



APPLICATION OF TESTING AT THE PRESENT STAGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the relevance, features and applications of testing at the present stage of English language teaching. The advantages of tests over traditional methods of control are described. The characteristics of the correctly composed test and the most common forms of test tasks are given in the article.

KEYWORDS: *test, testing, test technologies, knowledge control, self-control, quantitative assessment, qualitative assessment, unified educational standard, computer control, open form, closed form.*

DISCUSSION

Testing as one of the methods of knowledge control at the present stage of training is increasingly used and distributed. The test, i.e. the standardized measurement procedure, is the main instrument of such control.

It consists of the structural elements of any test-job. Testing can be defined as a targeted, the same for all subjects and conducted under strictly controlled conditions, the survey, allowing objectively measure the studied characteristics of the pedagogical process. However, it should be noted that the test can be used not only for control, but also as an effective means of training, forecasting and self-control.

The relevance of the introduction of test technologies in the educational process is due to the fact that testing is a tool for quantifying the level of knowledge, skills and competencies of students.

However, for an objective assessment of the level of competence, qualitative methods are also needed. A qualitative evaluation can be obtained if to apply, for example, the portfolio of individual achievement, which helps pupils to review their own learning activities and to set new goals. In the higher education system, the emergence of this method is due to the introduction of new Federal educational standards that focus on the competence approach.

It should be noted that the use of tests in education has a long history. In the USA since 1900 for testing used exam to define academic abilities qualifying exam for school leavers entering the universities, which assesses mathematical and verbal ability. And to confirm the level of English language

proficiency, a test confirming knowledge of English as a foreign language (Test of English has a Foreign Language, IELTS, TOFEL) is passed, which is now carried out only with the use of computer technology.

In addition to testing, the Bologna Declaration also provides non-traditional ways of assessing students, such as rating and credit system. It is the students and not only teaching staff and administrative staff are full partners in higher education governance [of the Bologna process. 2007, p. 57]. To support mobility and integration into a single educational space, each student must have a certain set of key competencies, among which the foreign language occupies an important place. By competence we mean the ability to apply knowledge and skills for successful professional activity.

The development of tests to check the level of mastery of a foreign language (as, indeed, any other subject) is a time — consuming process, because it is very difficult to answer questions about how and what to measure, and the object of measurement — the level of knowledge of the subject — itself is very variable (compared with the exact Sciences, for example). Therefore, supporters of the traditional method of knowledge testing criticize tests, putting forward various arguments against their application, including the following: the inability to replace the teacher in assessing the knowledge of the student; the fundamental impossibility of measurement in pedagogy; the lack of units; students do not receive logical thinking skills; the ability to memorize answers and other [Kabanova, Novikov, 2010, p. 47]. But for each such argument



"against" it is quite natural to give the argument "for". It is obvious that today's learning process cannot be imagined without tests. They have undeniable advantages over traditional methods of control and contribute to the reduction of subjective evaluation, since there is no direct contact between the teacher and the test. Tests, which can contain a fairly large number of questions (about 50), allow you to check the content of a particular discipline most fully compared to the traditional examination ticket, which usually includes three questions. In addition, in a fairly short period of time, mass testing and verification of its results in the application of computer programs is carried out (the time of checking the results by the teacher is much longer than the time of the test). Tests clearly show the structure of the acquired knowledge and help to assess the quality of education.

In pedagogical practice methods of oral, written, machine, practical control, and self-control are used. Control can be individual, group, front and can have different goals: organization of the current test of assimilation of the material or intermediate or final. Based on the content of education and goals, we can distinguish control tests, diagnostic, training and tests for self-control. The control test is designed to evaluate the most important results achieved by students during the study of a particular area. The test includes certain didactic units of the discipline (section, module, topic, and so on). The diagnostic test determines the level of preparation of the student to the learning process (criterion-oriented test) at a certain stage or helps to form a training group of one level of training (normative-oriented test). Training tests and tests for self-control allow you to get the correct answer with detailed explanations; can contain links to the necessary sources, which is especially important for distance learning and independent work, when there is no contact with the teacher. In general, a correctly compiled test should have some characteristics: reliability, validity, homogeneity, optimal length and criterion score (if criteria-based testing is carried out). The reliability of the test should be ensured by the accuracy of measurements, to exclude the possibility of guessing the answer and incorrect formulation of tasks. A valid test is one that measures what it was intended for. First of all, it is necessary to talk about the content of the test, that is, the compliance of the test content with the planned control of the achievement of learning goals. Homogeneity, that is, the test of knowledge in the subject area for which the test is planned. The optimal length of the test (the actual number of tasks in the test) is closely related to the reliability characteristic, since short tests increase measurement errors, and too long reduce its effectiveness. Criteria score allows you to determine the probability with which the minimum prepared student will perform each test task.

Any test includes a variety of test items that must match the content of the training material. The choice of the form of test tasks depends on the specifics of the content of the subject area and the purpose of the test. Tasks of one form often have a single instruction for execution, if the tasks are different, the instruction is given before each task. Despite the apparent diversity of test tasks, the most common forms are open and closed [...Pedagogy 2009, p. 313].

A characteristic feature of the closed form of test tasks is that the task given options ready answers, one of which (sometimes several) correct. Of course, there is a possibility of guessing, which causes a negative attitude to such tasks. In addition, this task does not stimulate an independent search for an answer, and requires the subject only a choice of the proposed options. Such tasks are widely used in English language tests for obtaining a certificate confirming knowledge of English at an advanced level (Certificate in Advanced English, CAE), and a certificate confirming knowledge of business English (Business English Certificate, BEC). Experience shows (and it should be noted) that very often when performing such tasks, students are ready to offer their own answer, which is not provided in the list of possible options (usually four), in the exercises to fill in the blanks. This type includes tasks to establish the correspondence of elements of one set to elements of another set and tasks to establish the correct sequence of judgments, actions, processes, calculations. Tasks of this type are also found in the English language course of the specialty "Risk Management and Insurance", for example.

The open form does not contain ready-made answers; it allows you to formulate them freely and provides some variation. This form makes it possible to show the logic of thinking, the ability to formulate and argue the answer. There are tasks for addition with restrictions on the answer (for example, when you need to fill in the gaps in the related text, which requires taking into account the content of the text, its grammatical and lexical features, which is why the number of possible answers is limited). Usually in SAE tests it is possible to fill in omissions with several variants of prepositions or conjunctions of close importance. And the second version of the task is an exercise with a free constructed response example of which can be executing a small written work on a specific topic. Turning to the SAE tests, it should be noted this type of work in the "Letter" section, when the applicant for a certificate in a limited period of time and taking into account certain instructions, it is necessary to write one mandatory work (report, letter, and so on) and one to choose from (usually from four proposed), performing clearly described tasks.

In order to prevent possible conflicts and to avoid ambiguity, all test tasks should contain clear



instructions, it is necessary to specify the time to perform each task, and students should be familiar with the scoring system and the rules of evaluation. It should be noted that at the present stage of teaching English widely used international textbooks, which are authentic materials in different forms, including the test. The choice of benefits is so large that it is not difficult to find material of the appropriate level and subject for any group of students. Tutorials, including preparation for international exams (the so-called historical material), can only contain test tasks, accompanied by only the correct answers, and contain detailed comments, as manuals for self-study with answers (self-study books). However, this does not always solve the problem of selection of materials for work in a particular group: the development of control and measuring materials remains a difficult and serious problem for each teacher. Only tests cannot do this type of work, as the translation from the native language to a foreign language within the studied topics, it is necessary to use at different stages of training, including at the stage of control. Preparation and development of tasks of this kind is constantly present in the methodical work of the teacher. An important area of application of the tests is to control the independent work of students, which is given great attention in higher education. The volume of tasks for independent work is very large, and didactic tests allow in the shortest time to monitor the results of these tasks and improve the efficiency of independent work. The teacher often has to listen to fair reproaches from the students that they have been doing the task for so long, which was so quickly checked. After all, any work of students should be evaluated, otherwise the irregularity or lack of educational and methodological impact (testing, control, consultation) inevitably leads to a decrease in academic performance. This is especially true in junior courses, when in the period of adaptation to the rules of work in high school, after high school, once in a new team and a new educational situation, the student is experiencing the greatest difficulties with the implementation of various tasks.

The most attractive method of testing, which is particularly interesting, especially for students, is computer control. All modern education, including test technologies, is computerized very quickly. It seems that everything connected with the computer is primarily connected with the English language. Computer tests allow you to work in groups of any size, they are focused on a wide range of users who do not have special training in programming, and provide feedback to students. This type of control ensures the unity of requirements for each student, allows to implement the principle of transparency and visibility of the evaluation results, creates the possibility of taking into account all types of work during the module or semester, develops the skill of

independent work and stimulates quality study of the material. Computer testing contributes to the implementation of a systematic approach to the study of the discipline and helps to overcome the subjectivity in the assessment of students' knowledge by the teacher.

In conclusion, it would better to note once again that the most difficult stage in testing is the development of the test itself, which meets all the above requirements. Now more and more English textbooks contain computerized test tasks, but even this fact does not remove the teacher from the task of developing various tests taking into account the specifics of the educational environment and goals.

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