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**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REFLEXIVE VERBS IN RUSSIAN  
AND TURKISH LANGUAGES**

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*Abstract*

The article is devoted to the study of grammatical peculiarities of reflexive verbs. The features of the reflexive verbs of the Russian and Turkish languages are discussed in the article. Besides, the specific features of verbs and their mastering by non-natives of the Russian language are analyzed. The study is based on the comparative method. The reflexive verbs in Russian and Turkish are compared, and, as a result of this comparison, both similarity and divergence of the reflexive verbs in two unrelated languages are revealed. The results of the tests performed by Turkish students learning Russian outside the language environment are presented. The nature of errors when using the reflexive verbs is determined. The objective of this article is to reveal the meanings and use of the reflexive verbs in the Russian language; to analyze the ways of conveying the meanings of Russian reflexive verbs in Turkish; to determine the influence of the system of the native language on the process of learning of verbs by Turkish students; to demonstrate and eliminate potential errors in the process of learning Russian reflexive verbs. The relevance of the article is due to the need to identify difficulties which arise during the learning process of these verbs by foreign students, as well as the search for the ways to improve the efficiency of the educational process.

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## 1. Introduction

The Russian verbal system has a number of specific features and peculiarities. One of them is a category of reflexivity, which is realized in a large number of reflexive verbs that are diverse in their lexical and semantic terms. It is known that the most difficult topics are the reflexive verbs that take a special place in the Russian verbal system. The analysis of theoretical and practical works shows that the largest group consists of the reflexive verbs (Vasiliev, 1981).

Speaking about the grammatical peculiarities of Russian reflexive verbs in the linguodidactic aspect, it is important to pay attention to the fact that in the reflexive verbs the postfix *-sya* (*self*) gives the verb the meaning of concentration of an action on the one who performs it, for example, *to please someone – to rejoice (obradovatsya)*, *to stop someone – to stop (ostanovitsya)*. The suffix *-sya* (*self*) in this verbs does not have the meaning of the reflexive pronoun «себя» (*self*) and makes it possible to join the defining pronoun *sam*, *samomu* (*oneself*) to the reflexive verb: *ostanovitsya samomu – astanovilsya sam* (*stop - stopped*), *obradovatsya samomu – obradovalsya sam* (*get happy – got happy*).

Traditionally, the reflexive verbs are divided into the following subgroups:

1. Verbs denoting external and physical changes of the performer of an action, changes in his\her condition, position, movement, for example, *brosatsya*, *vozvrashchatsya*, *katatsya*, *kupatsya*, *naklonyatsya*, *napravlyatsya*, *podnimatsya*, *prodvigatsya*, etc. (*rush, come back, ride, swim, bend, go to, climb, get ahead*).
2. Verbs denoting inner states and emotional upheaval: *bespokoitsya*, *veselitsya*, *pechalitsya*, *radovatsya*, *serditsya*, *udivlyatsya*, *uspokoitsya* (*worry, have fun, grieve, rejoice, get angry, be surprised, calm down*). (Russian grammar, 1960)

In the Grammar of Modern Russian Literary Language it is indicated that the reflexive verbs describe the action that occurs in the subject itself as a state of this subject: *serditsya*, *tomitsya*, *dutsya*, *pugatsya* (*get angry, groan, be sulky with, be frightened*), or the physical action of a subject: *otvernutsya*, *ostanovitsya*, *progulyatsya* (*turn away, stop, take a walk*).

In the Russian grammar (Russian grammar, 1980) the reflexive verbs are defined similarly to those that describe the action, closed in the sphere of a subject as its state: *serditsya*, *trevozhitsya*, *udivlyatsya*, *radovatsya*, *tomitsya*, *pugatsya*, *bespokoitsya*, *veselitsya*, *pechalitsya*, *konfuzitsya* (*get angry, get anxious, be surprised, be happy, groan, be frightened, be anxious, have fun, get sad, be embarrassed*).

## 2. Problem Statement

The reflexive return verbs are difficult for foreign students. This is due to several facts: a) the complexity of the category of reflexiveness in the Russian language; b) the lack of methodological materials regarding this group of verbs; c) interlanguage interference. Errors related to the use of reflexive verbs belong to the group of the most typical errors (Karaseva, 2014).

In case of teaching Russian as a foreign language, the traditional division of reflexive verbs into two subgroups seems to be insufficient. A more detailed grouping of reflexive verbs for the purpose of teaching Russian to foreigners was developed by teachers I.I. Gadalina, N.I. Kiseleva (Gadalina, & Kiseleva, 1986), and E.A. Nivina (Nivina, 2014). A methodically expedient description of reflexive verbs is found in special textbooks and articles of O.V. Chagina (Chagina, 2009) and N.Ya. Surzhikova (Surzhikova, 1979).

In textbooks that are used for the work with foreign students, the reflexive verbs are represented by four subgroups.

The first group consists of reflexive verbs with the meaning of quantitative and qualitative changes. This is a large group of verbal units that are widely used in the scientific, official business, and journalistic styles, which determines their place in the Russian language programs and textbooks for foreigners.

It is important to note that all reflexive verbs in this group correspond to transitive verbs: *ukhudshatsya – ukhudshat, rasshiryatsya – rasshiryat, povyshatsya – povyshat, snizhatsya – snizhat, umenshatsya – umenshat* (get worsen - degrade, expand - enlarge, increase - improve, go down - decrease, diminish – decrease).

The verbs of quantitative changes are defined as changes in size - *uvelichivatsya, umenshatsya, umnozhatsya, sokraschatsya* (increase, decrease, multiply, shrink), and changes in individual parameters, i.e. height – *povyshatsya, ponizhatsya, snizhatsya* (increase, decrease, go down), length – *udlinyatsya, ukorachivatsya* (lengthen, shorten), width – *rasshiryatsya, suzhatsya* (expand, shrink), and speed – *uskoryatsya, zamedlyatsya* (accelerate, slow down).

The verbs of qualitative changes may characterize an object in terms of an overall assessment, i.e. “good” or “bad”, as well as positive or negative changes. An important feature of this subgroup of reflexive verbs is that most of them are antonym pairs: *improve ≠ deteriorate*, and from specific changes in force, strength, accuracy, price, complexity, weight – *strengthen ≠ weaken, become more expensive ≠ become cheaper, become complicated ≠ ease, become heavier ≠ become lighter, get rich ≠ become poor*, etc.

The second subgroup includes the reflexive verbs denoting movement or change in position and state: *move, rise, fall, return, get back, stop, approach, bend or lean, straighten-up, turn, appear* and others.

A relatively small subgroup combines reflexive verbs denoting the beginning, the end and the continuation of the action: *begin, to continue, finish or come to an end, stop or cease*.

The third group is presented by the reflexive verbs expressing the beginning, the end and the continuation of the action and correspond to transitional (nonreflexive) verbs: *begin - begin what?, continue - continue what?*

The fourth subgroup includes the reflexive verbs expressing a state of mind and emotions of a person, such as: *being interested, be worried, be angry, be upset, rejoice, resent, be offended, be embarrassed, calm down, like, be anxious*. (Chagina, 2009)

A more detailed classification of the verbs of this group, represented by nine subgroups, was developed to work with foreign students:

1. Verbs denoting hobbies: get involved, admire, rave, enjoy, delight, be fascinated, be inspired, be proud, resent.
2. Verbs denoting wonder: be surprised, be amazed, marvel, rejoice, be terrified.
3. Verbs denoting worship and self-deprecation: get lost, be humiliated, venerate.
4. Verbs denoting high self-esteem: bluster, show off.
5. Verbs denoting mockery and bullying: laugh, deride, mock.
6. Verbs denoting discontent: cry, complain, be offended, get angry, be irritated, swear.
7. Verbs denoting fear: be in fear, be uptight about, be afraid of, feel shy.
8. Verbs denoting anxiety: worry, be agitated, be anxious.

9. Verbs denoting care, excitement and sadness: care, worry, worry, be anxious, grieve, crunch, miss. (Kryuchkova, 1974)

In Turkish, as in Russian there is a category of reflexivity inherent in the verb, which is formally expressed by the affixes –n, -lan, -len; however, there is no such concept as general reflexive verbs. The reflexive verbs have no special affixes for the formation of verbs of corresponding meanings, therefore, there are significant differences between Russian and Turkish verbs. For this reason, when Turkish students learn Russian reflexive verbs, it is impossible to rely on the students' native language.

### 3. Research Questions

The article attempts to answer the following questions: What are the peculiarities of Russian reflexive verbs? How does the command of the native language affect the process of mastering of Russian reflexive verbs by students? What difficulties do students have when learning them? How these difficulties may be prevented?

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to reveal the meanings and the use of the reflexive verbs in Russian; to analyze the ways of conveying the meanings of Russian reflexive verbs in Turkish; to determine the influence of the system of the native language on the verb learning process by Turkish students; to predict and eliminate the potential errors in the process of studying Russian reflexive verbs.

### 5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of this study is a comparative method. The comparative method is widely used in linguistics and in the methodology of teaching foreign languages. Comparative language learning allows 1) to identify the similarities and differences between the languages being compared; 2) to establish the nature of interlingual interference; 3) to determine the difficulties of learning non-native language arising from cross-language differences; 4) to develop a procedure for interlanguage comparison as a method of teaching non-native language. (Yusupov, 1988).

### 6. Findings

In order to see how the meanings of Russian reflexive verbs get across in Turkish, the most commonly used reflexive verbs that are included into methodological materials were analyzed. (Esina, 2011; Shustikova, 2007; Ivanova, 2013). In the course of this work 34 verbs were studied. A comparative analysis of the verbs of two languages showed that the meanings of Russian reflexive verbs get across by different means and methods. Let us introduce the results of these analysis:

The verbs denoting the beginning, the end and the continuation of an action, i.e. *nachnatsya* (begin) – *başlamak*; *prodolzhat'sya* (continue) – *devam etmek*; *konschatsya* (come to an end) – *bitmek*; *prekraschatsya* (terminate) – *kesilmek* are translated into Turkish by means of nonreflexive verbs.

The verbs denoting movement or position change in space, i.e. *dvigatsya* (move) – *hareket etmek*; *podnimatsya* (go up) – *çıkılmak*; *opuskatsya* (go down) – *inmek*; *vozvraschatsya* (get back) – *dönmek*; *ostanavlivatsya* (stop) – *durmak*, *priblizhatsya* (approach) – *yaklaşmak*, *naklonyatsya* (lean) – *eğilmek*;

*vypryamlyatsya (straighten) – doğrulmak; povertyvatsya (turn) – dönmek; prevraschatsya (turn into) – dönüşmek* are also translated into Turkish by means of a nonreflexive verb.

The verbs with the meaning of quantitative and qualitative changes, i.e. *povyshatsya (increase) – artmak; ponizhatsya, snizhatsya (decrease) – azalmak; uskoryatsya (accelerate) - hızlanmak; zamedlyatsya (slow down) – yavaşlamak; uvelischitsya (increase) - artmak, umenshatsya (decrease) – azalmak; izmenyatsya (change) – değişmek; uleschshatsya (improve) – iyileşmek; ukhudshatsya (worsen) – kötüleşmek; ukreplyatsya (strengthen) – sağlamlaşmak; uslozhnyatsya (get complicated) – zorlaşmak; uproshchatsya (simplify) - kolaylaşmak* are translated into Turkish using an nonreflexive verb.

The verbs denoting the state of mind and inner experiences of a person: *interesovatsya (be interested) – ilgilenmek; volnovatsya (worry) - endişelenmek, trevozhitsya (be anxious) – telaşlanmak; udivlyatsya (be surprised) - şaşırmaq, radovatsya (rejoice) – sevinmek; pechalitsya (be sad) – kederlenmek; konfuzitsya (embarrassed) - mahçup olmak* are translated into Turkish with the help of self-reflexive affixes: the meaning of reflexivity is shown by affixes -n, -lan, -len, which carry an indirect meaning of self-reflexiveness.

In addition to analyzing the most commonly used verbs taken from the dictionaries, there were analyzed the reflexive verbs from the story of A.P. Chekhov *Ionich* translated into Turkish by famous Turkish translator Yergin Altay. All the sentences containing the reflexive verbs were taken from the novel; their number was 151 verbs. A translation into Turkish was written down on a card with the Russian sentences. The sentences were classified according to the meaning of reflexive verbs. The most frequently encountered were general-reflexive verbs. The analysis of Russian sentences and their translations into Turkish showed that the most typical ways of conveying the meanings of reflexive verbs were the following:

a) Russian general-reflexive verb - the corresponding Turkish self-reflexive verb:

1. *He calmed down - Kendine geldi.*
2. *They were not interested in anything - Ne de birşeyle ilgileniyorlardı.*
3. *He felt irritated and worried - Canı sıkılıyor heyecanlanıyordu.*
4. *Could complain about his life - Ona yakınabilirdi.*

b) Russian general-reflexive verb - the corresponding Turkish nonreflexive verb:

1. *Startsev went to town to have fun - Startsev'in yüreği hızlı çarpıyordu.*
2. *She stopped - O durdu.*
3. *Startsev's heart stopped beating uneasily - Startsev'in yüreği hızlı çarpıyordu.*
4. *Returning home late at night - Eve geç vakit dönüyordu.*
5. *Vera Iosifovna wrote to Dmitry Ionych that she missed him very much - Vera İosifovna, Startsev'e onu çok özlediğini yazıyordu.*

So, the results of the analysis show that Russian reflexive (general-reflexive) verbs are mainly translated into Turkish by means of nonreflexive verbs.

In order to identify the real difficulties (the cause of the errors), a test was done by Turkish students of the first stage of education, studying the Russian language. The test consisted of sentences and text with the reflexive verbs, expressing the meanings of quantitative and qualitative changes; movement or change of the position and state; the beginning, the end and the continuation of an action; state of mind and inner

experiences of a person. In the first part of the test students had to identify the reflexive verbs (with postfix –sya) and nonreflexive (without postfix –sya) in the correct form and proper case. In the second part of the test, a text was offered where it was necessary to put the missing reflexive or nonreflexive / transitive verbs. 40 students were engaged in the test. The results of the analysis of the test testify to the real difficulties in mastering reflexive verbs of the Russian language. All the errors were of different nature, the most typical were as follows:

1. Errors related to proper case of the reflexive verbs

worry (why)?\*<sup>1</sup>, fear (why)?\*, be proud (of what)?\*, (whom)?\* (of what)?\*, do (what)?\*, interested (in what)?\*, hope (for who)?\*, be appealing (to what)?\*, be offended (by who)?\*, differ (why)?, use (what)?, laugh (at what)?\*, (who)?\*, (whom)?\*, be surprised (at what)?, (whom)?\*, come up with (what)?\*. For example:

*My younger sister is afraid dark\** instead of *of the dark*. *A mother can be proud her son\** instead of *being proud of her son*. *My friend is interested Russian art\** instead of *interested in Russian art*. *It is not good to laugh towards people\** towards people\* instead of *at people*.

The interlanguage interference (over-differentiation) should be considered the reason for these errors, i.e. transfer of a differential feature from the native language to the target one. These verbs in Turkish have different case. For example, the verb *to be interested* in Turkish requires an ablative case with preposition and a verb *laugh* requires dative case.

2. The errors related to nondistinction of verbs with postfix –sya (reflexive, intransitive) and verbs without postfix –sya (nonreflexive, transitive):

*Kogda nachal\* urok, my nachalis\* pisat diktant* instead of *nachalsya urok i my nachali pisat*. *Posle pereryva urok prodolzhal\*, my prodolzhalis\* rasskazyvat tekst* instead of *urok prodolzhalisya i my prodolzhalisya rasskazyvat tekst*. *Kogda on konchitsya shkolu, on budet postupat v universitet* instead of *konchit shkolu*. *Yego interesovayetsya\* shakhmaty vmesto yego interesuyut shakhmaty*. *Andrey uvekal\* fotografiyey*. *Yego uvekalis\* fotografiya* instead of *Andrey uvekalsya fotografiyey*. *Yego uvekayet fotografiya*. *Ya vstretil svoyego druga i ne uznal yego*. *On ochen izmenil\**. *Gody izmenilis\* yego vmesto on ochen izmenilsya i gody izmenili yego*. - *Govoryat, tseny na benzin opyat povysili*. - *Da, kompaniya povysilsya\* tseny na pyat protsentov* instead of - *Govoryat, tseny na benzin opyat povysilis*. - *Da, kompaniya povysila tseny na pyat protsentov*. (examples are transliterated from Russian into English)

The errors in these sentences relate to the incorrect use of verbs with postfix –sya and in nondistinction between the nonreflexive/transitive verb and reflexive/intransitive.

These errors are the result of underdifferentiation, i.e. non-observance of the differential sign of transitivity/intransitivity due to its absence in the native language.

## 7. Conclusion

To sum up everything what was described above, one may state that the use of the verb either with or without postfix –sya entails difficulties among Turkish students. Often, with the right choice of a transitional or reflexive verb, there are errors in the conjugation of verbs, in choosing the type and the tense form, for example: *Children were watching a funny cartoon and were laughing loudly\**. *My little brother*

*is afraid\* of heights. I never doubt\* his honesty.* This means that when working with the verb it is necessary to pay attention to its paradigm, class of the verb, tense forms and its types.

It should also be noted that Russian reflexive verbs are mainly translated into Turkish with the help of nonreflexive verb; they do not have any formal grammatical indicators of reflexiveness. The language phenomena that have no analogues in the students' native language entail great difficulty. The linguistic phenomena that have significant differences in the form of expression and the meaning are a source of interference, which in turn is the cause of errors. The analysis of errors can be helpful for teachers working with reflexive verbs.

Knowledge of the features of the students' native language system (for example Turkish) can help organize Russian language classes in a proper manner. The discrepancies in the language systems and the categories that are absent in the students' native language require an increased attention, clarification, explanation, and especially organized training.

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