



DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN WRITING ESSAYS IN EFL (ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

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ABSTRACT

The article under discussion summarizes the experience of the English language Olympiad conducted among the students of Ferghana Polytechnic Institute, Uzbekistan who study English as a foreign language. The main types of the Olympiad's tasks have been considered and typical mistakes in Writing section of the contestants have been analyzed.

KEY WORDS: *Olympiad in a foreign language, objectives of the Olympiad, blocks of tasks, results of the Olympiad, expediency of introducing new tasks, educational institution, requirement, communicative competence.*

DISCUSSION

The Olympiad of a foreign language in any educational institution is an important event and a driving force for the development and strengthening of the status of a given foreign language in the Uzbek educational language space. The content of the Olympiad should meet the requirement of a competent approach adopted today in world educational practice. The main goal of foreign language teaching at the present stage is the formation of communicative competence, since language is a means of communication [1]. In the absence of a natural environment for communication in the language under study, a great role in the formation of students' ability and willingness to enter into intercultural communication is to be played by extra-curricular work (various competitions and Olympiads), which allows the use of a foreign language both as a tool of cognition and as a tool of communication, to penetrate more deeply into the culture of peoples of foreign languages under study, because "languages should be studied in an inseparable unity with the world and culture of peoples speaking these languages" [2].

Participation in Olympiads increases motivation and interest in the language and culture of the native speakers of a given language, which students learn as a means of intercultural communication. Also participation in the Olympiad

influences the formation of personal qualities of students of any age, forms purposefulness, independence, expands the outlook and understanding of the culture of the country of the studied language.

For several years the Department of Teaching Foreign Languages of Ferghana Polytechnic Institute organizes and conducts an Olympiad in English as a foreign language for students of Year 1-4 of different faculties.

The aim of the Olympiad is:

- To establish the level of formation of communicative and linguistic competences of students, ensuring their ability to intercultural communication;
- To identify the most talented and competent students to master English.

The tasks of all sections of the Olympiad correspond to the threshold level of complexity B2 on the scale of the Council of Europe. The Olympiad includes Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking sections.

One of the requirements of Writing section of the Olympiad is writing a mini essay. A mini essay does not only verify lexical and grammatical skills, but also allows you to evaluate a student's ability to reflect on often difficult topics in a foreign language. Learning to write an essay in EFL (English as a foreign language) is rather a complicated type



of work, as it requires from a student the ability to think creatively, to use speech structures competently, to follow a clear and precise structure of presentation. Students experience difficulties in this type of work both in our country and abroad. [3].

There are several main reasons why students face difficulties in writing an essay:

- lack of ability to write in English
- inability to write opinions
- poor vocabulary
- lack of familiarity with grammar
- inability to organize text
- poor time management

In the written part, the student should show his/her ability to write and express thoughts in English, as well as his vocabulary, imagination and knowledge of grammar. In addition, many Uzbek students get low scores due to copying phrases written in the task itself and a large number of common words and expressions that create a volume of text, but do not carry any information [5].

The analysis of the content of contestants' essays allowed to identify the following difficulties that took place in the performance of the task:

- Partially or completely misunderstanding of the task, deviation from the topic. In most cases, the subjects considered for instance environmental problems in general, global, with insufficient emphasis on the disappearance of animals. Obviously, this is due to limited vocabulary that does not correspond to B2 level;
- ignorance of the format of this task and the requirements for its performance;
- a limited amount of time allocated for the task fulfillment.

Among the most common mistakes in achieving a communicative goal in this case, the following can be highlighted:

- failure to follow a neutral style of presentation, deviation from objective presentation of information, narrowing the scope of the global problem to individual cases when the subjects described their personal experience, for example: *Once I saw a group of teenagers throwing litter in the lake;*
- Absence of introduction and/or conclusion in the essay. The most common mistake is literally using the wording of the task as an introduction.

Among the most typical errors in the text organization are the following:

- absence of text division into paragraphs;

- Limited use of binding elements. Users used mainly conjunctions *and, but and or;*
- incorrect use of binding elements (*also* instead of *although*) as well as use of unnecessarily long sentences that make it difficult to understand the text or break the logic of the statement;
- logic violation (not related to the incorrect use of binding elements), expressed in a sharp transition from one thought to another, unjustified conclusions, inappropriate examples, inconsistency of the conclusion with the arguments given earlier [6].

Language design. The analysis of the works showed that observing the correctness of a statement is much more difficult than a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The most common grammatical errors:

- in the use of the verb to be: a) the verb is omitted, for example: *It <is> important to stop environmental destruction; people <are> too busy and lazy to do it;* b) the verb does not agree with a noun, for example: *There is* (instead of *'there are'*) *ecological friendly technologies;*
 - in the use of an article: a) the absence of the indefinite article before a singular noun, for example: *It can be <a> reason why other people try to help nature;* b) the use of the indefinite article with a plural noun, for example: *Our world has a serious environmental problem;*
 - in the use of countable/uncountable nouns, for example: *Now new cars have special equipments; a lot of transports use large amounts of fuel;*
 - in the use of prepositions, for example: *It is dangerous gas which influences on their health; they suffer of* (instead of *from*) *air pollution; It helps to avoid of ecological problems;*
 - in the agreement of a pronoun and a noun, for example: *If we realize these things;*
 - in the use of complex subordinate clauses with additive time and conditions, for example: *If all ordinary people will think that helping the environment; but if we do not do it, it is not a changing situation;*
 - in the use of modal verbs, for example: *People must have a lot of money and power; people can change the environment; we may not try to save the animals.*
- Typical lexical errors are the following:
- incorrect use of adjectives formed with negative prefixes and suffixes, for example:



pandas look so unhelpful (instead of *helpless*), probably due to ignorance of their meaning;

- the use of similar words with a different meaning, such as: *inspiration* (instead of *respiratory*); *pandas are dangerous* (instead of *endangered*) *nowadays*; *ordinary people can't solve* (instead of *solve*) *this*;
- incorrect use of certain words, for example: *destroyed habitat is the main reason* (instead of *cause*) *of their extinction*; *it is necessary to combine* (instead of *unite*) *people*.

CONCLUSION

So, the analysis of the contestants' essays of the Olympiad in English as a foreign language conducted in Fergana Polytechnic Institute, Uzbekistan, demonstrates low scores obtained on the indicator "language design", which is due not so much to the narrow range of language means, as to lexical and grammatical errors made by the students.

The analysis of the content of the Olympiad works makes it possible to state the following decrease level of language competence of contestants during 3-4 years, which is due to weaker language training of students. At the same time, we can state a tendency to increase the number of participants in the Olympiad, which allows us to conclude that participation in the Olympiad is one of the effective means of increasing motivation for learning English.

Participation in the Olympiad helps students and teachers not only to assess properly the results of their efforts, but also to strengthen the spirit of healthy competition, respect for each other and the desire to acquire new knowledge.

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