

Ogul Unal: I'm not Afraid to Make a Mistake

"I speak English well, but I want to improve my Russian," confessed Ogul UNAL and insisted that the interview be conducted in Russian. A determined young man came to St. Petersburg from Turkey two years ago. He decided that he wanted to study in Russia and as a result, he completed his Master's degree program at Polytechnic University - at the Institute of Computer Science and Technology. Now he is studying under the postgraduate study program. Ogul is not only a talented young scientist, but also a teacher of the [International Polytechnic Summer School](#) the students love. His leisure time he dedicates to playing the guitar.



Ogul understood that it is impossible to live in Russia without knowing Russian. And his own secret in learning the language is not to be afraid to make mistakes and work on them. Although he sometimes misses his home, he still loves St. Petersburg and is proud to have connected his life with Polytechnic University.

- Ogul, why did you need to go to study abroad??

- In the town of Chivril, where I was born, live less than 20 thousand people. I always wanted to go to a big city, so I chose a university in Istanbul and studied at

the Department of Computer Engineering. Already when I started working in my profession, I wanted to learn some other language. I knew German at a basic level, but I did not want to continue learning it. I chose Russian because I heard a lot of Russian speech around me and I liked the way it sounded.

At first, back in Istanbul, I took a nine-month Russian course. After that I decided to apply for the Master's degree already in Russia. Before that I had been to St. Petersburg, and I liked the city very much. It turned out that Polytechnic University had a program on "Intellectual Systems," and I was interested in exactly this sphere, where there is artificial intelligence, machine learning, control systems, and much more. When I was 27, I enrolled in the Master's program of Polytechnic University, and after graduating from it, I was advised to go to the post-graduate course too.

- And you decided to stay. You probably found a job, didn't you?

- I have an interesting job in the field of search engine optimization, which brings me a pretty good income. In addition, I am engaged in important scientific research, and I teach at Polytechnic University - I like it. But I am very afraid of the philosophy exam, which will take place literally in a week. I'm worried about this right now!

- And why exactly does this subject scare you?

- I believe that philosophy is a very important subject that shapes the outlook on life, teaches us to understand science and the structure of the world in general. Although I love philosophy, it is still difficult for me to explain my thoughts in Russian. So it sometimes seems - almost like Socrates, that I only know that I don't know anything ... And the exam will also be full-time, from which during the pandemic we have all lost the habit.



- At the very beginning, when you came to Russia, was it difficult for you to be here?

- If we talk about studying, yes, it was a bit difficult. But I liked the fact that I had to work a lot, do my homework - thanks to this I was able to understand even pretty difficult subjects. As for the language, I read many books by Russian authors - Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov and others. I really like Russian culture, Russian soul - it was interesting to learn that, both through books and live.

The most difficult moments for me are when I miss the live communication with my relatives and friends, not through video communication. And I miss our national cuisine, but I got used to local food long ago. I dream to go home on vacation for at least 10 days.

- What do you like most about St. Petersburg?

- It seems to me like a special city. Although a little depressing, it is largely due to the cloudy weather. But compared to the same Istanbul, it is a safe city. It is tranquil and nice here.



I love Rubinstein Street - it is very atmospheric, there are a lot of people there, it is some kind of special energy. I also like Nevsky Avenue with its beautiful views. I also admire the Polytechnic University campus: it is stylish; it comprises modern buildings, ancient buildings, and even a park. If my guests came to visit me, I would definitely show them Polytechnic University!

- Tell us about your scientific interests, please.

- Machine learning is a discipline within a whole line of studies, which is called artificial intelligence. We teach the model to solve the problem of classification of objects, and it is useful in many areas. For example, my master's degree work was related to obtaining brain signals and using them to recognize actions - this process is called electroencephalography. The point is that you control the robot by just thinking about it and doing nothing else, that is, by the power of thought. For example, you decided: "Go left!" or "I want to go up" and the robot did it. This is useful for disabled people, for example. I never dreamed of becoming a doctor, but I like to help others and make their lives easier through machine learning.

- What do you teach at Polytechnic University?

- This year I taught machine training during the International Polytechnic Summer School. Due to the pandemic and closed borders, the school had to use online format for the first time ever, but everything went perfectly. Even television came

to shoot us. Over 300 people from 27 countries participated in the summer school. These are really concerned students, they all did their homework and coped with the final project, for which they worked with a real database.



I like to teach because I not only give some information to students, but also learn something new. I try to explain in class how I can effectively use the knowledge I receive. I feel that students are quite interested, so I like to teach. Now I want to lead classes not only in the short-term program, but also during the academic year.

- Ogul, for sure you have helpful advice for international students applying to Russian universities.

- First of all, it is impossible to live here without knowing the Russian language. Second, be ready to live by yourself and alone for a while. You will need to adapt to Russian people. To be more exact, the Russians need time to adapt to you. I noticed that they are quite restrained, even chilly at the beginning of communication. But after a while, they become a lot more open and allow you to communicate with them closer: it takes patience to reach this level when the St. Petersburg people "thaw." This is not bad or good, I just wanted to share what I have noticed in my experience. I am becoming more restrained here myself; at home they even ask why I have become like this. In reality, everything is fine - I just live in the Northern Capital of Russia.



I also recommend that international students visit all museums. St. Petersburg has a soul, and it is impossible to perceive it without visiting museums and without seeing the main attractions. Be sure to study this city: it is beautiful!

- Ogul, thank you so much for the interesting conversation. Have a successful philosophy exam and an interesting academic year!

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