

VI International Forum on Teacher Education

# Innovative Approaches to the Formation of Humanitarian Knowledge of Students (on the Example of the Course "Current Problems of Modern Russian Literature")

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#### Abstract

The relevance of the development of the innovative approach to the formation of the students' humanitarian knowledge is confirmed by the goals set by the Strategy of development of upbringing in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025. Also, the important reason for this study were the challenges of time, connected with the threats of youth's self-identification weakening, with the necessity of the youth's spiritual and moral growth through the activation of historical and cultural memory. In this context it was when the future philologists studied the contemporary Russian literature at the university, which defined both the content and the leading experimental method that showed itself during the stages of the ascertaining, formative and control experiments. The experimental method allowed us to obtain the convincing argumentation of the efficiency of the developed technique of the text competency that contains the achievement of not only the teaching goals but also the educational ones connected with the reader's self-identification and spiritual and moral growth. The quality of the obtained results, proven by practice, gives us the grounds to recommend the wide application of the developed innovative technique.

*Keywords:* humanitarian knowledge, humanitarian education, spiritual and moral growth, self-identification, historical memory, cultural memory, pedagogical innovation, text competency.

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Published by Kazan federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2020 (VI International Forum on Teacher Education)

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#### Introduction

The contemporary stage of the social development over the recent decades (the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century– the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century) was marked in the social and humanitarian discourse by a surge of the academic interest in the value aspect of the philosophical and aesthetic category of memory as a fundamental culture-forming principle. And "understanding of memory as a borderline phenomenon that determines the communicative conjunction of history and the present time, of individual and collective intentions, of the universal and national values forms new methodological approaches and creates new foundations for the perception and understanding of literature and the literary text of culture as a whole" (Sharupina, 2020).

Clearly, the new angle of the study of humanitarian knowledge (the study of cultural and historical memory) is bound to also show itself in the literary interpretations of memory that are connected primarily with the actualized problems of a personality's self-identification, with the transfer of spiritual and moral legacy as a value (Daniluk et al., 2009), with the transfer of cultural memory of the literary texts, of the retrospective of the increase of their significant images meaning.

The relevance of the innovative study of literary texts in this way, which stems from the requirements of the present time, also fully applies to the educational context, including in particular the future philologists studying the contemporary Russian literature at the university and forming their professional competency (Baker, 2008). Thus, time itself caused a decisive turn towards the dominant consideration of how writers solve the problems of cultural and historical identity, of cultural and historical memory; this became the subject of our consideration in relation to the educational conditions that activate the students' spiritual and moral growth and self-identification.

Since in Russia the Russian literature has always been a life textbook, the developing value and activity approach (Zalesskiy and Redkina, 1996). This study attempts the wider consideration of formation of the contemporary humanitarian knowledge in general. Consequently, there appeared a need for the innovative pedagogical technique of educational consideration of a work from a certain angle, which determined this study's scholarly apparatus.

The possibility of giving the innovation status to the pedagogical technique under development is argued by the fact that the innovations' peculiarity is a well-grounded solution of a relevant problem, which provides a brand new result, and the implementation of this technique provides the quality changes of other elements of the whole system. In pedagogical discourse it is the process of development of educational practice through the introduction of new elements or their replacement (Khutorskoy, 2008).

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The development of a technique for the students (who would later become literature teachers) to study the literary texts of the contemporary Russian literature in order to form the humanitarian knowledge and to optimize the process of their self-identification, spiritual and moral growth became the *research problem*.

This problem is solved through scientific rationalization, development and experimental validation of the efficiency of the students forming the text competency that activates the cultural and historical memory for the reader's self-identification, national identity and spiritual and moral growth when these students study the contemporary Russian literature works.

Let us note that the text competency development is described in our article (Taranosova et al., 2018). The text competency is defined as the linguistic and literary competency that is a part of the structure of the integrated professional competency of a future teacher of the Russian language and literature and that includes both the knowledge about a literary text and the knowledge of educational techniques for studying it. In the aspect under study these are the techniques of philological and linguistic and literary commenting (Taranosova et al., 2019).

Let us also emphasize that the studied process of the humanitarian knowledge formation should be based on true scientific knowledge of our past. And yet our time keeps giving us more and more examples of true facts being replaced by their permissive, politically determined interpretations. It is enough to make an example of the current polemic in the world information space about our Motherland's role and significance in the Great Patriotic War and of the echoes of this process that get their artistic reflection in the contemporary writers' works.

It is obvious that the memory of the past that is also captured in the works by talented authors is extremely important for society, for the development of the personality's social and cultural self-identification. So this process is all the more important in the educational practice of studying the humanities, which is meant to transfer collective and public memory from one generation to another, to form cultural identification and value system.

We analyzed the scientific literature on the topic of this study, and the analysis confirmed that the statement about the ongoing development of the personality's social and cultural self-identification under the influence of memory is based on the fact that memory is a resource of changes, when the revision of the values and motivations of the past becomes possible. Is that not the reason why since the 1980s the term "memory" started to get the status of a construct in the contemporary social and humanitarian knowledge system? By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century other notions were actualized: "cultural memory", "historical

memory", and then "cultural and historical memory", the integrated notion combining both of the previous ones (Assmann, 2004; Hutton, 2003; Ragozina, 2007; Ragozina, 2017).

People started to see historical memory as the memory about the historical past, as one of the most important elements of a personality's self-identification, as a possibility connected not only with the transfer of experience and the knowledge about the past, but also with the social reality ideological reflection, influenced by political interests. The representation of the past as a self-identification factor is important for the literary consciousness, too.

Cultural memory, characterized by a contradictory trait, which is "the ability of a social and cultural entity to reproduce itself in its identicalness, generality and invariance and at the same time to produce in itself (inside itself) difference, peculiarity and variability" (Ragozina, 2017, p. 54), is seen "as a special symbolic form of transfer and actualization of cultural meanings, which goes beyond the limits of the individuals' and groups' experience, which is preserved by tradition, formalized and ritualized, expressed through the various types of memorial signs: historic sites, dates, ceremonies, written, visual and grand monuments" (Ragozina, 2017, p. 24).

This interpretation of memory became the basis of our study, which includes the consideration of cultural and historical identity, of the national identity constants in the contemporary artistic consciousness, of the cultural memory of a literary text when it is studied by the students as a part of the course "Current Problems of the Contemporary Russian Literature", with the emphasis on their self-identification and spiritual and moral growth.

It is from this perspective we offered the interpretation of the images from the works studied by the students; also, this interpretation included the analysis of how they acquired the meaning increment and what this increment was. At that, it was taken into account that "the cultural memory is actualized through the mechanisms of remembering, quoting, mastering one's own and other people's past, through looking closely at the surrounding object world" (Sharupina, 2020, p. 12).

At the stage of creating the theoretical basis of this study it was also important for us to determine such a meaningful key concept as self-identification. We have to emphasize that this concept is connected with the university educational practice of working with the contemporary literary texts, which includes not only the teaching goals, but also the goals of patriotic, moral and civic education. This aspect is defined by the Strategy of development of upbringing in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 (Government of the Russian Federation, 2015) and the Concept of the spiritual and moral growth and

upbringing of a Russian citizen's personality (Daniluk et al., 2009), which makes the developed technique even more relevant.

In this context the personality's self-identification is seen as "the process of a person forming an image of themselves as of a self-identical, integral and unique personality. Self-identification is a specifically human act, which is formed under the influence of culture, and is not predetermined by nature" (Lysak, 2008). In other words, self-identification is a process of the identification that is accompanied by the need for spiritual and moral growth.

#### Purpose and objectives of the study

The choice of our methods was determined by the *study purpose*: to give a theoretical ground, to develop and to test experimentally the efficiency of the formation of a certain text competency among the students; when the future philologists study the works of the contemporary Russian literature, this text competency activates the historical and cultural memory for self-identification, self-awareness and spiritual and moral growth of a reader.

The purpose determined the *objectives of the study:* 

- to study and to systemize the scientific and the scientific and pedagogical works on the topic under study;

- to choose the authors whose works were to be included into the course "Current Problems of the Contemporary Russian Literature" to be studied by the future teachers of the Russian language and literature, in order to use them for practicing the implemented innovative technique within the framework of the text competency;

- to provide scientific rationalization, development and experimental validation of the efficiency of the future philologists forming the proposed text competency.

## Literature review

The approaches we proclaimed as the innovative ones in this study necessitated the scientific understanding of the pedagogical innovation theory as a theory of creation, evaluation, mastering and application of pedagogical innovations. Our approach to disclose its content basis was the publication of our tutorial "Innovative processes in education" (Taranosova, 2018), in which we analyzed the contemporary scientists' works on the pedagogical innovation theory.

As we read the scientific literature on the study of innovative approaches in the educational sphere, we came to the conclusion that the innovation theory had become a science not so long ago: the foreign sources show that it happened in the 1960s. The fundamentals of this science were set by Sombart (1967) and Schumpeter (1954); nowadays the pedagogical aspect of their works is studied deeply by many foreign scientists, such as Angelovski (1991), Griffiths and Hamilton (1984), Bridge and Miles (1996), and Haberman and Stinnett (1973).

The fact that the global interest in the pedagogical innovation is widespread was confirmed by the creation of the Center for the Study of Education Innovations under the auspices of UNESCO and the Asian Center for Pedagogical Innovations for the Education Development. Even specialized periodicals appeared, for example, "Pedagogical Innovations" and "Information and Innovations in Education" in France.

The scientific research cemented our understanding of the fact that the pedagogical innovation theory is a theory of creation and evaluation of pedagogical innovations, of them being mastered by the pedagogical community and applied in the pedagogical practice (Yusufbekova, 1991). As for the theoretical aspect, we gravitated towards the description of the fundamentals of the pedagogical innovation theory given by Khutorskoy (2008), and that is reflected in this study.

#### Methodology

The above-mentioned objectives of the study were performed with the help of the following methods:

- the theoretical research method with the use of analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, abstraction, generalization;

- the experimental method that included the ascertaining, formative and control experiments;

- the sociological-pedagogical method that defined the conversations with students and philology teachers and taking into account their expert evaluations;

- the statistical method that allowed us to analyze and generalize the results obtained during the experiment.

Togliatti State University became the study's experimental base. The results were implemented at the Povolzhsky Orthodox Institute named after Saint Aleksiy, Metropolitan of Moscow, and at the Togliatti Social Pedagogical College.

The study was carried out in three stages:

- at the first stage the authors researched the main sources on the topic of the study, determined its methodological foundation, made the experimental work plan, clarified the study's purpose, tasks and basic concepts, carried out the ascertaining experiment and analyzed its results;

 at the second stage the authors provided the theoretical justification of the formative experiment, carried out the said experiment and analyzed the obtained experimental data;

- at the third stage the authors, using the expert evaluation method, carried out the control experiment, during which they compared the experimental training final results, systematized and summarized the study results.

## Results

*The ascertaining stage of the experiment* included the following types of scientific and research activities: study of the history of teaching the contemporary Russian literature in the process of university training of the Russian language and literature teachers, analysis of the use of approaches and techniques through which the students mastered the course "Current Problems of the Contemporary Russian Literature", questionnaires and conversations with teachers and students about the content of this course and the methods and techniques of studying it.

The performed work allowed us to determine that the study of the contemporary Russian literature in the described educational conditions does not take into account those new trends of the scientific consideration of the knowledge humanitarian discourse phenomena that are connected with the newly actualized concepts of memory (specifically, the cultural and historical memory). As a rule, the teaching process also places no special emphasis on the educational tasks, for example, the tasks aimed at self-identification and spiritual and moral growth. This widespread university practice significantly weakens the teaching process educational influence on a student's personality.

At the ascertaining stage of the experiment we suggested that the students analyze "The Old Man Who Planted the Forest", a novella by Tikholoz (2009), on their own; and this analysis showed that the students pay no attention to the novella's invaluable potential in regard to the cultural and historical memory and its role in revealing the ideological content, in the meaning increment; it not only impoverishes the understanding of the author's concept, but also allows to understand the author's idea on the superficial level only, and the students deprive themselves of the most wonderful opportunity for self-identification.

This way, the ascertaining experiment revealed the absence of professional attention to the problems under study, confirmed the relevance of the chosen perspective of studying them and made us see the undeniable pedagogical effect that would be obtained through the implementation of the offered technique.

At the stage of *the formative experiment* a scientifically grounded and developed innovative technique of working with a literary text was inserted into the above-mentioned course; this technique is aimed at the students' humanitarian knowledge formation, self-identification and spiritual and moral growth through the activation of cultural and historical memory and the studied work's spiritual and moral potential. At this stage of the experiment we used two specific examples: the study of "Owl's Flight", a novella by Tarkovskiy (2017) and the study of "Pavel, My Soul", a novel by Varlamov (2018).

The selection of the literary texts by contemporary authors to be studied by the students in the experimental learning mode was defined by the specificity of the characters, which can be described as "people who read". M. Tarkovskiy and A. Varlamov became these authors. The characters from the works by these writers are philologists, that is why their disputes and thoughts cannot but address book problems. The students' involvement in the characters' literary disputes in the process of the formative experiment is tied to the cultural and historical memory.

Awareness of how ancient the national culture is, of being a part of the historical memory was one of the main themes of "Owl's Flight". In one of its scenes, when the main character, Sergey Ivanovich, a village teacher, talked to Guryan, an innate of Siberia and an Old Believer, the author described how the teacher admired Guryan's worldview. Guryan said that he was disgusted by the new religion preachers, who became too numerous those days, and noted, "Our faith is a thousand years old, it comes from one generation to another. And here you are running around with your pamphlets" (Tarkovskiy, 2017, p. 113).

The teacher admired the "quiet, cooing accent" of the Siberian resident. He confessed, "This ancient speech warmed me up inside" (Tarkovskiy, 2017, p. 113), when he discussed the unacceptability of the new-fangled words that came into common use. In the same part of the text study it was noted that the idea of keeping the native Russian language was very important for this novella. The main character compared the language to a hayfield that needed to be cleaned to remove the alien and superficial things, because "if you do not tend to it, it will immediately become overgrown with weeds" (Tarkovskiy, 2017, p. 30). The author invested a hope for the keeping of the national identity, for the revival of Russia in the Siberian hunters; that was also discussed by the students during the heuristic conversation that was a part of their work with the text.

The theme of the connection between generations was also activated during the study of "Owl's Flight". For example, a scene with a student essay. Kolka, its author, received an "unsatisfactory" grade for the thoughtlessly plagiarized work about Kashtanka. The teacher advised him to write an essay about his dog. And suddenly a negligent student's pen created a story that resembled works by M. Prishvin and V. Astafyev, though it was unlikely that idler Kolka ever read them.

The students were led to the conclusion that the fact that Tarkovskiy's character, teacher Sergey Ivanovich protected the traditional moral values not only reminded of the famous metaphor "A poet's word is a formidable weapon", but also made it possible to see the Russian literature's special role: this character believed that it created "fortified areas" in the battle for light and goodness in people's souls. He said, "…in advance our classical writers created fortified areas in all directions. And their luminous firepower automatically destroys any enemy power" (Tarkovskiy, 2017, p. 21).

The discussion is intensified by appeal to the opinions expressed in magazines and newspapers both by critics and authors. For example, during the discussion that was part of the experimental learning we used an interview with Tarkovskiy, in which he talked about the contemporary Russian writers' goals: "write about the life of a modern person who is a Russian spiritual ideal" (Oberemko, 2020).

In "Pavel, My Soul", a novel by Varlamov (2016), a new aspect of the subject under study is explored: the Soviet patriotism, professed by the main character Pavlik Nepomiluyev. The young man was proud of a large country. He was genuinely indignant when he faced the "non-Soviet thinking" of other students. But the other kids his age thought this commitment to the ideals of the past was ridiculous.

The conflict of opinions created by the author is a fertile ground for the activation of the students' discussion, which was confirmed by the educational work with the text. Moreover, the discussions about the Russian literature in the above-mentioned works by Tarkovskiy and Varlamov also help to create the images of the society's spiritual life and to guide the students' discussions of these images.

For example, in one of the novel's scenes Varlamov described a dispute between the students about the time of the creation of "The Tale of Igor's Campaign"; this dispute was solved by Pavlik Nepomiluyev, who intuitively felt the deep connection between the ancient Russian literature masterpiece and history. Also, the students' attention was drawn to the fact that the students' choice of the books they read made it possible to see how extensive their reading was.

When the students worked with this text, we advised them to list the works of the Russian literature mentioned in it and to explain the appropriateness of it. The works mentioned were not only "The Captain's

Daughter", "Eugene Onegin" and "The Belkin Tales", but also "The Microscope", a short story by Shukshin (2019), "The Gulag Archipelago" by Solzhenitsyn (2017) (that was prohibited at that time) and "The Hawk's Cry in Autumn", a poem by Brodskiy (2013).

It is emphasized that the choice of the books for reading is a traditionally important characteristic of the Russian literature characters. Even in "Eugene Onegin" the characters' reading preferences were outlined. The books read by Lermontov's "hero of our time" were mentioned, too; and there were some reading characters in "Dead Souls", a poem by Gogol. Therefore, it is emphasized that the theme of the cultural and historical memory in the Russian prose of the 21<sup>st</sup> century continues its development through some sort of a dialogue that was started by the writers of times past.

As an example we used the phrase "more than a thousand years" that was in a strong text position in "The Muravsky Trail", a miniature by I. Bunin. It should be noted that this phrase was said by a poorly educated coachman; this emphasizes the safekeeping of the eternal history of the country and the nation in the memories of people who come from all classes and all generations.

The process of consideration of the subject under study also included "The Oath", a short story by A. Varlamov; this story described the fascination felt by young people who saw the Church of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin on the River Nerl for the first time. The narrator later recalled the ancient church during his route march: "...there was something unusual in that stormy night, and again I felt that excitement that I felt a few days ago, when I was standing in front of the church on the Nerl <...> I knew that if I had to, I would die for that village, for the Intercession Church, for my guys. For my father" (Varlamov, 2002).

*The control experiment* was performed in order to confirm the efficiency of the proposed innovative technique; for that we used the expert evaluation method. Fifteen teachers from the higher education institutions of Togliatti and Samara acted as the experts. Their final reports noted the fruitfulness and effectiveness of the proposed innovative approach to the formation of the students' humanitarian knowledge, spiritual and moral growth and personality self-identification. It was recommended to implement the developed technique widely.

At the control experiment stage we also studied the reviews the students wrote on their own while analyzing a work that had not been studied before and that we proposed to them: "A Village House", a novella by Varlamov (2008). The novella's interpretation provided by the students showed that the goal and tasks set in this research were achieved. The students revealed how the work's meaning was incremented, which spiritual and moral guidelines were dominant, what role was played by the cultural and historical memory that was involuntarily activated as the story unfolded. The statistical analysis of the students' reviews in accordance with the criterion t (t = 0,14 with Sd = 1,5) of the initial and final data (Bespalko, 1970) also confirmed the positive dynamics, thus proving the efficiency of the proposed innovative technique.

## Discussions

The analysis of scientific and pedagogical works made us realize that there are practically no researches of the problem under study. We believe that the problems close to the problems we explore in this research are studied by the following scientists: Brovkin (2018), Okhremenko (2019). Also, the work on the essential characteristics of the contemporary innovative techniques by Amerkhanova & Amerkhanova (2019) coincides with the direction of our study.

Our research shows a possible solution to this problem: the implementation of the innovative technique of studying the literary works of the contemporary Russian literature in the learning process. The developed technique, which is aimed at the activation of the students' cultural and historical memory, is inserted as an integral part of the professional text competency that the students master, and it addresses both the educational and the pedagogic tasks.

The scientific works we studied and our experience of teaching at a university confirm the ongoing modernization of students' professional training, the conscious need for the transition to innovative development paths, for setting and achieving not only the educational tasks, but also, to no lesser extent, the pedagogic tasks.

At the present moment the young people's self-identification and spiritual and moral growth, connected with the process and the content of their education, are one of the most relevant problems of upbringing. The statement that the solution of the indicated problems in Russia can be carried out most successfully with the help of the Russian literature will not come as a surprise. At that, our research proves that this approach is most efficient when the cultural and historical memory is activated at the same time.

It is obvious that this sort of development is necessary for all the aspects of the university educational practice that are related to teaching philologists and the humanitarian knowledge formation.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the well-argued theoretical justification we give the experimental confirmation of the efficiency of the proposed approach to the formation of the students' humanitarian knowledge through the innovative technique of studying the contemporary literature texts, the technique that activates cultural and

historical memory. It is also confirmed that the developed technique facilitates mastering the professional text competency, self-identification and spiritual and moral growth of the students' personalities.

The demand for the innovative technique of the humanitarian knowledge formation was revealed as a result of the analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature and the experience of the future teachers – philologists studying the contemporary Russian literature.

We developed the value-activity approach to the formation of the humanitarian knowledge of the future Russian language and literature teachers through adding the cultural and historical memory activation into the text competency and solving not only the educational tasks, but also the pedagogic tasks of the students' spiritual and moral growth and self-identification.

The described *ascertaining experiment* included the following elements: the study of the experience of teaching the contemporary Russian literature at a university, the practice of adding the pedagogic tasks into the educational process. We found out that such tasks are either not set at all, or they appear accidentally and randomly, without any system. There are no guidelines on how to solve them, either.

Beside the goals set for the ascertaining experiment stage, there was another goal: to reveal how wellformed as values were the students' self-identification and spiritual and moral aspect, as well as their skill to activate their cultural and historical memory while working with a literary text. We managed to confirm that if the above-listed traits and skills are not well-formed, then the possibility of identifying them in the studied works and the students' personality growth are significantly reduced.

In order to find out how the students' historical and cultural memory, a literary work's spiritual and moral potential and the moral values woven into it get actualized, we suggested that the students analyze "The Old Man Who Planted the Forest", a novella by Tikholoz (2009). Later, in the process of discussing the results of the work performed by the students, we oriented towards the analysis made by the authors of this research (Taranosova et al., 2019); this analysis confirmed that the students' thoughts, reasoning and arguments were superficial.

Thus, the ascertaining experiment confirmed the relevance of our study and its pedagogical usefulness. But the proposed value-activity approach to the formation of the humanitarian knowledge becomes efficient only if the future philologists, while studying the contemporary Russian literature texts at the university, use the professional text competency that includes such an innovative technique that through the philological and linguistic and literary commenting is aimed at the cultural and historical memory activation, at the value component detection and, thereby, at the growth of a personality's spiritual and moral aspect, at its self-identification. *The formative experiment* acted as the implementation of the developed approach and the above-listed pedagogical conditions for its efficiency. It was described through the example of the study of the following works: "Owl's Flight" by Tarkovskiy (2017) and "Pavel, My Soul" by Varlamov (2018). The formative experiment afforded us an opportunity to illustrate not only how the developed approach is implemented in specific educational conditions, but also how efficient it is in achieving the stated goal.

*The control experiment* afforded us an opportunity to verify the effectiveness of the developed approach to the humanitarian knowledge formation, which was confirmed by the experts and the statistical processing of the students' works that they performed on their own, analyzing the proposed literary text.

Since experimental training confirmed the effectiveness of the proposed technique of working with the contemporary Russian literature texts, with the emphasis on the activation of spiritual and moral aspects and the cultural and historical memory, there is every reason to recommend that this technique we developed is widely implemented in the university and school practice.

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