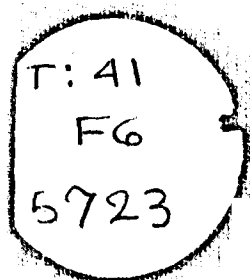


# The Language Medium Question.

*The Relation between Language and Thought as illustrated  
by the experience of teaching through a foreign medium.*

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By C. H. SCHMIDT, M.A., B.Litt. (Oxon).  
Lecturer in Psychology, Grey Univ. College Bloemfontein.



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J. L. VAN SCHAİK, LTD., PRETORIA.

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T: 41

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5723

## SUMMARY OF CONTENTS,

### PART I. DIRECT RELATION.

#### *Chap. I.—The Nature of Language and of Thought.*

A. Language: the arbitrary system of signs and symbols, the most economical and efficient for the representation of thought.

Language is either vocal, graphic or tactual.

Child's inheritance (1) Physical—a capacity for speech.

(2) Social (a) a language.

(b) a system of Relationships (knowledge).

B. Thought: Sensations, perceptions, images and ideas.

Thought implies (1) A want

(2) reproduction of Associations.

(3) A process of selection.

#### *Chap. II.—The Part played by Language in Thought.*

Words have the same function in thought as perceptions, stable-images and gestures. Words largely replace these.

Certain problems arise (1) Is thinking merely the action of language mechanisms? No.

(2) Is there such a thing as an abstract idea, or is it merely a word (Nominalism)? There is an abstract idea.

(3) Can we think without images? This can be taken in two ways, viz.:

(a) can we think using only verbal images (in consciousness)? Yes.

(b) Using no images whatever? A little.

Development of thought largely dependent on Language: compare Helen Keller and Laura Bridgman with Julia Brace.

Bilingualism and Polylingualism. How we can consecutively think in one language at a time.

Use of Mother-tongue and of Other-tongue.

## PART II. INDIRECT RELATION.

### Chap. III.—*The Use of a Foreign Medium affects thought by Affecting:—*

- (1) *Perception.* Words of foreign language not so easily perceived, especially at the beginning. Requires more attention.
- (2) *The strength and Variety of Associations.* Meanings more vague, words not so easily reproduced—See reaction time experiment.
- (3) *Interest and Attention.* Language requires more attention, hence subject-matter gets less—Less interest. See evidence.
- (4) *Fatigue.* Selective activity—the alternation of attention between language and subject-matter causes fatigue—Evidence and experiment.
- (5) *Expression of Thought.* A. Oral—less discussion—fewer questions and answers. B. Written—Essays weaker—less imaginative, less logical, less natural. Evidence and experiment.  
Influence of one language on the other.
- (6) *Rote Learning:* Habit of rote-learning encouraged as a result of the difficulties of comprehension and expression—evidence.
- (7) *The Relation between School and Home.* School associated with foreign medium; home and outside life, which are most real to the child, with the mother-tongue. Hence school less natural—Evidence.
- (8) *Adler's Theory of the Inferiority Complex.*
- (9) *The Spread of Culture.* (1) Graphically—Reading and Writing.  
(2) Orally—Discussion.

In both cases the spread of culture is adversely affected by the use of a foreign medium.

*Chap. IV.—The Motives for Making a Foreign Language the Medium of Instruction.*

- (1) Political—The function of language for a nation-ality. What its replacement would mean.
  - (3) Social
  - (2) Economical
- { Economical and social advantages attached to the use of the foreign medium.
- (4) Educational. (a) Advantages of bilingualism.
  - (b) Different culture requires the language in which it is expressed.
  - (c) Inadequate languages.

*Chap. V.—Method of Replacing the Mother-tongue as Medium, and Conclusion.*

Failure of foreign language medium instruction.

Sometimes it is necessary

How the replacement is accomplished with least harm.

(1) Study of second language—it can be commenced in Infant Class.

Compromise of direct method.

(2) Replacement should be gradual—spread over several years.

Conclusion—short summing up.

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we saw that we had to make use of a foreign medium, that the advantages attached to it outweighed the disadvantages, especially if the replacement was done in the right way. The second language must first be taught by a compromise of the direct method, must gradually and almost imperceptibly replace the mother-tongue as medium. This study has shown us in what way words are connected with ideas; it has shown us how thought is affected by the use of a foreign medium; it has thrown some light on the relation between language and thought.

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Much of my information I have received through  
 correspondence, and by means of Questionnaires. I have  
 also made free use of the information contained in a  
 pamphlet by myself on "Ondersoek na die Waarde van  
 Afrikaans as Medium van Onderwys vir Afrikaans spre-  
 kende Leerlinge."