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Teaching Literature to Foreign Audience at the Stage of Pre-University Training

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Abstract

The paper considers the problems of applying the Russian as a foreign language teaching technique for teaching literature at pre-university department. In spite of the reduced scope of additional educational program in literature as provided for by the new requirements, in this audience, studying the Russian writers' works corps is coupled with difficulties of both linguistic and mental nature. The teaching starts in groups having A1 mastery level of Russian, and, alongside with the non-mother tongue, the attendees have to master a course of Russian literature ranging from folklore and Old Russian literature to that of the 20th century within an incomplete academic year. The specific character of students' audience and program requirements prescribe the necessary use of the main principles of RFL teaching – communicative, linguistic, didactic and psychological ones. The authors of the paper pay a special attention to practical application of the said principles giving numerous examples of study assignments and exercises of various types. The paper can be targeted to RFL teachers, students of philology and to everyone interested in problems of techniques of teaching literature in a non-mother tongues.

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1. Introduction

The discipline "Literature" belongs to the federal component of the humanitarian profile pre-university study program for foreign citizens that provides for compulsory study of the Russian literature. On October 3, 2014, by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1304, new requirements for mastery of additional general

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education programs ensuring the preparation of the foreign citizens to mastery of vocational educational programs in Russian, including ones of humanitarian trend. The requirements for the discipline "Literature" (Order of the RF Ministry of general and vocational education dated May 8, 1997, No. 866) have changed essentially. The differences may be seen in Appendix A. First of all, this touched on the compulsory minimum content of this program. Previously, the attendees had to study an impressive list of topics including learning about the writers' biographies, detailed analysis of the content, composition, system of characters of key works of each literature period. Meanwhile, the practice of teaching shows that to master such scope of material was quite a difficult task for the preparation department attendees. The new requirements imply a more general familiarization with the main periods of the Russian literature and a concentrated presentation of the material on writers. With regard to this, the main focus is on the XIX century literature: works of A.S. Pushkin, M.Yu. Lermontov, N.V. Gogol, I.S. Turgenev, F.M. Dostoevskiy, L.N. Tolstoy and A.P. Chekhov.

The problem of qualitative change of the Russian literature program content has been long pending. The practicing teachers have repeatedly noted infeasibility of 1997 type program requirements both from the standpoint of scope of the material suggested for studying and the deadlines for mastering it and from the standpoint of the initial language knowledge level and cultural background of learners. For instance, Yu.O. Chernoborodova (2009) points out quite fairly that the foreigners cannot attain the level of knowledge that the Russian school-leavers have due to shorter terms of pre-university programs for foreigners (the knowledge which Russian schoolchildren get during 11 years cannot be mastered in a year). Moreover, "Russian schoolchildren study literature in their native language in which they are fluent. As for foreigners, the preparation department is the first year of studying Russian, one of the most complicated languages" (Chernoborodova, 2009, p. 143). No doubt, the new program in literature, the 2014 version, is more up to the needs and capacities of the attendees. However, attaining the main goal of mastering the Russian literature program, namely, "forming the social and cultural competency – understanding the role, place and importance of the Russian literature in the system of national culture" cannot be promoted solely by modification of its scope and content.

Here it is the methodical expertise of a teacher, his ability to use the main methodic principles of RFL teaching in practice, his ability to evaluate and bear in mind the level and particularities of students' audience, to vary the students' classroom and independent work. Although there is a great quantity of methodical research into various RFL teaching issues at present, it is hard to disagree with the opinion of A.I. Surygin (2000) who considers that today only the techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language that are sufficiently worked out, while the problems of teaching other disciplines in a non-mother tongue have not yet received due attention either in didactic or even more so psychological and pedagogical aspects. The statement also holds true in relation to the Russian literature teaching techniques, despite the discoveries in language teaching techniques being widely used by Russian language teachers. Research in the area of teaching Russian literature to foreigners is especially relevant in conditions of changing requirements to the level of students' vocational training.

Speaking about the specific character of teaching non-philologist students at an engineering higher education institution, many resource teachers stress its linguistic and didactic inclination, i.e. the necessity of teaching language while studying the basics of another discipline first of all. Thus, "what is taking place is that techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language and techniques of teaching special subjects in Russian as a non-mother tongue are coming closer in practice" (Vasil'eva, 2000, p. 3). So, by teaching language using the material of a subject, a widespread problem is resolved – that of insufficient preparation of students of the preparation department to further studies at the higher education institution due to poor knowledge of the Russian language.

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

Seeking to organize the pedagogical process orienting to the current educational standards and requests of the audience formed the basis of the research carried out. The goal of the paper was describing the main principles of RFL teaching techniques taking into account the new requirements and social portrait of learners studying the Russian literature at the beginner level.

In order to attain the said goal, the following objectives had to be achieved:

- to compare the content of the programs according to the requirements to mastering additional general education programs of 1997 and 2014;

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