

TYPES OF TESTS USED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

У статті розглядається проблема типів тестів, які є важливим аспектом процесу вивчення та викладання англійської мови. Розглянуто різні типи тестів, які використовуються в англійській мові. Визначено, що роль тестів є дуже важливою, особливо у вивченні мови, бо вони показують, що учні дізналися під час курсу, а також відображають сильні та слабкі сторони навчального процесу, та допомагають вчителю поліпшити викладання англійської мови. Дана класифікація чотирьох традиційних категорій тестів. Проаналізовано використання найбільш поширених типів об'єктивних тестів, таких як - коротка відповідь, множинний вибір, підбір пари слів або частин речень. З'ясовано, що кожному процесу передачі знань необхідна перевірка отриманих знань з метою нагляду за ефективністю засвоєння знань. Безліч різних методів і форм контролю дає вчителю можливість вибору, в залежності від індивідуальних особливостей класу.

Ключові слова: *тестування, різні типи тестів, вивчення і викладання англійської мови.*

Statement of the problem in general aspect and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks. Among all words used in a classroom there is the only word that usually makes the students shudder: "test". There is hardly a person who would claim that s/he favours tests and finds them very motivating. However, tests cannot be avoided completely, for they are inevitable elements of learning process. They are included into curriculum at schools and are to check the students' level of knowledge and what they are able to do; they could be accomplished at the beginning of the study year and at the end of it; the students could be tested after working on new topics and acquiring new vocabulary. Moreover, the students are to face the tests in order to enter any foreign university or reveal the level of their English language skills for themselves. For that purpose they take specially designed tests that are Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL (further in the text) and CFC (further in the text), or Cambridge First Certificate. Although, these tests can sometimes serve for different purposes and are unrelated, they are sometimes quite common in their design and structure. [1: 26] Therefore, the author of the article is particularly interested in the present research, for she assumes it to be of a great significance not only for herself, but also for the individuals who are either involved in the field or just want to learn more about TOEFL and CFC tests, their structure, design and application.

The present article will display various aspects of the theory discussed, accompanied with the practical part vastly analyzed.

Making out the parts of general problem not solved earlier with which the paper deals. The problem of tests used in English language has not been yet solved till present.

Formulating the paper aims (stating the task). The goal of the present research is to investigate various types of test formats and ways of testing, focusing particularly on TOEFL and CFC tests, in order to see how the theory is used and could be applied in practice.

Presentation of the research with complete grounding of the obtained scientific results. Different scholars (Alderson, 1996; Heaton, 1990; Underhill, 1991) in their researches ask the similar question – why test, do the teachers really need them and for what purpose. Further, they all agree that test is not the teacher's desire to catch the students unprepared with what they are not acquainted; it is also not the motivating factor for the students to study. In fact, the test is a request for information and possibility to learn what the teachers did not know about their students before. We can add here that the test is important for the students, too, though they are unaware of that. The test is supposed to display not only the students' weak points, but also their strong sides. It could act as an indicator of progress the student is gradually making learning the language. Moreover, we can cite the idea of Hughes (1989:5) who emphasises that we can check the progress, general or specific knowledge of the students, etc. This claim will directly lead us to the statement that for each of these purposes there is a special type of testing. According to some scholars (Thompson, 2001; Hughes, 1989; Alderson, 1996; Heaton, 1990; Underhill, 1991), there are four traditional categories or types of tests: proficiency tests, achievement tests, diagnostic tests, and placement tests [2: 12]

Diagnostic tests. Referring to Longman Dictionary of LTAL (106) diagnostic tests is a test that is meant to display what the student knows and what s/he does not know. The dictionary gives an example of testing the learners' pronunciation of English sounds. Moreover, the test can check the students' knowledge before starting a particular course. Hughes (1989:6) adds that diagnostic tests are supposed to spot the students' weak and strong points. Heaton (1990:13) compares such type of test with a diagnosis of a patient, and the teacher with a doctor who states the diagnosis. Underhill (1991:14.) adds that a diagnostic test provides the student with a variety of language elements, which will help the teacher to determine what the student knows or does not know.

We believe that the teacher will intentionally include the material that either is presumed to be taught by a syllabus or could be a starting point for a course without the knowledge of which the further work is not possible [3: 35] Thus, we fully agree with the Heaton's comparison where he contrasts the test with a patient's diagnosis. The diagnostic test displays the teacher a situation of the students' current knowledge. This is very essential especially when the students return from their summer holidays (that produces a rather substantial gap in their knowledge) or if the students start a new course and the teacher is completely unfamiliar with the level of the group. Hence, the teacher has to consider carefully about the items s/he is interested in to teach. This consideration reflects Heaton's proposal (ibid.), which stipulates that the teachers should be systematic to design the tasks that are supposed to illustrate the students' abilities, and they should know what exactly they are testing. Moreover, Underhill (ibid.) points out that apart from the above-mentioned the most essential element of the diagnostic test is that the students should not feel depressed when the test is completed [3: 67].

Therefore, very often the teachers do not put any marks for the diagnostic test and sometimes even do not show the test to the learners if the students do not ask the teacher to return it. Nevertheless, regarding our own experience, the learners, especially the young ones, are eager to know their results and even demand marks for their work. Notwithstanding, it is up to the teacher whether to inform his/her students with the results or not; however, the test represents a valuable information mostly for the teacher and his/her plans for designing a syllabus.

Placement tests. Another type of test we are intended to discuss is a placement test. Concerning Longman Dictionary of LTAL again (279-280) we can see that a placement test is a test that places the students at an appropriate level in a programme or a course. This term does not refer to the system and construction of the test, but to its usage purpose. According to Hughes (1989:7), this type of test is also used to decide which group or class the learner could be joined to. This statement is entirely supported by another scholar, such as Alderson (1996:216), who declares that this type of test is meant for showing the teacher the students' level of the language ability.

According to Heaton (ibid.), the placement test should deal exactly with the language skills relevant to those that will be taught during a particular course. If our course includes development of writing skills required for politics, it is not appropriate to study writing required for medical purposes.

At this point we can attempt to compare a placement test and diagnostic one. From the first sight these both types of tests could look similar. They both are given at the beginning of the study year and both are meant for distinguishing the students' level of the current knowledge. However, if we consider the facts described in sub-chapter 2.1 we will see how they are different. A diagnostic test is meant for displaying a picture of the students' general knowledge at the beginning of the study year for the teacher to plan further work and design an appropriate syllabus for his/her students. Whereas, a placement test is designed and given in order to use the information of the students' knowledge for putting the students into groups according to their level of the language. Indeed, they are both used for teacher's planning of the course their functions differ. A colleague of mine, who works at high school, has informed me that they have used a placement test at the beginning of the year and it appeared to be relevant and efficient for her and her colleague's future teaching. The students were divided according to their English language abilities: the students with better knowledge were put together, whereas the weaker students formed their own group. It does not mean discrimination between the students. The teachers have explained the students the reason for such actions, why it was necessary – they wanted to produce an appropriate teaching for each student taking his/her abilities into account. The teachers have altered their syllabus to meet the demands of the students. The result proved to be satisfying. The students with better knowledge progressed; no one halted them. The weaker students have gradually improved their knowledge, for they received due attention than it would be in mixed group [3: 81]

Progress tests. Having discussed two types of tests that are usually used at the beginning, we can approach the test typically employed during the study year to check the students' development. We will speak about a progress test. According to Alderson (1996:217), progress test will show the teacher whether the students have learnt the recently taught material successfully. Basically, the teacher intends to check certain items, not general topics covered during the school or study year. Commonly, it is not very long and is determined to check the recent material. Therefore, the teacher might expect his/her learners to get rather high scores. The following type is supposed to be used after the students have learnt either a set of units on a theme or have covered a definite topic of the language. It will display the teacher whether the material has been successfully acquired or the students need additional practice instead of starting a new material.

A progress test will basically display the activities based on the material the teacher is determined to check. To evaluate it the teacher can work out a certain system of points that later will compose a mark. Typically, such tests do not influence the students' final mark at the end of the year.

The authorities of school demand the teachers to conduct progress tests, as well. However, the teachers themselves decide on the necessity of applying them. Nevertheless, we can claim that progress test is inevitable part of the learning process. We can even take a responsibility to declare that progress test facilitate the material acquisition in a way. The students preparing for the test look through the material again and there is a chance it can be transferred to their long-term memory.

Achievement tests. Apart from a progress test the teachers employ another type – achievement test. According to Longman Dictionary of LTAL (3), an achievement test is a test, which measures a language someone has learned during a specific course, study or program. Here the progress is significant and, therefore, is the main point tested. Alderson (1996:219) posits that achievement tests are “more formal”, whereas Hughes (1989:8) assumes that this type of tests will fully involve teachers, for they will be responsible for the preparation of such tests and giving them to the learners. He repeats the dictionary defining the notion of achievement tests, adding just that success of the students, groups of students, or the courses. Furthermore, Alderson (ibid.) conceives that achievement tests are mainly given at definite times of the school year. Moreover, they could be extremely crucial for the students, for they are intended either to make the students pass or fail the test [4: 45]

Proficiency tests. The last type of test to be discussed is a proficiency test. Regarding Longman Dictionary of LTAL (292) proficiency test is a test, which measures how much of a language a person knows or has learnt. It is not bound to any curriculum or syllabus, but is intended to check the learners’ language competence. Although, some preparation and administration was done before taking the test, the test’s results are what being focused on. The examples of such tests could be the American Testing of English as Foreign Language test (further in the text TOEFL) that is used to measure the learners’ general knowledge of English in order to allow them to enter any high educational establishments or to take up a job in the USA. Another proficiency test is Cambridge First Certificate test that has almost the same aim as a TOEFL.

To summarize we can claim that there are different types of tests that serve for different purposes. Moreover, they all are necessary for the teacher’s work, for them, apart from a proficiency test, could contribute to successful material acquisition by learners.

Conclusions and perspective of future development. The present research attempted to investigate the essence of two types of tests, such as TOEFL and CFC tests. The research has achieved the initially set goals and objectives. It dealt with the basic data about testing, where the author had displayed the ideas what was the essence of tests, why the students should be tested, what consequences could tests produce and whom they would mostly influence. Afterwards, the reasons for testing were discussed, where the author of the paper had gradually showed why tests were significant in the process of learning and the role of testing in the teaching process. After the basic data had been discussed, the author came directly to types of testing. At that point the author of the research made an attempt to review various sources on the topic she was able to find.

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Хижняк Е. Типы тестов, которые используются в английском языке.

В статье показаны типы тестов, которые используются в английском языке и являются важным аспектом процесса изучения и преподавания английского языка. Дана классификация четырех категорий тестов. Определено, что роль тестов является очень важной, особенно в изучении языка, потому что они показывают, что учащиеся узнали во время курса, а также отражают сильные и слабые стороны учебного процесса, и помогают учителю улучшить преподавание английского языка. Проанализировано использование распространенных типов объективных тестов. Выяснено, что каждому процессу обучения и передачи знаний необходима проверка полученных учащимися знаний в целях надзора за эффективностью усвоения знаний.

Контроль имеет множество разносторонних функций, при выполнении которых можно добиться высокого результата.

Ключевые слова: *тестирование, различные типы тестов, изучение и преподавание английского языка.*

Khyzhniak O. Types of tests used in English language.

This article deals with problem of types of tests used in English language, which is the important aspect of the process of English language learning and teaching. It considers different types of tests used in English language. The role of tests is very useful and important, especially in language learning, for they indicates how much the learners have learnt during a course, as well as display the strength and weakness of the teaching process and help the teacher improve it. The tests can facilitate the students' acquisition process and function as a tool to increase their motivation; however, too much of testing could be disastrous changing entirely the students' attitude towards learning the language, especially if the results are usually dissatisfying. There are four traditional categories or types of tests: proficiency tests measuring how much of a language a person knows or has learnt; achievement tests measuring a language someone has learned during a specific course, study or program; diagnostic tests displaying the knowledge of the students or lack of it, and placement tests placing the students at an appropriate level in a programme or a course. Discrete point test is a language test that is meant to test a particular language item, whereas the integrative test intends to check several language skills and language components together or simultaneously. To enter any foreign university the students are supposed to take the TOEFL or CFC tests. Serving for almost similar purpose, however being sometimes different in their design and structure, the TOEFL and CFC tests are usually constructed according to the accepted universal pattern.

Key words: *testing, various types of tests, English language learning and teaching.*