

УДК 165.12

Consciousness Reflecting Reality as an Epistemological Basis of the Professional Skills of a Psychologist and a Translator: Theoretical Parallels

Yaroslav V. Sokolovsky*

Siberian Federal University

79 Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk, 660041, Russia

Received 02.11.2015, received in revised form 19.11.2015, accepted 07.12.2015

Alexei N. Leontiev, a famous Russian developmental psychologist and the founder of activity theory, attached great importance to the concept of reflection in psychology. In this article, we intend to show the theoretical relationship between the concept of reflection in modern psychology and the concept of reflection in modern interpreting and translation studies. The stated subject matter of the paper does not seem strange to us, because, as we will show further reflection of the reality of consciousness is the epistemological basis for any conscious human activity. The given parallels between a psychologist and a translator were chosen because they seem to depict the gnoseological power of the philosophical concept of reflection most vividly.

Keywords: translation, interpreting, reflection, mental picture, cognitive studies, translational equivalence, mental image, psychology, linguistics, translation studies, psychologist, reflection of reality.

DOI: 10.17516/1997-1370-2015-8-12-2947-2952.

Research area: philology.

The concept of reflection is a key to theoretical psychology

Alexei N. Leontiev

Equivalence in Translation Entails Reflection

In one of our previous papers (2010) we described the complex nature of the relationship between the original text and translation text. We spoke on the sad fact that the eternal studies on the nature of translation and interpreting aimed

at faithfulness or liberty in translation have got us absolutely nowhere. We also described the problem of translation fidelity as “one of the cornerstones of translation theory and practice”. Today we may stipulate that to a certain extent it is due to the fact that the taxonomic features of translation have not been fully determined yet,

© Siberian Federal University. All rights reserved

* Corresponding author E-mail address: sokol_rus@hotmail.com

which can be proved by dozens of translation definitions (although in the previous paper (2010) we made such an attempt). As soon as a fundamental set of constitutive features of translation activity has been developed we may proceed with the problem of identity between the translated text and the original text. In translation studies it is common knowledge that problem of identity between the translated text and the original text can be attributed to the objective impossibility of translation to convey all information, which is kept in original text. This problem has been studied by all scholars of translation studies for ages.

The concept of reflection has a direct relation to the notion of translation category of correspondence¹. Different categories of correspondence now are an essential part for definitions of translation and interpreting. It partially resulted in a multitude of linguistic frameworks for the notion of translation. Actually few attempts were made to define translation without the category of equivalence. Vagueness and blurriness in definitions of translation do not allow scholars to give a universal linguistic definition of translation, yet provide a definition of good, high quality translation. Meanwhile we are to bear in mind that there is a universal human language behind translation and its original text, therefore the principal foundation for translation is supposed not to rely on any certain translation technique or method, but on the ability to extract the universal human meanings from the discourse of a particular language. As a result, since a scholar fails to formulate general theory, he (she) is doomed to attach all attention to a method he (she) applies, therefore the method starts to act as a theory, which gives us not much explanation about the nature of the processes taking place in reality.

It is apparent that all categories of correspondence (equivalence, adequacy,

isomorphism, etc.) determine the most crucial element of translation – the vector of semiotic transformations, which are being accomplished by the translator (interpreter). Generally speaking, different categories of correspondence refer to different solutions of the problem of identity between the translated text and original text. Describing translation through them brings us to a theoretical room with no doors and windows: equivalence (adequacy, etc.) cannot be defined without the definition of translation; the definition of translation in its turn cannot be defined without the definition of equivalence, adequacy, etc. Consequently, the definition of translation should contain the most general indications for translation and original to be identical, but should not contain any particular descriptors, since we should be free to develop new categories of correspondence, which can provide new (possibly more efficient) solutions for the problem of identity between the translated and original texts.

In our current perspective the notion of equivalence has a clear association with the idea of reflection: when A reflects B it means that A becomes equivalent to B in a certain sense, so the idea behind the translation is that the translator acts as a mirror, which reflects the inverted symbols coded in the text A in a way that it becomes possible to read them as a reflected text B.

Reflection in Consulting

Psychology vs. Reflection in Translation: Evident Gnoseological Similarities

The most prominent Russian scholars of psychology believe that the concept of “reflection” is “a key to theoretical psychology” (Leontiev, 2015). In this regard, Luria wrote (1979): “The analysis of how we construct a clear reflection of reality, as a person reflects the real world in which he (she) lives, and which he (she) receives

as a subjective image of the objective world, is a significant part of the entire contents of psychology”.

A.N. Leontiev stipulates (2015): “Thus, it is becoming increasingly clear that for the visual image to appear is not sufficient, as Herbart once wrote, “just to have an object in front of our eyes”, i.e. we need to have a projection of that image on our retina. It is also necessary to implement the proactive work of the visual system perception, which requires the participation of all the efferent links inside our brain”. A direct analogy, we can observe in the descriptive approach to the pre-translational analysis of texts, for example, in the theory of literary translation (as well as in literary criticism), where scholars actively use the concept of the artistic image (for example, the image of Margarita in Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel “Master and Margarita”, or the image of “Raskolnikov” from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s novel “Crime and Punishment”). This image is formed by different stylistic means (stylistic figures of speech, special techniques, etc.), but in order “to understand” this image and to have it broken down into constitutive elements it is not enough to simply “have the text before your eyes”. At the same time you need to have good knowledge of the original language, knowledge of the original cultural context to which the artistic image ontologically is being translated, etc. In other words, going back to the thought of A.N. Leontiev, that was used at the beginning of this paragraph, you will notice that physiologically and psychologically (and therefore in the speech sense) the reflection is possible only within the correct operation of the internal processing mechanisms of the psyche, otherwise we will be faced with the effect of a distorting mirror: on the mental level, it can indicate certain pathologies and in terms of language it may indicate an incorrect understanding of the original language code by the recipient.

“The theoretical basis of the research is grounded in the psychology of the idea that the phenomena of reality perceived by humans in the structure of activity and communication are displayed in their mind in such a way that this mapping captures the cause and space links of the events and emotions invoked by the perception of these phenomena, and the image of the world changes from one culture to another” (Ufimtseva, 2011: 205-206)

Psychologists and translators both work with what is called the “language consciousness”. A psychologist, based on the reconstructed image of the language consciousness of the client, restores the investigative causal relationships, motives, emotions and desires that drive the client. At the same time, as was noted above, one of the main tasks of a psychologist is a reflection of the situation of the client for the client himself. Epistemologically a translator (interpreter) works in accordance with the same algorithm: based on the reconstructed image of the language consciousness of the client—a native speaker of the original, he performs a cross-language translation (interpreting), which should be equivalent to the original (and a psychologist is supposed to reflect the situation “so that it becomes clear and obvious to his client”). The concept of “language consciousness” can be compared “with the concept of “the image of the world” that exists in the national psychology as “a language picture of the world”, which is represented in the psyche of the individual objective world mediated by substantive values and corresponding cognitive schemes and subjects of the conscious reflection” (Ufimtseva, 2011: 206).

The psyche is the highest form of reflection of reality. An important function of the psychologist-consultant is a reflection of the client’s situation for himself in totality. For example, I.E. Aleshina, a well-known Russian expert in the field of didactics for advisory conversation in psychology

in this regard says: “We, the psychologists, do not give advice, do not prescribe any medication. Our assistance to people is that we talk to them and try to help them to see their own situation from the outside, from a different perspective, and if necessary, on the basis of this to make a decision or to change their behavior” (Psikhologicheskoe konsul ‘tirovanie. Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo, 2014: 460). The language picture of the world of the client helps the therapist to portray the internal image of the world and subjective reality of the individual, his (her) way of structuring the world (Buliubash, 2014: 96)

The gnoseological power of reflection is so enormous, that it is widely applied not only by consulting psychology, but by all other types of applied psychology, including nursing education and practices: “Central to the process is the reliance on reflection to transform attitudes and beliefs of the learner related to knowledge attainment, interpretation and application to a clinical situation. This feature is intended to teach students how to think in meaningful ways that will help them construct knowledge necessary to guide their clinical actions and provide holistic evidence based care” (Regan & Onello, 2013).

Another important feature of the concept of reflection is that nowadays it is widely used in consultative psychology as a specialized technique, and denotes the therapist’s “reflecting” back the client’s words (reading or saying the client’s words back to the client). It is necessary to allow the client to hear for themselves what they have said and evaluate the logic or reasoning behind their own statements.

For example, people often accept things that they have been told since childhood as truth, however when they hear it reflected back to them, they can see the illogic or unfairness of something that they have always accepted as an “evident” fact (Psychology Glossary, 2015).

Conclusion

Leontiev A.N. (2015) believed that when we investigate the active aspect of reflection, we meet many complicating circumstances. However, they cannot conceal the main thing – that the process of reflection is not a mere result of an impact, but is a result of an interaction, i.e. a result of processes taking place as if toward each other. One of them is the process of object impact on the living system; the other is the activity of the system in relation to the impact of the facility. This latter process due to its assimilation with the independent properties of reality results in a reflection of this reality.

Identity is the epistemological purpose of translation. Thus, translation is supposed to search for identity between different languages and cultures. “Identity is an ideal, absolute purpose of the translator’s activity, which is imposed by one of the basic philosophical principles of intellectual and practical activity operating at the level of subconsciousness” (Sokolovskaya, 2011). In other words, fidelity, equivalence, isomorphism, etc. of translation are embodiments of one common category, which can be determined as a gnosiologically generic category, which is supposed to “reflect” the reality coded in the original text.

¹ The term “translation category of correspondence” in our papers traditionally denotes a notion, implying the existence of translation interconnections between the original and translated texts.

References

- Buliubash, I.D. *Ia tebia slyshu. Fenomeny iazyka i rechi v praktike geshtal't-terapevta* [I can hear you. The phenomena of language and speech in the practice of Gestalt therapist]. Samara, Bachrach-M, 2014. 272 p.

Leontiev, A.N. *Poniatie otrazheniia i ego znachenie dlia psikhologii* [The concept of reflection and its importance for psychology]. Available from: <http://www.persev.ru/book/an-leontev-ponyatie-otrazheniya-i-ego-znachenie-dlya-psihologii> (Accessed: September 20, 2015)

Luria, A.R. *Iazyk i soznanie* [Language and consciousness]. Moscow State University Press, 1979. 320 p.

Psikhologicheskoe konsul'tirovanie. Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo [Psychological consultation. A Practical Guide]. Samara, Bachrach-M, 2014. 824 p.

Psychology Glossary. Available from: <http://www.alleydog.com/glossary/definition.php?term=Reflection> (Accessed: October 8th, 2015).

Regan, M. J. & Onello, R. (2013). Knowledge, action and reflection: A theoretically based model for use with high fidelity simulation in nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 3(7), 106-113. DOI: 10.5430/jnep.v3n7p106 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/jnep.v3n7p106>

Sokolovsky, Ya. V. (2010). On the Linguistic Definition of Translation. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 285–292.

Sokolovsky, Ya.V. & Razumovskaya, V.A. *Original and Translation: the Conception of Cognitive Isomorphism (in Literary Text)*. Saarbrücken, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH&Co.KG, 2011.

Sokolovskaya, O.V. & Sokolovsky, Ya.V. (2011). Factors Influencing Translation within the Framework of Language Contacts: on the Interaction between the Russian and Chinese Languages. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(10), 1454–1461.

Ufimtseva, N.V. *Iazykovoie soznanie: dinamika i variativnost* [Language consciousness: the dynamics and variability]. Moscow, Institute of Linguistics of the RAS, 2011. 252 p.

**Отражение реальности сознанием
как гносеологическая основа
профессиональных навыков
психолога и переводчика:
теоретические параллели**

Я.В. Соколовский

*Сибирский федеральный университет
Россия, 660041, Красноярск, пр. Свободный, 79*

А.Н. Леонтьев отмечает, что понятие отражения «является ключевым для теоретической психологии». В данной статье мы намерены показать теоретическое родство понятия отражения в современной психологии с понятием отражения в современном переводоведении. Заявленная тема статьи нам не кажется странной, поскольку, как мы постараемся показать дальше, отражение реальности сознанием выступает гносеологическим базисом для вообще любой сознательной деятельности человека. Приведённые параллели между психологом и переводчиком выбраны потому, что автор более подробно знаком с существом вопроса в данном конкретном случае.

Ключевые слова: перевод, устный перевод, отражение, мысленная картина, когнитивные исследования, поступательные эквивалентности, мысленный образ, психология, лингвистика, переводоведение, психолог, отражение действительности.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.
