

## PROBLEMS OF TESTING APPLICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING CONTROL

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### *Abstract*

**Purpose of the study:** This article is devoted to the test form of control which is characterized by objective measurement of learning outcomes because they are guided by the objective empirical criteria.

**Methodology:** Method of structural analysis, content analysis method, scientific interpretation, and synthesis of specific factual materials were chosen as methods of our research.

**Results:** Test control of knowledge is effective only when a great effort is made by the teacher. The teacher should know how to choose the right tests and how to make them, as not every set of questions with answers to them can be called a test. The aim of this work is to identify the problems of using testing as a control form of foreign language learning and give guidelines for their solution.

**Applications of this study:** This research can be used for the universities, teachers, and students.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** In this research, the model of the Problems of Testing Application in Foreign Language Learning Control is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

**Keywords:** *education, student, foreign language, test, testing, learning control.*

### INTRODUCTION

Currently much is said about the optimization of the educational process which leads to an increase in the efficiency of teaching a foreign language. The learning control is played an important role. One of the most effective means of foreign language learning control is considered to be a test. It does not spend a lot of time and is absolutely easy to check. Testing becomes an integral part of the educational process; therefore, we must pay sufficient attention to the preparation of students to perform the tests, to acquaint them with all the variety of tests as well as to apply the test method correctly in teaching a foreign language.

### METHODS

Method of structural analysis, content analysis method, scientific interpretation, and synthesis of specific factual materials were chosen as methods of our research.

### RESULTS

The students are faced with the task of mastering a foreign language as a means of interpersonal, intercultural communication. According to L. G. Chumarova, it is not only a means of human communication, an instrument of thought transmission but also acts as a mirror of national culture, its keeper (Chumarova, 2017). Therefore, independent work on mastering practical skills to understand speech, read texts, extracting the most important information has particular importance. Independent work allows achieving positive results in the preparation for exams. As experience shows, great benefit is brought by examination at once of all students in the form of small by volume control tasks, in other words, tests.

Tests are an integral part of the testing. It is a research method providing for the implementation of special tasks. Such tasks are called tests. They are offered either in an open form (the testee must complete the main text in order to obtain a true statement) or in a closed-form (the testee must choose the desired answer from several options, one of them is correct and the others not).

The main difference between traditional control tasks and test tasks is that the latter always involves measurement using a special scale (matrix). Therefore, the assessment issued following the results of the test will be more objectivity and independence from the possible subjectivity of the teacher. The standard form of tasks at the same time provides efficiency in work and ease of calculation of results.

In the methodical literature and practice of language teaching two types of tests are widespread: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced.

Norm-referenced is designed to compare the educational achievements of the testee. Test results are expressed in points, and, accordingly, students are arranged according to the number of points scored (Koroleva and Pystina, 1986). This test is widely used in the distribution of students into groups taking into account the level of language training and abilities.

Criterion-referenced test is used to assess the degree of material covered ownership by the testee. It became widespread in

the mid-1970s as a reliable source of professional certification of personnel and to determine the level of language proficiency ([Koroleva and Pystina, 1986](#)).

The main difference between the test and the traditional control task is that it always involves measurement. Therefore, the test score is more objective and independent of the possible subjectivity of the teacher than the score for the performance of the traditional control task which is always subjective because it is based on the impression of the teacher and it is not always free from his personal likes or dislikes towards a particular student.

Testing in teaching a foreign language is carried out to identify: ([Alpatova & Bim, 2002](#))

1. Level of achievement in a particular activity;
2. Abilities to a certain type of activity;
3. Difficulties in mastering a particular activity and possible ways to overcome them.

Tests can be final or thematic. Final tests are designed to objectively confirm the level of learning achieved by students. The thematic test is designed to improve the educational process.

Tests can determine a learner's level of learning and/or language competence relatively to other learners' level (norm-referenced test) or relative to a specific criterion, such as learning level (criterion-referenced test) ([Alpatova & Bim, 2002](#)).

The test results can be used to assess the learning level of students, to select them in a particular educational institution, to certify their achievements in a certain type of activity (in the academic subject), for distribution into training groups depending on the achieved level, to diagnose learning difficulties. The use of tests in the control is advisable because they set the direction of the mental activity of students; teach them to vary the procedure of the perceived information processing ([Kolker, et al. 2003](#)).

The main task in choosing the test during our experiment was to provide the most reliable and accurate assessment of the language training parameters of the students. Each task was evaluated by one point in the case of correct execution and zero points in the case of its incorrect execution. This approach is rational because the processing of the results becomes quite simple and this approach is the most objective. Our test is evaluated on a five-point system: 55% - 70% - "3", 71% - 85% - "4", 86% - 100% - "5".

The experiment was conducted in the group 17.2-701, direction "Clinical psychology" of the Institute of Psychology and Education. The English group consists of 15 people. Tests were offered on a variety of grammatical material taking into account the knowledge of students.

The first proposed test (see Appendix 1) was to check the orientation of students in the tenses of the group "Past Simple and Past Perfect". Testee has distributed sheets with tasks on which were written sentences with missing words. These words were verbs enclosed in brackets; they had to be used in the correct form.

For example,

*She \_\_\_\_\_ (move) to Hollywood because her first film \_\_\_\_\_ (be) successful.*

Conclusion: the task of this kind allows identifying how students can operate vocabulary in the context, also develops logical thinking, and trains the skills of independent work. Of the 15 tested, 8 people received a rating of "5", a rating of "4" - 5 people, a rating of "3" - 2 people and a rating of "2" - 0.

The second test (see Appendix 2) was conducted on the well-known grammar construction "The Passive". It was suggested to change the verbs from Active Voice to Passive Voice.

For example,

*Lots of people read tabloid newspapers.*

*Tabloid newspapers \_\_\_\_\_ lots of people.*

The results of the work were as follows: "5" - 9 people, "4" - 6 students, "3" - 0 people and "2" - 0 people.

The following test was conducted to control the formation of indirect speech skills in oral and written form. To effectively control the new grammar skills, students were offered a test (see Appendix 3) which consisted of multiple-choice questions. The test was aimed not only to control but also to diagnose the most difficult for students to learn grammatical phenomena.

For example,

Write the reported questions.

1. *Is London an interesting city? He asked me \_\_\_\_\_*
2. *Where are you going to stay in New York? She asked me \_\_\_\_\_*

3. *When will I see you again? He asked me \_\_\_\_\_*
4. *How often does Bella ring you? She asked me \_\_\_\_\_*
5. *How long does this test take? He asked me \_\_\_\_\_*

Conclusion: test control easily allowed students to cope with this task. The results were as follows: "5" received 9 students, "4" - 6 students, satisfactory and unsatisfactory grades were not.

We believe that this method of control allows students to be less nervous, as students don't have fear of not doing the task, so the attitude to the tests and as it was already seen from the results of the work, was better than traditional control work.

Analysis of the results showed that the number of correct answers is increasing for students who are capable of learning. Those students, who have not coped with the test task, after analyzing and correcting errors should be given the opportunity to get a higher score by performing another version of the test.

As a result of the test control students faced the following difficulties:

1. The complexity of decision-making based on large amounts of information;
2. Doubt in the use of a particular grammatical structure, the lack of existing vocabulary;
3. The danger of automatic errors;
4. The danger of profanity. External ease of the test seduces students who are not able to correctly analyze the job;
5. Loss of individual approach, stress, fear not to meet the definite time interval;
6. Lack of trust. The soulless and formalized nature of the testing procedure itself, of course, turns out that the testee is deprived of the feeling that the teacher is interested in him personally, to help in his problems and difficulties.

Thus, tests cannot be the only comprehensive method of any diagnosis; they require parallel use of free written works, as well as oral questioning. That is, the place of tests is to complement more traditional methods. In this capacity, the tests are irreplaceable because they do not have many disadvantages, in contrast, traditional methods.

## DISCUSSION

A test is considered as one of the most effective means of controlling foreign language learning. Most of the studies in this area met the needs of their time but they touched on certain aspects and problems of testing and often under the test meant only some types of test items ([Bond, 1996](#), [Committee on Assessment and Evaluation in Education, 2005](#)).

The history of the tests, according to A. N. Mayorov has its roots far into the depths of centuries ([Mayorov, 2001](#)). Even in Ancient Egypt, Greece, China various abilities, knowledge, skills were tested. These tests were associated with certain measurements of certain qualitative results of human activity ([Kunnan, 2014](#)). They can be considered as the background of the tests. With the development of social relations quantitative methods of measurement are improved, new requirements for examinations and assessments were demanded. ([Kane, 2010](#), [Bridgeman, et al. 2004](#), [Melo, et al. 2017](#)).

The first stage of tests application in the world practice can be considered the period from the 80-s of the XIX century in the 20-ies of the XX century ([Chalhoub-Deville, 2001](#); [Crocker & Algina, 1986](#); [Passov, 1999](#)). This is a period of origin and formation testing. Theoretical foundations of testing were laid in the mid-80-ies of the XIX century by English psychologist and scientist F. Galton who supposed that using tests it is possible to separate the factors of heredity and environmental influence in the human psyche ([Klimenchenko & Mirolyubova, 1981](#)).

Over a protracted period, tests have developed as a tool for individual measurements. The mass nature of testing has caused the need to move from individual to group tests. ([Emmerich, et al. 1991](#)).

Currently, the foreign language proficiency levels set by the Council of Europe serve as a benchmark for communication tests in many countries. Thus, in France and America, communication tests are used to solve problems related to exams and the issuance of certificates and diplomas such as TCF, DALF, DELF ([Fomenko, 2008](#); [Bayliss & Ingram, 2000](#); [Breland, et al. 2004](#); [Body, 2001](#)).

TCF is a standardized test that measures the level of communicative competence in French as a foreign language. It consists of 3 obligatory tasks (listening, grammar and reading) and 2 additional tasks (speaking and writing). The test is designed according to the requirements of the Council of Europe for foreign language proficiency. TCF is like a photo of the level available at the exam time. During the test, the results of the French language proficiency are correlated with the 6 levels defined by the Council of Europe from elementary to advanced threshold.

The TCF procedure is objective, fast and simple: multiple-choice tasks are computer-checked and speaking and writing tests are checked by a team of competent experts. DELF, DALF exams are designed for young people under the age of 18. They were first organized in 1985 and have since changed several times in accordance with Council of Europe documents ([Fomenko, 2008](#)).

In Russia, the practical value of the tests received after 1925 when a special test commission was created. It existed at the pedagogical Department of the methods of school work Institute. Its tasks included the development of tests for the Soviet school. And in the spring of 1926 came out such tests created on the basis of American.

The next stage in the development of testing in Russia in the period from the beginning of the 60-s to the end of the 70-s. Reforms in teaching a number of subjects, the development of programmed learning gave a significant impetus to the further improvement of tests ([Ardakani, et al. 2015](#); [Umpawan, 2018](#)).

The theory and practice of pedagogical measurements are also intensively developing in Russia today. In teaching foreign languages these are scientific studies of the team of following authors I. Rapoport, R. Selg, I. Sotter who summarized the foreign and domestic experience, developed a methodology for a scientific approach to testing, designed tests and experimentally tested them ([Shayakhmetova & Chaklikova, 2018](#); [Matandare, 2018](#)).

With the introduction of educational standards, including in foreign languages, there is a need to streamline and objectify the means of monitoring and evaluation to verify compliance with the requirements of the standard to the level of students' training. To this end, an experiment on mass testing of unified control measuring materials (the Unified state exam) is conducted. These are tests of three levels of difficulty (basic, advanced and high), which correspond to the levels of foreign language proficiency defined in the documents of the Council of Europe, as follows: basic level — A2+, advanced level — B1, high level—B2. To solve the scientific problems of the theory and practice of testing the Federal Institute of pedagogical measurements was established.

The history of the testing development abroad and in Russia has shown that the level of training tests (success tests) is an important way to assess pedagogical activity with the help of which the results of the educational process can be fairly objectively, reliably measured, processed, interpreted and used in teaching practice.

## SUMMARY

Proceeding from the above, we can conclude that to control the teaching of a foreign language is necessary to choose a method that will be able in a short period of time to control exactly the amount of knowledge that is needed by the teacher, a method that will provide ease of verification and writing, but at the same time will be effective and show objective results. We came to the conclusion that this method is a test.

The tests have some disadvantages. The main shortage is the reduced ability of the experimenter to achieve mutual understanding with the testee, to interest them, in addition, when group testing is difficult to control the condition of the subjects, such as anxiety, etc.

Thus, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of tests as a method of pedagogical control, during the tests attention should be paid to the specifics of this control method, it is also impossible to lose sight of the characteristics of the testee, the test should be carefully prepared and thought out, the shortcomings of this form of control should be taken into account.

## CONCLUSIONS

One of the most effective means of control in teaching a foreign language is a test that is considered in the work as a form of control and training tasks designed to diagnose the level of training.

The features of the test regardless of its type are the objectivity and independence of evaluation, free from possible subjectivity of the teacher, the standard structure, the simplicity of the procedure and the ease of feedback.

The success of the test of students in teaching a foreign language is directly dependent on the speed, depth, and integrity of their understanding of the entire text.

It should be noticed that the test control of knowledge is effective only when a great effort is made by the teacher. The teacher should know how to choose the right tests and how to make them. Test control is an effective form of control provided that the test is assorted to the specifics of the group and students are prepared to write it.

We conducted a diagnostic study aimed at identifying the level of knowledge, skills, abilities formation in students of the group 17.2-701, "Clinical psychology" direction of the Institute of Psychology and Education. During the experiment, the problems encountered in the use of test control were found: the complexity of decision-making based on large amounts of information; doubt in the use of a particular grammatical structure, the lack of existing vocabulary; the danger of automatic errors; the danger of profanity.

We have proposed recommendations that will help to avoid problems during the test control: all answers to this question should be plausible forcing the testee to analyze each answer and identify its inaccuracy or error; correct and incorrect answers should be unambiguous in content, structure and the total number of words; the place of the correct answer should be determined so that it is not repeated from question to question, there were no patterns, and was given at random; use a long question and a short answer; to analyze tasks from the point of view of the wrong answer of the most prepared students; to avoid repetition and not to simplify questions.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1

#### Test 1 «Past Simple and Past Perfect»

Each sentence is missing a verb, it is enclosed in brackets. Put the verb in the correct form. If you find it difficult to answer, just skip the question.

#### Complete the sentences with the Past Simple and the Past Perfect.

1. He.....(read) the story to his children because he (like) it when he was young.
2. The children..... (hide) the cups because they .....(break) them.
3. His parents..... (buy) him a bicycle because he.....(get) good marks in his exams.
4. I (finished) my homework 10 minutes before the lesson..... (start).
5. The children..... (fall) asleep before she ..... (go) to say goodnight.

#### Write either the Past Simple or the Past Perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

In 1936, a woman in the USA (publish) *.published*, a book called *Gone With the Wind*. Three years later, in 1939, it became one of the most successful films of the twentieth century. It (1 win) ..... ten Academy Awards and it (2 make).....

Vivien Leigh an international star. However, it (3 not be).....an easy film to make. Before the public saw *Gone With the Wind*, three different directors (4 work).....on it and it (5 take).....two years to find an actress to star in the film. Before the film makers (6 choose).....Vivien Leigh for this important part, they (7 see).....about 2000 women. Some people (8 not like)..... *Gone With the Wind* because it was not a true history but millions of people all over the world (9 love)..... the film. One famous actress said that every time she saw *Gone With the Wind* she found something in the story that she (10 not see)..... before.

### Appendix 2

#### Test 2 «Change the verb from Active to Passive»

The sentence is in the form of Active Voice. Change it using the Passive Voice construct. If you find it difficult to answer, just skip the question.

#### Change the verbs from Active to Passive.

1. Lots of people read tabloid newspapers.  
Tabloid newspapers..... lots of people.
2. Sue Green reads the news on television.  
The news on television..... by Sue Green.
3. The witness is helping the police.  
The police..... by the witness.
4. The newspapers aren't publishing the photographs.  
The photographs..... by the newspapers.
5. The police have arrested the driver.  
The driver..... by the police.
6. The thief had taken the painting before the guard woke up.  
The painting..... before the guard woke up.
7. The company will deliver the flowers the next day.  
The flowers..... the next day.
8. The Government is going to give every school student a computer.  
Every school student..... by the Government.
9. You can buy a magazine on the train.

Magazines ... on the train.

10. My sister made the pop video.

The pop video.....by my sister.

### Appendix 3

#### Test 3 «Reported speech»

##### 1. Match the direct questions with the reported questions.

1. Where do you live?	a) She asked me where I had Lived.
2. Where are you living?	b) She asked me where I would live.
3. Where have you lived?	c) She asked me where I lived.
4. Where will you live?	d) She asked me where I could live.
5. Where can you live?	e) She asked me where I was living.

##### 2. Write the direct questions.

- He asked me how old I was.
- She wanted to know when I had arrived.
- He asked whether I was going to watch the film.
- She asked me where we were living.
- He wanted to know if he would see me the next day.

##### 3. Write the reported questions.

- Is London an interesting city? He asked me
- Where are you going to stay in New York? She asked me
- When will I see you again? He asked me
- How often does Bella ring you? She asked me
10. How long does this test take? He asked me

##### 4. Read the questions asked by an immigration officer. Use the prompts to write a paragraph reporting the questions.

- 'Why are you visiting Los Angeles?'
- 'How long are you planning to stay here?'
- 'How much money have you got with you?'
- 'Do you have any friends or family in the States?'
- 'Can you show me your return ticket?'

When I arrived at immigration the officer first asked me (1).... Then the officer wanted to know (2)..... The next thing they wanted to know (3).....After that the officer asked (4)..... Finally, (5)....