

CAN THE MASTERY OVER 'MOTHER TONGUE' FACILITATE EASY ACQUISITION OF 'OTHER TONGUE'?

SYED MOHAMMED HASEEBUDDINQUADRI¹ & G GOVINDAIAH²

¹Professor, Department of English, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses a claim that if one has mastery over one's mother tongue, one can acquire any foreign language easily. The premise behind such statement appears to be grounded in the translation and finding out of quick equivalents of mother tongue's linguistic substance in the foreign tongue or second language. A theoretical attempt has been made to translate a sentence of Urdu in English, and discuss, in the light of it, whether it is easy to learn one language from the mastery of another language.

KEYWORDS: Analytic, English, Inflection, Morphological Typology, Mother Tongue, Other Tongue, Synthetic, Urdu, Word Order

INTRODUCTION

Recently a Professor of linguistics made a statement in his keynote address that 'if you have mastery over your mother tongue, you may easily acquire the other tongue' (in the 4th English National Conference, organised by the Department of English, Maulana Azad National Urdu University on 17th February in MANUU Hyderabad). Ever since I listened to this statement I wanted to examine it and see whether it stands in the theoretical argument let alone in experimental verification. I believe that the statement requires some evidence for substantiation. I do not know if he made the statement on the basis of some experiments or it is just an assumption which sometimes gets solidified in our own beliefs.

If we accept that the complete acquisition of mother tongue helps in easy acquisition of foreign tongue, then let us dissect the assumption behind it. The premise seems to be grounded in the translation of mother tongue's words, expressions and sentences in foreign tongue (or other tongue, second language etc.) while learning it. Indeed, it is observable at the lexical level, that is, equivalent words or cognates in foreign tongue of mother tongue can be found out easily, unless there are no cognates for certain words, because of cultural, social, religious, scientific and technological reasons. However, the process of finding similar expressions in meaning for idioms and phrases become somewhat laborious and difficult. Least is left to surmise, if one language does not possess some sounds and the other has those sounds, then the acquisition of sound system itself poses problems, since it is the sounds that we learn first even if we learn a foreign language. For example, /z/ or /zha/, /b/ or /bh/, /g/ or /gh/ and so on, do not or any one of these does not exist in any language, then the learner of the foreign tongue requires learning them necessarily, which is not that easy.

However, here, I would like to draw attention to the sentence conversion aspect from mother tongue to other tongue or foreign tongue.

