XIX century literature: works of A.S. Pushkin, M.Yu. Lermontov, N.V. Gogol, I.S. Turgenev, F.M. Dostoevskiy, L.N. Tolstoy and A.P. Chekhov.

The problem of qualitative change of the Russian literature program content has been long pending. The practicing teachers have repeatedly noted infeasibility of 1997 type program requirements both from the standpoint of scope of the material suggested for studying and the deadlines for mastering it and from the standpoint of the initial language knowledge level and cultural background of learners. For instance, Yu.O. Chernoborodova (2009) points out quite fairly that the foreigners cannot attain the level of knowledge that the Russian school-leavers have due to shorter terms of pre-university programs for foreigners (the knowledge which Russian schoolchildren get during 11 years cannot be mastered in a year). Moreover, "Russian schoolchildren study literature in their native language in which they are fluent. As for foreigners, the preparation department is the first year of studying Russian, one of the most complicated languages" (Chernoborodova, 2009, p. 143). No doubt, the new program in literature, the 2014 version, is more up to the needs and capacities of the attendees. However, attaining the main goal of mastering the Russian literature program, namely, "forming the social and cultural competency – understanding the role, place and importance of the Russian literature in the system of national culture" cannot be promoted solely by modification of its scope and content.

Here it is the methodical expertise of a teacher, his ability to use the main methodic principles of RFL teaching in practice, his ability to evaluate and bear in mind the level and particularities of students' audience, to vary the students' classroom and independent work. Although there is a great quantity of methodical research into various RFL teaching issues at present, it is hard to disagree with the opinion of A.I. Surygin (2000) who considers that today only the techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language that are sufficiently worked out, while the problems of teaching other disciplines in a non-mother tongue have not yet received due attention either in didactic or even more so psychological and pedagogical aspects. The statement also holds true in relation to the Russian literature teaching techniques, despite the discoveries in language teaching techniques being widely used by Russian language teachers. Research in the area of teaching Russian literature to foreigners is especially relevant in conditions of changing requirements to the level of students' vocational training.

Speaking about the specific character of teaching non-philologist students at an engineering higher education institution, many resource teachers stress its linguistic and didactic inclination, i.e. the necessity of teaching language while studying the basics of another discipline first of all. Thus, "what is taking place is that techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language and techniques of teaching special subjects in Russian as a non-mother tongue are coming closer in practice" (Vasil'eva, 2000, p. 3). So, by teaching language using the material of a subject, a widespread problem is resolved – that of insufficient preparation of students of the preparation department to further studies at the higher education institution due to poor knowledge of the Russian language.

## 2. Objectives, methodology and research design

Seeking to organize the pedagogical process orienting to the current educational standards and requests of the audience formed the basis of the research carried out. The goal of the paper was describing the main principles of RFL teaching techniques taking into account the new requirements and social portrait of learners studying the Russian literature at the beginner level.

In order to attain the said goal, the following objectives had to be achieved:

- to compare the content of the programs according to the requirements to mastering additional general education programs of 1997 and 2014;

- to determine the particularities of the students' audience of preparation department (humanitarian profile one);
- to study the attendees' extent of familiarization with the Russian literature (certain authors and works), their expectations from the Russian literature course depending on their vocational orientation;
- to describe the particularities of implementing the principles of teaching Russian as a foreign language in literature classes;
- to describe the results of applying these principles in humanitarian profile attendees groups of the preparation department of Tomsk Polytechnic University over the period from 2007 to 2015;
- to outline further prospects of the research associated with the communicative, social and cultural constituents of the process of teaching literature to humanitarian profile professionals.

The objectives set determined the choice of research methods. The methods of analysis of scientific and study literature, diagnostics and research prospects forecasting, pedagogical reflection were actively used. During the methodical experiment, the most efficient RFL teaching principles were singled out in relation to the Russian literature course. With the principles, a learning kit on literature was developed which included study aids, audio and video materials, materials for control and independent studying, as well as reference ones.

The research had several phases:

2008 – 2015 - analysis of RFL teaching principles, determining the most efficient ones for teaching literature in preparation department;

October 2014 – December 2014 - analysis of the composition of humanitarian profile attendees groups;

December 2014 - analysis and comparison of program in literature according to the 1997 and 2014 requirements;

October 2014 – April 2015 - generalization of experience of teaching literature in preparation department of Tomsk Polytechnic University, wording the conclusions during the pedagogical reflection of teachers of the Russian as a foreign language chair at the Institute of International Education and Language Communications (IIELC);

April 2015 - description of the results of using these principles in humanitarian profile attendees groups of preparation department of Tomsk Polytechnic University in 2014-2015 academic year; development of a questionnaire, carrying out the questionnaire survey and analyzing the results of surveying the humanitarian profile attendees of the preparation department (2014-2015); outline of further prospects of the research associated with the communicative, social and cultural constituents of literature teaching process in various students' audiences (not only among linguists, but also among other humanitarian profile specialties students).

Studying the composition of groups in preparation department of Tomsk Polytechnic University has shown that the discipline "Russian literature" is mainly taught not to philologists (translators or linguists) but to humanitarian profile professionals: religious scholars, professionals in foreign religious studies, customs procedures, advertisement and public relations (Zamjatina, Volodina & Paraeva, 2013).

According to the research phases mentioned, at the end of 2014-2015 academic year, a questionnaire survey was conducted. It was dedicated to analyzing the attendees' extent of familiarization with Russian literature and expectations from the Russian literature course depending on the vocational orientation of attendees of the humanitarian profile preparation department of IIELC TPU.

Three groups of questions were proposed to the preparation department attendees for answering.

The first group of questions dealt with the attendees' preparation for the course:

Did you study Russian literature at school? For how many years?

What writers and poets did you know when you entered the preparation department?

What works of Russian literature did you know before entering the preparation department?

The second group was related to vocational orientation of attendees:

What kind of work would you like to do?

Will the knowledge you received be useful in your further work?

The third group touches on the knowledge received:

What topics in the course of literature turned out new for you?

What is the Russian literature knowledge necessary for?

Is it important for you to study the Russian language in literature classes?

### 3. Discussion of the research outcomes

The questionnaire survey has revealed that most topics suggested for studying is little known if at all to the

attendees. The students have very fragmented information about the Russian literature and their vocational preparation level also varies (of 14 people, 10 have never studied Russian literature in their native countries, 2 attendees have studied it for 5 months, 2 students – for 1 and 2 years). Among authors already known to them as of entering the preparation department, 71% of the respondents name A.S. Pushkin and L.N. Tolstoy. The Chinese audience attendees have an idea about works of M. Gorky. Students coming from the European countries list the names of A.P. Chekhov, B. Pasternak, F.M. Dostoevskiy, V. Mayakovskiy, S. Yesenin, I.S. Turgenev, I. Babel etc. "War and Peace", "Eugene Onegin", "Ruslan and Lyudmila", "Anna Karenina", "Crime and Punishment", "Dr. Zhivago", "Uncle Vanya" proved to be already known to the students.

50% of the surveyed are planning to become translators; other attendees gave different professions in their answers: educator, guide, journalist, politician, psychologist, teacher, manager. The respondents pointed out the importance of the course: "Russian academic literature, historical prerequisites and national practices will surely help in future translations", "a knowledge of Russian literature will help learn Russian history, customs and will be useful in translator's activity", "I would like to become a guide, so knowing about the famous authors is very important for my work", "I will be a psychologist, so the knowledge of Russian literature will help learn the reasons of people's behavior in various situations", "I want to work in the area of Korean trade and investments, so all knowledge will be useful because I will work with the Russians", "for a journalist, the knowledge of biographies and cultural context comes in handy".

The attendees mentioned the importance and novelty of the topics studied. 64% of the surveyed had an interest for "Mythology and folklore" course section. 57% of students were interested in topics related to studying life and creativity of Russian writers and poets, while 28% marked the familiarization with the nobility culture and life of peasants as important. 14% of the attendees single out military and historical topics.

Given the above facts, the "abridged" scope of program requirements seems more suitable for requests and capacities of the audience. However, despite bringing the new program content to a minimum, its scope remains quite big. So, on top of a non-mother tongue, the attendees also have to master a course of Russian literature from folklore and Old Russian literature up to the XX century literature within less than one academic year. Moreover, the composition of preparation department attendees groups is often mixed, both in language skills level and in the scope of knowledge.

The specific character of students' audience and program requirements imply a special methodical expertise when organizing the study and methodical material, thoughtful selection and consistent use of main RFL teaching technique principles. Here the communicative, linguistic, didactic and psychological principles act as fundamental ones (Principy obuchenija, 2010).

According to the communicative principle, the means and object of study is utterance and text. When studying literature, the overview study text about an author's creative career and excerpts of the original artistic text act as such text. The linguistic knowledge and speech skills are subordinated to communicative skills: the goal of a literature class is producing a grounded oral utterance on the topic or a written text revealing the opinion and standpoint of the attendees in the sphere of moral and philosophical problems range.

When working out the classes, the students' knowledge of their native culture and their social and cultural identity are taken into account, e.g. in such assignments:

1. Prepare a presentation of a Vietnamese (Mongol, Chinese) myth (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
2. What significance does the wind have in your mythology? (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
3. Is there a hero similar to Ilya Muromets in your culture? Speak about him (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
4. Do you think Pechorin can change Bela's destiny? What do you think about the custom of stealing the bride? (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2012).
- You have read the story "The stupid Frenchman". Say how does the Frenchman perceive the Russian? What image of a Russian have you got? (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2013).

By performing similar tasks, such an important constituent of the communicative principle of RFL teaching as country study one is implemented, as well as social and cultural orientation of teaching. Students' mastery of a foreign language culture occurs via communication which in literature classes is implemented in reading artistic works texts, their subsequent discussion, as well as doing brief tasks accompanied by country study comment.

The key communicative principle in working with foreign students, especially in multi-national groups, is visualization – the technique gives colorfulness, interest, dynamic character to teaching and allows plunging into the material deeper. When teaching literature in preparation department, communicative and speech visualization and

non-linguistic (non-verbal) one are used:

1. Natural (gestures, mimics, postures).
2. Depictive (pictures by Russian artists V. Vasnetsov, I. Repin, M. Vrubel, I. Shishkin etc., photographs of Russian writers and culture figures, archive photographs, including ones of the Great Patriotic War times).
3. Sound and depictive (episodes of feature films based on the great works of the Russian classics – "War and Peace" (1965-1967), "Crime and Punishment" (2007), "Gypsies are Found Near Heaven" (1975), "And Quiet Flows The Don" (1958), TV dramas "The Inspector General" and "Cherry Orchard", records of the Russian folk songs, A.S. Pushkin's and I. Turgenev's poems set to music, theatre records of poems by A.S. Pushkin, M.Yu. Lermontov etc.).
4. Graphic (diagrams and tables).

Several types of assignments using various kinds of visualization can be singled out, in particular.

*For understanding the general content and individual excerpts of the text:*

- Read a daily life tale, find the relevant illustrations.
- Retell the tale based on illustrations. What excerpt of the text is shown in the picture?

*For speech development:*

- Look at the pictures and describe the appearance of characters of the novel.
- Describe the picture using the plan.

*For semantization and actualization of the vocabulary:*

- Look at the picture. What do you think the tale is about?
- Look at the V. Vasnetsov's picture "The Christening of Russia". Explain what christening is (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
- Watch the video episode and answer the questions using the words for reference.

*Assignments for describing the landscape as a means of imagery:*

- Write down epithets, metaphors, personifications from the text using which the writers depicts nature.
- Using the imagery means, describe I.I. Shishkin's picture "Before the storm".
- Watch the video episode. Describe the landscape and say what Bela's feelings it conveys.

*Assignments using diagrams, tables and plans:*

- Describe the diagram "Periods of development of the Russian literature" using the structure "what is subdivided into what" (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
- Make up 3-4 sentences using the following words: the almighty, kin, golden egg, love, universe + to create / to have created, to bear / to have given birth. Draw the diagram "The origin of the world" (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
- Read independently any story by Chekhov (to your choice). Analyze it in writing according to the plan (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2013).

The linguistic principles are not less important during teaching the discipline "Literature"; following the principles promotes the learners' developing literacy, linguistic feeling, the idea about style abundance of linguistic means and their appropriate use. The linguistic consistency principle underlies the representation of language as an integral system of interrelated components, i.e. in the connected presentation of word building, lexical, grammatical constituents of the language. It can be implemented in the following types of exercises represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Exercises implementing the linguistic consistency principle

Type and purpose of exercises	Example of assignment
For understanding the structure of words (analysis of known morphemes, producing, word formation)	Find words having -bear- / -bir- root in the text. Explain the meaning of the words. Form nouns from verbs. a) using the suffix -ing to bear / to give birth – bearing to explain / to have explained – ... ... b) using the suffix -tion to collect / to have collected – ... ... (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).

Using the expressive opportunities of word building in fine literature	Write down the nouns having diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes from the text. Make up their singular / plural form. Write down the word form without the diminutive-hypocoristic suffix (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
For development the speech using word building paradigms	Say in what situation you are going to use the word "house", and in what – "little house"? (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
Exercises for developing the lexical and grammatical competency	
For forming the idea of consistency of the vocabulary (language): lexical meaning, lexical and semantic groups, paradigm relations, ways of semantization	Find the adjectives meaning "a human quality" in the text: strong, brave, ... (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015). Choose words having close meaning: popular – ... .., liberty – ... .., autocracy – ... .. (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2012). 3. Explain the use of verbs "call" and "be named". Give your examples (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2012).
For forming the lexical comment skills	Explain the meaning of compound words. Write down what parts these words comprise. self-education benefaction bloodshed autobiographical nation-wide (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2013).
For understanding the set expressions, phraseological units	In what situation can the expression "to have one's eyes on (somebody / something) be used? = look at smth very closely) (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).

The linguistic principles of functionality and stylistic differentiation are implemented during familiarization with study and artistic texts in the fullest manner. When studying the excerpts of artistic works, the students get an idea both about the literary style and about other speech styles (first of all, about the colloquial one) that make an integral part of the literary narration tissue. Meanwhile, when getting to know the overview literary studies texts, definitions of main literary terms, making reports, the students master the scientific style of speech.

The development of creative capacities of students, maintaining a high interest level of learners for the discipline studied are ensured by using a number of didactic principles.

*The principle of activity:*

- Listen to information about the lyrical song and watch the presentation. Prepare and ask questions.

*The principle of team work:*

- Dramatize a tale (role play). Roles: hare, fox, dog, bear, cock (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
- Make up two teams. Prepare reports about "Life and creativity of I.S. Turgenev". Answer the questions and do the tasks (the team scoring highest is the winner).

*The principle of creativity:*

- Tell the tale from the part of the fox (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2015).
- Write a letter to the author of "The Inspector General" comedy from a grateful (displeased) reader (Zamjatina, Volodina & Siskevich, 2012).



The difficult period of students' adapting to new conditions and linguistic environment, as well as the difficulty of the Russian literature course program itself prescribes the teacher to compulsorily take into account the psychological principles.

When teaching the discipline "Literature" to foreign students, of all psychological RFL technique principles, the crucial one becomes the availability and adequacy of teaching: studying the Russian literature is coupled with both properly linguistic and mental nature difficulties. The texts of the great Russian writers can also be difficult for Russian students who absorb the Russian culture since being born, and they are yet more difficult for a representative of another cultural paradigm. This is why the original text excerpts proposed to the attendees have to: go after study materials touching on the general idea about the works (a brief historic and literary reference, adapted synopsis of the text and the main features of the writer's poetics); reflect the text episodes known to attendees and presented in the synopsis; reveal the main features of poetics of the studied work as completely as possible on condition they are accompanied by clear lexical, grammatical, social and cultural comments.

Another crucial psychological principle is phased forming of competencies in learners. So, in the beginning topics of the course – "Folklore", "Old Russian literature" – tasks matching the basic level of the Russian language skills are suggested to the preparation department attendees, while by the end of the course performing the assignments and exercises develops skills and abilities in line with requirements of the Second certification level. This principle allows taking into account the linguistic training of learners because the study materials in the discipline "Literature" are adapted according to the educational program in the Russian language for foreign attendees of preparation departments. For ones having a more profound linguistic training, advanced tasks can be suggested which at the same time solve another problem, one of individualization of the educational process. Teaching the discipline "Literature" is impossible without bearing in mind the individual and psychological particularities of learners, which is demonstrated by various creative and teamwork tasks as well as ones to choose from.

According to the research phases mentioned, at the end of 2014-2015 academic year, a questionnaire survey was conducted. It was dedicated to analysis of teaching the discipline "Literature" in IIELC TPU preparation department in humanitarian profile groups. The use of fundamental principles of Russian as a foreign language teaching has resonated with the attendees of literature course, which is confirmed by the results of the questionnaire survey conducted. The attendees spoke about the significance of the Russian literature course for development of speaking skills: "very important", "very useful", "interesting", "good for speaking", "to explore new words", "to understand". The answers of the respondents have shown the importance of general education goal of the literature course consisting in forming the country study knowledge about the history of Russia, development of the Russian society within the context of Russian literature. Familiarization with life and creativity of writers (first of all, the XIX century ones), analysis of works and getting to know Russian culture proved to be the most interesting. 100% of learners mentioned the novelty of the course studied and the importance of cultural constituent of the discipline "Literature": "it helps learn the soul of the Russian people", "Russian character, Russian culture and Russian society", "to understand the Russian people", "Russian culture and customs", "learn about the culture of Russia, why they think so, and the difference with others", "the culture and history that are manifested in literature", this is "folk knowledge, national one", it is essential "for studying the course of development of the state", "for development", "Russian academic literature, historical prerequisites and national practices help in future translations", "to read and to develop reader's habits". The respondents' answers show successful implementation of the main RFL teaching principles and attaining the goal of the discipline "Literature": forming the social and cultural competency – understanding the role, place and importance of the Russian literature in the system of national culture.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the recent decades, language teaching is increasingly being integrated with teaching literature and country study, with learning the cultural realia, because culture "is always at the source" (Kramsch, 1993). R. Mitchell and F. Myles argue that "language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 235). The ways of integrating literature into a foreign language course become the object of research of scientists all over the world, with the subject of study being various language (Paran, 2006; Scott & Huntington, 2000; Ayo, 2003).

This paper analyzes the main methodical principles of teaching the Russian language as a foreign one in literature classes. Examples from the learning kit are given as illustrations; the development of the learning kit is undoubtedly a contribution into the practical solution of the problem of integrating literature into a foreign language course. Mastery of the literature course promotes creation of a more profound image of Russia in the foreign citizens' consciousness, and the knowledge and language skills obtained during this can be used in further professional activity – in that of a translator, in the sphere of tourism and business contacts, in political and economic spheres.

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### Appendix A.

Table 2 presents the content of requirements for the discipline "Literature" at the stage of pre-university training of foreign citizens: versions of 1997 (Order of the RF Ministry of general and vocational education dated May 8, 1997, No. 866) and of 2014 (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1304).

Table 2. Differences of programs in literature according to 1997 and 2014 requirements

1997	2014
Folklore	Folklore
Old Russian literature of the X – XVII centuries. "The Song of Igor's Campaign", "Journey across three seas", "The Tale of Bygone Years". Hagiographic literature.	Old Russian literature (general idea).
Russian literature of the XVIII century. Works by M.V. Lomonosov, G.R. Derzhavin, A.N. Radischev, D.I. Fonvizin, N.M. Karamzin	Russian literature of the XVIII century (general idea).
Russian literature of the XIX century: A.S. Pushkin, M.Yu. Lermontov, N.V. Gogol, I.S. Turgenev, A.N. Ostrovskiy, F.M. Dostoevskiy, L.N. Tolstoy, A.P. Chekhov.	Russian literature of the XIX century: A.S. Pushkin (life and creative career, main phases, lyrics – 3-5 poems to choose, "Eugene Onegin" novel – general idea); M.Yu. Lermontov (life and creative career, main phases, lyrics – 3-5 poems to choose, "A Hero of Our Time" – general idea); N.V. Gogol (life and creative career, "The Inspector Genera" comedy, "The Overcoat" story); I.S. Turgenev (life and creative career, "Fathers and Sons" novel – general idea); F.M. Dostoevskiy (life and creative career, "Crime and Punishment" novel – general idea); L.N. Tolstoy (life and creative career, "War and Peace" novel – general idea);



A.P. Chekhov (life and creative career).

Russian literature of the XX century. Main trends in the Russian literature of the early XX century. A. Blok, A. Akhmatova, V. Mayakovskiy. Prose of the early XX century: A.M. Gorky, I.A. Bunin, A.I. Kuprin.	Russian literature of the XX century (general idea).
Russian Soviet literature. A.M. Gorky, M.A. Bulgakov, M.A. Sholokhov. Literature of the Great Patriotic War time. A. Tvardovskiy, K. Simonov, M.A. Sholokhov.	
Modern literature (general idea). Main trends in literature of the latest decades. Works by F. Iskander, A. Bitov, A.I. Solzhenitsyn. Russian émigré literature.	

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