

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FUTURE TRANSLATORS VIA THE METHODOLOGY OF CULTURE-ORIENTED INTERPRETATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE FICTIONAL TEXTS

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The article examines the problem of integrating the cultural component into the professional curriculum of translators' training via incorporating the methodology of culture-oriented English language fictional texts aimed at the development of the sociocultural competence of translation studies students. The article shows how to integrate the methodology of culture-oriented interpretation as a set of successive operations determined by the content of the text-based activities and interpretation operations: cultural orientation, reception, explication and evaluation. The analysis of the theoretical research in the sphere of linguodidactics and empirical data have shown that the enrichment of the personal experience of intercultural communication can be achieved due to integrating English Language fictional texts, documentary, animation and feature films into the process of language education. The complex of criteria and indicators to describe the degree of well-formedness of the sociocultural competence via the estimation of the level of mastery of the strategies of culture-oriented interpretation of EL fictional texts has been identified and theoretically founded and the effectiveness of the offered didactic courseware was experimentally proved. The materials of the article can be useful for lecturers teaching in the framework of the content-based instruction and content and language integrated learning.

**Key words:** sociocultural competence, English language, translators' professional training.

### INTRODUCTION

The professional language education in the 21st century is intended to play the leading role in broadening students' cultural horizons and providing their exposure to the diversity of cultures. Future translators not only have to master language structures, but also have to learn to juxtapose their worldview with the one belonging to the representatives of other cultures and to learn to use the points of coincidences as a positive program professionally guiding them to the dialogue of cultures. The conditions of the globalization of the world community make it necessary to teach the students to value diversity of cultures and to develop a high level of readiness to intercultural cooperation. The widening and condensation of information flows due to the development of information technologies as well as the intensification of international contacts due to the population mobility blur the students' cognitive orientations and require effective analytical strategies of their rich experience of intercultural communication, that becomes possible in the course of the development

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of the students' sociocultural competence (Lopatina *et al.*, 2015). Management of the process of the sociocultural competence development requires an efficient methodology that can guarantee the achievement of the stated goals of teaching. The research conducted has demonstrated that the educational methodology of teaching the culture-oriented interpretation of the English language fictional texts can meet this requirement.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The analysis of literature on the problems of integrated culture and language studies shows that the role of culture as the focus of anthropological and existential being was described in the works by M.M. Bakhtin (1975), V.S. Bibler (1997), G.F. Yusupova, J. Podgorecki & N.G. Markova (2015). The problems of inextricable connection of language and culture and the necessity of their complex studies are a central issue in the works by Ye.M. Verescshagin (2005), Yu.N. Karaulov (2004), V.G. Kostomarov (2005), A.A. Leontyev (2004), O.A. Leontovich (2007). The problem of culture and its artistic and aesthetic manifestations in literature are described in writings by G.D. Gachev (2008) and Yu.M. Lotman (2014). Text interpretation issues as an element of language learning are the subject of research by I.V. Arnold (2014), I.Ya. Galperin (2006), V.A. Kukharensko (2011). The pedagogical aspects of the interrelated integration of language and culture into the educational process are in the focus of research interests of Ye.I. Passov (2006), V.V. Safonova (2008), A.N. Ytekhina (2012), D. Crandell (2004) and others.

Yet, we have to admit the necessity of the structural organization of the framework of categories and concepts, of the didactic means and methodology that can provide successful introduction of the culture-oriented aspect into the language component of the educational program "translation and translation studies". Meanwhile, the quality of the future professional carrier of the translators-to-be to a greater extent is defined by the selection of the methodology integrating the culture-oriented component into English language education.

The analysis of the present context of education lets us witness the controversy between the understanding that it is necessary to introduce culture-oriented aspect into language professional education and the need in reconsideration of the conceptual approach to the selection of culturally valuable content and the didactic means of its integration; between the necessity for teachers and students to master professional skills of understanding and apprehension of English language texts and the crudity of existing methodologies to teach it.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Methods of the Research**

To achieve the goals and meet challenges we used a number of theoretical and empirical methods of research, such as theoretical analysis of philosophical, didactic,

psychological, psycholinguistic, philological, didactic literature on the realization of the competence-based, methodological and culture-oriented approaches published in Russia and worldwide; the studies of empirical pedagogical experience, educational and methodological documentation on professional language learning and instruction; empirical methods (modeling of the process of teaching culture-oriented interpretation, strategic planning); diagnostic methods (questionnaire surveys, group and individual discussions, students' achievements templates); observational methods (incorporated observation based on specially designed maps and programs, self-observation, retrospective analysis of personal pedagogical experience as a University English language lecturer); qualitative and quantitative analysis of the gained research results with the application of the statistical processing of the experimental data.

#### **Experimental basis of the research and the quantity of the experiment participants**

The experiment was conducted at the Institute of Foreign Languages and Literature of the Udmurt State University (Izhevsk, Russia), in the Teachers' In-carrier training Institute (Izhevsk, Russia), 430 students, 15 University instructors, 40 teachers of English in the Udmurt Republic (Russia), 20 informants – native speakers of English.

#### **The stages of the research**

The research was conducted in three stages:

1. *Preparatory stage* included the historical and theoretical analysis of the state of the problem under study, the analysis of scientific and methodological literature on the problems of culture studies, the didactics of reaching English as a foreign language and the strategies of the interpretation of fictional texts, putting forward a hypothesis of the research; the observation of the students' learning process, the assessment of the level of the students' acquisition of the interpretation methodology of a work of fiction with the purpose of identification of the culture-oriented content in it.
2. *The designing stage* consisted in determining the conceptual framework of the research, in the development of the didactic support and courseware of the methodology of teaching culture-oriented interpretation of English language fiction and films in the framework of the development of sociocultural competence considered both the result and the aim of the instruction, as well as the evaluation of the texts of fiction selected for publication.
3. *Formative and summative stage* included experimental instruction of the students of the Institute of Foreign Languages and Literature of the Udmurt State University that included input and output assessment, statistical

processing of the collected data, the analysis and the summary of the experiment's results, drawing conclusions on the conducted research.

## **RESULTS**

### **The essence and the structure of the methodology of the culture-oriented interpretation of English language fictional texts**

The methodology of culture-oriented interpretation is a set of successive operations determined by the content of the text-based activities as well as the succession of the interpretation operations from the operations of general cultural orientation to the more specific personally evaluative: cultural orientation, reception, explication and evaluation. Implementing these operations helps the students to develop professionally meaningful strategies of the culture-oriented interpretation on the cognitive-conceptual, communicative and personally evaluative levels. To develop the students' interpretation strategies we worked out a system of the open type tasks and activities, which are based on the principles of heuristic discovery approach, and correlate with the algorithm of culture-oriented interpretation. The operations of the methodology of the culture-oriented interpretation of the EL fictional texts are as follows.

Cultural orientation: modeling of the cultural notions, processes, phenomena; putting forward hypotheses, pre-text questions, activities to anticipate the text content; linguistic and conceptual guessing, information processing to reproduce the plot of the text; web-quests; modeling diverse information requirements; speech intellectual warm-up activities; association games.

Reception: juxtaposing the text with non-verbal intersemiotic elements (a picture, a photo, a reproduction) that reflect the general atmosphere of a fictional or poetic work under study and the reader's emotional state; matching culture-specific words with their definitions and meanings; making mind maps with the culture-specific vocabulary; true-false statements; contrasting, offering oppositions of culture-specific vocabulary and culture-specific information; verbal decoding; making brief retellings of a text of fiction; retelling of a poem in prose.

Explication: creating non-conflict cross-cultural communication vocabulary with the help of the strategy of differentiating a description of a cultural phenomenon from a judgment; identifying the time and place of the events described in a work of fiction or film; explaining culture specific vocabulary (non-equivalent lexis, idioms, phraseological units, stylistic devices); identifying phenomena in the author's focus of attention and the phenomena of secondary importance and stating their connection with the cultural concept framework of the work of fiction; paraphrasing culture-specific vocabulary of the text and looking for their analogues in the student's native culture; substitution of a notion by a generalization; clarification of "difficult" places; matching equivalent substitutions, the analysis

of their commonalities; selecting content-specific and meaningful values of the concept framework.

Evaluation: an aural report of the student's personal impressions; ranging and juxtaposing the values of an "other" and one's own culture; writing a short essay to express a student's personal attitude to the values reflected in the text; interviewing the students about their personal opinions of the culture-specific concepts and attitudes described in the text; creating TV and radio programs demonstrating students' personal attitudes and points of view.

The development of the strategies of culture-oriented interpretation relies also on the techniques of speech interaction of the students in a variety of forms and regimes: heuristic questioning, simulated problem-based discussions, culture-oriented project. Such a system of didactically organized means of the interpretation of English language fictional texts allows the students to master the strategies of text processing activities and develops cultural self-identification strategies arising due to the knowledge of culture-specific categories, reception, understanding and evaluation of works of fiction providing the basis of the system of respectful attitudes to other cultures.

The measurements of the degree of the development of the strategies of culture-oriented interpretation were organized on the stage of "extensive" instruction in the framework of the practical English Language course and on the stage of "intensive" instruction in the delivery of the elective course "The reflection of values of American culture in Literature and film" intended to teach theoretical and practical aspects of the interpretation of English language fictional texts.

### **The results of integrating the methodology of culture-oriented interpretation of English Language fictional texts into the curriculum**

The results of the experiment conducted are represented in the table showing students' summative achievements in acquiring cognitive-conceptual, communicative and personal evaluative strategies on the low, medium and high levels. The mastery of the strategies by the students was measured by how complete was their cultural conceptual thesaurus, how well they could synthesize the cultural content of the English Language fictional texts and how actively the students could internalize their capacity for cultural self-identification.

The analysis of the results of the experiment has shown that the students of the experimental group have better developed professionally relevant capacities to perform culture-oriented interpretation of a fictional text, than the students of the control group. The improvement has been achieved in the following parameters:

*on the cognitive conceptive level*

- the students have a more complete thesaurus;
- the students have a higher degree of cognitive activity in studying text manifestations of the other culture;

TABLE 1: THE RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

<i>Summative indicators</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Manifestations in students</i>			
		<i>Experimental group</i>		<i>Control group</i>	
		<i>Beginning of instruction</i>	<i>End of instruction</i>	<i>Beginning of instruction</i>	<i>End of instruction</i>
Completeness of cultural thesaurus	h	6,36	15,7	3,16	9,68
	m	70,11	81,14	50,32	60,14
	l	23,53	3,16	46,52	30,18
Synthesizing the cultural content of the English Language fictional texts	h	10,12	16,7	7,24	9,65
	m	71,17	82,18	60,13	70,18
	l	18,71	1,12	32,63	20,17
Efficiency of cultural self-identification	h	4,18	17,75	3,22	16
	m	69,44	76,11	50,14	60,81
	l	26,38	6,14	46,64	23,19

*on the communicative level*

- the students have learned the technique of establishing the correlation of the strategies to the operations of the culture-oriented interpretation, they know the succession and the content of the operations and procedures;
- the students have the linguocultural readiness to receive implicit and explicit indicators of the micro- and macro- level of the text analysis
- the students have a deep sensitivity to the culturally relevant content of a work of fiction
- the students have very well developed analytical and synthetic strategies of the culture-oriented interpretation

*on the personal evaluative level*

- the students transfer the culturally valuable meaning of a work of fiction into the sphere of axiological self-identification
- demonstrate tolerance to the linguocultural manifestations of the “other” culture and behave in accordance with the norms of speech and effective cross-cultural communication.

## DISCUSSIONS

### **Sociocultural competence in the translators’ professional training**

Sociocultural competence is considered a generic interpersonal competence in the framework of the project “Tuning” in which the lecturers and professors of the Institute of Foreign Languages and Literature of Udmurt State University participated together with representatives of some other Universities from Spain,

Finland, Holland, Russia and from a number of other countries (Sanchez & Ruiz, 2008; Gabdulkhakov, Gareyeva & Garifullina 2012; Petrova, Murtazina & Samsonova, 2012; Gabdulkhakov & Galimova, 2014). The European Project “Tuning” was aimed at working out a system of comparable competences as a result and target-oriented foundation for the University education in Europe. The coordinators of the project in Europe and Russia analyzed the system of competences and their relevance to the education of Europe and Russia and confidently proved the common vector in the development of competences necessary for the university graduates of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The project participants defined the basic approaches to the description of the competences and determined how to integrate them into the university curricula. Taking into consideration a certain degree of schematic limitations in the description of competences in the system of competence-based instruction in university education, educationists developed a number of normative documents that allowed bringing university education to new orientations with the priorities that can be formulated as the following requirements:

1. Integrating student-oriented approach, where the students are in the center as the subjects of education;
2. Integrating competence-based approach that determines the adaptability of the results of education as well the students’ personal development to the labor market;
3. Technological and methodological efficiency of the education process intended to guarantee the achievement of the goals of education;
4. Intellectual intensification of university education realized via the combination of the theoretical depth with the immediate integration of the results of intellectual activity into life and labor spheres.

Sociocultural competence is considered as the result and target-oriented basis of learning the strategies of the culture-oriented interpretation of English Language fictional texts. The comparison of the competences required by the Federal standards on Philology and Linguistics in Russia and the system of competences offered in the “Tuning” project has shown that the sociocultural competence includes three content aspects: the recognition of diversity as a value of people’s coexistence in the modern world, the capacity to implement intercultural interaction and the personalized cultural evaluative self-identification.

#### **The problem of culture-oriented English Language fictional text interpretation in the research of Russia and worldwide**

The developers of the “Tuning” project as recommendations for the selection of the didactically meaningful content aimed at the development of the sociocultural competence point out case studies, intercultural training sessions, project methods, the materials which can rely on the personal experience of the students that they

gained in their own intercultural communication situations. The analysis of the theoretical research in the sphere of linguodidactics and empirical data have shown that the enrichment of the personal experience of intercultural communication was implemented due to the integrating English Language fictional texts, documentary, animation and feature films into the process of language education. The text is considered the main entity of teaching and learning. The fundamental theoretical ideas underlying our research are the following: the reader of the text is involved in the multifunctional textual activity; the reception of the text requires research capabilities on the part of the student, the result of which is the synthesis of the text's imagery enriched with the personal interpretations of the text's meaning; the understanding of the text involves the projection of the personal features into understanding of the imagery and text ideas (Dridze, 1996; Galperin, 2008; Leontyev, 2004). We also consider the text of a work of fiction as a complex artistic and aesthetic system, where the imagery and meaning are actualized in connection with cultural elements. Another important idea is that the text reproduces controversies and attitudes of people's existence in multi-dimensional and multi-functional imagery-based ties having both a universal and ethnically specific culture-oriented components.

The functional characteristics of the text allow us to give the definition to the culture-oriented interpretation of the English Language fictional text by which we mean a specifically organized process of its understanding as an artistic and aesthetic system with the purpose of identifying culturally valuable information in it that lets the students penetrate into the deep layers of basic cultural concepts and develop a system of positive respectful attitudes to the manifestations of other cultures.

The content matter of the culture-oriented interpretation of a work of fiction: the authors' point of view

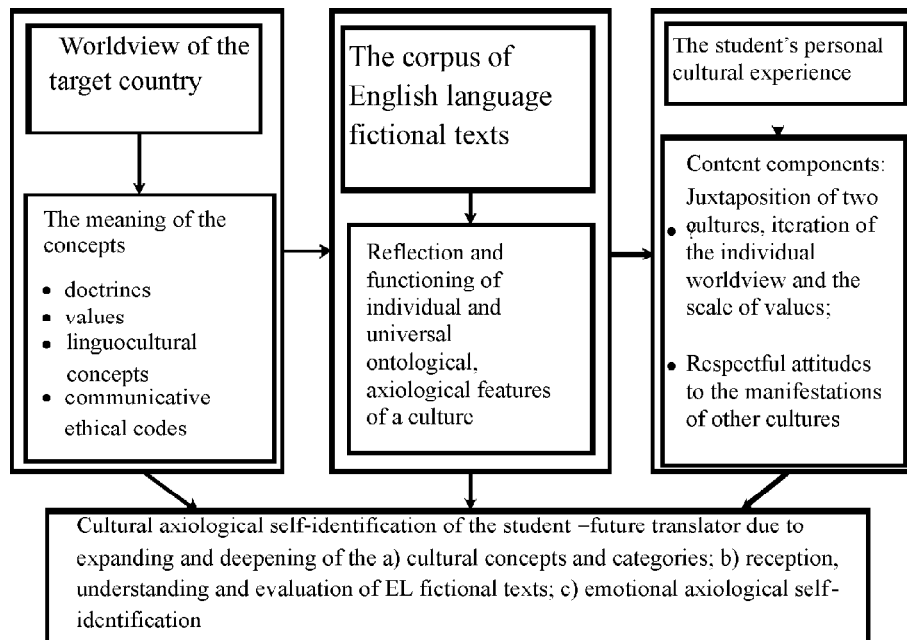
The main function of the text in our conception is to form an alternate worldview, differing from the one the student has in her own linguoculture. Thus, the knowledge of the English Language can help the student acquire additional information about the world, society, the culture of people's behavior. In the course of the text interpretation the students enrich their system of values and perfect their knowledge about the life of other ethnicities and cultural groups. The culture-oriented interpretation also helps the students develop a positive and respectful attitude to the cultural information gathered in the process of learning. Taking this into consideration, we defined basic requirements to the selection of the texts: implicit and explicit expressivity of the cultural component; the strategic role of the cultural component in the work of fiction; the adequacy of the text to the level of the students' knowledge and skills in the sphere of English language mastery; interest, originality and fascination of the plot and fable; the presence of the problematic controversy or of the conflict in the work of fiction; the dialogical



nature of the text, its “polyphony”, according to M. M. Bakhtin (1975), allowing multiplicity of its interpretations.

The theory of text perception worked out by the psycholinguists L. S. Vygotsky (2005), A. A. Leontyev (2004), the ideas of linguocultural studies (Yu. N. Karaulov (2004), Yu. S. Stepanov (2010), the culture-oriented approach to the content of the interpretation activity and understanding of the essence of the culture-oriented interpretation led us to the design of the structure flow-chart of the content matter of the culture-oriented interpretation of the English language fictional texts. The flow-chart incorporates the worldview of the culture of the target country, the corpus of specifically organized English Language texts, the students’ cultural experience in the intercultural and “inner” cultural communication, providing their professional personal culturally meaningful self-identification. The designed flow-chart is efficiently incorporated into the author’s special course “The reflection of American values in literature and film”, where the goals, tasks and requirements to the organization of the teaching process are described, as well as the basic principles of the organization of the process of teaching of the culture-oriented interpretation of the text are included.

We used the psycholinguistic “top-down” and “bottom-up” models of the receptive text activity described by L.S. Vygotsky (2005), I.A. Zimnyaya (2001),



**Figure 1:** The content matter of the culture-oriented interpretation of English language fictional texts

A.A. Leontyev (2004), that allowed to identify two strategies of text processing; the first describes the process of descending reception (general idea of the text, its content, style, genre, thus synthetic activities prevail); the second – the model “bottom-up” defined the course of the successive acquisition of the functional system of the language (developing major vocabulary and grammar skills and strategies, developing basic mechanisms of the reception and understanding of English language texts).

### **CONCLUSION**

In the framework of our research we have provided rationale for the content of cultural component and the methodology of culture-oriented interpretation of the English Language fictional texts and their integration into the process of English Language education and professional training of translators. A definition for the culture-oriented interpretation intended to develop a positive respectful attitude of the students to other cultures has been offered. The teaching and learning potential of the culture-oriented interpretation, its pedagogical nature and the role in professional training of future translators have been analyzed. An operational algorithm based on the psycholinguistic mechanisms, underlying the text interpretation activity: cultural orientation, reception, explicating and evaluating has been introduced. We identified professionally significant strategies of the text interpretation and proposed a complex of teaching aids and scaffolding, which included culturally valuable information represented in functionally adequate materials, a methodology of culture-oriented interpretation consisting of a number of successive operations with a system of training activities relevant for the translators' education. We identified and theoretically founded the complex of criteria and indicators to describe the degree of well-formedness of the sociocultural competence via the estimation of the level of mastery of the strategies of culture-oriented interpretation of EL fictional texts and we experimentally proved that the offered didactic courseware had been effective.

The materials of the article can be used by teachers of English to enrich the variety of methods and by instructors of intercultural communication. The outcomes of our research can also be useful for lecturers teaching in the framework of the content-based instruction and content and language integrated learning.

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