Literature in a Course for Business Professionals

Maria Bourlatskaya

University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol12/iss1/3

Copyright © 2007 by Purdue Research Foundation. Global Business Languages is produced by Purdue CIBER. http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the CC BY-NC-ND license.
INTRODUCTION
In developing a language course for business professionals, educators face the fundamental challenge of choosing the best and most effective materials. A popular approach is to concentrate on business practices and vocabulary along with political, legal, and social institutions and norms using relevant texts from current publications. Literature is typically treated as a separate field of study, although literary works are used occasionally for illustration and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.

Film is another source of this material and provides for very rich culture study. Film can be incorporated into various courses on business and politics. A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

The work of the renowned cross-culturalist and linguist Richard Lewis demonstrates the connection between business and culture and provides a means to identify aspects of culture that should be taught in a classroom for professionals (see Cultures). With globalization, despite the popular belief in the past that cultures would be drawn together and cultural differences would lessen in significance for business, the need for mutual cross-cultural understanding has increased greatly. Cultural differences present the greatest challenge in doing business successfully in a foreign country, often leading to misunderstandings and conflicts that inflict critical damage upon business relationships. In The Cultural Imperative, Lewis writes that “today the process of globalization is creating more economic and political links among countries, regions, and cultures, but conflicts in Serbia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.

Film is another source of this material and provides for very rich culture study. Film can be incorporated into various courses on business and politics. A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

Maria Bourlatskaya
University of Pennsylvania

LITERATURE IN A COURSE FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

INTRODUCTION
In developing a language course for business professionals, educators face the fundamental challenge of choosing the best and most effective materials. A popular approach is to concentrate on business practices and vocabulary along with political, legal, and social institutions and norms using relevant texts from current publications. Literature is typically treated as a separate field of study, although literary works are used occasionally for illustration and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.

Film is another source of this material and provides for very rich culture study. Film can be incorporated into various courses on business and politics. A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

The work of the renowned cross-culturalist and linguist Richard Lewis demonstrates the connection between business and culture and provides a means to identify aspects of culture that should be taught in a classroom for professionals (see Cultures). With globalization, despite the popular belief in the past that cultures would be drawn together and cultural differences would lessen in significance for business, the need for mutual cross-cultural understanding has increased greatly. Cultural differences present the greatest challenge in doing business successfully in a foreign country, often leading to misunderstandings and conflicts that inflict critical damage upon business relationships. In The Cultural Imperative, Lewis writes that “today the process of globalization is creating more economic and political links among countries, regions, and cultures, but conflicts in Serbia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.

Film is another source of this material and provides for very rich culture study. Film can be incorporated into various courses on business and politics. A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

The work of the renowned cross-culturalist and linguist Richard Lewis demonstrates the connection between business and culture and provides a means to identify aspects of culture that should be taught in a classroom for professionals (see Cultures). With globalization, despite the popular belief in the past that cultures would be drawn together and cultural differences would lessen in significance for business, the need for mutual cross-cultural understanding has increased greatly. Cultural differences present the greatest challenge in doing business successfully in a foreign country, often leading to misunderstandings and conflicts that inflict critical damage upon business relationships. In The Cultural Imperative, Lewis writes that “today the process of globalization is creating more economic and political links among countries, regions, and cultures, but conflicts in Serbia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.

Film is another source of this material and provides for very rich culture study. Film can be incorporated into various courses on business and politics. A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

The work of the renowned cross-culturalist and linguist Richard Lewis demonstrates the connection between business and culture and provides a means to identify aspects of culture that should be taught in a classroom for professionals (see Cultures). With globalization, despite the popular belief in the past that cultures would be drawn together and cultural differences would lessen in significance for business, the need for mutual cross-cultural understanding has increased greatly. Cultural differences present the greatest challenge in doing business successfully in a foreign country, often leading to misunderstandings and conflicts that inflict critical damage upon business relationships. In The Cultural Imperative, Lewis writes that “today the process of globalization is creating more economic and political links among countries, regions, and cultures, but conflicts in Serbia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.

Film is another source of this material and provides for very rich culture study. Film can be incorporated into various courses on business and politics. A separate course, “A Society through Film,” is an effective way to introduce twentieth-century cultural and historical trends. Since the approach to course design and the use of film material differ from those used in a literature course, it seems logical to devote a separate article to the use of film in a language course for the professions.

The work of the renowned cross-culturalist and linguist Richard Lewis demonstrates the connection between business and culture and provides a means to identify aspects of culture that should be taught in a classroom for professionals (see Cultures). With globalization, despite the popular belief in the past that cultures would be drawn together and cultural differences would lessen in significance for business, the need for mutual cross-cultural understanding has increased greatly. Cultural differences present the greatest challenge in doing business successfully in a foreign country, often leading to misunderstandings and conflicts that inflict critical damage upon business relationships. In The Cultural Imperative, Lewis writes that “today the process of globalization is creating more economic and political links among countries, regions, and cultures, but conflicts in Serbia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and entertainment. At the same time, the use of this material facilitates a richer and more meaningful understanding of how a foreign business operates in the target country by introducing students not just to the formal organizations, rules, and practices, but also to the informal social norms, customs, traditions, and other practices that are shared by members of a society but are not stated explicitly in any textbooks. Literary material can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of foreign thought and behavior, thereby providing for more meaningful and successful business interactions.
the Middle East, and Timor (and other parts of Indonesia) as well as India’s and Pakistan’s long-lived conflict over Kashmir show how regional culture identities resist erosion . . . [Cultural barriers, though frequently permeable, are formidable] (xxiv).

Every business interaction happens in a cultural context. Further, it is in that context that the significance of such interaction must be understood. Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner assert that “culture pervades and radiates meanings into every aspect of the enterprise. Culture patterns the whole field of business relationships” (16). The connection between business and culture and the need to provide students with a framework for understanding a foreign culture are acknowledged by language educators. Vicki Galloway wrote

. . . there simply is no such thing as sanitized, culturally neutral interaction among humans. . . . Understanding another culture requires constructing another—a different—framework of perceptions and values . . . Thus, guiding students to understand and appreciate the business picture will require guiding them, as well, to see the vivid colors and subtle hues that merge to form another sense-making system. (54)

The educator’s task, then, is to determine what is meant by culture, what aspects of a foreign culture are important for business people to understand, and what material should be used and how it should be presented in a language classroom.

Trompenaars’s definition of culture and classification of cultural phenomena can lead to some answers. He describes culture as “a shared system of meanings. It dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we value” (13). He continues by stating that it is “man-made, confirmed by others, conventionalized and passed on for younger people or newcomers to learn. It provides people with a meaningful context in which to meet, to think about themselves and face the outer world” (24). G. Hofstede calls culture “the collective programming of the mind” (Lewis, Cultures 25), which begins immediately after birth and is supervised by parents and teachers. And Trompenaars distinguishes between explicit culture, norms, and values.

Explicit culture is the observable reality of the language, food, buildings, houses, monuments, agriculture, shrines, markets, fashions and art. Norms are the mutual sense a group has of what is “right” and “wrong.” Norms can develop on a formal level as written laws, and on an informal level as social control. Values, on the other hand, determine the definition of

the Middle East, and Timor (and other parts of Indonesia) as well as India’s and Pakistan’s long-lived conflict over Kashmir show how regional culture identities resist erosion . . . [Cultural barriers, though frequently permeable, are formidable] (xxiv).

Every business interaction happens in a cultural context. Further, it is in that context that the significance of such interaction must be understood. Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner assert that “culture pervades and radiates meanings into every aspect of the enterprise. Culture patterns the whole field of business relationships” (16). The connection between business and culture and the need to provide students with a framework for understanding a foreign culture are acknowledged by language educators. Vicki Galloway wrote

. . . there simply is no such thing as sanitized, culturally neutral interaction among humans. . . . Understanding another culture requires constructing another—a different—framework of perceptions and values . . . Thus, guiding students to understand and appreciate the business picture will require guiding them, as well, to see the vivid colors and subtle hues that merge to form another sense-making system. (54)

The educator’s task, then, is to determine what is meant by culture, what aspects of a foreign culture are important for business people to understand, and what material should be used and how it should be presented in a language classroom.

Trompenaars’s definition of culture and classification of cultural phenomena can lead to some answers. He describes culture as “a shared system of meanings. It dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we value” (13). He continues by stating that it is “man-made, confirmed by others, conventionalized and passed on for younger people or newcomers to learn. It provides people with a meaningful context in which to meet, to think about themselves and face the outer world” (24). G. Hofstede calls culture “the collective programming of the mind” (Lewis, Cultures 25), which begins immediately after birth and is supervised by parents and teachers. And Trompenaars distinguishes between explicit culture, norms, and values.

Explicit culture is the observable reality of the language, food, buildings, houses, monuments, agriculture, shrines, markets, fashions and art. Norms are the mutual sense a group has of what is “right” and “wrong.” Norms can develop on a formal level as written laws, and on an informal level as social control. Values, on the other hand, determine the definition of

the Middle East, and Timor (and other parts of Indonesia) as well as India’s and Pakistan’s long-lived conflict over Kashmir show how regional culture identities resist erosion . . . [Cultural barriers, though frequently permeable, are formidable] (xxiv).

Every business interaction happens in a cultural context. Further, it is in that context that the significance of such interaction must be understood. Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner assert that “culture pervades and radiates meanings into every aspect of the enterprise. Culture patterns the whole field of business relationships” (16). The connection between business and culture and the need to provide students with a framework for understanding a foreign culture are acknowledged by language educators. Vicki Galloway wrote

. . . there simply is no such thing as sanitized, culturally neutral interaction among humans. . . . Understanding another culture requires constructing another—a different—framework of perceptions and values . . . Thus, guiding students to understand and appreciate the business picture will require guiding them, as well, to see the vivid colors and subtle hues that merge to form another sense-making system. (54)

The educator’s task, then, is to determine what is meant by culture, what aspects of a foreign culture are important for business people to understand, and what material should be used and how it should be presented in a language classroom.

Trompenaars’s definition of culture and classification of cultural phenomena can lead to some answers. He describes culture as “a shared system of meanings. It dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we value” (13). He continues by stating that it is “man-made, confirmed by others, conventionalized and passed on for younger people or newcomers to learn. It provides people with a meaningful context in which to meet, to think about themselves and face the outer world” (24). G. Hofstede calls culture “the collective programming of the mind” (Lewis, Cultures 25), which begins immediately after birth and is supervised by parents and teachers. And Trompenaars distinguishes between explicit culture, norms, and values.

Explicit culture is the observable reality of the language, food, buildings, houses, monuments, agriculture, shrines, markets, fashions and art. Norms are the mutual sense a group has of what is “right” and “wrong.” Norms can develop on a formal level as written laws, and on an informal level as social control. Values, on the other hand, determine the definition of
This classification demonstrates that a large and varied group of visible manifestations of culture and some explicitly stated norms can be acquired easily through observation. In contrast, such invisible cultural phenomena as a group understanding of right and wrong, or cultural concepts that define good and bad, are much more difficult to acquire because they are not stated explicitly in the popular press or explained to foreigners.

Lewis postulates that people from different cultures share basic concepts but view them from different angles and perspectives, leading them to behave in a manner that we may consider irrational or even in direct contradiction of what we hold sacred. Indeed, cross-cultural training is an important and powerful tool for acquiring knowledge of a foreign culture and developing cross-cultural sensitivity. This allows us to identify and describe certain cross-cultural differences and provide a means of understanding a foreign culture, although not in depth. A deeper understanding of the cultural roots of national behavior can be achieved by studying specific manifestations of a culture, such as that found in literature and film. From them, students learn about national heroes, their beliefs, the problems they faced, and their deeds and accomplishments in confronting every kind of issue traditionally important to the society. By studying literature and film, students can begin to understand the core beliefs and basic concepts that underlie, and in many ways continue to determine, a people’s actions and behaviors in a societal context.

THE RUSSIAN CASE

The example of Russia suggests an approach to the choice of literary works and the insights they can provide into a foreign business environment. Russian folklore and literature document the cultural development of the society through the ages. Folktales and medieval epic stories that we read now in Russian folklore and literature demonstrate that a large and varied group of visible manifestations of culture and some explicitly stated norms can be acquired easily through observation. In contrast, such invisible cultural phenomena as a group understanding of right and wrong, or cultural concepts that define good and bad, are much more difficult to acquire because they are not stated explicitly in the popular press or explained to foreigners.

Lewis postulates that people from different cultures share basic concepts but view them from different angles and perspectives, leading them to behave in a manner that we may consider irrational or even in direct contradiction of what we hold sacred. Indeed, cross-cultural training is an important and powerful tool for acquiring knowledge of a foreign culture and developing cross-cultural sensitivity. This allows us to identify and describe certain cross-cultural differences and provide a means of understanding a foreign culture, although not in depth. A deeper understanding of the cultural roots of national behavior can be achieved by studying specific manifestations of a culture, such as that found in literature and film. From them, students learn about national heroes, their beliefs, the problems they faced, and their deeds and accomplishments in confronting every kind of issue traditionally important to the society. By studying literature and film, students can begin to understand the core beliefs and basic concepts that underlie, and in many ways continue to determine, a people’s actions and behaviors in a societal context.

THE RUSSIAN CASE

The example of Russia suggests an approach to the choice of literary works and the insights they can provide into a foreign business environment. Russian folklore and literature document the cultural development of the society through the ages. Folktales and medieval epic stories that we read now in Russian folklore and literature demonstrate that a large and varied group of visible manifestations of culture and some explicitly stated norms can be acquired easily through observation. In contrast, such invisible cultural phenomena as a group understanding of right and wrong, or cultural concepts that define good and bad, are much more difficult to acquire because they are not stated explicitly in the popular press or explained to foreigners.

Lewis postulates that people from different cultures share basic concepts but view them from different angles and perspectives, leading them to behave in a manner that we may consider irrational or even in direct contradiction of what we hold sacred. Indeed, cross-cultural training is an important and powerful tool for acquiring knowledge of a foreign culture and developing cross-cultural sensitivity. This allows us to identify and describe certain cross-cultural differences and provide a means of understanding a foreign culture, although not in depth. A deeper understanding of the cultural roots of national behavior can be achieved by studying specific manifestations of a culture, such as that found in literature and film. From them, students learn about national heroes, their beliefs, the problems they faced, and their deeds and accomplishments in confronting every kind of issue traditionally important to the society. By studying literature and film, students can begin to understand the core beliefs and basic concepts that underlie, and in many ways continue to determine, a people’s actions and behaviors in a societal context.
Russia were put into their present form by the authors of the nineteenth century; many stories are continuously rewritten by modern authors so that children can easily understand them. Some of the details have changed as the society has evolved, but the plots have not changed much over the centuries. From fairy tales and medieval epics, Russian children learn who they are as they learn to read. The most beloved characters of Russian folktales are fools who go against the norms of the society, refuse to work, live at the expense of their parents or brothers, and spend most of their time lying idle by a warm hearth. Yet it is the fools—not their hardworking brothers—who merit wealth and happiness. Are they really fools, or do they just pretend to be? Understanding why fools are the favorite characters in Russian folktales, why they always marry princesses and are rewarded with a kingdom, and what that means with regard to Russian culture sheds light on the Russian view on good and evil, right and wrong, and strength and weakness. Similarly, studying the development of the epic Russian warrior, bogatyr, into an icon of Russian patriotism during the Second World War, and his further development into a metaphor for Russia itself at the beginning of the twenty-first century, can facilitate a student’s understanding of the Russian national identity and the notion of patriotism.

The nineteenth century was the golden age of Russian literature. Literary works of that period have had a significant influence on social conduct and have played a major role in establishing the Russian national identity. Writers were seen as prophets and teachers, interpreting history, commenting on law and society, and providing a national conscience. They created a vast and colorful literary heritage, and some of these works are known all over the world. But more to the point, they are taught in depth in Russian schools, introducing students not only to the history of Russia but also to the major issues, norms, and values of the society. On the one hand, they documented the development of society and social conduct, presenting typical characters, situations, and behaviors; on the other hand, they played a unique educational role through the centuries, defining and preserving those practices approved, or at least admired, by society and proclaiming national ideals.

Cross-cultural theories may suggest a starting point for choosing literature that is relevant to modern society and can offer insights into its current informal culture. The popular misconception with regard to post-soviet Russia has been that it is a newly formed democratic capitalist state that is quickly adopting Western norms and practices. Recent developments in Russia vividly demonstrate that the traditional mentality and value system are still in place, standing in the way of change. Apparently, cultural norms and values; on the other hand, they played a unique educational role through the centuries, defining and preserving those practices approved, or at least admired, by society and proclaiming national ideals.

Cross-cultural theories may suggest a starting point for choosing literature that is relevant to modern society and can offer insights into its current informal culture. The popular misconception with regard to post-soviet Russia has been that it is a newly formed democratic capitalist state that is quickly adopting Western norms and practices. Recent developments in Russia vividly demonstrate that the traditional mentality and value system are still in place, standing in the way of change. Apparently, cultural norms and values; on the other hand, they played a unique educational role through the centuries, defining and preserving those practices approved, or at least admired, by society and proclaiming national ideals.

Cross-cultural theories may suggest a starting point for choosing literature that is relevant to modern society and can offer insights into its current informal culture. The popular misconception with regard to post-soviet Russia has been that it is a newly formed democratic capitalist state that is quickly adopting Western norms and practices. Recent developments in Russia vividly demonstrate that the traditional mentality and value system are still in place, standing in the way of change. Apparently, cultural norms and values; on the other hand, they played a unique educational role through the centuries, defining and preserving those practices approved, or at least admired, by society and proclaiming national ideals.
beliefs that have taken centuries to develop will not change overnight. Any number of societal phenomena with popular conceptions rooted in culture have received markedly different treatment in Russia from their treatment in the West. Among the more significant are:

- the Russian man and the Russian woman
- motivation, leadership, and the work ethic
- business and businessmen
- theft, bribery, and corruption
- power, state, and the common man
- treatment of foreigners.

This list is an outgrowth of the process of designing a course in language for professionals. It has been developed from cross-cultural studies, private interviews with various Russian businessmen and foreigners doing business in Russia, and publications on challenges in Russian business in the current press. It reflects certain cultural aspects that have characterized Russians for centuries and are reflected in folk tales and nineteenth-century literature. The story of one Russian company’s experiences with the motivation, leadership, and work ethic of its employees provides an example of the correlation between literary works and the current cultural traits of a society.

Motivating workers in Russia has been one of the concerns of business owners and managers since the liberation of the market. Very often, financial compensation has not been an incentive for Russians to work better or harder. In many cases, no direct correlation exists between the amount of compensation and the quality of work. Although there has been a drift toward Western practices in large cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg, in rural Russia this has not been the case. A fascinating study has been conducted by EFKO, a company that built a food-processing plant in Belgorodskaya Oblast, a rural agricultural area with a near-subsistence economy, a complete lack of employment opportunities, and a corresponding absence of income for the local population. The company had expected to find and hire cheap, enthusiastic labor, but to their great surprise, the local people refused to work and even sabotaged the company’s operations. It turned out that the company failed in its attempts to motivate the workers financially. Their monetary requirements were so small that they were simply not interested in financial incentives. The company invited sociologists and psychologists to create a means of motivating the workers. After extensive research, they concluded that this population had no material needs and no desire to improve

LITERATURE FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

beliefs that have taken centuries to develop will not change overnight. Any number of societal phenomena with popular conceptions rooted in culture have received markedly different treatment in Russia from their treatment in the West. Among the more significant are:

- the Russian man and the Russian woman
- motivation, leadership, and the work ethic
- business and businessmen
- theft, bribery, and corruption
- power, state, and the common man
- treatment of foreigners.

This list is an outgrowth of the process of designing a course in language for professionals. It has been developed from cross-cultural studies, private interviews with various Russian businessmen and foreigners doing business in Russia, and publications on challenges in Russian business in the current press. It reflects certain cultural aspects that have characterized Russians for centuries and are reflected in folk tales and nineteenth-century literature. The story of one Russian company’s experiences with the motivation, leadership, and work ethic of its employees provides an example of the correlation between literary works and the current cultural traits of a society.

Motivating workers in Russia has been one of the concerns of business owners and managers since the liberation of the market. Very often, financial compensation has not been an incentive for Russians to work better or harder. In many cases, no direct correlation exists between the amount of compensation and the quality of work. Although there has been a drift toward Western practices in large cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg, in rural Russia this has not been the case. A fascinating study has been conducted by EFKO, a company that built a food-processing plant in Belgorodskaya Oblast, a rural agricultural area with a near-subsistence economy, a complete lack of employment opportunities, and a corresponding absence of income for the local population. The company had expected to find and hire cheap, enthusiastic labor, but to their great surprise, the local people refused to work and even sabotaged the company’s operations. It turned out that the company failed in its attempts to motivate the workers financially. Their monetary requirements were so small that they were simply not interested in financial incentives. The company invited sociologists and psychologists to create a means of motivating the workers. After extensive research, they concluded that this population had no material needs and no desire to improve
Their standard of living or achieve pragmatic goals of any kind. The only motivation factor for them was their own reputation in the local community and ties with their neighbors. The study concluded that what was crucial was the development of a sense of belonging to the business and of being part of it. Furthermore, the reward-and-punishment system should be built on collective performance rather than on individual work. This study, published in 2002, demonstrates convincingly that cultural characteristics are slow to change, persisting through centuries and in spite of drastic changes in economic and governmental systems. A similar attitude toward work is the defining characteristic of the fool in Russian fairy tales. He has no material interests and no desire to achieve. He is capable of doing a job well but will work only when asked kindly and politely by the elder, or promised a treat in return for his efforts. The same attitude toward work may be seen in various works by nineteenth-century authors. A wonderful example can be found in the novel Oblomov (1859) by Ivan Goncharov. The main character, the landlord Oblomov, spends his life on a couch, unwilling to apply himself to any activity, not even to the running of his own estate. The story Lefty (1886), by Nikolai Leskov, presents a colorful image of Russian craftsmen who create a master work at the request of the tsar, in an attempt to demonstrate Russian superiority over the British. The British presented the tsar with a life-sized metal flea that could jump when the mechanism inside was put in motion. The Russian craftsmen succeeded in putting horseshoes on each foot of the flea and wrote the craftsmen’s initials on each horseshoe. Lefty was the most skillful of all, so he made little nails. His initials could be seen only through a very strong microscope; his nails could not be seen even then. This story provides material for discussing a number of Russian cultural characteristics, including the work ethic and the nature of motivation. The most powerful incentive lay not in a tangible reward, but in the pride that the craftsmen took in their work and the opportunity to impress the tsar. They understood that the tsar counted on his people, and they simply did not want to let him down.

This example demonstrates that some of the characteristics described in Russian folktales and nineteenth-century literature have survived the political and economic upheavals of the twentieth century and contribute greatly to the cultural identity of modern-day Russians. Even if these characteristics seem obsolete to Westerners, their importance should not be underestimated and should be acknowledged and worked into managerial methods. Another important result of studying literary texts is that foreigners are introduced to the development of a sense of belonging to the business and of being part of it. Furthermore, the reward-and-punishment system should be built on collective performance rather than on individual work.
to the stories and characters familiar to all educated Russians. They can under-stand some of these characters in the current press and impress Russians with their knowledge of Russian culture.

APPLICATION TO THE CLASSROOM
We should acknowledge certain constraints in introducing literary texts into a content-based language course for professions. The major constraint, determined by the students’ language level, is the length of the text and its complexity. For example, in a course for students who have achieved the minimum of the ACTFL Advanced level in the oral proficiency interview, a realistic reading assignment is from five to fifteen pages in preparation for one class. This limits the choice of literary texts to short stories and excerpts from novels. The passages can be supplemented by films, which are generally not satisfactory substitutes, given that the screen version may offer a view of the literary work through a modern prism and, therefore, the interpretation may vary significantly from that found in the original text. Comparison of the two could facilitate a rich cultural discussion on the current perception of the literary work.

In order to help students deal with the complexity of the reading, a variety of materials are supplied along with the reading assignment itself. Each text is accompanied by a glossary to allow reading without a dictionary. Culturally important sayings, proverbs, and frequently used vocabulary are introduced in the pre-reading exercises. Cultural and historical commentary, crucial for adequate understanding of the events in the story, are provided for the students prior to their reading the text.

Discussion of the text in class is based on two types of questions. The first type is intended to check the students’ understanding of the text, focusing on important twists in the story. Vocabulary available in the text is usually suf-ficient for this task. The second type is aimed at the interpretation of the text and discussion of culturally specific behaviors and characteristics. Here students are expected to interpret the text, formulate and support their opinions, draw conclusions, make comparisons, and hypothesize. In other words, the students perform tasks requiring level three language proficiency.

Vocabulary, syntax structures, and devices of coherence and cohesion are provided for the students in the accompanying materials.

Daily class discussions illuminate a wide variety of cultural characteristics and prepare students for more general presentations on cultural themes.
relevant to the course material. Each student is expected to make two pre-
sentations over the course of a semester on a theme of his/her choosing,
using material from the assigned texts and class discussions. The themes of
these presentations are found in the materials discussed in the course. With
regard to the course outlined in this article, some of the themes may include
the following:

1. Characters in Russian fairy tales and what makes them good.
2. Relationships between men and women as described in fairy tales
date and nineteenth-century literature, and the similarities and differences
observed.
3. Work ethic and motivation factors presented in the texts, comparing
them with the situation in today’s Russia.
4. Roots of bribery in Russia and attitudes toward theft and bribery as
presented in the literature.

These themes require students to look critically at the texts they have
read, search for culturally specific materials, and reconcile them with their
understanding of contemporary Russian society. While preparing their pre-
sentations, in addition to working on language, students think critically about
the foreign culture, see the issue within the framework of that culture, con-
textualize their newly acquired knowledge within their pre-existing concept
of the culture, and contrast it with their own culture. The main purpose of the
exercise is to broaden the students’ understanding of a foreign culture and
to help them combine the knowledge they have gained from their previous
studies of Russian politics, economy, and business with their own experiences
in the country into an organized structure.

This approach to studying classical literature to learn cultural norms,
beliefs, and behaviors that constitute the foundation of a culture provides
an opportunity to examine the roots of contemporary culture and to find
some explanations for recent developments in countries like Russia. From a
broad cultural studies perspective, Russian culture since 1991 has yet to be
adequately explored. Drastic economic and political changes have led to the
formation of a visibly new regime in some ways resembling those in the West
but at the same time drastically different. Some research into these issues has
been done, as in the case of the EFKO company presented above, but even for
Russians this is a new field of study. In the absence of cultural studies, a dialogue between disciplines can shed light on recent developments and
relevant to the course material. Each student is expected to make two pre-
sentations over the course of a semester on a theme of his/her choosing,
using material from the assigned texts and class discussions. The themes of
these presentations are found in the materials discussed in the course. With
regard to the course outlined in this article, some of the themes may include
the following:

1. Characters in Russian fairy tales and what makes them good.
2. Relationships between men and women as described in fairy tales
date and nineteenth-century literature, and the similarities and differences
observed.
3. Work ethic and motivation factors presented in the texts, comparing
them with the situation in today’s Russia.
4. Roots of bribery in Russia and attitudes toward theft and bribery as
presented in the literature.

These themes require students to look critically at the texts they have
read, search for culturally specific materials, and reconcile them with their
understanding of contemporary Russian society. While preparing their pre-
sentations, in addition to working on language, students think critically about
the foreign culture, see the issue within the framework of that culture, con-
textualize their newly acquired knowledge within their pre-existing concept
of the culture, and contrast it with their own culture. The main purpose of the
exercise is to broaden the students’ understanding of a foreign culture and
to help them combine the knowledge they have gained from their previous
studies of Russian politics, economy, and business with their own experiences
in the country into an organized structure.

This approach to studying classical literature to learn cultural norms,
beliefs, and behaviors that constitute the foundation of a culture provides
an opportunity to examine the roots of contemporary culture and to find
some explanations for recent developments in countries like Russia. From a
broad cultural studies perspective, Russian culture since 1991 has yet to be
adequately explored. Drastic economic and political changes have led to the
formation of a visibly new regime in some ways resembling those in the West
but at the same time drastically different. Some research into these issues has
been done, as in the case of the EFKO company presented above, but even for
Russians this is a new field of study. In the absence of cultural studies, a dialogue between disciplines can shed light on recent developments and
predict the challenges that business professionals will likely encounter working in a foreign country. A literature course for business professionals can bring cultural literacy to people who have some knowledge of the country, its history, economics, politics, and people.

APPENDIX 1
UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN CHARACTER THROUGH RUSSIAN LITERATURE

GOALS:
The course aims to improve the understanding of culture through the study of literary works and the characters that populate them, which are familiar to all educated Russians; to expand understanding of the behavior and value systems of contemporary Russians; to improve the ability to speak in Russian on cultural and social issues; to learn to prepare presentations, formulate and defend opinions, and to lead discussions.

THEMES:
The course will focus on cultural, economic, and political issues. There will be an emphasis on vocabulary development and correct grammatical usage.

TEXTS:
Selected readings from fairy tales, bylines, and nineteenth-century literature will be posted on Blackboard.

GUIDELINES FOR COURSE MANAGEMENT:

Homework Preparation:

1. READING ASSIGNMENTS:
   In order to be able to participate productively in class discussions, you should prepare to summarize the text and demonstrate that you understand the assigned material. When provided, you will need to read the questions on the text and prepare to answer them using appropriate vocabulary from the text. You should refer to the text to support your answers. If you have trouble summarizing the text or answering the questions, you should prepare your own questions on the text. This will enable you to participate in the discussion.

predict the challenges that business professionals will likely encounter working in a foreign country. A literature course for business professionals can bring cultural literacy to people who have some knowledge of the country, its history, economics, politics, and people.

APPENDIX 1
UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN CHARACTER THROUGH RUSSIAN LITERATURE

GOALS:
The course aims to improve the understanding of culture through the study of literary works and the characters that populate them, which are familiar to all educated Russians; to expand understanding of the behavior and value systems of contemporary Russians; to improve the ability to speak in Russian on cultural and social issues; to learn to prepare presentations, formulate and defend opinions, and to lead discussions.

THEMES:
The course will focus on cultural, economic, and political issues. There will be an emphasis on vocabulary development and correct grammatical usage.

TEXTS:
Selected readings from fairy tales, bylines, and nineteenth-century literature will be posted on Blackboard.

GUIDELINES FOR COURSE MANAGEMENT:

Homework Preparation:

1. READING ASSIGNMENTS:
   In order to be able to participate productively in class discussions, you should prepare to summarize the text and demonstrate that you understand the assigned material. When provided, you will need to read the questions on the text and prepare to answer them using appropriate vocabulary from the text. You should refer to the text to support your answers. If you have trouble summarizing the text or answering the questions, you should prepare your own questions on the text. This will enable you to participate in the discussion.
2. PAPERS:
Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to write six papers of 1–2 typed pages. Each paper should analyze a text or a theme of your choice from the materials discussed in class. Students are expected to hand in a paper every two weeks. Late papers will be accepted only under special circumstances. Papers will be returned with corrections. You should schedule meetings with your instructor to discuss these corrections if you do not understand them. You will be given a grade only after you have corrected your mistakes.

Mid-Term:
A 10-minute oral class presentation on a theme of your choice.

Final Examinations:
1. A 10–15-minute oral final presentation on a theme of your choice related to the class materials. A list of suggested themes will be distributed in class.
The use of Power Point or handouts is required. Your final presentation will be graded on its organization, content, clarity, and accuracy.
2. A typed 3–5-page paper on the topic of your final class presentation.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS:
1. Original thinking: present your own understanding of the theme and readings; cite references to texts to support your ideas
2. Clarity of written and oral expression
3. Use of coherence and cohesion as organizers
4. Incorporation of grammar and vocabulary introduced in the course
5. Clear structure:
   i. Appearance: place your topic at the top of the first page of the paper and in the opening slide of your presentation
   ii. Introduction: formulate the rationale for choosing this theme and the main ideas of the presentation
   iii. Development: use examples from the course materials to support each idea
   iv. Conclusion: summarize your ideas.

2. PAPERS:
Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to write six papers of 1–2 typed pages. Each paper should analyze a text or a theme of your choice from the materials discussed in class. Students are expected to hand in a paper every two weeks. Late papers will be accepted only under special circumstances. Papers will be returned with corrections. You should schedule meetings with your instructor to discuss these corrections if you do not understand them. You will be given a grade only after you have corrected your mistakes.

Mid-Term:
A 10-minute oral class presentation on a theme of your choice.

Final Examinations:
1. A 10–15-minute oral final presentation on a theme of your choice related to the class materials. A list of suggested themes will be distributed in class.
The use of Power Point or handouts is required. Your final presentation will be graded on its organization, content, clarity, and accuracy.
2. A typed 3–5-page paper on the topic of your final class presentation.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS:
1. Original thinking: present your own understanding of the theme and readings; cite references to texts to support your ideas
2. Clarity of written and oral expression
3. Use of coherence and cohesion as organizers
4. Incorporation of grammar and vocabulary introduced in the course
5. Clear structure:
   i. Appearance: place your topic at the top of the first page of the paper and in the opening slide of your presentation
   ii. Introduction: formulate the rationale for choosing this theme and the main ideas of the presentation
   iii. Development: use examples from the course materials to support each idea
   iv. Conclusion: summarize your ideas.
I. The Russian man: the image of the Russian hero in fairy tales
   Byliny, Russian epic stories, e.g., How Ilya from Murom Became a Bogaty
   Ilia Muromets and Solovej Razbojnik
   Cartoons
III. Goncharov’s Oblomov and the notion of oblomovschina
   Excerpts from the novel
   Film A Few Days from the Life of Ivan Oblomov
IV. The Russian woman in fairy tales and in nineteenth-century literature
   Fairy tales
   Excerpts from Crime and Punishment by Dostoevsky
   Scenes from the film Crime and Punishment
   Excerpt from the book Russian Idea
   Dmitri Likhachev, National openness and conservatism
   V. Foreigners and the foreign
   Nikolai Leskov, Lefty
   Excerpts from the novel War and Peace
   Nikolai Berlyayev: “Perception of Nationality”
   Dmitri Likhachev, National openness and conservatism
VI. Business and businessmen
   Anton Chekhov, Cherry Orchard
   VII. Theft and bribery in Russia
   Nikolai Gogol, Dead Souls, chapter 11
   VIII. Power and the common man
   Alexander Pushkin, Bronze Horsemen

REFERENCES