

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****HOME READING AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

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Abstract

The paper discusses some issues related to home reading for teaching junior students the culture of the country of the target language at the faculty of foreign languages. Getting to know the samples of artistic creativity by foreign writers, students acquire knowledge in the field of linguistics, and learn language and speech skills and abilities. Bearing in mind methodological requirements, teachers apply a three-stage approach to artistic texts. Each of the stages has its own goals and objectives. The ultimate goal of all stages is to effectively train students in foreign language (FL) communicative competence. In addition, reading fiction books is invaluable for teaching cultural traits of the country of the target language, customs and traditions, etc. The teacher faces a number of issues that need to be addressed both in preparation for classes and in classroom. First of all, it is necessary to determine the genre of texts that should be studied as home reading – short stories, detective stories or novels. Each genre has positive aspects. The next question comes up in teaching practice as to what topics of texts will be the most interesting for 1–2 year students. Since the wider objective of teaching a foreign language is teaching FL communicative competence, the question arises as to how to teach speaking foreign languages, while teaching students to understand and respect foreign cultures, be tolerant. Studying foreign cultures, students begin to understand and appreciate their native culture more deeply, become more open in perceiving the multicultural world around.

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Keywords: Artistic text, home reading, skills, abilities, foreign culture, foreign language communicative competence



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1. Introduction

The study is relevant, based on the fact that the methodology of teaching foreign languages is constantly modified, in accordance with changes in public life, responding to the challenges and requirements of present time. A good command of the language is extremely important, because it is the language that acts as the main means, and, perhaps, the only object of learning (Galskova et al., 2018). In this regard, it is necessary to look for new approaches to training.

Students in various types of educational institutions, according to the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard, must learn to communicate in the target language. In addition, students acquire linguocultural knowledge about the country of the target language. An interconnected study of language and culture, knowledge of language through culture is an indisputable postulate of contemporary learning theory.

A graduate of the Faculty of Foreign Languages who has completed a bachelor's program should have the following general cultural competencies, namely: the ability to navigate easily in the system of universal human values, accommodate and respect the originality of foreign culture, possess the skills of socio-cultural and intercultural communication that ensure the adequacy of social and professional contacts (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science, 2014). Students acquire a variety of knowledge in the theory of the target language, which helps them to better appreciate pieces of writing under study programs, understand foreign language in various communication situations and respond appropriately. The wider objective of foreign language teaching is mastering FL communicative competency, acquaintance with foreign culture, since it is the language that reflects people's culture and identity. "Cultures are chiefly transmitted through spoken and written languages. Encapsulated within a language is most of a community's history and a large part of its cultural identity. David Crystal" (Ter-Minasova, 2000).

Home reading, being an important aspect of foreign language teaching, has assumed renewed importance lately. A literary work expands students' horizons and creates a natural support for the development of thinking, contains a rich factual, linguocultural material used by students to learn communication. They learn to compare, draw conclusions and generalizations. All of the above confirms a communicative focus of foreign language teaching in home reading classes.

2. Problem Statement

The study is based on the fact that teaching FL communicative competence requires the learning process to be built with a cultural component of the target language in mind. Learning takes place outside the country of the target language, in an artificially created learning environment. The culture of the country of the target language can be taught based on literary texts, the language of which is a living, evolving organism, full of graphic and expressive means. How to make the learning process more amusing and effective – this is the problem that can be addressed along with some features of FL teaching.

Currently, much attention is paid to teaching the culture of the country of the target language, because through foreign culture, it is possible to understand and master foreign language communication.

Culture is the basis of teaching languages: “since culture (and that alone!) constitutes the content of education, make “foreign culture” the content of foreign language education as an integrative spiritual substance that, while being mastered, contributes to the development of a student’s individuality being a subject of a dialogue of cultures ...” (Passov, 2010).

Throughout studies, students receive a significant amount of information necessary for mastering a FL communicative competence. Teaching conducted in an artificially created language environment in classroom settings should provide students with “incentives to use language as a means of communication” (Galskova, 2007). Such incentives are provided through various methods: games, projects, alternative lessons, ICT.

3. Research Questions

The subject of research is organizing home reading classes for 1–2 year students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages.

1. What genre and volume of texts are preferred in home reading classes? The teacher should choose a humorous story, a fantasy or a historical novel, subject to the interests of students and their level of language proficiency.
2. What types of tasks help to streamline the learning process? Home reading assignments contribute to the improvement of FL communicative competence.

4. Purpose of the Study

The relevance of the study determines the objective set: to consider and clarify the components of Home reading assignment used for reading fiction.

5. Research Methods

The methodology is based on the use of methods of scientific knowledge, data systematization with subsequent analysis and generalization. The authors used the following research methods: a) theoretical – study and analysis of linguistic, methodological, pedagogical, psychological literature on the problem under study; b) pedagogical – pilot training of 1st year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, monitoring of the learning process; c) collecting facts; d) generalizations.

6. Findings

Reading literary texts, like other activities in home reading classes, fosters the development of different types of student’s competences, which, in total, are constituent components of FL communicative competence.

Reading as a type of speech activity is peculiar in that it always involves obtaining or extracting information from the text you have read. Reading literary texts in a foreign language becomes more important, because along with linguistic material, the student receives linguocultural information. Moreover, students enrolled in language study programs usually study two foreign languages – English as

the first foreign language, French or German – as the second foreign language. Students prepare home reading assignments in two languages. This technology is aimed at immersing students in a linguocultural environment of 4 languages: two foreign, native and Russian. This means that linguocultural approach, implemented in teaching both the first and second foreign languages, is regarded as effective knowledge of foreign languages and cultures in the broadest sense, which contributes to the development of a multicultural and tolerant person (Yagubova & Murieva, 2018).

Many teachers consider stories, fairy tales, or relatively complete pieces of fiction to be preferred. Literary texts create great opportunities for the accumulation and clarification of knowledge about the culture of the country of the target language, including knowledge of history, geography, music, painting, etc. Choosing learning material, you should always remember that texts should, if possible, be of the most different types and genres (Ivanova, 2018).

The authors clarified the components of a three-stage approach to texts selected for home reading. There is an opinion that it is possible to stick to third-stage tasks, since they are aimed at the development of communicative competence. This is a controversial statement. All stages of dealing with the text are important, and skipping one of the stages can have irreversible impact. First-stage tasks – pre-textual – involve the introduction of new lexical units, and the simultaneous formation and development of pronunciation skills.

The second stage – textual – is designed to reinforce the introduced lexical units, and enhance grammatical skills. Language skills, including phonetic, lexical and grammatical, are shaped and developed in an integrated manner, forming the basis for teaching speaking skills.

The third stage – after-textual – aimed at “using the source text as a basis and support for the development of productive skills in oral or written speech” (Solovova, 2008), involves intensive activities to form FL communicative competence based on skills acquired by students in the first two stages. The text is discussed, monologic utterances are produced, dialogues are made up and staged, problems raised by authors in their pieces of writing are discussed with students. The follow-up stage is also exploited by many teachers to develop productive writing skills.

The third stage is composed of the tasks aimed at speaking, discussing events, expressing one’s attitude to what is happening. Frequently used tasks here involve answering questions about the content of the text, retelling a chapter on behalf of one of the heroes, dealing with problems, etc.

At the Faculty of Foreign Languages first-year students read *Magnolia Buildings* by Elizabeth Stucley, who depicts the Berners family living in a block of flats in London. Readers get to know the life of the family, their daily concerns. Traditional English holidays are held against the backdrop of all the events – Christmas with the obligatory amateur school play (Pantomime), May Fair, Guy Fawkes Day, etc.

In the first chapter, the author shows the family on the first day of the New Year. On New Year’s Eve in England there is a tradition to make wishes, and at the end of the year to find out what has come true (New Year Resolutions). Another tradition: British schoolchildren put on an amateur Christmas performance (Pantomime), and invite their parents. Students compare English traditions with those typical of their country, and often get surprised at how similar some of them are, while others are not common for their homeland.

Example of follow-up tasks:

1. Answer the questions.
 - How old was Gloria Evelyn and what was her short name?
 - What was the first thing Ally wanted?
 - Speak about the members of the Berners family.
2. Give the summary of Chapter 1.
3. Retell the chapter in the words of: Ally; The mother; Val; Len; The father; Auntie Glad; Doreen.
4. Topics for discussion:
 - Is it useful to keep a diary?
 - How do you usually spend your first day of the year?
 - What did you dream about when you were 14?

The topics for discussion need to cover the ones interesting for students, or those that require expressing one's own opinion, i.e. topics that personally address the student as such, affecting their interests and aspirations. For example: How do you spend the first day of the New Year? What did you dream about when you were 14 years old?

In Chapter 4, the author tells about an 11-year-old girl who is taking exams – The eleven plus examination. Based on the exam, students can continue their studies in a grammar school, which makes it possible after graduation to go to college. Doreen, who dreams of becoming a teacher, is working hard to pass a 4-part exam. In this example, students learn the education system in England and compare with the education system in Russia, with testing in Russian schools, with the Unified State Exam, etc. After reading this chapter, the following topics were chosen as topics for discussion, concerning the choice of a future profession, the emotional state of students before exams, and others.

In the “Jobs” chapter, the author shows teenagers in search of additional income, because they need money to make their dreams come true: buy clothes, a bicycle, etc. Many teenagers in our country work after school, and they can compare the types of jobs described by the author with the jobs Russian schoolchildren and students apply for. Here they find little difference. Like many other books, *Magnolia Buildings* conveys cultural values of another country, a completely different world where the same people live: they go to school, hang out with classmates, sometimes do not get on well with their parents, dream about the future, choose a profession. The events described in the book serve as the basis for discussion, an opportunity to express students' own opinion. Besides oral activities, it is possible to teach writing skills, like writing a letter to the main character, writing an essay on the topic discussed in a book or story. In the classroom, students deliver what they have read in various forms: discussion, round table, presentation, staging of individual chapters or episodes. A lesson like this aims to introduce students to the multinational world in its diversity, to teach them to respect traditions of another country, to strive for knowledge of the world around, and, based on this, to better understand their own culture, which will help to become a highly educated and multicultural person. It is necessary to reprofile education ... to be culture-consistent, which will make a person not only educated, but also cultural, spiritual, teach not thoughts, but think, aim not at mastering ready-made knowledge and their application, but at creativity, creation (Passov, 2010).

Home reading in the second foreign language – French, is introduced from the second semester. Students are offered edited authentic texts by the famous French storyteller of the 17th–18th centuries Charles Perrault. Texts of this type are characterized by simplified grammatical phenomena and structures, corresponding to the level of students' knowledge for the second semester of study, reduced unfamiliar vocabulary, the most common set expressions and language chunks.

In the second FL classes, students are invited to perform tasks aimed at revealing the content of fairy tales, as well as the nature of characters and their actions. After each tale, comments are given, allowing students to more accurately translate the tales. A step-by-step approach is applied, which does not differ fundamentally from home reading lessons in the first FL. The first step implies getting acquainted with C. Perrot's biography and work for a deeper understanding of everyday life people lead in that era. Much attention is paid to reading techniques and auditory-pronunciation skills. For this purpose, videos are used with scripts of fairy tales, voiced by native speakers. At this stage, a lot of time is devoted to reading for detail (aloud – 90 %, silently – 10 %), setting intonation and correct pronunciation. The purpose of the next stage is to control the level of language and speech skills. At this stage, lexical and grammatical structures are reinforced and drilled. Together with comments, the home reading manual contains: key vocabulary for a certain fairy tale, questions about the content, phrases to be translated from Russian into French, as well as a number of exercises and tasks for finding missing synonyms/antonyms; true/false statements, matching headings, describing the main characters, making up phrases with collocations and phraseological units. Then, students are invited to make up a retelling plan based on the text read and retell it. At the last stage, situations borrowed from the fairy tales are necessarily used as supports to develop dialogical and monologic utterances. In the learning process, we use both group forms and methods of work, and individual ones, with the ultimate goal of developing intercultural competence, full participation in the dialogue of cultures. This approach, in the authors' opinion, is not only justified, but also effective, and contributes to the development of necessary skills and abilities of all speech activities in students: listening and speaking, reading and writing.

7. Conclusion

Foreign language is specific as a subject because while taking it students not only acquire knowledge, but also develop skills and abilities to use it as a means of communication and obtain new information. Such opportunities are facilitated by the communicative essence of the discipline, its focus on studying the life, traditions and language of other people (Kanukova, 2020).

Developing FL communicative competence is a complex, multifaceted process that intertwines both its constituent components, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, etc. and knowledge in the culture of the country. Mastering communicative competence in teaching foreign languages involves the development of students' knowledge, abilities and skills that allow them to get to know the culture of another country and communicate in a foreign language with native speakers.

To achieve positive outcomes in foreign language teaching at all stages of training, it is required to acquire knowledge in the field of culture and other areas of life, in addition to grammatical and phonetic structures of the target language. Such broad cultural knowledge can be provided by the Home Reading

aspect, based on reading and analyzing stories, excerpts of fictional works by English and American classics and contemporary authors.

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