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## Why Learn a Second Language?

“If you speak English, why bother learning a second language?” This paper did a fantastic job of not only answering the question but delving into the “lens” of a language and the insight each one can offer. As Ansary said, humanity doesn’t have a finite collection of shared meanings. Just as different people have different perspectives, languages have different cultures, experiences, and histories behind them. As such, the nuances of these different subsets of shared experience often can’t be captured through direct translation. Learning a new language doesn’t just expand your vocabulary; it broadens your perspective and worldview.

As someone who is multilingual and speaks a different dialect, I could relate with Ansary about how certain words in one language often can’t be captured by another. I talk to family in Odia, an Indian dialect, and like “qukh,” there are various words in Odia that can’t be perfectly translated into English. A great example of an Odia word with deep roots in the language and state’s culture that is hard to carry to English is “dhanyabaad.” On the surface level, one might directly translate it to “thank you,” but its meaning goes much further beyond that. To me, it means one’s blessings their sharing of the well-wishes of others, reflecting a sense of humility and interconnectedness that isn’t the same as a run-of-the-mill “thank you.” Unlike common English expressions of gratitude, "dhanyabaad" carries a distinctive weight, signifying a more profound acknowledgment of the connection between individuals and their shared moments. It’s

one of many words that offer a lens into the values of Odisha, and it can't really be translated perfectly.

Ansary's anecdote regarding his translation of a *ghazal* also reminded me of the limitations of translation in the scope of another cultural heirloom: literature. In our Summer reading, *Walden*, the author criticized copies of the classics, such as Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, or Virgil's *Aeneid*, into vernacular languages due to the inherent loss of the author's original impression. After reading about how Ansary's *ghazal* went from a sensual sonnet to an unintelligible list of references, I can't help but see the complexity of transferring artistic and linguistic nuances in literature and the intricate challenge of preserving the cultural depth encapsulated in the original words. In my English class last year, we read a variety of world literature, and as such, they were primarily translations. We often read translations of the same piece and found that each version carried its own interpretation, showing how they could often impart the creative license of the translator rather than the author. This wasn't mentioned much in the article, but I think another benefit of learning a new language can be connecting with works of art, such as books and poems, along with people and cultures.

Overall, Ansary's narrative of creating meaning together by crossing the barriers between cultural perspectives through language was a joy to read. As Henry David Thoreau said, "Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?"