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### **ЕФЕКТИВНА ПІДГОТОВКА ДО МІЖНАРОДНИХ ЕКЗАМЕНІВ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ: МОДУЛЬ ЧИТАННЯ**

*В статті розглядається низка питань, пов'язаних з необхідністю підготовки українських студентів до виконання вимог, передбачених Загальноєвропейськими рекомендаціями з мовної освіти, для оцінювання рівня знань іноземної мови, що зумовлено інтеграцією країни до світового освітнього простору.*

*Автори наводять аргументи щодо необхідності використання інноваційних підходів в процесі навчання мові студентів у вищих навчальних закладах України з метою підготовки до складання міжнародних іспитів. Поєднання інтерактивних та традиційних комунікативних методик з особливою увагою до модулю читання передбачає використання контент завдань та вправ, ефективних для підготовки компетентних користувачів англійською мовою.*

*Ключові слова: навчальна програма, екзаменаційний модуль, контент навчання, інноваційний підхід, автономія студента.*

*Гладь С. В., Чугу С. Д. Эффективная подготовка к международным экзаменам по английскому языку: модуль чтение / Винницкий торгово-экономический институт Киевского национального торгово-экономического университета, Украина, г. Винница.*

*В статье рассматривается ряд вопросов, связанных с необходимостью подготовки украинских студентов к выполнению требований, предусмотренных Общеввропейскими рекомендациями по языковому образованию, для оценивания уровня знаний иностранного языка, что обусловлено интеграцией страны в образовательный процесс на международном уровне.*

*Авторы аргументируют необходимость использования инновационных подходов в процессе обучения языку в высших учебных заведениях Украины с целью подготовки к сдаче международных экзаменов. Соединение интерактивных и традиционных коммуникативных методик с особым вниманием к модулю чтение предусматривает использование контент заданий и упражнений, эффективных для подготовки компетентных пользователей английским языком.*

*Ключевые слова: учебная программа, экзаменационный модуль, контент обучение, инновационный подход, автономия обучающегося.*

*Gladjo S. V., Chugu S. D. Effective Training for International Examinations in English: Reading Module / Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics, Ukraine, Vinnytsia.*

*The article deals with the issues related to tailoring students' knowledge of English in Ukraine to meet the requirements of the validation system of language ability, set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in the context of the country's integration into the world educational community.*

*The authors emphasize the need for incorporation of innovative approaches into the preparation of Ukrainian students for internationally recognized examinations in higher education environment in Ukraine as part of EFL/ESP teaching. Interactive and traditional communicative methods are to be combined efficiently with a special focus on the reading module and the use of a range of content-based tasks and activities relevant for training fluent users of English.*

*Key words: curriculum, examination module, content-based teaching, innovative approach, learner's autonomy.*

**Introduction.** EFL/ESP teachers and academic administrators in Ukraine realize the key role of English in major educational fields for shaping well-rounded professionals who will be able to face the challenges of the global working world. The process of integration into European educational community encourages English instructors in the country to follow the guidelines of the recognized testing systems and incorporate innovative approaches and methods into the foreign language training in Ukraine both in secondary and higher educational institutions in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), put together by the Council of Europe [1].

The **aim** of the article is to emphasize the necessity of EFL/ESP instruction based on teaching students analytically compare and contrast authentic materials of various formats, tackling each task effectively and realizing potential challenges and problem areas to deal with in a conscientious way.

The logistics of training for internationally formatted examinations of English requires that several **essential tasks** are to be addressed carefully to assist candidates to reach the proper level of language performance and to be successful in the chosen examination. The EFL teacher should aim to direct instructing efforts on the three major aspects:

- 1) general training with the focus on the development of all language areas (listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar, vocabulary);
- 2) linguo-social and linguo-cultural peculiarities;
- 3) specificity of a certain exam format.

The theoretical postulates and classroom-oriented activities offered by the authors call for the introduction of exam-focus changes into the ESP/EFL curriculum in Ukraine to provide proper training and guidance to students in their language development.

Incorporation of examination-oriented activities in the higher education environment as part of EFL/ESP teaching calls for systemic use of a range of content-based tasks relevant for training a fluent/good user of English as well as to enhance their language performance and boost their confidence. The issues examined in the article are based on the effective techniques of training reading skills as one of the basic examination modules.

### **Theoretical Rationale**

The requirements to reading skills explained in depth in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), that serves as guidelines to describe achievements of foreign language learners across Europe, vary in accordance with the levels. The CEFR elaborates learners' skills at six specific levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 in line with the 'can do' statements that identify language functions and skills in three broad categories:

- Basic User (A1 and A2);
- Independent User (B1 and B2);
- Proficient User (C1 and C2)' [2, p.4].

The categories match general concepts of basic, intermediate, and advanced levels and are often referred to as the Global Scale. Competencies, skills and knowledge are described in detail for achievements at each level, namely competencies necessary for effective communication; skills and knowledge related to language learning and competencies, situations (people, place, time, organization, etc.) and contexts (study, work, social, tourism, etc.) in which communication takes place [3].

Due to the fact that the Global Scale is not language-specific it can be applied to any language and, thus, enables language teachers to compare achievements and learning across languages as there is direct correlation of levels in different languages. This way the Global Scale is a valuable source for educators, teachers, administrators, and material writers who make choices concerning EL curriculum and syllabus content [4].

Language learners benefit from the CEFR as well due to the introduction of the 'can do' statements that describe the achievements and match the goals of language development at different levels in listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing. All these aspects are included into EFL testing systems used worldwide to evaluate examinees' competences, skills and knowledge. The most popular testing systems are either of European: the First Certificate in English (FCE, in new terminology – Cambridge Examination: First) [5, 6], the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) [7, 8], and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) [9], and American - Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) [10] formats.

For students to have a clear idea of what the test is like, to develop the ability to consider and analyze the questions and tasks correctly, and to promote confidence, special materials have been designed for the practice tests that are labeled as 'tests that teach'. These are usually authentic exam tests followed by certain guidance questions that facilitate students' genuine understanding of why certain things are right while their alternatives are wrong, thus, helping them to get higher scores and to heighten their confidence as well as overcome a natural psychological barrier. So, a number of aims within the examination training process are reached to reinforce students' linguistic and psychological 'preparedness' that will enable examinees to perform well at the examination.

The aim of any EFL exam is to assess the candidate's linguistic knowledge and communicative skills. So, in terms of the linguistic aspect, the examinee is expected to be able to understand and be understood as well as to know specific terminology, be a fluent language user, to have advanced listening, reading, and writing skills.

Besides, candidates are to know adequate ways to express different ideas reasonably in the oral and writing format. In addition, most EFL examinations aim at checking the candidate's awareness of different registers. While developing writing skills special emphasis is to be put on the academic writing whereas EFL teachers should be well aware of the fact that the oral examination part is designed to check diverse communicative functions.

A number of extra-linguistic factors such as social, psychological, cultural, ethnic, religious, are to be regarded as the most crucial ones in addition to profound linguistic knowledge and communicative skills that examinees are to demonstrate. The question how to combine these two aspects most effectively remains extremely challenging for the teachers and candidates as examination preparation requires expert knowledge, communicative and content-based methods.

In the context of exam training the simplest solution is to use the so-called social-cultural approach while teaching EFL, which means using content-based texts, scripts, practically-oriented written assignments, practice of language functions in different communicative settings. Besides, the information-oriented teaching materials are of great importance in the EFL classroom as, on the one hand, they do help update students' knowledge of the customs, traditions, patterns of behavior in a foreign country.

On the other hand, the language students learn becomes a strong motivational device for their future careers as they are exposed to the communicative value of the language. All in all, in the current educational context EFL educators have to face a number of challenges, the main ones being connected with the necessity to convert young immature teenagers into highly-motivated, conscientious EFL learners. The solution might be a user-friendly manual that will include activities helpful in achieving this goal and based on the learner-centered approach that enhances students' language performance and reinforces the learning autonomy [11].

The four basic skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) are tested in an EFL examination, all exam materials are informative and deal with different aspects of life in the community, including issues related to culture, history, technology, politics, education, society, psychology, and the like. Listening activities are designed so that to check whether the candidate is able to differentiate the language used in different registers and formats. The student should also know the spelling rules and topical terminology as the extracts from academic lectures may deal with a wide range of issues. The examinee should possess analytical skills and have significant background knowledge.

Reading tests, that teach, aim to develop the student's ability to understand the gist, main points, details, structure and meaning of sample passages. Reading modules of various exams differ to a great extent in terms of allotted time and the examination tasks: *the FCE Reading Module* covers 35 questions. It should be done within 75 minutes and includes four texts (350-700 words) with diverse testing focuses: gapped texts with headlines and textual components missing; multiple choice and multiple matching texts.

*The CAE Reading Part* has the same time limit (75 minutes) but includes 50 questions. Likewise questions include various types of multiple choice, gap filling

and multiple matching. Texts may include newspaper and magazine articles, extracts from leaflets, brochures or non-fiction books.

*Reading Paper in IELTS* is limited to 60 minutes. Three texts with a total 1,500 to 2,500 words cover 40 questions that may include multiple-choice questions, sentence completion, short answer questions, completion of tables/charts/summaries, choosing headings, identification of a writer's views or attitudes in terms of "yes, no, not given" answers, classification, matching lists, matching phrases.

*The Reading Section in TOEFL* covers 50 questions that are asked to 5 two-paragraph texts. The time limit is 55 minutes.

Radical changes in the global world resulted in shifts in the EFL/ESP instruction in the country, the focal one currently being the objective to teach students analytically compare and contrast authentic testing materials of various formats, tackling each text and highlighting potential challenges and problem areas in each examination module.

As to reading, the typical EFL reading class aims at working on a reading passage according to the reading schema that includes three phases: pre-reading, reading and post-reading tasks and activities. Pre-reading questions, during which the teacher elicits students' background knowledge provide the insight into the reading passage and usually introduces some key problems and important vocabulary. It is useful to design the activities that help students preview the passage so that to predict its contents and plausible developments of the plot in case of the literary text [12, 13].

Students are often advised to do the preview by looking at the title and the subtitles, photos and captions, if any, that accompany the passage, as well as section headings in the article. The next logical step is for students to read the passage on their own, either at home or in class. The activities at this stage focus on the essential vocabulary and grammar as well as the gist of the passage [14].

Post-reading activities include numerous comprehension tasks in different formats: true/false; multiple choice; fill-in-the-blanks; complete sentences/texts with relevant information; provide short answers, et cetera); do vocabulary and/or grammar-oriented exercises. Follow-up activities aim to engage students in the personal involvement tasks in written or spoken forms that imply expressing opinions about the reading or sharing their comments and ideas on moral or ethical issues raised in the passage.

According to Anderson N.J. 'reading involves the integration of various bottom-up and top-down skills in order to reach the goal of comprehension. Good readers can combine information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning, they read fluently and strategically in order to accomplish their reading purpose' [15, p.103], in other words, reading is of great significance for language learners, both as a source of information and as a fundamental language skill.

The authors designed an efficient teaching algorithm so that to meet the requirements of international EFL examinations. The model is to help language learners understand the complex nature of reading, to show a practical approach for EL teachers to conduct meaningful classes on reading-related topics, with effective instruction. Moreover, the tasks for teaching reading are to be based on the integrated approach, as the materials and techniques offered to the students, should focus on the

multi-aspect approach, when the main objective of language teaching activities is to make students use the language to meet communicative needs [16].

Besides, the system incorporates training students' special skills through a systemic use of various tasks and techniques, the main purpose of which is to do exam-oriented tasks. Critical analysis of different examination manuals, resulted in the realization that the reading module, as one of the exam components, should include essential information on examination logistics, detailed description of task types and strategies. The information may be used both by the language teachers and exam candidates to prepare for diverse reading tasks: multiple matching; multiple choice; gapped text; identification of a writer's views/attitudes; sentence/text completion; short answer questions, choosing headings, etc. and activities for developing students' reading skills are to be applied to meet the requirements successfully.

Traditional classes in EFL grammar should be substituted by grammar-content texts, grammar rules are to be explained by the students themselves after doing exercises and making mistakes, reading texts are to be analyzed from the point of information, not language, speaking should be done by involving students' personal experiences, anecdotes, feelings and emotions. While teaching students express their thoughts, authentic collocations, clichés, and idioms add to the natural way of speaking as it enhances their desire to speak up freely, the way they feel and like, without being corrected or interrupted, that consequently will lead to the strengthening of language learners' motivation [17].

To ensure success in the EFL exam it is advisable that students be familiar with the general guidelines of the process. Candidates are to be aware of the procedure and of what to expect. This can be achieved by doing sample examination papers that are available in printed and electronic formats on a systematic basis. Understanding how the test is scored and how scores are interpreted is an integral aspect of realizing the peculiarities of the examination. In addition, for many students setting a strategy, while defining clear goals and deadlines, developing a personal study plan and schedule, are the factors of great importance as they ensure that the student feels knowledgeable, calm, and confident.

**Conclusion.** To summarize, current pedagogical challenges in the EFL/ESP field in Ukraine are caused by integration of the Ukrainian education system into the international academic community that views a good command of English as the focal issue to ensure successful communication in the global world, thus, foreign and second language teaching should aim at the communicative competency and skills of language learners, their ability to deal with various socio-cultural differences, to perceive and comprehend events and situations correctly, to adjust to diverse registers and be competent to cover numerous topics.

As the main aim in the EFL classroom, a reading class in particular, is to make students use a foreign language as a universal tool for communication and study, teaching them to think in a foreign language, to ensure that they are able to analyze, contrast and compare familiar things with the new ones, are the objectives of paramount importance.

Interactive and traditional communicative methods are to be combined efficiently to design a range of content-based tasks and activities relevant for training

fluent users of English. The issues raised in the article emphasize the need for the systemic and methodologically accurate ways of the use of diverse meaningful tasks in the EFL classroom.

The EFL/ESP field in the country should be considered from the perspective of its effectiveness for the future employment and is to be included into the curriculum of higher education institutions to train students in a proper way to help them succeed in the competitive job market in the future. This prospect is to be explored further to estimate trends in the fields of professional growth and personal empowerment carefully.

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