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Foreign-Language Media Texts as a Means of Forming the Media Competence of University Students

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ABSTRACT

The global goal of any educational system is to prepare the graduates for full participation in all spheres of society. Thereby, the educational process should be based on the peculiarities of the modern multicultural society development, which is characterized, firstly, by the plurality of interacting languages and cultures, and secondly, the plurality of texts and text formats presented in the global information space created by modern media. That is why one of the main requirements of modern society is media competence. The purpose of the article is to present the results of the study, conducted in the process of forming media competence of students in the process of L2 teaching. To achieve this goal, we can use different methods of work with media texts such as cross-media case studies, content analysis and teaching writing skills.
Keywords: media texts, media competence, cross-media case study, content analysis, advertising and public relations, language skills, critical thinking

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key competences necessary for any graduate of high school to effectively function in modern information environment is the media competence, defined as "the ability to adequately interact with media streams in the global information space: to search, analyze, critically evaluate media texts distributed through various media and communications, in all the diversity of their forms"[1]. Thus, the issue of forming media competence is becoming very acute. In this regard pedagogical process must be organized with consideration of numerous foreign language media texts and text formats. After generalizing and analyzing the experience of Russian and foreign media pedagogues, media education goals in the process of foreign language teaching can be considered as proactively planned and formulated result of both a foreign language and the language of authentic mass communication means study. Therefore, at the modern stage of foreign language education development one may separate a new perspective direction, which hasn't been exposed to research up to now. A person's information space considerably broadens during the period when he/she begins to study a foreign language and foreign mass communication means. It is known that the media's assimilation process is by far the most contradictive and has its own peculiarities in comparison with the mother language.

There is a demand nowadays for the member of the society who is a personality capable of interacting with foreign language media information's streams in the global informational space. Moreover, a foreign language cannot stand off from the solution of the pedagogical problem to form a person able to interact with media streams in the global information space.

According to some researchers, technological advances have created new opportunities for interaction with L2. There is a growing research interest in learning a second language through various media, which are mainly accessed on the Internet, such as music, television shows and blogs [2].

We are convinced that the potential of foreign language media texts consists not only in the improvement of speech or compensation for the lack of a language environment, but to a considerable degree it consists in forming of students' media competence. This very fact comprises a principally new approach to mass communication means' usage at L2 lessons at the modern stage of the information society [3].

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Media text as a component of media competence

In the materials of the Symposium "Key Competencies for Europe" (Berne, 1996), skills in interacting with media texts are referred to competencies associated with increasing informatization of the society, which ensure the willingness and need to correctly and critically use modern sources of information in professional and everyday fields of activity. Foreign researchers made a great contribution to science in the field of media education, and the formation of media competence. The term «media

competence» is increasingly being discussed in the educational community, and it mostly is understood as "the ability to qualified, independent, creative and socially responsible action in relation to the media" [4].

Some domestic linguists consider the term "media competence" along with the terms "media literacy", "media education" and "media culture of a person". In their studies, the authors draw the conclusion that the term "media competence" more accurately defines the essence of an individual's ability to use, critically analyze, evaluate and transmit media texts in various formsand genres, to analyze the complex processes of media functioning in society [5:22].

The development of media competence of the audience, according to some researchers [5:40], is based on a number of components such as: experience, the active application of media skills, and the maturation of readiness for self-education. Media competence of an individual is interpreted by them as a combination of its motives, knowledge, skills, abilities, contributing to the selection, use, critical analysis, evaluation, creation and transmission of media texts in various forms, forms and genres, analysis of complex processes of media functioning in society.

2.2. Approaches to the definition of media text

The priority characteristic of a foreign-language media text is that they represent in some way a "concentration" of sociocultural and linguistic and cultural information, which is a source of replenishment of students' background knowledge. In terms of language, the authentic material of a foreign language media text is combined with the learning objectives, in other words, the selected texts are educational, most fully embodying the features of a particular genre of media texts, reflecting the basic vocabulary, stable phrases, characteristic syntactic constructions and turns. In terms of content, the educational value of the media text is due to relevant information, which is instantly reflected in the media in different countries and causes a reaction from readers.

In order to determine the content of the concept of "media text", we turn to the interpretations of this definition presented in domestic and foreign studies. Arising in the 90s of the 20th century in English-language scientific literature, this term has become widely used in Russian studies of recent years devoted to mass communications. Relying on the linguistic-didactic works of their predecessors, in the 21st century, Russian researches are exploring a whole range of issues related to media text. In the works of some researches [6], it is proposed to single out research of this kind into a special discipline as "media linguistics", "the framework of which provides a systematic scientific approach to the study of the language of the media, and also makes it possible to single out media text as the main category of analysis".

A number of researchers [7] regard this term as a text that combines "material of creativity, personal priorities and tastes of the creator, interests and possibilities of the print publication", other researchers [1] consider such media

characteristics as multidimensionality and versatility, linguistic content, dynamic nature, socio-regulatory nature.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some researches state open educational resources as the source of numerous types of resources for different media materials. Such materials are posted in the form of electronic resources, blogs, open content training courses, free educational courses, open materials for e-learning, wikis, online repositories for training. The format of each category is different from each other, and various resources are also available in such resources [8].

The reasons for utilizing media texts in our study are as follows:

1. Authentic media texts such as newspapers increase the ability of students to interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate cultural texts beyond the comprehension of simple facts.

2. As online technology media texts provide an excellent source making our students more culturally and media competent.

3. Students obtaining an Advertising and Public Relations degree can learn the terminology of their professional field, see how the terms are used and train their writing skills (press releases, articles and speech writing).

4. Besides, such resources are usually cheap and easy to access.

When teaching and learning terminology, the meanings of the terms are explained by examples of their usage, how they work in written and in oral forms of the language of specialty [9].

It is well known that the mass media is a good source for present-day data. It offers real interaction with the target language and culture, and is a valuable instructional resource. Teachers should also be aware that media texts are aimed at a particular target readership; and as such they may reflect the values, interests and biases of the readership; as well as those of the owners, editorial staff, and the political milieu. For example, the headlines and first paragraph of a news article have to contain information about the what, when, where, who, and how of an event to provide the gist of a story for busy readers.

To demonstrate how we work with articles headlines, here are some tasks from text book "ESP for PR and Advertising" by V. I. Litovchenko, T. V. Ukhova, S. G. Efa:

- Read the information about headline language. What are the peculiarities of headline language?

- Match the headlines with the appropriate topic.

- Explain what the following headlines mean in ordinary English.

Example from text book "ESP for PR and Advertising" by V. I. Litovchenko, T. V. Ukhova, S. G. Efa: [10].
Task 5. On the left there is a list of headlines. On the right there is a list of news topics. Match the headlines with the appropriate topic as in the example.

1) PM BACKS PEACE PLAN   a) marriage of a famous actress
2) MP SPY DRAMA   b) royal jewels are stolen
3) SPACE PROBE FAILS   c) a person who saw crime in danger
4) QUEEN'S GEMS RIDDLE   d) politician sells secrets to enemy
5) STAR WEDS   e) satellite is not launched
6) KEY WITNESS DEATH THREAT   f) proposal to end war

There are different techniques and methods aimed at the formation and development of media competence by means of foreign-language media text. We have considered two of them.

The first one is a cross-media case study which represents the research activities performed with the support of various types of media texts, highlighting a specific theme/problem/ situation, including self-searching, processing and analysis of information, group discussion in the form of polylogical communication, evaluation and presentation of the obtained results.

To implement a cross-media case study we suggest using articles on one topic but from different sources. Articles should be topical and up-to-date (even 26 from yesterday's edition or from ten days ago). For example, we used the following set of articles.

1. American sanctions, and fears over Syria, roil Russian markets (The Economist, Apr 12th 2018).

2. Putin, or the world? Sanctions may force oligarchs to choose (The New York Times, Apr 11th 2018).

3. US gets out the sanctions howitzer (BBC News, Apr 10th 2018).

4. Goodbye, America: Russia sanctions could hit us medical, tech industries (Deutsche Welle, Apr 16th 2018).

Students found these articles, analysed the content, considered the language features, discussed them in groups and presented the obtained results.

The second method of work with media texts is content (ideological, critical) analysis. It is a method of text analysis that contains information and is presented in any type and genre of media (television show, film, press material, website, etc.) through the consideration of individual sides, parts or artistic originality with the aim of developing the audience's independent judgment, critical thinking, etc. [11].

The General scheme of media text analysis includes work with the following components: determining the type of media, the category of messages, search for possible mistakes and inaccuracies in media communication, expressive means, determining the potential recipient of the media text (type of audience, social status), determining the purpose of media communication, compliance with the goals and means of this media text, etc.

The following example of the task from the text book [10] demonstrates the method of content analysis of such media texts as speeches.

Students are offered to view or to read a speech of a famous person. After watching a video or reading a speech, students analyse it, interpret the author's position, evaluate the social significance of the work, and explore the language used in the speech answering the questions from the table. The scheme of media text analysisis shown in Table1.

Table 1 Scheme of media text analysis

	Questions	Speech 1	Speech 2
1	Who is the speaker? What is the topic?		
2	What problems are touched upon in the speeches?		
3	What is the communicative purpose of the speaker (e.g. to inform, to convince, to entertain)		
4	What kind of English is used in the speech: formal, informal, neutral, emotionally coloured, emotionally neutral? Give examples		
5	What means are used by the speakers to attract the audience's attention to the subject?		

The analysis of media text assumes the ability to analyze it, relying on extensive knowledge; interpretation of the author's position from the position of consent or disagreement with it; evaluation of the social significance of the work; ability to correlate emotional perception with conceptual judgment, transferring this judgment to other types and genres of media; interpret the name of the media text as a figurative generalization [12].
Based on the above, we have developed the following sequence of content analysis of media text:

- acquaintance of the audience with the main goals of media text;

- display and analysis of methods and techniques by which the creators of a media text are trying to achieve the desired effect;

- identification of the author's concept, evaluation of the concept of media text by the audience.

Using all the techniques and exercises above the study has been conducted. The participants of the study were 58 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Advertising and Public Relations (Reshentnev Siberian State University of Science and Technology). The material used in this study comprised the course book 'ESP for PR and Advertising' online newspapers, advertisements, speeches and press releases (podcasts).

The first four weeks were mainly devoted to the evaluation of written texts of newspapers and the viewing and analysis of advertising.The role of the teacher was to direct and encourage students to focus on the viewpoint of the reader and avoid generalizations.Every week, students were asked to discuss their findings and share them with members of their groups and other students who read newspapers of the same type or watch the same advertising podcast.The next four weeks were mainly devoted to the assessment of visual forms of newspapers, such as advertising, cartoons and photographs.

The following four weeks were devoted to the work of students: participation in a cross-media case in groups.To implement a cross-media case, we suggest using articles on one topic, but from different sources. Articles must be topical and new. The students found articles on the same subject from different media publications, analyzed their content, examined the peculiarities of the language, discussed them in groups and presented the results.

The results were analysed and can be presented in the following categories:

- language skills;

- critical thinking skills.

Figure 1 shows a threefold increase in the number of students with an average and high level of media competence after conducted study.
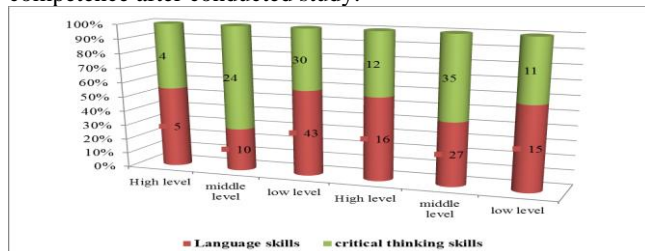
Figure 1 The number of students with an average and high level of media competence at the end of the research

Language skills. Analysing and then writing press releases, news, speeches, and preparing advertisement during cross-media case provided students with a motivating 28 context through which they could practice their English by reading, analyzing and writing. Moreover, work with media texts helped students learn new vocabulary, especially terminology which is essential for their future specialty.

Critical thinking skills. What is critical thinking? In a broader sense, critical thinking is focused, organized thinking – the ability to see clearly the relationship among ideas. It also involves related skills such as distinguishing fact from opinion, judging credibility of statements, and assessing the soundness of evidence [13].

All of the students state that they have become more conscious readers and started to see things from different perspectives. Students spent a good deal of time organizing their speeches. While this may seem like a purely mechanical exercise, it is closely connected with critical thinking. Organizing a speech is not just a matter of arranging the ideas you have but rather, it is an important part of shaping the ideas themselves. As students work on expressing their ideas in clear, accurate language, they enhance their ability to think clearly and accurately. As they study the role of evidence and reasoning in speechmaking, they will see how they can they can be used in other forms of communication as well.

4. CONCLUSION

Media texts as part of the online technologieshave shown significant potential for streamlining the learning process in higher education. And, as some researches state,the online technologies help students gain professional knowledge through active learning strategies, as interactive classes provide students with more flexibility than traditional campus-based courses[14].

And the implementation of media texts in L2 learning and teaching process contributed to a threefold increase in the number of students with an average and high level of media competence. Furthermore, authentic media texts can be a good way of motivation for students to develop their foreign language competence, a good source to broaden their mind.

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