

Grammar 3—Thinking in English, Speaking Russian

The Language Generators handed out in class will help you to think and express yourself as Russians do. This is very important. English expressions translated literally into Russian sound awkward and unclear even when it is done correctly. When a beginner tries it, the result can be completely unintelligible. Here are some common examples:

Beginner Thought	Beginner Said	Which Means	Should Have Said
She kissed her husband.	Она поцеловала её мужа.	She kissed that other woman's husband.	Она поцеловала свою мужа.
It's me.	Это меня.	(complete nonsense)	Это я.
Give Masha the pencil.	Дайте Маша карандаш.	Masha, give the pencil.	Дайте Маше карандаш.
Ask a question.	Спроси вопрос.	Ask a question a question.	Задай вопрос.
How to you feel about that?	Как Вы чувствуете об этом.	(complete nonsense)	Как Вы относитесь к этому?
This week we go.	Эта неделя мы пойдём.	This is a week. We go.	В эту неделю мы пойдём.
It (meaning "the dog") came.	Это пришло.	That thing arrived.	Она пришла.

As you can see from the examples above, you cannot speak intelligible Russian by composing English sentences and then replacing the English words with Russian words. The ideas will seldom connect properly.

One reason this happens is that English leaves the cases of nouns vague. If you do not "think" the Russian sentence, you will have no way to supply the correct cases and will have to guess. This leads to absurd utterances such as the following:

Beginner Thought	Beginner Said	Which Means	Should Have Said
We drive to the Kingdom Hall.	Мы ездим в Зале Царства.	We drive around inside the Kingdom Hall.	Мы ездим в Зал Царства.
I love ice cream more than my wife does.	Я люблю мороженное больше чем жену.	I love ice cream more than I love my wife.	Я люблю мороженное больше чем жена.

So try not to use English sentences as a pattern when speaking Russian. Adapt the Russian sentences which you learn from the language generators and dialogs.

Another good source of sentences to learn is the weekly *Watchtower* lessons. Read as much as you can of each lesson in Russian. Even if you have to use the English edition at home to help you prepare, follow along in the Russian edition at the meetings. Have it underlined. Write the meanings of important unfamiliar words in the margins. When you comment, look at the Russian text where you will see the correct words and phrases for discussing the theme. Use them in your comments.