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STUDENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS TESTING

The task of assessing student learning is as old as the institution one calls school or university. Socrates used questions to determine what students learned. The problem that confronted Socrates was how to assess what students knew. This difficulty is equally significant for modern-day educators.

Nowadays there has been a growing interest in testing. Properly organized testing of student's achievements gives the lecture a chance to get an idea of students' progress in foreign language learning [4].

Grant P. Wiggins expects teachers to construct tests in which they assess «whether students are learning how to learn» [1, p. 214]. According to Wiggins, in most classrooms, teachers treat knowledge as static. Tests are constructed to assess what students already know, often through the rote processing of information. Wiggins demands more: «instead of testing whether students have learned to read, we should test their ability to read to learn; instead of finding out whether they know formulas we should find out whether they can use formulas to find other formulas, and so on» [1, p. 214].

Wiggins's goal is to create evaluation conditions in which authentic student performance is possible. This requires that teachers foster certain habits of the mind and enable students to constantly move: «back and forth between drill and a whole performance; that way students can learn what it feels like to be in the habit of skillful performing and can see the value of developing the newer, more difficult habits» [1, p. 218].

If there were a high uniformity in the occurrence and use of the various language units testing of a foreign language could be simplified. Any situation could be taken and we could engage student in speaking, reading, writing and listening. And an achievement score could be the same if we chose another situation, a shorter or longer topic. Nevertheless, it does not happen.

«The situations in which language is the medium of communication are potentially almost infinite» [3, p. 26]. The technical language of the scientist in the field of oil and gas could not be understood by scientists from nuclear power field. «Even though all the classes in a large university may be taught in the same language it is doubtful that any professor could go into any and all the classrooms of his university and understand what is being explained» [3, p. 26]. When the subject matter is not within one's experience a man who speaks a language natively can fail to understand what is explained.

On the other hand, there are situations when we can understand what is said even without understanding the language.

In both cases we cannot be sure that we have tested language.

Strategically a situation approach is no effective as it has only «the outward appearance of validity» [3, p. 27].

Moreover, even if only valid situations could be chosen and we could be sure that understanding happened thanks to the language used, there still will be the problem of the diversity of the language used situations.

The elements of language are limited and «it is more profitable to sample these elements than to sample the great variety of situations in which language can be used» [3, p. 27].

When we decide to test the language as directly as possible, we still are faced with choices between integrated skills and separate elements. The decision here can be the following: we need to test the skills and the elements separately and should choose one or the other or a combination depending on the purpose and conditions of the test [5].

If we compare group testing and individual testing we will come to the conclusion that group testing is more economical. If we give a twenty-minute individual test to 25 students, the teacher would check these tests for a couple of days. So it is time-consuming in comparison to a modern one hour fifteen minutes test.

When we speak about strategy in foreign language testing we should take into account two types of tests: subjective and objective. The first type of test requires an opinion of the examiner. In subjective tests there are differences in scoring by different examiners. On the other hand, objective tests are those that are scored rather mechanically without need to evaluate complex performance on a scale [2].

According to R. Lado «tests are not either subjective or objective but range over a scale with completely objective scoring at the other» [3, p. 29].

Often a teacher has to choose between more apparent validity but less objectivity and more objectivity but less apparent validity.

Литература

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