

The Dialogue between Literature and Medicine:
Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language to
Medical Students through the Works of
M. A. Bulgakov and A. P. Chekhov

AYNURA AYBERGENOVA
Karakalpak State University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

The article examines the didactic potential of artistically adapted texts by M. A. Bulgakov and A. P. Chekhov in teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) to medical students. The importance of integrating literary and professional components in the process of forming communicative competence is substantiated. Methodological approaches to using literary texts with medical themes are analyzed, and practical recommendations for their adaptation and implementation in the educational process are proposed. The study emphasizes that such texts contribute not only to the development of linguistic and speech skills, but also to the formation of professional vocabulary, intercultural awareness, and empathy, which are essential for future medical practitioners. Special attention is paid to the selection criteria of texts, the stages of their methodological adaptation, and the design of pre-text, while-text, and post-text activities aimed at enhancing students' motivation and engagement. The results demonstrate that the inclusion of adapted literary materials in RFL classes increases the effectiveness of language acquisition and supports the development of professionally oriented communicative competence in a multicultural educational environment.

Keywords: RFL, medical students, literary text, adaptation, communicative competence, medical discourse, Bulgakov, Chekhov

INTRODUCTION

Modern approaches to teaching Russian as a foreign language are aimed at forming not only linguistic but also professional-communicative competence of students. This task is of particular relevance in teaching foreign students of medical universities, for whom language is a tool of professionalism. In this context, the integration of literary texts with medical content into the educational process becomes especially significant. Such texts provide a unique opportunity to combine language learning with the development of professional thinking, as they reflect real-life situations, ethical dilemmas, and communicative models inherent in medical practice. The works of Russian classical authors, particularly those with medical backgrounds or themes, offer rich material for this purpose, allowing students to engage with authentic cultural and professional discourse.

Moreover, the use of artistically adapted texts facilitates the gradual acquisition of complex lexical and grammatical structures while maintaining students' interest and motivation. Adaptation ensures accessibility of the content without losing its semantic and cultural value, which is crucial for learners at different proficiency levels. Through carefully designed tasks accompanying these texts, students develop not only reading and speaking skills but also critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural competence. Thus, incorporating adapted literary works into RFL instruction for medical students aligns with contemporary educational goals, promoting a holistic approach to language learning that supports both communicative effectiveness and professional development.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The use of literary text in teaching RFL is considered within the framework of linguodidactic, communicative, and competency-based approaches aimed at forming the learner's secondary linguistic personality. Within these approaches, the artistic text is interpreted as a polyfunctional didactic unit that combines linguistic, cognitive, and cultural potential. It serves not only as a

source of authentic linguistic material but also as a means of forming sociocultural, discursive, and strategic competencies that ensure successful intercultural communication.

From the perspective of communicative methodology, a literary text is considered a model of real speech interaction, representing diverse types of discourse and communicative intentions. Including such texts in the educational process contributes to the development of interpretation, argumentation skills, and pragmatically adequate speech behavior.

From the point of view of the cognitive-discursive approach, a literary text is a complex semiotic system in which linguistic units function in close connection with extralinguistic factors – cultural context, author’s intention, professional sphere of communication. This allows us to consider it as a means of forming not only language skills but also professional thinking, especially in the context of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes).

Texts containing elements of professional discourse, particularly medical discourse, are of particular importance. Medical discourse is characterized by specific terminology, genre diversity (anamnesis, consultation, diagnosis), as well as special communicative strategies, including empathy, ethicalness, and accuracy of expression. In the works of Mikhail Bulgakov (“Young Doctor’s Notes”) and Anton Chekhov (“Palace No. 6”, “Surgery”, etc.), typical speech situations of medical communication are represented, reflecting both professional and ethical-deontological aspects of medical activity.

Analysis of these texts allows us to identify models of “doctor-patient” interaction, features of professional speech, as well as culturally determined norms of medical communication in the Russian-speaking environment. This makes them a valuable resource for the formation of professional and communicative competence of foreign medical students, as it ensures the integration of language learning with mastering the basics of professional culture.

Thus, the theoretical basis of the research is the synthesis of linguodidactic, communicative, and cognitive-discursive approaches, which allows us to consider the artistically adapted

text as an effective means of comprehensive teaching of RFL in a medical university.

METHODOLOGY

Working with literary texts involves their preliminary adaptation, taking into account the students' language proficiency level, as well as their professional needs and cognitive capabilities. Adaptation should be scientifically grounded and systematic, ensuring the preservation of the semantic, stylistic, and cultural integrity of the source text during its didactic transformation.

Adaptation includes

- lexical simplification while preserving key semantic dominants;
- reduction of complex syntactic constructions while preserving the logic of the author's statement;
- comments on culturally specific realities and precedent phenomena;
- introduction and semantics of professionally significant medical vocabulary;
- text structuring (dividing into semantic fragments, titles, highlighting key elements);
- use of glossaries and linguacultural commentaries.

Special attention is paid to the principle of gradual complication of the material: from adapted fragments to conditionally authentic ones and then to original texts.

The methodological model for working with text can include the following stages:

1. *Pre-text stage*

Actualization of background knowledge, formation of a motivational attitude, and preparation for text perception. At this stage, the following are implemented:

- introduction of key general language and professional vocabulary;

- forecasting the content of the text based on the title and keywords;
- discussion of problems (for example, medical ethics, the “doctor-patient” relationship in the works of Anton Chekhov and Mikhail Bulgakov);
- working with illustrative and multimedia materials.

2. *Text stage*

Formation of skills in understanding and interpreting text. This stage includes:

- reading (introductory, studying, selective);
- completing tasks for global and detailed understanding;
- identifying key meanings, characters, and communicative situations;
- analysis of linguistic means characteristic of medical discourse (terminology, speech clichés, forms of address);
- establishing cause-and-effect relationships and interpreting the author's position.

3. *Post-text stage*

Development of productive types of speech activity and professional-communicative skills. At this stage, the following are used:

- discussion of the content of the text with an emphasis on professional aspects;
- modeling typical situations of medical communication (“doctor – patient”, “doctor – colleague” role-playing games);
- solving case studies based on the plots of the works;
- writing annotations, reviews, clinical descriptions based on the text;
- discussions on ethical and deontological issues presented in the works.

Exercise 1

- Vocabulary
- Solution – *yeritpe*
- Injection – *teriasti' naukolqi'li'w*
- To prescribe – *jazi p beriw*
- Vial – *shiysh*
- Puncture – *shanshi'w*
- Needle – *i'ne*
- Dissolution – *yeritiw*
- Stopper – *qaqpaq*
- Is recommended – *usi'ni'syeteledi*
- To carry out/to perform – *islepshi'g'ari'w*
- Intended for dissolution – *yeritiwgearnalg'an*
- Due to precipitation of the base – *tiykari' ali' ng'nsebepli*
- Medical institution – *awi'riwana*
- Are intended – *birna'rseushi'nbelgileniw*
- Are prepared – *birna'rseushi'ntayatlanadi*
- Water for injections is prescribed – *inekciyaushi'nsuwberiledi*

Exercise 2

Read the dialogue between the doctor and the patient. Underline all complex sentences. Determine which sentences are compound and which are complex (subordinate). Try to come up with your own short remark from the patient or the doctor using one complex sentence.

- **Doctor:** Good afternoon! How do you feel?
- **Patient:** Sometimes my blood sugar level increases.
- **Doctor:** Measure your blood sugar every day and record the results in a diary.
- **Patient:** Okay, but what should I do if the sugar level is very high?
- **Doctor:** If the sugar level is high, take the medicine and get some rest.
- **Patient:** I try to eat properly, but sometimes I eat sweets.
- **Doctor:** Monitor your diet so that your sugar level does not rise, because it is dangerous for your health.
- **Patient:** Thank you, I will follow your recommendations.
- **Doctor:** Excellent! Come for a check-up in a week, and we will look at the results.

Additionally, a reflexive-evaluative stage can be distinguished, which involves self-assessment and assessment of the formation of communicative skills, as well as understanding the acquired experience from the perspective of future professional activity. Thus, the proposed methodology ensures the integration of receptive and productive types of speech activity, contributes to the formation of professionally oriented communicative competence, and allows for the effective use of speech. The didactic potential of Bulgakov and Chekhov Texts. The works of these authors have several advantages:

- Authenticity of professional context;
- The texts reflect real medical situations and professional dilemmas’;
- Emotional-value component.

Literature contributes to the development of empathy, which is especially important for future doctors. For example: Read the text from Anton Chekhov’s novella “Ward No. 6” and answer the questions below.

...Ivan Dmitrich Gromov, a man of about thirty-three, of noble birth, a former bailiff and provincial secretary, suffers from persecution mania. He either lies curled up on the bed, or walks from corner to corner, as if for exercise, but sits very rarely. He is always excited, agitated, and tense with some vague, indefinite expectation. The slightest rustle in the hall or a shout in the courtyard is enough for him to raise his head and listen: is it coming for him? Isn’t he the one they’re looking for? And his face at the same time expresses extreme concern and disgust.

I like his broad, high-cheekboned face, always pale and unhappy, reflecting in itself, as in a mirror, a soul tortured by struggle and prolonged fear. His grimaces are strange and painful, but the delicate features placed on his face by deep sincere suffering are reasonable and intelligent, and there is a warm, healthy glow in his eyes. I like him, he is polite, helpful and extremely considerate in dealing with everyone except Nikita. When someone drops a button or a spoon, he quickly jumps out of bed and picks it up. Every morning, he congratulates his comrades

on a good morning before going to bed and wishes them a good night.

The text is followed by questions that students must answer:

1. What kind of mental disorder can be assumed in Ivan Dmitrich Gromov based on the described symptoms (constant anxiety, expectation of danger, ideas of persecution)?
2. What behavioral signs in the text indicate the patient's state of psychomotor agitation?
3. What emotional and affective disorders are manifested in the description of facial expressions and the general condition of the patient?
4. How could prolonged fear and tension affect the patient's physical and mental state?
5. What differential diagnostic conditions should be considered if a patient has delusions of persecution?

Language and culture integration. Students are introduced to the peculiarities of Russian culture, medical ethics, and traditions. Critical thinking development. Discussing the moral and ethical aspects of medical practice encourages analytical activity. Practical significance. Including adapted literary texts in the educational process allows:

- increase the motivation of students;
- expand professional vocabulary;
- develop intercultural communication skills;
- prepare students for real communication situations in the medical environment.

Read an excerpt from the short story "Enemies" by Anton Chekhov and answer the questions below. Is the doctor in? I'm at home, Kirilov replied. What do you want?

Oh, is that you? I am very glad! The newcomer was delighted and began to look for the doctor's hand in the dark, found it and

squeezed it tightly in his hands. – I am very, very glad! We know each other!... I am Abogin... I had the pleasure of seeing you at Gnuchev's in the summer. I'm very glad I caught you... For God's sake, please come with me now... My wife is dangerously ill... And the crew is with me...

It was obvious from the newcomer's voice and movements that he was in a highly agitated state. As if frightened by a fire or a rabid dog, he could barely contain his rapid breathing and spoke quickly in a trembling voice, and there was something genuinely sincere, childishly cowardly in his speech. Like everyone else who was scared and stunned, he spoke in short, jerky phrases and uttered a lot of unnecessary, completely irrelevant words. I was afraid I wouldn't find you, he continued... Get dressed and let's go, for God's sake... It happened this way. Alexander Semyonovich Papchinsky, whom you know, is coming to see me... We talked... then they sat down to drink tea; suddenly the wife screams, clutches her heart and falls on the back of a chair. We carried her to the bed, and... I've already rubbed her temples with ammonia and sprayed her with water... She's lying there like she's dead... I'm afraid it's an aneurysm... Let's go...

Kirilov listened and was silent, as if he did not understand Russian. Questions follow post-text assignments

1. What symptoms in the description of Abogin's wife's condition indicate an acute emergency?
2. What possible diagnoses, besides aneurysm, should be considered in case of sudden pain in the heart and loss of consciousness?
3. What primary emergency measures have been taken (ammonia, water), and to what extent are they medically justified?
4. What is the significance of the indication of heredity (death of the father from an aneurysm) in assessing the risk of this condition?
5. What additional symptoms or medical history should the doctor clarify during the first examination of the patient?
6. How can Abogin's psychoemotional state affect the perception of the severity of the patient's condition and the transmission of information to the doctor?

7. In what cases can a sudden deterioration of the condition simulate a cardiovascular catastrophe (fainting, hysterical reaction)?

RESULTS

Practice shows that using Bulgakov and Chekhov texts contributes to a deeper assimilation of language material and the formation of professional identity in future doctors.

Thus, the dialogue between literature and medicine in teaching RFL opens up new opportunities for the comprehensive development of foreign medical students. The artistically adapted texts of Mikhail Bulgakov and Anton Chekhov are an effective tool for forming not only communicative but also professionally oriented competence, ensuring the integration of language training with mastering the norms of medical discourse and professional culture.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirm that the integration of artistically adapted literary texts into the process of teaching Russian as a Foreign Language to medical students has significant pedagogical value. The use of works by Bulgakov and Chekhov demonstrates that literary discourse, when methodologically adapted, can effectively serve as a bridge between language acquisition and professional training. The findings indicate that students not only improve their linguistic competence but also develop essential professional skills, including the ability to interpret medical situations, engage in doctor-patient communication, and apply appropriate speech strategies in clinical contexts. Moreover, the inclusion of ethical and deontological issues in literary texts fosters the development of empathy and critical thinking, which are crucial qualities for future medical practitioners. At the same time, the study highlights certain challenges. These include the need for careful selection and adaptation of texts according to students' language proficiency, as well as the necessity of designing well-structured

tasks that align with both linguistic and professional objectives. Without proper methodological support, the potential of literary texts may not be fully realized.

Therefore, further research may focus on developing more detailed criteria for text adaptation, expanding the range of literary materials with medical themes, and exploring digital and interactive formats for their implementation. Overall, the integration of literature and medical discourse represents a перспективнонаправление in RFL methodology, contributing to a more holistic and practice-oriented model of language education.

CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated that artistically adapted literary texts by M. A. Bulgakov and A. P. Chekhov possess considerable didactic potential in the teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) to medical students. Their incorporation into the educational process enables the effective integration of linguistic, cultural, and professional components, thereby facilitating the development of communicative competence within a medical context.

The proposed methodological framework, based on a structured system of pre-text, while-text, and post-text activities, ensures the formation of both receptive and productive language skills. In parallel, it contributes to the acquisition of professional vocabulary, the enhancement of intercultural awareness, and the development of empathy and ethical sensitivity, which are essential qualities for future healthcare professionals.

The findings confirm that the use of adapted literary texts increases student motivation, improves the quality of language acquisition, and prepares learners for authentic professional communication in clinical settings. Therefore, the integration of literary discourse into RFL instruction can be regarded as an effective and promising direction for the improvement of foreign medical students' training within a multicultural educational environment.

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AYNURA AYBERGENOVA
 BASIC DOCTORAL STUDENT
 KARAKALPAK STATE UNIVERSITY,
 NUKUS, UZBEKISTAN.
 E-MAIL: <AYNURA22NUKUS@GMAIL.COM>