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ON WORDS AND TRANSLATION

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СЛОВА ТА ЇХ ПЕРЕКЛАД

The word is the most enduring substance of the human race. Not every word in one language has an exact equivalent in another. Thus, not all concepts that are expressed through the words of one language are exactly the same as the ones that are expressed through the words of another ...

Sometimes a language lacks the word for a certain concept even though it exists in most, perhaps all, other languages. On the other hand, for certain concepts a word exists only in one language and is then adopted by other languages ... At times, a foreign language introduces conceptual nuance for which there is no word in our own language. Then anyone who is concerned about the exact presentation of his or her thoughts will use the foreign word. In all cases where a certain word cannot render exactly the same concept in another language, the dictionary will offer several synonyms. They indicate the directions of meaning that delineate the boundaries within which the concept moves. This causes unavoidable imperfection in all translations. Rarely can a characteristic, terse, and significant sentence be transplanted from one language to another so that it will produce exactly the same effect in the new language. Every translation either remains dead and its style appears forced, wooden, and unnatural, or it frees itself of the constraints of adherence to language.

Hence, when we learn a language, our main problem lies in understanding every concept for which the foreign language has a word, but for which our own language lacks an exact equivalent – as is often the case. Thus, in learning a foreign language one must map out several new spheres of concepts in one's own mind that didn't exist before. Consequently, one doesn't only learn words but acquires concepts. This is practically true for the learning of classical languages, since the ways in which the ancients expressed themselves differ considerably more from ours than modern languages vary from one another. This is more conspicuously evident with translation into Latin: expressions totally different from the original have to be used. Indeed, the ideas to be translated into Latin have to be totally reconstructed and remolded; the idea has to be dissolved into its most basic components and then reconstructed in the new language. It is precisely through this process that the mind benefits so much from the learning of ancient languages.

One can only fathom the spirit of the language to be learnt after one has correctly grasped the concepts that this language designates through individual words, and when is capable of immediately associating each word with its corresponding concept in the foreign language. We will never grasp the spirit of the foreign language if we first translate each word into our other tongue and then associate it with its conceptual affinity in that language – with doesn't always correspond to the concepts of the source language – and the same holds true for entire sentences. If one has properly grasped the spirit of a foreign language, one has also taken a large step toward understanding the nation that speaks that language for, as the style is related to the mind of the individual, so is the language to the mind of the nation. A complete mastery of another language has taken place when one is capable of translating not books but oneself into the other language, so that without losing one's own individuality one can immediately communicate in that language; and thereby please foreigners as well as one's countrymen in the same manner.

Секція 5. Основні засади формування професійної компетентності у вищій школі

People of limited intellectual abilities will not easily master a foreign language. They actually learn the words; however, they always use the words only in the sense of the approximate equivalent in the mother tongue, and they always maintain those expressions and sentences peculiar to the mother tongue. They are incapable of acquiring the 'spirit' of the foreign language. This can be explained by the fact that their thinking is not generated by its own substance but, for the most part, is borrowed from their mother tongue, whose current phrases and expressions substitute for their own thoughts. Therefore, they use only worn-out patterns of speech (hackney'd phrases, *phrases banales*) in their own language, which they put together so awkwardly that one realizes how imperfectly they understand the meaning of what they are saying and how little their entire thinking beyond the mere use of words, so that it is not much more than mindless carrot. Conversely, a person's originality of expression and the appropriateness of individual formations used by such a person are an infallible indication of a superior mind.

From all this it becomes clear that new concepts are created during the process of learning a foreign language to give meaning to new signs. Moreover, it becomes clear that concepts that together made up a larger and vaguer one, since only one word existed for them, can be refined in their differentiation, and that relationships unknown until then are discovered because the foreign language expresses the concept through a trope or metaphor indigenous to that language. Therefore, an infinite number of nuances, similarities, differences, and relationships among objects rise to the level of consciousness as a result of learning the new language, and thus one perceives multiple perspectives of all phenomena. This confirms that one thinks differently in every language, that our thinking is modified and newly tinged through the learning of each foreign language, and the polyglotism is, apart from its many immediate advantages, a direct means of educating the mind by correcting and perfecting our perceptions through the emerging diversity and refinement of concepts. At the same time, polyglotism increases the flexibility of thinking since, through the learning of many languages, the concept increasingly separates itself from the word.

The classical languages effect this to a much higher degree than the modern languages because they differ more from ours. This difference does not leave room for a word-for-word rendering but requires that we melt down our thoughts entirely and recast them into a different form. Or (if I may be permitted to bring in a comparison from chemistry), whereas translation of a modern language into another modern one requires only disassembly of the sentence to be translated into its obvious components and then the reassembly of them, the translation into Latin often requires a breakdown of a sentence into its most refined, elementary components (the pure thought content) from which the sentence is then regenerated in totally different forms. Thus it often happens that nouns in the text of one language can only be translated as verbs in another, or vice versa, and there are many other examples. The same process takes place when we translate classical languages into modern ones. Thus is revealed the distance of the relations that we can have with classical authors, by way of such translations.

The fact that speech is translated from one language into another confronts us everywhere in a variety of forms. On the one hand, this enables people who perhaps were originally separated from one another by the whole breadth of the earth to come into contact or perhaps to assimilate into one language the products of another language that has been extinct for many centuries. On the other hand, we need not even go outside the boundaries of one single language to find the same phenomenon. For the different tribal dialects of one nation and the different developments of the same language or dialect in different centuries are, in the strict sense of the word, different languages, which frequently require a complete translation. Even contemporaries who are not separated by dialects but who come from different social classes that have every little contact and who are far apart in their education

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can often communicate with each other only through a similar process of translation. Are we not often compelled, after all, to translate for ourselves the words for another person who is quite like us, but of a different temperament and mind? For when we feel that in our mouth the same words would have an entirely different meaning, or here a stronger or there a weaker weight than in his, and that we would use quite a different words and phrases if we wanted to express in our way the same things he meant to say, then it seems, as we define this feeling for ourselves more closely, and as it becomes a thought in us, that we translate. Occasionally we must translate even our own words, when we want to make them our very own again. And this skill is practiced not only for the purpose of transplanting into foreign soil what a language has created in the fields of scholarship and the theoretical arts, thereby expanding the horizon of the power of the mind, but it is also practiced in business translation between individuals of different nations, and in diplomatic exchanges of independent governments, in which each is accustomed to speak in his own language to the other to ensure strict equality without making use of a dead language.

The activity of translating is radically different from mere interpreting. Wherever the word is not totally bound by obvious objects or by external facts (which it is merely supposed to express), wherever the speaker is thinking more or less independently and therefore wants to express himself, he stands in an ambiguous relationship to language; and his speech will be understood correctly only insofar as this relationship is comprehended correctly. Every human being is, on the other hand, in the power of the language he speaks; he and his whole thinking are a product of it. He cannot, with complete certainty, think anything that lies outside the limits of language. The form of his concepts, the way and means of connecting them, is outlined for him through the language in which he is born and educated; intellect and imagination are bound by it.

On the other hand, however, every free thinking and intellectually spontaneous human being also forms the language himself. For how else, but through these influences, would it have come to be and to grow from its first raw state to its more perfect formation in scholarship and arts? In this sense, therefore, it is the living power of the individual that produces new forms in the malleable material of the language, originally only for the momentary purpose of communicating a transitory awareness; these forms, however, remain, now more, now less, in the language and taken up by others continue to speak. One can even say that only to the extent to which the person influences language does he deserve to be heard beyond his immediate environment.