1. Introduction

The concept of interdisciplinarity and the use of international standards in the latest approaches to teaching foreign languages are becoming critical. With the expansion of global economic and educational boundaries and advanced intercultural communication it is justified and strongly recommended to use literature as an additional component and a source of authentic texts in English for specific purposes (ESP) curriculum. It is already established that analysis of socio-cultural and economic concepts help to shape critical thinking and language skills. In the literary works of many authors socio-economic notions are depicted rather accurately and often analytically, thus creating fertile soil for further investigation.

The cases of how literary narrative assists in language teaching are exposed in several studies which offer a comprehensive analysis of modern methods of applying fiction into teaching English as a second language [Maley 1989; Collie, Slater 1990; Carter, Long 1991; Bassnett, Grundy 1993; Bloemert et al. 2017]. The discussion of literature’s role in teaching English for business...
studies started in late 1990s and is still ongoing in TEFL community. Scholars claimed that "teaching literature improves the students' ability in effective business communication" [Duangsamosorn 1996: 19], and proved that integrating literature into Business English classroom "helps students to understand other cultures better" [Vogt 1998: 10]. Further published studies of the XXI century demonstrate how literature can be incorporated and used to teach specific business skills, improve proficiency in business writing, foster cross-cultural communication and develop analytical skills [Sharifi et al. 2013, Hişmanğolu 2005, Choo 2005]. As M. M. Sharifi et al. prove "through literature, the learner achieves cultural assimilation or acculturation, language development and competence, conflict resolution, a good liberal education and development of desired and desirable attributes" [Sharifi et al. 2013: 50]. The underlying reasons, which determine the importance of using literary texts in business English classrooms, are defined as valuable authentic materials, cultural and language enrichment, personal involvement [Collie, Slater 1990,Whitener, 2019]. Later other principles, such as universality, personal relevance, economy and suggestive power, variety and interest were added [Hişmanğolu 2005, Duff 2007].

Recent Russian education studies have also acknowledged the role of literature as a catalyst for enhancing ESP course materials [Ter-Minasova 2005; McCaughey 2005; Calafito 2018] and particularly in non-linguistic universities [Belkina, Stetsenko 2015; Chernetskova et al. 2018]. Yet at the same time, the specific aspects of teaching business English through fiction in tertiary education, the use of English-language novels related to business topics, and the difference from teaching English for other purposes have not been fully investigated.

The cases of using literature as a supplementary didactic material for contributing to our knowledge about economic history have played a critical role for this study [Watts, Smith 1989, Watts 2002, Hartley 2001, Vachris, Bohanon 2012, Younkins 2016]. M. Watts, an author of several studies in the field of interdisciplinary teaching and an author of Literary Book of Economics (2003) advocates the benefits of reading from literature and drama on economic themes, concepts and issues. M. Watts and R. Smith argued that this approach allowed some university instructors to base their educational modules on literary passages with objectives of “(1) reaching new groups of students who find the study of economics boring and distasteful; (2) providing interesting and complementary materials to supplement textbooks and other instructional materials; and (3) adding to the instructor's own store of examples, stories, and allusions” [Watts, Smith 1989: 294]. J. E. Hartley describes the syllabus of his introductory economics course in which the recommended reading list is drawn entirely from the Great Books of Western World [Hartley 2001]. Another article illustrates how passages from American novels, e.g. Sister Carrie by T. Drieser, The Grapes of Wrath by J. Steinbeck, Moby Dick by H. Melville, etc., can enhance undergraduate courses on labour market economics [Vachris, Bohanon 2012].

There is enough evidence that many modern economists are interested in cross-disciplinary research in social study fields, such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, law and literature. Likewise, a number of writers have expressed activist outlooks to political and economic aspects. For example, U. Sinclair in The Jungle criticized monopoly power, employment practices and income distribution. The socio-economic themes are pronounced in the writings of the 20th century American authors, such as W. Faulkner, F. Norris, J. Steinbeck, A. Rand, F. S. Fitzgerald, E. L. Doctorow, J. Updike, etc.

Earlier writers such as B. Franklin, H. Alger and R. Emerson presented mostly traditional and conservative standpoints on economic issues, rather than avant-garde. Not only writers have been interested in investigating economic issues but also economists have tried to use literary passages in supporting their views and levels of economic activity. It is common to find some passages from fiction functioning as evidence of some particular industrial practices, changing life standards and socio-cultural trends. With respect to the history of economic thought, the works of J. Swift, T. L. Peacock, C. Dickens, S. T. Coleridge, T. Carlyle, H. D. Thoreau and other British and earlier mentioned American authors have received due attention and reflection in the studies of economic historians [Watts, 2002: 338].

Although it is customary to consider that political economy is expressed implicitly in modern literature, there are a number of examples where such elements are brought in the foreground. Ayn Rand’s work shows that an activist and conservative political economy may be developed through literary pieces. Her most famous oeuvre contains a large portion of economic content and could be viewed as a treatise on economics wrapped in a literary package. Theodore Dreiser in his novels exposed the true nature of American democracy by depicting heroes who are already fully aware of the power of money, later become typical capitalists and stop at nothing to become rich and powerful. Meanwhile, the excesses of feverish Wall Street, lifestyles of self-absorbed millionaires and various aspects of life in ’80s New York come alive in biting satire of Tom Wolfe,
chronicler of modern American culture. For the reason of explicit use of business-related language, these three authors have come into focus of this research.

2. Methodology

The participants of the experiment were selected among the third-year students majoring in Management and Economics at Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. Three groups of 30 learners were organized according to their language levels: from intermediate to advanced (B1-C1). The extracts of literary works and audio-video materials were integrated into English for business studies curriculum during one academic semester to fill the gap of non-adapted foreign language and culture-focused resources. The texts were taken from American novels of different periods: T. Dreiser’s Sister Carrie (1900), A. Rand’s Atlas Shrugged (1957) and T. Wolfe’s The Bonfire of the Vanities (1987). Reading paragraphs were supported by subsequent film adaptations: Carrie (1952) by W. Wyler, Atlas Shrugged (2011) by P. Johansson and The Bonfire of the Vanities (1990) by B. De Palma.

The main approach to using literature and literary narrative in this study is investigational, i.e. learners first familiarized themselves with the novels, later analysed any business-related implications and responded to the posed socio-economic problem.

The second approach deliberates on what is to be learned and a typical method is PPP, where language is presented, practiced using diverse activities and finally produced through some kind of communicative activity (e.g. role-plays, simulations or presentations). In the frames of this research J. Harmer’s ESA model is implemented alongside the previous one, which suggests that “a teaching sequence can be divided into three components where the learners emotionally engage with the situation, study the language, and then activate it” [Frendo 2005: 13].

All these approaches emphasize what is to be learned and how and prove to be more profitable for learners, allowing them to discover the language.

The extracts were supplemented with diverse challenging and encouraging assignments targeting vocabulary building and all four language skills. Reading was trained through techniques of skimming and scanning the text and supported by Vocabulary building tasks. Speaking contained such activities as Lead-in, Back-up, Comprehension and Discussion. Writing focused on further recycling of new material. Listening complimented the rest of the tasks by audio-video extracts targeting oratorical and other communication skills. As a final step of the extract study the students were asked to write or act out a role play by presenting their personal view on tackled economic matters, simulate a scene of job interview, etc. Here the role of the educator was to coordinate, assist and supervise their work, acting mostly as a facilitator and a guide. Due attention was driven on linguistic items, stylistic features of the literary discourse, and relevant economic lexis.

2.1. Research aim

This research pursues the following aims:

• provide stimulating and complementary materials to enhance coursebooks with relevant linguistic units and business topics;
• supplement the language store of learners with literary examples and allusions targeting figurative meanings;
• help learners develop interpersonal and cross-cultural skills, which are crucial for current global business environment;
• help learners develop thinking and processing skills through reading literary extracts from the perspective of their professional knowledge.

3. Results

The process of literature incorporation was performed in three groups of learners with different language levels. The first target group comprised advanced level learners who major in Management and study other subjects in English. Therefore, they felt quite comfortable and excited when reading extracts from Atlas Shrugged by A. Rand and watching the film adaptation of the same book. The first passage chosen for reading was F. D’Anconia’s Money speech, which contains one of the most direct statements on economic matters in the novel and raises a whole number of ethical issues about money’s role both in the marketplace and in the society: “So you
think that money is the root of all evil? <...> Have you ever asked what the root of money is? Money is a tool of exchange, which can’t exist unless there are goods produced and men able to produce them. Money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value…” [Rand 1957: 410].

The second passage touches upon the topic of production and exemplifies the idea that producers are the primary movers in the market and that human mind is the source of the creation of wealth: “...Material products can’t be shared, they belong to some ultimate consumer; it is only the value of an idea that can be shared with unlimited numbers of men, making all sharers richer at no one’s sacrifice or loss, raising the productive capacity of whatever labor they perform…” [Rand 1957: 1064].

High level of engagement was marked in completing the task A “Respond to Francisco’s speech on Money”, and task B “Present your own perception of Power of Intelligence vs. Law, their value in Economics”. In both cases, the learners were compelled to use rhetorical questions, repetitions for emphasis and business related vocabulary. Below are given some excerpts of their answers to Francisco’s soliloquy on Money.

Student A: “Money is somehow a matter of perception for every person. <...> We interact with money and money is the equivalent of the value of what we have done. Thus, money is the production of something valuable, and the production of goods and services for people’s needs and it cannot be evil.”

Student B: “Money by itself has no actual value; it is essentially a method of exchange. <...> It goes beyond being our legal tender, as most economists would call it. It becomes more than just a means to acquire our basic necessities. Money has been written about in many books, portrayed as a motive for most evils in the world <...> The media is constantly reminding us what our countries owe or what they are giving away…”

Student C: “Money is the tool that economies uses in order to be able to function. I would say that money is a store of value, a reward for the work done. It would be difficult to cope without money as it is impossible to estimate the value of one product or labour with another…”

Student D: “...the mentioned arguments ring a bell as far as the seed of the ideas alike is planted. It is more on a "debate" side of things, a speculation, though, some might agree, a splendid one.”

Student E: “Ever since certain states can print money without supporting them with any goods and later using them as the worldwide exchange tool, any economic theory is inapplicable to money. Ever since certain states force the currencies of other countries inflate instead their own ones causing poverty, it is absolutely true to name money the root of all evil. At the end of the day, ruined states could only wonder, were they April fools this time?”

Student F: “...sometimes money is used as a source of power. Some people do apply it to humiliate and insult others, who prevent them from reaching goals for the benefit of only one. In this case the one what creates evil is not money but a person who is ready for everything to gain it.”

The learners appeared to be more involved and enthusiastic when they were asked to write a short paragraph in pairs by presenting their opinion on the issue of “Power of Intelligence vs. Law and their value in Economics”.The survey would illustrate some of the writings:

Student G and Student H: “Inventors need big amount of knowledge and experience to make something new; it is difficult to replace him or her. From the other hand, people, who work on manufactures, can be easily changeable and majority of them don’t need a degree to work there.”

Student A and Student D: “Almost everything that we are delighted to take advantage of, be that technologies, services (let alone economy) is a byproduct of Human Intelligence. The easy access of economic intelligence creates opportunities as well as threats. Economic intelligence means smart information management in order to know, understand to prevent risks, particularly in immaterial fields, and to exert ethical influence. Humanity has plenty of ideas to implement; there are no barriers for imagination. Hence, the deeds of human nation have to be controlled by law.”

Student C and Student I: “The ideas of struggle between law and intelligence have been overwhelmingly repetitive recently. But are you sure that it were not intelligent people who economically monopolized ability to think by legalizing stupidity? If this is not, what is the intelligence after all?”

Student A and Student J: “In our opinion the question is outdated. With current technological and scientific processes, it is possible to replace manual labour in many fields. Some factories are
capable of autonomously manufacture goods with a minimum supervision. The demand for physical labour is decreasing, thus the value also decreases continuously.”

Considering the empirical analysis of learners’ responses, it could be concluded that apart from minor stylistic inconsistences, they were quite successfully and professionally written and mini-pitches were well acted. So, this kind of customized learning resource helped to reveal learners’ own perception of economic and political issues, comparing and contrasting business insights of various eras and providing their personal understanding of them.

In the second group of upper-intermediate level learners majoring in Management the literary materials were taken from Sister Carrie by T. Dreiser (1900). The lesson’s focus was on the period of industrialization, banking sector evolvement and issues of employability. The extracts were mainly descriptive and dialogue based, which created a fine base for role-playing scenarios, and helped to visualize the economic trends and changes of that century. For instance, after analyzing the scene of the dialogue between Carrie and the potential employer, comparing and contrasting with current approaches and job searching channels, the learners were encouraged to simulate a scene of a job interview: «“Have you ever had any experience in the wholesale dry goods business?” he questioned. “No, sir,” she replied. “Are you a stenographer or typewriter?” “No, sir. "Well, we haven’t anything here,” he said. “We employ only experienced help“»[Dreiser 2007: 22].

In the second extract, the detailed description of a department store and its functions were a good example for drawing parallels with the present and two centuries afore patterns: "At that time the department store was in its earliest form of successful operation, and there were not many. The first three in the United States, established about 1884, were in Chicago. Carrie was familiar with the names of several through the advertisements in the “Daily News,” and now proceeded to seek them” [Dreiser 2007: 22].

The reading-discussion session was supplemented with some scenes from the feature film Carrie (1952), directed by W. Wyler, thus providing the students visual perception of the depicted socio-cultural era with existing economic problems.

For the final task the learners were asked critical thinking questions and the following answers were summarized.

1. Draw parallels between present and earlier interview forms, job search methods and necessary skills. The learners answered: "...currently the skills demanded are nearly the same – no significant changes, only instead of stenography or typewriter it is necessary to be PC literate, a team player, communicative and master a foreign language. Job search methods are mostly via the internet-based websites, e.g. Headhunter, Superjobs, etc. Interview forms are quite similar – only some shifts in business vocabulary, such as experienced help replaced by work experience..."

2. Compare and contrast the department stores – current and former. They responded: "Department stores and the business concept implied in them are pretty analogous to what we see nowadays around us, e.g. busy aisles with hundreds of stores coordinated. Maybe the form of service, display designs and fashion trends are changed. The business concept is identical”.

The overall linguistic units of the excerpt were quite simple for understanding and interpreting, yet this simplicity made the learners even more engaged and motivated to reveal economic insights, to analyse and practice business-related language.

A slightly different form of narrative and an original supplement to the topic of Finance was offered to the third experimental group of intermediate learners of English majoring in Economics. At this level, boosting students’ confidence and supporting their interest in the authentic materials is of crucial importance for the teacher. The excerpt from T. Wolfe’s The Bonfire of the Vanities likewise proved to be motivating and relevant to the students for a number of reasons.

First of all, T. Wolfe’s influence on contemporary literature and American pop culture contributes greatly to his undeniable popularity among the young adult readership, which strengthens teachers' assumptions about student's a priori acquaintance with the author.

Second, the nature of the extract itself, a father's attempt to explain serious financial concepts to a child, the comparisons of equity to a cake and of stipulates the specific use of language, graded for the level of an intermediate learner but still manifested in the authentic literary text, facilitates students' understanding and stimulates their motivation to reading in the original outside classroom: The model illustrates a piece from the dialogue explaining the concept of bonds to the daughter: "Just imagine that a bond is a slice of cake, and you didn’t bake the cake, but every time you hand somebody a slice of the cake a tiny little bit comes off, like a little crumb, and you can keep that <...> Or you have to imagine little crumbs, but a lot of little crumbs. If you pass
around enough slices of cake, then pretty soon you have enough crumbs to make a gigantic cake” [Wolfe 1987: 215].

Third, the form of the narrative serves as an instructive model for extending activities with similar tasks that could be well incorporated into other lessons of financial English. Possible tasks could include questions as follows: “If you were Sherman McCoy, how would you explain the concept of bonds or other securities to your child?”, “How would you explain the concept of investment in a simple language?”, etc.

Finally, The Bonfire of the Vanities, subsequently adapted into a feature film by B. De Palma, served as a strong motivational tool and a source of inspiration for students, who enjoyed watching it in the original and were able to compare their impressions of the book with those of the film. This stage of the lesson continues all the previous models of tailor-made materials, based not only on the authentic text but also on the authentic video with further reflection on the topic. The mentioned technique of integrating audio-video content alongside with reading passages functions as an entire and intertwined process yielding better understanding and high-level commitment by students, who are able to trace the differences in author’s interpretation, liberties taken from the original text, changes in dialogue scenes, stylistic differences of the language, etc.

To summarize, it should be highlighted that within the frames of integrating literary arts in the syllabus of business English the implementation of traditional, interactive and communicative methods of knowledge acquisition has significantly improved the content of education, analytical and investigative skills of learners, which is illustrated in Table 1.

The results of experimental training confirmed the hypothesis of the study: with the incorporation of economic, political, social and cultural contexts on an interdisciplinary basis, students firmly mastered the basic material, economic concepts and definitions; students demonstrated the ability to consider literary works as social documents of economic history whilst performing literary analysis of their aesthetic and artistic features; students applied theoretical knowledge obtained as a result of their academic training in other subjects and improved their command of professional terminology; students improved their intercultural competence through the analysis of sociolinguistic richness of the texts revealing national specificity of the target language literature.

### Table 1
Results of the survey in control and experimental groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and tasks</th>
<th>Level of students’ performance</th>
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<td>Economic insights in the novels of American authors of the 19-20th centuries</td>
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<tr>
<td>The influence of literature on economic thought through centuries</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences and similarities of economic texts and fiction</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terminological richness of literary works tackling economic issues</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparison of foreign and native authors’ approaches to economic problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of professional vocabulary in restricted practice</td>
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4. Conclusions

On careful examination of multiple research works and solid empirical data, it is concluded that the idea of integrating fiction into a business English classroom for students majoring in Management and Economics seems to be fully justified and supported by a number of facts. The effectiveness of supplementing the syllabus with authentic literary pieces depends on their content, length and relevance. Economic insights create a fruitful ground for both oral and written language expression, as an integral part of current blended course designs, suitable both for face-to-face and distant learning modules with an integration of traditional, active and interactive learning methods. Being highly evocative and associative, literature encourages and pushes learners into immediate participation, discussion engagement and language practice. Accordingly, it helps to reveal learners’ own perception of economic and political issues, comparing and contrasting business insights of various eras while improving their language expertise.

Bibliographic references


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