

# Teaching Cultural Codes through Proverbs at Classes of Tatar as a Second Language

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## Abstract

The important ties between culture and language learning encourage teachers of foreign languages to promote cultural awareness. To be bilingual, a non-native learner has to be bicultural. Main aspects and principles of communication explicitly and implicitly underline the importance of cultural studies at SL classes. To approach the understanding of the cultural code of a nation, folklore studies could be included in language practice courses. The system of values characteristic to a nation can be introduced to learners through proverbs. The examples are based on the model suggested by John Fiske and will be given on the material of the Tatar language, namely the proverbs about family, its members, their relationship. Cultural code of 'Family' are presents schematically as a result of the research. Codes could be a subject of practical study during a SL class, along with other exercises on grammar and speaking skills that could be used by a Tatar SL teacher.

**Key words:** Cultural code, Tatar, Coding, Value, Communication

## INTRODUCTION

Native speakers learn the culture of their language without being conscious of it, but bilingual lexicographers and foreign language teachers should devote equal, if not greater, attention to non-conceptual meaning and sometimes their task is to introduce cultural codes. What is a cultural code? A cultural code is the unconscious meaning we apply to any object or abstract notion: a car, a type of food, a relationship, even a country in which we are raised. The notion of a cultural code is closely interwoven with the notion of imprint that was first studied by K.Lorenz in 1935 [1]. The stronger the emotion, the more clearly the experience is learnt. The combination of experience and its accompanying emotion create an imprint. Imprints vary from culture to culture; if we could decode elements of culture to discover the emotions and meaning attached to them, we could learn a great deal about the human behavior and how it varies across the planet. Different cultures have

different interpretations of notions. All of the different codes of all the different imprints create a system that people living in one country use without being aware of it. These different systems guide different nations in different ways. Understanding the cultural codes provides us with a remarkable new tool. Cultural codes help us understand each other when we communicate.

The importance of cultural codes is based on such aspects of communication as: socio-cultural behavior; sending and receiving messages; messages are encoded by senders and to be decoded by receivers; senders and receivers of messages are participants in the process; participants are socio-cultural beings and share a common code; messages are sent and received to achieve certain purposes.

Communication regulated by the principles: answers are based on intelligence, not on emotions or instincts; emotions are the keys to imprinting and mental connections; the key to understanding the true meaning is the understanding of a structure; the meaning of imprints varies from one culture to another; to access the meaning of imprint in a particular culture, one must learn a code for that imprint.

Signs are entities, yet signs do not occur singly; they occur in groups. Technically, semioticians term a group or set of signs a code. The concept of code implies more than groupness; it also includes ruled organization of individual

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signs. Code is a set of signs and rules for their use [2]. Codes are repositories, or collections of signs, available for human communication [3]. Coding is a form of behavior that is learned and shared by the members of a communication group [4].

Constituents of code are: a message or text; addresser, a person who created the text; addressee, or people interpreting the text; external reality to which both text and people refer, as it stated by J.Fiske [5]. Codes have no existence apart from the humans who use them. By implication codes are culture-bound and context-specific. The proper context for understanding a single cultural code is culture - a set of codes and rules for their use. No culture is made up of only single isolated code, no matter how complex it may be. Different cultures share the basic types of codes they incorporate. In social life codes are woven together as a coherent whole in intricate and mutually influencing way.

Yu.Lotman described a code as an artificial structure, based on agreement and delivering implicit historic knowledge. Two speakers possessing the same code will perfectly understand each other. If the codes of the speakers are completely opposite, the communication is not possible either. Hence, Yu.Lotman speaks of two tendencies: a tendency for using identical codes and thus facilitating communication and a tendency for using different codes and thus complicating communication. The more difficult the translation of different codes is, the more value is attached to communication [6]. V. V. Krasnykh underlines the axiological aspect of cultural codes and distinguishes somatic, spatial, temporal, objective, biomorphic and spiritual codes [7]. D. B. Gudkov, states that cultural codes occupy a central position in a national culture and form its structure [8]. S. V. Morozova et al. attributes production, translation, and preservation of human culture; openness to change and universality to cultural codes [9].

## METHODS

The methods of comparative analysis, semantic analysis, component analysis and logical-semantic representation were applied in the research.

Studying folklore is compulsory for understanding the culture of a nation. Proverbs and sayings reflect moral values widely accepted in the society and contain widely used and accepted evaluations of human behavior and actions/deeds in various situations and in different circumstances. Surrounding phenomena often become a part of proverbs. This rich culturally loaded material should be included in a speech course. Proverbs can be used in

teaching some national and culture oriented linguistic data at Second Language classes. The knowledge of proverbs of the studied language leads to better understanding of culture and national identity. Various exercises on grammar, vocabulary and phonetics can be applied by a teacher of the Tatar language at different stages of the education process.

## RESULTS

According to their didactic significance proverbs vividly represent the system of values of a nation. As the main topic of our research we have studied the proverbs that describe the concept of Family. The studied proverbs include proverbs about family and its constituents, such as father, mother, children, husband and wife. The examples have been selected due to its bright representation of cultural notions. We can not state that the images and metaphors are unique and specific only to Tatar or Turkish culture, but they are very typical for these cultures and are reduplicated in other forms of folklore, such as folk songs, fairytales, riddles, etc, thus being an integral part of the folk oral heritage, as “the same national unity see the world and perceive the world through stereotypes”[10].

The hypothetical model code of Family could be build based on the values attached to its constituents.

### (1) Family

*Бөркет булмый таусыз-кыясыз, адәм булмый йортсыз-гаиләсез.*

*Börketbulmıytawsız-qıyasız, adämbulmıyyortsız-ğailäsez.*

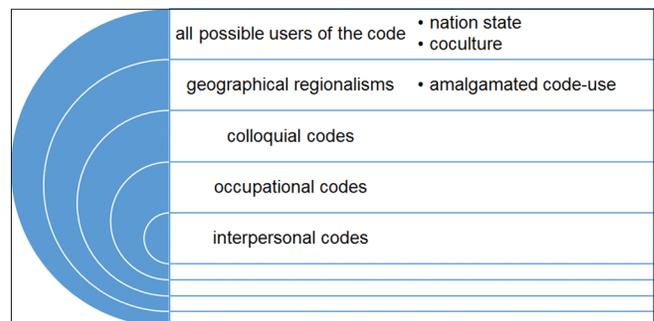
*There is no eagle without mountains, there is not a man without a family*

*Ғаилә – илтерәге*

*Ğailä – ilteräge*

*Family is the basis of a country*

Value: family, getting married



Graph 1: Cultural boundaries of codes

Value: connection to the Motherland, roots, native village, the Republic

(2) Father

*Ата һөнәре – балага мирас*  
*Ata hönäre – balagamiras*

*The craft of the father is a heritage of his son*

*Атаның сүзе – акылның үзе*  
*Atanıñsüze – aqılñiñüze*  
*Wisdom is in the words of the father*

*Ата юлы балага такыр*  
*Ata yulbalağataqır*  
*Father paves a way for his child*

Value: knowledge and wisdom  
Value: succession of generations

(3) Mother

*Ана куены туннан жылырак*  
*Ana quyuntunnancılraq*  
*A mother of a rabbit is warmer than a thick fur coat*

*Ана жылысы – кояш жылысы*  
*Ana cılısı – qoyaşcılısı*  
*The warmth of a mother is the warmth of the sun*

Value: maternity bonds, warmth

(4) Children

*Балалар – өйнең бизәге.*  
*Balalar – öyneñbižäge.*  
*Children are the jewels of the house*

*Өч бала-ике бала, Ике бала – бер бала, бер бала-бала түгел.*  
*Öç bala-ike bala, İke bala – ber bala, ber bala-bala tügel.*  
*Three children are two children, two children are one; one child is not a child*

Value: Children. There should be at least two children in a family

(5) Attitude to parents

*Ата-ананы тыңлаган – адәм булган, тыңламаган – әрәм булган,*  
*Ata-ananı tıñlağan – adämbulğan, tıñlamağan - ärämbulğan*  
*Who listens to his parents becomes a person, who doesn't - achieves nothing*

Value: obedience to parents

(6) Creating a family

Matchmaker

*Qızı bar keşegäqırıqyavçıkilä.*  
*If there is one girl in the house, forty matchmakers will come after her.*

*İñmaturitepsayrawçıqoş-sanduğaç; İñmaturitepsöylänçekeşe-yavçı*  
*Nightingales and matchmakers sing sweet songs*

*Kiñäşletıytarqalmas*  
*Arranged marriages don't break*

Value: diplomatic skills in arranging marriages

(7) Bride

*Kilbätlegizkilenbulğaçkürener*  
*A girl is beautiful, if she makes a good daughter in law*  
*Uñğanxatınqaröstendäqazanqaynata*

*A skillful woman can boil a pan over snow*  
*Xatınkiñäşe – xanğayarı*  
*Advice of a woman will do good to a king*

Value: house running skills, wisdom

(8) Groom

*Юньсезкияүйортотмас*  
*Yünsezkünyortotmas*  
*A thoughtless son-in-law can't be the head of a family*

*Иркитерә белсен, хатын җиткерә белсен*  
*İrkiteräbelsen, xatıncitkeräbelsen*  
*A husband should bring, a woman manage.*

Value: a husband is the head of the family and a breadwinner

(9) Husband and wife

*İr-baş, xatın-mıyın*  
*A man is a head, a woman is a neck*  
*Xatınqanatı – ir, irqanatı - at*

*The wing of a woman is a man, the wing of a man is a horse*  
*İröydänçqsa-bäräkät, xatın-qızöydätorsa - bäräkät*  
*If a man goes out of the house – it is a benefit; if a woman stays all the time at home – it is a benefit*

Value: hierarchy in unity; patriarchy of a family

Graphically the code can be described in a form of a life cycle as it is presented in Chart 2.

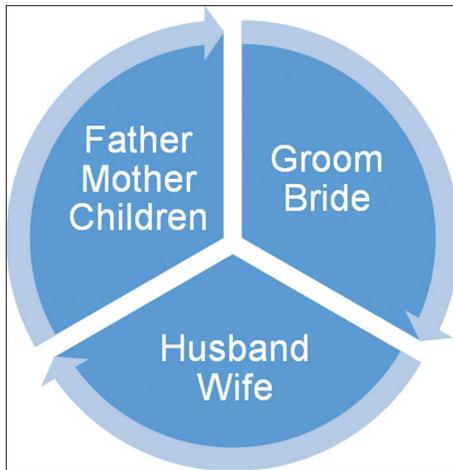


Chart 2: The graphical presentation of the code of Family

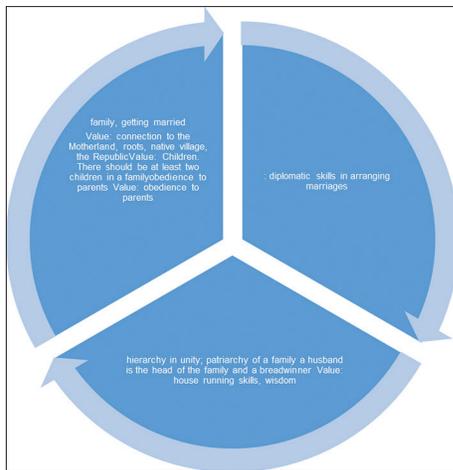


Chart 3: Code of Family with the attached values

We suggest the cyclic graphic form of the Code of Family (Chart 2), as it depicts the succession of generations. The schematic analysis of the Code demonstrates that the greater value in the proverbs is attached to interrelation on the level of equal partners: mother-father, husband-wife, while children constitute a transitional stage, and are supposed to follow the example of their parents and become adults.

## DISCUSSION

The practical part of our research concerns with practical aspects of teaching cultural codes through speaking and grammar exercises. It is important to note that during individuals' speech the verbal experience is developed which involves a certain subjective conceptualization of hierarchy and structure of speech elements[11].The quantitative enrichment of the students' word stock and the development of the permanence of lexical skills do not contradict each other [12].

To master grammatical and lexical material students may be given exercises with gaps, for example:

Fill in the gap:

*Гайлэ – ил ...*  
*Ѓайлэ – ил ....*  
*Атаһөнәре – балага ....*  
*Ата һөнәре – балага .....*

The teacher can apply the communicative method in teaching grammatical forms: pronouns, degrees of comparison of adjectives, imperative forms, modal verbs, etc. interacting with students.

To teach to use a dash correctly, the models of proverbs can be used:

*Ана чысы – qoyaşчысы.*  
*Balalar – öyneñbizäge.*

The rules of using present negative forms (adding mi- mi, miy- miy to the stem of the verb) may be illustrated on the samples of the proverbs with the verbs in the negative form:

*Börketbulmytawsız-qıyasız, adämbulmyyortsız-ğailäsez.*  
*Tatuğailägäqayğıkermi.*  
*Hatınnarmñkılıçıbervakıt ta tutıkemıy.*

To develop students' speaking skills teachers can offer monologue exercises. Students could illustrate proverbs basing on their life experience, telling short stories.

*Tell a story illustrating the proverb: Ата-ананы тыңдаган – адәм булган, тыңламаган – әрәм булган.*  
*Ата - а н а н ы т ы ң л а ғ а н – а д ә м б у л ғ а н ,*  
*тыңламаған - әрәм булған.*  
*Who listens to his parents becomes a person, who doesn't - achieves nothing.*

To develop students' speaking skills teachers can offer dialogue exercises. Students could discuss the meaning of the proverbs with their partners.

*Ата һөнәре – балагамырас.*

To develop students' speaking skills teachers can offer answering and asking the following questions to their partners:

*How important is it to obey parents?*  
*Are you going to follow your parents' footsteps in a career choice?*  
*Can you name some famous professional dynasties?*  
*Why do some children choose the same profession as their parents?*

Students speak on the topic of family values developing speaking abilities, and acquire knowledge about Tatar culture. Communicative exercises in the lessons increase students' motivation and interest in learning the language.

To teach phonetics proverbs can be applied in drilling consonants and vowels. For example, the Tatar sounds [ö], [ä], can be practiced on the following proverbs:

[ö]- Ata hönäre – balaga miras.  
 Öçbala-ikebala, İke bala – berbala, berbala-balatügel.  
 Börketbulmıytawsız-qıyasız, adämbulmıyyortsız-ğailäsez.  
 [ä]- Tatuğailägäqayğikerme  
 Qızı bar keşegäqırıqyawçıkilä.  
 Kiñäşletuytarqalmas

All these exercises can promote “formation, development and improvement of sociocultural competence of students” [13] as well as teach the cultural codes as the proverbs reflect “a historical, cultural and ethnographical context” [14].

## CONCLUSION

The code of Family reflects the succession of generations. The greater value in the studied proverbs is given to interrelation on the level of equal partners: mother-father, husband-wife; and children constitute are supposed to follow the example of their parents and become adults. These types of exercises on developing phonetics, vocabulary and grammar skills with elements of folklore will assist students to enlarge knowledge of culture. A linguistic approach enables to learn cultural codes of the nation and make the communication in the studied language more effective. Students speak on various topics and acquire knowledge about Tatar culture. Communicative exercises in the lessons increase students' motivation and interest in learning the language.

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