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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



Rethinking Learning in a Connected Age

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GREATER DEGREE OF EQUIVALENCE OF PHRASEOLOGISMS FROM MOTHER TONGUE AS A FERTILE GROUND FOR STUDYING THEM IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

*„Der Grund und Boden einer Sprache,
sind die Worte, darauf die Redensarten
gleichsam als Früchte herfür wachsen.“*

– Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716)

Phraseologisms as specific lexical constructs are by themselves difficult to adopt regardless of whether it is a native or foreign language, hence the assertion of many about the difficulties in adopting them for Macedonian students of English and German as foreign languages. However, full or partial equivalent phraseologisms found in foreign language teaching are considered as to be a favorable circumstance, i.e. the greater the level of equivalence of phraseologisms from the mother tongue, the more fertile is the soil for studying them in the teaching of a foreign language, in our case English or German. For this purpose, in this paper we will try to provide more concrete explanations supported by data from the research carried out within the project "Supplemental Instruction as a Tool for Improving Students' Language Competence at the Faculty of Philology". The aim of this paper is to confirm our thesis that the degree of equivalence of phraseologisms is of great help in their adoption in foreign language instruction. During this project, which is expected to last two semesters, research, i.e. testing is planned of Macedonian students of English and German language, through which we will determine how and whether the level of equivalence plays a major role in the process of studying this specific vocabulary category. Tests are provided that contain fully, partly equivalent, and, of course, zero equivalent phraseologisms from mother tongue as a source language toward target languages-English and German.

Keywords: fully, partly, zero equivalent, foreign language teaching.

1 INTRODUCTION

The paper is the result of the project "Supplemental Instruction as a Tool for Improving Students' Language Competence at the Faculty of Philology" at the University "Goce Delcev" in Stip, R. Macedonia. Students enrolled in the first year at the Faculty of Philology in Stip have different language competences they have developed or acquired during their previous education which, through the project for supplemental classes anticipated for the courses Contemporary Macedonian / English / German language, we will try to aim towards overcoming difficulties or so-called obstacles occurring during the intended course of study. The project is divided into two stages that will be implemented in the first and the second semester. This paper refers to supplemental instruction organized in the second semester when group A is the control group, and group B is experimental. Group A will not attend supplementary classes, and with Group B implicit language learning will be practiced through the use of literary texts, and with phraseologisms according to the principles of language approach in the use of literary texts. The aim of this paper is to confirm our thesis that the degree of equivalence between phraseologisms in mother tongue as the source language and in the foreign language (English and German) as the target language is of great help in the adoption of phraseologisms in foreign language teaching. At the beginning of the second semester, research, i.e. testing of Macedonian students and students in English and German language is planned, through which we will determine how and whether the level of equivalence plays a major role in the process of studying this specific lexical category and, at the end of the same semester, we will conduct re-testing of same participants who attended supplementary instruction through which they developed their phraseological competence in order to determine the benefits of this approach concerning students' language competence.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The main role of the mother tongue that appears as a language source in foreign language teaching has long been talked about. Foreign language learners strive to adopt the particular foreign language to the level of their mother tongue, meaning to the highest level, given the fact that the rule of mother tongue is always in the first place, and only then come other foreign languages. Thus we can safely confirm that the mother tongue is the basic starting point from which the process of studying any other language, which is considered to be a foreign language, can begin. The paper deals with Macedonian language as the mother tongue of our students and with the two most current world languages - English and German. This opinion that knowledge of phraseological units in mother tongue plays a decisive role in understanding and learning phraseology in a foreign language is shared by Hallsteinsdóttir [5].

Phraseologisms as specific lexical categories are complex in themselves, because it is difficult to separate them from other lexical units in a language, let alone study them in a foreign language and look for appropriate equivalents in their mother tongue. Their very inclusion in foreign language teaching causes difficulties which are often called "a stumbling block" on one hand, and, on the other hand, they influence the level of the learners' language competence, and can be also called "language decorations".

There is a contradictory situation here: on one side they are elements that teachers themselves and their students consciously or unconsciously avoid in teaching a foreign language, and on the other side they are the very benchmark of the quality of language mastery [8]. So, one thing is certain, that they are a necessary evil without which language communication cannot be carried out. That is why we will try to find the easiest and simplest possible way for their inclusion in teaching English and German as foreign languages. Based on the theoretical and practical knowledge we acquired during this research, we concluded that an important role in this process is played by the knowledge of phraseologisms in the native Macedonian language, that is, the greater degree of their equivalence. In principle, when teaching any new material, we always start from some already known material that is related in some way to the new one, and which will surely facilitate the way of learning new, unknown teaching material. Such is the case with phraseologisms in foreign language teaching, i.e. the more Macedonian phraseologisms we know, the easier it is to find a way to connect them or find their equivalents in English and German.

In the process of studying a foreign language, a system of lexical correlation between languages develops in the linguistic consciousness of students, so they develop in parallel as two lexical systems [7]. Consequently, it follows that in the individual vocabulary of each foreign language learner, the so-called interlingual phraseological harmonization develops, so that foreign phraseologisms can most often rely on their equivalents or corresponding harmonized forms in the mother tongue. In the initial stages of studying a foreign language, such interlanguage relations are of great importance for the proper implementation of foreign language teaching. Students first identify phraseologisms and then reach out for their clarification, and by analogy they seek help from the already known ones, i.e. in the first line of their mother tongue, and only after that from the acquired knowledge of another foreign language. As Hallsteinsdóttir [5] says:

»Die Übertragung der muttersprachlichen phraseologischen Kompetenz auf Fremdsprachen bedeutet, dass Fremdsprachler über Strategien verfügen, die ihnen die Konstruktion einer phraseologischen Bedeutung bei nicht lexikalisierten muttersprachlichen und dem zufolge auch bei unbekanntem fremdsprachlichen Phraseologismen ermöglichen.«

(The transfer of phraseological competence from a mother tongue into a foreign language means that the foreign language teachers themselves reach out for strategies that enable them to find a phraseological meaning by using non-vocabulary phrases in their mother tongue to explain unknown foreign phraseologisms.)

We can safely say that with regard to the positive transfer of phraseology in foreign language teaching, sure success can be reached by means of the so-called absolute, i.e. full equivalents. The results of contrastive phraseological research in European languages [9], [10], [6] show that this way of adjustment is not final. Of course, the fact that the possibility of interlingual phraseological relations can lead to a negative transfer, that is, cause some delay in the process of transferring from one language to another, is not excluded, and these phraseologisms with formal or semantic-pragmatic differences are considered to be partial equivalents. Another kind of phraseologisms are those that interlinguistically do not have a single phraseological equivalent so are called zero equivalents, and they can be interpreted as separate language categories characteristic only of that language. In this

paper we speak about the degree of equivalence of phraseologisms from the native Macedonian language and their positive influence on the process of adopting phraseologisms in English and German. Hence, from the abovementioned, we can conclude that students will be successful in the adoption of English and German phraseologies only if they detect the most appropriate equivalents of the language units from the source language into the target language. In order to achieve this so-called successful transfer, they need to distinguish the basic three degrees of equivalence [3]:

- 1 Full equivalence (Volläquivalenz) - we have this in phraseologisms that are harmonized on semantic, structural and lexical level in both languages - in the source language and in the target language.
- 2 Partial equivalence (Teiläquivalenz) - refers to phraseologisms that are truly harmonized, but there are clear differences in vividness, lexical harmonization, semantics or function. But they are minimal and do not affect their harmonized meaning, so we call them partial rather than complete equivalents.
- 3 Zero equivalence (Nulläquivalenz) - in non-phraseological equivalence, i.e. in the absence of a synonymous or antonymous equivalent in the target language, we reach out towards translating or describing the action.

Our goal is to try to induce successful phraseological transfer from the source language source into the target language during the teaching process, using appropriate didactic methods [2]. Our intention is to enrich the phraseological inventory of the native Macedonian language and in that way create a successful foundation for a successful transfer of phraseologisms, that is, the adoption of foreign phraseologisms through the use of an appropriate equivalent from the mother tongue. Phraseological-theoretical assumptions say that phraseologisms in different languages indicate many common features if one takes into account tradition, but another also important defining of the meaning of phraseologisms is the psychological-cognitive assumption that they have long been an integral part of the foreign languages learners' vocabularies and that they are actually an integral component of any communication.

Exercises for practicing students' phraseological competence by finding an appropriate equivalent from the source language into the target language also refer to vocabulary enrichment, and, of course, practicing grammatical rules. Through such exercises we will try to confirm our thesis that the easiest phraseologisms to learn in the process of teaching a foreign language are the full equivalent phraseologisms from the source language into the target language, then follow the partial equivalents, and, at the end, the zero equivalent phraseologisms are considered the most difficult to learn [2].

3 CONCLUSION

The acquired knowledge in terms of phraseologisms in mother tongue should be correlated with the high degree of phraseological convergence between the source language and the target language. It is therefore very important to choose the phraseologisms that will be taken into consideration in the teaching of a foreign language. Of course, one should take into account the phraseological knowledge of mother tongue of the students participating in this project. So, as a starting fertile ground, we take the native Macedonian language and try to find the so-called full equivalents in English and in German, which we consider to be most easily taken up by foreign language learners due to the fact that they have the same easily recognizable components that do not exert a lot of effort in students, and therefore are most acceptable and most useful in written language and in oral communication. When it comes to such equivalents, then there is no doubt that we have a successful transfer of phrases from the source language into the target language. The obstacles in achieving successful transfer are predicted when it comes to partial equivalents in which there are clear differences in terms of vividness, lexical harmonization, semantics or function; however, in this category, we anticipate a successful transfer, unlike the last mentioned zero equivalents with which we believe students will encounter the greatest difficulties possibly leading to unsuccessful transfer of phraseologisms from the source language into the target language. The reason for this unsuccessful transfer is associated with the lack of finding a synonymous or antonymous equivalent, and in order to achieve their successful transfer, it is advisable to reach out for a descriptive transfer of such a phraseologism.

This paper opens up many questions in the field of language, that is, in phraseological competence that we need to develop with Macedonian students, students of English and German as a foreign language. We hope that our research will confirm our thesis, our assumptions and that we will contribute to this field of study.

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