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## **Developing English speaking skills through written**

**Lela Bolkvadze**

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,  
Tbilisi, Georgia

Email: [bolkvadze.lela@yahoo.com](mailto:bolkvadze.lela@yahoo.com)

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**Lela Bolkvadze**

*Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi Georgia*

## **Developing English speaking skills through written translation**

### **ABSTRACT**

The article deals with problems of acquiring English speaking skills by adult learners and represents an attempt to determine the influence of written speech on the development of oral speech and define the role of translation in this process, based on which some new approaches can be formed both for teaching as well as learning processes to promote independence. In addressing these issues, the article focuses on issues of language learning, teaching, developing fluency through written translation and delves into the roots of the term bilingualism to come to satisfactory solutions. The aim of this article is to present the two facets of using translation for educational purposes and try to demystify the way teachers and learners should follow. The scholarly references I cite in this article span quite a long period because the problem has a long history, not yet solved, and some older perspectives are just beginning to reappear in a new light.

**Keywords:** *bilingualism, translation, automaticity, fluency, cognition*

### **Introduction**

Whether it be in personal relationships, business or social communications, more than half of the people can speak more than one language in all types of societies. Many challenges come with this ostensible process and acquisition of speaking skill itself. Despite the numerous material and experiences that have been accumulated on this topic, there is no one solution to the problem and there still is a need to redefine approaches to the development of speaking skills. Also many myths exist about bilingualism that makes the problem even more complicated. What is the actual meaning of bilingualism? Does it imply one is fluent in two languages, that one equally shares two cultures or starts to see the world as two people? To tackle the common misconceptions for better understanding of the true nature of the intricate issue of fluency we have to take a closer look at all the things that may affect but at the same time not lose sight of the big picture. The things which have to be observed and reexamined are language processing, cognition, peculiarities of bilingual brain, audio-visual integration

in oral performance, the processing of decontextualized words and how they are processed in context to ensure overall coherence, cognitive architecture that subserves language processing and the cognitive basis of bilingualism. It does seem excessively overstated with regard to just making minor adjustments in curriculum, but defining what role should be given to students' first language may help teachers to teach effectively in diverse contexts.

### **Natural influences**

The English language has become the main lingua franca of social interactions, education, trade and culture. The conscious desire of learning languages increases in adulthood but chances of acquiring it decrease and constant questions are heard from learners what they can do to be able to use at least what they already know in an unplanned conversation. A number of problems hinder their success like a lack of practice, peculiarities of adulthood, undefined approaches etc. and the solutions we all would like to have are missing and their speaking skills and generally productive skills stay far behind their receptive skills and have problems in adopting strategic competence, which means to use language without fear. (*The term "fear" belongs to psycholinguist Iva Mindadze and the concept of "strategic competence" is introduced by linguist Scott Thornbury*).

Quite a large number of scientists mention the problem, but as we have noted, these issues have not been studied to the full, which is demonstrated by the unsolved practical problems that our learners still have in terms of acquiring speaking skills. As the act of speaking as well as learning is one of the models of human behavior, it seems reasonable to rely on and draw data from psychology and psycholinguistics as well as Andragogy.

Noam Chomsky says that "Language is a tool for thought" (Chomsky, 2002, p.11) and if we agree with that we can assume that the development of written speech can leave a significant positive trace on the development of oral speech and therefore, can be used as an educational tool in a teaching/learning process as people continuously think while writing through linguistic units and the process of constantly thinking leads to much needed automaticity which is in accordance with Thornbury's three-stage model according to which the activity of speaking consists of: conceptualization, formulation and articulation where a speaker observes one's own speech (Thornbury, 2002, p.75). Here the third stage can be replaced by creating a text, making recordings instead of the articulation stage. This can be converted into one of the means of achieving automaticity as without this feature a speaking process is glitchy and with significant flaws in the absence of practical speaking situations and creating additional scaffold for learners to promote them to the next level of fluency is

greatly to their benefit especially in countries like Georgia where frequent direct communication is less of a chance.

### **Gains and losses of using translation**

There are contradictory opinions about the need of using translation in teaching process and it is truly a very difficult task to determine its practical affect on educational purposes as claims which different scientists make are mutually exclusive. It should be noted that in recent times using translation has been less popular than a widely used direct method and methods derived from it. It doesn't seem detrimental to raise this issue once again because unequivocally effective approaches do not appear and still need to be the object of study.

Scott Thornbury says if a learner uses a translation to find the equivalent of the word, they will become dependent on getting the meaning this way and will only be able to implement this process in mind only through translation (Thornbury, 2008, p.46) but at the same time he says in another discussion that a second language learner already has the first language in his mind and these are not just words but also the whole verbal systems in which these words are coded and speaks about the vital importance of acquiring automaticity for the implementation of new systems in order to get fluent conversational act (Thornbury, 2008, p.123) So, if this is the case, maybe the constant transfer to the foreign language and back of these already deeply ingrained conceptual systems in an adult mind is the effective mechanism to evolve this process so that subsequently translation will not be of use any more.

The lack of appropriate comparison groups makes the issue even more complicated as very often little is known about the student's language acquiring process details and consequently a retrospective comparison is potentially flawed. Valuable contributions have been made by scientists of different fields here, based on which we can rebuild new visions that will be a blend of old and new. It will be invaluable in order to find a mechanism how code-switching be triggered artificially and *inner linguistic urge* obtained naturally to control processes that enable language selection and equip learners with means of avoiding obstacles easily while speaking. (*The term 'inner linguistic urge' is new and introduced by me to describe the case when a person almost unconsciously starts to express an opinion in a foreign language.*)

### **Beneath the surface**

Psychologists address the issue of different selves from many angles, some of which are almost directly related to language learning, as we all know, each language is a different

platform to see the world. Also many scientists of different fields like linguistics, psycholinguistics, psychology, andragogy and etc. point out that students should feel that the material they learn is suitable for them and that emotional closeness should be developed with the language for learners. So, with that in mind, we can think that selecting the most necessary linguistic material takes place during forming opinions in native language at initial stages of training if the use of students' first language is adequately assessed and used.

In order to demystify the issue a little and find some initial support for further research exactly the same matter was debated in my class of adult B1 students. We did some speaking activities at first without a single opportunity to use their first language and then I asked them to answer only one question but not publicly and on a sheet of paper. The question was as follows: 'Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your different language?' Clearly, these respondents are not representatives of general bilingual society and much depends on age, cognitive development, manner of acquisition and etc. but the majority of answers were alike: 'I feel as if the first language is real, new one is fake', 'I feel as though I am acting', 'I feel like I am someone else if I speak English and more at ease if I express myself in Georgian' etc.

Out of this simple example we can draw important conclusions that the need of delving into the disarray of arguments for and against the translation is still beneficial and rejecting the first language may preclude original thinking.

### **Peculiarities of adult learners**

Psychologist Carl Rogers says about perceiving the environment by adults "even when stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within" (Rogers, 1969, p.5). Adult learners hang on the past experiences, feel the uniqueness of the self, have ingrained skills which are developed through practice and are not passive recipients of transmitted knowledge. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing and they may learn better if their experiences are taken into account. Here we can also mention Sigmund Freud's "influence of subconscious mind on behavior" and Rogers' words "Experience which, if assimilated would involve a change in the organization of self, tends to be resisted through denial or distortion of symbolization" (Rogers, 1969, p.27)

Emphasizing the issue of past experiences has something to do with student's identity. Young children derive their impressions from the outside world, from their families, schools, environments, but gradually they start to see all of these through their own perspective as their perceptions become sharper, so adults are made of their experiences and if their experiences

are devalued, they may get this as rejecting themselves altogether. In recent years the links between adult needs and adult education has become permeable and although using a translation as a tool for developing fluency is not an entirely new approach, this recent surge in attempting to renew past beneficial traits in teaching is fueled by the key findings and their implications rejecting of which runs the risk of ignoring the essential that would improve individual effectiveness and performance of adult learners.

As we close this article, we do not attempt to provide any responses at this point, as scientific discussions are ongoing in the field. The article suggests the importance of reexamining benefits of using translation as an educational tool through written practice and poses noteworthy questions surrounding the issue of developing fluency.

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