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LINGUISTIC PERSONALITY OF AN ARTISTIC TEXT AUTHOR IN TEACHING FOREIGN STUDENTS-PHILOLOGISTS

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Abstract

Competence approach is used in modern methodology of teaching to evaluate the quality of educational attainment of graduates. Key notions here are competence (requirements to the students' skills and knowledge, the description of these skills and knowledge) and expertise (results of learning). The article studies one of the ways of increasing effectiveness of forming literary competence which is one of the main components of a communicative competence of a foreign philologist. Foreign philologists deserve special attention, because it is their work that mainly defines relation to Russia, Russian culture, language and literature abroad. Foreign philologists have to be good at analysing an artistic text, because text is a basic methodical unit in teaching any foreign language at an advanced level, and artistic texts are one of the most important kind of authentic texts at the lessons of Russian as a foreign language. The authors propose analysing an artistic text through the linguistic personality of their authors. The teaching material in the article is the poem by Igor Severyanin "Predvoskresenje" [Before resurrection]. The article presents a system of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities oriented at pointing out the specifics of verbal-semantic, cognitive and pragmatic level of Igor Severyanin's personality. This system allow to read the poem not as a separate poem, but as production of the author's personality and historical epoch, this way to see the deeper sense of the text.

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Keywords: Literary competence, foreign philologists, Russian as a foreign language, Igor Severyanin, Russian émigré community.



1. Introduction

In 2003, Russian higher educational institutions entered the world educational system and this was the key for competence approach in didactics and working out state standards of higher education. This approach allows to precisely evaluate the quality of knowledge of graduates, the maturity of their skills and expertise. However, the systems of competences which the students of different specialities have to acquire and the descriptions of these competences still require further studies and elaboration, and also “new ways of optimizing the process of forming communicative competence of foreign students” (Abramova, 2016, p. 10). The above-mentioned facts make research in the sphere of competence approach actual: “Our modern society needs competitive professionals, who are in a high demand on the labor market” (Mitrofanova, 2018, p. 1809).

Studying foreign languages remain popular nowadays, and a lot of students come to target-language countries because it gives more effect. For this reason, foreign students come to Russia to study the Russian language, and some of them study it at a professional level in order to have a possibility in the future to teach it in their native countries. To assess the quality of those students’ expertise we need to specify their competences, this shows the results of their education and consequently their competitive performance at labour market. Besides, “the activity of foreign philologists like no other assists popularisation, development, distribution and learning Russian language, Russian culture and literature abroad” (Solomonova, 2010, p. 3). In respect of this foreign students-philologists, studying in Russia, deserve special attention.

The key competence for foreign philologists is communicative competence, consisting of several components. Due to its complicated nature, where “language aspects (phonetics, lexis, grammar, linguistic and cultural studies/cultural linguistics) are inseparably associated and consistent” (Pashkovskaya, 2019, p. 20), the components of this competence are being elaborated in modern scientific papers. Communicative competence is based on linguistic, speech and sociocultural competences and is understood as “the ability to take part in speech activity in a studied language according to the aims and situation of communication in a certain sphere” (Shibko, 2014, p. 41). In relation to foreign philologists this competence is described as follows: “Communicative competence of a student is a complex formation including a number of other competences: linguistic, speech, country studying, literary and methodical” (Solomonova, 2010, p. 16).

So foreign philologists need to develop not only linguistic, but also literary competence – the skill to work with the text and teach others to read a text in a foreign language: «There is a sense in which the reader/hearer of a piece of language has no choice but to temporarily suspend their own viewpoints and assumptions and to enter the world of the text» (Jeffries, 2015, p. 9). Consequently, text becomes simultaneously a source and a means of learning a foreign language: “Reading helps to master communication means and use them in speech” (Shchukin, 2012, p. 449). In such a way, having an educational function, text also fulfils nurturant (forms students’ moral qualities, enriches knowledge of the culture of people, speaking a target language) and communicative (contains examples of Russian speech) (Strelchuk, 2011).

Literary competence is formed on different kinds of texts. At the beginner stage, teachers tend to use inauthentic (specially written for education aims) and adapted (original, but simplified according to the level of linguistic competence, interests, etc.) texts. But we know that a teacher of Russian as a foreign

language cannot work without authentic texts, i.e. texts, which “were not primarily created for teaching aims, but were created by a native speaker for native speakers in natural communication” (Melnikova, 2017, p. 20).

2. Problem Statement

To reveal the potential of an artistic text, modern teachers use a traditional system of exercises: pre-, while- and post-reading exercises.

On the pre-reading stage pupils usually work with small texts which according to thematic criterion can be divided into texts about the writer’s biography, historical epoch, the writer’s creative life and history of the text itself.

In while-reading exercises, which are given only after the students have read the whole text, we can pay attention to the co-called key words, remove difficulties in understanding these words, find out the most frequently-used words. We can also look at words-texts concealing a rich cultural background, for example proper-nouns. Linguocultural comments to key words in pre- and post-text exercises reveal their meaning in the text, but not only this: “Comment <...> is aimed at decrypting the meaning and sense of language units, relate the sense of the text with extra-textual reality, describe context where the text was created and fix the connections and relations with the whole world of texts” (Potyomkina, 2015, p. 87).

In post-reading exercises students can answer questions, checking their understanding of the text contents and main ideas of the text. This stage can contain creative exercises, for example, writing an essay on the topic of the text.

We assume that this system of exercises should include tasks and material aimed at revealing the linguistic personality of the author.

The structure of the linguistic personality of the author traditionally contains three levels: verbal-semantic, conceptual, and pragmatic (Karaulov, 1987).

We present such a system of exercises on the example of the poem by Igor Severyanin “Predvoskresenje” [Before resurrection].

The poem of Russian poet-emigrant Igor Severyanin was chosen not coincidentally. It is only eight verses long, and this can help minimize its difficulties for foreign students. The small size of the poem helps to quickly find the necessary fragments in analysis.

The poems of Russian émigré writers meet all the requirements of educational texts: “The principle of choosing educational texts is based on the following criteria: the texts should reflect the most significant for the Russian culture phenomena and events, they have to be understandable and interesting for modern readers, but at the same time give rise to cultural and historical generalization” (Timoshenkova, & Fedotova, 2016, p. 425). Russian émigré community is an original and outstanding part of Russian literature. In addition, the history of Russian émigré community is connected with different countries, so practically every foreign student can see the connection of these texts with the history of their native countries. The role of Russian emigration was important not only for host countries, but for their motherland as well: despite of the fact they could not come back to Russia, they managed to “keep their Russian and even Slavonic identity” (Utyeva & Zharnikova, 2016, p. 369). This will increase motivation to read other artistic texts in Russian and to continue studying the Russian language. At the same time these texts are

hard to understand without cultural background about the reasons why Russian writers and poets had to leave their country, about their feelings. Emotional stress of leaving native country is a kind of linguistic and cultural universals, because every person has a similar experience or knows somebody who has been in such a situation. In most cases leaving a native country, adapting to a new linguistic and cultural environment are compulsory, and it conditions the specifics of perception of a new country and new life. For Russian émigré writers it was even harder, taking into account that the whole world, centuries of traditions broke in a very short time, and new era began: “the Bolshevik Revolution constituted the foundation myth for the entire Soviet era” (Torbakov, 2018). A person seems to get two motherlands: the left one and the new one. The latter can adopt or reject her new son or daughter. This is the reason why the concept of Motherland in the works of émigré writers is ambivalent, on the one hand, because it combines the features of Russia and the new country, on the other – because the images of these countries combine positive and negative features. So a very complicated image is created in a very short, laconic text. This makes interpretation even more difficult.

It is even more difficult, because poems are usually read unadapted. In fact, there are two opposite trends in modern ways of reading texts at the lessons of Russian as a foreign language: on the one hand, internet technologies give a wide access to different texts in a foreign language; on the other – there is practically no need in adapting the texts, because teachers and students can easily find texts which they can use or read without adapting (Korotyshev, 2017, p. 17).

Analysing conceptual level of the author’s linguistic personality help students adequately understand the text meaning, because differences in universal concepts can cause misunderstanding in the dialogue of cultures. It is known that “a word is conceptual in nature and the concept itself is multi-layered” (Kováčová, & Ciprianová, 2016, p. 69).

In order to prepare students to read poems of Russian émigré writers and to conclude about main concepts (cognitive level) and their interpretation (pragmatic level) at pre-reading stage we can propose the microtext:

As a result of social disasters – 1917 October Revolution and Civil War (1917-1922) a lot of writers and poets were forced to emigrate, including great Russian writers: I.A. Bunin, A.I. Kuprin, Z.N. Gippius, D.S. Merezhkovsky, A.N. Remizov, I.S. Shmelev, M.I. Tsvetaeva, etc. Abroad went L.N. Andreev who spent his last years in Finland, and Igor Severyanin, who lived in Estonia.

Russian emigration spread over all continents, but the literary life was concentrated in some centres: firstly, in Berlin and Paris, and also in Prague, Belgrade, Warsaw, Sofia and “Russian China” – in Harbin and Shanghai.

Texts of Russian poets and writers, written abroad, are called Russian émigré community.

Before reading the text, it is necessary to ask students if they are acquainted with the chrononyms “Great October Revolution”, “Civil War” and the lexeme “emigration”. We can also discuss what these people felt and why they left their country.

Reading the text and answering the questions on the text students conclude about the reasons why the poet created poems about Russia in this focus. This text will prepare the students to understand the image of motherland as generated of Severyanin’s patriotism.

Before reading the text about Severyanin's biography the teacher should draw their attention that Severyanin is pseudonym, first written as one word "Igor-Severyanin", the author's surname is Lotaryov. Even if the students are not familiar with the word "severyanin" [a man who lives in the north], the meaning is easily traced with the help of word-formation analysis: the root – sever-, having the meaning 'north' and the suffix -yuanin-, indexing a man according to his place of living. Such exercises develop students' feeling for language and increase motivation. Then the teacher can ask students why the poet took this pseudonym. This pseudonym can be connected with the native city of Severyanin – Saint-Petersburg, Northern capital of Russia, Northern Palmyra, as it is called. The students can see deeper connection with North as a basic hyper-concept of Russian linguistic culture, the sacred space where Russian culture flows from. The students are ready to know more about the author. They start to work with a microtext about life and creative work of Igor Severyanin. On the pre-reading stage we should check if the students know the literary terms "egofuturism" (if not, it is easily explained by its derivation), "leitmotif". The teacher can inform the students that Severyanin's style is characterised by author's neologisms. The author's linguistic personality contains national and individual features, and "individual aspect of a linguistic personality is formed by internal attitude to a language and through forming individual linguistic meanings" (Ilyasova, 2016, p. 51). So it is really important to draw the students' attentions to author neologisms and to consider them not as only strange and specific linguistic units, but also fundamental traits of Igor Severyanin's style. One of such neologisms is used in the text – "poeso-concert" (from the words "poetry" and "concert"). The students can think over what Severyanin wanted to combine poetry with. Here is the text about Severyanin's life and poetry:

Igor Severyanin (real name and surname are Igor Vasilyevich Lotaryov), 1887, Saint-Petersburg – 1941, Tallinn), is a poet, founder of egofuturism, poetic school based on confirmation of the author's "Ego".

The style of young Severyanin is original, and at the same time the author is oriented at classic examples.

Severyanin aspires to combine poetry and music. He surprised his contemporaries with poeso-concerts, when he did not read, but sang his poems, sometimes holding a white lily in his hand.

The leitmotifs of his poetry are love, nature and the author's individuality.

Since 1918, Severyanin who went to Estonia, became an unintentional emigrant, as many other Russian poets and writers. In emigration, he continued giving concerts, but still felt a creative block. In 1920-1930s he published several collections of poems in Berlin, Tartu, Beograd, Bucharest. His poetry enriched with new themes of Estonian nature and mythology, nostalgia, thoughts of the future of his motherland.

He died in Tallinn, where he went after the German Army occupied Estonia.

(Using S.F. Kuzmina, 2012).

After reading the text we can discuss it, focusing on the specifics of the author's creative work, this will help to characterize motivational and pragmatic level of Severyanin's linguistic personality. The teacher can ask questions:

- 1) Is Igor Severyanin the real name of the poet?
- 2) Which poetic school did he found? What is the specifics of this poetic school?
- 3) What did Igor Severyanin combine in his poetry?

4) What are the main themes of his poetry?

5) Why do we include Severyanin's poetry in Russian émigré community?

Then the students start working with Igor Severyanin's poem "Predvoskresenje" [Before resurrection]:

Предвоскресенье	Before Resurrection
На восток, туда, к горам Урала,	To the south, there, to the mountains of the Ural
Разбросалась странная страна,	A strange country spread about,
Что не раз, казалось, умирала,	Which, it seemed, died again and again,
Как любовь, как солнце, как весна.	As love, as the sun, as spring.
И когда народ смолкал сурово	And when the people severely grew silenced
И, осиротелый, слеп от слёз,	And, orphaned, grew blind of tears,
Божьей волей воскресала снова, -	With the help of God resurrected again and again -
Как весна, как солнце, как Христос!	As spring, as the sun, as Christ.

(Translated from Russian)

In pre-reading exercises, students can pay attention to verbal-semantic level of the poet's linguistic personality. One of the brightest features of I. Severyanin's style is using neologisms. Traditionally, students conduct derivational analysis to find out the meaning of these words. Before reading the poem, students can guess the meaning of Severyanin's neologisms from other poems: *odinochit'* [verb from lonely], *ognet'* [verb from flame], *nov'* [noun from new], *sovremenie* [noun from modern], etc. Students do not only find out the lexical meaning, but also define grammar characteristics: part of speech, gender, tense, etc. The students can make conclusion about the function of such words in the text.

At the pre-reading stage, foreign students analyse the neologism "predvoskresenje". The students see the prefix pre- with the meaning "in front of something, before something, earlier than". They can pick other words with the same prefix. They also analyse the root "voskresenje" with its main meanings 'the seventh day of the week' and 'action of the verb *voskresat'* 'arise from dead'; coming back to life' (Evgen'eva, 1981-1984). Students can suppose which of the two meanings of the root lexeme are actualized in the poem. Then they read the whole poem and check their ideas.

At the while-reading stage (when the students start reading the poem by verses) the teacher checks students' understanding of the key lexemes, shows how the dictionary meaning of lexemes changes under the influence of narrow or broad context. Paying attention to the linguistic personality of the author helps to analyse the meaning of key words not only in micro-, but also in macrocontext. Macrocontext is not constant, it "varies according to the interpreter's culture, background information, or the environment of the speech situation" (Abuarrah, 2018, p. 88).

One of the most difficult groups of nouns for commenting are traditionally proper nouns. These nouns have a rich connotative component which complicates their adequate understanding by a foreigner. Connotative component consists of associative, imaginative, pragmatic or stylistic meanings. The teacher's comments should disclose this component.

The poem "Predvoskresenje" contains the toponym "Ural" and the mythonym "Christ". The mythonym is usually adequately recognised in most groups, we should trace the connection of the

mythonym with the frame “resurrection”. The toponym should be commented in respect of its meaning for Igor Severyanin. Ural (the Urals) is not only a geographical notion, it is the border between European and Asian Russia, one of the most important industrial region in Russia. Pragmatic level of the author’s linguistic personality could be revealed through the subjective understanding of the lexeme for Severyanin’s poetry: in Severyanin’s poem Ural is the embodiment of Russia’s natural beauty, its richness, the image of Ural shows the author’s admiration before his motherland.

We also draw the students’ attention to the lexeme “razbrosalas” [spread about]. The lexical meaning of the word is ‘to be situated, to lie on a wide territory, to spread about in different directions’ (Evgen’eva, 1981-1984). The lexeme underlines the mightiness of Russia.

The author’s pragmatic orientation on originality and combining poetry with music is manifested in definition “strannaja” [strange] with the word “strana” [country], resulting in creating a sound image. We can also point out the alliteration with sounds [r] and [s], which also create the music of the poem.

Speaking about grammar features, we should define the consequence of imperfective verbs “died, silenced, got blind, resurrected”. These verbs give the idea of the action frequency, repetition. So the author argues that the situation of the poem happened in Russian history not once.

The poem composition pulls our attention to the last verses of the four-liners. We see the change in the sequence of key words (love-sun-spring vs spring-sun-Christ). This composition makes Christ and love occasional synonyms.

Post-reading activities can help students reveal the cognitive and pragmatic level of the author’s linguistic personality in answering the following questions:

- 1) How does the author describe Russia? What does he feel to it?
- 2) How does the word “predvoskresenje” characterize the present situation in Russia?
- 3) What events, in your opinion, does the author mean when he says “died again and again”?
- 4) What does the author think of the future of his motherland? What will help his country in the future?
- 5) What do you think of new words that the author uses? Are they necessary? What meanings do they imply?

At the post-reading stage students can discuss also linguistic personality of the author, understand its pragmatic level in such exercises:

- write an essay and answer the question if you agree or disagree with the author and why;
- make up a dialogue with the author. What questions would you ask him? What would he answer you?

Here the text could turn into a dialogue or even polylogue of different personalities if the students present it in the classroom. Poetic texts are relevant for exercises in creative writing. Students can write different essays on the topics of the texts, “not only expositive essays, but literary and/or reflective essays that may involve creativity” (Safonova, 2018, p. 137).

After reading in class the students can read the other poems disclosing the key concept “Motherland” on the cognitive level of Severyanin’s worldview, for example:

Ты потерял свою Россию.

You lost your Russia.

Противоставил ли стихию

Did you oppose the power

Добра стихии мрачной зла?
Нет? Так умолкни: увела
Тебя судьба не без причины
В края неласковой чужбины.
Что толку охать и тужить —
Россию нужно заслужить!

Of kindness to the dark power of evil?
No? Then keep silence: you were drawn away
By your fortune not without reason
To the unaffectionate outland.
There is no need to moan and sigh –
You have to deserve Russia!
(Translated from Russian)

Чаемый праздник

The forthcoming holiday

О России петь – что стремиться в храм
По лесным горам, полевым коврам...

To sing about Russia is like aspiring to the temple
Along forested mountains, field carpets...

О России петь – что весну встречать,
Что невесту ждать, что утешить мать...

To sing about Russia is like meeting spring,
Like waiting for your bride, like consoling your
mother...

О России петь – что тоску забыть,
Что Любовь любить, что бессмертным быть!

To sing about Russia is like forgetting the grief,
Like loving the Love, like being deathless!
(Translated from Russian)

After reading the poems on the same theme students can write a composition or take part in discussion on the topic “The image of Russia in I. Severyanin’s poems”.

3. Research Questions

The article is aimed to define:

- the role of an artistic text in forming literary competence of foreign philologists;
- the importance of the author’s linguistic personality for adequate understanding of an artistic text;
- work out the system of pre-, while- and post-reading exercises revealing the specifics of the author’s linguistic personality.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to show how the specifics of verbal-semantic, cognitive, pragmatic levels of the author’s linguistic personality can be revealed through the system of pre-, while- and post-reading exercises.

5. Research Methods

The authors used the following methods: linguistic and cultural analysis of an artistic text, methods of adapting of teaching materials, analysis of the scientific papers on the subject.

6. Findings

The skill to analyse an artistic text, adequately interpret language units and their functions in the text is fundamental for a foreign philologist.

In order to realise the artistic text potential it is crucial to have a special system of analysis, because “using at the lessons original texts lead the students into the real life of the language, its actual functioning, requests creative (and not mechanical) using the acquired knowledge – linguistic as well as cultural” (Kulibina, 2014, p.5).

Reading an artistic text at foreign language lessons is like a talk with the author, who is not only a native speaker of the target language, but also a person of the other culture, and this can lead to misunderstanding. That is why it is really important to show the author as a linguistic personality with the help of the system of exercises.

In our opinion, the texts of the Russian émigré writers meet requirements to authentic texts used in the process of teaching. Feelings of a person far from his motherland are very close to foreign students studying abroad. Here we see the connection with thematic and motivational criteria. Everything close is understandable and interesting to read. These texts are representative, because show an important period in Russian literature, bring up the topics, notional for all Russian writers.

The specifics of these texts is understood in the system of pre-, while- and post-reading exercises oriented at revealing the author’s linguistic personality.

7. Conclusion

Thanks to the thoroughly elaborated system of exercises teachers can include in the teaching process more artistic texts, prosaic and poetic, which are the most difficult for foreign students.

The system of pre-, while- and post-reading exercises, based on the author’s linguistic personality, helps form literary competence of a future foreign philologist, raise students’ motivation to reading artistic texts, arise their interest to enrich their background knowledge, elaborate their love to word, necessary for the future philologist, persuades them that in artistic texts all words are not accidental, but are keys disclosing the idea of the text. Foreign students understand that an artistic text should be assumed as the production of the author’s linguistic personality and the historical epoch. Text analysis would be incomplete without this information, as well as readers’ perception.

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