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Teaching a Russian Media Course Based on the Theory of Multiliteracies Pedagogy

ANDREA LIEBSCHNER

1. Introduction

This paper is intended to provide a pedagogical framework for specific choices that instructors can make about tasks and their relationship to course goals for teaching a Russian media course to non-native speakers of Russian. The course materials involve work with literary texts, television, and the Internet. This paper first considers the New London Group's (1996) theory of multiliteracies to build a fitting pedagogical framework for working with different types of media and communication channels in a Russian media course outside of Russia. The paper then provides an overview of existing courses about Russian media. Finally, it analyzes in detail the course content and presents the assessment of an existing Russian media course taught at a British university that applies the theory of multiliteracies.

2. A Pedagogical Framework for a Russian Media Course, Based on the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

This section of the paper uses the theory of multiliteracies to build a fitting pedagogical framework and syllabus for a Russian media course outside of Russia. According to Herring (2011), there are "changing trends in, and new uses of, web technology and web design, especially involving participatory information sharing." People communicate differently due to new technologies and cultural diversity in the world. In 1996, research by the New London Group, which consisted of ten academics in New London, New Hampshire, in the United States, introduced the term MULTILITERACIES. The New London Group developed a new literacy pedagogy, a PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES, which focuses not only on reading, analyzing, and understanding standard printed texts, but also on decoding and applying new technologies. This new literacy pedagogy reacts to the new learning needs of students and teaches them to use and

understand new media technologies for communicating in the culturally diverse world. The aim of the New London Group was to “help students to participate fully in our dynamic, technological and culturally diverse societies” (Mills 2009, 103). According to the New London Group, media include LINGUISTIC, AUDITORY, VISUAL, and GESTURAL MODES OF MEANING (Mills 2009); LINGUISTIC MODES include language; AUDITORY MODES may consist of music, voice-overs, and sound-effects; VISUAL MODES include, for example, screen formats, perspectives, images, layouts, and colors; and GESTURAL MODES can be represented by body language, gestures, feelings, and behavior (New London Group 2000). According to the New London Group (2000), these four modes are closely connected, but they differ in the following pedagogical moves, which are relevant for teaching situations: SITUATED PRACTICE, OVERT INSTRUCTION, CRITICAL FRAMING and TRANSFORMED PRACTICES. SITUATED PRACTICE is a method for learners to experience authentic situations in the classroom, in which they are challenged to practically apply their knowledge. According to Doucette-Vanthuyne (2016, 32), “overt instruction is scaffolded learning by the teacher to foster critical understanding through directions and providing sources of information to the learners.” For CRITICAL FRAMING, students are confronted with unknown information and need to relate it to their previous life experiences. According to Kalantzis and Cope (2000), CRITICAL FRAMING offers options to analyze various texts in their social and cultural context. With TRANSFORMED PRACTICE, students are involved in classroom activities, where they put their actions in relation to their own aims. During a Russian media course, the course materials (e.g., literary texts, television and the Internet) can be analyzed according to the LINGUISTIC, AUDITORY, VISUAL, AND GESTURAL MODES proposed by the New London Group (2000). Students need to learn about these *modes* in the media to decode and critically analyze their content in the classroom. Then they can also apply them in everyday use. In class, these modes can be trained with tasks for VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, READING AND ANALYZING, and LISTENING AND WATCHING ACTIVITIES in relation to the cultural and social context in Russia. If students are not native speakers, they need sufficient cultural, political, and social background information about Russia. Then they can apply this knowledge to practical tasks in class and everyday life. A later section of this paper presents the pedagogical framework and tasks of an existing Russian media course at

a British university. That section will provide insights on how the PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES can be applied in the classroom.

3. Literature Overview about Research on Russian Media

This section presents an overview of recent publications on television and the Internet in Russia, which can be relevant to a Russian media course. These publications offer background information in relation to the social, political, and economic events in Russia since 1990. Recent research has focused on Russian television channels in relation to the existing political structures and actors in Russia (Koltsova 2006; Dunn 2009; Beumers, Hutchings, and Rulyova 2009; Hutchings and Rulyova 2009). Koltsova (2006) introduced and examined the position of various “agents of power” for Russian television, in particular the production of news programs. Dunn (2009) discussed the changing influence of political control on television channels in Russia since 1990. According to Dunn, Russia differs from Western countries with “the failure of the competing media organisations to develop spheres other than politics for the competition to be enacted” (2009, 144). Hutchings and Rulyova (2009, 1) also focused on “the role of television as entertainment, as well as its role in nation-building and the projection of a national identity.” Furthermore, they discussed the impact of game shows and talk shows in Russia.

A number of recent articles have examined the content of dramas, series, and comedies on Russian television (Condee 2009; Beumers 2009; Zvereva 2007, 2012a; MacFadyen 2007). Condee (2009), for example, focused on the series *Гибель империи*, about fictional characters during World War One. She explored the parallels between the content of this series and current events in Russian politics under Putin. Beumers (2009) noted that the growing economic and political stability from the year 2000 onwards gave way to the development of sitcoms and social dramas, which reflected life in Russia. At the same time serials about literature and history became popular. MacFadyen (2007) focused on primetime drama and comedy, concluding that there are approaches in which the Russian government under Putin uses primetime television to convey a new perception of Russian “national identity and recent history” (MacFadyen 2007, 2). Zvereva (2007, 79) found that police procedurals convey “an image of a ‘home-grown’ police force that is at the same time a menacing deterrent to the criminal element.” A second task of such programs,

according to Zvereva (2007, 79), is “to present a complex of cultural concepts that have been assigned the status of ‘folksy’ and ‘homemade.’” In a later study, Zvereva (2012a) analyzed series, talk and reality shows, advertising, and sports programs on Russian television channels during the 2000s. Her focus was socio-cultural phenomena and the representation of everyday life in Russian TV. She discovered that in the 2000s the government showed its immediate interest in Russian television and successfully managed to influence it by introducing entertainment programs and keeping things conservative. According to her, the flow of the television forms an atmosphere of the trivial for the viewer.

In addition to a focus on Russian television, many scholars have explored the Russian segment of the Internet, the Runet. In this section, I present only a few publications that relate to politics and society (Schmidt and Teubener 2006a, 2006b; Goriunova 2006) as well as language (Zvereva 2012b; Кронгауз 2011, 2013, 2016; Liebschner 2016). One promising area of research examines the Runet as a source of conflict. For example, Schmidt and Teubener (2006a, 20) position the Internet as a source of identity, concluding that the Internet in Russia can “be interpreted as symbol for both hopes and fears related to the overall atmosphere of change.” In a later publication, the authors (Schmidt and Teubener 2006b) examine the Internet as an alternative place of conflict between values of the past and present in Russia, where individuals try to express themselves and their art. Goriunova (2006) considered literature as a form of resistance on the Runet and also looked at the phenomenon of collectively written literature.

Other studies have focused on the language and social norms of the Russian Internet. Zvereva (2012b) examined the social and cultural aspects of communication, including an analysis of the language in Twitter and blogs. Liebschner (2016) provided a detailed analysis of communication on the Russian social network *Vkontakte*, with a focus on cohesion and coherence between messages of three selected groups of interest. Кронгауз (2011) presented his view on the peculiarities of the language found on the Russian Internet; two years later, he provided an analysis focused on *олбанский язык* (Кронгауз 2013), a variant of Russian language typical for Internet communication. In 2016, he published his “Словарь языка Интернета” (Кронгауз 2016). The literature on Russian media discussed above was also part of the reading

list of a Russian media course at a British University, which is described in more detail in a later section of the paper.

4. Overview of Existing Russian Media Courses at English-speaking Universities and Their Specific Content

This section provides an overview of existing Russian media courses at universities. An Internet search in November 2017 identified thirteen courses on Russian media. Two courses were taught in the UK (University of Manchester¹ and University of Sheffield²) and eleven in the USA (University of Washington in Tacoma;³ Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut;⁴ University of California;⁵ University of Colorado, Boulder;⁶ Harvard University;⁷ Dartmouth College, Massachusetts;⁸ Utah Valley University;⁹ University of Columbia;¹⁰ Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania;¹¹ Bucknell College in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania;¹² and University of Florida¹³). One course was for second-year Russian students,

¹ Course description, Manchester University, accessed December 11, 2017, <http://courseunits.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/Undergraduate/RUSS30602/Display>.

² Course description, Sheffield University, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/russian/undergraduates/courses/modules>.

³ Course description, University of Washington, Tacoma, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.washington.edu/students/crscatt/tcom.html>.

⁴ Course description, Trinity College, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://www.trincoll.edu/Academics/MajorsAndMinors/Russian/Pages/Courses.aspx>.

⁵ Course description, University of California, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://slavic.ucla.edu/russian/courses/>.

⁶ Course description, University of Colorado, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.colorado.edu/gsl/russian-program>.

⁷ Course description, Harvard University, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://courses.harvard.edu/index.html>.

⁸ Course description, Dartmouth, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://russian.dartmouth.edu/undergraduate/courses>.

⁹ Course description, Utha University, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.uvu.edu/catalog/current/courses/russian>.

¹⁰ Course description, University of Columbia, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://sps.columbia.edu/postbaccalaureate-studies/courses/russian>.

¹¹ Course description, Dickinson College, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/187/russ>.

¹² Course description, Bucknell College, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://coursecatalog.bucknell.edu/courses/russ/>.

¹³ Course description, University of Florida, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://sites.clas.ufl.edu/languages/files/RUW4341-03A3-gorham.pdf>.

six courses were for third-year students, four courses were for fourth-year students, and two courses lacked information about the year of study. Four courses focused on culture, media, and politics; three focused on film and society; three focused on the language of Russian media; one focused on the Russian press; and one examined Russian media mainly as a tool for language learning. Two of the thirteen courses were taught in Russian, and one course was taught in English. For the remaining ten courses, there was no information regarding the course language. This overview reveals that there are content-focused courses and language-focused courses. Table 1 provides an overview of the Russian media courses.

Table 1. Numbers of Existing Courses on Russian Media

Country	Number of Courses	Second-year	Third-Year	Fourth-Year	not stated
U.S.	11	0	5	4	2
U.K.	2	1	1		

5. Application of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in a Russian Media Course

This section examines the pedagogical framework, based on the PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES, of another existing Russian media course for fourth-year Russian students at the University of Edinburgh, UK. The context, content, course objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment are presented below.

5.1. Context of the Course

The Russian department at the University of Edinburgh offers the following degree programs for Russian: Russian Studies (MA), Russian Studies and Business (MA), and Russian Studies and another language (MA)¹⁴. Russian can be studied at the honors level, as either a single or a

¹⁴ Overview, Degree programs, Russian studies, University of Edinburgh, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/degrees/index.php?action=subject&code=48>.

joint honors degree. The Russian studies programs last four years. In year 1, students start with Russian language courses, which are continued in year 2 with the addition of a course on Russian literature. Year 3 is spent in a Russian-speaking country, studying at a university or in a work-experience placement. In Year 4, students have more language classes, including “Prose and Writing in Style” and “Translation and Text Analysis.” The Russian media course is one of five elective courses available in the fourth year; the other four are Russian literature, Russian language and society, Russian politics, and Russian architecture. The Russian media course lasts eleven weeks, with one 100-minute class per week. The course is mainly taught in Russian. The language is switched to English only when students show obvious difficulties in understanding Russian or expressing themselves in Russian.

Students in this Russian media course concurrently took for example courses in Classics, History, History of Art, Business, Politics, and French. Their Russian language level was around B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). According to the CEFR descriptors, students at the B1 level are able to satisfy their main communicative needs in everyday, cultural, educational, and professional situations. They can produce simple, connected texts on familiar topics.

Prior to enrolling in the Russian Media Course, students acquire some knowledge about the life, culture, and mass media in Russia. The Princess Dashkova Centre at the University of Edinburgh regularly organizes events related to the Russian culture and language, such as research seminars in Russian, which students are invited to attend.

5.2. Course Objectives and Course Content

The general aim of the Russian media course is to provide students with knowledge about the roles and functions of print, audiovisual, and digital media in Post-Soviet Russian society, including an understanding of cultural forms in the Russian media system. Another aim is to enable students to talk about media-related topics and express their opinions orally and in a written essay. The course materials for this Russian media course include printed literary texts, as well as television and Internet sources relevant to cultural and social events in Russia. Students are required to learn about the *linguistic, auditory, visual, and gestural modes of*

these media, which they use to decode and critically analyze their content in the classroom. In class, these modes can be studied through VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, READING AND ANALYZING, and LISTENING AND VIEWING ACTIVITIES specific to the cultural and social context of modern Russia. Section 5.4 presents examples of such tasks. If students are not native Russian speakers, they need to learn sufficient cultural, political, and social background information about Russia, so they can later apply this knowledge in practical tasks.

5.2.1 Expected Learning Outcomes

It is expected that by the end of this course, students will demonstrate the ability to analyze Russian television news programs. They should be able to analyze the structure of the news programs and compare it to television news programs in other countries. It is expected that students will become familiar with the history of television and Internet in Russia. They will be able to differentiate between the genres of talk shows, game shows, and series on Russian television and to analyze their specific structure. During the course, students learn to analyze the structure, functions, and characteristics of *Сетевая литература* (engl. network literature) and the social networks *Vkontakte* and *Facebook*. Through numerous exercises, students learn to decode, analyze, and understand LINGUISTIC, VISUAL, AUDITORY, and GESTURAL MODES OF MEANING (New London Group 1996, 2000) on television and the Internet. They acquire the necessary vocabulary and terminology to talk about Russian television and the Internet. Due to the numerous discussions of the reading materials and other relevant topics in class, students can express their own opinion regarding the course topics.

5.2.2 Assessment

The formative and summative assignments for this course include written assignments, a course essay, and a two-hour written exam at the end of the term. Students' oral ability is assessed in each class based on their oral contributions during the exercises; their oral participation grade is based on the correctness of syntax, grammar, and lexis and is 20% of the overall grade. The written exam consists of six questions in two sections. Students choose one question from each section, A and B, and answer these questions in writing. They have two hours (120 minutes) to write the

exam. Following are examples of questions that appeared on the exam in the winter term 2016:

1. How do the format, content and production of Western and Russian news programs relate to each other? (cite examples from the Russian news programs we discussed in class).
2. How do contemporary Russian television series function as a method to build a national identity?
3. Discuss the representation of social values and moral norms in Andrei Malakhov's program "*Пусть говорят.*"
4. Discuss the role of Russian game shows and their hosts as a cultural mediator.
5. Please compare the function, features, and target group of the Russian social network *Vkontakte* and *Facebook*.
6. Discuss the typical elements of СЕТЕПАТУРА in comparison to non-digital literature.

Each exam was assessed based on the student's ability to discuss the topics in English. Moreover, essays were expected to demonstrate that the learners had acquired sufficient background information from the reading materials and individual study. In addition, the language and argumentation in the exam were evaluated on the extent to which each was convincing and appropriate.

5.3 Four Modules of the Russian Media Course

The course consists of four modules, which are taught over eleven weeks. Module 1, "MEDIA CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA," provides the context for understanding the relationships among the state, society, and media culture in Russia, with a special focus on television in the 1990s–2000s. Module 2, "RUSSIAN TELEVISION: INFORMATION POLITICS AND NEWS COVERAGE," deals with the structure of central and regional television broadcasting since 1990, television journalism in the 2000s, Russian news programs, infotainment, and the media coverage of events. In Module 3, "THE CULTURE OF RUSSIAN TV-ENTERTAINMENT," students analyze the cultural specifics of Russian television series, talk shows, and game shows. This module focuses on the representation of society in popular procedurals about the police, military forces, and ordinary

people. Module 4, “RUSSIAN INTERNET CULTURE AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES IN 2000–2017,” affords students the opportunity to analyze the Russian-speaking Internet segment, the Rунet. Students focus on communication styles, the laws concerning the Russian Internet (Rунet), the phenomenon of СЕТЕПАТЯ (ENGL. NETWORK LITERATURE) and a comparison of the social networks *Vkontakte* and *Facebook*. The next section presents these modules with their specific classroom tasks in more detail. Before the start of the first module it is necessary to provide a definition of MEDIA and discuss it with students. Following is a possible definition of MEDIA that can be given to students: “In general, ‘media’ refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio, and the newspaper are different types of media. The term can also be used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies. In the computer world, ‘media’ is also used as a collective noun, but refers to different types of data storage.”¹⁵ Students can be asked to arrange media according to their different characteristics, first by working with a partner and then with the teacher checking the completed work. Next, the students can discuss which Russian media are already known and used by them.

Module 1 “MEDIA CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA”

a) Reading and analyzing

The coursework for the Russian media course includes reading topic-related papers in English or Russian before each class for background information. The papers are accessible on a university-owned online platform and can be downloaded by students. For this module, students were asked to read papers in English by Dunn (2009, 42–55) and Koltsova (2006, 45–72) dealing with Russian television channels in relation to the existing political structures and actors in Russia. In class, these papers were discussed with English questions in a PowerPoint presentation provided by the teacher. Here are some sample questions relevant to the paper by Dunn (2009, 42–55):

1. What kind of TV-programs are available on Russian television according to the paper?

¹⁵ “Definition of ‘Media,’” accessed April 2, 2018, <http://techterms.com/definition/media>.

2. How has the television structure changed after the election of Vladimir Putin?
3. What has gone wrong and why did the system break down, according to the author?
4. How do you understand the term “управляемая демократия” in the text?
5. Which theme of Russian life is mentioned in the paper and what does it mean for the situation of television in Russia?

b) Providing background information

As students of Russian in the UK might have little prior knowledge about the main cultural and political events in Russia during the 1990s–2000s, the discussions about the reading list for this class are supported by a chronological overview of these events in a PowerPoint presentation. A second presentation provides a brief history about Russian television with a focus on the 1990s–2000s. The ownership of each television channel and its programs is explained. Students prepare their own presentations about radio stations and print media in Russia. All of these presentations provide students with relevant background information that helps them understand events from the papers and how they relate to Russian media culture.

c) Vocabulary development

Russian vocabulary related to television, including such terms as *передача* (engl. programme), *ведущий* (engl. host), *гость* (engl. guest), *актер/актриса* (engl. actor/actress), is reviewed with students before the discussion of television programs, if necessary.

Module 2 “RUSSIAN TELEVISION: INFORMATION POLITICS AND NEWS COVERAGE”

Module 2.1 News programs

a) Providing background information

The reading list for this module includes articles by Hutchings and Rulyova (2009, 29–56) and Koltsova (2006, 98–117) about news production for television in Russia. Students probably have little prior knowledge about the structure of Russian central and regional television broadcasting. Therefore, these readings provide useful background

information.

b) Vocabulary development

Vocabulary related to the political and social events in the 2000s needs to be explained in both Russian and English, as it is likely to be unfamiliar to students. For example, the culturally complex and multi-layered items “крышевание” (engl. racketeering) and “рекет” (engl, racket) occur first in the readings at home. Students learn about the context of the usage of those words in the 1990s and 2000s.

c) Listening and viewing activities

Next students are introduced to Russian news programs. This introduction includes an initial discussion of the typical elements of news programs on television: the teaser, the feature of a cultural symbol for the country in the introduction, the presentation and behavior of the news presenters (language, gestures, clothing), the presentation of the main news items, the order of international news and country-related news, the length of the news items, the manner of their presentation, etc. This task affords opportunities for analyzing the LINGUISTIC, VISUAL, AUDITORY, and GESTURAL MODES OF MEANING. Students analyze the format, content, and production of news by NTV, ORT and RBK. The video files can be accessed online or downloaded in advance. In class students use the list of criteria mentioned above and take notes while watching the news in Russian. The television news are shown as individual news items, with a short pause for discussion after each segment. The teacher asks questions similar to those below to guide learners through the viewing process:

1. What is the main topic of the news item?
2. How is it presented visually?
3. How would you describe the tone of voice, behavior, and gestures of the presenter?

News programs might initially be difficult to understand. They require knowledge about current affairs in Russia, and presenters speak faster than students anticipate and use different terminology from what students may be familiar with. When necessary, additional explanations of vocabulary are provided by the teacher as a handout or on the board

before or after watching. The first exercise for students involves summarizing news reports orally in Russian. A second exercise involves comparing features of Russian news to those in the UK, which may be done in class with a partner or later as homework. A third exercise involves analyzing two presentations about the recent elections in Moscow by two different news programs, Ren-TV and TVC. For example, students are asked how the two programs represent their political figures, Сергей Собянин and Алексей Навальный.

a) “Возвращение несогласных” (Ren-TV, Мариана Максимовская)¹⁶

b) Post-Scriptum, min. 01.00–08.46. (TVC, Александр Пушкин)¹⁷

This second viewing activity provides useful practice of the LINGUISTIC, VISUAL, and AUDITORY MODES OF MEANING (New London Group 1996, 2000). For the linguistic mode, students can analyze and characterize the content of speech, choice of lexical items, and tone of voice of both political figures. Visual modes can include the camera perspective and types of scenes in which both politicians appear, such as close-ups of their faces or video excerpts from official statements. Auditory modes may include the use of music or other audio-effects during the programs.

Module 2.2 Infotainment

The second half of the module deals with infotainment, which is first defined by the instructor. The reading materials for this class introduce students to the technical possibilities and media strategies of infotainment. The reading list for this class includes Hutchings and Rulyova (2009, 137–56) and a collective interview with Владимир Познер, Леонид Парфенов, and others about journalism, its relation to infotainment, and the responsibilities and tasks of a journalist.¹⁸ Students consider the following questions in English about this interview for discussion in class:

¹⁶ “Возвращение несогласных,” Ren-TV, Marianna Maksimovskaya, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fY8giMuy02M>.

¹⁷ “Post-Scriptum, min. 01.00–08.46,” TVC, Alexander Pushkov, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkeDIHu9gvU>.

¹⁸ “Informatsiia k razvlecheniiu. XXI vek: novyi informatsionnyi poriadok,” in *Iskusstvo kino* 11 (November 2003), <http://kinoart.ru/archive/2003/11/n11-article1>.

1. What is the function of news according to your opinion?
2. What is the function of news according to the round of experts in the article?
3. Which problems can appear for the production and broadcasting of news?

a) Providing background information

The coverage of cultural and public events, such as the wars in Chechnya or the celebration of День Победы on May 9, can be used as examples of infotainment. Students gather information about these two events from the paper by Koltsova (2006, 205–25) and as homework prior to the class discussion.

b) Listening and viewing activities

In class, students watch an excerpt of День Победы (engl. Victory Day) on YouTube.¹⁹ For this activity, the following questions are used for group and class discussions:

1. How is День Победы celebrated in Russia?
2. What is part of the media coverage on that day?
3. Which technical possibilities and strategies were used during the broadcast of the parade in 2005?
4. How are cameras used during the coverage?

This task also allows students to practice analyzing the LINGUISTIC, VISUAL, and AUDITORY MODES OF MEANING (New London Group 1996, 2000). Popular journalists and television presenters in Russian television, such as Владимир Позднер and Леонид Парфенов, and their programs are introduced with a short presentation. Students read or watch an interview with Леонид Парфенов or Ксения Собчак as homework.

Module 3 “CULTURE OF RUSSIAN TV-ENTERTAINMENT”

a) Providing background information

The reading list for this module includes Hutchings and Rulyova (2009,

¹⁹ “Video-file of the Victory Day—Parade in Moscow,” accessed April 2, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWx0_TmeTM0.

89–113, 160–75), Beumers (2009, 159–77), Condee (2009, 178–88), and Zvereva (2012, 83–100) and deals with Russian СЕРИЯ and СЕРИАЛ. It is necessary to explain the difference between the terms SERIES in English and СЕРИАЛ and СЕРИЯ in Russian. СЕРИАЛ is the Russian equivalent to SERIES in English. СЕРИЯ, on the other hand, means part of a feature film. In the seventies and eighties many Russian films consisted of two or more parts, but they were not a television series as in the UK or USA. A speaking exercise involves the following questions:

1. Which Western series do you watch?
2. What are the topics in these series?
3. What is typical for these series?
4. Do you know any Russian series?

Apart from television series, this module also presents talk shows and game shows in Russia. Talk shows and game shows appear in the same module, because they have a presenter, guests, and an audience. The shows can be analyzed according to similar criteria: the content of the show, its structure, the topics, the atmosphere, the behavior and language of the presenter, the guests and the audience. A PowerPoint presentation introduces students to the talk show format in general and gives an overview of the history and origin of talk shows in Post-Soviet Russia. Students first read an English article about game shows in Russia by Hutchings and Rulyova (2009, 160–75) and then watch fragments in class. Game shows are discussed in terms of their format and the interaction of the host with his audience.

b) Vocabulary development

Talk shows and game shows often present a special challenge for students because they may include colloquial expressions that non-native speakers do not know. In this course, such colloquial expressions are explained and listed on the whiteboard before or after watching the video excerpts from talks shows and game shows. Additional difficulties for listening arise when several guests and the host talk at the same time. Therefore, the instructor provides a summary of the main topics in each show prior to viewing.

c) Listening and viewing activities

Examples of Russian television series are presented through short video clips from the following popular Russian series: “Гибель империи” (a series about people during World War I), “Каменская” (a popular Russian crime series with a female detective), “Участок” (a crime series that takes place in a Russian village), “Улицы разбитых фонарей” (a series about a group of four policemen fighting against brutal and unusual types of crime), “Тайны следствия” (a series about the cases in a Russian district attorney’s office), “Зона” (a series about life in a Russian prison), “Штрафбат” (a series about soldiers in a war prison in Russia), and “Солдаты” (a comedy series about the life in the Russian army). While watching the video clips, students take notes regarding the presentation of the state, society, and the individual in each series with the help of the following questions:

1. What is your impression about the first five minutes in each series?
2. What is the attitude of the author of the article (Condee 2009, 178–88) towards the content and presentation of historical events in this television series?
3. According to the author, what is the relationship between the state and individual?
4. What is your own experience regarding the meaning of the individual and society in Russia?

A second assignment involves comparing three television series about prison and army life: “Зона,” “Штрафбат,” and “Солдаты.” The aim is to explain the atmosphere and visual elements in these series. Students receive the following questions and take notes while watching:

1. How do these serials differ from each other visually and what do they have in common?
2. What kind of controversial elements do they include?

With this task students can practice analyzing the VISUAL and AUDITORY MODES OF MEANING (New London Group 1996, 2000). Students compare their notes in pairs or small groups. Then their results can be presented and discussed in class.

In the next practical section of this module, students watch video clips from the popular Russian talk shows “Что хочет женщина?” (discussion of female topics), “Частная жизнь” (discussion of real-life problems in front of an audience), “Жди меня” (search for missing people), “Основной инстинкт” (discussion of political topics), “Большая стирка” (discussion of guests’ problems in front of an audience), “Пусть говорят” (the follow-up of “Большая стирка”), and “Школа злословия” (an intellectual talk show with the author Tatiana Tolstaia). First, students demonstrate comprehension of the topic and the main points discussed in the shows by answering questions. In a second exercise, students evaluate the atmosphere of the conversation and role of the audience, presenter, and guests, analyzing their behavior and the type of language (the expression of respect and disrespect in the conversation). This a good opportunity to practice the LINGUISTIC, VISUAL, AUDITORY, and GESTURAL MODES OF MEANING (New London Group 1996, 2000). In a later discussion, students express their opinion about whether talk shows can be considered to be a mediator between public and private spheres. Comparing Russian talk shows to shows from the UK that students are familiar with is also an option. Both exercises offer speaking practice for students in Russian.

Next, students analyze the content and structure of the popular Russian game show “Поле чудес,” which is based on the American show “*Wheel of Fortune*.” While they watch video clips from the show, students take notes about the conversations in and the structure of the show, including the role and behavior of the host. Students are then asked about the function of the presentation of gifts in “Поле чудес.” After this task, students compare the structure of other game shows in Russia and the UK in a speaking exercise.

Module 4 “RUSSIAN INTERNET CULTURE AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES IN 2000–2017”

a) Providing background information

This module covers the Russian Internet segment (Runet), “Сетеварыпа,” and social networks. A lecture and accompanying PowerPoint presentation in Russian provide a brief history and definition of the Russian segment of the Internet. Students use the Internet frequently and are very familiar with the use and structure of social networks such as

Facebook and *Twitter*, as well as blogs, chats, and online applications.

As homework, students read an English paper by Strukov (2009) about Russian laws concerning the Internet, which is then discussed in class. Students compare laws concerning the Internet in Russia to those of Western countries. A second topic in this module is “*Сетевая литература*,” which is a type of literature that is produced and edited on or for the Internet and is widely accessible to participants there. For the third topic, social networks, students gather information regarding characteristics of *Facebook* and then compare these characteristics to those of Russian social media sites.

b) Reading/Analyzing activities

Students are asked to take notes concerning the differences between printed literature and digitally published literature on the Internet with the aid of the following questions:

1. Do you read literature online?
2. Which resources for Russian literature do you know?
3. Do you use e-books? If yes, how do they differ from print books?
4. Which features are typical for print literature/online literature? Make a list.

In a practical exercise, text excerpts from *udaff.com* can be discussed as an example for “*Сетевая литература*” with the following questions:

1. How can people participate in *udaff.com*?
2. Who is the typical user of *udaff.com*?
3. What is the structure and aim of the project?
4. What is your understanding of the interaction among users and between users and the administrator?

Such an exercise provides an opportunity to practice analyzing the LINGUISTIC and VISUAL MODES OF MEANING (New London Group 1996, 2000). For the topic “social networks,” students can compare *Facebook* to the Russian network *Vkontakte* and analyze the features of both networks. Often *Vkontakte* is called the Russian variation of *Facebook*, but students can express their opinion regarding this statement.

c) Vocabulary development

Udaff.com poses a linguistic problem for students because it includes colloquial speech in Russian, “падонский язык,” (Russian internet jargon opposed to conventional linguistic norms) and even “мат,” (engl. Russian swear words) Russian swear words. Падонский язык is defined as the intentional misrepresentation of orthography, where the written form of the word tries to imitate its pronunciation on the Internet (Zvereva 2012). In a textual analysis of udaff.com, students can look for “падонский язык” and “мат.”

5.4 Student outcomes

The final exams revealed that students were generally able to give the correct answers to their chosen questions. However, some students lacked the ability to use sufficient background information from the readings, and a few students struggled with the language, using colloquial expressions in their answers. Students earned extra points for using examples, sources for the arguments, statistics, and sufficient argumentation. Some students’ answers were slightly off-topic, and their argumentation was weak. Too short, inaccurate, and repetitive answers, which lacked context and detail, were awarded fewer points and a lower grade. Generally, students showed that they learned the main information from the classes and understood the important points. The grades for the exam ranged from 52 to 80 points out of 100 possible points; the threshold for passing was 40 points. All students passed the course. Students’ ability to speak about various topics improved, and students were able to freely express their opinion in Russian during discussions.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to provide an example of a pedagogical framework for a Russian media course in the UK, based on the theory of multiliteracies. For the correct use and understanding of communication on television and the Internet, students had to learn to recognize, decode, and analyze the LINGUISTIC, AUDITORY, VISUAL, and GESTURAL MODES OF MEANING of these media. The methods for multiliteracies pedagogy in this Russian media course included *providing background information, listening and watching activities, reading/analyzing activities, and vocabulary development*. The assessment at the end of the course revealed that

students gained a good or very good knowledge of the course topics. It can be concluded that the Russian media course effectively applied the pedagogical framework based on the theory of multiliteracies and provided students with a sound knowledge about television and Internet in Russia, as well as a higher proficiency in oral expression and knowledge of new vocabulary.

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