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ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF ASSESSING ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN READING OF SENIOR PUPILS IN UKRAINIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract. The article analyses the state of the system of assessing students' knowledge in the context of learning foreign languages. It is proved that modern students with language diversity are intensively included in the process of European mobility, cooperation and mutual understanding to facilitate educational process and intercultural communication. The article provides the Common European Framework observation that reveals the common description of language syllabuses, ways of assessment, educational resources and learning strategies all over the world.

Analysis of the current research conducted by scientists has shown that alternative ways of assessment should be implemented in the process of academic learning as one of the most valuable and useful parts of the process of learning languages. Moreover, scientists point out negative effects of summative assessment as it reduces the chances of future effort and success and leads to "teaching to be assessed".

The purpose of the article is to attract attention to alternative systems of assessing English Language competence of senior pupils in Reading. As a focus of the article, Cambridge Assessment System as a way to promote educational excellence and high-quality learning through the use of alternative assessment techniques is observed. The article analyzes the level of pupils' knowledge, their awareness of exam strategies and readiness to take part in Cambridge Assessment, which is one of the most widely-recognized ways of alternative assessment.

The analysis of the pupils' results after completing A2 level Reading Part in a deep way shows which material is complicated for pupils. Authentic information from signs, notices, labels, airports and road signs seemed to be difficult to understand for the pupils because of containing more unfamiliar language than the pupils can cope with. One more thing which attracted attention of the author of the article is the lack of deductive skills, approximately 40 % of students can't deduce the meaning from the context.

Summing up the analysis given in the article, the list of tips for teachers while preparing pupils for assessing competence in reading include the following recommendations: give pupils reading texts with unfamiliar vocabulary, help practice skimming and scanning, work out the meaning of the text by using the rest of information, practice doing timed exercises and exam tasks.

Key words: alternative assessment; competence in reading; deductive skills; authenticity.

Problem setting in general. Modern world provides the rich heritage of diverse languages, promote European mobility, cooperation and mutual understanding as it is important to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different

mother tongues. In this connection a major educational effort is focused on converting languages diversity from an obstacle to find understanding into a source of mutual enrichment and support.

The Common European Framework gives a common basis for description of language syllabuses, ways of assessment, textbooks and learning guidelines across Europe. It describes in a common way the amount of knowledge of English language learners have to obtain in order to communicate properly and effectively. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners to be assessed at each stage of learning a foreign language.

The Common European Framework is intended to overcome the barriers arising from the requirements of different educational systems in Europe. It provides clear instructions and guidelines for educational administrators, course designers, teacher trainers and examiners to coordinate their efforts with a view to meeting the real needs of the learners to whom they are responsible. The provision of objective criteria for assessing language proficiency facilitates the mutual recognition of language qualifications gained in different language context.

Analysis of publications. The term "alternative assessment", the value and usefulness of alternative assessment, the results of this method implementation, the necessity of using alternative method of assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process have been under consideration for a long time.

Alderson and Banerjee (2001, p. 213–220) give a definition to the term "alternative assessment" as formative, less formal assessment procedure which has a beneficial outcome, aiming at promoting learning. It emphases the point that language learning gives students the opportunity to assess themselves and their peers as the evaluation criteria are known to students (Gipps & Stobard, 2003, p. 549–553).

Pashalori and Milesi see alternative assessment as a search technique to collect and analyze data. It is a method that leads to the systematic codification of the written word, and includes the characteristics of qualitative methods of research, which are flexibility as, inductive analysis, detailed and in depth description, which helps form a complete picture of every case (Evans & O' Sullivan, 2002, p. 235–237).

The fact that traditional, academic assessment lowers the self-esteem of low-achieving students and thus reduces the chances of future effort and success also contributes to promoting alternative assessment. Supporting the use of alternative assessment many scientists point out that teachers have a wider range of evidence on which to judge students' competence, becoming more responsive to individual differences, and equipping students with lifelong skills, which promote autonomy (Mitchell, 2014, p. 357–360).

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Професіоналізм педагога: теоретичні й методичні аспекти. – Вип. 14 (Ч. 1). – Слов'янськ, 2021.

107

The purpose of the article. The main task of the article is to attract attention to alternative ways of assessing secondary school pupils' competence in English. It is common for teachers of English in Ukraine to be accustomed to using only one type of assessment in the English class. While varying how to assess pupils who don't respond to a particular assessment and may not perform well on classical test-based assessment method is becoming an issue under consideration nowadays. In teaching English there is a great variety of assessing techniques which is a good thing to have in teachers' arsenal of methodological approaches. Among them are rubrics which are a very effective and efficient way to score group projects or cooperative learning activities, short writing assignments, presentations, discussion boards where students can post questions or interact online. Pupils can monitor their own progress with check-lists, a writing assignment by giving themselves a grade on an assignment to get a perception of their work. Teachers can meet briefly with students to ask them a few well-planned questions and take down notes based on what each pupil says and assign a grade on their ability to explain concepts. Cambridge Assessment was established to promote educational excellence and high-quality learning through the use of alternative assessment techniques. Tests and qualifications from Cambridge English Assessment are taken by over five million people, in 130 countries each year. Cambridge International Examinations Syndicate is the world's largest provider of international qualifications. Ukraine schools, colleges and other educational establishments are not actively involved in the system of preparing pupils for gaining internationally-recognized certificates.

Results of the study. The main mission of the given article is to present the results of mock testing designed by Cambridge Assessment Group, which is one of the promoter of the Common European Framework's standards. The Mock Test was held by the lecturers of Donbas State Pedagogical University, the Department of theory and Practice of Primary Education. The aim of the testing session was to analyze the level of pupils' knowledge, their awareness of exam strategies and readiness to take part in Cambridge Assessment, which is one of the most widely-recognized ways of alternative assessment.

100 pupils of the 9th form were offered to complete A2 level Mock Test, which is marked KET (Key English Test) by Cambridge Assessment Group and 120 pupils of the 10th form participated in B1 Mock Exam Session, marked PET (Preliminary English Test) by Cambridge Assessment Group.

Every testing session started with a small presentation on Cambridge Assessment Framework for pupils interested in obtaining information on the ways of taking the way of alternative assessing. These pre-testing talks showed that a little more

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than 60% of the pupils tested knew about Cambridge Assessment Group, 40% could tell the difference between level requirements and exam parts, 10-15% of pupils asked participated in Mock Exam Sessions earlier. Namely, the last group of pupils demonstrated good and excellent results. The list of the most frequently asked questions and the areas of pupils' interest includes the following questions:

1. Who is the exam for?
2. Who recognizes Cambridge Assessment certificates?
3. What levels requirements are?
4. Where to find sample papers for self-assessment?
5. How to get ready for Cambridge International Assessment?

Lots of test participants demonstrated involvement in discussing exam strategies, benefits which Cambridge certificate holders get and the ways how to take the exam, both computer-based and paper-based versions. They were interested to know that even B1 Preliminary certificate is accepted by a wide range of educational institutions for study purposes and is also recognized around the world as proof of intermediate level English skills for administrative and service-based employment.

Pupils participated in mock testing were also interested to know that Cambridge exams are thorough tests of all areas of language ability including the Speaking test at which pupils are tested on their competence to take part in different types of interaction: with the examiner, with the other candidate and by themselves. That is what that differs Cambridge exams a lot from Ukrainian system of testing.

The article presents the results of the A2, B1 tests completion, Reading Parts only. Reading Part was chosen for the article's analysis as the most frequently tested competence at school and at the same time as one of the most important real life skills to be developed.

In this part A2 candidates are tested on their ability to understand straightforward information within known areas which vary from food, standard menus, road signs to messages on automatic cash machines, complete most forms related to personal information, take in the general meaning of a simplified textbook or article, reading very slowly.

A2 Reading includes six parts and thirty questions in them. The first four task types are three-option multiple choice in which pupils have to read short real-life texts for the main message, read questions and texts on the same topic, then match the questions to the texts, read one long text for detailed understanding, read a factual text and choose the correct vocabulary items to complete the gaps. The last part in A2 Reading is an open cloze test which is aimed at completing gaps in an email using one word. The texts used in the Reading component are adapted from authentic reading

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Професіоналізм педагога: теоретичні й методичні аспекти. – Вип. 14 (Ч. 1). – Слов'янськ, 2021.

109

texts and may include notices and signs, packaging information, notes, emails, cards, text messages, newspapers and magazines, simplified encyclopedias and other non-fiction books, brochures, leaflets and websites.

B1 Preliminary Reading Part has six parts which include different types of texts and questions such as multiple choice, matching, a gapped text, multiple choice cloze and open cloze. Pupils have to read five real-world notices, messages and other short texts for the main message, match five descriptions of people to eight short texts on a particular topic, showing detailed comprehension, read a longer text for detailed comprehension, gist, inference and global meaning, as well as writer's attitude and opinion. Moreover, pupils are exposed to reading a longer text from which five sentences have been removed. This task is aimed at showing understanding of how a coherent and well-structured text is formed.

According to the A2, B1 test frame candidates who showed 70% of the right answers pass the test, candidates who give more than 85% of the right answers pass it with merit, over 90% of the right answers mean the performance at the next level. As the results of the Mock test show, approximately 40% of the pupils participated in A2, B1 Mock testing showed good and excellent results, 50% completed the test at the borderline, 10-15% had less than 10 right answers out of 30 (level A2), 32 (level B1). It means their level of English is not enough to be assessed as pre-intermediate or intermediate.

Let us analyze pupils' results after completing A2 level Reading Part in a deeper way and show which parts of the text were more complicated for pupils. According to the tasks of the test they vary as for the different test focus of each part. In Parts 1 and 5 texts are authentic, but edited to bring vocabulary and structure within the grasp of pupils at this level. Presenting information from signs, notices, labels and other very short texts of the type found on roads, airports and restaurants as well as magazine articles and junior encyclopedias, the tasks in Parts 1 and 5 seemed to be complicated for the pupils because they contain more unfamiliar language the pupils could cope with and reflected idiosyncratic and unusual native speaker usage.

Texts in Parts 2 and 3 are specially written but based on authentic types to ensure task authenticity. Reading them pupils demonstrated more confidence in completing these tasks as they involved tests based on the language used in the routine exchange of daily life. Sentences in these tasks were quite simple and short with a connecting theme.

One more thing which attracted attention after analyzing the pupils' results is the lack of deductive skills. Reading the texts which contained some vocabulary or

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structures unknown to pupils approximately 40% of pupils couldn't deduce the meaning from the context.

Task 5 which is an open close task required pupils to show control of structures and vocabulary. In this task pupils showed the lowest result as reading of this kind is focused not only on structure and vocabulary, but the context as well.

Deep analysis of the Reading Test focus allows to divide the types of reading tasks into the groups "Easy for pupils" and "Complicated for pupils". Pupils had no difficulty making a three-option multiple choice with a lexical or grammar focus, extracting relevant information from one or two input texts and matching short texts with appropriate options to choose between, whereas completing separate two-line exchanges in the context of a short dialogue or a gapped text without offered option to complete gave rise to difficulties.

Easy for Pupils Tasks:

1. Reading for main message;

2. Reading and identifying appropriate vocabulary;

3. Reading and focus on grammar structure;

4. Reading and focus on content.

Complicated for Pupils Tasks:

1. Reading for specific details;

2. Reading and identifying an appropriate structural word;

3. Reading and identifying appropriate response.

Summing up the analysis given the author of the article gives the list of tips while preparing pupils for the Reading Papers:

1. Give pupils a wide range of texts to read, both authentic and adapted. This list of texts can include notes and messages on social media websites, information leaflets, graded readers and articles.

2. Help pupils practice skimming and scanning both shorter and longer texts. Encourage leaners to develop a habit of always skimming a text first to get a general understanding.

3. Give pupils practice reading texts with unfamiliar vocabulary, learning to ignore words which are not important for the task.

4. Encourage pupils to read instructions carefully, ask them to highlight key words, and use examples to help them understand what to do.

5. Give pupils practice doing timed exercises and exam tasks where they manage their own time in the Reading paper.

Професіоналізм педагога: теоретичні й методичні аспекти. – Вип. 14 (Ч. 1). – Слов'янськ, 2021.

111

6. Help pupils think about different ways they read texts. If they are reading an information leaflet, ask them to find some specific information. If they are reading a message, ask them to think how they would reply for it.

7. Help pupils to work out the meaning of new words by using the rest of the text. Encourage them not to use dictionary for every new word.

Conclusion. Summing up, in this article an effort has been made to show the process of implementing an alternative method of assessing. Definitions of alternative assessment were provided, followed by a reference to Cambridge Assessment test, focusing on the method implemented. The first part of the article concluded with the analysis of the reasons why alternative assessment is necessary. The second part described the implementation of the method, the steps and stages, as well as the results and an evaluation of it.

From the whole material, it can be concluded that the alternative assessment should be part of every teaching program as it does not burden the students and the teacher with extra time and work and devoted to the skill being assessed. For this, it is necessary to train both teachers and students how to apply this method. Alternative assessment is a new trend in the Ukrainian school reality, and it can help realize the importance and necessity of being assessed in both traditional and alternative ways.

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АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНІ СПОСОБИ ОЦІНЮВАННЯ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ З ЧИТАННЯ СТАРШИХ УЧНІВ В УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ШКОЛАХ

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Alternative Ways of Assessing English Language Competence in Reading of Senior Pupils
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Анотація. У статті проаналізовано стан системи оцінювання знань учнів у контексті вивчення іноземних мов. Доведено, що сучасні учні з мовною різноманітністю інтенсивно залучаються до процесу європейської мобільності, співпраці та взаєморозуміння для сприяння навчальному процесу та міжкультурному спілкуванню. У статті подано аналіз Загальноєвропейських рамок, який розкриває загальний опис навчальних програм мови, шляхи оцінювання, освітні ресурси та стратегії навчання у всьому світі. Метою статті є привернення уваги до альтернативних систем оцінювання англомовної компетентності старших школярів із читання. У центрі уваги статті спостерігається Кембриджська система оцінювання як спосіб сприяння вдосконаленню освіти та якісному навчанню за допомогою використання альтернативних методів оцінювання. У статті проаналізовано рівень знань учнів, їх обізнаність щодо стратегій іспиту та готовність взяти участь у Кембриджському оцінюванні, яке є одним із найбільш загальновизнаних способів альтернативного оцінювання.

Ключові слова: альтернативне оцінювання; компетентність у читанні; дедуктивні навички; достовірність.

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Професіоналізм педагога: теоретичні й методичні аспекти. – Вип. 14 (Ч. 1). – Слов'янськ, 2021.

113