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## ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PLACEMENT, ACHIEVEMENT AND PROFICIENCY TESTS

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*Abstract.* The article deals with the description of three types of English language tests: namely placement, achievement and proficiency ones. Attention is given to different approaches to testing which makes it possible to simulate real life situations.

*Key words:* approach, testing, communication, situations, simulation.

## РОЗРОБКА ТА ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЯ СТАРТОВИХ, КОНТРОЛЬНИХ ТЕСТІВ І ТЕСТІВ ЗА ФАХОМ

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*Анотація.* Розглядаються три типи тестів з англійської мови, а саме, стартові, контрольні та тести за фахом. Приділено увагу різним підходам до тестування, що дозволяє імітувати повсякденні ситуації.

*Ключові слова:* підхід, тестування, спілкування, ситуації, моделювання.

## РАЗРАБОТКА И ИМПЛЕМЕНТАЦИЯ СТАРТОВЫХ, КОНТРОЛЬНЫХ ТЕСТОВ И ТЕСТОВ ПО СПЕЦИАЛЬНОСТИ

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*Аннотация.* Рассматриваются три типа тестов по английскому языку, а именно, стартовые, контрольные и тесты по специальности. Уделяется внимание различным подходам к тестированию, что позволяет имитировать повседневные ситуации.

*Ключевые слова:* подход, тестирование, общение, ситуации, моделирование.

### Introduction

Development of English language tests for students, masters, specialists, postgraduates in technical specialties in Kharkiv National Automobile and Highway University is a crucial issue. A key point of the quality tests provision is to meet multifaceted and strict requirements to their design and implementation. On the one hand, the requirements have been identified by the national and international standards for the English Language Proficiency Level, on the other hand, the requirements reflect the demands for high efficient tests.

### Literature review

Placement, achievement, proficiency and other tests in English language teaching are devoted much attention to methodological literature. The most valuable and up-to-date in this field are the elaborations by professor David Crystal (Cambridge University) published in his works «English language assessment» and «Language and Internet». Professor Penny Ur from Cambridge University in the article "English the International language" proposes different tests and methods of their implementation in English language teaching. Mention should be made here of

professor B.V. Lihachev (Moscow) working in this sphere. The tests, described in the offered article are the development of the author to estimate students' knowledge of English at Kharkiv Automobile and Highway University.

### **Purpose and task**

English language tests for above mentioned learners should be considered as a comprehensive procedure based on a relevant approach to evaluation. It is of great importance that this approach should reflect approaches to English for special purpose (ESP) teaching and learning, namely, the communicative approach and the learner-centered approach. Therefore tests should be recognized for the important role they play in the teaching-learning process.

The communicative approach to testing allows simulating real life situations within the testing environment. Communicative language tests are tests of communicative skills, typically used in contradistinction to tests of grammatical knowledge. Such tests may be of specificity of context, authenticity of material or the simulation of real-life performance [1].

The reflection of a learner-centered approach to such testing development would provide better evaluation of English Language learner's competence. Competency-based assessment of speciality learners testing means an approach to assessment which places primary emphasis on the competences to perform a particular job adequately. In teaching and assessment of a foreign language, the focus is on the intended outcomes of language training, that is, the sorts of tasks are expected to deal within the target (non-standard situation).

Thus, these communicative tests should take into account specific learning needs. These specific needs are identified by English language competence required for Bachelors training in transportation, ecology, mechatronics, road-building construction and etc.

### **English language tests development and implementation**

Such assessment is necessarily criterion-referenced. The main difficulty in assessing language knowledge within such a framework is in defining what the necessary skills or competences are in establishing mastery levels, par-

ticularly where language skills or competence are not only one contributing factor of success (occupational knowledge and personal qualities being other relevant skills). This fact could be one of the reasons offering development of such testing in general English for technical students of Bachelor course. There arises a question how much these tests based on this scale will be a reliable tool to measure student's competence? First of all these tests require knowledge of the subject. Therefore, the test will measure both the integrated language and professional skills. This may lead to reducing both the tests value and their reliability. To keep these tests at the proper level it is necessary to care of the relevant balance between both complexity of subject knowledge and language skills required to go through the texts tasks.

Any language teaching course has certain evaluation requirements and these requirements should be strictly observed at composing different tests. All three kinds of tests can be used as diagnostic tests to determine the areas of learners' weakness.

As it has already been noted before, evaluation can have two functions – assessment and feedback. Assessment is a matter of measuring what the learners already know. But any assessment should also provide a positive feedback to inform teachers and learners about what is still not known, thus providing important input to the content and methods of future work.

Speaking about such testing it is possible to point out three basic types of assessment tests: placement, achievement and proficiency.

The placement tests are used to place learners in the course most suited to their needs. The placement test comes before the course begins. The aim of the placement tests is to determine the learner's state of knowledge before English language university course starts. The tests results should indicate what form of course the students should take. In the first instance, therefore, the placement test is a diagnostic one, indicating how far and in what ways the student falls short of the proficiency level. In this respect the test has a formative value – the test results can be used in forming the nature and content of training.

What should be borne in mind is that any placement test can only be an approximate guide

and should be treated with caution. A good placement test should also reveal positive factors. It should show not just what the learner lacks, but also what potential for learning can be exploited in the English language for technical students course [2].

The achievement tests show how well the learner is keeping up with the syllabus and can be administered any time through the course. Achievement tests, is a kind of test being the least problematic, since it is usually internal to the course. The achievement test is, however, a kind of testing which the teacher of English is most likely to conduct. In constructing a good achievement test, one should follow the same basic principles as for constructing any test, namely:

1. The test reasonably assumes what the learners have learnt. This is not necessarily the same they have been taught.
2. Bias in the test should be avoided. For example, the test items should not demand specialist subject knowledge or cultural knowledge. This is a problem with any kind of language test, but it is more apparent in achievement tests, which may often involve the use of specialist content. The important point is that getting a correct answer should not depend on special subject knowledge outside the material used in the text, unit to have been studied.

For the achievement test it is also important to take into account the ability of the learners to any stand stressful situation which can occur as non-standard ones.

Speaking about proficiency tests it is necessary to stress that these tests assess whether or not the learner copes with the demands of a particular non-standard situation, which may require appropriate levels of skills to use plain English within the communication in English for Special Purposes [3]. Proficiency testing is identified as testing designed to assess whether candidates will be able to perform the language tasks required of them therefore such tests are primarily criterion-referenced. In other words the candidate's ability is assessed according to how it matches the certain criterion judged to be essen-

tial for proficiency in a particular task. Proficiency tests are criterion-referenced and therein lies a problem what should the criteria be? Should they vary within different subject areas? How specific are skills and knowledge for any particular tasks?

The move towards proficiency testing fits very nearly with the context of ESP which is crucially concerned with enabling learners to perform certain language tasks. Proficiency tests for specific purposes should be able to give reliable indication of whether a master, a post-graduate or engineer is proficient enough to carry out the tasks that will be required for getting a decent workplace.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, all three types of tests can be used as diagnostic tests to determine the areas of weakness such tests may have. The diagnostic evidence can then be used as a means of determining what for and how much tuition needs such testing.

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