

Original Research

Classical texts in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language: Investigation of a case study of 2018–2023 curriculum

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Traditional foreign language programmes for students in humanities and technical faculties, excluding philological ones, do not include in-depth study of the history and culture of the corresponding region, which limits the overall language proficiency level of future specialists. This paper describes the theoretical and practical foundations of the proposed methodology for incorporating classical literary texts into the process of teaching foreign languages to non-philology students, aiming to deepen their knowledge of history, social processes, and stages of cultural development in the target language country. The authors provide justification for utilising both classical methods such as reading, translation, and retelling of literary texts, as well as elements of the communicative approach, such as group work, presentations, the use of audio-visual materials, and so on. The aim of the research was to determine the effectiveness of the proposed course for students based on the manual created by the authors using the proposed methodology. This article analyses the results of a survey conducted between 2018 and 2023, among students learning Spanish as a foreign language at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba (RUDN University). The study employed a quantitative analysis using a mixed-method approach with statistical calculations and analysis. The survey data confirms the authors' idea of the high effectiveness of the integrated study method of historical and social processes, as well as literature from the country of the target language. Specifically, 90 percent of the students noted an enhancement of their knowledge of the culture and history of the country, and 67 percent of the students indicated significant benefits of the course for developing competencies relevant to their future professional careers. Due to its universality, the approach can be extrapolated to other foreign languages for students from different disciplines and levels of study.

KEYWORDS: teaching Spanish, literature, ELE, language learning, cultural competence, communicative competence



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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the current challenges for a university professor in the 21st century is the development of a new methodology for introducing literary texts into the process of teaching foreign languages. The main difficulty lies in the fact that, unlike the generation of the 20th and early 21st centuries, young people of the 2020s read significantly less and in non-philological classrooms we have repeatedly encountered a lack of understanding among students regarding the essence of literary texts and their differences from business, news, or scientific texts. Students do not always know the genre laws of its construction, do not see the correlation with the ideas of the era. Therefore, working with literary texts in the process of teaching foreign languages should also

involve immersing students in the world of literature. However, students in non-philological disciplines of study usually pay special attention to the language of their specialty and professional communication, and due to the shortage of class hours, their exposure to the culture and literature of the target language country is often overlooked, leading to a problem with the overall cultural proficiency of professionally trained translators with university education.

The awareness of the aforementioned problem prompted the Spanish language section of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at RUDN University to develop a unique methodology for introducing literary texts into the context of foreign language teaching for non-philological disciplines. Over

the course of five years, a textbook was prepared and published in electronic format in 2020 titled *Spain: History, Society, Literature*, along with the corresponding textbook (Khimich & Palacios González, 2020). In 2022, a printed version of this manual was released, based on materials from the course that had been taught for over 15 years.

As an integral part of a country's culture and a manifestation of language use, the literary text is an excellent resource for Spanish as a Foreign Language, especially in ELE (Español como lengua extranjera – Spanish as a foreign language) classes. By reading classical literary texts from different eras, guided by their teachers, students can gain insights into the evolution and history of the society that uses the language, while also analysing the influence of social development factors and changes in the language itself. Particularly, Spanish literature is incredibly rich and serves as a gateway for students to explore the Hispanic world.

We believe that one of the most crucial criteria in developing a methodology for working with literary texts in foreign languages in the 21st century, specifically for students in non-philological disciplines, is contextualisation of the work. A literary text is not just a linguistic model of the highest quality, but also a complex of the author's ideas, values, and perspectives of the era, reflecting the essence of the people's mentality at a particular historical stage, often framed by descriptions of everyday life and traditions. Working with a literary text outside its context, that is, without prior discussion with students about the historical, geopolitical, economic, social, and cultural context of the era, deprives students of the opportunity to delve deeper into the text and see it as more than just a linguistic model to imitate. In our course, structured chronologically, we explore all aspects of society in a given period: historical and political events, economy, philosophical ideas of the era, cultural movements, and social development issues. The introduction to the period culminates with the reading of a literary work which, when perceived by the students in the context of the events, ideas, and problems of the era, serves as an author's personalised illustration of historical events.

In this paper, the authors are committed to investigating various aspects of student progress after completing this course, its effectiveness through the results extracted from a survey conducted with several groups of students who were exposed to the material.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Currently, the debate about the role of literary texts in Spanish as a Foreign Language class remains open. In recent decades, various studies have emerged that examine the role of literature in second language learning programmes, and there is an extensive list of authors who strongly advocate the use of literary texts in ELE classes. Examples include the works of Sitman and Lerner (1996, 1999); Acquaroni Muñoz (1997, 2006, 2007, 2008); Martínez Sallés (1999, 2004); Naranjo (1999); Martín Peris (2000); Sanz Pastor (2000); San Mateo Valdehita (2001);

Sanz Pastor and Higuera García (2005); Núñez Sabarís (2005); Mendoza Fillola (2007); Albaladejo García (2007, 2017); Ubach Medina (2008); Carrillo García et al. (2008); González Cobas and Herrero Sanz (2009); Iriarte Vañó (2009); Garrido and Montesa (2010); Alonso Cortés (2010); Sanmartín Vélez (2011); Sáez (2011); González Cobas (2014, 2019); Nevado Fuentes (2015); Gómez Sacristán and Madrigal López (2017); Granero Navarro (2017); Palacios González (2015, 2017a); Serradilla Castaño and González Cobas (2017); García Aguilar (2018); Lanseros Sánchez and Sánchez García (2018); Reyes-Torres (2019); Díez Mediavilla (2019). Works such as those by Martín Peris (2000), Acquaroni Muñoz (2006, 2007, 2008), Sanz Pastor (2006), Mendoza Fillola (2007), Millares and Binns (2002), Benetti et al. (2003), and Khimich and Palacios González (2011) demonstrate a trend towards the recovery of the didactic value of literary texts in the language learning process. In spite of this, many current textbooks offer few literary texts among their language samples, and those that are included appear in a decontextualised form and sometimes only serve as examples of the linguistic and grammatical structures studied in the unit. Indeed, one of the conclusions of the comparative study of textbooks carried out by Professor Martín Peris found that although *'in the 1980s literary texts made a full entry into textbooks published in Spain'* (Martín Peris, 2000, p. 122), at present *'literature is considered to be invested with a special difficulty, or a special respect, which prevents it from being made accessible to beginners'* (Martín Peris, 2000, p. 123). He highlights the predominance of activities oriented towards oral comprehension, and that the tasks to be carried out by students are isolated from each other and that there is no common reading goal. Also, literary texts are inserted in many textbooks at the end of the lesson, which shows that they are not a priority as didactic material, as if they served as *'gratification reserved for those who have managed to learn'* (Martín Peris, 2000, p. 123). Following in these footsteps, Acquaroni (2006), in his study of textbooks published between 1995 and 2005, shows that the percentage of literary texts decreased even further compared to Martín Peris' data (Acquaroni, 2006, p. 52). In this line, after analysing a selection of ELE communicative textbooks published between 2002 and 2015, Palacios González (2017a) perceives a certain improvement in the didactic exploitation of literary texts, since the predominance of linguistic practice favours the integration of skills and considers literary aspects. In contrast, the analysis of textbooks by Palacios González (2017b) reveals that the distribution of literary texts is very irregular depending on the textbook and that students are offered a biased image of the literary heritage in Spanish, with hardly any attention paid to non-contemporary classical literary texts. Moreover, as González Cobas (2021) has recently pointed out, if we look at the didactic exploitation, the activities with literary texts do not work or do little work on sociocultural competence and interculturality.

Given that the authors of the textbook on reading classical literary texts which is the subject of this article belong to two different methodological traditions (i.e., Spanish and Russian),

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before continuing with our presentation, it seems pertinent to briefly yet descriptively review the use of literary texts as a resource for language teaching in the Russian tradition, particularly in the case of Spanish.

In the Russian linguistic school, classical literature is maintained as the basis for structuring second/foreign language textbooks (Nuzhdin et al., 2004; Larionova & Chibisova, 2005; Kienja, 2005; Soler et al., 2005; Kondrashova & Kostyleva, 2014; Gorohova & Tsareva, 2021). Although it seems that all Russian researchers and methodologists agree on the issue of the importance of literary texts in foreign language learning, in the last few decades there has been an open scientific debate about the techniques and, above all, the objectives that teachers should consider when using artistic texts in their foreign language classes (Khimich, 2008; Kuznetsova, 2011; Bahtiozina, 2015; Eremina, 2015; Gilmanova et al., 2016; Minakova et al., 2017; Nikonova & Chelikova, 2017; Knyagicheva, 2021; Sanginova & Shalyukhina, 2021). To take one example, Kuznetsova (2011, p. 120) mentions the following objectives: (1) linguistic (enrichment of vocabulary, demonstration of the possibilities of the grammatical system, etc.); (2) communicative (the literary text as a starting point for discussion); (3) knowledge of culture (realities, processes, events and facts of the nation's culture); and (4) competences for the aesthetic perception of the artistic text.

Despite considering the cultural knowledge associated with literary texts, these studies do not place enough emphasis on the importance of contextualising literary works and their connection to the learning process of history, ideas from each era, and the social, cultural, and political development of the country or countries where the language studied is spoken.

Particularly, in the ELE class in Russia, although literature holds significant importance and is acknowledged by both teachers and students, it is primarily used as an illustration of linguistic, lexical, and grammatical content, disregarding its literary character. Therefore, while Russian students of Spanish have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with excerpts from the most prominent Hispanic literary heritage texts, in most cases, they receive them solely as a language model that exemplifies a grammatical phenomenon studied in the unit and/or as a means to enrich their vocabulary. Without diminishing all the positive aspects of this approach, we would like to point out

that it has certain drawbacks. The main one is that works or fragments of works are not chosen for their literary value or the ideas they contain but rather for the linguistic content that will serve to work on grammatical usage in class (e.g., the use of the subjunctive mood in a particular type of sentence, differences between the Indefinite and Imperfect tenses, etc.). Thus, in grammar classes, the historical-cultural value of the works, their contextualisation, and the relationship of the ideas they contain with the reality of the time in which they were written are typically left out of the study. This results in a superficial approach to literary texts that, deprived of their content and its cultural and historical value, do not have the effect on student perception that they could have had if it had been presented from another methodological perspective.

Taking into account this issue, and since it is very important for us that, in addition to the aforementioned use in grammar and vocabulary classes, artistic texts are studied with a broader and deeper focus, contextualised in the era to which they belong and their ideas, we have dedicated our efforts to adding contextualised readings with communicative and critical analysis activities of literary works to the traditional use that the Russian school makes of classic texts in the ELE classroom. Thus, we highlight the potential of literary texts for the development of linguistic competencies, as well as for the development of other competencies aimed at training future specialists with deeper knowledge of the country's culture.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1. Authors' methodology

The manual created based on our methodology is entitled *Spain: History, Society, Literature*. The material was designed to be used with Russian-speaking students at advanced levels in Spanish (B2-C1), although we believe that the method is universal and suitable for any student at this level. Our approach was to organise and present the course materials with not only philology students in mind but also other students from different humanities disciplines and even technical careers who may not necessarily have a consolidated reading habit or deep knowledge of Spanish history and culture. Certainly, both the organisation of the material and the simple structure of the manual allow it to be used both at university level and in bilingual schools or other ELE courses.

For the elaboration of our manual, we have combined aspects that we consider most effective from the Russian methodology (such as reading and translation of lengthy texts, report writing, memorisation, etc.) with other elements of the communicative approach (such as speaking practice, personal involvement, student engagement, group interaction and cooperation in the learning process, etc.). In this way, we have effectively achieved a didactic approach that allows us to integrate skills through a wide range of tasks that coherently combine reading, translation, storytelling (oral summary of the plot with the exposition of main ideas), analytical and hypothetical commentary, group dynamics, presentation of papers and reports, written

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composition, memorisation, recitation, and analysis of and commentary on audio-visual materials (films, songs, etc.) as well as other historical and cultural texts related to each period. Our objective is to achieve linguistic improvement alongside comprehensive education and personal enrichment of the individual, resulting in the development of their interpretative and critical abilities.

In our proposal, we understand literature not as a model to follow, but as a manifestation of language, an artistic expression that is distinct from others. Therefore, we emphasise the fact that literature should be studied in the ELE class as literature, making it clear to students that literary texts may not always serve as imitable examples in everyday speech or in scientific or professional language. Thus, while our objectives include teaching linguistic aspects of Spanish through the course, we do not approach the study of literature from a grammatical or lexical perspective. Instead, we aim to expand the knowledge that students acquire in other courses focused exclusively on grammar, paying more attention to the development of other competencies. We advocate the idea that careful examination of history, social processes, and cultural development through literature is highly beneficial at advanced levels of foreign language learning as it enables learners to better understand the mentality and character of the people who speak it. As aptly highlighted by Sáez (2011), the cultural decoding of literary texts is necessary in the ELE class because *'the difficulty that renders a classic work unreadable for both native and foreign readers lies not only in the language but also in the context and content'* (Sáez, 2011, p. 63).

In line with the Russian tradition, the units in the manual follow a chronological order, in which literary texts that serve as the basis for the course are grouped by historical periods. In the selection of texts (mostly excerpts from longer texts), we aimed to provide variety in order to present a wide range of text types, including prose, poetry, and drama. The texts are presented in a diachronic translation. Another criterion for our selection of texts was their representativeness, either due to their dissemination or their importance for understanding Spanish culture. We also considered the universal and timeless nature of the themes and ideas present in the literary texts, which is highly relevant for successfully organising debates and activities that engage students personally.

In all units, the literary texts in the manual are presented in a contextualised manner to activate students' critical thinking abilities. They are encouraged to compare their own perspectives with the diverse viewpoints and sensitivities of the actors from each historical period. The contextualisation of the texts is achieved through activities that require student participation, both individually and in groups, connecting their new knowledge about Spain with their existing understanding of universal history and culture, as well as their knowledge of Russia.

The tasks accompanying the reading of the texts are varied, just like the structure of the units. We have chosen to diversify the activities with the aim of energising the units so that students do not encounter a predictable pattern, believing that this diversity and unpredictability provoke student interest and creativity. However, the exercises in each unit are traditionally organised into three phases: pre-reading, reading, and post-reading.

In accordance with everything stated above, our manual aims to develop the learners' integrated competencies: communicative competence in (ELE) along with lexical-grammatical competence, reading competence, literary competence, artistic-aesthetic competence, and pluricultural competence. Our intention is to convey to students, through contextualised classic literary texts, that throughout history, there have been different value systems, political and administrative systems, and varying relationships between individuals and power. Understanding this fact critically and reflectively can help them better comprehend the social conflicts of other eras and many of those in the present.

3.2. Participants

The materials in our manual have been put into practice for 12 years in classes at the RUDN University in Moscow with groups of third-year Spanish students from different humanities courses (International Relations, Public Administration, History, Philosophy, Art, Political Science and Sociology). The course *Spain: History, Society, Literature* is taught to students over the course of one academic year (2 academic hours per week). Since 2018, we have been offering students the opportunity to participate in a post-course self-evaluation survey, which allows us to analyse the effectiveness of the teaching methodology employed in this course.

A total of 147 students from 2 groups of third-year Spanish students participated in the course evaluation survey each academic year, with an average age of 20 years. All of them were studying at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, pursuing dual degrees combining their major discipline with studies in Russian-Spanish interpretation/translation. To avoid biasing the responses, students were given the option to complete the questionnaire anonymously if they preferred.

3.3. Methods

The method of the research is conducting a survey which makes inferences from data collected by means of the questionnaire specially designed for research purposes. At the end of the

classes taught during the academic years 2018-2023 (September to May, 5 years), we invited students to fill out a questionnaire regarding their assessment of the course and the level of interest it had sparked in them, in order to determine the effectiveness of the materials and which activities had captured their attention the most. The survey questions were formulated in the Spanish language, as indicated below.

The personal evaluation questionnaire consisted of five questions (A, B, C, D, and E). It began with an initial closed-ended question (A): *Was the course Spain: History, Society, Literature useful for you?* This question aimed to determine the overall assessment of the teaching methodology, course materials, and integration of various activities in the process of improving language skills.

For the second (B), third (C), fourth (D), and fifth (E) questions, we provided students with multiple-choice options, where they could select one or several options. For the second question (B) *Evaluate which knowledge, skills, and abilities were acquired during the course*, students could choose any number of answers from the seven options provided: I gained knowledge about the culture and history of Spain; I learned to easily read long texts of various content; I improved my reading skills; I developed speaking skills and expressing my own point of view; I improved my writing skills, learned to write long texts; I familiarised myself with Spanish literature (I developed literary competence); I developed translation skills into the Russian language; I developed listening skills. These questions aimed to assess the students' evaluation of the various language competencies they acquired.

The third question (C) *Do you think this course will be beneficial for your professional career after graduation?* implied choosing from three answer options: yes, definitely, it will be beneficial for my professional career because it is important to have a lot of knowledge about the history and culture of the country; yes, because my knowledge of the Spanish language has greatly improved during this course (plus I developed many language competencies); no, I don't think this course will be beneficial for my career. This question aimed to show us whether students

consider the acquired knowledge about the culture, history, and literature of the studied language's country to be useful for their professional growth or if they only see the benefit of the course in terms of progress in learning the Spanish language.

The fourth question (D) *Which topics and aspects of the course did you find most interesting?* aimed to analyse students' interest in studying the substantive aspects of the course. Students could choose any number of the eight answers: history topics; reading literary texts; cultural aspect; social processes; country's economy; I liked the idea of studying everything as a whole, connecting philosophical ideas of the era with history and culture; I found it intriguing to trace the protagonist's perspective in the literary work within the historical and social context of the era we studied before reading the texts; I didn't enjoy studying the history and culture of Spain, I have other interests.

The fifth question (E) *Which tasks did you like the most?* involved choosing from eight possible answers: reading and translating historical texts; translating literary texts, including poetry; retelling; commenting and analysing; memorising and reciting poems; group work: collaborative analysis and commentary; watching movies; preparing and presenting reports. The textbook combines a large amount of non-repetitive tasks aimed at developing various skills and competencies. This question aimed to identify students' interest in different types of tasks.

After collecting the survey data, the responses were processed using a mixed-method approach with statistical calculations and quantitative analysis of students' answers. To illustrate these results, we have prepared graphs, which have allowed us to determine conclusions about the outcomes of the course.

4. STUDY RESULTS

4.1. General evaluation of the course

In response to the first question (A), which had a simple and closed response format, out of the 147 participants, 100% answered 'yes', which initially indicates the effectiveness of the course from the perspective of personal evaluation by the students (Figure 1):

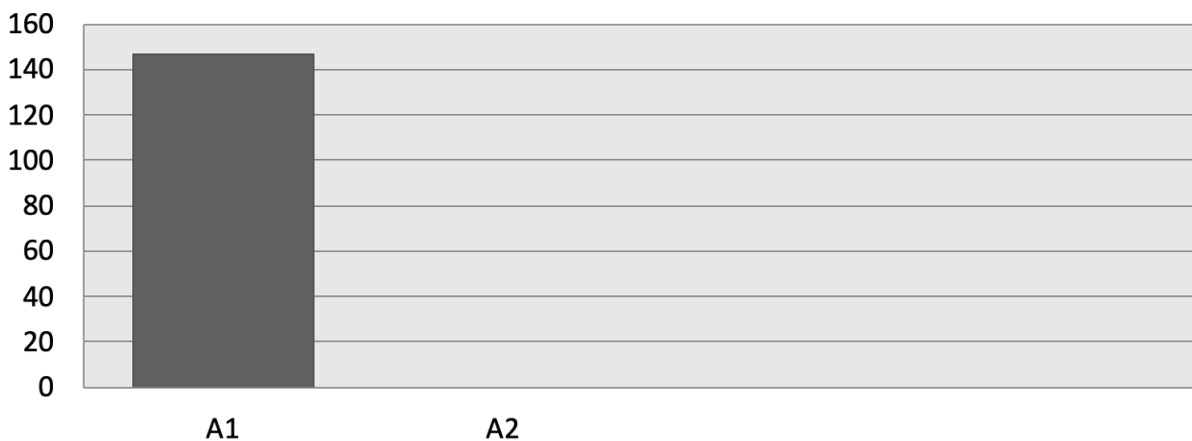


Figure 1. Visualisation of Question A responses (Has the course been useful for you?), by number of answers marked

4.2. Evaluation of language competences

The second question (B) was dedicated to the self-assessment of acquired knowledge and competencies. We were particularly interested in knowing the students' evaluation in this re-

gard, as we believe that self-assessment is of great importance as it allows the learner to engage with the course methodology, assess their progress, and understand which aspects of language learning they still need to improve (Table 1, Figure 2).

Table 1
Responses to Question B: Evaluate the knowledge, skills, and competencies that you think you have developed during this course

TASK	RESPONSE	'YES' RESPONSES (%)
B1	I have improved my knowledge of culture and history	90
B2	I have learned to read longer texts of difficult content more easily, improving my reading comprehension skills	71
B3	I have improved my speaking skills to express my point of view	67
B4	I have improved my writing skills, to write complicated texts	65
B5	I have developed my literary competence	85
B6	I have improved my Russian translation skills	42
B7	I have developed my listening comprehension skills	22

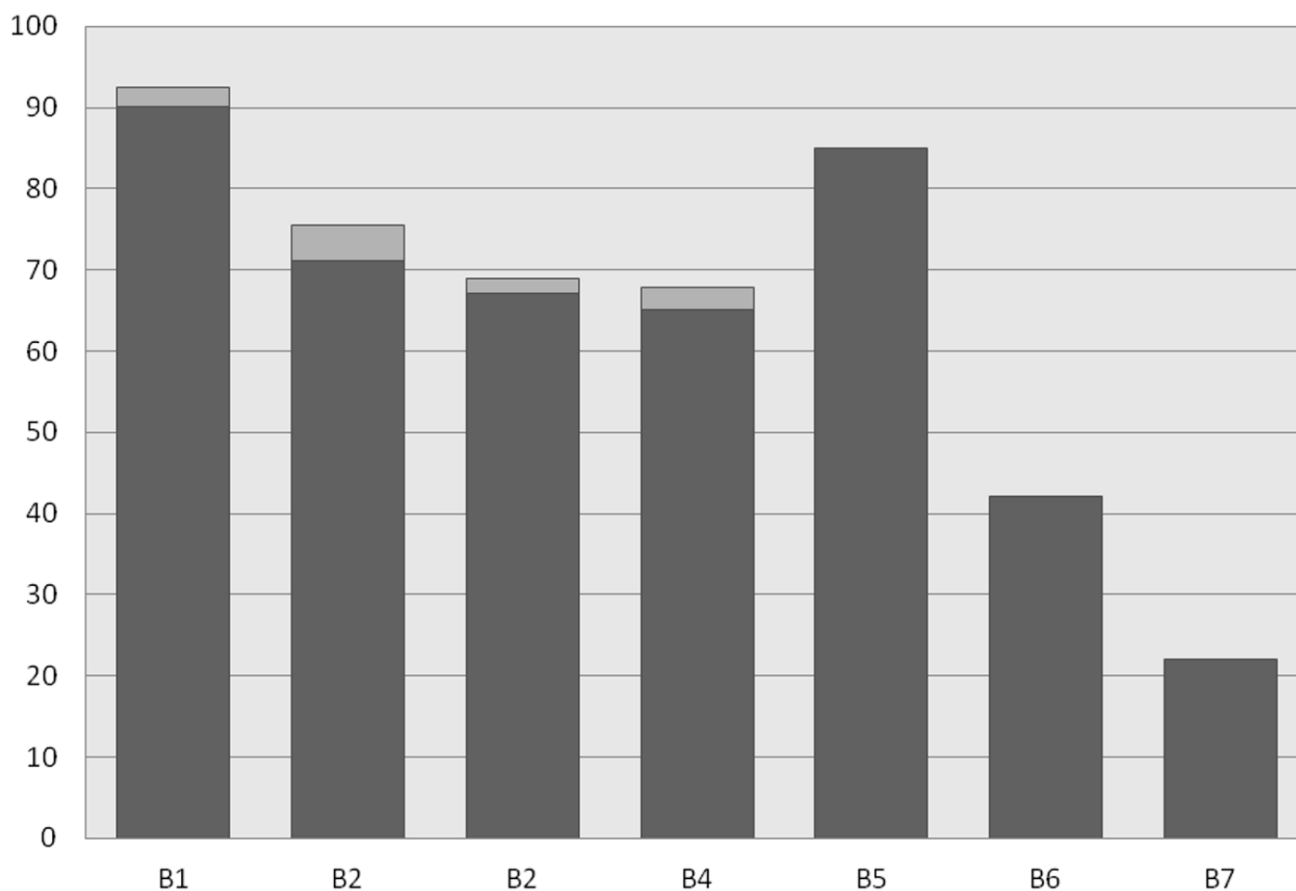


Figure 2. Visualisation of Question B responses (Evaluate the knowledge, skills, and competencies that you think you have developed during this course), by number of answers marked

Given the characteristics of the course and the emphasis placed on these aspects, it was predictable to have a high percentage (90%) of participants who claimed to have improved their cultural competence and knowledge of history after receiving the classes. We consider the percentages obtained for responses B2 and B6 to be very positive, as we have achieved one of the course objectives, namely, to teach students to read complex texts more easily in order to develop the habit of reading in Spanish. It is also very encouraging that 85% of the students believed they had improved their literary competence, especially

considering that these students were not philologists. Additionally, the result regarding the improvement of their ability to express their point of view orally is also good, particularly considering the difficulty presented in some texts and the complex analytical tasks proposed.

4.3. Professional usefulness evaluation

In the third question (C), we asked the students to reflect on their future career and link the course they had taken to their potential professional growth (Table 2, Figure 3):

Table 2

Responses to Question C: Do you believe that this course will be useful for your professional career after completing university?

TASK	RESPONSE	'YES' RESPONSES (%)
C1	Yes, I will certainly become more competent, because it is important to know a lot about the history and culture of the country	65
C2	Yes, because I have made a lot of progress in my Spanish during this course, and I have developed a lot of skills	67
C7	No, I don't think this course will be useful for my career	1

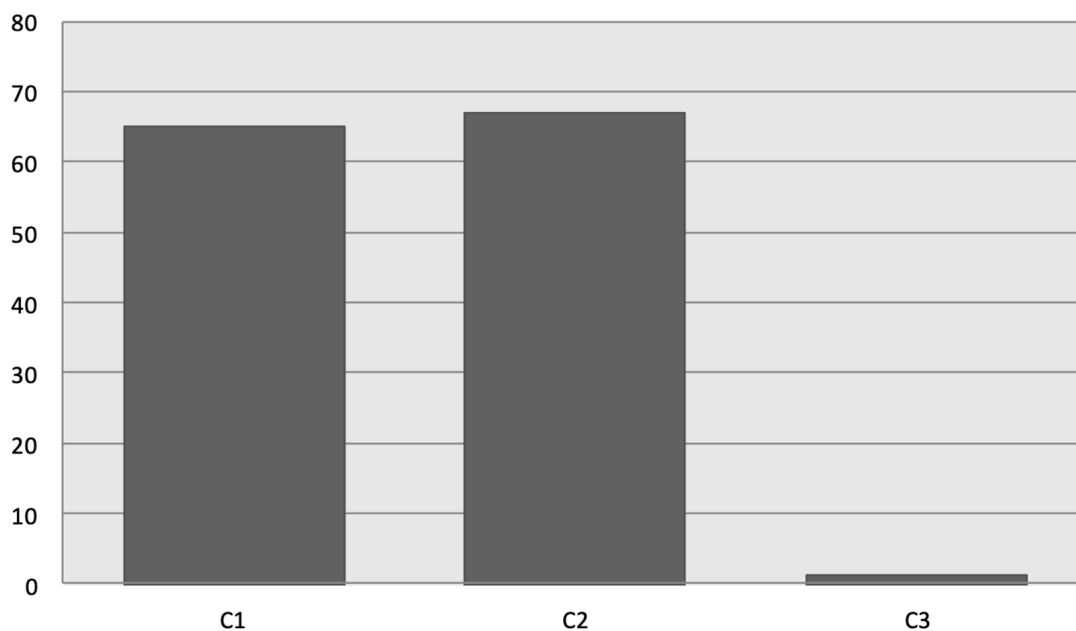


Figure 3. Visualisation of Question C responses (Do you believe that this course will be useful for your professional career after completing university?), by number of answers marked

As we can see, participants were offered the option (with answers C1 and C2) to indicate either the importance of history and culture knowledge or other competences for their future career, among which we understand linguistic competence to be included, as it is a foreign language course. Only one student stated that they believed the course would not be useful for their future. The majority of the remaining students perceived this question as a choice, selecting one or the other answer, while a

few participants marked both answers. This result demonstrates that for approximately half of the students, the development of their cultural competence is as important as having a good command of the language. From our perspective, focusing on second language teaching in a university context, this is a highly positive aspect, as one of our goals is to train professionals who have a strong cultural background and possess critical thinking skills for reflection and analysis.

4.4. Evaluation of the content aspects of the course

Given the diversity in the group composition, with participants having varied interests and knowledge, we decided to focus the fourth question of the questionnaire (D) on determining which topics and aspects covered during the course had aroused the most interest among them. In formulating the answers, we provided the respondents with the option to specify each of the topics (history, literary texts, cultural themes, social issues, economy) and the opportunity to evaluate their opinion on the integrated work of all these aspects and the connections between the texts and the ideas of the era, culture, and history (answer

D6). Additionally, we wanted to gauge their opinion on one of the essential aspects of the method: the curiosity generated by seeing the historical and social context of their time through the eyes of the literary characters.

We emphasise that for us, this curiosity generated in the classes is one of the most important elements for student motivation when undertaking challenging tasks that require personal involvement, as well as for approaching the perspective of the protagonists, which will help students contextualise the literary text as a manifestation of the personal viewpoint of a specific era (Table 3, Figure 4):

Table 3

Responses to Question D: Which topics and aspects of the course did you find most interesting?

TASK	RESPONSE	'YES' RESPONSES (%)
D1	History topics	65
D2	Reading literary texts	44
D3	Everything that was linked to culture	39
D4	Studying social processes	61
D5	Studying the country's economic processes	41
D6	I liked the idea of studying everything together, to see how the ideas of the time were related to history and culture	70
D7	I found it curious to see through the eyes of the protagonists of the literary works the historical and social context that we studied before reading the texts	44
D8	I did not enjoy studying the history and culture of Spain, as I am interested in other things	2

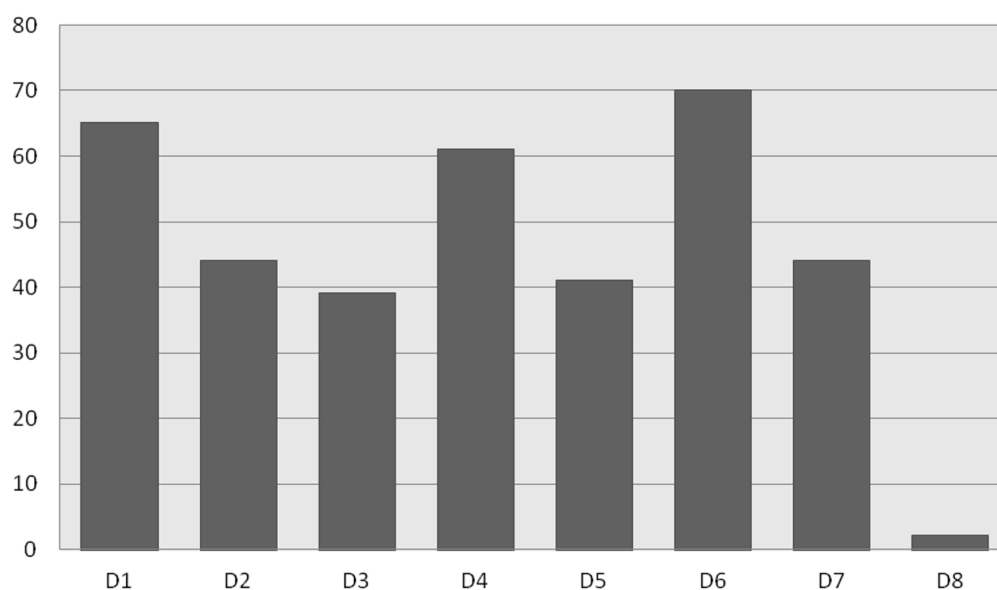


Figure 4. Visualisation of Question D responses (Which topics and aspects of the course did you find most interesting?), by number of answers marked

The results of the responses to this question appear to be very illustrative. According to these results, the aspects that interested the participants the most in the course were: topics on history (65%), social processes (61%), economic processes (41%), and culture (39%). Only 3 out of 147 students did not find the course content interesting. Meanwhile, 44% of students found reading classic literary works to be the most interesting aspect of the course, which we can positively evaluate as an indicator of the effectiveness of the method in engaging students in reading classics in Spanish. This is especially noteworthy considering that these students are not philologists and the texts we

read were classics and ancient, some of them even in their original versions, which can be quite challenging for a third-year foreign Spanish student. Similarly encouraging are the percentages obtained in responses D6 and D7, especially the 70% for the first of these, in which students responded that they truly enjoyed working with the texts in a contextualised manner.

4.5. Evaluation of the methodological design

The last question of our survey (E) was focused on the students' assessment of the tasks proposed during the course (Table 4, Figure 5):

Table 4
 Responses to Question E: What kind of assignments did you like the most?

TASK	RESPONSE	'YES' RESPONSES (%)
E1	Read and translate historical texts	69
E2	Translate literary works and poetry	48
E3	Relating the texts	28
E4	Comment and analyse	65
E5	Learn poetry	38
E6	Working in groups, comparing and commenting together	54
E7	Watch films	37
E8	Make reports and presentations and share them with the group	17

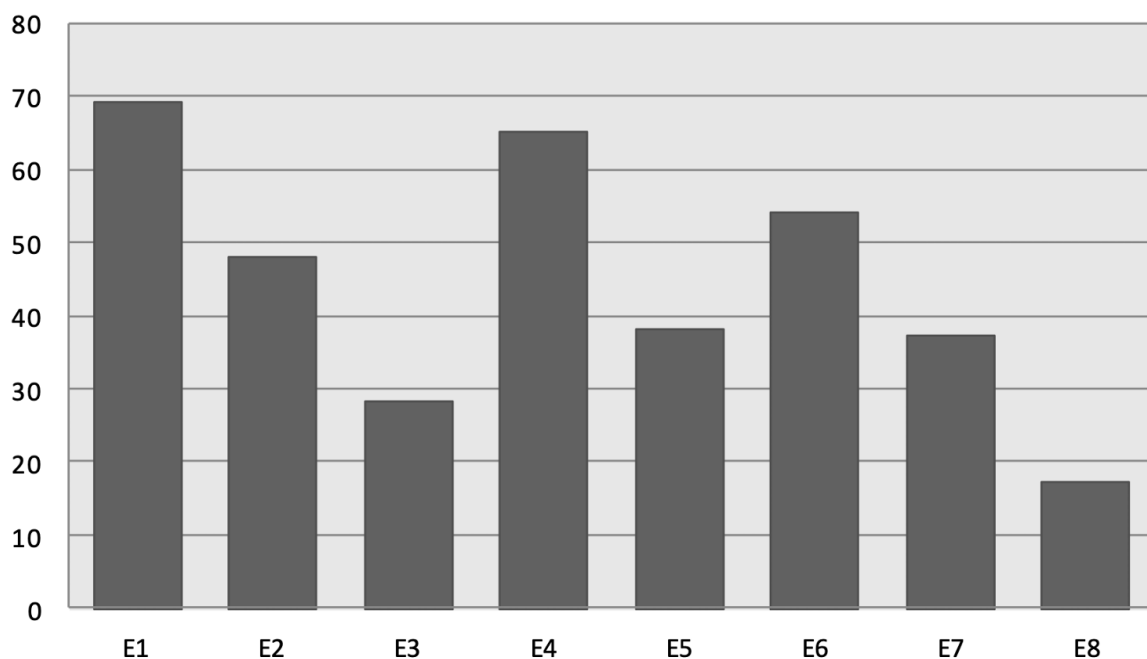


Figure 5. Visualisation of Question E responses (What kind of assignments did you like the most?), by number of answers marked

The results of the conducted research clearly demonstrate the high evaluation given by students to the integrated method of studying the history, social processes, and literature of the target language country. The idea of including literary texts in the process of teaching Spanish as a foreign language is also supported by leading methodologists in Spain'

The percentages obtained demonstrate the primary interest of students in reading and translating historical texts (69%) and in oral exercises dedicated to commenting and analysing texts (65%). Equally important is the number of students (48%) who preferred reading activities over others, as indicated by survey results.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of the conducted research clearly demonstrate the high evaluation given by students to the integrated method of studying the history, social processes, and literature of the target language country. The idea of including literary texts in the process of teaching Spanish as a foreign language is also supported by leading methodologists in Spain. González Cobas (2021) concludes his research in the following words: *'The steps taken are significant, but literary texts are still often perceived as appropriate resources to be introduced in complementary sections. The decision to integrate them or not within the teaching units represents a specific methodological choice, which is as important as many other decisions made that influence class development, teaching, and learning. Being aware of these factors undoubtedly contributes to a better understanding of the journey embarked upon by language learners and makes it more accessible to them'* (González Cobas, 2021, p. 172).

In line with González Cobas (2021), we believe that in the process of language teaching, our role as educators in the classroom should not be seen as a finite process. Language learning is a journey, a path that begins in the classroom but extends far beyond it. It is the path that will shape students' lives, and it is the teacher's responsibility to guide them, imparting the skills, competencies, and tools necessary for independent learning beyond the classroom. Therefore, our methodology aims to equip students with the ability to read literary texts in Spanish, to contextualise them, and to see them not only as models of grammar and vocabulary (which, of course, are essential), but also as sources of enjoyment and understanding, encompassing literary, social, and at times, political or philosophical dimensions.

The findings of our analysis also corroborate the perspective put forth by Pozo Díez (2018), who asserts that a properly guided reading of classical texts in ELE classes *'can serve as a driving force through which students not only acquire new knowledge, but also develop emotional learning strategies, practice all language skills, and imbue themselves with humanistic competence, which underlies the essence of any language'* (Pozo Díez, 2018, p. 349).

A comprehensive theoretical study conducted by Spanish methodologist Palacios González (2017a) in his doctoral dissertation, *Classical Literary Texts in the Teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language*, also highlights the benefits of incorporating literary texts into the teaching process. Evaluating the survey results of students conducted after an experimental course on classical literary works within the framework of the teaching methodology of the Cervantes Institute, the researcher writes: *'The students surveyed perceive literature in general and classical literature in particular as a useful way to improve their level in Spanish and to access cultural elements that they see as important and significant for their learning'* (Palacios González, 2017a, p. 824). This conclusion aligns completely with the findings of our research.

However, it is important to recognize that, despite the generally favorable reception of the proposed course by students, practical experience reveals its ineffectiveness in groups with a Spanish language proficiency level below B1+. Successful mastery of the discipline demands more than just students' interest and commitment to self-development; it also necessitates a sufficiently high level of language proficiency. The proposed course proves ineffective for groups grappling with challenges in reading, grammar, and text comprehension, and it may be more suitable for recommendation at later stages of education.

Despite the mentioned constraints, the proposed methodology can be applied to develop similar programmes and educational materials for contextualisation systems in various regions, with a particular emphasis on Latin American countries. Additionally, it can be adapted for teaching foreign languages beyond the scope of the current programme. Considering the positive results of the method presented and analysed in this research, and given its universal nature, as a projection of this investigation, we propose the application of the method in other countries and teaching contexts of Spanish as a second language or as a foreign language, through collaboration with teachers from different nationalities and educational settings.

6. CONCLUSION

Setting out to determine the effectiveness of incorporating classical literary texts into the process of teaching Spanish to non-philology students, the authors analysed the results of a survey conducted among students learning Spanish as a foreign language at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, named after Patrice Lumumba (RUDN University), from 2018 to 2023. A quantitative analysis using a mixed-method approach with statistical calculations and analysis was employed in the development of the study. The contextualisation method of literary works allows students to gain an understanding of the evolution and history of society, analyse the impact of factors in social development, and changes in the language itself.

In summary, in the light of the questionnaire results regarding the interest generated by the course among the students, we can conclude that all of them considered working with classical literary texts in Spanish to be useful in general, and almost all of

them also perceived it as beneficial for their career development. Similarly, the majority of students (90%) reported an improvement in their knowledge of culture and history, and many of them also mentioned enhancements in their language skills. A significant proportion of the participants (70%) particularly enjoyed working with contextualised literary texts and exploring their connection to the ideas of the era, history, and culture.

Extrapolating our experience with Russian university students of ELE to a broader context, we can conclude that working with classical literary texts in Spanish as a Foreign Language (ELE) classes proves fruitful when it goes beyond purely linguistic exercises and includes communicative activities that contextualise and interpret the works, providing meaning and generating personal engagement from the students.

The research outlined in this article will be extended into the academic year 2023-2024. Our forthcoming plans involve a more comprehensive analysis, not only dealing with the impact of the method on foreign language acquisition and personal development in a non-language environment but also exploring specific themes that capture students' attention. To pursue this objective, we have augmented the questionnaire with two additional inquiries: F. Identify the century or historical/prehistoric period of Spain that you found most intriguing. Justify your perspective (minimum 5 lines, maximum 10); G. Select and enumerate three themes that held greater interest for you than others and that you anticipate will leave a lasting impression (choices may encompass historical, cultural, architectural, literary, social processes, etc.).

Additionally, students currently participate in two surveys as part of our assessment approach. The initial survey, administered before the course commences, aims to discern learners' ex-

pectations – eliciting observations on what they aspire to learn, the types of activities crucial for individual development, favoured topics, and preferred tasks. Following the completion of the course, students revisit the same survey, which enables a comparative analysis between their initial expectations and post-course perspectives. This process allows learners to gauge the skills acquired throughout the academic year. The outcomes of this comprehensive survey will be incorporated into our forthcoming research. Additionally, we are exploring the prospect of conducting a survey involving former course participants whose career advancements were contingent on Spanish language proficiency.

Work experience shows that, unquestionably, the conducted research and analysis of survey results contribute to the improvement of the methodology, allowing its adaptation to each specific group of learners depending on their specialty and proficiency level in the Spanish language. This working method, which we exemplify in our approach, is applicable to students with diverse backgrounds and educational contexts, and it is the task of the teacher to effectively and considerably adapt exercises and tasks to the needs of each student group. To achieve this, it is sufficient to focus on the proposed texts by highlighting aspects that capture the students' attention (artistic, historical, cultural, etc.) and/or exploring universal and timeless themes in classical works.

In this way, it is possible to conclude that, through the implementation of suitable communicative tasks and activities, classical literary texts generate interest and curiosity in ELE learners, foster a reading habit, and facilitate the development of competences that contribute to their personal and professional enrichment.

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