Philological Students’ Scientific Research Work: Organization and Essential Gains

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Abstract

This paper describes the organization of philological students’ step-by-step mastering the methodology and technology of philological scientific research and generalizes the essential gains of students’ scientific research work, aimed at studying the poetics of the literary text as representation of its author’s artistic consciousness. The major collective results of students’ research work include: determining the artistic concepts typology adequate for the purpose of modeling the conceptual sphere of the literary work; working out the technique of modeling the conceptual sphere of the literary work; revealing meaningful correspondences in the results of the students’ research work.

Keywords: Philological students; research work; artistic concept; conceptual sphere; essential gains

1. Introduction

Philosophic-artistic synthesis as an ontological property of the public conscience of the 20th century (Semenova, 2009), the anthropocentric cognitive-discursive linguistics paradigm, integrative tendencies of the modern humanitarian knowledge in general resulted in gnoseological refocusing of the modern literature studies on investigating the structured integer of a literary work as representation of the artistic consciousness (Sedlmayr, 2000). Since art is regarded as a form of thinking, inherent in human consciousness (Lotman, 1994), the methodology of the modern philological literary research incorporates both hermeneutic methods and methods of lingua-cognitive, lingua-psychological and lingua-cultural studies. This fact can be rightly regarded as an immediate...
consequence of investigating the semantics of a literary text in terms of mental processes, which helps single out ways of objectifying the ontological reality by means of the verbal artistic image (Belekhova, 2000).

Mastering the new methodology of literary studies in the process of students’ scientific research work allows for optimization of forming the philological competence of future teachers of foreign languages and literature, which is of special importance in the conditions of increasing de-verbalization and de-culturalization of the modern global community (Kisil, 2007).

The efficiency and cultural adequacy of pedagogic impact performed by the teacher of language and literature directly depends on the level of his philological competence. In its wide sense, the philological competence, regardless of its’ bearer social and profession affiliation, is a sign of mastering the national verbal cultural code, of the high developmental level of his language personality. In its narrow sense, the philological competence of teachers of foreign languages and literature has been defined as the complex of bilingual culture of speech behavior and bilingual culture of reading that ensures a personality’s capacity to efficient cross-cultural communication and axiological orientation in the cross-cultural space in its diachronic and synchronic projections (Kamenskaya, 2011). The speech behavior culture refers to the speaker’s capacity to constructive speech interaction ensuring optimal perlocutive effect of a speech act and providing harmonization of the interlocutors’ interpersonal relations (Klyuev, 1998). The culture of reading consists in the perception of the written discourse as a realized act of thinking, which requires responsive intellectual activity of the reader (Lotman, 1988) the capacity to perform critical analysis of the text (Solovova, Porechenkova, 2006). Yet, such analysis has to be rather of an axiological than gnoseological character, that is, has to be aimed at deepening the reader’s comprehension of the author’s concept on the basis of the developed skills of functional decoding the verbal code of the literary text.

It naturally follows that organizing students’ scientific research work according to the requirements of the modern philological paradigm is a challenging task both for the student and his scientific supervisor. This paper is aimed at describing the organization of students’ scientific research work in the student scientific group “Lingua-cognitive aspects of the poetics of the literary text” of the Crimean University for the Humanities (Yalta) and at outlining some of the major accomplishments of its participants.

2. Mastering methodology and technology of philological scientific research in students’ scientific research work

Having outlined the background requirements to students’ research work in terms of the requirements and challenges of the modern philological paradigm, we can now suggest ways of meeting these requirements by way of proper organization of students’ scientific research work. Then, we will sum up the most evident collective results of this work to provide certain evidence of its productivity.

2.1. Stages of students’ mastering methodology and technology of philological scientific research

The student research team “Lingua-cognitive aspects of the poetics of the literary text” of the Crimean University for the Humanities (Yalta) includes students of the second to the fifth years of study, each working at the chosen research subject for four years. Such a long term of research allows for mastering the methodology and technology of philological scientific research in four stages.

Thus, the task of the first stage corresponding to writing the course paper in foreign literature consists of the second-year students mastering the methods of analysis and generalization of the scientific literature of quite a wide range: that on philosophy, psychology, history, sociology, literature, culture and country studies, as well as the method of contextual interpretation of a literary text and the descriptive method. The target of the first stage of the student scientific research work consists in determining the philosophical, ideological, structural and image-bearing specificity of the artistic world of the literary work under study.

At the second stage corresponding to writing the course paper in linguistics by the third-year students the corpus of the analyzed scientific literature is presented by the major works and latest research in cognitive linguistics. Students solve a challenging task of coming to grips with such complicated notions as ‘artistic concept’, ‘artistic consciousness’, ‘lingua-cognitive process’, ‘verbal world-image’ etc, and learn to apply the knowledge gained in the process of singling out artistic macro-concepts, basic concepts and micro-concepts of the literary work under study,
as well as the means of their explication and verbalization. The research methods employed at this stage include methods of conceptual and lingua-stylistic analysis of the literary discourse.

The theoretical-methodological base of the research acquired in this way during the first two years of the research experience allows the four-year students master the method of the lingua-cognitive modeling at the third stage of their research in the process of writing their bachelor papers. The purpose of the bachelor paper is formulated as modeling the concept sphere of the literary work regarded in terms of the structural integer, since determining the structure and semantics of the inner ties of the concept sphere means maximal approximation to the adequate interpretation of the literary text (Sedlmayr, 2000).

Finally, at the completing stage of the students’ scientific research work, corresponding to writing diploma papers, undergraduates solve the task of determining the degree of conceptual adequacy of the translation of the literary work under study into their mother tongue. The theoretical base of the research is complimented by the analysis and systematization of the scientific works on the problem of criteria-based estimation of the level of adequacy of the artistic translation in the linguistic theory of translation. The practical part of the research consists of probating the criterion of conceptual adequacy of the translation on the material of the original and translated texts of the literary work under study.

2.2. Summary of major accomplishments of students’ research work

The most significant outcomes of the scientific research work performed by the participants of the student research team “Lingua-cognitive aspects of the poetics of the literary text” are regarded to be the following ones:

1) determining the typology of artistic concepts that proved to be the most adequate to the task of modeling the concept sphere of a literary text. Such a typology is based on the criterion of the degree of integration of semantic structures, according to which there have been singled out macro-concepts, basic concepts and micro-concepts of a literary text, discovering and describing their hierarchic interrelations. Macro-concepts refer to the concepts lying in the base of a person’s world image. Interaction of macro-concepts define the major oppositions of the concept sphere of a literary work. Basic concepts serve for explicating manifestation of macro-concept in certain spheres of human activity. Micro-concepts, in their turn, serve to specify basic concepts, at the same time forming the semantic field of their confluence and interference;

2) working out the methodology and techniques of modeling the concept sphere of a literary work viewed as a projection of its author’s verbal world image. The theoretical-methodological basis of such methodology is the postulate of a person’s mental-speech activity being the result of the person’s existential being and the instruments of developing notions describing phenomena of the surrounding world; human mental-speech activity is realized in the boundaries of logical antinomies with their inevitably orthodox oppositions and alternative infinity of notions in between (Klimenyuk, 2009);

3) establishing certain regular correlations between the results of students’ researches of concept spheres of the works of the English language authors of the second half of the 20th century who worked in different genres from different philosophic-aesthetic positions, which opens the path for wider literary critical, philosophic and cultural generalizations.

2.3. Illustration of major accomplishments of students’ research work

To illustrate the final accomplishment, the results of the three student researches have been generalized: I. Malafeeva’s diploma paper on the subject “Explicating anti-utopian concept in the concept sphere of ‘451 Fahrenheit’ by R. Bradbury” (2010) (Malafeeva, 2010); S. Yevdokimova’s diploma paper on the subject “The concept sphere of the novel ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest’ as a model of K. Kesey’s verbal world-image” (2012) (Yevdokimova, 2011); A. Sushcheva’s course-paper on the subject “The concept sphere of the novel ‘The Heart of the Matter’ by G. Greene” (2013) (Sushcheva, 2012).

The attempt to discover certain correlations in the structure of the concept spheres of the three novels under study is justified by the presence of the following common features in the research material: a) chronological measures of the creation (1953, 1962 and 1948 respectively); b) the presence of anti-utopian features of pseudo-carnival (the
conflict of human spiritual life and social existence resulting in the atmosphere of fear, theatricalization of action, ritualization of existence, characters’ eccentricity, emotional shocks); c) existential problematics of the novels (problems of life and death, faith and conscience, personal freedom, one’s choice and taking responsibility for the choice made).

In accordance with the developed methodology of modeling a concept sphere of a literary work, the student researchers have singled out the following intersecting antinomies of macro-concepts in the novels under study: a) Life – Death and Natural Human – Social Human in R. Bradbury ‘Fahrenheit 451’; b) Personality – Conformism – Non-Conformism in K. Kesey’s ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest’; c) Personality – Religion and Spiritual Life – Social Being in G. Greene’s ‘The Heart of the Matter’. Imposition of the systems of conceptual coordinates of the artistic worlds of the three novels reveals the following conceptual pattern: in the concept sphere of the English language existential anti-utopian literature of the second half of the 20th century the existential problem of life and death is solved as the conflict of the spiritual and social roots of a personality, the contradiction between a person’s spiritual needs and ontological existence in the society. The location of an individual personality on the suppositive scale between Life and Death is determined by the extent of the person’s independence from the outer existential frame imposed by Religion symbolizing outer ritualization and regulation of the inner spiritual life, by the Combine and City symbolizing the power structures of the society.

The content of the macro-concepts of the three novels is revealed in the bipolar way through the interpretative fields of their outer and inner characteristics.

The inner interpretative field of the macro-concepts Personality and the trinity of Combine / City / Religion (conditionally compiled into the concept Society) is characterized by the opposition of the basic concepts Freedom and Fear. The antinomy of the basic concepts Conformism and Non-Conformism predetermines the outer field of the macro-concepts Personality and Society. Thus, a person’s location on the conditional coordinate axis between the Spiritual Life and Spiritual Death is determined by the correlation of Freedom and Fear in the person’s inner spiritual life, and by the correlation of Conformism and Non-Conformism in his / her outer social life. The comparative analysis of the explication of the basic concepts in the micro-concepts in each of the three novels reveals a significant number of parallels: Strength, Heroism, Self-Sacrifice, Responsibility, Search for Truth, Choice, Laughter in the interpretative field of the basic concept Freedom; Exclusion, Alienation, Hypocrisy, Lies, Machine, Power, State, War, Church, Weakness in the interpretative field of the basic concept Fear. The concept Non-Conformism is explicated through the micro-concepts Power, Taunt, Courage, Rebellion, Dispute, Riot. The interpretative field of the concept Conformism includes the micro-concepts Conformity Rules, Control, Artificiality, Punishment, Suppression, Ritual Confession.

A sufficient number of inconsistencies in the interpretation fields of the basic concepts of the three literary works under study is naturally preconditioned by the authors’ individual views. Thus, R. Bradbury connects the problem of Life and Death of the civilization as a whole with the character of its relationship with nature; K. Kesey explores the issue of norm in an abnormal society, and G. Greene’s major concern is existential problems of freedom of choice and responsibility for it. The more surprising is the commonality of the conceptual coordinates of these three quite different artistic worlds, vividly demonstrating the authors’ conviction in the need to overcome spiritual stagnation to ensure the survival and further humane development of the humanity, and proving the depth of comprehension of the global social trends of the modernity by Graham Green, Ray Bradbury, and Ken Kesey.

3. Conclusion

The scientific research work of the student research team “Lingua-cognitive aspects of the poetics of the literary text” has proved productive in two aspects. Firstly, it helped optimize the formation of the practical philological competence of future teachers of foreign languages and foreign literature. Secondly, it increased the participants’ level of individual academic philological competence due to the possibility of individual improvement and testing of the complex of the research methods worked out by the team.

The effectiveness of the organization of the student scientific research work described consists in: determining the typology of artistic concepts that is the most adequate to the task of modeling the concept sphere of a literary text; working out the methodology and techniques of modeling the concept sphere of a literary work as a projection of its author’s verbal world image; establishing certain regular correlations between the results of students’ researches of
concept spheres of the works by the English language authors of the second half of the 20th century. The existential problem of life and death in the concept sphere of the English-language existential anti-utopian literature of this epoch is solved as the conflict of the spiritual and social roots of a personality, the contradiction between a person’s spiritual needs and ontological existence in the society.

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