

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN A NON- PHILOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The contemporary transformation of higher education requires a reconsideration of the role of language and literature disciplines in non-philological universities, where the traditional model of subject transmission is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of academic mobility, professional communication, and multicultural interaction. In this context, Russian language and literature courses acquire a renewed methodological significance because they function not merely as carriers of linguistic norms or literary knowledge, but as instruments for shaping the student's cognitive culture, ethical worldview, interpretive maturity, dialogic competence, and ability to construct professionally meaningful speech in complex social settings. The present study develops and tests an interdisciplinary competence-based model for teaching Russian language and literature to students of a non-philological institution, with special attention to the agrarian university environment, where language training must interact with professional vocabulary, scientific discourse, humanitarian reflection, and the formation of personal communicative responsibility. The research is based on a mixed-method design combining pedagogical observation, diagnostic assessment, comparative analysis, discourse-oriented classroom tasks, and an experimental comparison between control and experimental student groups. The model integrates literary interpretation, academic writing, professional terminology, dialogic practices, contextual vocabulary development, and reflective reading strategies in order to move beyond the fragmented separation of language and literature as independent teaching blocks. The results demonstrate that students who studied within the interdisciplinary model showed more substantial growth in communicative accuracy, speech coherence, analytical reading, terminological precision, and the ability to translate literary and linguistic knowledge into professional and social communication. The study argues that the productive union of Russian language and literature in higher education should be conceptualized not as a residual general education requirement, but as a strategic humanitarian component of specialist formation, particularly in institutions where students must learn to think clearly, speak responsibly, interpret texts critically, and participate in culturally mediated professional dialogue. The article concludes that the modernization of Russian language and literature teaching in non-philological universities depends on methodological synthesis,

professionally oriented content selection, dialogic pedagogy, and the rehumanization of higher education through text, meaning, and speech.

Keywords: Russian language teaching, Russian literature, non-philological university, agrarian education, interdisciplinary approach, communicative competence, literary interpretation, professional speech, discourse-based learning, higher education methodology.

Introduction

In the system of contemporary higher education, the status of Russian language and literature as academic disciplines is undergoing a deep methodological and ideological re-evaluation, particularly in non-philological institutions where the utilitarian pressure of specialization often narrows the space traditionally reserved for humanitarian development. Yet it is precisely under such conditions that language and literature reveal their strategic pedagogical value most clearly, because the future specialist cannot function effectively in academic, professional, or civic contexts without the ability to understand complex texts, formulate coherent arguments, choose speech means appropriately, interpret cultural meanings, and participate in dialogue with intellectual and ethical responsibility. In many universities, especially those oriented toward technical, agricultural, economic, or applied sciences, language teaching has for years been reduced to grammar drills, isolated lexical practice, and limited corrective exercises, while literature has been treated either as a chronologically arranged set of canonical names or as a supplementary cultural background with weak integration into students' actual communicative growth. Such separation produces a double loss: language becomes decontextualized and formal, while literature becomes contemplative but pedagogically underused. As a result, students may memorize rules and reproduce plot information, yet remain unable to read analytically, speak persuasively, interpret metaphorically, or write professionally in a linguistically confident and culturally informed manner. This contradiction has become even more visible in the twenty-first century, when higher education increasingly demands not only disciplinary knowledge but also flexible communication, interdisciplinary reasoning, academic literacy, ethical sensitivity, and participation in multilingual environments shaped by digital media, scientific exchange, and global educational mobility. Within this situation, Russian language and literature teaching must move beyond the traditional dichotomy between linguistic norm and literary heritage and be restructured as an integrated educational field aimed at the development of communicative, interpretive, reflective, and profession-oriented competencies. The theoretical basis for such a rethinking can be found in several major pedagogical and philological traditions. The cultural-historical perspective of Vygotsky emphasizes the

formative role of language in the development of thought and consciousness, suggesting that mastery of speech is inseparable from intellectual growth and social participation. Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and speech genres demonstrates that language exists not as an abstract system alone, but as socially saturated utterance, always shaped by context, addressee, value position, and interaction. Lotman's semiotic understanding of literature confirms that literary text is not merely an object of aesthetic appreciation but a mechanism of cultural memory and meaning production, training the reader to decode layered sign systems and enter broader cultural space. The competence-based paradigm in education, developed in different forms by Zimnyaya, Khutorskoy, Verbitsky, and others, reinforces the need to treat learning outcomes as integrated abilities rather than disconnected knowledge fragments. At the same time, modern approaches to professionally oriented language teaching insist that students in specialized universities require linguistic training that reflects their future communicative environments, including terminological precision, genre awareness, oral interaction, academic writing, and contextual reading. However, many existing models of professionally oriented teaching risk becoming excessively instrumental: they narrow language to service communication and neglect the formative capacity of literary reading, ethical imagination, emotional intelligence, and symbolic thinking. This article proceeds from the opposite assumption: in a non-philological university, especially an agrarian university where students will work in socially significant sectors tied to land, ecology, food, rural development, science, and public communication, the combined study of Russian language and literature can generate a more holistic educational effect than either discipline alone. Russian language develops verbal discipline, stylistic awareness, logical expression, and communicative correctness; Russian literature deepens interpretive skills, empathy, worldview complexity, value reflection, and sensitivity to speech registers. When integrated methodologically, these disciplines help form not merely a technically prepared graduate, but a professionally articulate, culturally competent, and intellectually mature person. The relevance of this study is also strengthened by the changing student profile. Contemporary students often demonstrate fragmented reading habits, reduced attention span, superficial vocabulary retention, dependence on short digital formats, and difficulty in constructing long coherent speech or written analysis. They may possess everyday communicative fluency while lacking academic register, conceptual clarity, argumentation skills, and the ability to engage with complex artistic or scientific texts. This is not merely a linguistic problem; it is a pedagogical and civilizational one, affecting the quality of professional reasoning and social responsibility. Therefore, the present research addresses a central question: how can Russian language and literature be taught in an integrated, practice-oriented, yet humanistically grounded way in a non-philological university so that students develop communicative competence, literary interpretive skill, and professional speech culture simultaneously? The objective of the study is to design, implement, and assess an interdisciplinary teaching model that combines linguistic training, literary analysis,

contextual professional vocabulary, dialogic classroom practices, and reflective written production. The hypothesis is that students taught through an integrated model will demonstrate significantly stronger progress in speech coherence, interpretive depth, lexical range, genre awareness, and profession-oriented communication than students taught through a traditional separated-content model. The novelty of the article lies in its attempt to bridge literary-humanitarian and profession-oriented language education within the specific conditions of higher non-philological education, proposing not a decorative inclusion of literary texts, but a structurally grounded methodology in which language and literature reinforce each other as instruments of thinking, communication, and professional formation.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted within the educational environment of a non-philological higher education institution and was designed as a mixed-method pedagogical study combining theoretical modeling with empirical classroom testing. The sample included 124 first- and second-year students enrolled in non-philological programs, primarily from agrarian and related applied specializations, whose Russian language proficiency ranged from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate functional academic use. The participants were divided into two comparable groups: a control group of 62 students taught according to the conventional curriculum, where Russian language and literature components were delivered in relatively separate blocks with emphasis on rule explanation, vocabulary memorization, and thematic literary discussion, and an experimental group of 62 students taught through the interdisciplinary model developed in this study. The intervention lasted one academic semester and was structured around four methodological modules: contextual language analysis, interpretive literary reading, profession-oriented discourse practice, and reflective written production. In the contextual language analysis module, grammatical and lexical units were not presented as isolated phenomena but embedded in speech situations, academic mini-genres, and professional contexts relevant to the students' fields of study. In the interpretive literary reading module, selected prose and poetic texts from Russian literature were used not only for content discussion but also for analysis of speech organization, ethical conflict, authorial position, character discourse, symbolism, and stylistic nuance; texts were selected according to criteria of semantic richness, accessibility, value potential, and possibility of interdisciplinary projection into themes such as human labor, nature, responsibility, memory, rural life, social relations, and moral choice. In the profession-oriented discourse practice module, students performed oral and written tasks linking literary and linguistic material with their future professional communication, including annotation writing, oral mini-reports, debate, terminology explanation, reflective commentary, descriptive and analytical writing, and role-based communication scenarios. In the reflective written production module, students regularly produced short analytical essays, response paragraphs, comparative

interpretations, speech self-assessments, and microtexts requiring the use of academic vocabulary, cohesive devices, and argumentation strategies. The diagnostic tools included entry and final tests, rubric-based writing assessment, teacher observation protocols, oral performance evaluation, vocabulary retention tasks, literary interpretation tasks, and student reflection questionnaires. Five assessment criteria were used: communicative accuracy, speech coherence, lexical and stylistic range, interpretive depth, and professional-discursive applicability. Each criterion was evaluated on a four-level scale from low to advanced. Quantitative analysis involved comparative measurement of initial and final indicators in both groups, while qualitative analysis focused on error patterns, interpretive behavior, classroom interaction dynamics, and student reflections on their own learning progress. The instructional design of the experimental model relied on several methodological principles: integrativity, whereby language and literature content were planned as mutually illuminating rather than parallel domains; discursivity, whereby all linguistic phenomena were studied in actual speech environments; dialogicity, whereby students were encouraged to construct meaning through discussion rather than passive reception; professional relevance, whereby academic tasks were adapted to future specialist communication; reflexivity, whereby students evaluated their own speech and reading strategies; and developmental sequencing, whereby simpler interpretive and communicative tasks prepared students for more complex analytical production. Examples of integrated tasks included identifying how lexical choices in a literary excerpt shape character image and then transferring similar expressive precision into a short professional description; comparing speech registers in literary dialogue and academic explanation; rewriting a descriptive passage using profession-related vocabulary without losing semantic clarity; constructing argument chains based on literary conflict and then adapting the same logic to problem-solving discussion in an agrarian context; and analyzing the rhetoric of responsibility in a literary text before producing a short speech on ecological responsibility in professional activity. The teacher's role in the experimental model shifted from transmitter of ready interpretations to moderator of textual dialogue, organizer of speech activity, and diagnostician of language development. Importantly, literature was not reduced to a pretext for grammar, nor was language treated as mere technical support for literary appreciation; the model maintained the specificity of both disciplines while creating methodological crossings between them. Ethical considerations included voluntary student participation in anonymized analysis, equal access to learning materials, and the use of evaluation tools aligned with curricular standards. The empirical part of the study was supplemented by theoretical analysis of pedagogical, linguistic, and literary scholarship in order to ensure that the model was not only practically effective but conceptually grounded in current higher education discourse.

Results

The implementation of the interdisciplinary model produced consistently positive shifts across all measured indicators in the experimental group, while the control group demonstrated only moderate and uneven progress characteristic of routine academic adaptation. At the initial diagnostic stage, both groups showed approximately similar profiles: students generally coped with elementary grammar recognition and simple thematic reproduction, but experienced notable difficulties in constructing extended oral responses, maintaining coherence in writing, selecting stylistically appropriate vocabulary, interpreting literary subtext, and transferring classroom language knowledge into professional or interdisciplinary communication. A widespread pattern in both groups at the beginning of the semester included fragmentary sentence structure, excessive dependence on memorized formulations, weak paragraph organization, underdeveloped argumentation, confusion between colloquial and academic registers, and superficial literary commentary limited to plot retelling or generalized moral conclusions. By the end of the intervention, however, the experimental group demonstrated stronger development in every criterion. In communicative accuracy, the proportion of students reaching the upper two levels rose from 29% to 71% in the experimental group, compared with an increase from 31% to 48% in the control group. In speech coherence, where students were evaluated according to the logic of thought progression, use of cohesive devices, paragraph unity, and ability to maintain a communicative task, the experimental group advanced from 24% to 68% in the upper levels, while the control group moved from 26% to 43%. Lexical and stylistic range showed one of the most visible differences: students taught through the integrated model expanded not only their active vocabulary but also their ability to choose words according to communicative purpose, text type, and addressee; here the experimental group's upper-level performance rose from 22% to 66%, while the control group rose from 23% to 39%. Particularly significant was the growth in interpretive depth, an indicator absent or weak in traditional utilitarian language teaching but central to the present model. Students in the experimental group became more capable of identifying authorial stance, recognizing emotional and symbolic detail, distinguishing explicit and implicit meaning, comparing character speech patterns, and connecting literary situations with broader ethical or social issues. On this criterion, upper-level performance rose from 18% to 63% in the experimental group, while the control group increased only from 19% to 34%. In professional-discursive applicability, which assessed students' ability to adapt linguistic and analytical skills to academic and profession-oriented contexts such as short reports, structured explanations, terminology-based descriptions, and argument-driven commentary, the experimental group improved from 27% to 69%, whereas the control group improved from 28% to 45%. Qualitative analysis clarified the character of these changes. Students in the control group often continued to separate literature answers from language exercises: when discussing a literary text, they tended toward emotional but unsystematic comments; when performing language tasks, they reverted to mechanical

norm reproduction without semantic depth. By contrast, students in the experimental group increasingly treated text as a space of meaning-making and language as a tool of purposeful expression. Their written responses became longer, more structured, and more conceptually connected; oral participation became more confident and dialogic; and their use of evidence, examples, and comparative formulations improved substantially. In literary interpretation tasks, many experimental-group students moved from formulaic statements such as the author wanted to show kindness toward more nuanced observations involving narrative tone, lexical repetition, contrast, speech characteristics, and moral tension. In profession-related tasks, they began to use more accurate terminology while preserving clarity and communicative naturalness, an important sign that linguistic development was not occurring in abstraction from future specialist needs. Teacher observations also recorded important motivational effects. Initially, many students perceived literature as distant from their professional identity and language study as burdensome formal correction. During the semester, however, participation increased when texts and tasks were organized around dialogue, comparison, real speech situations, and interdisciplinary bridges. Students responded especially positively to assignments where a literary fragment became the starting point for discussion of labor, responsibility, human relations, ecology, village life, or communication ethics relevant to agrarian and social reality. Reflection questionnaires indicated that students increasingly recognized the usefulness of literary reading for vocabulary enrichment, moral reflection, and speech development, while also reporting greater confidence in writing structured texts and participating in academic discussion. Another important result concerned error transformation. In the control group, error quantity decreased somewhat, but many mistakes remained stable because students corrected forms without rethinking communicative intention. In the experimental group, some formal errors also persisted, yet there was clearer improvement in self-monitoring: students more often noticed register mismatches, redundancy, weak transitions, or vague word choice on their own. This suggests that the integrated model not only improved immediate performance but also stimulated metalinguistic awareness and reflective self-regulation. The results therefore support the central hypothesis of the study: when Russian language and literature are taught through an integrated competence-based methodology within a non-philological university, students develop more effectively across communicative, interpretive, and profession-oriented dimensions than under a traditional separated-content approach.

Discussion

The findings of the study allow several broader pedagogical conclusions to be drawn regarding the place of Russian language and literature in contemporary higher education and the methodological conditions required for their productive renewal. First, the results confirm that the crisis often attributed to humanitarian disciplines in specialized universities is not primarily a crisis of relevance, but a crisis of methodology. Students do

not reject language and literature because these subjects lack value; rather, they disengage when the teaching model fails to reveal the living connection between text, speech, thought, profession, and personal experience. The stronger outcomes of the experimental group indicate that integrative teaching restores this connection by showing students that linguistic norm, literary meaning, and professional communication are not separate educational territories but interdependent dimensions of intellectual development. This conclusion corresponds to dialogic and competence-based theories of education, according to which genuine learning occurs when knowledge is mobilized in meaningful activity, not merely stored as isolated information. Second, the study highlights the special pedagogical role of literature in non-philological education. In many practice-oriented institutions, literature is often marginalized because it appears less directly useful than terminology, grammar, or communication formulas. Yet the present findings show that literary text contributes precisely those capacities that narrowly instrumental teaching cannot easily generate: empathy, interpretive flexibility, semantic sensitivity, awareness of ambiguity, ethical reflection, and nuanced speech perception. Literature trains students to hear voice, detect position, recognize hidden conflict, and tolerate complexity—abilities that matter not only for cultural development but also for professional interaction, leadership, teamwork, public communication, and responsible decision-making. A specialist who reads only functionally may describe processes, but a specialist formed through literature and language together is more likely to understand people, contexts, and value-laden consequences. Third, the results suggest that language teaching in non-philological institutions should not imitate philological specialization, but neither should it reduce itself to technical language service. The appropriate model is one of pedagogical synthesis: the linguistic component should cultivate norm, clarity, style, genre awareness, and communicative purpose; the literary component should cultivate interpretation, worldview, emotional intelligence, and discursive sensitivity; profession-oriented tasks should connect both to real future speech practices. Such synthesis is especially relevant in agrarian universities, where students will work in sectors that demand communication across scientific, administrative, ecological, and community levels. Agrarian specialists often interact with farmers, local authorities, researchers, educators, and broader society; therefore, professional effectiveness depends not only on subject competence but also on the ability to explain, persuade, document, interpret, and communicate ethically. Fourth, the study reveals that the development of speech coherence is one of the most important and most underestimated outcomes of integrated teaching. Coherence is more than grammatical correctness; it reflects structured thinking, logical sequencing, thematic focus, and rhetorical awareness. The marked progress of the experimental group in this area suggests that coherence is strengthened when students are repeatedly asked to move between reading, discussion, interpretation, and writing, because each of these activities disciplines thought in a different way. Literary analysis teaches attention to internal structure and semantic relation; language work teaches formal means of connection;

professional tasks teach purpose and audience orientation. Together they produce a more mature speech behavior than grammar training alone. Fifth, the observed improvement in self-monitoring deserves special attention. Modern pedagogy increasingly values learner autonomy, but autonomy cannot emerge from procedural drilling alone. It develops when students begin to understand why a formulation is weak, why a text lacks unity, why a word is inappropriate in a given register, or how meaning changes through stylistic choice. The interdisciplinary model appeared to create precisely such awareness because it constantly returned students to questions of meaning, addressee, intention, and textual effect. In this sense, the model supports not only knowledge acquisition but the formation of a reflective language personality. At the same time, the study has several limitations. The experiment covered one academic semester and one institutional context; broader longitudinal research could reveal how stable the observed improvements remain over time and whether they transfer to more advanced professional communication tasks. The sample size, while sufficient for pedagogical comparison, does not claim universal representativeness across all non-philological universities. In addition, some assessment criteria, especially interpretive depth and stylistic range, inevitably involve expert judgment, although rubric-based evaluation and comparative procedures were used to reduce subjectivity. Future studies could strengthen the design through multi-institutional sampling, digital corpus analysis of student writing, tracking of long-term academic performance, and comparison with other interdisciplinary models, including bilingual or multilingual formats. Nevertheless, the conceptual implications remain significant. The modernization of Russian language and literature teaching should not be understood as mere digitization, reduction of content, or replacement of classical forms with fashionable methods. True modernization means constructing an educational environment in which text again becomes an event of thought, language becomes a medium of self-formation, and professional preparation includes humanitarian depth rather than excluding it. That is where the old split between useful language and beautiful literature quietly collapses; a good teacher is left to sweep up the fragments and build something better. The present study argues that such rebuilding is both possible and necessary. It requires curricular flexibility, thoughtful text selection, interdisciplinary task design, active dialogue formats, and teachers capable of working at the intersection of philology, pedagogy, and professional communication. When these conditions are met, Russian language and literature cease to be peripheral subjects and become formative disciplines shaping the communicative and cultural architecture of the future specialist.

Conclusion

The conducted research demonstrates that the teaching of Russian language and literature in a non-philological university can achieve substantially higher educational outcomes when organized through an interdisciplinary competence-based model rather than through the conventional separation of linguistic and literary content. The integrated

approach tested in this study enabled students to improve not only grammatical correctness and vocabulary usage, but also coherence of speech, interpretive thinking, stylistic awareness, reflective self-control, and the ability to transfer humanitarian knowledge into professional communication. This proves that Russian language and literature retain strategic relevance in specialized higher education precisely because they help form the intellectual, cultural, and communicative maturity required of the contemporary graduate. For non-philological institutions, and especially for agrarian universities, the methodological union of language and literature offers a productive way to humanize professional training without weakening its practical orientation. The study therefore recommends a revision of curricular design, task systems, and assessment practices so that literary reading, academic speech development, contextual vocabulary work, and profession-oriented discourse are no longer treated as disconnected elements. The broader conclusion is clear: higher education needs specialists who can not only know, but also understand; not only operate, but also explain; not only communicate, but also think through language with responsibility and depth. Russian language and literature, taught integrally, remain one of the most powerful means of achieving that goal.

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