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Starting Point on the Roadmap of the Intercultural Communication Competence (Case of Turkish-Russian Language Pair)

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the widespread use of the concept of “intercultural communication competence” in theoretical and empirical studies, there are problems with the development of this competence in real-time teaching process within local contexts. This **research aims** to analyze the situation regarding the development of intercultural communicative competence in the learning process in the context of Turkey and to evaluate the approach used as a starting point for developing linguistic and cultural awareness among the students of the Russian language and literature department in Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University. As part of the study, the author used the **methods** of deductive analysis, the analysis of the current state of the problem as well as the onomasiological and contrastive analysis. The author analyses the results of testing, based on the ideas of contrastive onomasiology and presented in a learning book for the Translation Course. The **results** show that a comparative analysis of the reality – language interaction models based on concepts such as “situation”, “perspective” and “reframing” helps develop the awareness of the students towards the different “thought patterns”. The main **conclusion** of this paper is the thesis that contrastive onomasiology contributes to the development of linguistic and cultural awareness, which is the first step towards intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: intercultural communication competence; contrastive onomasiology; linguistic and cultural awareness

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ОРИГИНАЛЬНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

Отправная точка на дорожной карте межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции (на примере турецко-русской языковой пары)

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Несмотря на широкое использование понятия «межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция» в теоретических и эмпирических исследованиях, развитие этой компетенции в процессе обучения в реальном времени и в определенном пространстве сопряжено с некоторыми проблемами. **Целью** данной работы является анализ ситуации в области развития межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции в процессе обучения в контексте Турции и оценка подхода, примененного в качестве отправной точки для развития у студентов лингвокультурологической осознанности на отделении русского языка и литературы в Анкаромском университете им. Хаджи Байрама Вели. В работе использованы **методы** анализа текущего состояния проблемы, дедуктивного анализа, а также онемасиологический и сопоставительный анализ.

Автор анализирует результаты апробации подхода, основанного на идеях контрастивной ономазиологии и представленного в учебном пособии по дисциплине «Перевод». **Результаты** показывают, что сопоставительный анализ моделей взаимодействия действительности и языка на основе таких понятий, как «ситуация», «перспектива» и «рефрейминг», способствует развитию осознанности по отношению к различным «моделям мышления» у студентов. **Основным выводом** работы является тезис о том, что контрастивная ономазиология способствует развитию лингвокультурологической осознанности, что является первым шагом на пути к межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция; контрастивная ономазиология; лингвокультурологическая осознанность

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Introduction and literature review

Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) has been now for decades in the mainstream of the approaches to the foreign language teaching. In spite of the frequent use of the term in theoretical and empirical research there is no consensus on definition of the ICC [1–3]. ICC acts as an umbrella-term for researchers working in different areas, and there are different models of ICC for specific context [4–5]. The most famous model of ICC in language teaching presented in 1997 and known as “Byram’s model” remains at the core of ICC. Some of the main components of ICC in this model are knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness [6]. As Byram notices, these components are “taken for granted” in the European context [7], so have to be discussed in a broader perspective. Recently, researchers have tried broadening the European context and “visualize” ICC with other variables [5, 8]. While the theoretical and empirical studies on ICC draw researchers’ attention, there seems to be a growing gap between theory and practice at the “basement level” of the process of teaching foreign language with a focus on ICC [9–10]. In the case of Turkey, recent studies show that the foreign language teaching bachelor programs are not ICC-focused [9], and although lecturers seem to be aware of the importance of the ICC, they prefer to focus on the grammatical issues rather than language in use or intercultural awareness due to the insufficient linguistic skills of the students or students’ prejudices towards the target culture [11]. The researchers highlight the problem of Western cultures-oriented teaching materials [11], insufficient knowledge on ICC and insufficient lessons as a

result of it [12]. In this case, foreign language teachers or language lecturers at the university are supposed to rely on their own “roadmap” to ICC, trying to develop an awareness as a critical concept, which triggers the development of other components. This roadmap seems to include many variables regarding the factors mentioned above along with the culture-specific factors [13] among which, in the case of Turkey, can be monolinguality, ethnocentricity and stereotypes about the target culture [12, 14].

This paper aims at spotlighting the issue of ICC in terms of defining the starting point for the ICC roadmap from the perspective of a language lecturer in Turkish-Russian language pair in the context of Turkey. This paper suggests that contrastive onomasiology can be the starting point in the process of the intercultural awareness development with its objective of acquiring “*cultural-thought patterns*” [15]. It is argued that the onomasiological approach can be adopted for the language lecturer’s needs and applied in the teaching materials aiming at “*a change of perspective on self and other*” [7], which leads to awareness towards different layers of the language and culture.

The teaching context

The approach based on the ideas of contrastive onomasiology was applied in learning materials prepared for the Translation Course, being a compulsory subject for the 1st, 2nd and 4th year students of the Department of Russian Language and Literature at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University in Turkey. The course is included as a two-hour-per-week module in the curriculum. The 1st year students can participate in this course as well as other courses in the

curriculum after the compulsory one-year Russian language programme. Most of the 1st year students enrolled in the Translation Course had Russian proficiency level of A2 after receiving approximately 670 hours of formal grammar, reading, writing and speaking during the compulsory language programme. The Translation Course with the awareness-perspective based on the contrastive onomasiological approach was a new experience for the 1st year students. The approach applied during the 1st year Translation Course enabled students to translate texts on topic-in-case from Turkish into Russian, as well as producing such texts in Russian, with different perspectives on the situation in the text and focus on the “thought patterns” awareness. The observations of the 1st year students’ progress on their way to developing a perspective of the “other” and gaining awareness of the reality-language interaction are introduced in this article as a part of the outcome of the innovations in practice.

Reason for the innovation

In spite of the widespread use of the concept of “intercultural communication competence” in theoretical and empirical studies, there are problems with the development of this competence in real-time teaching process within local contexts. In case of Turkish – Russian language pair in Turkey, currently there are no studies on ICC problem and no teaching and learning materials with the focus on “a change of perspective on self and other” [7], being one of the most important components of ICC. The change of perspective starts with the analysis of the “thought patterns”, which are usually taken for granted in the mother tongue (first language) but can become a “cognitive nightmare” when dealing with the second language. At this point, there is a need to apply an approach that enables us to see the interaction between the reality and their models it, created by languages and followed by us as a kind of cognitive map. By analysing these models, we can observe unique and universal features that help us to read the cognitive map of “the other” and to be aware of “the self”. It was considered necessary to provide a solid theoretical framework for all these ideas and to develop learning materials

with a focus on the analysis and interiorization of the cognitive maps of the languages in case. Thus, the research aiming at compiling “core ideas” behind the contrastive onomasiology was an important part of the process prior to the innovation in practice.

The innovation in practice based on the ideas of the contrastive onomasiology was developed with regard to the needs of the professional language training in Turkish-Russian language pair, focusing on the translation competence, which implies ICC. The main objective of the innovation was defined as the analysis of the naming patterns of the situations in Turkish – Russian language pair with a focus on structural and semantic features, followed by the interiorization of the patterns through exercises.

Description of the innovation

The theoretical framework behind the idea that contrastive onomasiology can be a starting point for a language lecturer who is supposed to be responsible for developing ICC from the “zero-level” but has to deal with the issue in the rich-in-theory environment in general, but with no teaching materials aiming at the concept of awareness, is based on the following ideas and approaches:

1. The idea of natural language being the primary modelling system with its crucial implications on human beings, presented in [16–17]. Following this idea, it can be suggested that to “advance” to the culture level, being the secondary modelling system, and to make a shift to “intercultural” layer with the concept of awareness, we need to conceptualize and internalize the primary modelling system.

2. The idea of natural language being the mechanism that encodes information about the objective and subjective reality in different models of categorization and conceptualization, discussed in-depth in [18–20]. This approach can be summarized in a concept of “world-creative function” of the language [19], which refers to the idea of language not mirroring but *creating* the reality.

3. Onomasiological approach to language based on the principle “from reality to language”, interpreted with different focuses [21–23]. The theory of naming based on the ideas of Meshaninov [24] and developed in [25] and in [26]

as a “motivation theory”, focuses on process of naming objects and situations and the naming patterns. This focus is believed to be the first step to critical thinking and awareness.

4. Contrastive analysis [27] integrated with onomasiological approach in models [28–29] is believed to be applicable in an “every day process” of developing awareness and change of perspective on the way to ICC.

These ideas led to the development of learning materials in a form of a textbook [30] with authentic information texts from leading Russian and Turkish news agencies and exercises focused on perspective and reframing. The main concepts to be analysed and interiorized by the students were introduced in the following way:

I. The concepts of “Situation”, “Perspective” and “Reframing” are redefined in a simplified way and suggested as “keywords” for the “everyday” teaching process and for learning materials.

II. Situation is defined as an event in different modes [18] which can be possible in objective or subjective reality in any time and space dimensions with participants and their roles in the event. As an example of a situation in the category of “Natural Disasters → Typhoon”, we can see *Тайфун обрушился на Индонезию* (word by word¹: Typhoon broke down on Indonesia Accusative Determiner) model in Russian, while Turkish constructs it like *Tayfun Endonezya’yı vurdu* (word by word: Typhoon Indonesia Accusative Determiner hit). Situations are constructed by languages in various language structures.

III. Perspective is defined as a point of view of one of the participants encoded in a particular language structure. As an example, the situation in *Тайфун обрушился на Индонезию* is constructed in Russian with the perspective of “typhoon”, so is in Turkish (and English). Russian has other variants for the same perspective, e.g., *Тайфун накрыл страну* (word by word: Typhoon covered the country); *Тайфун ударил по стране* (word by word: Typhoon hit the country). Turkish has the same perspective in *Tayfun meydana geldi* (word by word: Typhoon came to the openness/open space). These perspectives can be examined under a category of “realization” of the event. Classification of the perspectives is suggested

to be adjusted on the basis of the meaning ↔ text model as in [28].

IV. Reframing is defined as a change of perspective followed by a shift in the roles of participants. In this approach, the concept of reframing, as in [32] is redefined and adjusted for the lecturer’s needs and goals. In the case of the above-mentioned situation, reframing in Russian is possible in models as *Страна оказалась во власти тайфуна* (word by word: The country is said to be in the power of typhoon) — *Страна подверглась удару тайфуна* (word by word: The country was thrown under the strike of typhoon) — *Страна приняла на себя удар тайфуна* (word by word: The country took to oneself the strike of typhoon). In case of Turkish, reframing is possible as *Ülke tayfunun etkisi altında kaldı* (word by word: Country- typhoon Possessive Determiner - influence Possessive Determiner -under- stayed (The country was hit by the typhoon)).

The topics of the texts presented as learning materials reflect the main subjects in the news connected with the everyday life (e.g., “Natural Disasters”, “Elections and Protests”, “International Relations”, “Conflicts and Agreements”, “Science and Technology”, etc.).

At the first lesson, the 1st year students were introduced the main concepts and objectives of the approach. After this, each lesson was divided into three parts: Analysis — Brainstorm — Synthesis.

Each lesson started with the analysis of the text in Russian. Students were supposed to analyse the naming patterns of the situations and the perspective in the pattern. Then they were asked to list the naming patterns for the same situation in Turkish and compare the models in the language pair. This type of analysis was a part of the students’ homework. As part of the “Brainstorm”, the students were supposed to analyse the models of the same situation with different perspectives, which were introduced after each text. The students were asked to reflect on the naming pattern change in the language pair and were welcomed to comment on the “thought patterns”, existing in the modern Russian and Turkish. The “Synthesis” part of the lesson was supposed to bring together students’ knowledge and “reframing skills” connected to the topic-in-case. At this point, the students were asked to translate text on the same topic from Turkish into Russian, using different perspectives and

¹ In word-by-word reconstruction root morphemes were analyzed in order to demonstrate the images encoded in language structures. Root morphemes as in [31].

applying the necessary reframing models. Thus, each lesson was expected to be student-centred with the teacher in the role of “Mentor”, explaining the origins of the naming patterns and the variety of the perspectives in the language.

Reflection and analysis

The following ideas are based on the observations on students’ progress on their way to developing a perspective of the “other” and gaining awareness of the reality-language interaction in different cultural contexts, being Turkish-Russian in our case:

1. The onomasiological approach contributes to the development of critical thinking towards the relations between the reality and the language. One of the main theoretical outputs can be defined as “not to take the language for granted”. This idea can be verbalized in a broader way as “not to take the source or target culture for granted but to scrutinize it”. Every cultural fact from the use of interjections and nonverbal communication to allusions and connotations has to be questioned.

2. Analysis of the reality — language relations spotlights an issue of images encoded in language and triggered by cultural dimension. For the source language and culture, there can be no obvious relations between *su* (water) and *protesto* (protest) with their situations as in [*su* → *dökmek* → *dökülmek*] (water → to pour out) and [*protesto* → *bir şeye dönüşmek*] (protest → to turn into something), but the target culture can reveal something different about the situation, thus showing deep layers behind ordinary — at a first glance- things. As an example, Russian binds these events with the naming pattern constructed on the image of “movement” in a time and space dimension, so in this case we have [*Water*]^{Movement} → [*Event*]^{Movement} as in [*Вода*]^{Лить} → [*Событие*]^{Вылиться} with spacetime-oriented classifiers [33]: *Протесты вылились в столкновения* (word by word: Protests poured out into clashes). Therefore, the naming patterns for the situations with its images both in source and target language context have to be questioned and analysed, starting from the very beginning.

3. Analysis of the situations focused on a human being with its physiological and psychological dimensions can reveal hidden patterns of the language and culture, which can be crucial

for understanding of the “other”. On the one hand, there can be “I-language” as in the case of modern Turkish with its activation of a human, e.g., *Üşüdüm* (word by word: [freeze + I]^{Past Tense Determiner} (I am cold)), *Eğleniyorum* (word by word: [joy+ I]^{Present Tense Determiner} (I am enjoying myself)). In the case of a human interacting with an object, Turkish demonstrates strong connectivity between a human and an object through the category of “belongingness”, e.g., *Benim sorunlarım var* (word by word: [*Posessive Determiner* + Problems *Posessive Determiner* + Exist^{Existential State}] (just to compare with “I-perspective” in English: “I have problems”)). This concept of connectivity can be applied to different situations in Turkish such as “body-part” frame (*Başım ağrıyor* (word by word: [*Head*^{Posessive Determiner} + Ache *Present Tense/3rd Person Determiner*] (I have a headache)). On the other hand, we can have “(To-) Me-Language” as in case of Russian with its passivisation of the participant, e.g., *Мне холодно* (word by word: [*Me*^{Dative} + Cold-*State Determiner*] (I am cold)), *Мне весело* [*Me*^{Dative} + Enjoy^{State Determiner}] (I am enjoying myself)), *Мне видно* [*Me*^{Dative} + See^{State Determiner}] (I (can) see)). In case of a human-object interaction, we can see “existential loneliness” created by the language. Russian reconstructs reality by creating a space dimension between the participant and the object, e.g., *У меня проблемы* (word by word: [*Space Determiner* + Me^{Passive Actant Determiner} + Problems] (I have problems)). The body-part frame is reconstructed with the same model, e.g., *У меня болит голова* (word by word: [*Space Determiner* + Me^{Passive Actant Determiner} + Ache *Present Tense/3rd Person Determiner* + Head] (I have a headache)).

4. The concepts of perspective and reframing included in the analysis of the reality-language relations highlight the anatomy of the situation reconstructed by the languages. Immersion in the deepest layers of the naming patterns contributes to the development of “reality-check-in” awareness when dealing with any kind of intercultural communication. This kind of awareness allows us to be competitive (at least for now) against artificial intelligence, thus has to be conceptualised in the framework of ICC.

Conclusions and future pedagogical direction

In this paper, the contrastive onomasiological analysis is suggested to be a starting point on

the roadmap to ICC. Onomasiological approach contributes to the development of flexible thinking and of the reality — language awareness, dealing with language as a software for the reality. This framework can be a kind of “meta-tune-up” for developing other compo-

nents within ICC. There is a need for further research on contrastive onomasiology as a framework for teaching materials in local contexts. Both theoretical and empirical studies are required for conceptualising the framework and its applicability in teaching process.

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