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The Interliterary Dialogues' Heuristic Potential on the Lessons of the Russian literature in the Mulyiethnic Environment

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Abstract

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In order to solve the main task of learning on the lessons of Russian and Tatar literatures, associated with the formation of the reader's culture as a creative thinking person, it is necessary to revise the conceptual strategies of the literary education. This meets the urgent needs of studying the works of one national literature in the context of comparison with the other one. The main aim of the article is to identify epistemological potential of the interliterary dialogue as a concept of literary comparative study and consider its projection into the teaching of the Russian literature in schools with non-Russian language of teaching, based on "The Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka" of N.V. Gogol and poems "Shurale" and "The Water maid" of G. Tukay. The study of works of one literature in the context of comparison with the other one expands the space of the reader's perception. The meaning of a literary work makes the context of the national literature a real problem. The educational activity is aimed at understanding principles and methods of artistic forms of understanding reality: time and space images, plot schemes and motifs, national and universal in the characters, etc. Finding these meanings helps the reader to interpret the resulting aesthetic information adequately. "Alien" culture is perceived as "the other". Student's consciousness captures the diversity of artistic principles and the world and human image's forms. Thus, the study of different types of dialogical relations arising between the works of Russian and native (Tatar) literatures, fundamentally changes the nature of the students' cognitive activity.

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Keywords: Russian literature; Tatar literature; methodology; bilingualism; comparison; dialogue; genre.



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1. Introduction

Currently, the problem of the dialogue of cultures in the context of student-centered technology strategies of modern education attracts the attention of scientists in the philological pedagogy. The nature of learning activities is considered in the value mainstream of the concept of the School of dialogue between cultures, launched and developed by V.S. Bibler. One of the fruitful socio-cultural ideas in the field of the humanitarian thinking is the idea of understanding and communication, the subject which is a work of art: it is assumed that the modern reader, joining different times and peoples' diverse cultural values enshrined in the literature, finds its unique place on their borders, "in the contact zone" with "strangers" cognitive, ethical and aesthetic senses. In order to solve the main task of learning on the lessons of Russian and Tatar literatures, associated with the formation of the reader's culture as a creative thinking person, it is necessary to revise the conceptual strategies of the literary education. This meets the urgent needs of studying the works of one national literature in the context of comparison with the other one.

The methodical science developed a sturdy tradition of purposeful study of the specifics of teaching Russian literature in the non-Russian linguistic, cultural and historical environment, developed the principles and techniques of using the two forms of interliterary process allocated in the traditional comparative linguistics, i.e. contact connections and typological similarities that demonstrate the similarities and differences due to different factors (social, psychological and intraliterary) (see: Sheiman, 1972; Akhmetzyanov, 1979; Cherkezova, 1981; Cherkezova, 1991). However, at the present stage, the expansion of both the subject of comparative studies and the transformation of its functions take place. A crucial role in this process belongs to the concept of intertextuality, on the one hand, and changes in the scope and content of concepts, retaining national identity of a work of art, on the other hand (see: Amineva, 2010, pp. 33-47). The drastic changes in the discourse of comparative literature point to the necessity to move to a new philological language, that is able to rethink the historical and literary reality of the end of the XXth – the beginning of the XXIst century.

In addition to a deterministic causal contact-genetic ties and typological convergence there is another area of the interliterary interactions, in which the free exchange of artistic values takes place. It is based on dialogic relationships fundamentally open, unfinished, accumulating in itself a substantial energy of the national literary and aesthetic development and spiritual values of the peoples (Amineva, 2010, pp. 19-20). Thus, the traditional terms of the comparative literary study are "contact-genetic relationships" and "typological convergence" may be supplemented by the term "a dialogue between literatures" that enriches the arsenal of methods of the Comparative studies (Amineva, 2010, pp. 77-88; 8) and the possibility of their projections within the scope of methodology of teaching literature at school.

In a globalizing world and the growth of national consciousness the cultural ties between the people are getting new forms and new content. Differences in religions, ideologies, values in a democratic society actualize the problems of intercultural dialogue. Bilingualism gives this problem a particular relevance, defining a socio-cultural situation in many of Russia's national republics. A possession of two or more languages, reading the original literary texts belonging to different national literatures

contribute to the perception of their own culture in a collision and unity with other cultures. A comparison of “own” and “alien” arising in a schoolboy reader’s mind can become the basis for the construction of the new educational paradigms.

2. Methodology

The given research is within the context of cultural dialogue ideas as a form of their being in Big time, expressed in domestic science by M. M. Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1979, p. 424). Works of domestic and foreign scholars (see: Iser, 1978; Iser, 1988; Iser, 1993; Ricoeur, 2002; Jaus, 1995; Jaus, 2004) that deal with the problem of perception and connected to its understanding are the methodological basis for scientific searches in the realm of the literary dialogue.

Conception of the given research was influenced by the works that deal with the categories of “own” and “alien”. The nature of “foreignness” is based upon opposition of ethno-linguistic, ethical and religious, space and geographical, social and other aspects. Moreover, the volume and content of “foreignness” constitute those parameters in which the dichotomous typologies of cultures are formulated. For example, they appear to be the cosmo centric paradigm (or transcendental culture), correlated with the notion of “East”, which is foreign to the anthropocentric paradigm correlated with the notion of “West”. In European culture, semantic units are organized by sorts and kinds. This is foreign to Arabic-Muslim poetics with its historically steady character. The dualism of Russian thinking not allowing for anything intermediate, gradual, mixed is contrasted with “eastern” man’s ideas about the inseparability of the part and the whole, or the man and the world and their consistency, concordance and inseparability» (Amineva, 2014, p. 2095).

The study of dialogue between cultures and literatures found that «its participants enter the world of other artistic and aesthetic values. Moreover, they find their unique places in “zone of contact” with “foreign” cognitive, ethic and aesthetic meanings. In these conditions, the “foreign” either transforms to “other”, “alien”, “new” and finally “one's own” or remains something that could not and should not be used in one's own practice (Amineva, 2014, p. 2096). In modern science, dialogue with other cultures as a way of understanding national identity of literature is actively investigated (Bekmetov, 2015).

The main aim of the article is to identify epistemological potential of the inter literary dialogue as a concept of literary comparative study and consider its projection into the teaching of the Russian literature in schools with non-Russian language of teaching, basing on “The Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka” of N.V. Gogol and poems “Shurale” and “The Water maid” of G. Tukay. In a study of the dialogue between the Russian and Tatar literatures the structural, semiotic, hermeneutic, comparative methods; ethno-psychological and other interdisciplinary approaches needed to understand the spiritual and meaningful “appearance” of the compared literatures and cultures are used. Intercultural approaches found in the works of J.Birova (Birova, 2013, vol. 2; Birova, 2013, vol. 3) were also very useful for realizing our goals.

3. Results

Fantastic in “The Evenings ...” initiates the aimed processes of sense development associated with the two communicative strategies’ implementation, i.e. parables and anecdotes. Tracing the relationship between the two strategies of genre in a cycle of stories by Gogol, it may be noted that the degree of anecdotes and parables’ representativeness in them is different. It depends on the expressing merits of the terrible and funny, real and fantastic, alive and dead in the text. An anecdote dominates at the level of plot twists and turns in “The Fair of Sorochinsk”, “The Lost Letter”, “The Night before Christmas”, “Enchanted place”. These are love “affairs” of Khivry with Popovich, Solokha with suitors, playing cards with the devilry, the search for an enchanted place with gold, etc.

The devilry tends to intervene in the fate of the central character, influence his behavior, and the whole course of events. The devil in the “The Night before Christmas”, as well as in folk beliefs, aims “to mischief” a man, to make him go astray, to destroy him. The devil causes minor troubles, sends bad weather, trying to catch the soul of a blacksmith named Vakula, who depicts it in his paintings as a funny and ugly devilry, and so on.

Solokha and the Devil are presented in comic everyday situations (let us recall how the witch is hiding her cavaliers into the sacks or how deftly Vakula grabs the tail of a bewildered devil, that is afraid of “a terrible cross”). The portrait of the devil and his actions are also presented in the story with irony: it is either freezing in the cold, blowing into his fist, or he is beaten with a whip, saddled as a horse, put into the pocket, etc. The story offers an occasional in its openness picture of life, in which the hero appears as the subject of sovereign activity. The conspicuous anecdotal of the situations reveals his courage and bravery, resistance to temptation, persistence in achieving his goals.

Within the story Vakula, a hero of an anecdote, saddling a devil and flying on it towards the capital of the state to get the shoes for proud Oksana, becomes a hero of the parable: as in other works of the cycle, the author argues the idea of the final triumph of high moral principles above all sorts of tricks of the dark forces.

The genre strategy of the parable thinking the most vividly is revealed in the story “The Evenings on the eve of Ivan Kupala”, “May Night, or the Drowned Maiden”, “A Terrible Vengeance”, “Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and his aunt”. Disguised under the mask of a beekeeper the narrator has the conviction that organizes a didactic discourse of a parable: it demonstrates the inability to build happiness on the misfortune of the others people, reveals the reasons of the irreconcilable contradictions indicated in the world of Dikanka: they are selfish calculations, encouraging people to put their interests above the public ones, self-interest and greed, crime before compatriots, termination of the natural ties, demonic power of money and others.

The anecdote in “The Evenings...” makes fun of human vices, and the parable dictates true values. Anecdotal as a manifestation of the living national spirit, culture of folk humor is a distinct addition to the parable expressing the people’s worldly wisdom. However, an anecdote destroys and objectifies something terrible, unreal, and fantastic that is the semantic field of the parable, which in turn is opposed to the ridiculous as a didactic pathos.

The genre strategies of the anecdotes and parables¹ create a unique counterpoint in G.Tukay's poem "Shyräle" ("Shurale", 1907). The poem begins with a description of the harmony and beauty of the nature of Kyrlyay village and its surroundings. This magical paradise of a landscape is beautiful, full of colorful details. As in a fairy tale, after introductions, the narrator tells the story of the brave hero, having defeated "the evil spirits".

An image of Shurale in the poem dates back to the Turkic mythology. This is an evil forest spirit, like a man, but higher and stronger than him. The characteristics of his appearance are a small horn on his forehead, long arms and fingers, with which he loves to tickle people lost in the woods. In the poem of G.Tukay in the image of Shurale the mythological aspects of his appearance (he vaguely resembles a man, like Gogol's devil, and is also a forest creature) and his favorite pastime (to amuse and titillate people) are stored. That's how he wanted to destroy Dzhigit, who went into the forest to collect firewood in the summer night. Shurale, like a devil in the novel "The Night before Christmas", is not a mystical vision but a concrete, tangible, even mundane creature that has some additional physical properties in relation to the people.

G.Tukay tries Gogol's technique of non-demonization and simplification of the evil power. Deceived by Dzhigit an evil forest spirit does not look scary but silly and ridiculous compared to other Shurales, decrying his stupidity. Having known a false name of his abuser ("Byltyr", "The Last year"), Shurale scolds him to his brothers, seeking for support. So the desire to make fun of Dzhigit turns that Shurale himself becomes a laughing stock of the other forest spirits. Comic situations connected with the fantastic characters, give the works of N.V.Gogol and G.Tukay the features of a folk tale.

In the folk tradition the main positive characters such as a blacksmith Vakula and Dzhigit are also represented. They express the fullness of life, beauty, wisdom, wit, spiritual strength of the people, who can easily withstand any mischief. Vakula, a blacksmith, like an epic hero, and Dzhigit, like a fabulous Batyr, do not lose the inner strength to fight against the Devil and Shurale, but evil spirits suffer a complete failure, and are put to shame. Dzhigit's behavior as well as Vakula's, differs with witty ingenuity. The characters are driven by personal initiative; its unprecedentedness causes cheerful delight. The main feature in the images of the Devil and Shurale is not tragic but comic.

In the poem "Shurale" a causal picture of the world, characteristic to the anecdote, which rejects fatal predetermination of the existing relations, takes place. A parable beginning in this work is due to its educational and humanistic pathos: a sensible, brave Dzhigit could outwit Shurale and became victorious from the fight with the evil forest spirit. A victory of Dzhigit over Shurale symbolizes the victory of reason over folly, cosmos over chaos, the human over nature spirit. Along with traditional ideas, a work updates the anthropocentric model of the world: a person as a carrier of "light", a rational beginning and does good and defeats the evil.

The picture of the world, formed in the poem "Su Anasy" ("The Water Maid", 1908), is defined by the rhetorical modality of the parable. In this work the idea of condemnation of theft, regardless of who owns the thing taken (Su Anasy or someone else), comes to the fore. The story happened to the hero served as a lesson to him.

¹ In the Tatar literature these genre strategies are connected to the traditions of the genres called "mezek" and "nasihat" (see: Tatar encyclopedia, 2008, pp. 324; 368).

The parable beginning of the poem “Su Anasy” is also emphasized by the organization of the subjective sphere. The narrative is in the first person: the subject of the speech is a village boy, the main character and a part of the events. The narrator, as a storyteller, is absent. This destroys the perception of the work as a fairy tale and underlines the real, the authentic beginning of all that is happening. Su Anasy’s image is presented through the eyes of a village boy, as a carrier of the archetypal folk beliefs, given through his interior monologue. For the hero of the poem, in the mind of whom children representations are intertwined with non-religious and religious views of the world, Su Anasy is not only an evil water spirit, but “a terrible woman”, “a demonic old woman”.

A fantastic plot in Tukay’s poems is close to a didactic parable and performs a didactic, educational function. G.Tukay creates an imperative picture of the world, where everything happens as it should have happened. And not only Dzhigit as a carrier of the national intelligence, cunning and ingenuity, but also the forest spirits, laughing at his stupid friend can speak the folk wisdom: «Kyskanga byltyr, kychkyralarmy byl?!» (Tukai, 2011, p 186) (“Can someone, pinched last year, give out such a scream this year?!”).

Genetic roots of the fantastic plot in the considered works of N.V.Gogol and G.Tukay date back to different mythological, folklore, religious systems. Folk fantasy, serving as means of poetic expression of national thinking, has a different motivation (parable or anecdote). The two genre strategies (parables and anecdotes) are in the complex relationships in “The Evenings ...” of N.V.Gogol: complementarity, opposition, clashing, controversy, etc., reflecting the desire of the author to create a unique genre form in each case. The game of the meanings, interweaving of the real and the fantastic, the anecdote and parable creates a special and unique world of Gogol's Dikanka. It is mandatory and initiative at the same time, driven by the moral prohibitions, and personal initiative, a world in which the regularity and randomness, serious and laughter beginning of life, the tragic and comic interact.

In Tukay’s poems the traditional picture of the world is mainly represented. It begins to undergo a transformation, anecdotal and parable are, which are placed much further from one another than in the cycle of the stories by N.V.Gogol. The parable beginning dominates, as usual, which subordinates the genre strategy of an anecdote. Fantastic images and plots are used primarily to create an imperative picture of the world. The moral law, constituting the moral of the parable, is realized with their help.

4. Conclusions

The study of works of one literature in the context of comparison with the other one expands the space of the reader’s perception, providing attention to the genre-typological features of the compared works; motivational structures used by the writers, the spatial-temporal relations, pictured in the text, methods and techniques of the mental images, etc.

The meaning of a literary work makes the context of the national literature a real problem. The educational activity is aimed at understanding principles and methods of artistic forms of understanding reality: time and space images, plot schemes and motives, national and universal in the characters, etc. Finding these meanings helps the reader to interpret the resulting aesthetic information adequately. “Alien” culture is perceived as “the other”. Student’s consciousness captures the diversity

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