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**INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN THE EDUCATION SPACE OF  
THE INFORMATION AGE**

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***Abstract***

In this study the authors characterize modern post-industrial society and the related global changes in culture, innovation, intellectual creativity. The article analyzes the factors that shape the culture of the information society, puts forward new approaches to understanding culture through intercultural dialogue. The principles of multicultural education that are based on intercultural dialogue are described. The goal of intercultural (multicultural) education is represented, which is the development of intercultural competence of students, which will allow to successfully carry out a dialogue with representatives of other cultures. It is demonstrated that in the formation of competences related to intercultural dialogue, literary education is of particular importance. The object of this research is the problem of studying mythology, classical and contemporary literature in terms of the dialogue between cultures. The article presents the new ways in which learners perceive the text. The particular attention is given to the specific features of reading in present-day world, when literary text is perceived as a source of information and means of mass communication. It is concluded that the dialogue of literatures is one of the ways to create a comprehensive readers' perception with the possibility of eventually establishing personal contacts in the present-day formats of communication.

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**Keywords:** Information society, intellectual technology, cultural adaptation, literary education space, intercultural dialogue.



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## **1. Introduction**

At the present time, humankind is going through global social, cultural and technological changes; culture of the new post-industrial information society is being formed, there is a huge diversity of cultures and life styles. Knowledge workers, who deal with complex and diverse information, are now in the forefront. Most pressing issues are: the understanding the significance of culture in human life and a person's cultural adaptation; the development of large-scale thinking; lifelong education for working with innovative technologies.

Due to the expanding information the environment world is becoming more open, there is an opportunity to communicate with representatives of different ethnic and national cultures (Losev, 1995). For the system of education, these processes not only serve as a limitless potential for developing the contents and educational technologies, but also pose pedagogical problems concerning the learners' orientation in cultural space.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In Russia, the ideas of intercultural dialogue are also effectively promoted in the context of education; this approach is based on the concept of dialogism proposed by cultural studies scholar Bakhtin, M.M. and has resulted in the new educational concepts (Cherkezova, 2007). The basic principle is the need to educate "a man of culture", a person who not only has a wide range of humanitarian knowledge, but is also able to compare the artistic phenomena of Russian culture that is being studied to the phenomena of other national cultures. "In the present-day world education comes with the intercultural interaction of large and small ethnic groups. This process, along with the development of national culture, enriches the dominant as well as small cultures. Such trend presupposes that all the participants of intercultural dialogue are building a connection due to the nurturing of their cultural values; in such a way a common cultural and national space, where every person acquires a particular social and ethnic status, is being created; and determines one's membership in this or that language and subculture" (Dzhurinskij, 2010).

## **3. Research Questions**

In line with the demands and challenges of our time, the most authoritative international organizations, eminent scientists and leading educational institutions from around the world establish principles of multicultural education, which is based on intercultural dialogue.

According to the definition in White Paper, launched by Council of Europe Ministers of foreign affairs at their 118<sup>th</sup> ministerial session on 7 May, 2008 as the result of a long-time work of the European Union member states, intercultural dialogue is "an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world" (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008).

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The object of this research is the problem of studying mythology, classical and contemporary literature in terms of the dialogue between cultures. The article presents the new ways in which learners perceive the text.

## 5. Research Methods

Qualitative methodological analysis of the Russian and foreign state regulations and educational standards: curricula in the academic discipline of literature at the secondary school.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Intercultural dialogue in the system of education Language literacy

This is a specially organized interaction between learners of different cultures. Educational concepts that are based on the idea of intercultural dialogue are widespread in Europe and the United States, Canada, Australia, Asia (Byram, Holmes, Savvides, 2013; Feng, Byram, Fleming, 2009; Kramsch, 1993; Morgan, Caine, 2002; Wen-Chuan, Byram, 2016). The purpose of intercultural (multicultural) education is defined as the formation and development of *intercultural competence* of learners, which allows them to successfully engage in a dialogue with representatives of other cultures. An emphasis is also laid on their necessary ability to be aware of their own cultural identity in terms of their native language, culture, history, religion.

In the system of school education, the subject field of "Philology", that includes language and literature teaching, plays a crucial role in terms of developing competencies of intercultural dialogue.

### 6.2. The dialogue of literatures

The study of interconnections between the artistic texts is of particular importance in literary education, it will help to evaluate national identity and at the same time introduce the learners to the best examples of world literature. Dzhurinsky, noted that "understanding of the unity and diversity of historical-cultural perspective of the world is impossible without reference to mythology, the study of which at the first step of literary education allows for the creation of the solid foundation for further development of intercultural competence of learners" (Dzhurinskij, 2010). The following statements serve as an explanation of this opinion.

Verbal expression of culture has roots stretching back to ancient myths, which attempted to reflect and explain the reality. The traditional research of the myth is constantly enriched by the modern approaches to its study (Rodina, 2015). According to Frejdenberg, at the next stage of human development, "the morphology of the classical plots and genres is formed from the primitive semantics and... is functioning in the classical literature" (Frejdenberg, 1997).

The myth of Prometheus, who gave fire to mankind and therefore became immortalized, can serve as a prime example. The character of Prometheus is considered by scholars to be a "universal and historical symbol of civilization" (Feng, Byram, Fleming, 2009), and the eternal punishment of

Prometheus is "a symbol of either the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus, or a set of conflicts between two gods, a God and a man, a God and fate, power and knowledge, etc." (Fowler, 1957).

The myth of Prometheus was depicted in the tragedy "Prometheus Bound" by an Ancient Greek tragedian Aeschylus, and as a result, the character of the Titan as symbol of martyrdom in the name of saving mankind has entered the literature and the arts of different nations. Similar opinions are also expressed in modern foreign literary studies (West, 2007). However, it is of minor significance how exactly did the myth of Prometheus become an indispensable part of the culture of mankind.

The image of Prometheus is seen differently by the artists of the word. In the poem "Prometheus" Goethe portrays the rebellious, courageous, determined nature of the hero; Byron, in the poem of the same name, interprets the image of Prometheus as a person, whose heroic act has become a role model; the tragedy "Prometheus Unbound" by Shelley ends with the triumph of patience and weal, etc.

It is well known that Zeus ordered Hephaestus (or Hermes) to chain Prometheus to the Caucasus range for stealing fire. The Caucasus has long been familiar with chained giants. Strong in spirit, proud and rebellious, they are in many ways similar to Prometheus we find in classics, although they have their own origin. "Forceful and powerful personality, the rebellious resistance to the gods, violence and evil towards people are the ancient attributes of a Titan, who, after the centuries, started to be seen as a friend of mankind, its enlightener and defender. The punishment of such a brash evildoer is therefore well deserved: his attempts to escape threaten to provoke some great calamities. These are the titans of the Caucasian tales" (Veselovsky, 2011). The Prometheus plot can be found in Ossetian, Cherkess, Abkhazian and Georgian legends of Amiran (Amran), that, in turn, are reflected in the best examples of literature of these peoples: in the poem "Tornike Eristavi" written by the great Georgian writer Zereteli, A. and in "Amran", a play by one of the founders of the Georgian literature, E. Britaev. In their work, the authors shift from the narrow national interests to the universal problems concerned with freeing the world from violence and slavery, which seems to be the perfect representation of the dialogue of literatures, cultures and intercultural communication.

Knowledge of the above-mentioned literary, historical and cultural facts allows to easily introduce the learners to the phenomenon of intercultural literary diffusion, which at the next stage of learning can be presented in the study of Russian and foreign writers from the perspective of intertextuality, which is revealed through the writers' mutual influence, their artistic systems. At this stage, learners gradually form the skills of comprehending the author's intent through the dialogue "between the reader and the writer". In the process of discussing the texts, the perception of the work is being broadened through the dialogue between readers and the knowledge of different interpretations (screenings, staging). When comparing different points of view of the Russian and foreign writers on the same issue (comparative study), the perception of literature gains integrity. The following works can serve as examples of comparison: Griboyedov's "Woe from Wit" and "the Misanthrope" by Moliere, "Anna Karenina" by Tolstoy and "Madame Bovary" by Flaubert, etc. In the study of "Dead souls" by Gogol it is possible to address how the subject of greed and hoarding is portrayed in the works of Balzac. Compare Chichikov who is purchasing "dead souls" with a usurer Gobseck. The female characters in "The Portionless girl" and "The Storm" by Ostrovsky, who face immorality and vulgarity, can be compared with the life of Emma Bovary. The characters of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard", "The Seagull" can be related to the characters of "A Fantasia in the Russian Manner" by Shaw, B. ("Heartbreak House").

However, in forming and developing skills of intercultural dialogue, the peculiarities of reading in the present-day world should be taken into consideration, and we also "should take into account not so much a personal experience of the reader, as the history of the way the work has been perceived with respect to the changing aesthetics and expectations that allow the work to stay in demand in different historic periods" (Caller, 2006).

### **6.3. The modern model of reading**

It can be argued that nowadays a new model of reading, which is significantly different from the traditional one, has already been constructed. Modern reader sees the book not as a cultural phenomenon, and certainly not as the book of life, but as one of many sources of information and means of mass communication. "We are faced with a situation where you need to process large chunks of information fast, without a pause. Here quick, superficial reading is extremely necessary – searching for the key words, skimming skills, the ability to determine if I need to read it at all. It is a kind of a system of filters we cannot now do without. It is another thing, when you are sitting in the estate in and are no hurry, slowly reading Shakespeare's sonnets – a completely different activity that actually needs time, and a slow, multi-layered reading. These are different processes, which are wrongly called by the same word," - that is how a well-known neurophysiologist Chernigovskaya, characterizes the modern process of reading (Cherkezova, 2007). Modern reader with mosaic thinking and mosaic perception of the world tends to read literary texts quickly, and more often than not cannot grasp the deeper meaning. Today, there is a gap between generations, both in the home, parents – children, and in school education: traditional content – a new model of reading.

Modern students do not want to waste time reading "outdated" classics, linear and static. In this respect, modern literature offers a more dynamic approach. Here, there are such trends as a consistent elimination of linear structures, compression with a simultaneous increase in information loading, the synthesis of straight text and rich text (infographics, images, pictogrammes), additions to the content made in different semiotic systems.

In the modern education space, the possibilities that the Internet provides give a great technological boost for working with the text, to the extent of the creation of your own intellectual product. However, this does not solve the problem of the reading competence, since it is impossible to cultivate love of literature without slow reading. There are several ways, which require time, but can captivate a teenager with their depth and reflection. One of them is to become acquainted with literary connections — dialogues between classical and contemporary literature on the cultural basis. In this case, a specific sequence of studying the texts in literature classes organizes the dialogue as an interaction between the consciousness of the author – student – teacher, and the underlying concepts of the course in contemporary literature, which reflect universal human values, will help to build intercultural dialogue and allow people to "communicate" with the book in the present-day format of communication.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, there is now a unique opportunity to compare the inner world of people of different cultural periods and their mindsets in the process of literary education. This approach to literary education opens up new vistas for understanding of the main features of world culture, develops the ability to appreciate the core values of classical literature from the modern point of view. "At the same time, it is most essential to avoid vulgar and simplified "modernization" of the classics which is a common mistake of different kind of interpretations of the 19th century literature. This trend is extremely dangerous for the learning objective of literary education: let us emphasize it once again - the study of literature is based on the ability to engage in a dialogue with the author and not to impose some "meanings", alien to his work" (Aristova, Berdysheva, Strizhekurova, 2016).

The objective of literary education consists in helping the reader take a glimpse into the "world of values" of different generations, see the ways and means of self-understanding and self-expression, develop an understanding of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as one of the greatest values in the world.

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