

An Analysis of Literary Works and Cultural Contents in Foreign Language Textbooks (Russian, French, and English)

Wati Istanti^a, Anastasia Pudjiriherwanti^b, Maria Beloborodova^c,
^{a,b}Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia, ^cSaint Peterburg State University,
Rusia,

Foreigners need a language book to make it easier for them to learn a second or foreign language and in order to improve their language skills. Literature is considered a hard language study to date, even for native speakers and so there are only a few foreign language books containing literary works. Literary works and cultural contents should have been analysed to prove that literature can serve as a language instructional medium for foreigners. This study relied on the content analysis method to describe the literary works and cultural contents in language books for foreigners, e.g. an intermediate-level Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2), a French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1), and an English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2). Literary works and cultures can be utilised in the language learning process for foreigners with an intermediate level.

Key words: *Foreign Language Books, Literature, Culture.*

Introduction

Foreigners need a language learning book to make it easier for them to learn a second or foreign language and in order to improve their language skills. The language book is composed differently from the one provided to home-grown learners. For instance, the Indonesian language book for foreigners is undoubtedly different to the book used by Indonesian learners due to the idea that foreigners do not need to understand the characters of the language. As a matter of fact, foreigners also experience different Indonesian language acquisitions from Indonesian people.



There have been a variety of foreign language books. Based on the international level, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (henceforth, CEFR) serves as the reference of language level. The CEFR has six levels of A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. In an almost similar tune to CEFR, French also has language levels of DELF A1, DELF A2, DELF B1, DELF B2, DELF C1, and DELF C2.

The purpose of a language book for foreigners is classified based on academic and non-academic needs. Pimsleur (2013) states “many people want to learn a foreign language for reasons that are no less real for being impractical. Such reasons are often deeply personal.” An example of this is the academic purpose, that is when one wants to learn a foreign language for studying or conducting research in a country; meanwhile, the non-academic one is the initiative of living, touring, working in a country, and the like. The book can also be classified according to the taught materials, such as grammar, conversation, vocabulary, and culture.

The types of language books intended for foreigners are also written in Russian, French, and English; these books are for beginner, elementary (A1, A2), intermediate, upper-intermediate (B1, B2), and advanced, proficiency (C1, C2) levels. All of these books that have met the criteria of a language book for foreigners are more directed to a general purpose. There are several criteria of a good language book, such as: (1) delivering the target language communication messages to foreign students; (2) includes knowledge and skills competencies; (3) provide a change of attitude to students; (4) contains values contained in the study of literature; (5) can be easily read and understood by students; (6) displays images to support explanations.

Literature is considered a hard topic of language study to date, even for domestic people. Nevertheless, literature can also be utilised as a lesson in foreign language teachings. Hadaway et al. (in Babaee and Yahya, 2014:81) assert that teaching literature can take into account the contextualisation of a language, social factors in literature, the application of an illustrative language, and the use of a descriptive language in literature.

Literature also has something to do with culture, by which it is very important for learners to understand this concept in order to go deep into the literary text. Nasirahmadi et al. (2014) claim that literature associates with many aspects. Cultures, or facts about life, are effective and are to be involved in language learning.

The objective of this study is to explain literary works and cultural contents in language textbooks for foreigners. This study attempts to describe that a literary text is not that complex and can be applied as an instructional medium; this is strengthened by a clear prologue of a book. Literary works and cultural contents should have been analysed to confirm that literature

can serve as a language instructional medium for foreigners. The significance of this study is to find out the forms of literary works that can be used in the learning process.

A previous study by Noviana (2017) has discussed the use of literature in learning Japanese. It is concluded that learning Japanese through literary works as a variation of leaning materials can improve learner mastery towards such a language. Santoso et al. (2011) have also reported in their study on the utilisation of literary texts in learning German in senior high schools that literary texts can function as a medium to practice grammar and language skills, as well as to deliver cultural elements and independent goals. Independent goals refer to the idea that literary texts can give a space for learners to activate the aspects of feeling, experience, and knowledge, and to bring up the emotional connection with their experiences so that a more quality and meaningful learning process is created

Method of Study

This study relied on the content analysis method. Such a method was employed to classify the symbols used in communication, to utilise criteria in the classification, and to use specific techniques of analysis in making predictions. Content analysis is a technique to identify the characteristics of a message or information that does not necessarily have to come from a written content of communication (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:472).

The content analysis method is to explain the facts in the examined object, along with the aspects that become the focus of this study. This study elaborated on the literary works and cultural contents in language books for foreigners, e.g., an intermediate-level Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2), a French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1), and an English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2). Furthermore, it also described the forms of literary works coming up as instructional media.

Results and Discussion

There were three foreign language textbooks that were subject of this study. The analysis was carried out by finding literary and cultural contents in the books. Foreign language textbooks for foreign learners obviously have different characteristics. Literary and cultural contents are highly required in foreign language textbooks, allowing foreign learners to learn both the language and the local culture.

Those books have similar contents, in which the literary and cultural contents are clearly written in several chapters of the books, although they do not specifically reveal each genre in literary works. The Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2) is slightly different from the other two foreign books, i.e. the French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De

Leleve B1), and the intermediate-level English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2). The Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2) uses Russian and English as the languages. In contrast, the French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1) and intermediate-level English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2) use French and English, respectively.

As resulted from the document analysis on those three books, the Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2), the French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1), and the intermediate-level English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2) contain literary and cultural contents. They serve as foreign language textbooks that are intended for foreign language learners.

After analysing language books for foreigners, some of the books, i.e. the Russian, French, and English textbooks, contain literary works and cultural contents.

Literary Works and Cultures in the Russian Book (ASSIMIL Russian B2)

There are a lot of literary works and cultural contents in the Russian book for foreigners, in which most of its literary works and cultures are closely related to life in Russia.

Literary Works in the Russian Book

Literary works in this book are in the form of new poems, old prose, fairy tales, proverbs and reviews.

Poem

There are four types of poems contained in this book, e.g. on page 39, the expression “Neither down nor feathers!” is an encouragement for a person and to wish him/her luck. This expression is categorised as an idiom that also comprises a literary work of a short poem in the form of a mantra. A mantra refers to sacred utterances possessing magical power. Yet the power, in this context, is not the case. The mantra is rather intended for one’s goodness. In addition, there is a new poem entitled “Tongue-twisters” on page 349 that serves as an example of an introduction to suffixes and adjectives.

On page 459, an utterance in the marriage of the Russian community is explained; the utterance is expressed when the guests say *goroko* which means bitter, so that the bride and groom will be kissing. The utterance contains a literary work of a short poem in the form of a mantra. The mantra is intended for the family’s goodness. The fourth poem is on page 505, e.g. the Russian classical rhyme "Homeland" which means love for the motherland (patriotic). The rhyme is

included in a literary work of a poem since its presentation is corresponded and linked between one line and the other.

Old Prose (History)

On page 59, the old prose is about a famous street in Russia called Arbat Street. The street is well-known as the celebration place of the 500th anniversary of Moscow. This information is included in a literary work of old prose (history) as the writing is actual. Another prose is the history of New Russia on page 296, in which the Russians have made money effortlessly and worn gold necklaces and big diamond rings since 1990.

Fairy Tale

There come two textbooks comprise a fairy tale on page 367 stating that Russians have an assumption that if a person walks in front of them with an empty bucket, dreadful things will happen. They also believe that they cannot fill the water in an empty bottle on the table; rather, they should do it under the table or in other places. Additionally, page 367 also shows that if a black cat crosses the road in front of them, it is a bad sign; if the eye itches, they will cry or face problems; if they break a mirror, they will experience terrible things. These are included as a fairy tale, i.e. a myth. Myth refers to the fantasies of society in ancient times which have profound meanings.

Proverb

This book has two proverbs included in the literary text, the first on page 429. In the first place is *Утро ве́чера мудре́нее* which means “the morning is wiser than the evening”. It is clearly shown that this book contains a literary work of proverb that embodies advice or teachings from the elderly. The aforementioned proverb implies that it is better to take time to understand at night for better decisions later in the morning.

Moreover, the proverb “no pain no gain” or in Indonesian known as *Berakit-rakit ke hulu, berenang-renang ke tepian*, is written on page 513. This expression contains literary elements as it is categorised as a proverb that encompasses advice, warning, sarcasm, and the like.

Review

This book also encompasses redaction opinions or considerations on the literature on page 43, i.e. information or review about a famous literary work all over the world. The work is a novel entitled “War and Peace” written by Leo Tolstoy. Further, there is a review of a well-known literary work in Russian written by Alexander Pushkin on page 205.



Cultures in Russian Book (ASSIMIL Russian B2)

There are a great number of texts discussing cultures in the Russian book. When one is learning a language, s/he is also learning its culture as language and culture are inextricably linked.

Several cultural records in this Russian book are (a) trains in Russia written on page 79; (b) traditional Russian foods on page 69 and 83; (c) stereotypes about Siberia on page 93; (d) tradition of gift-giving at every celebration on page 117; (e) how to write Latin characters in Russia on page 125; (f) unique school rules, i.e., the schools will be off during a certain temperature on page 158; (g) New Year's Eve on page 225; (h) traditional Russian houses on page 247; (i) mnemonic systems to memorise colour vocabulary on page 347; (j) tradition of drinking tea, kinds of teas, and tools for making tea on page 469; (k) Russians' favourite foods on page 475; (l) tradition of grilling satay inside or outside the house and eating with friends usually on the weekend on page 495.

Literary Works in the French Book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1)

There are literary works in the French book for foreigners, including dramas, histories, and poems.

Drama

There is a drama in the form of a comic as a learning medium on page 93. The drama is part of a literary work that involves a telephone conversation between office colleagues.

History

Page 102 incorporates a news regarding the hardship in Pakistan and dramatic situation in Russia, i.e. forest fires and the anger of its inhabitants. This information is included in a literary work of old prose as the writing is actual.

Poem

On page 112-113, there are several poems as one of the instructional media, including "Le Pont Mirabeau", "Une Passante", and "Le Corbeau Et Le Renard". These include in a literary work.

Literary Works in the English Book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2)

Literary works in the English book for foreigners are poems, dramas, and short stories.

Poem

On page 76, there comes a poem entitled “The Wind” that presents beautiful stanzas with well-run suffixes. The poem also contains some words that are written repeatedly.

Drama

Drama is a very common literary work; there has been a drama talking about everyday life entitled “Everyday Talk” on page 27, and another drama entitled “Margaret Priestley’s Birthday Morning” on page 65; the drama with four characters is part of the literary work showing up in the English book. Besides, a drama between Hob and Mr. Priestley is also written on page 40-42. This drama narrates a story of how Hob tells about how a cat and a bird can act like a human. Such story and drama are considered as myth and a literary work, respectively.

Page 153 also comprises a drama with three rounds of dialogue talking about the characters of Jand and Frieda who leave for Switzerland. Lastly, there is a drama about the character coming back from vacation on page 163-168. The drama also puts in a sentence that can be called a short poem due to its orderly rhythm and arrangement.

No Money. Not Funny. Sonny
How Sad. Too Bad. Dad.

Short Story

There is a short story entitled “The Story of Uncle Tom: The man who took notice of notices” that acts as a literary work in the form of prose or narrative writing.

Of those three books, the Russian textbook is the one that contains the highest number of literary works and cultural contents, in which the literary works are more inclined towards poems. However, the most found literary work in the English book is drama.

The following section discusses the analysis results of the Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2), French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1), and English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2), the Russian book with Russian and English language has complete contents for studies and cultures. Literary works contained in this book include poems, old prose (history), fairy tales, proverbs, and literary review. Besides, the Russian book also comprises some references of storybooks to support the understanding of this book regarding proverbs, including (a) Russian Stories: A Dual-Language Book (1990); (b) The Heart of a Dog by Mikhail Bulgakov (2009); (c) The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov (2007); (d) The Gambler (and Other Stories) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (2010); (e) The



Twelve Chairs by Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov (1997); (f) Dreams of My Russian Summers by Andrei Makine (2011); and (g) We by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1993).

The cultural content in the Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2), however, puts more emphasis on providing information about activity-related cultures, such as traditional food, school rules, new year celebration, and other aspects of Russian culture. Further, the Russians still also believe in myth as part of culture, in which the myth is written in the book. The Russians have an assumption that if a person walks in front of them bringing an empty bucket, bad things will happen. They also believe that one cannot fill the water in an empty bottle on the table, rather, they should do it under the table or other places (Page 363).

Another foreign language book is the French Book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1) that contains literary materials, namely drama, history and poem. The drama is in the form of a comic as a learning medium in a foreign language. The drama is part of literary works that involves a telephone conversation between office colleagues (page 93). Nevertheless, there is no cultural content in this French book since the book focuses more on the discussion of literary content. The last book is English (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2) that has similar contents to the French book, e.g. poem, drama and short story. An enticing part of the analysis is the drama between Hob and Mr. Priestley. This drama, included in myth, narrates a fictional thing of how Hob talks about how a cat and bird can act as a human. This English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2) does not comprise any materials that elaborate on cultural information.

Conclusion

This study concludes that literary works, particularly the ones with various genres and cultures, can possibly be utilised in the language learning process for foreigners at an intermediate level. Literary content is almost found in all three books as discussed previously. Such content has some values that can influence foreign learners when learning a foreign language.

The Russian book (ASSIMIL Russian B2) contains some lessons revolving around cultural records and literary works of new poems, old prose, fairy tales, proverbs and reviews. Meanwhile, literary works such as dramas, histories and poems are found in the French book (Version Originale 3 Methode De Francais-Livre De Leleve B1) without explicit cultural content. Lastly, in the English book (Essential English for Foreign Students Book 2), there are also literary works in the form of poems, dramas and short stories without any cultural contents.



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