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Semantic Distance Coefficient for Semantic Field Religion of Tatar Culture-Specific Concepts and Their Equivalents in English

Gulnara M. Nurtdinova[*]
Kazan Federal University, Russia

Dilyara M. Sadykova
Kazan Federal University, Russia

Abstract

In present time intercultural conflicts prevention is one of the issues of the day because many people leave their native lands and migrate to other countries. But they do not leave their culture and traditions and some of them can cause misunderstanding of natives. One of the most important components of culture is religion. Religion is a part of worldview that is different to people of other countries due to historical development. This difference is reflected in the language which verbalizes the cultural worldview and sometimes the difference is presented in culture specific concepts. The article is aiming at Tatar culture-specific concepts, namely the words from the semantic field Religion. We have investigated this semantic group relative to their equivalents in English and have calculated the semantic distance coefficient for this group. The coefficient made up 12.44 and it is showing that the concepts of the field Religion segment this field differently by Tatar and English peoples. The research results can be used in future research of the Tatar language and culture, Intercultural Communication, conflict prevention as well as in Theory and Practice of Machine Translation.

Keywords: Language; World image; Culture worldview; Conflict.

1. Introduction

Any language has the words that have straightforward equivalents in other languages Book (Eng), Kniga (Rus), Buch (Ger), Kitap (Tatar), Livre (Fr), Libro (Sp) etc. and it simplifies the process of a foreign language learning. Learners do not need to analyze the concept meaning because it is well known to everybody. Meanwhile the lexicon of any language has the lexemes that do not have equivalents. Such words present some difficulty because people do not have the object and consequently they do not have the word in their language to name this object or the meaning of the word in one language differs in some aspect in other one. E.g. Minaret, a slender tower, typically part of a mosque (Christians do not have a mosque and a minaret, they have a church or a temple). In Russian a word blanket names any kind of a blanket whereas in English they have a blanket and a quilt. Many researchers such as (Nida, 1964), (Barchudarov, 1975), (Vereshshagin and Kostomarov, 1990), (Vlachov and Florin, 1986) and others investigated such words and they have given them different names and definitions: culture-specific concepts, out-of–vocabulary words, untranslatable words (Janssen, 2012) non-exisiting words, etc. Moreover, some words can have the equivalent in language A but they cannot have it in the language B (Vereshshagin and Kostomarov, 1990). Such words have been investigating since ancient times and still the problem needs more research. Some researchers analyze the works of linguists who started the research of lexical gaps, for example, the works of Lehrer and basing their results make their own conclusions (Henry and Schogt, 2016).

Russian linguist (Barchudarov, 1975) made the classification for these words. He has distributed such words into three groups: 1. Proper and geographic names. 2. Realias, the words that do not exist in the language of people of other community. Usually such words present culture- specific concepts of a particular ethnic group. 3. Lexemes that (Barchudarov, 1975) named occasional lacunas. The object of our research is the second group, realias. Barchudarov has presented the following definition Realias are the words which name objects, concepts and situations that people speaking other language do not experience (Barchudarov, 1975) .In our research we are basing this definition. The problem is how to present realias in other language. Many researchers analyze and systemize translation techniques relative to different languages. We can find the information in the works of Braçaj (2015), (Mashadi, 2016) and others. Nida (1964) wrote in his book …differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure (Nida, 1964). To avoid misunderstanding while presenting realias we should think of making an explanatory dictionary for culture-specific concepts or realias. In this article we are presenting the draft fragment of English Explanatory Dictionary for Tatar realias of the semantic field Religion.

2. Methodology

The material of our research is the collection of Tatar fairy tales. Some of them were taken from the collection of Tatar fairy tales of Kaum Nasyry, famous Tatar educator and writer, published in 1900 and the others were taken from the collection of Tatar fairy tales that were written down by Tatar writers during the ethnographic expeditions

*Corresponding Author

in 1939-1940. The reason why we have chosen these fairy tales is that they are published in Tatar. As the number of fairy tales published in original Tatar is small and the Tatar-English dictionaries contain a small number of Tatar realias the authors selected them from the corpora of above-mentioned books basing the comments presented in the books. The tales are published in the period of forming Tatar literary language by joining village and town koines. Moreove, the comments present the information that the tales were told by native Tatar speakers. Any fairy tales have a big number of culture-specific concepts and these tales are not the exception. We also used on-line dictionaries to select such lexemes. We are using the method developed by Russian researchers of Voronezh University (Russia). According to this method the criterion for a lexeme selection can be the following: if a word of any language has an equivalent in an explanatory article of the dictionary it means that both languages segment the semantic field in similar way and form the similar concepts. But in the case when to explain the word meaning we need a few words we can say that the pair language does not have analogous concept. (Titov, 2002), Russian linguist concluded that the more words we need to explain the word meaning the less common concepts the pair of the languages have (Titov, 2002). Bulgarian researchers (Vlachov and Florin, 1986) consider that realias can be presented mostly by nominative language units, nouns, very rarely, by adjectives, which have been derived from the nouns denoting specific notions. Rarely are they presented by free word-combinations (Dorzhu and Oyun, 2018).

After selecting the realias we distributed them into a few semantic fields. Earlier we presented the results for the fields Family and Human Being Environment and Food. In our article we are showing the results of our investigation of the semantic field Religion and we are presenting the draft extract of English Explanatory dictionary of Tatar culture-specific concepts and the quantity of semantic distance coefficient related to English and Tatar fields. The higher is the figure the bigger is the difference between the concepts. To calculate the coefficient of semantic distance (SDC) it is necessary to get the data about the number of the definitions from a bilingual dictionary and the number of words in the definitions. For this purpose we made the fragment of a dictionary (at present the English Explanatory Dictionary of Tatar culture-specific concepts has not been published), some definitions have been taken from on-line dictionaries, some have been written by the author and edited by native speakers from Australia and UK. Then we have got the total number of the words of all the definitions (see Figure 1). To do it we have multiplied the number of the explanatory words of each definition by the number of the definitions. Total number we got is the quantity D – the sum of all the words of the definitions. Titov (2002) has presented the following formula of a coefficient of semantic distance calculation for a particular language: a coefficient of semantic distance = D: Q, where Q is the number of all the definitions and D is the sum of all words we need for explanation (Boscán Leal and Villalobos Antúnez, 2016).

3. Results and Discussions

We selected twenty five culture-specific concepts of the semantic field Religion. Ordinary the number of such concepts is not big but they are used to enrich dictionaries of other languages. The results of the research conducted by Nutrtdinova (2017) showed that culture-specific words in Russian made up 6-7% (Vereshshagin and Kostomarov, 1990) but most culture-specific words can be the source for loan words. It seems that the words of the field Religion can be defined as religious terms. Bulgarian researchers (Nutrtdinova, 2015) consider that we can find scientific terms in scientific works and they always have straightforward equivalents but if we find such words in the texts of other styles and genres they have another function. As we have selected the words from the fairy tales we can consider the words as realias. In the fairy tales that belong to folklore the words of the field Religion show that Tatar people confess Islam not Christianity or other religion. As any religion is a part of culture we can say that the lexemes of this field are not the terms but culture-specific concepts.

Here we are presenting the draft extract of English Explanatory dictionary for Tatar culture-specific concepts. At the end of the definition we set the number of words we need to explain the meaning of the word.

Garasat – n. the end of the world 7.

Gonah shomlygy – misfortune brought by Allah 4.

Hodai –n. the name of the supreme being, in use among the Mohammedans generally. 15.

Halal – adj. denoting or relating to meat prepared as prescribed by Muslim law 13. Ikende vakyt - the third salat prayer in the time of the day before sunset. Also means asr in Arabic 16.

Tatar people have their own names for Namaz along with Arabic terms. We found this name in the tale Zakir and Shakir.

Komgan – n. a jar for Islamic ablution 7.

Korban – n. a sacrificial animal 5.

Makan – n. the place for preaching Koran; a village placement 11.

Makam – n. the style of preaching Koran 7.

Madrasa – n. a college for Islamic instruction 7.

Mullah – n. a Muslim learned in Islamic theology and sacred law 11.

Muezzin – n. a man who calls Muslims to prayer from the minaret of a mosque 15. Minaret – n. a slender tower, typically part of a mosque, with a balcony from which a muezzin calls Muslims to prayer 23.

Muhammadiya – n. a religious school, a synonym of madrasa 10.

Namaz - the ritual prayers prescribed by Islam to be observed five times a day 13. Namazlyk - n. a prayer mat 5.

Nikah – n. a Muslim marriage 5.

Qiblah – n. the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays 12.

Rahmat yausyn - let it be your mercy! The words of thanks for any good deed addressed to any person 19.

Sharia (h) – n. Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith and Sunna), prescribing both religious and secular duties and sometimes retributive penalties for law-breaking 34.

Shaitan – n. the Devil or an evil spirit in Muslim countries 11.

Taharat – n. purification from ritual impurities by means of <u>wudu</u> or <u>ghusl</u> 12.

Tasbih – n. a set or string of 33, 66, or 99 prayer beads used by Muslims as a counting aid in reciting the 99 titles of Allah and in meditation 32.

Toratash – n. a stone idol 5.

Zhaya – n. a place for a human being in the dignity book 12.

On the basis of the dictionary we calculated the quantity of semantic distance coefficient of this field. The method we have presented in item 2 of our article.

Figure-1. Semantic Distance Coefficient (SDC) for Semantic Field Religion

Number of Explanatory Words	Number of Realias	Total number of words
4	1	4
5	4	20
7	4	28
10	1	10
11	3	33
12	3	36
13	2	26
15	2	30
16	1	16
19	1	19
23	1	23
32	1	32
34	1	31
	Q = 25	D = 311

SDC= D/Q = 311/25 =12, 44

Thus the coefficient of semantic distance for realias of semantic group Religion made up 12.44. The data is showing that Tatar people segment the universe in different way relative to English people so translators or lexicographers should take it into consideration to avoid misunderstanding. According to earlier published results the SDC for semantic field Family made up 8.57, for the field Food it is 9.93 for the field Money and Measures it is 11.7. So far the SDC for the field Religion is the biggest one. These figures are proved in everyday life. The attitude to people confessing some other religion can be negative because some traditions and religious rituals look strange and unintelligible so they can cause conflicts and rejection. The SDC also proves the fact that a language verbalizes a world image and culture-specific concepts show how differently people of different identities see the world.

4. Summary

The quantity of SDC for the field Religion (12.44) is showing that Tatar people segment the universe in different way relative to English people so translators or lexicographers should take it into consideration to avoid misunderstanding. According to earlier published results the SDC for semantic field Family made up 8.57, for the field Food it is 9.93 for the field Money and Measures it is 11.7. So far the SDC for the field Religion is the biggest one. These figures are proved in everyday life. The attitude to people confessing Islam from people of other religions can be negative because some traditions and religious rituals look strange and unintelligible and it can cause conflicts and rejection. In our further research we are intending to investigate the other semantic fields of Tatar culture-specific concepts.

5. Conclusion

Many researchers investigate culture-specific concepts and try to define the reason of lexicalization lack presented by the gaps. The researchers give to such words their own names and define them in some aspects differently. The number of such words is small in many languages (In Russian it made up 6-7%) but they can be the source for loan words and correspondingly they enrich the vocabularies of received languages. The names of culture-specific concepts are various but Russian researchers very often use the word realias. Such words have been researching since ancient times and still the problem needs more research because the lexical system of any language has the words that cannot have the equivalent in language A but they can have it in language B forming lexical gaps. While writing this article the author has read the articles where the researchers try to investigate how to translate Indonesian culture-specific concepts and Lithuanian culture-specific concepts into English. We think that the number of translation techniques for such concepts translation is limited so one of the ways to present them is to make an explanatory dictionary. In such a dictionary we can find the information about the culture of other peoples and see which field differs much to prevent misunderstanding during Intercultural communication. We can also make the conclusion that despite the process of globalization none of identity wants to lose their culture and forget their

language. This is proved by the fact that UN organizes conferences devoted to preserving indigenous languages (Nutrtdinova, 2017).

Acknowledgements

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