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2-бөлім

ЯСАУИ МҰРАСЫ: ТІЛ ЖӘНЕ ӘДЕБИЕТ

Section 2

YASAWI HERITAGE: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Раздел 2

НАСЛЕДИЕ ЯСАВИ: ЯЗЫК И ЛИТЕРАТУРА

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THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF YASAWI'S HIKMETS AND METHODOLOGIES FOR THEIR APPLICATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Қожа Ахмет Ясауидің «Диуани Хикмет» шығармасының ағылшын тіліне аударылған алғашқы нұсқасына шолу жасалып, олардың тіл үйрету үдерісінде қолдану мүмкіндіктері қарастырылады. Автор хикметтерді оқытуда дәстүрлі әдістер арқылы оқушылардың тілдік дағдыларын дамыту жолдарын ұсынады. Атап айтқанда, мәтінмен жұмыс жасау, аударма тапсырмалары, мазмұндық талдау сияқты дәстүрлі тәсілдерді пайдаланудың тиімділігі көрсетіледі. Мақалада хикметтерді оқыту тек тілді меңгеру құралы ғана емес, сонымен бірге мәдени-рухани танымды кеңейтудің де маңызды әдісі екені дәлелденеді. Осылайша, Ясауи мұрасы дәстүрлі мен цифрлық педагогиканы үйлестіре отырып, тілді меңгерудің сапалы ресурсы ретінде ұсынылады.

Кілт сөздер: Ясауи хикметтері, Диуани хикмет, орта ғасыр, оқыту технологиясы, дәстүрлі әдіс, мазмұндау және перефразалау, эксперимент.

Abstract. This article provides an overview of the earliest English translations of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's *Divan-i Hikmet* and

examines their potential applications in the process of language teaching. The author proposes ways of developing learners' language skills through the use of traditional instructional methods in teaching hikmets. In particular, the effectiveness of using conventional approaches such as text-based work, translation tasks, and content analysis is demonstrated.

The study argues that teaching hikmets is not only a means of language acquisition but also an important tool for expanding cultural and spiritual understanding. Thus, Yasawi's heritage is presented as a valuable resource for language learning that integrates both traditional and digital pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: Yasawi hikmets, Divan-i Hikmet, Middle Ages, teaching methodology, traditional methods, summarizing and paraphrasing, experiment.

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются первые переводы произведения Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави «Диван-и Хикмет» на английский язык и анализируются возможности их использования в процессе обучения языку. Автор предлагает пути развития языковых навыков обучающихся посредством

традиционных методов работы с текстом при изучении хикметов. В частности, демонстрируется эффективность таких традиционных приёмов, как работа с текстом, переводческие задания и содержательный анализ.

В статье доказывается, что изучение хикметов является не только средством овладения языком, но и важным инструментом расширения культурного и

духовного мировоззрения. Таким образом, наследие Ясави рассматривается как ценный образовательный ресурс, объединяющий традиционные и цифровые педагогические технологии.

Ключевые слова: хикметы Ясави, «Диван-и Хикмет», Средневековье, методика обучения, традиционные методы, пересказ и перефразирование, эксперимент.

Khoja Ahmed Yasawi is a spiritual leader of the Turkic world, the founder of Sufi poetry, and a great thinker who lived in the 11th–12th centuries. His principal work, *Divan-i Hikmet* (The Book of Wisdom), consists of deeply meaningful poetic compositions that call for morality, faith, education, and spiritual purification. These works occupy an important place in the literature and culture of the Turkic peoples.

According to Professor K. Tosun of Ankara University, *Divan-i Hikmet* is considered one of the earliest and most significant works of Turkic-Islamic literature. The main factor that enhances the significance of this work is not only its early emergence but also the fact that it has withstood the test of time and has retained its relevance for centuries. Originating in the 12th century in the Turkistan region, this work has become widely known across many countries due to its wisdom-filled content and distinctive style.

The scholar also emphasizes that *Divan-i Hikmet* should be regarded not only as a work of Sufi teaching but also as an educational and enlightening literary work (Tosun, 2016: 147-167). Indeed, the didactic significance of these hikmets is considerable: they were used not only in the medieval period but also in later centuries as educational materials in madrasas across various countries. Moreover, beyond formal educational institutions, they also served as spiritual guides in the everyday life of ordinary people.

In recent years, efforts have been made to translate Yasawi's works into English in order to introduce his heritage to a global audience. One of such researchers is D. Trapman, who translated the collection of hikmets into English and stated that: "Yasawi's works are a remarkable gift to humanity." (Trapman, 2013: 320)

This collection was translated from N. Sagyndykova's Russian-language version and published in 2013 under the title *Divine Wisdom: Diwani Hikmet*. In her foreword, the author notes that after Kazakhstan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Anuarbek Bokebay, a retired local communist public figure, retrieved a number of sensitive documents from a bookshelf and revealed a secret archive that had been kept out of sight for many years (Trapman, 2013: 320). Jonathan's wife, Virve, also made a significant contribution to the translation of this work. In 2011, she participated in a conference on architecture and construction held in the city of Astana, where she met Samatbek Bokebay, the brother of Anuarbek Bokebay. Having long cherished the wish to translate her brother's valuable materials into English, he invited Virve to the city of Shymkent.

Virve Trapman was highly interested in increasing global awareness of Yasawi's rich heritage. While in Shymkent, she and her husband became acquainted with all the relatives of Anuarbek Bokebay and sought to gather as much relevant information from each of them as possible.

This translation was studied by Zh.A. Suleimenova, who expressed the following opinion: "Yasawi's hikmets were not written merely to express explicit emotions, but rather to convey hikmets, spiritual truths, and moral instructions. This makes them universal and accessible to different listeners and audiences. Although the proportion of negatively and positively connoted hikmets may be relatively subjective, the overall orientation of Yasawi's hikmets is toward spiritual enlightenment and development; therefore, their positive aspects are more prominent." (Suleimenova, Yskak, 2022:

80). In addition, in her article titled “Exploring Topics and Sentiment in the English Version of Yassawi’s *Divan-i Hikmet*: A Text Mining Approach” (Suleimenova, Yskak, 2022: 80), she examined the thematic structure and sentiment characteristics of the English translations of the hikmets and demonstrated that positive meanings prevail in the texts.

To evaluate the emotional spectrum of the studied text, the scholar conducted sentiment analysis using the *Tidytext R package* [Silge, Robinson, 2016]. In this framework, the “AFINN” method was applied, where each word expressing a negative attitude was assigned a negative score (not lower than −5), while words expressing positive sentiment were assigned a positive score (up to +5). The results of the analysis are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

The time series of emotional states derived from *Divan-i Hikmet* is presented in Figure 4. As can be seen from the data, the entire area of the smoothed curve is positioned above the zero line, indicating an overall positive affective composition of the texts. However, noticeable emotional declines are observed approximately between hikmets 20 and 105.

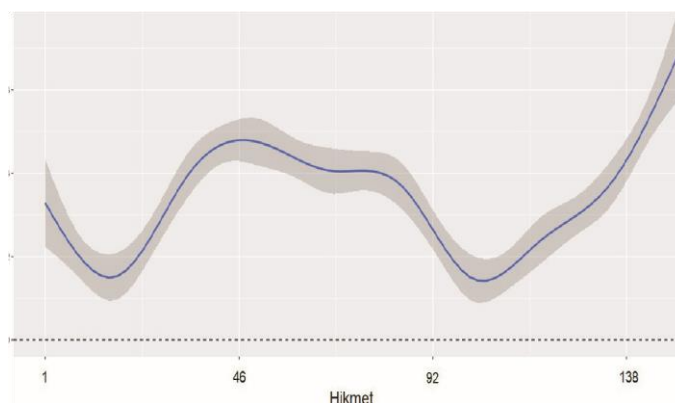


Figure 4 – Emotional State of Divan-i Hikmet

In the figure, specific words representing the overall emotional tone of the work are presented. Words highlighted in red indicate a positive sentiment, while those shown in blue represent a negative sentiment. Thus, the predominance of positive words is clearly observed.

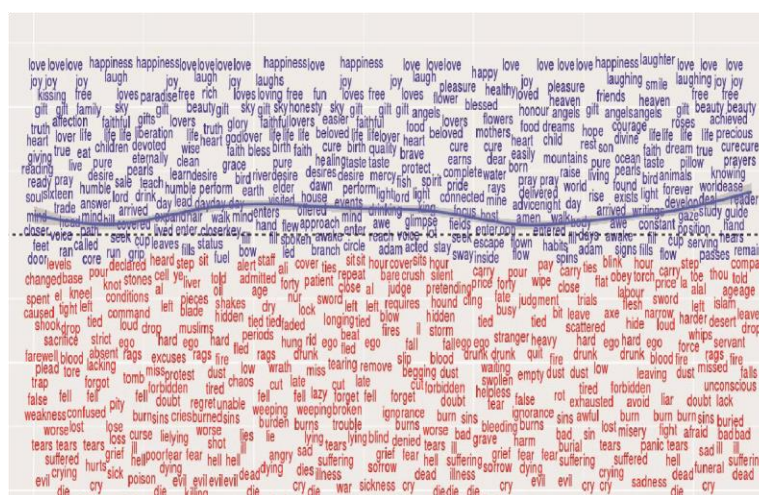


Figure 5 – The predominance of positive (favorable) words over negative (unfavorable) words in Yasawi’s Divan-i Hikmet

The results of this analysis show that, in Yasawi’s hikmets, positive perspectives and wisdom that enable readers to perceive the meaning of life and achieve spiritual development are predominantly present.

In addition, the frequency of words in Yasawi’s hikmets was identified. A word cloud was generated based on the 100 most frequently occurring words in the text corpus using the *wordcloud2* package as part of the open-source *R 4.2.1* platform (Team, 2022). As a result, it was found that the most frequent words are those expressing the attributes of the Creator, followed by words such as “love,” “friends,” “dervish,” and “spirit” (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Word Frequency in Divan-i Hikmet

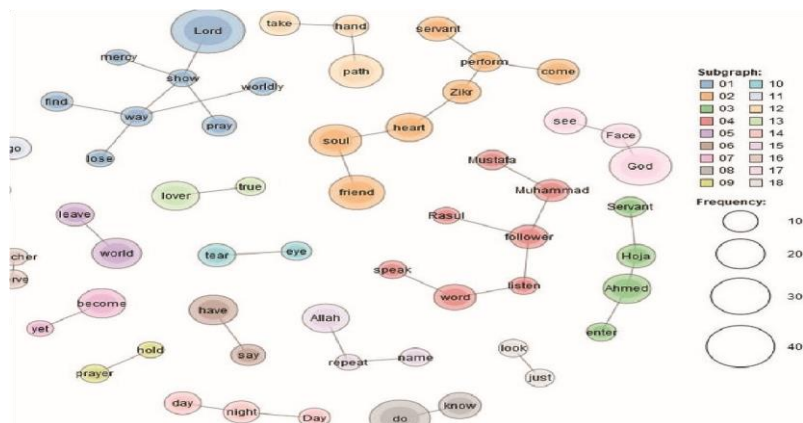


Figure 7 – Co-occurrence Network of Selected Words

Furthermore, the word “path” is connected with the terms “hand” and “to take.” However, sentences containing all three words together were not found; only sentences containing the words “hand” and “to take” were identified (e.g., “Muhammad deb tashna bolsang kolyn alay” (say Muhammad, follow me and take my hand) or “Ruz mahshar kolyn tutkay tanla barsang” (On Judgment Day the Lord will take your hand)).

Such quantitative analysis was carried out using automated methods of intelligent text mining.

In the Middle Ages, through memorization of the hikmets, Yasawi's disciples disseminated his wisdom throughout the Turkic world and preserved it as a heritage for future generations. It is also evident that the collection of hikmets, transmitted orally from generation to generation, has reached the present day as a result of this memorization practice. Thus, memorization can be considered one of the most effective learning technologies.

Similarly, in this study, a traditional summarization technique was selected in order to develop learners' speaking skills. Canan defines summarization as a repetition method that involves condensing or retelling previously heard or read information or events. Summarization is also described as a tool for assessing "how well a student has understood a particular event" (Janan, 2022:158).

Marsh states that memorization is a recall method that requires the reproduction of specific information stored in memory, whereas summarization is the retelling of an event depending on the speaker's intention, audience, and social context. These definitions show that summarization is more important than memorization. Retelling (summarization) is commonly used in foreign language teaching to develop students' speaking skills and their ability to organize and express ideas in the target language. It is applied when learners are asked to retell previously heard or read stories and information. Through summarization, learners strengthen their vocabulary and attempt to overcome fear and anxiety during speaking.

Regarding this, S. Ebadi states that "lexical knowledge is recognized as one of the key aspects of language learning" (Marsh, 2007:16-20). Taking this view into account, we conclude that summarizing Yasawi's hikmets enhances students' oral communication skills in terms of effectiveness and expressiveness. Moreover, there are sufficient linguistic theories supporting the assumption that using Yasawi's hikmets can improve students' English language skills. For example, Krashen's Input Hypothesis suggests that second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language input that is slightly above their current level of proficiency, known as "comprehensible input." (Lichtman, 2021:283-305).

Through summarizing Yasawi's hikmets, students can obtain authentic linguistic input that helps them better understand English and improve their spoken language skills. In this regard, M. Swain's hypothesis can be cited: "This theoretical basis of language teaching is characterized by the importance of output in the language acquisition process. It is assumed that when learners speak, cognitive processes are activated that facilitate language acquisition, help identify gaps in linguistic knowledge, encourage learners to revise their ideas, and lead them to formulate more accurate expressions" (Swain, 1985: 235-253).

The summarization of hikmets aligns with Swain's theory, as students produce language output, receive feedback, and use language in a meaningful and authentic context.

In summarizing Yasawi's hikmets, students encountered considerable difficulties, as the hikmets, unlike other literary texts, do not contain a clear narrative plot, and at first glance, their oral reproduction appeared quite challenging. However, we concluded that summarizing hikmets can facilitate faster and easier language learning. Hikmets are generally concise in length, which encouraged English language learners to speak in a shorter and more direct manner. In addition, hikmets often contain complex vocabulary and profound ideas, which helped students develop syntactic and lexical complexity in expressing the meaning of the texts with a certain degree of accuracy.

Considering that hikmets are written in a poetic form, we observed the presence of unique and creative linguistic expressions. This contributed to improving students' fluency in speaking and their overall language skills. Thus, although hikmets do not have a clear narrative structure, they proved to be a valuable tool for developing oral communication skills in language learning contexts.

Furthermore, Yasawi's hikmets are often complex and semantically layered. Working with such complex linguistic material helped learners enhance their language competence and expand their vocabulary.

Now let us turn to the experimental procedure. In order to define the aim of this study, we first sought to address the following research questions prior to the experiment:

Research Question 1. Can students improve their vocabulary size and speaking performance through summarizing Yasawi's hikmets?

Research Question 2. Does the vocabulary size of students in the pre-test have a moderating effect on their post-test results and vocabulary development after the hikmet summarization task?

The participants of this study were third-year students enrolled in the educational programs "Kazakh Philology" and "Kazakh Language and Literature" at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. In total, approximately sixty English language learners aged between 17 and 19 participated in the study from three groups.

Of the participants, 78% were female. The learners did not show significant differences in their English proficiency levels; most of them corresponded to the B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), indicating an upper-intermediate proficiency level.

All participants agreed to take part in the study and completed informed consent forms.

In this experiment, a pre-test/post-test control group design was employed. Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group, each consisting of 30 students.

The students were provided with an electronic version of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's *Divan-i Hikmet* in English, which was sent via email. They were instructed to select hikmets relevant to the course syllabus and read them independently. In addition, weekly 3-hour sessions were conducted over a ten-week period as part of the students' independent work (IW) schedule outside regular classroom hours.

The instructional material used in this study was the English translation of Yasawi's hikmets, which was considered a canonical text within the scope of this research. During the sessions, students gathered and practiced summarizing the main ideas of selected hikmets in monologue form. As researchers, we provided corrective feedback and supportive guidance for each speaker.

The first session took place in mid-September 2022, a few days after the pre-test. Throughout the experiment, each student produced ten oral summaries. In total, ten sessions were conducted, with the final one held at the end of November.

After the intervention, both groups took a post-test. The control group did not participate in any extracurricular speaking activities and only completed independent assignments according to the curriculum. This design was implemented to compare the language learning outcomes of the two groups.

In the literature on second language acquisition, there is a general consensus that three key parameters determine the effectiveness of language learning: fluency, complexity, and accuracy (De Jong, 2023:541-560).

Taking these parameters into account, oral storytelling (summarization) tasks were used in both the pre-test and post-test phases to assess participants' speaking performance.

After explaining the task, each participant was asked to retell a selected hikmet in a quiet university classroom during an individual session with one of the researchers. Three authors participated in the data collection process. Participants were informed that their responses would be recorded for subsequent analysis and that the task was conducted for research purposes rather than as an exam.

During the summarization process, textual prompts provided in the appendix were used as support materials. However, to reduce potential confusion caused by the lack of visual stimulation in paraphrasing hikmets, each task was supplemented with colorful illustrations depicting relevant characters or events (Appendix B; the images were generated using neural networks).

These visual materials facilitated task completion by learners. They served as clear and concrete visual guides, enabling students to construct their own narratives and interpretations more easily.

Two minutes were allocated for viewing the images, and four minutes were given for completing the task. In addition, it was ensured that students did not repeat the same hikmet (topic) in the pre-test and post-test stages. Since the task instructions and conditions had been previously piloted among students, they fully corresponded to our research design. A vocabulary assessment was conducted before and after the experiment in large classroom settings using a paper-based test. Participants were given 40 minutes to complete the form.

The recorded speech data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using the *PRAAT* software in order to evaluate five dimensions reflecting syntactic and lexical complexity, as well as fluency and accuracy of speech. *PRAAT* is a free and user-friendly software that allows users to record audio files or import previously recorded data for analysis.

The analysis procedure was carried out according to the following principles:

Fluency. In this study, fluency was operationalized as articulatory rate, calculated as the interaction of syllable duration (in milliseconds), excluding pauses, divided by the total number of syllables produced.

Syntactic complexity. This was measured by mean length of sentence and subordination, i.e., the average number of sentences within a speech unit.

Lexical complexity. Lexical complexity was assessed using the extended Guiraud Index (2003) (number of word types not included in the list of 2000 most frequent words divided by the square root of the number of tokens) and calculated using an online vocabulary profiling tool (lextutor.ca/vp/eng/).

Accuracy was defined as the number of lexical and grammatical errors per 100 words (excluding minor slips occurring during speech production). The units of analysis and selection errors were identified and manually coded by the authors.

Vocabulary size. Lexical accuracy is generally considered to be primarily determined by the size of an individual's second language vocabulary (Daidone, Darcy, 2021:16). In this study, vocabulary size was measured using the test developed by P. Schmitt and B. Laufer (Snoder, Laufer, 2022:1242-1265) which assessed students' knowledge of core vocabulary across the first eight frequency bands, consisting of 1,000-word lists, using a set of 80 multiple-choice questions.

To evaluate the effectiveness of using Yasawi's hikmets in the learning process, the results of the first experiment were analyzed using specialized quantitative software, while the results of the second experiment were assessed using researcher-designed tests and questionnaires.

Statistical analysis was conducted using the R programming environment and MedCalc statistical software (MedCalc Software bv, Ostend, Belgium; <https://www.medcalc.org>; 2020). Paired t-tests, independent t-tests, and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were applied to analyze vocabulary size and the number of lexical items in oral production. Paired t-tests were used to compare pre-test and post-test results within groups, while independent t-tests were used for between-group comparisons. To enhance the analytical power of evaluating the effectiveness of hikmet summarization, ANCOVA was performed after checking statistical assumptions, using pre-test scores and vocabulary size as covariates (Khammar, Yarahmadi, Khanjani, 2020: 1016-1017)

According to the D'Agostino–Pearson test, all variables followed a normal distribution, with p-values greater than 0.05. Therefore, parametric tests were applied to examine mean differences between the control and experimental groups. An independent samples t-test was first conducted between the two groups, and no statistically significant differences were observed ($p > 0.05$). The p-value in the t-test indicates the probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

Subsequently, paired samples t-tests were performed within each group to compare pre-test and post-test results. The results showed that the learners in the control group demonstrated a significant increase in sentence length ($p < 0.01$), while the experimental group exhibited improvements in vocabulary size, lexical richness (as measured by the advanced Guiraud index), and syntactic complexity.

In this experiment, we attempted to empirically demonstrate that the use of rich and meaningful materials such as Yasawi's hikmets can significantly enhance learners' speaking skills

and vocabulary development through summarization or paraphrasing. We are confident that this study can make a valuable contribution to both practice and future research.

Although the study has its own methodological strengths, it also has several limitations. In particular, only the summarization method was applied within the experimental framework, which restricted the scope of the study. Therefore, in future research, it would be advisable to include participants with different proficiency levels and age groups in the experimental design.

It would also be more effective to conduct the sessions in classroom or online learning environments rather than as independent work, which would allow for a better assessment of the potential advantages of the summarization method. In addition, the experiment lasted only ten weeks, which may not be sufficient to fully evaluate its effectiveness. Thus, future studies should consider conducting longer-term interventions to continuously enhance learners' English speaking skills through summarization.

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