

Immanent Modeling in the System of Teaching Migrant Children the Fundamentals of Russian Culture (by Way of Russian Literature)

Modelado inmanente en el sistema de enseñanza de niños inmigrantes usando fundamentos de la cultura rusa (a través de la literatura rusa)

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ABSTRACT:

This paper looks into the possibility of employing immanent modeling in teaching Russian literature to migrant children. The authors describe a methodology developed and tested as part of the operation of a weekend school for migrant children run by the Evsevev Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute. The methodology helps stimulate thinking activity, engendering multiple comparisons and juxtapositions with one's knowledge acquired earlier, and facilitate the development of one's creative abilities and cultivation of one's aesthetic taste. Working with a literary text implies gaining a full understanding of it via a special system of assignments aimed at cultivating in migrant children the ability to read a literary text carefully and try to get a good grasp of it, reflect on the meaning of various words, and compare the objects, deeds, events, and realities described in the text with those forming part of their sociocultural knowledge acquired as part of the process of getting to know their home culture. The paper outlines the findings from an experimental learning project and describes some of the key components of the pedagogical model proposed by the authors. The proposed learning technology is aimed at ensuring the proper assimilation by migrant children of an adapted curriculum on Russian literature and their successful sociocultural adaptation into the Russian educational space.

Keywords: Immanent analysis, modeling, migrant children, non-native speaker learners

RESUMEN:

Este documento analiza la posibilidad de emplear modelos inmanentes para enseñar literatura rusa a niños migrantes. Los autores describen una metodología desarrollada y probada como parte de la operación de una escuela de fin de semana para niños migrantes dirigida por el Evsevev Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute. La metodología ayuda a estimular la actividad del pensamiento, generando comparaciones y yuxtaposiciones múltiples con los conocimientos adquiridos anteriormente, y facilita el desarrollo de las capacidades creativas y el cultivo del gusto estético de uno. Trabajar con un texto literario implica obtener una comprensión completa del mismo a través de un sistema especial de tareas destinadas a cultivar en los niños migrantes la capacidad de leer un texto literario con cuidado y tratar de comprenderlo bien, reflexionar sobre el significado de varias palabras, y comparar los objetos, hechos, eventos y realidades descritos en el texto con aquellos que forman parte de su conocimiento sociocultural adquirido como parte del proceso de conocer su cultura hogareña. El documento describe los hallazgos de un proyecto de aprendizaje experimental y describe algunos de los componentes clave del modelo pedagógico propuesto por los autores. La tecnología de aprendizaje propuesta tiene como objetivo garantizar la asimilación adecuada por parte de los niños migrantes de un plan de estudios adaptado sobre la literatura rusa y su adaptación sociocultural exitosa en el espacio educativo ruso.

Palabras clave: análisis inmanente, modelado, niños migrantes, aprendices de hablantes no nativos

1. Introduction

Amid today's globalization-driven changes occurring worldwide and integration processes shaping the present-day geopolitical world order, new requirements are being set with regard to forming a common cultural and social space (Berry, 1980). In a climate of augmenting migration processes, the main focus is being shifted onto issues related to the adaptation and integration into Russia's sociocultural space of not just adult migrants coming in from the near and not-so-near abroad but their children accompanying them as well. In this regard, of special relevance is the objective of facilitating migrant children's personal development and learning, fostering in them the required levels of competence in intercultural and linguistic communication, and helping them overcome the sociocultural barrier which impedes their adaptation.

Amid a surge in migration and in view of the necessity to deal with issues arising in connection with it, there arises the need to conceptualize these processes both theoretically and methodologically. In large part, processes taking place at the current stage in the development of society are just starting to be the object of joint study by a number of disciplines, including political science, psychology, sociology, and teaching Russian and Russian literature, which is giving rise to the formation of migrantology as an emergent and catch-all knowledge area. Despite only minor headway made in generalizing research findings, the availability today of a number of papers and monographs written on the subject attests to the possibility of getting all of the available material duly systematized, especially in light of growing interest in the topic as a whole and some of its specific aspects in particular.

The tri-level model for the adaptation of migrant children learners described by scholars G.E. Zborovskii, E.A. Shuklina (Zborovskii & Shuklina, 2013), E.L. Omel'chenko, Yu.V. Andreeva, E.L. Luk'yanova, G.A. Sabirova, and Ya.N. Krupets (Omel'chenko, Andreeva, Luk'yanova, Sabirova, & Krupets, 2010), which comprises the learning, social/psychological, and cultural components, is of definite interest in terms of conducting immanent analysis of literary works, which may be regarded as essential to learning the Russian language and getting to know Russian culture as the basis for children who are non-native speaker learners attaining a decent level of education.

2. Materials and methods

The choice of the study's material was grounded in the possibility of implementing the fundamentals of immanent modeling in the process of having migrant children learners work with literary samples (by way of analysis of Russian poetry). The authors employed the following methods: theoretical (the study and analysis of literary, methodological, and psychological-pedagogical research); sociological-pedagogical (the development of a relevant methodological concept based on the analysis of observations of the organization of work on the study of literary works at a weekend school for migrant children; interviews with students and instructors); experimental (the organization and conduct of ascertaining, teaching, and controlling experiments in introducing migrant children to the fundamentals of Russian culture); statistical (the analysis and summarization of the study's results).

3. Results

There has lately been a major surge in interest among domestic and foreign Humanities-based researchers in issues related to various aspects of one's social adaptation. As a rule, this topic is mainly discussed within the subject field of philosophy, sociology, and social psychology. The Humanities are currently in the stage of developing a single concept for the study of issues of one's social adaptation, including that of migrants (Badal'yants, 2012). The issue of the immediate adaptation of migrant children to the cultural space is currently being resolved with a certain amount of lag behind the

actual needs of social practice.

As part of the project 'A Regional Model for the Linguistic and Sociocultural Adaptation of Migrant Children in a School's Educational Space' (Activity 5.4 'Support for Innovation in the Area of Development and Monitoring of the Education System' of the 2016–2020 Federal Special Purpose Program for the Development of Education), instructors at the Evsevev Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute have implemented and tested a system of classes on the history of Russian literature that is based on the immanent analysis of literary works as a source of linguistic-country-studies and cultural information.

To implement the program, it has been decided to adopt a dialogue of cultures technology (Kuznetsova, 2016), which makes it possible to put together, taking into account natural difficulties arising due to insufficient command of the Russian language, an associative system for the comprehension of literary works by migrant children.

The authors totally concur with professor V.P. Belyanin in the belief that a "literary text, as a sample of popular culture, require some culturological knowledge that is aligned with its non-linguistic basis" (Belyanin, 1988). With this in mind, the authors focused on activating cultural-associative linkages that facilitated the development in non-native speaker learners of both the aspiration and ability to comprehend and interpret literary works in comparative-juxtapositional mode. At the level of blurring the boundaries and differences between the way the depicted is comprehended by bearers of an ethnic culture and non-native speakers who join them, the active inculcation during the learning process of some of the accumulated experience and reflected writer impressions of reality may also be of interest from a perspective of the formation of a common cultural space. But within the frame of this way of looking at things, it becomes significant to get one to perceive what is "theirs" as quite possible and what is "ours" as possibly related to what is "theirs". In the authors' view, it is most interesting in this regard to identify immanent components within the boundaries of a literary work as an aggregation of a writer's sociocultural experience and a reflection of ethical, ethnic, and cultural dominants of the society and time which the author is part of.

Conducting an immanent analysis of a literary work implies not so much conducting a comprehensive examination of the proposed system of events and characters as "examining the work's figurative-stylistic system, characterizing the semantic-associative relationships between linguistic units within the writer's context, and determining those "increments of meaning" that appear in the meaning of words under the influence of the context" (Bobylev, 2015). Special attention should be given to the components of immanent modeling as a whole.

Considering that leading pedagogical technologies are grounded in the principle of modeling one's personal advancement in mastering a certain discipline, it helps to examine a few specific examples to illustrate some of the proposed assignments aimed at cultivating sequences of intellectual operations that facilitate gaining insight into the gist of a certain topic and fostering in migrant children the practical behavioral skills that are crucial to their social activity.

Thus, for instance, to analyze the image of the knife, which is encountered in many samples of Russian literature as a whole, the authors put together the following functional associative series:

(KNIFE)

an article used in a ritual killing
an implement used by housewives
a symbol of death
a gender sign (a designation for the male principle), etc.

It is commonly known that in pagan society the knife was an indispensable article used in carrying out ritual killings for the gods. Only several centuries later, the knife would also become an indispensable implement used by housewives in the kitchen and a saving weapon used in close combat with an opponent in warfare.

The fact that the knife is surrounded by all kinds of mysteries and superstitions may be attributed to the sacred treatment of this type of bladed weapon in mankind's earlier history. Thus, for instance, you must not eat off a knife; a dropped knife will cause a male guest to appear in your doorway; the knife is used to cut off the cord on little children who will be making their first steps in life. You may want to look for explanations in antiquity, when medicine was underdeveloped and it was believed that all straight and sharp weapons were a male symbol and that humans, especially children, were surrounded by evil spirits, with the knife being the surest way to defend a person from them.

Over time, the knife became a dangerous weapon that was capable of taking the life of not just animals but humans as well. The knife started to be associated with destruction and viewed as a symbol of death.

In the sociocultural tradition, it is pretty easy to tell the difference among, say, the Uzbek pichoq and the Tadzhik kord, the Bavarian nicker, the Spanish navaja, and the sheath knife. Consequently, the image of the knife can, among other things, be tagged ethnically.

Russian writers have also used the symbol in their works. Thus, for instance, both M.Yu. Lermontov and A.S. Pushkin have a poem entitled 'The Dagger', although that is the only thing these 2 poems have in common.

M.Yu. Lermontov wrote his poem after bidding farewell to A.S. Griboyedov's widow Nina Chavchavadze, who presented the poet with a dagger as a gift. The lady's fortitude and determination are to be envied by anyone, with Lermontov's dagger, therefore, being associated with the grief of a beautiful widow who selflessly and wholeheartedly loves her late husband. The poet makes the dagger a symbol of fortitude and magnanimity:

To me you are a friend in pledge of love unspoken:
And so my iron comrade, I shall be like you –
Of hardened heart and will unbroken [translation by R. Moreton] (Lermontov, 1841-1989)

In A.S. Pushkin's poem, the dagger is used to murder 3 renowned political figures: Julius Caesar, Jean-Paul Marat, and August von Kotzebue. In the poet's view, Hephaestus forged the knife "for the hands of deathless Nemesis" [translation by W. Arndt], the goddess of retribution concerned with meting out punishment for violating social and moral norms.

The last lines of the 1st stanza point to the dagger's special functionality:

The secret sentinel of Freedom's threatened life,
The final arbiter of rape and shame impassioned [translation by W. Arndt] (Pushkin, 1856-1947)

The poet is of the view that murder is the most extreme measure against the cruelty of tyrants. No ruler who perpetrates iniquities is insured against this kind of end to their life. The poem commences and concludes with a description of the dagger, which attests to its circular composition. Of interest are the poem's final lines:

And on your somber unmarked tomb
There glows a dagger for a gravestone [translation by W. Arndt] (Pushkin, 1856-1947)

The nameless dagger is intended for all tyrants who refuse to follow moral and social rules. In this verse, the knife (dagger) is a symbol of retribution and punishment, a menace for any tyrant.

A totally different interpretation of the symbol under study is provided in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novel 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich'. Here, the writer mentions just "a short length of steel" [translation by R. Parker] (Solzhenitsyn, 1962-1989), which should be turned into a knife afterwards. Even so, right away it starts making a huge difference to Ivan Shukhov's life. If that piece of metal were found on the inmate, he would most definitely end up in a solitary confinement cell. But Ivan Denisovich takes the risk, for "a cobbler's knife was money, it was bread" [translation by R. Parker] (Solzhenitsyn, 1962-1989). In the book, the knife takes on the meaning of a provider, helper, and a way to survive. It gives you hope for the better tomorrow.

For the most part, the knife is a weapon that is resorted to when someone wants to take revenge or cleanse their soul of sin and render themselves a martyr for society. Thus, as a weapon the knife acts as a symbol of retaliation and liberation. To modern-day humans, the knife is, above all, a tool. To people occupied in many different trades, it is an indispensable item without which it is impossible to do one's work or save other people's life.

Thus, the ability of migrant children to think in images is an essential component of all assignments related to learning both Russian literature and the Russian language, as just about any assignment contains problem situations that one will need to resolve as part of independent activity. It is the use of immanent modeling in the system of assisting migrant children in getting the grasp of literary samples and picking up on the present-day realities that makes it possible here to also tap into the educational aspect of the perception of what is going on in the society of the receiving country.

4. Discussion

While the activity of adults who come to Russia to live and work on its soil is at least partially regulated by the Concept on the State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation through to 2025, which prescribes the need for some knowledge of the Russian language and Russian history, subject to compulsory testing, migrant children are exempt from any sort of even formal identification. This leads to a disconnect between their necessary social adaptation, predicated on their knowledge of the Russian language, and the possibility of getting an education as such. On the one hand, official registration in the Russian Federation entitles one to go to a Russian school, but, on the other hand, putting a migrant child to a school does not yet resolve the issue of them getting an adequate education for a number of reasons.

An ascertaining experiment conducted at a number of municipal educational institutions (Gymnasium No. 19, Secondary Specialized General School No. 39, and the Lukhovskiy Lyceum) and a weekend school (a total of 54 non-native speaker learners) to assess migrant children's ability to grasp the gist of literary works found a lack of interest in and low levels of understanding of what they are about (49% of the migrant children learners were unable to name a story's protagonists, 12% – recall a story's title, and 21% – name a story's author, while 18% were able to do only a part of the assignment).

The experimental activities carried out based on a weekend school set up at the Department of Philology at the Evseev Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute were comprised of different-level classes for migrant children. Having in consideration migrant children's inhomogeneous and diverging initial literary preparation levels, it was decided to have in the migrant reading skills improvement project 3 different levels: the initial level (A Novice Reader), the intermediate level (A Reader with a Technical Educational Minimum – capable of school-level study of literature), and the highest level (An Advanced Reader). Immanent modeling was employed at the 2nd level only. In parallel, a control group was formed at the Lukhovskiy Lyceum.

The controlling experiment helped reveal the following. Among the key reasons behind declines in migrant children's interest in reading listed by the students themselves were insufficient knowledge of the Russian language and having a difficulty making out general and particular image interpretations. A significant portion of the participants saw the reason in the lack of purposeful activities aimed at promoting reading as a form of spiritual activity, with many parents failing to set an example to their kids in this respect.

Based on the findings from the authors' study, the use of immanent modeling in teaching Russian literature to migrant children learners helps introduce them to the spiritual riches of the Russian people and their history and culture and, based on that, cultivate in them the ability to properly perceive, as well as generate, text in Russian. It helps these learners, through the analysis of literary works, familiarize themselves with and get a handle on concepts dealing with the fundamental sociocultural values of Russian society, without pitting them against those from their home culture.

62% of the respondents among migrant children attending the weekend school expressed a willingness to continue their program of study using immanent modeling, with 2% willing to take part personally in the development of that kind of systems.

5. Conclusion

Migration processes have been the object of significant attention among scholars around the world (Brown & Sanders, 1981; Han, 2000; Amann & Hirschauer, 1997). However, despite the challenges of today, the present-day Humanities have yet to produce a commonly accepted concept in the study of issues related to one's social adaptation, including that of migrant children.

In resolving issues of integration within Mordovia's educational space, much has been done to accommodate for the region's polyethnic makeup and centuries-old friendly relations among representatives of various national cultures and religions. This leads to a relevant suggestion: a possible constructive adaptation strategy in respect of migrant children is their literary education.

The learning of Russian literature by migrant children serves many purposes. In our case, the primary focus is on familiarizing non-native speaker learners with samples of Russian culture that reflect the ethnic, ethical, and aesthetic priorities of the Russian people, whose morals and customs one will need to assimilate to be able to live and study in Russia comfortably going forward.

Evidence from practice suggests that the use of immanent modeling in teaching migrant children the fundamentals of Russian culture (by way of Russian literature) produces positive results, which is attested to by the experience of teaching literature in a weekend school set up as part of the Little School Academy run by the Evseev Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute.

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