Universal competence "communication" in the digital age

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Abstract: The article examines a new didactic approach to the formation of the universal competence "communication" in the framework of the course "Oratory and Rhetoric". The strategic goal of training is to bring up a strong linguistic personality with a high level of speech-thinking culture. In the proposed training system, a modern polycode text becomes a promising object of analysis and a tool for the development of communicative competence. The results of scientific and methodological research have been tested by the author in contact and distance activities involving graduate students of St. Petersburg State Forest Technical University; they are reflected in the work program of the discipline and in the textbooks prepared by the author. The results obtained testify to the effectiveness and prospects of the chosen approach.

1. Introduction
The modern person lives at the intersection of two worlds, real and virtual. The dominant feature of the present and, without any doubt, the future life of mankind is evolution, the swiftness and unpredictability of which is largely determined by the digital age. In a situation where the only constant, including the educational process, is transformation [1], the higher education system is faced by a challenge and must answer difficult questions about the goals and objectives, teaching methods, and the competencies required for a graduate.

According to the majority of the global pedagogical community, the formation (development, improvement, etc.) of universal competences comes to the fore, among which one of the main ones is “communication”. Communication as the most important form of social interaction involves the exchange of sign information between social subjects, and the process (and result) of the interaction of communicants who generate and interpret texts. For effective communication, an appropriate (high) level of a communicant is required, possessing (in addition to professional competencies) a speech-thinking culture, ethical responsibility, flexibility of thinking and psychological stability; therefore, it is necessary to bring up a strong linguistic personality [2]. It is this strategic goal that determines the inclusion of the discipline "Oratory and Rhetoric" in the master's training plan at SPbSFTU.

2. Methods and Materials
The material of this research is a system of practical work based on productive and creative tasks (texts) prepared by the author of the publication and intended for regular classroom and independent work of undergraduates studying "Oratory and rhetoric" [3, 4]. For the purpose of the most adequate presentation of the results of the work done, theoretical (descriptive and analytical) and empirical (survey, focus group discussions) research methods are used.
3. Results and Discussion
The concept of the author's course "Oratory and Rhetoric" is implemented in a two-module (two-part) asymmetric teaching system, in which most of the time is devoted to the problems of the effectiveness of modern communication.

At the first (retrospective) stage, the main attention is paid to the diagnosis and systematization (correction) of the knowledge, skills and abilities of students in the language, text and communicative subcompetencies. The initial type of diagnostic control is a written survey, during which undergraduates conduct a "dialogue with a precedent phenomenon" [5]. Precedential speech / precedential situation becomes the starting point and the motive of the speaking activity related to communication problems, and which reveals the overall cultural level, rhetoric competence, communicative problems, the depth of reflection and the persuasiveness of the argumentation of students. Diagnostics of competencies continues in subsequent lessons of this stage in discussions of short informational speeches of each student on the history of rhetoric and oratory. All this allows, to a certain extent and depending on the preparedness of students, to adjust further classroom (group) and extracurricular (individual) work.

As part of the retrospective stage, the systemic assimilation of knowledge is set by the actual historical and rhetorical material in chronological sequence (from the origins of oratory and rhetoric of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, Russian rhetoric and eloquence of the 18th-19th centuries to the neorhetoric of the modern world). At the same time, the use of the capabilities of the virtual educational environment of the university, the Moodle LMS, allows taking into account the individual characteristics of each student and choosing, if necessary, a more acceptable trajectory of educational activity. The effectiveness of educational activity at this stage is determined not only (and not so much) by the expansion of the cultural outlook, deepening knowledge about the characteristics of good speech and the mechanisms of its generation, but by the establishment of the consistency and continuity of cultural and rhetorical experience.

The second (progressive) stage of training is addressing the modern public communication, and is focused on the classical rhetorical canon and the tasks of preparing students for a master’s degree. The technology of creating speech as a central object of study with the identification of basic (key) stages in the movement from thought to word determines the radial composition of this module. Thus, at the main stage of mastering the discipline "Oratory and Rhetoric", undergraduates consider modern classifications, composition, language (verbal and non-verbal) of public speech, problems of interaction between the speaker and the audience, and other aspects of the preparation and implementation of public communication, including post-communicative reflection of the speaker and audience. Performing multi-level productive tasks in various topics ultimately creates a solid foundation for preparing a detailed public presentation. Final practical lessons are in the style of an oratorical workshop (both contact and distance formats) and represent a demonstration of the level of formation of students' communicative competencies.

The scientific and methodological approach of both stages is associated with the interpretation and creation (generation) of texts of both traditional and innovative types, dictated by the requirements of modern communication, including digital environment. And in this situation, the role of the teacher as the main carrier of information is obviously archaic: with a modern overabundance of information, students need appropriate selection, adequate understanding, a holistic (not fragmentary) vision of the issues being studied, and ultimately, in a holistic picture of the world acquired in the learning process.

All this determines the logic of the chosen methods and methods of teaching, allows us to realize full-fledged dialogue communication, increase the efficiency of mental activity, and activate creativity and motivation for the educational process.

Despite the fact that master’s students have some common linguistic knowledge, skills and abilities obtained in the study of the course "Russian language and culture of speech", in preparation for the defense and defense of the final qualifying work for the bachelor degree, etc., nevertheless in the field of collection, perception and understanding of information, and its adequate transmission, there are significant differences among undergraduates. In this regard, one of the main objectives of the course
is to teach a language of modern communication, the language dictated by the new style of the digital era and the transformation of text as a cultural phenomenon.

The digital era actualizes and replicates new speech events and polycode texts of various modifications as objects of study and teaching (impact) tools. In particular, the art of oral self-presentation (Elevator Pitch) and presentation writing literacy in a digital environment (electronic portfolio) are considered as the most important areas of the communicative professional training of a university graduate [6]. One of the necessary forms of professional self-presentation is a resume, which, when establishing business contacts, is currently carried out mainly with reliance on digital technologies and becomes a constructively complex text (support letter, the resume itself, annexes to the resume). And yet, the functioning of written business texts in the digital environment is primarily subject to the general requirements of the official business style of the literary language, and to the peculiarities of business communication in general. The emerging "stylistic anomalies", "neoplasms" in business texts, according to experts [7], signal both the peculiarities of the syntactic structure of a business text, an orientation towards unambiguity and clarity of its understanding (and can be considered as acceptable), indicate insufficient knowledge of business language, and require correction.

The most relevant for academic and professional interaction, for study and training, are electronic polycode texts of the virtual space, their correlation with other kinds of texts, and opportunities and limitations of use.

It is known that the written printed text in the digital age is undergoing significant changes: the traditional (linear) text and its reading (mainly on paper) is giving way more and more to the web text, a special phenomenon of mass communication called "modular text" [8]. These two completely differently organized speech materials require different approaches to reading, interpretation and use / application in order to avoid communication errors and communication failures.

Modular text, placed on a plane and bounded by the frame of a web page, is focused on usability; reducing the volume of the text (and, consequently, reading time), increasing its functionality, and the ability to compete for the reader's attention create a new technological format for the existence of information. The differentiating features of modular texts are both the general principle of presenting the material (the principle of the inverted pyramid: the main information is presented at the beginning), and particular principles: the presence of keywords and explanatory subheadings, bulleted lists, the exclusion of large paragraphs, the use of non-verbal signs, hyperlinks, etc. The location of information and its nature generate (and subsequently form) a special type of perception, an F-shaped pattern for reading web content [9]. Considering that master's students can be of different generations, different cultures of information perception, the teacher also focuses on the conscious specifics of reading texts in a virtual environment, on a new model of working with information sources (when preparing messages, reports, articles, final qualification work, etc.).

However, the specified knowledge about the modular text is of the greatest relevance at the productive stage of the speech activity of students in a situation of direct, contact (or indirect, distance) public communication, speaking in front of an audience with slides, or, in other words, with a presentation. According to some experts in the field of public speaking, since speech and writing are fundamentally different types of communicative and mental activity, their combination in a presentation with slides puts the needs of the speaker (orator) above the needs of the audience [10] and harms effective communication. The experience of the international TED conference also testifies to a high level of interest in presentations without reliance on slides [11], the degree of high success in public speaking is often associated with the combination of intellectual information and emotional experience in a vivid form of storytelling. At the same time, a different trend dominates in modern academic and professional communication, the style of public speaking with the obligatory use of slides (presentations), with visualization of the speech flow and using various semiotic systems has taken root.

At the same time, it is paradoxical that slides for a speech (written verbal and non-verbal accompaniment) are still created by the majority of speakers intuitively, relying on their own taste and
preferences. Conducted focus group discussions in the classroom of undergraduates on the basic issues of slide preparation (general concept, number, ratio and location of visual and verbal texts, performance criteria, method of connection with the oral (verbal) text of the speech, etc.) indicate the need for teaching understanding this type of modular text and "digital migrants" and "digital natives". Experts note that “despite the apparent simplicity, the stepwise transformation of an oral text into a written one, then into a polycode, is a complex process that requires the formation of a whole complex of special competencies”[12]. In this regard, it should be noted that in the classes on "Oratory and Rhetoric", systematic work is carried out to analyze the specific features of oral (spontaneous and prepared) and written speech, with the identification of potentially vulnerable and hindering the effectiveness of loci in the discourse of public speech, their overcoming on the basis of the modern experience of professional speakers and specialists in public speaking [13]. At the "Oratory workshop" (in the final attestation public speech of each student) master's students will have to demonstrate complex knowledge and skills in obtaining and re-coding information, reduction of verbal text and its partial visualization / animation in the modular text of slides, etc. For further individual improvement of oratorical skills and solution of promising didactic problems, a video recording of all stages of rhetorical work is traditionally kept: the speech of each master student, answers to audience questions, analysis of speeches by the audience, and self-analysis of the speaker.

At the same time, new speech events with the participation of digital technologies, information in the format of modular text (autonomous, technological, utilitarian and unified) also set new standards for the perception of information and form "modular thinking". And if active participants in Internet communication, "digital natives", can cope with multitasking and are distinguished by a high speed of work with fast reading, then studying a complex (large) scientific text causes repulsion, the inability to immerse themselves in a slow, thoughtful reading. Switching from simultaneous (holistic) to successive (progressive) perception of the text requires special efforts and concentration of attention for a systematic rethinking of information from different sources, critical thinking, imagination and creativity. According to the studies carried out, to launch this mechanism of intellectual and emotional activity of the brain, and to expand social experience, it is possible to use high-quality fiction literature, which has a "rocket booster effect" [14]. The use of classical works of the Russian literature (reading and listening to stories by A.P. Chekhov, N.A. Teffi, fragments of works by I Ilf and Y Petrov, M Bulgakov, V M Shukshin, etc.) within the framework of a thematic analysis of key rhetorical aspects sets as its goal the return to slow reading, subtext and ambiguity of meanings, the development of the speech-thinking abilities of the linguistic personality. And the ironic (satirical) orientation of literary texts – a warning against duplication, thoughtless copying of schemes, stencils, and clichés– is also an incentive to search for an individual style.

4. Conclusion
The development of the communicative competence of SPbSFTU undergraduates in the course "Oratory and Rhetoric" is based on the synthesis of universal principles and rules for constructing speech with modern digital technologies. The relevance and validity of their use and the degree of ownership, determine the success of modern communication. Moreover, communicative competence in the digital environment, including knowledge of the rules of digital etiquette, should become one of the markers of the cultural and value hierarchy of types of speech culture.

The construction of the course (from a review of key rhetorical achievements (oratorical traditions) to modern rhetorical experience and its comprehension through speech creation technology) lays down not only a systemic, but also an open approach to learning. All this allows us to predict that in the future, the acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities will not only be in demand, but with the advent of new speech events and situations, they may be subject to revision, and therefore should not be perceived as unshakable, eternal truths. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the results of studying the discipline in the form of a final public speech of undergraduates, reflections of the course participants through an anonymous questionnaire and an open survey about the effectiveness of training, cannot be considered as final. It is assumed that the positive results of studying the discipline
and the necessary level of formation of the universal competence "communication" should also appear in the long term, when the received attitudes will motivate the continuity of the development of the linguistic personality.

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