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## INTRODUCING TRANSLATION SKILLS TO LEVEL 200 STUDENTS OF RUSSIAN: A CASE STUDY UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

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The paper examines the steps to introduce basic translation skills to level 200 students of Russian. It adopts the teacher-student centered approach and employs the theory of equivalence at a superficial level to achieve the intended goal. The aim of the paper is to enhance on students' language proficiency while at the same time introducing translation skills at the intermediate level.

The study is designed to equip students with basic translation skills. It aims at strengthening students' bilingual competence at the level of written translation as our priority and then oral translation otherwise known as interpretation. It points to the fundamental ingredients needed to be acquired before embarking on the translation task. Main research questions are: a) the steps to introduce and strengthen translation skills to level 200 students of Russian; 2) identifying basic language principles required to do proper translation; 3) relating language to the immediate realities of the student in the introduction process.

Based on the experience of introducing basic translation skills to level 200 students of Russian at the University of Ghana, it was concluded that the teacher and student centered approaches are employed to produce acceptable and genuine results.

**Key words:** Introducing, translation, skills, level 200 (intermediate), students, Russian, English, words, method

In the University of Ghana translation studies were initially introduced at level 300. The assumption being the fact that students might have acquired sufficient knowledge in the Russian and other foreign languages. Whereas this assumption could be true, there is no established principle that prevents the introduction of translation skills to level 200 students of Russian. Students have not reached the level as stated by Bloomfield [2] and Halliday, McIntosh, Strevens [7], that bilingual is when an individual can use the two languages in question, in such a way that, the individual could be considered as a native. The students' level could be related to the position of Haugen [8], Apel, Muysken [1] which maintains that as a prerequisite to attain the level of a bilingual, one should be able to read, write, listen and speak. On the basis of their bilingual competence, they will be able to distinguish between source language (SL) text and translated text. The grounds would be fertile to acquire translation skills.

***The background to the introduction of translation skills.*** Non-Russian speaking students are admitted to level 100. The same process applies to Spanish, Chinese, and in some cases Arabic.

The primary responsibility of the language instructor in Russian is to teach students the Russian alphabet. When students are well grounded in the knowledge of the alphabet, they are taught basic Russian words. The under-listed are the examples of words they are introduced to.

GROUP A: Сегодня — Today; Вчера — Yesterday; Сейчас — Now, At the moment; Днём — In the daytime; Вечером — In the evening; Ночь — Night; Погода — Weather; Дождь — Rain.

VERBS: Идти; Слушать; Кушать; Завтракать; Обедать; Ужинать; Жить.

GROUP B: Дети — Children; Мать — Mother; Отец — Father; Дедушка — Grandfather; Бабушка — Grandmother; Дом — House; Вода — Water; Книга — Book; Человек — Person; Школа — School; Магазин — Shop; Ручка — Pen; Карандаш — Pencil; Телевизор — Television; Пассажир — Passenger; Студент — Student (Boy/Male); Студентка — Student (Girl/Female); Преподаватель — Teacher; Столовая — Restaurant.

The words in groups A, B and C are words that are linked with the language reality of the students' life. It is also on the premises that "meaning arises from embodied interaction in the world" [12. P. 21]. Students in their local and English language understand the meaning of the words in the various groups. At level 100, students of Russian have a mental picture of what these words denote. Students will not need to carve out a new meaning from the already existing meaning. What is required of the instructor is to give an interpretation of the Russian words in the English language. Once students have the potential to identify Russian words at level 100, understand them, it is left with the instructor to teach students the meaning in the Russian language through the English language. There are cases where the instructor can employ audio-visual aids and demonstrations to avoid translation. In any case, the students have a mental picture and even if the instructor does not provide an interpretation, students are able to transfer the meaning to the English language. At this level, students have been ushered into the translation process. The teaching of the language basically at this level thrives on interpretation.

There is a meaningful relationship between the words in Russian and English. It is evident that translation is an integral part of the teaching and study of foreign languages. This part of the paper serves as bedrock to the introduction of translation skills to level 200 students of Russian. The background is that students have the basic understanding of the words that have been used as examples. This section is seen as a transition to the real introduction of translation skills to level 200 students of Russian. The teaching method used is basically teacher-centered.

***Strengthening and increasing students lexical range.*** A smooth translation also depends on students 'lexical bank' or lexical reserve, what Russians will call "Лексический запас". The method used in this segment of the study is teacher or instructor centered approach.

Simple expressions are given with their translations. These expressions are not beyond the students' intellectual scope. Experience has shown that students are not likely to learn new words on their own when it comes to the study of foreign languages with special reference to Russian.

Some phrases given with translation:

- 1) Я хочу взять интервью у Виктора — I would like to interview Victor;
- 2) Прежде всего — First of all;
- 3) В конце XX века — At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or At the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century;

- 4) Я пенсионер, коренной москвич — I am a pensioner, a native of Moscow;
- 5) Недавно был день независимости России — Recently there was Russian Independence Day;
- 6) Курсы валют с 15ого марта — The exchange rate from the 15<sup>th</sup> of March;
- 7) Компания продолжает диктовать свои условия — The company continues to dictate its conditions;
- 8) Какие функции выполняет отец? — What are the functions performed by a father?
- 9) Условия для развития бизнеса создает государство — The conditions for the development of business are created by the state.

The instructor must show some competence in the translation process. The examples given to the students indicate to the students that adequately translated items are before them. They are to study the examples given and based on that, attempt to perform a similar translation.

A model has been given to the students and for that matter translation skills have been “injected” into the students at this level. Once this idea has been inculcated into students, even without detailed notes on translation studies, students will be eligible to translate simple sentences on their own. At this level, it will not be possible to include words from different disciplines. Efforts are made however to mention some key words and use them in the formation of sentences. Words like; анкета, ключ, врач, зал, прекрасно, космос, бумага, площадь, интересный, спектакль.

Strengthening the students’ lexical range enhances students’ preparation to translate some basic sentences, phrases into the English language. Though, while students are dealing with the Russian language at the level of monolingual, it aims at establishing a meaningful relationship between the Russian and the English. Unintentionally, students will be cultivating first, the habit of gaining mastery over the Russian language, which will serve as a transition to a stage where students’ bilingual competence could be tested. Students have already mastered to a greater extent the more complex constructions in Russian which are alien to them. Students will be able to make a good construction in the English language.

The other approach is the use of audio-visual aids. This has the potential of first intensifying students’ interest in the learning of the Russian and secondly, it helps increase students vocabulary and communicative competence. The language model that these programmes present presupposes that students have adequate knowledge of the Russian language.

***The basis for the introduction through interaction with students.*** A lecturer’s interaction with students learning a foreign language is very vital. The lecturer has the responsibility to promote a classroom environment that is inviting and encourages students to be engaged in “their own learning” [5. P. 389].

In the teaching of the Russian language in an environment where the English language dominates, a poor student-lecturer relationship could have a negative impact on the study of a language that is totally foreign to students [13].

Based on the fact that students have the fundamental knowledge in the Russian language at level 200, learning at this level is student-lecturer centered, the results from

learning activities is co-produced by the lecturer and the student [11. P. 262]. The interaction took place between the instructor and forty-two level 200 students of Russian. Students have acquired fundamental knowledge in the Russian language at level 100.

The interaction with the students on the basis of the knowledge acquired previously puts the lecturer or instructor in a position that requires of him to speak fast. It is imperative on the part of the instructor to adopt the usage-based approach in his interaction. This approach has been associated with language learning by some cognitive linguists [4]. The instructor must be abided with the sense that language use is linked directly with language-based events. The old and new uses of the words are contextualized-based. The choice of linguistic forms occurs in the context of communication [9]. The interaction takes different forms.

**First stage** of interaction:

- 1) Что это такое? (Instructor) — Это ручка. (Student);
- 2) Какой сегодня день? (Instructor) — Сегодня пятница. (Student);
- 3) Кто это? (Instructor) — Это Давид. (Student);
- 4) Что это такое? (Instructor) — Это окно. (Student).

The **second stage** of the interaction is to allow students to answer the questions in the English language. The responses must be: 1) It is a pen, 2) Today is Friday, 3) This is David, 4) It is a window.

At **third stage of interaction**, simple English phrases and sentences are spoken and students respond in the Russian language.

1. This is my friend. His name is Kofi. — Это мой друг. Его зовут Кофи.
2. This is my girlfriend. Her name is Janet. — Это моя подруга. Её зовут Жанет.
3. У меня красный карандаш. — I have a red pencil.
4. Is Kwame a student? No, he is not a student, he is a medical doctor. — Кваме студент? Нет, он не студент, он врач.
5. Is it your book? No, it is not. — Это твоя книга? Нет, не моя.

**The results of the interaction.** Out of the 42 students, 30 students responded correctly in the Russian language, with regards to the first stage of interaction. Seven students responded correctly in Russian except that the pronunciation was not standard. This was detected after a one-to-one interaction. Five students performed averagely in the response. They were slow and lacked confidence. The lack of confidence explains that their knowledge in basic Russian is lower than the rest of the class. They got the response wrong and the pronunciation was far removed from the Russian intonation.

With regards to the second stage of interaction, thirty-seven students responded correctly in the English language except for the five students. At the third stage of interaction, twenty students got all the answers correctly in the Russian language. 13 of the students got three of the answers correctly, four students got two of the answers correctly, one student got one of the questions correctly and four students got none of them correctly.

This exercise gave three defining characteristics of the students. Very good students, good students, average students and below average students in terms of the acquisition of the Russian language at the basic and the early intermediate levels.

Level 200 students are considered intermediate. Nevertheless, some students at this level still lack basic understanding of simple expressions in the Russian language. The

lack of understanding of the basic expressions leads to poor communication and inability to translate into the receptor language, which is the English language.

At the stage of interaction, attention was paid to the students' immediate environment to conform to Goldberg's "principle of sieve encoding hypothesis" [6]. She opines that synthetic and morphological patterns displayed in sentences are not abstract that springs from some mysterious principle, they should rather be seen as meaningful patterns that stem from general human interaction, experience and communicative needs. Students have an idea of the Russian language. The instructor who interacts with the students, presuming that the students have a mental picture of what the speaker presents for their responses and reaction, has the duty to draw the students' attention.

**Conclusion.** Translation becomes a vital component in the teaching and learning of any foreign language. The introduction of translation skills to level 200 students of Russian is an imperative within the framework of foreign language teaching with special reference to Russian.

The teacher and student centered approaches are employed to produce acceptable and genuine results. Students are led through the introduction process in stages to help them grasp the concept of translation and to develop the skills systematically.

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## **ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ НАВЫКОВ ПЕРЕВОДА У СТУДЕНТОВ СО СРЕДНИМ УРОВНЕМ ВЛАДЕНИЯ РУССКИМ ЯЗЫКОМ: АНАЛИЗ ОПЫТА УНИВЕРСИТЕТА ГАНЫ**

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В статье рассматриваются начальные этапы формирования основных навыков перевода у студентов со средним уровнем владения русским языком (уровень 200). Для достижения цели применяется «учитель—ученик»-ориентированный подход и основы теории эквивалентности. Целью работы является повышение уровня владения языком одновременно с формированием навыков перевода у студентов среднего уровня (*intermediate*), изучающих русский язык в университете Ганы.

Исследование организовано так, чтобы сформировать у студентов основные навыки перевода. Основная цель — развитие двуязычной компетенции, прежде всего, на уровне письменного, а затем и устного перевода. Рассмотрены основные навыки, без овладения которыми невозможно приступить к обучению переводу.

Основные исследовательские задачи: 1) рассмотреть начальные этапы формирования и развития навыков перевода у студентов со средним уровнем владения русским языком; 2) определить основные языковые навыки, необходимые для того, чтобы выполнить правильный перевод; 3) подобрать языковой материал, связанный с реальной студенческой жизнью, для облегчения процесса формирования навыков перевода.

На основе опыта формирования основных навыков перевода у студентов среднего уровня владения русским языком, обучающихся в Университете Ганы, сделан вывод о том, что использование «учитель—ученик»-ориентированного подхода позволяет получить приемлемые результаты.

**Ключевые слова:** формирование, перевод, навыки, уровень 200 (средний уровень), студенты, русский язык, английский язык, метод