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COMPARING LITERATURE USED FOR THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF STUDENTS

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Abstract

A method of literary comparison during the process of the formation of students' national identity in teaching literature in school is considered. Theoretical and practical bases of the creation of modern educational technologies for the formation of national identity are determined. It is established that the comparison of literatures actualizes interdisciplinary bonds and makes it possible to use integrational approach in the process of national identity formation during literature lessons. The potential of literary comparison is distinguished while realizing the cognitive educational tasks (the formation of the students' knowledge on the national features of literatures, on the multiplicity of literatures (cultures), differences between them, and, at the same time, similarities, due to the common values of the Russian culture) and value-oriented educational tasks (the formation of the awareness of the concern for the national cultural values).

It was revealed that the method of literary comparison used in the practice of teaching literature is oriented to establish typological similarities between them. The article substantiates the need to introduce new concepts into the practice of teaching literature at school (national topos, national character, national concept, cultural archetype) aimed at establishing literary differences determined by the national identity of cultures. The possibilities of these concepts are demonstrated in a comparative study of the works of Russian and Tatar literatures in the process of teaching literature at schools.

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Keywords: National identity, comparison of literatures, teaching literatures, values, similarities, differences.



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1. Introduction

The formation of the national identity is one of the foreground tasks of the Russian humanitarian policy. The modern socio-political challenges (primarily, activity of the disruptive political and religious organizations, which, due to the modern information technologies, get the opportunity to incorporate an artificially constructed false identity into the mass consciousness) require efforts for keeping and transmitting the values, knowledge and traditions. A significant part in this process is performed by the system of education, in particular, humanitarian education.

In the process of creation of the modern educational technologies on the formation of the national identity, methods and relevant situations of the variety of Russian culture are in great demand.

2. Problem Statement

Modern scientists are searching for educational methods and relevant situations of cultural diversity. For their theoretical bases, various theories and concepts are considered: a multilingual theory (Dagenais 2013, Dagenais et al., 2006, Xhaferi, & Xhaferi, 2012), a dialogue of cultures (Mukhametshina, 2007, Amineva et al., 2016), and receptive theories (Khabibullina et al., 2016).

In the sphere of humanitarian education, there are educational approaches, possessing significant potential. The theoretical basis for them is comparative study as a discipline direction in humanities, the formation of which began in the first half of the 19th century.

Modern scientists write about crisis in modern comparative studies, linking it to the globalization, which neutralizes cultural diversity. In the sphere of the literary comparative studies, the crisis manifests itself in the distribution of the postmodern theory of intertextuality, which “transmits the problems of the Comparative Literary Studies into the sphere of Common Literary Studies, as any text, which is out of question about its artistry and its axiology, is just a crossover point of the various discourse” (Smirnov, 2003, p. 22).

Establishing the crisis in Comparative Studies, the scientists suggest various ways to overcome it. As an alternative for the traditional understanding of the Comparative Science, which studies literature from the point of view of the author, the peoples, period of the development, style or genre, either a study of the wide discursive context (philosophy, history, law, etc.), where literature exists (Virk, 2003), or a renewal of the comparative historical method with the help of the theoretical concepts, in particular, Bakhtin's (1979) philosophy of the dialogue, is suggested (Schajtanov, 2010).

The idea of literary comparison is an alternative for the contrastive method, formed primarily, in the process of comparison of European literatures. Terms of the Comparative Literary Studies “coincide with the nature of these literatures and provide success of the comparative studies held on their material”. However, “representatives of the contrastive method extrapolate such terms on any kind of comparisons, which include various literatures, even “Eastern” ones” (Safullin, 2010, p.97). Apart from the contrast, comparison suggests keeping the uniqueness and equality of every literature, included into the circle of studies.

This idea finds response in the works of modern philosophers and historians. The Russian philosopher Kolesnikov (2004, p. 273) points out that “the dialogical nature of philosophical culture presupposes the search for optimal variants for the coexistence of different philosophical cultures as

equals in the historical and philosophical context”. The historian Kelly connects the future of the comparative history with the idea of difference, when historical comparisons focus more on dissimilarities, historians are researchers looking for “strange, often incommensurable, ways of something other” (Kelly, 2001, p. 102).

The idea of difference (of languages, literatures, cultures) lying in the basis of the comparative method is productive for teaching literature at schools. It shapes the students’ perception of the diversity of Russian culture, which is one of the foundations for the education of a tolerant personality. In this regard, it is necessary to develop a methodology for the comparative study of literature, focused on the solution of cognitive educational tasks (the formation of the students’ knowledge on national features of literatures, multiplicity of literatures (cultures), differences between them, and, at the same time, similarities, due to the common values of the Russian culture) and axiological educational tasks (the formation of awareness of ownership of the values of national cultures).

3. Research Questions

The creation of a methodology for comparative study of literature at schools involves the definition of a system of supporting concepts that allow solving problems associated with the formation of the national identity of students in the process of literary comparisons.

Traditional concepts are offered as widely used in modern practice of teaching literature (image, motif, character, chronotype, author), and innovative (concept, topos, archetype).

Comparative analysis of literary works guides the teachers of literature on the actualization of communications between subjects: images, motifs, features of the spatio-temporal, and subject organization of the compared literary works. They are considered as conditioned by national languages, cultures, and the psychology of peoples.

Let’s give examples of possible literary comparisons in the teaching of Russian and Tatar literatures in secondary schools in the Republic of Tatarstan.

3.1. National topos in comparison of literatures

In the formation of the national identity of literature, the role of topos is significant. Topoi in the national literature act as factors of its unity. Despite the historical variability of the national literature (culture), it is, in the words of Panchenko (1999, p. 233), “a stock of stable forms that are relevant throughout its entirety”. Among the topoi in the literature there are repetitive images, motifs, and plots.

For instance, the opposition “home – road” is one of the universal topoi in the world of literature, which in various national literatures gains the meanings determined by their national identity. In the process of studying the specific literary works in schools, an appeal to the experience of the foreign literary artistic perception of this topos allows identifying its national specific meaning.

In particular, the comparison of Leskov’s “The Enchanted Wanderer” with the works of the Tatar prose writer of the early 20th century, Sh. Kamal (“The Tramp”, “In the Search of Happiness”, “In a Foreign Country”, “The Seagull”), reveals one of the facets of the national identity of the Russian Literature to students: unlike Tatar literature, in which wanderings are tragedies for heroes, torn from their home by the force of mysterious circumstances, in Russian literature homelessness is not always a

tragedy. In the value orientations of several heroes, Leskov (first of all, Ivan Fljagin from the “The Enchanted Wanderer”) the preference is given to the path, and not to the house.

3.2. National character in the comparison of the literatures

The actualization of the problem of the national character in the process of teaching literature is possible through the comparison of the peculiarities of characters in Russian and national literatures. In particular, the comparison of the female images in the works of Turgenev and Amirkhan, a Tatar poet of the beginning of the XX century, forms a definition about the peculiarities of the female national character in Russian and Tatar literatures: unlike “Turgenev’s women”, whose characters are determined by “the prevalence of the morality with a deep call of duty transmitted into the Christian need for self-sacrificing love” (Nedzveckij, 2011, p.160), Amirkhan’s female characters have other basis. If in “The Tatar girl” (1909) the author described the fate of the Tatar girl, who lacks individuality. She appears exceptionally as an object of the collision of the national social life’s indisputable norms (*«kara kəsch»* (dark power) and natural human manifestations, emotions, feelings (*«tereklek»* (life)). In “Hayat” (1911) the female character is motivated by the conflict of Hayat’s feeling of individuality with the social norms of the Tatar society’s national life. The individual outset in Amirkhan’s female character is not fully realized, and because of that, along with the striving for fullness of the moral life, she manages to keep loyalty for the moral commandments of the old Tatar society. Such a type of character is peculiar to the personages of the Tatar literature, where the heroes with “arbitrarily and value-initiative” characters (Bakhtin, 1979) are encountered rather rarely than in Russian and European literatures. This is due to the high degree of the traditionalism, which differentiates the Eastern culture, including the Tatar culture genetically linked with the Eastern one.

3.3. National concepts in the comparison of the literatures.

In the process of teaching literature, students find out information about the concepts of national culture (Likhachev). Comparison of individual artistic concepts is productive for understanding their national identity. For example, while comparing Solzhenitsyn’s story “Matrena’s Yard” and Gilyazov’s story “On Friday Evening”, the features of the representation of the concepts “pravednik” and “izge” (in the works of Russian and Tatar writers) are established. This comparison involves the analysis of cultural codes representing national concepts: the transformations of the Christian (sacramental) code in the story of Solzhenitsyn’s story and the Muslim code in Gilyazov’s story. It should be pointed out that the result of this comparison is not only the concept of the uniqueness of national concepts, but also the similarity of their artistic transformations. As described in Solzhenitsyn’s story, the idea of righteousness is the basis of national life (“There is no village without a righteous man, not a city or the whole earth”) corresponds with the implication of the concept “izgelek” expressed in the Bibinur’s image: the basis of the moral being of Gilyazov’s heroine is the value experience of Nation’s unity, the preservation of which is the continuity of generations and the feeling that everyone is a part of the whole (the native nature, the traditions of national life, moral and ethical foundations formed within centuries).

3.4. The cultural archetypes in the comparison of the literatures

The epistemological status of national identity in the process of teaching literature at schools should not be reduced to an ideological construct: identity should be understood as having an axiological basis and manifested in a system of values transmitted from generation to generation, a feeling in which the rational component (perceived identity with the national culture, territory, Peoples) is associated with the non-rational, determined by the action of the mechanisms of cultural memory.

Various concepts are used in literature to understand the nature of the operation of these mechanisms, for example, “literary recall” (Bem) or “genetic memory of literature” (Bocharov, 2012).

In the process of studying literary works in the upper grades of general education schools, the term “archetype” can be used.

In a number of modern works, the term “archetype” is used in a sense that is broader than that of Young. Archetypes are collective representations that are formed and acquire certainty in a particular type of culture (Esaulov, 2010). Such an approach actualizes in the archetype, not its universal, supranational significance, but the meaning specific to a given national culture.

The concept of a “cultural archetype” can become a working idea in the process of forming the national identity of students in teaching literature at schools. Its use implies the identification of archetypal structures expressing national psychology in literary works, the juxtaposition of which makes it possible to reveal the features of national identity.

For example, the comparison of Daria’s images (“Farewell to Materaya” by Rasputin) and Akəbi (“The Unspoken Will” by Eniki) makes it possible to reveal not only their similarity due to the universal nature of the mother archetype, related to the national cultural context.

In the images of Darya and Akəbi, the idea of motherhood, understood in a broad sense (the guardian of traditions, customs and national principles) is clearly manifested.

On the other hand, comparing these images, it is necessary to draw the students’ attention to the differences between them. Daria is more determined; she can withstand others, without restraining emotions, defending her vital position. Akəbi, on the contrary, is reserved, indecisive, patient (“sabyr”), she goes through all the collisions that occur in her life by herself, which is typical for the behavior of the Tatar woman and corresponds to the mental make-up of the Tatar nation.

The archetype of the mother in the image of Akəbi is transformed by Amirkhan Eniki in accordance with the idea of preserving the unity of the nation, while the image of Darya is comprehended, mainly, in the context of the idea of preserving the spiritual unity of the peoples. This kind of transformation of the archetype is evidently since in the Tatar culture, the problem of preserving the nation was one of the most acute problems at various periods of its development.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to create a methodology for the comparative analysis of the national identity of literatures for general schools, and its subsequent implementation in the system of literary education.

The development and implementation of this methodology are focused on the formation of the national identity of students, their understanding of literature as part of the national culture, and their understanding of the diversity of literatures and cultures.

5. Research Methods

To develop a methodology for comparative study of national identity for general schools, a questionnaire was conducted among teachers of literature in secondary schools in the Republic of Tatarstan. 50 teachers of the Russian language and literature took part in the survey.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What do you mean by identity?
2. How do you understand civil identity?
3. How do you understand national identity?
4. What is the relationship between civil and national identity?
5. What role does fiction play in the formation of civic identity of students?
6. What role does fiction play in shaping the national identity of students?
7. What literary themes and images are the most significant in the formation of civic identity of students?
8. Name the works of Russian literature (from the school curriculum), in which, in your opinion, the civil identity is expressed the most vividly.
9. Name the works of Russian literature (from the school curriculum), in which, in your opinion, the national identity is the most pronounced.
10. Do you use the method of comparison of the literatures to form the civil and national identity of the students (in particular, works of Russian and Tatar, and Russian and foreign literatures) while teaching Russian literature?

The analysis of the questionnaires allows us to conclude that in most cases, literary comparisons are understood as a method aimed at establishing the typological similarities between the works of Russian and Tatar literatures: thematic (love and landscape lyrics in Russian and Tatar poetry were indicated by the participants more frequently as the basis for comparison), generic-species (among the often mentioned comparisons are comparisons of genres of Tatar and Russian folklore, primarily of fairy tales) associated with the functioning of methods of fictional expressiveness (in several questionnaires, the function of fiction in *Nights Before Christmas* by Gogol and *Shurale* by Tukay was indicated as a topic for comparison).

In isolated cases, questionnaires as basis for comparison were indicated in literary trends (in particular, in the two replies, the works of Russian and Tatar futurists are indicated as objects of comparison).

Thus, the questionnaire showed that, firstly, the concept of comparing literatures in all questions correlates with the establishment of similarities between the works of different national literatures; secondly, as a basis for comparison, the surveyed use traditional theoretical concepts (theme, genre, artistic technique).

6. Findings

6.1. In solving the problem of forming the national identity of students in the process of teaching literature at school, the potential for comparing literatures is not fully utilized. Teachers of the language at secondary general educational institutions are focused on the search for typological similarities between the works of Russian and Tatar literatures. This methodological setting does not correspond to the cognitive guidelines for comparing literatures, as a method aimed at establishing differences between national literatures, conditioned by differences in languages, psychologies, religions, and the culture of the peoples.

6.2. It is necessary to create a modern methodology for comparative study of literature at schools, the conceptual basis of which is the notion of differences in national literatures.

6.3. It is necessary to expand the body of theoretical concepts in the teaching of literature at school by introducing concepts that have proved to be productive in the studies of the national identity of literatures: *the national topos, the national character, the national concept, the archetype of culture*.

7. Conclusion

Comparison of literatures, based on the corresponding contemporary situation of the plurality of cultures, the idea of the difference between literatures, is promising from the point of view of realizing the task of forming the national identity of students.

The use of this method shapes students' knowledge of the diversity of Russian culture. At the same time, the uniqueness of the phenomena of national literatures comprehended as a result of literary comparisons does not level out the possibility of similarity between them. Russian literatures, for many decades, are developed in the context of Russian culture, and they are involved in its values: kindness, charity, love, beauty, readiness for collective action for the good of the public, serving a high goal that prevails over narrow personal interests, etc. These values of the Russian culture, finding artistic expression in the works of various national writers, can become a starting point in the study of the national identity of literatures, which manifests itself as dissimilar (special, unique) in a similar one and is revealed to the reader in the process of their (works) comparison.

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