METHODS OF ASSESSING STUDENTS' LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Abstract. The article is devoted to the consideration of the problem of evaluating the educational achievements of foreign language students. One of the most important conditions for obtaining positive results of the educational process is an adequate assessment of educational achievements.

Correctly applied assessment can motivate students to work towards the learning goals of the course, encourage more intensive learning activities, directing them to achieve planned results and promptly providing a reflection of the results. Modernization of education should be carried out according to objective, understandable and personally meaningful principles and criteria for students, teachers and organizers of the educational process. Only under the condition of integration of the internal efforts of the student and the external action of the purposeful educational process, the interested and effective activity of the participants of the educational process is possible to obtain a high quality of education.

Control methods are methods of activity of the teacher and students, in the course of which the assimilation of educational material and mastering of knowledge, abilities and skills by students are revealed. The general meaning of these methods is to ensure timely and comprehensive feedback between students and teachers in the best possible way, on the basis of which it is established how students perceive and learn the material.
In modern didactics, the following methods of control are distinguished: daily observation of the educational and cognitive activities of students in classes, which allows the teacher to form an idea of how they perceive and interpret the educational material, to what extent they show independence, creativity, etc.; the oral survey consists in posing questions to the students according to the content of the studied material and evaluating the completeness, logic and validity of their answers; written control of knowledge and skills is carried out with the help of written works and allows to demonstrate the ability to consistently present the material, express one's thoughts in writing.

Keywords: assessment of learning achievements, foreign language, control methods, quality of learning, feedback.

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МЕТОДИКА ОЦІНЮВАННЯ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ДОСЯГНЕНЬ СТУДЕНТІВ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

Анотація. Стаття присвячена розгляду проблеми оцінювання навчальних досягнень студентів з іноземної мови. Однією з найважливіших умов отримання позитивних результатів освітнього процесу є адекватна оцінка навчальних досягнень.

Правильно застосоване оцінювання може спонукати студентів працювати для досягнення навчальних цілей курсу, заохочувати до інтенсивнішої навчальної діяльності, спрямовуючи її на досягнення запланованих результатів та оперативно надаючи відображення результатів. Модернізація освіти має здійснюватися за об’єктивними, зрозумілими та особистісно значущими для студентів, викладачів та організаторів
навчального процесу принципами і критеріями. Лише за умови інтеграції внутрішніх зусиль студента та зовнішньої дії цілеспрямованого навчального процесу можлива зацікавленна та ефективна діяльність учасників навчального процесу для отримання високої якості навчання.

Методи контролю - це способи діяльності викладача і студентів, в ході яких виявляються засвоєння учебного матеріалу та оволодіння студентами знаннями, вміннями та навичками. Загальне значення цих методів полягає в тому, щоб найліпшим чином забезпечити своєчасний і всебічний зворотний зв'язок між студентами і викладачами, на підставі якого встановлюється, як студенти сприймають та засвоюють матеріал.

У сучасній дидактиці виділяються такі методи контролю: щоденне спостереження за навчально-пізнавальною діяльністю студентів на заняттях, що дозволяє викладачеві скласти уявлення про те, як вони сприймають і осмислюють навчальний матеріал, в якій мірі виявляють самостійність, творчість тощо; усне опитування полягає в постановці перед студентами запитань за змістом вивченого матеріалу і оцінюванні повноти, логічності і обґрунтованості їхніх відповідей; письмовий контроль знань і умінь здійснюється за допомогою письмових робіт та дозволяє виявити уміння послідовно викладати матеріал, висловлювати свої думки на письмі.

Ключові слова: оцінювання навчальних досягнень, іноземна мова, методи контролю, якість навчання, зворотний зв'язок.

Problem statement. The need to transform the structure and content of training for future professionals, caused by society's need for highly qualified personnel, sets new requirements for education monitoring. The modern paradigm of education is changing from a knowledge-based to a competency-based one, and the technologies for assessing students' learning achievements are changing accordingly. The development of various types of pedagogical control stimulates students' learning and cognitive activity. As the history of education shows, attempts to eliminate control completely or partially led to a decrease in the quality of education.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Theoretical problems of students' knowledge control were the subject of research by Yu. Romanenko [6], L. Romanyshina [7], N. Tverezovskaya [8] and others. Implementation of the competence approach requires the use of new methods and techniques of current and examination control in the practice of higher education.

The aim of the article is to investigate and analyze the methods of assessing students' learning achievements in a foreign language to determine the quality of assimilation of educational material and the degree of correspondence of acquired practical skills and abilities to the goals and objectives of the discipline.
Outline of the main material of the study.

Assessment is the process of improving the quality of a person’s work after evaluation. Assessment is another important standard that enables any organization to identify the drawbacks of the employees and improve the quality of their work. In educational institutions also, assessment is done based on the evaluation. Assessment in education is about gathering, interpreting and using the information for the outcomes of learning. Bob Adamson rightly points out, “Assessment is the process of collecting information or evidence of a learner’s progress and achievement over a period of time in order to improve teaching and learning” [10]. Learner-centred assessment, at any level, is important in educational institutions where the focus is more on learners and their improvement.

Huba and Freed opine, “The process of assessment is nothing but gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning” [11]. In ELT also, assessment is one of the important standards that teachers follow to assess the performance of students and improve their quality of work for better results. Therefore, evaluation and assessment are done in English classrooms as the same process.

The main purpose of assessment is to improve learners' learning skills. Assessment, in the field of learning, is a continuous process which arises out of the interface between teaching and learning. Through assessment, we can identify and diagnose the needs of learners and assist them for their improvement. Even in corporate or business organizations, assessment is done for employees to improve their skills from time to time. Formal assessments are systematic, preplanned methods of testing students that are used to determine how well students have learnt the material that is being taught in the classroom. Each formal assessment has the same set of expectations for the students who are taking the assessment. It has specific criteria used for scoring and interpretation. This type of assessment is more useful for students.

Assessment is useful for students to improve themselves from time to time. The following are the advantages of assessment for students/learners:

- Students can develop active learning when assessment delivery is accurate and innovative.
- Assessment allows students to demonstrate their work to an authentic audience.
- It helps the students make the transition to life-long learning and self-assessment.
It provides an opportunity for the students to develop their skills, intelligence and practical knowledge.

It helps the students examine themselves where and how they are as far as their level or performance is concerned.

It fosters creative skills and develops creative thinking and meta-cognitive skills.

It enables students to see their own growth and take steps how to improve it further.

It improves students’ concentration and focus on the subject taught.

It helps the students engage in learning actively and doing the assignment or project work effectively.

It encourages peer feedback which motivates students to think more deeply about the work done and also to review and revise that work with utmost care than that of the previous one [12].

The main tasks of the technology for evaluating educational achievements in the system of professional training of future specialists of various profiles were to determine the quality of assimilation of educational material, the degree of correspondence of the acquired abilities and skills to the goals and tasks of the educational discipline, and to establish the adequacy of the chosen methods and means of teaching. The following requirements were taken into account:

- objectivity - creation of conditions for the most accurate assessment of students' knowledge, setting forth uniform requirements, fair treatment of everyone;
- reasonableness - argumentation of the rating scale;
- systematicity - an important psychological factor that forms persistence and focus on achieving the goal;
- an individual and differentiated approach - reducing psychological stress, taking into account the psychological characteristics of students, their character, potential opportunities, abilities, etc.;
- optimality - implies the adequacy of the control to the learning goals, the validity of the control and its reliability - the stability of the results obtained after repeated control after a certain time, the closeness of the results during the control by different teachers;
- professional focus - determined by targeted training of the future specialist [5, p. 149].

The rating system of assessment as a component of the credit-module system of the educational process organization most fully meets these requirements. According to L. Romanyshyna, the effective functioning of the rating system of knowledge assessment is ensured by taking into account all types of work performed by the student; assessment of the degree of mastering the discipline of students by
the overall rating; the possibility of converting the rating points to the usual scale of grades; combination of the system of control over educational activities with independent work of students; focus on the individual through individualization and differentiation of the educational process [7, p. 345].

In pedagogical practice, the following types of control are distinguished: input, current, final and deferred [7, p. 108–111]. The implementation of the pedagogical system of professional training of future specialists involved the use of all types of control. The purpose of entrance control (test) is to establish the initial level of the student's educational achievements. This gives the teacher information about the student's readiness for the learning process, promotes differentiation and individualization of the learning process.

Current control was carried out at each lesson on the basis of a systematic assessment of the level of knowledge (tests, oral survey). One of the components of current monitoring is self-monitoring - evaluation by the student of his/her educational activities. To carry out self-control, it is necessary to provide the student with a standard of educational activity and the expected result.

The final control was carried out in the form of modular control works and an exam.

The deferred control (determination of the level of academic achievement after a certain period of time after the final control) was conducted in writing according to the examination methodology. Based on the results, conclusions were drawn about the effectiveness of the organization of the educational process and the proposed methods of conducting classes.

We used oral, written, and practical forms of checking the level of students' learning achievements. The methods of oral assessment include individual questioning, conversation, and the methods of written assessment include thematic dictations, tests, quizzes, and individual research papers. Practical testing is associated with assessing the level of practical work performed by students. The use of only traditional forms and methods of control to assess students' learning activities is expressed in the evaluation of students' oral and written work, which creates a constant threat of bias. The total transition to test technologies for diagnosing knowledge leads to the leveling of creativity, non-standard solutions, individual pace and method of solving tasks. That is why we are convinced of the need to combine all methods of knowledge diagnostics. These aspects are key in the development of a system of pedagogical control of students' learning achievements [1, p. 144-146; 2, p. 99-105].

Oral control greatly simplifies the evaluation process: in the process of speaking or performing oral exercises, the student's speaking skills, language competence, and homework are immediately checked, and the learned lexical and grammatical material is evaluated. This type of control is indispensable for the
current verification of a small topic (conversation, story, communication on the topic, performing post-text exercises for understanding the text, translation, untranslated reading).

A written test, along with an oral one, is an important method of monitoring students' knowledge, skills and abilities. The use of this method makes it possible to simultaneously check the learning of the material by all students of the group in the shortest possible time, to determine directions for individual work with each. Written examination is used in all types of control and is carried out both in classroom and out-of-classroom work.

Testing is an effective means of organizing writing control in foreign language learning. Test control can ensure the successful implementation of the purpose and all functions of control, as well as meet the requirements for the quality of control. The main difference between the test and the traditional control work is that it always assumes measurement, and therefore the main distinguishing feature of the test is objectivity, which is guaranteed by measurement. That's why the grade given based on the results of testing differs in greater objectivity and independence from the possible subjectivity of the teacher than the grade for the performance of a traditional test, which is always subjective. The test technique is especially effective when the task is synthetic, which allows you to check the understanding of the task in a short period of time. Also, the test should be combined with traditional types of control. Written control of a foreign language can consist of various exercises to check different aspects: vocabulary, grammar, spelling, syntax.

Professional foreign language testing should be close to real conditions: both productive and reproductive skills should be tested using authentic materials. Exercises should reveal the student's ability to quickly translate technical terms, decipher abbreviations, find the correspondence between the terms of the language being studied and international terms, identify and translate the constructions of the technical text with transformation into syntactic models of the native language. The category of written control includes test papers in the form of various test tasks, written translations and works on a given topic. Recently, standardized knowledge control has been widely used in higher education throughout the entire period of study of educational courses. In standardized control, the test method with an alternative choice of answers is widely used. The method of alternative choice of answers consists in the fact that questions are asked and at the same time options of answers are offered, the correctness of which must be assessed.

Competency paradigm of training involves the use of test technologies as an indicator of the success to form the knowledge component of competencies of different levels. The global trend in the development of competency tests is aimed not only and not so much at the evaluation of learning results, but at the design of the learning process itself [4; 6; 8]. The advantages of test technologies include the
following factors: - great objectivity and, as a result, a positive stimulating effect on the student's cognitive activity; – reducing the negative impact on the test results of such subjective factors as the mood, level of qualification, personal preferences and other characteristics of a particular teacher; – focus on modern technical means, in particular computer tests; – universality, coverage of all stages of the learning process.

When structuring the control system, we took into account the components of test control: goal, object, criteria, correlation. The technology of test diagnostics of students' knowledge level developed by us, which takes into account the requirements of the credit-module system of education, is implemented in the process of teaching foreign languages at Khmelnytskyi National University and Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University.

The control is carried out at four levels: introductory control, which determines the basic level of students' knowledge of a foreign language; current control, which is used in the classroom for ongoing assessment of knowledge and correction of the learning process; final control - module tests (two per semester), which include tasks from all current tests conducted in the module; final control - examination tasks and tests to check the residual level of knowledge (including all test tasks of the discipline).

Given the heterogeneity of the student population (different levels of training, differences in the curricula of educational institutions (schools, colleges, lyceums, etc.), an adaptation period is envisaged during the training. According to P. Jutavichene [9, p. 186-187], this stage is one of the main elements of individualization of learning. Therefore, we believe that the structure of each discipline should include an entrance test aimed at assessing the basic level of students' knowledge. Such diagnostics is necessary for both the teacher (for the correct construction of the trajectory of teaching the discipline) and the student (for real self-assessment of their own knowledge and skills).

Along with the mandatory forms of current knowledge control (tests, vocabulary and grammar exercises, essays), we practice assessing students' participation in projects, in the work of the student research group, participation in subject competitions and student conferences. In this way, each type of student's learning activity is evaluated regardless of their basic level of knowledge, and passivity, lack of initiative and laziness are the reasons for low semester ratings of individual students [2, p. 36-41].

The introduction of professionally oriented tasks into the educational process has a number of positive aspects. Such tasks are a powerful means of educating students' intellectual culture and literacy (formation of key competencies), as they illustrate the need for the knowledge and skills acquired in the practice of a future specialist in a particular profession.
The problem of improving the forms of examination control arose when the credit-module organization of the educational process was introduced. Two diametric views emerged: the first is that examination control is unnecessary at all, because students are given a semester grade or credit based on their current rating; the second is that all students should take an exam, because it is the only form of adequate assessment of their academic achievements. In our opinion, the truth is in the middle. The need to improve the control model that would meet the requirements of the Bologna Process and take into account the positive experience of the national system of knowledge assessment is also emphasized by Yu. Komar [3, p. 245-251].

Let us consider in more detail the methodology of exam control in a foreign language in higher education institutions [1, p. 307-311]. In previous years, the exam used packages of exam cards (25-30 variants), which usually contained three questions (texts for reading and understanding, tasks and a topic for oral communication). Students took the exam orally, having previously prepared for the answer within 30-45 minutes. The teacher would hear all the students in turn, which often resulted in the exam lasting 6-8 hours.

When the credit-module system was introduced, the exam became an optional form of control, but according to the experience of teaching, only about a third of students do not pass the exam. In our opinion, the way the exam is conducted should correlate with the module tests, since based on their completion and current rating, a student can get a semester grade without taking an exam.

The author's approach to exams differs from the traditional one, in which the assessment of knowledge was subjective and often contained elements of assessing the student's personality and behavior, rather than academic achievements. A clear justification of the scores obtained for the completed exam tasks reduces the emotional stress of both students and teachers, helps to avoid conflicts and objectively assess students' academic achievements.

Having made a comparative analysis of the input and output tests of students' achievements in foreign language learning, we agree with the opinions of teachers from other Ukrainian higher education institutions about the low level of basic training of students in secondary schools. However, with the introduction of an independent system of assessment of graduates' knowledge, we observe a tendency to improve the level of students' knowledge due to a stricter system of selection of applicants for admission to higher education institutions.

State-funded students who had high independent evaluation scores demonstrate significantly better academic performance than their contract groupmates. During the entrance test, state-funded students showed mostly excellent and good results, while contract students showed satisfactory or even unsatisfactory results. The same trend continued during the final control. The competency-based approach determines the result-oriented focus of education, which, in our opinion,
is its undoubted advantage over other traditional and innovative approaches. Assessment of the level of competencies is a complex pedagogical problem, one of the ways to solve which is the proposed technology of pedagogical control of students' learning achievements [1; 2].

Based on the results of the implementation of the credit-module system at Khmelnytsky National University and Zhytomyr State Polytechnic University, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- credit-modular technology with a rating system of evaluation contributes to improving the quality of education, provided that the teacher works conscientiously and the student has an appropriate level of knowledge;
- systematic control and consultations help to improve the quality of the educational process, as a result of which even students with a low basic level of knowledge receive a satisfactory grade;
- the exam as a form of control of students' academic achievements has not lost its relevance, but has acquired a new meaning;
- adequate assessment of students' knowledge is achieved only through the use of various assessment methods (tests, oral conversations, written works, etc.);
- this teaching technology requires high qualification and experience of teachers and much more time for individual work with students;
- diagnostics of the quality of knowledge according to this system is impossible without the preparation of teaching materials.

Conclusions Therefore, systematic control of students' knowledge and skills is one of the main conditions for improving the quality of education. The task of the teacher is to identify the true state of knowledge, skills and abilities in the process of testing and assessing knowledge and thereby help students to rationally organize their academic work in the future. In his work, the teacher should use not only generally accepted forms of control, but also systematically invent and implement his own means. If the control and verification are built correctly, they contribute not only to the timely identification of gaps in students' knowledge and skills, repetition and systematization of the material, establishing the level of readiness to learn new material, forming the ability to use self-checking and self-control techniques, but also to improving the quality of training the future specialists.

References:


Література:


