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ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ ЖИЗНЕННОГО ОПЫТА И КУЛЬТУРНОЙ ОСВЕДОМЛЕННОСТИ КАК ДЕТЕРМИНАНТА ЭФФЕКТИВНОГО ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА И ОБУЧЕНИЯ

Аннотация. В магистерскую программу по направлению «Лингвистика» в Московском городском педагогическом университете был внедрен курс на английском языке «Американская и британская литература для молодого читателя». Данный курс представляет собой синергетическое соединение разновекторных подходов в обучении иностранному языку и способствует успешному изучению иностранного языка и развитию критического мышления.

Ключевые слова: литература для молодого читателя; синергетический подход; магистратура; лингвистика.

INTERACTION OF LIFE EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL AWARENESS AS A DETERMINANT OF EFFICIENT LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Summary. A course ‘American and British Young Adult Literature’ delivered in English was introduced into Master’s Degree program in linguistics in Moscow City University. The course knits synergistically differently centered approaches in foreign language teaching and contributes to successful foreign language learning and critical thinking development.

Key words: young adult literature; synergistic approach; Master’s degree program; linguistics.

Nowadays scholars concede that in education the “increasing emphasis is being placed on meeting the demands and expectations of students by continuously improving their experience whilst not diluting academic quality” [1]. Experience and academic quality have become the significant milestones in contemporary linguistic education. Life experience is a salient part of experience as a multi-faceted phenomenon. In language learning and teaching two different types of experience meet – a teacher’s experience and a student’s experience, both serving as the basis of discourse in a classroom. It is argued

that “teachers need to provide learners with opportunities to effectively participate in discourse” [2, p. 472]. To surmount this challenge, teachers should create a learning environment inspiring and encouraging students to express their own ideas, “including not just the idea itself, but <...> explanation, justification, and the background on which the idea is built” [3, p. 1]. Though a teacher’s experience is not always compatible with a student’s experience, both may coincide in case of experience of literature. Reading pieces of literature feeds one’s personal experience since it contributes to understanding another person’s pain, their motives and actions and eventually helps to develop empathy – a salient constituent of soft skills.

To pursue the goal of improving language competence (level C 1) and developing critical analysis skills a course on British and American Young Adult (YA) Literature was introduced into Master’s Degree program in linguistics in Moscow City University. The course harnesses synergies across teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches. It provides a synergistic environment in which the combined effect of individual interactions can be achieved. Though a teacher is a key figure in initiating synergistic atmosphere, once this atmosphere is established, both – a teacher and student become participants of a discourse and facilitators of teaching-learning process. The starting point was the perception of English learning students and their fictional peers as having similar life experience due to which they might have identical or close to identical understanding of some spheres of human life.

The necessity and reality of professional and everyday communication inside the global community have made cultural awareness an essential prerequisite of an individual growth and success. Cultural awareness is typically described as the knowledge and understanding of a particular culture. No doubt, it is “a two-way street. One should be well aware of their own traditions, history, cultural values <...> on the other hand, one should learn to understand other culture and respect other people’s values” [4, c. 13]. The lack of face-to-face acquaintance with other cultures can be replenished with the evidence derived from fiction. Students can benefit from having glimpses of contemporary American and British cultures borrowed from YA novels.

Before the notion ‘Young Adult’ appeared as such, schoolteachers and librarians strained to figure out how to get books in the hands of young readers. Though it was obvious that kids lived in a real world and were aware of social and economic troubles, most of the books offered to an adolescent audience were devoid of non- fictitious problems. Since YA literature took shape, attacks on it have never ceased. Opponents of YA books think these books do not conform to classical standards, which is why “they corrupt the young” [5, p. 146]. Some scholars and parents stick to the idea, that the classics is only kind of literature worth reading. “They feel that the reading and study of anything less than canonized literature handicaps readers’ cultural literacy, weakens students’ minds, and wastes valuable educational time and resources” [Ibid]. Young adult literature was deliberately chosen as the program subject because it relates to students’ lives, suggests explanations to hardships they are likely to encounter and gives a subtle or strong hint that having conflicts is real in their lives.

The list of YA books offered to the students comprised novels published in late XXth – early XXIst century: *Black Swan Green* by David Mitchell, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *Code Name Verity* by Elisabeth Wein and others. Careful reading and reflections on life experience of the fictional characters and reflections on students own experience motivated the learners to exchange their narratives (written and oral)

relating to the issues that were most sensitive to young readers. In fact, students used their imagination and critical thinking to interpret both the lives of literary characters and their own lives in a certain social and cultural context. Thus, critical analysis of the novels resulted in the array of topics of concern to the students: loneliness, trust, search for identity, violence, sexism, gender roles.

By the end of the course students were supposed to acquire the following skills:

- read young adult novels critically and demonstrate their comprehension in writing or speech,
- evaluate life experiences of fictional characters in written or oral arguments,
- express their reflections on their own assumptions in writing or speech using Standard English,
- be able to debate over crucial social and psychological issues.

The course ‘American and British Young Adult Literature’ has proved to be an efficient way to establish a high-performing education process and motivate Master’s degree students in linguistics to gain deeper insights into the relationship between literary text and reality, between language in fiction and social-cultural context.

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