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Cultural Value of Classical Languages at Siberian Federal University

Anna A. Makhonina*

*Siberian Federal University
82a Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk, 660041 Russia¹*

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The problem of university liberal education is particularly acute today, for it is caused by the necessity for formation, cultivation, and strengthening of value system, intellectual and world view foundations. The problematic field is formed by all the elements of liberal education, in particular, its fundamental branch called «classical education». In the article, there is a consideration of the problem of liberal education in teaching of classical languages at Siberian Federal University today.

Keywords: classical languages, liberal education, linguistic relativity theory, lingual picture of the world, Standard Average European language (SAE), culture.

Point

The world-view problem implying research on formation of a model of the world and ideas of the place of a human being in the world is one of the cardinal problems of liberal education. Weltanschauung finds its explication, conceptualization, and maintenance in a language which forms a lingual model of the world. The learning of languages doesn't only introduce into one or another lingual system, but also into culture as a whole, which allows us to comprehend the «glass» through which the bearers of a language could look at the world. The interdependence of structure of a language and a model of the world, specific features of conscience and thinking is one of the most important problems of ethnolinguistic studies, in Sapir-Whorf's linguistic relativity theory in particular in the 20th century.

Linguistic relativity theory was offered by Frans Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Whorf,

the founders of ethnolinguistics originating out of Wilhelm von Humboldt's views, who saw externalization of cultural ideas of speakers in a language. However, unlike W. von Humboldt, who thought that the differences in models of the world fixed in a concrete lingual system are determined by the level of development of its speakers, linguistic relativity theory of F. Boas, E. Sapir, and B. Whorf is based on the proposition of biological, intellectual, lingual, and accordingly cultural equality of the whole humankind.

«Linguistic relativity» term was applied by B. Whorf by analogy with Albert Einstein's relativity principle. «Linguistic relativity» concept implies the principle suggesting that differences in lingual structures become the cause of differences in perception and comprehension of the world, for grammatical order of a language determines specific character of analysis and description of a concrete reality.

* Corresponding author E-mail address: askalon_@mail.ru

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But at the same time, formation and development of a language are based on the reality inside which a concrete culture exists, and that reality is far from being the same in conscience of European, Indian or Pacific peoples. According to Edward Sapir, a language is a system strictly organized; its components (grammar, lexis, and phonetics) co-exist strictly hierarchized. That hierarchy has its own specific inner laws, due to which it is impossible to project a system of some language into the other without simultaneous deformation of the content of components of a lingual system. E. Sapir termed this phenomenon «incommensurability» of languages, which implies differences both in lingual fixation of the content of cultural experience and distinctions in specific comprehension and perception of reality carried out by a native speaker. E. Sapir remarks in the article «Scientific status of linguistics» (1928): «To a considerable degree, the «real world» is unconsciously built upon lingual customs of one or another social group. Two different languages are never alike so much they could be considered to be the means of expression of one and the same social reality... We can see, hear and generally perceive outward things in this way, no otherwise, mainly due to our choice, being interpreted, is predetermined by lingual customs of our society» [6]. Thus, from the point of the theory being under consideration, grammatical, lexical, and phonetic structures of a language and their correlations determine specific features of conscience, perception of the world, way of thinking, and culture of a concrete nationality as a native speaker.

But translation from one language into another and hermeneutic intromission into the circle of notions and ideas of other cultures are possible to a certain degree, subject to the one universal system of ideas attributed to the whole humankind being available. The more lingual systems similar to each other, the more similar

models of the world. Thereby the inconsiderable divergences between European languages pointed out by B. Whorf allow him to group those languages as «Standard Average European» (SAE). Their grouping is based on their belonging to the big family of Indo-European languages and to the one primary pre-Indo-European language, which became the base of formation of the ancient languages including Greek and Latin with classical language status.

Greek and Latin became something like «matrix» of European languages and culture. Europe today (its conscience, history, languages, and culture) is its ancient cultural and lingual roots. Carl Jaspers notices in his work «Power and the masses»: «Antiquity gave the real base of what we are as European people. The idea of education was first accomplished and conceived in Greece, the same way it's been applied by everyone realizing it since then. All the great rises of human being transpired in Europe by contact and dissociation from antiquity. When everyone forgot of antiquity, there came Barbarism... Antiquity is our soil, though it constantly changes» [1].

Thereby Greek and Latin are essential elements of the program of liberal (classical) education. The idea of education involves formation of some image and world-view, spiritual and intellectual core of a person. «Classical» notion means «exemplary», i.e. built on models. Classical education consequently implies the process of formation of a certain system of modeled images based on samples. The study of classical samples (texts of philosophers, poets, historians, and orators written in their native ancient language) makes not only comprehension and formation of world-view grounds attributed to European culture but also develops broad and universal mind and profoundness. «... that one who learned Greek and Latin early in his life, read classics, philosophers and historians, mastered

mathematics, and studied Bible and a few of the greatest poets of his nation, is distinguished by peace, which, in its eternal mobility and openness, gives profound content and makes everything accessible» [1].

If, according to linguistic relativity theory, a lingual system structures perception, conscience and thought, there comes up a question about specific features of conscience classical languages can form.

As for Latin, it undoubtedly has pronounced classificatory character and allows things, phenomena, and actions, as well as the borders between them, be clearly defined and distinguished. The classificatory character is displayed in a highly inflective nature of the language and strict grammatical agreement between words. The system of tenses including three types of the pasts (Imperfectum, Perfectum, and Plusquamperfectum), two types of the futures (Futurum I and Futurum II) and even infinitive tense forms makes precise orienting point and hierarchy of temporal sequence of events and actions. History as one of the most ancient science and chronology become a pillar of the world view of Roman and European civilizations. Accordingly, Roman culture passed a special attitude towards time over to European conscience and culture. Such an attitude involves the process of continual dissolution of temporal reality where a moment, a unique event, and an action become some fundamental points. This process consists of constant analysis, comparison, and detection of essential and unessential qualities, cause and effects, and system relations; it also lies in the idea of the world as a stable complex and integral system. All of this favours formation of rational way of thinking and attitude to the world.

Grammatical agreement and structure of classical Latin sentence (each member of a sentence has its own fixed position in the whole order) are able to engender the principle of system

organization in outlook sphere and order of the Universe, society, and human inner life. If we assume an analogy, the implementation of such a principle can be the Roman society, where law is the keystone laconically and distinctly determining the place and significance of everyone. Such a system can form feeling of clearness, definiteness, stability, and might – those are the features of the Roman state at prosperous era. The eurhythmy of the ancient hexameter written in Latin always seeks for balance and perfection like Roman law finds its own perfection and justness. These features of lingual and cultural system of ancient Rome bring to formation of idea of a citizen as a patriot of one's own country when all the actions are determined by patriotism and law. In some periods of European history, when some state rose and expanded, there was a turn to classical basis laid by Roman culture and language in art, education, policy, and some other spheres of social life. During the whole history of Europe, all of the states with empire status started with classical traditions and more or less repeated the way of the Roman Empire. The language of classicism engendered by Roman culture and Latin language is able to posit a state as the empire and some element chosen by God.

We should remark that classical education is able to bring some firm element in personal and social spheres and aids to find firm grounds. It was not without reason that educational system of Russian Empire provided upbringing of patriotic mind on the basis of classical education. The supporters of classical education in Russia (Tolstoy D.A., Katkov M.) pointed out that in spite of all its «minuses» (for example, isolation from life and practice, unprogressiveness), it promotes development of strict logic of thinking, flexibility of mind and ratio, serious relation to knowledge, and firmness of convictions. Learning of classic languages and antique legacy brings not to «broadwise» movement as smattering, cram,

and ignorance in point of fact, but to «inward» movement displayed in aspiration for essence of things. Thereby any action of a person classically educated involves profoundness. Classical education is to form a personality as wholeness and as some piece of art classically perfect and accomplished.

As for state and political sphere, classical education implies formation of conscience of citizen and patriot and favours social order and stability. In opinion of the supporters of classical education, a revolution or a coup d'état is more difficult to carry out in the society where a large part of citizens are classically educated; such a society is resistant to foreign influence. Therefore there is a great need in classical education for political, social, and inner life in the times of troubles and instability. Classical education is able to form those individual and social features, which allow a state to survive in crisis periods.

Classical languages and ancient culture on the whole as roots of European culture determine all the spheres of human being and cognition: that is the language of philosophy and law, economy and policy, science, art, and religion. Knowledge of language and ancient culture is a precondition of a dialogue of cultures throughout European area in the modern globalizing world. Ancient classical languages as «Standard Average European» and one cultural «matrix» have potential for solution of the problem of intercultural relations and globalization of lingual and cultural spheres of European world.

In this connection, teaching of classical languages at university remains not only homage to the tradition, but a real necessity brought about by the problem of cultural interrelations and understanding between the countries of European world. This necessity is realized in Siberian Federal University; its potential allows the university to keep up with the international standards.

Example

«Classical languages» and «Ancient languages» courses are the elements of the training program for specialists and bachelors of «Art history» and «Culture studies» specialities at Art History and Theory and Culture Studies department, Institute of Humanities, Siberian Federal University.

These courses imply a plunge into lingual, historical, and cultural space of Ancient Roman civilization as the greatest successor of Ancient Greek culture and historical and cultural founder of European world at present. Ancient Roman culture and history studies as well as the learning of ancient languages help understanding of economic, political, and cultural processes taking place not only in the past, but at present. The plunge into language, history, and culture of Ancient Rome is carried out both through study of primary sources (original texts written by Roman classics) and the texts adapted for a certain contexts, which helps the students to get acquainted with geography, historical events, and mythology of Ancient Rome. The lessons dealing with poetry readings promote the level of aesthetic perception of the Latin language and consequently intellectual and aesthetic development of a person. Therefore the chief aim of these courses includes acquirement of basic skills in reading and translation of original sources, learning of the required vocabulary, orientation in lingual space of a text, and consequently the idea of the Ancient Roman model of the world and world view. But the accomplishment of the aim demands multistage work.

The main part of a lesson is dedicated to the acquirement of grammar and reading skills as a compulsory basis, for the students usually don't have the required training before the courses start. At this stage of work, the most important thing is to make the students be interested in the language and motivated to learn further. Practice

shows that comparative linguistics helps a lot here. As far as both Latin and European languages are from the large Indo-European family, that allows the students to carry out very interesting linguistic investigations, to make etymological chains dealing with the problem of origin and development of a word and word-groups in Latin, Russian, and European languages, and to assimilate knowledge at grammar through comparison of the grammatical systems of Latin and European languages. In this connection, the students of culture studies speciality make an offer to devote some course time to cultural and linguistic investigations dealing with comparative analysis of lingual and cultural spaces of some ancient languages of Indo-European origin (Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Old Slavonic). For this reason, there appears a prospect of enlargement and development of new courses intended for formation of holistic idea of cultural and historical space of European civilization.

The courses are of practical character, and for this reason, study of Latin grammatical system is accompanied with development of skills in work with structure of a sentence and text as a whole. The students learn writing dictations, compositions, dialogues and speaking «the dead language». Keeping up of knowledge at lexicon, grammar, learning and the use of Latin winged words are of great importance at this stage of work. The appliance of interactive and creative elements can bring to some new interesting and perspective forms of learning the ancient language. For instance, there was an experiment in one of the last winter terms when students of Art History and Theory department tried to script for the scene presented in Latin. The spectacle consisted of a few mini-scenes as some original «sketches»; each one demanded its own space, and the spectator (the teacher and some other students) had to move in the University building according to one or another part of the spectacle.

The beginning sounded as though as traditional greeting to the teacher: «Ave, Caesar, morituri te salutant!» – and that gave some both ceremonial and humorous air. Then there followed the «sketch» of mediaeval priest ritually initiating the spectator with the Latin words such as: «Memento mori! Memento, quia pulvis es!» and «Absolvo te! Pax tecum! In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti!» After that there was a scene with the «Muses» who narrated about the nature of art in Latin. The following move-on let the spectator find himself in the space of «mediaeval university» where the young magisters dressed in black robes and hats were going on with their «lectures» in Latin, now about science, medicine, and man (e.g. «Litterarum radices amarae, fructus dulces sunt», «Medice, cura te ipsum!», etc.). The spectator followed one of the «students» of the «mediaeval university» and found himself in the «mediaeval tavern» where one of the most favourite songs of the mediaeval vagrant students, poets, and musicians «In Taberna» was sung. Then there was the student hymn «Gaudeamus» sung by the whole group in the end. Thus, an ordinary procedure of passing examination turned out to be some kind of enjoyment and fun both for the students (who received their fine marks) and for the teacher. And such a form awoke keen interest on the part of students.

The last part of a lesson consists of active acquirement of skills in reading and translation of Latin texts, learning of Latin winged words by heart (it can be also the beginning of a lesson), and acquirement of knowledge about history and culture of ancient Rome and mediaeval Europe; the students write their essays and prepare reports. The texts for reading and oral and written translation are selected on the basis of the grammatical materials being under study at that moment. This part of work is the most difficult stage for the students but only at this stage there is a real plunge into lingual space and

development of skills in contextual translation, making of a sentence, logical explication of thoughts, and perfection of speech. As it turns out, the very topics connected with mythology, religion, history, and culture of ancient Rome and Middle Ages often appear to be a new interesting material for the students. It is very difficult to avoid gradual turning of the teaching and learning of Latin into boring and routine process, that's why it is necessary to change the kinds of activity and tasks at the proper time. For example, after such sentence as «Civis verus patriam suam amat et defendit» is read and translated, we can ask the students: «How can you put in Latin «You must love your parents and motherland»? or «I love my motherland, parents, friends, dog, and cat», etc (the latter often brings about laugh and, consequently, will to think over the sentence and translate it). Such method allows student's attention to be attracted and the grammar and lexical materials to be repeated. The other method to draw attention to a text is some kind of «deviations» and interesting remarks about some interesting facts unknown to the audience. Such a cognitive «deviation» made by a lecturer allows the students to react actively: curiosity and questions can be aroused, as well as a wish to discuss and argue. In this case, the most important factor is the lecture's erudition and knowledge of measure, which are to give the logical finish to discussion and to return to the main subject on the one hand, and on the other – to arouse and support the wish for asking questions and search for the answers and knowledge. For instance, a point of art history students' interest was so called «Black Stone» at one of the Latin lessons. The very designation of the Stone sounded like something mysterious to the students. The interest wasn't reduced at the moment the students found out that the stele with inscriptions in ancient Latin signed some hero's burial place, perhaps, that one of Romulus, one of

the founders of Rome. Then the students' request for translation of the ancient Latin inscriptions made in the stele at Forum Romanum followed while the Latinists have been deciphering them up to now.

Finally, variance in topics is also a very effective method of stimulation of acquirement of skills in reading and translation of Latin texts. Sometimes there are some hours when the students are proposed short humorous stories, fairy-tales, fables, verses, and songs. The plot here stimulates a student to read the whole text up to its end and learn the lexical minimum. It is very important that such texts are to use the studied grammar materials actively and preparation for the tasks connected with answers to questions and retelling in Latin. Creative approach of the lecturer picking over, correcting, translating, and creating texts and materials for the course is undoubtedly of great importance in this case, for it is to keep up interest and activity in learning of the Latin language and culture. For instance, there is a special interest in the lesson where the students deal with psychological portraits described in Latin. Such a lesson is very useful to be held as a role game. The adapted fragments and original extracts from «Characters» book written by Theophrastus can be the basis of the text materials. The students get the required lexical minimum in cards or copies. Then someone gives a brief description of the character of any person of his group using the learned grammatical materials and words. He tells in Latin what his fellow likes to do or what he doesn't like, his features, manners, movements, and so on (here the teacher can give such a task: for example, the students should avoid simplifications, but they might use participles and participial constructions, which were the grammatical subject matter of the previous lessons). The others try to guess who is the person described. Another variant of the game can be reading and translation of

horoscopes made for the students of the group. The students generally are very active in working with new grammatical materials and doing the suggested tasks at such lessons. In practice, such lessons occasionally «interspersed» in a term considerably stimulate the process of learning of the language and give an influx of creative power and interest in study.

We should point out «Lingua Latina. Introduction to the Latin language and ancient culture» textbook worked out by A.V. Podosinov and N.I. Schaveleva and internet sources (one of the most important is Ilya Frank's multi-lingual project) as the fundamental basis for the materials prepared by a teacher.

Role playing lessons are of special importance for the course. But they also require active doing home tasks and responsibility of the students. Game elements as an effective method of «attention switch» are better to be used in the last part of a lesson after grammatical and fixative practical parts. For example, the game, which helps to fix knowledge at the Latin winged words (its symbolic name is «Oedipus and Sphinx»), involves the following operations: a student group is divided into two teams; each gives itself Latin name and chooses its Latin motto. A representative of one team selects a representative of the other team and asks him any winged word in Russian while the chosen representative is to answer it in Latin. If a winged word is pronounced right, the turn to ask is passed to the respondent, who, in his turn, asks his own Latin winged word. A team loses its turn if someone answers incorrect or pronounces badly the required Latin winged word. All the answers are scored, and the game generally proceeds quite actively and quickly, for teams' knowledge and «weak links» are revealed almost at once. At the same time, the game is some kind of concealed form of control of students' knowledge and skills. There can be an element of variety in the game, for instance,

instead of scorekeeping (10-12 scores), a teacher can propose any long Latin word unknown to the students; the word can consist of 10-12 letters the students are to find out. The alternative of this task can be rebuses, riddles, and crossword puzzles made in Latin and inquiring students' erudition and general knowledge of mythology, religion, history, and culture of the ancient and mediaeval worlds.

As an example of special game task, the students of art history department are suggested that they should search and select reproductions of paintings, graphics, sculptures, architecture, and arts and crafts, where the elements of the Latin language are used (for instance, the text explaining the subject of a piece of art (e.g. «Noli me tangere»), the inscriptions defining ownership (e.g. fibula), donative and dedicatory texts, etc.).

This kind of tasks involves consideration of works of art of millenary period: Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Classicism of the 17th and 18th centuries, and even works of art of the 20th century. Decipher and translations of the descriptions as parts of works of art become an essential stage of professional art critical analysis of a work of art. As a rule, a Latin inscription often can be some kind of «decipher» of specific aspects of the artistic idea and one of the elements brining a researcher to some new statuses of artistic image.

Thus, for instance, knowledge of the Latin language becomes a powerful methodological instrument of analysis of Dutch and Flemish still life of the 17th century in particular (genre-pieces as well). There are even the works of art where the pictorial elements turned into some specific «ciphered text» of a certain Latin proverb, winged word or aphorism.

There is some kind of interest brought about by New Age aesthetics, which applies the Latin language in some musical compositions; the elements of Neo-Latin also appear in modern

trends of rock music. As a result, Latin is important not only for educational and professional spheres at art history and culture studies but it also reveals itself in one or another «living» form in the present cultural space.

Thus, knowledge of the ancient languages is an aid in work with the vast volume of the works of art in European cultural space, and deciphering and translation of Latin texts obtain especially purposeful character, for knowledge of the bases of the ancient languages are used by the students in practice.

Resume

The classical languages taught in Siberian Federal University today is actualized due to the necessity of perfection of classical education

at humanities and art today, and formation, and development of professional knowledge and skills. A language as the basis of specific character of thinking and world view is able to give orienting points important for life, human, and society as a whole. Such traits as a sense of duty, patriot notion, rational basis of thinking, which the structure of a classical language (e.g. Latin) favours to be developed, always remain necessary in social and individual levels. Besides, the importance of classical education increases in the present globalizing world due to the search for common connections and enlargement of inter-cultural relations in European space, where the ancient classical languages historically remain its cultural and lingual matrix.

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Культурологическое значение классических языков в Сибирском федеральном университете

А.А. Махонина

*Сибирский федеральный университет,
Россия 660041, Красноярск, пр. Свободный 82а*

Проблема университетского гуманитарного образования встает сегодня особенно остро, поскольку вызвана необходимостью формирования, культивирования и укрепления системы ценностей, интеллектуальных и мировоззренческих основ. Проблемное поле создают элементы гуманитарного образования, в частности, той его фундаментальной области, которая называется «классическим образованием». В статье рассматривается проблема гуманитарного образования в области преподавания классических языков в современном Сибирском федеральном университете.

Ключевые слова: классические языки, классическое образование, лингвистическая теория относительности, лингвистическая картина мира, языки средневропейского стандарта, культура.
