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**ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT:
PERFORMANCE TESTS AND PORTFOLIOS**

The shift from reproductive model of instruction to constructive view of teaching and competency-based learning in Ukrainian educational context has resulted in raising interest to so called alternative or authentic assessment in teaching foreign languages and the English language in particular. Following the recommendations of the Common European Framework for Languages [1] such forms of assessments as performance tests and portfolio are getting actively incorporated into English teaching practices. Particular attention is devoted to implementing Language Portfolio on the basis of the European Language Portfolio. A. V. Herhel and L. V. Yahenich developed recommendations on using Portfolio at primary level, N. V. Yahelska worked out proposals for economists, O. D. Karpiuk proposed the project of Ukrainian Language portfolio. As a part of the State Program in 2010 the pilot project on approbation the Language Portfolio in Ukraine started in 5 regions [2]. The methodological base for it has become the works of American and European researchers (D. Little, D. Meijer, R. Perclova, T. McNamara and others) as well as Ukrainian scientists [3]. Though the mentioned above recommendations contain detail characteristics of the procedures related to using portfolio and the description of the detectors used for students' self-assessment the question about the place of such kind of assessment in the final evaluation needs further consideration. Many teachers in their working practice also face the problem of assessing such types of tasks as projects, presentations, conferences and other alternative forms of students' activity.

In the focus of the article is the problem of determining the principles and criteria for evaluation and scoring the alternative forms of assessment: performance-based activities and students' self-assessment, portfolio in particular.

The issue of the alternative assessment is not new for educational science. It was raised in 80-90 years of the XX century as an opposition to traditional paper-and-pencil tests which were the main instruments for evaluating students' progress. The term alternative assessment means alternative to traditional assessment. There are other common names for this form of assessment – performance assessment, authentic assessment and direct assessment – which help to reveal the nature of this kind of appraisal: to involve students in performing authentic “meaningful tasks that replicate real world challenges” [4, p. 2010]. The variety of alternative assessment, all of which are characterized by high degree of authenticity and integration of different language skills and competences, helps to reach the modern educational goals – to acquire not only the language but diverse learning strategies and to develop different metacognitive processes. The most common

types used in the teaching context are oral interviews, story or text retelling, writing samples, diaries, different performance-based tasks such as projects, presentations, conferences and portfolio.

Among the advantages of the alternative assessment we should also mention its formative nature and high wash-back potential. Teachers evaluate students “in the process of “forming” their competences and skills with the goal to continue their growth” [5, p. 7]: comments and suggestions given about their performance provide learners with an opportunity to improve their language ability.

As it has been stated above, there is a tough issue associated with the performance-based assessment that needs to be addressed – it is reliability. There is a large degree of subjectivity in judging such kind of tasks. To solve the problem a teacher should develop assessment criteria clear for both sides – a teacher and a student.

There are three general approaches to evaluating and scoring a student’s activity: objective, analytical and holistic. Objective approach is based on using quantified methods and primarily is used for evaluating students’ writing. For example, a correctness score may be calculated as a fraction of number of words (the particular number) and a sum of errors (each error is assigned a weighted score) in a piece of writing [6, p. 193].

The holistic approach considers the idea of treating a learner’s performance as a whole, without thinking about the individual components of a testing skill or counting the number of errors made by a student. Moreover, a single scale may be used to determine different levels of speaking or writing performance. The score is awarded on a scale (on 1 to 4, for example) which is accompanied by a detailed verbal description of the performance needed to achieve that score level. Usually the levels are determined according to the degree of meeting the standard of the performance (clearly demonstrates the competence, demonstrates the competence but has occasional errors, demonstrates a minimal competence etc.). Speaking about the verbal descriptors it should be said that they represent all the components required for the successful performance and resemble the descriptors used by analytical scoring. The examples of utilizing such holistic approach are descriptors for written test in TOEFL, for speaking in CAE or European Language Portfolio etc.

Taking into consideration the nature of the alternative assessment and time constraints many foreign researchers consider holistic approach more appropriate for evaluating projects, speeches, oral and PowerPoint presentations and other performance-based activities (J. V. O’Malley, L. V. Pierce, J. Mueller, H. D. Brown, K. Bailey, P. Abeywickrama). According to J. V. O’Malley and L. V. Pierce “the advantages of using holistic scoring are that it is fast, high rater reliability can be achieved, and the scaling can provide a public standard understood by teachers and students alike” [6, p. 188 – 189]. However, there is a concern that this approach may lack positive wash-back as the single score provides less diagnostic feedback. To solve the problem, a teacher may incorporate the elements of informal

assessment using anecdotal comments, pointing to strengths and weaknesses, giving suggestions etc.

Developing reliable and clear rubrics is crucial for alternative assessment. The criteria should be based on a common set of anchor papers and represent the standards of the performance related to different levels of the language proficiency (according to the skills, abilities and competences tested). It should be mentioned that there are no uniformed descriptors applicable to any situation: in most cases an educator should work them out independently. This task is rather tough and time-consuming and consequently may become a real barrier on the way of implementing reliable and valid assessment. To overcome these difficulties teachers should address the recommendations of the Common European Framework for Languages [1] developed for the purpose of elaboration the language education and unification of the learning and teaching standards across Europe. In teachers' disposal there are clear illustrative descriptors assessing different language competences relevant to the different levels of mastery and proficiency. The choice of descriptors depends on the performance content, on teachers' goals and the specifics of the assessing objectives.

Following the authors of the Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment [7, p. 55] we distinguish four common elements required for developing rubrics regardless the testing purpose:

- specification of traits or dimensions serving the basis for appraising the students performance;
- provision of descriptors (definitions and examples) to clarify the meaning of each trait or dimension;
- a scale of values which is used to rate each dimension;
- standards of excellence for specified performance level illustrated by corresponding models or examples.

Having discussed the issue of setting scoring criteria all researchers insist on involving students in the process. Such tactic will help not only to get better perception of the assessment descriptors but will make learners think about skills, abilities and competences needed to perform different authentic activities, raise their motivation and help in setting personal goals.

There are some other recommendations in grading and communicating students' performance related to alternative assessment:

- assign differentiated weights to all aspects of learner performance;
- do not grade effort and never combine effort and achievement in a single grade;
- assign grades separately for the result of group work and for individual contribution;
- use anecdotal records to support grades (give specific individualized comments and advice using the rubric language, link them to instructional goals).

As it has been stated above, portfolio is also a form of alternative assessment. Initially it was described as “a purposeful collection of student work that is intended to show progress over time” [6, p. 14]. Currently it is considered a key concept of new European doctrine on language learning. The main aims of implementing portfolios are the following: “to help learners give shape and coherence to their experience of learning and using languages other than their first language; to motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels; to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills they have acquired (to be consulted, for example, when they are moving to a higher learning level or seeking employment at home or abroad)” [8]. Thus, a language portfolio is first of all an instrument of student self-evaluation and a frame for forming thinking, active and creative plurilingual and pluricultural personality. The question about assessing this learning product is still open: some methodologies propose to assign grades for this work as a whole, others suggest evaluating only specific components of portfolios, and some educators suppose that portfolios must not be evaluated at all.

In our opinion, portfolios, being a form of assessment, need teacher’s appraisal as well as grading. The specifics of portfolios imply a complex approach to their evaluation and require development of a clear assessment policy. Regarding to the teaching goals and course objectives a teacher together with students choose which components to grade, what criteria to apply and what weighted to assign; the similar procedure should be utilized to define and describe rubrics and descriptors relevant to a portfolio as a whole. Special attention should be paid to appraising the ways of working on the portfolio during the whole instructional period. A teacher trainer should also consider stages of the evaluation.

The analysis of the alternative assessment issue proves that performance tests and portfolios meet the requirements of the Common European Framework for Languages adopted in our country and have become effective instruments measuring different language competences of learners. The reliability and validity of the alternative assessment is reached by applying holistic and analytical (independently or as a part of holistic) approaches to developing scoring criteria. The correct choice of descriptors and clear explanation of rubrics as well as following the assessment instructions are the crucial points for this kind of assessment. It is considered perspective to study the role and share of the alternative assessment regard to the whole instructional period and final grading.

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Наточий Л. О. Альтернативне оцінювання: тестування на основі оцінювання діяльності та мовне портфоліо

Стаття присвячена питанням альтернативного оцінювання, зокрема, проблемі тестування на основі оцінювання діяльності та використанню мовного портфоліо. Подано основні характеристики досліджуваного типу оцінювання. Проблема альтернативного контролю знань розглядається відповідно до критеріїв компетентнісного підходу, який застосовується у навчанні іноземним мовам. Доведено, що оцінювання на основі діяльності та використання мовного портфоліо відповідають вимогам Загальноєвропейських Рекомендацій з мовної освіти та постають ефективними засобами оцінювання різних видів мовної компетенції мовців, що вивчають англійську мову. Достовірність та валідність альтернативного оцінювання досягається завдяки застосуванню цілісного й аналітичного підходів до розробки критеріїв оцінювання. З'ясовано, що правильний відбір дескрипторів, чіткий і зрозумілий опис рубрик є критичними для досліджуваного типу контролю знань. Встановлено чотири головні ознаки шкал оцінювання. Задля забезпечення позитивного зворотного зв'язку, запропоновано використання неформальних видів оцінювання.

Ключові слова: альтернативне оцінювання, тестування на основі оцінювання діяльності, мовне портфоліо, критерії оцінювання.

Наточий Л. А. Альтернативное оценивание: тестирование на основе оценивания деятельности и языковое портфолио

Статья посвящена вопросам альтернативного оценивания, в частности, тестированию на основе оценивания деятельности и использованию языкового портфолио. Представлена общая характеристика анализируемого типа контроля. Альтернативное

оценивание рассматривается сквозь призму компетентностного подхода, который получил широкое распространение в современной методике обучения иностранным языкам. Подтверждено, что тестирование на основе оценивания деятельности и методика использования языкового портфолио соответствуют Общеввропейским Рекомендациям о языковом образовании и являются эффективными инструментами для определения различных видов языковой. Достоверность и валидность альтернативного оценивания обеспечивается применением целостного и аналитического подходов к разработке критериев оценивания. Выявлено, что правильный выбор критериев оценивания, четкое и понятное описание рубрик, соблюдение инструкций по применению оценивания являются критическими для альтернативного оценивания.

Ключевые слова: альтернативное оценивание, тестирование на основе оценивания деятельности, языковое портфолио, критерии оценивания.

Natochiy L. O. Alternative assessment: performance tests and portfolios

The article deals with the issue of alternative assessment, performance tests and portfolios in particular. General characteristic of this type of approach has been given. The alternative assessment is considered through the frame of the competency-based approach adopted in teaching foreign languages across Europe. It has been proved that performance tests and portfolios meet the requirements of the Common European Framework for Languages and have become effective instruments measuring different language competences of the English language learners. The reliability and validity of the alternative assessment is reached by applying holistic and analytical (independently or as a part of holistic) approaches to developing scoring criteria. It has been found out that the correct choice of descriptors and clear explanation of rubrics as well as following the assessment instructions are the crucial points for this kind of assessment. Four common characteristics of scoring scales have been distinguished. It has been proposed to accompany assessment grades with anecdotal comments, suggestions on the performance, course overview and other kinds of informal assessing instruments to ensure positive wash-back. It is considered perspective to study the role and share of the alternative assessment regard to the whole instructional period and final grading.

Key words: alternative assessment, performance test, language portfolio, scoring criteria.

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