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К проблеме оценивания уровня сформированности иноязычной коммуникативной компетенции студентов неязыковых вузов

Введение. Проблема адекватного и комплексного оценивания уровня сформированности иноязычной коммуникативной компетенции с учётом всех составляющих её компонентов остаётся актуальной, несмотря на то, что компетентностный подход довольно давно утвердился в образовательном процессе в системе высшего образования в качестве основного. В этой связи мы обратились к вопросу разработки матрицы, совмещающей комплекс аспектов оценивания уровня владения английским языком обучающимися неязыковых вузов.

Материалы и методы. В ходе исследования использовались общенаучные методы теоретического познания: анализ, синтез, обобщение, а также методы эмпирического познания: анкетирование и количественный анализ. К исследованию были привлечены респонденты из числа преподавательского состава, представляющие три образовательные организации города Орла, а именно: Орловский юридический институт МВД России имени В.В. Лукьянова, Орловский государственный университет имени И.С. Тургенева, а также Орловский государственный университет экономики и торговли. Общее количество преподавателей, принявших участие в анкетировании, составило 80 человек. Вторая категория респондентов представлена 320 обучающимися. Целевая группа включала курсантов и слушателей Орловского юридического института МВД России имени В.В. Лукьянова (180 человек). Контрольная группа была представлена студентами гражданских образовательных организаций (140 человек). Общее число респондентов, принявших участие в анкетировании по результатам апробации предложенной оценочной шкалы, составило 400 человек.

Результаты исследования. Предлагаемая шкала оценки включает в себя критерии различных типов речевой деятельности с учётом типов заданий и компонентов коммуникативной компетенции. Следовательно, сами дескрипторы, по которым оцениваются задания, дифференцируются в зависимости от рецептивного или продуктивного типов речевой деятельности и уровня сформированности требуемых для их выполнения компетенций. На основе мнений респондентов были выявлены те аспекты оценивания уровня владения английским языком, которые требуют улучшения, а именно: письмо (37% ответов респондентов) и устная речь (31% ответов респондентов) были выделены как типы речевой деятельности, требующие уточнения параметров оценки. Критерии оценки для чтения были признаны функциональными, что можно объяснить широким использованием основных форматов проверки умений чтения. В качестве направлений улучшения качества оценки посредством оценочной шкалы респонденты отметили добавление вариативности к списку параметров оценки (20% ответов), расширение диапазона форм контроля (18% ответов), а также необходимость одновременного введения новых параметров оценивания и расширения номенклатуры форм контроля (20 % ответов).

Заключение. Результаты исследования имеют практическую ценность, так как предлагают шаблон для оценивания прогресса обучающихся в освоении английского языка с учётом специфики форм обучения в образовательных организациях МВД России. В дальнейшем проведённое исследование будет способствовать созданию многогранной системы оценки уровня сформированности коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетенция, критерии оценки, оценочная шкала, анкетирование, респонденты, учебные задания, виды речевой деятельности

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The problem of assessment of foreign communicative competence formation in a non-specialized educational organization revisited

Introduction. The problem of adequate and comprehensive assessment of the level of formation of communicative competence in a foreign language, taking into account all its constituent components, remains relevant, despite the fact that the competence-based approach has long been established in the educational process in the higher education system as the main one. In this regard, we turned to the issue of developing a matrix that combines a complex of aspects for assessing the level of English proficiency by students of non-specialized educational organizations.

Materials and methods. In the course of the research, general scientific methods were used, such as analysis, synthesis, generalization, as well as methods of empirical knowledge such as a questionnaire and statistical analysis. The study involved respondents among the teaching staff, representing three educational organizations of the city of Oryol, namely Orel Law Institute of the Ministry of the Interior of Russia named after V.V. Lukyanov, Oryol State University named after I.S. Turgenev, as well as Oryol State University of Economics and Trade. The total number of teachers who took part in the questionnaire was 80 people. The second category of respondents was represented by 320 students. The target group included cadets and trainees of Orel Law Institute of the Ministry of the Interior of Russia named after V.V. Lukyanov (180 people). The control group was represented by students from civil educational organizations (140 people). The total number of respondents who took part in the questionnaire having worked with the proposed grading scale tallied 400 people.

Research results. The proposed assessment scale encompasses the criteria for different types of speech activity with the attention paid to the types of tasks and the components of communicative competence. Hence the descriptors according to which the tasks are assessed are differentiated according to the receptive or productive types of speech activity and the level of subordinate competences required for performing the task. Gleaned from the opinions of the respondents, those aspects were identified that require improvement, namely Writing (37% of the respondents' answers) and Speaking (31% of the respondents' answers) were pinpointed as the types of speech activity requiring circumstantiation. The assessment criteria for Reading were incontestably acknowledged as feasible, which can be explained by the relative familiarity of the reading formats. As directions for improving the quality of assessment using the rating scale, respondents noted the addition of variability to the list of assessment parameters (20% of the responses), an expansion of the range of control forms (18% of responses), as well as the need to simultaneously introduce new assessment parameters and expand the range of control forms (20% of responses).

Conclusion. The results of the study are of practical value, since they offer a template for assessing the progress of students in mastering the English language, primarily taking into account the specifics of the forms of teaching English in educational institutions of the Ministry of the Interior of Russia. In the future, this study will contribute to the creation of a multi-faceted assessment system for the level of formation of communicative competence.

Keywords: communicative competence, assessment criteria, assessment scale, questionnaire, respondents, study assignments, types of speech activity

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Introduction

Foreign communicative competence is the main goal of teaching foreign languages, that is developing the ability and readiness of students to carry out communication in a foreign language and achieve a level sufficient for practical use in the future professional activity. It is formed due to the implementation of all the four types of speech activity (reading, listening, writing and speaking), different forms of work, correctly selected methods and technologies of assessment.

The training process itself must meet the needs of future specialists. The practical application of the obtained information helps the younger generation to understand and assimilate it better. At the same time, the process of obtaining information is fast; future specialists have a craving for new facts and knowledge, and if the teacher does not provide them with the information they need, they can search for it and select it themselves. This is facilitated by the availability of information in the modern world. Future specialists do not feel the need to learn everything they need directly in the process of professional training. They can get the necessary knowledge themselves outside of school hours using modern devices and the Internet. However, future specialists feel the need to be guided in this search for information, taught how to implement it quickly and correctly.

The notion of **communicative competence** is dominant for modern linguodidactics. It, according to E.N. Solovova, includes *linguistic* (language), *sociolinguistic* (speech), *sociocultural*, *discursive*, *strategic* (compensatory), *social* (pragmatic) *competencies* [1, p. 6]. The terminological doublets require specification. The main components of communicative competence, identified by E.N. Solovova, based on the competences developed by the Council of Europe in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment [2] are given in italics. In the brackets, the analogues are suggested that are often found in linguodidactic research. We do not dwell on the issue of the coincidence of the volume of semantics of the analogues, acknowledging that the nomination means used in the analogues explicate the essential nature of each type of competence. In this study, only the correlative terms “linguistic competence” and “language competence” require clarification. In this study we employ the term “linguistic competence” adhering to the position according to which this type of competence encompasses students’ knowledge of linguistic phenomena, linguistic norms, the rules of the language functioning with the attention paid to its units at all the levels of the linguistic system, taking into account their actualization in speech. At the same time, E.N. Solovova clearly notes that in the domestic methodology, language competence “can be considered to be a complete analogue of linguistic competence” [1, p. 15].

F.M. Litvinenko interprets the generic term *communicative competence* as “a body of knowledge about the language system and its units, their structure and functioning in speech, about the ways of formulating thoughts in the target language and understanding the judgments of others, about the national and cultural characteristics of the speakers of the target language, about the specifics of various types of discourses; it is the ability of a language learner to communicate by means of language means in various types of speech activity in accordance with the communicative tasks to be solved, to understand, interpret and generate coherent statements” [3].

As noted by E.A. Bystrova, “communicative competence is the ability and real readiness to communicate adequately, conforming to the goals, spheres and situations of communication, readiness for verbal interaction and mutual understanding” [4, p. 27]. Among the components of communicative competence, E.A. Bystrova emphasizes “knowledge of speech concepts and communication skills of the reproductive and productive levels” [4, p.27].

Thus, developing students’ foreign communicative competence means giving them adequate tools for progressing in all the speech activities in English regarding the language means to provide for adequate communication both in everyday situations and in the professional sphere.

The study carried out with the view to identifying a set of acute problems relating to the process of forming foreign language communicative competence of cadets of educational establishments of the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation at the initial stage of studying has revealed cadets’ limited knowledge of the articulatory base of the English language and their inability to exploit it, problems of the development of lexical and grammatical skills, underdeveloped skills of summarizing, in particular, lack of experience in analytical and synthetic work on highlighting semantic milestones in the text applying the semantic compression and an adequate presentation of the content of the source [5]. These aspects require close attention and therefore must be taken into account when assessing the cadets’ progress in mastering English.

Within the competence paradigm of higher education the issue of improving the quality of an assessment system when teaching students a foreign language is pressing. An important condition for effective training of participants in the educational process is the formation of communicative universal educational actions necessary for planning educational cooperation with professionals and peers, finding solutions to the set tasks, and expressing their opinions. Thus, the problem of the formation of a reliable technology for assessing educational achievements of students comes to the forefront, which would act as a means of monitoring the formation of professional communicative competence and expanding student learning experience.

The need to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [2] as well as the competence levels outlined by the international certification exams [6; 7] determines the relevance of introducing the technology of criteria-based assessment of student learning in the educational process.

The purpose of this paper is to work out an approach to the problem of elaborating the technology of criteria-based assessment of educational achievements of cadets and trainees of educational establishments of the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation and demonstrate the effectiveness of its use as a means of monitoring the formation of communicative skills in an English class.

The following psychological and pedagogical theories were included in the conceptual basis of the proposed assessment technology: active cognitive activity and personality development (L.S. Vygotsky [8], S.L. Rubinstein [9], J.P. Guilford [10]); developmental education (V.V. Davydov [11]), assessment criteria for gauging the formation of communicative competence (A. Lieu Tran et al. [12], G. Brindley [13], A. Gomez Roffee [14], L. Santos et al. [15], E.G. Tareva, B.V. Tarev [16]).

An effective assessment technology is based on objective psychological and pedagogical regularities of the formation of key competencies, and its methods and subject forms depend on the subjects of educational activity. For that reason it is advisable to take into

account the specificities of the teaching-learning process when working out an assessment technology for a particular target group of students.

Since any competence is a dynamic feature which is realized in the process of acting, the assessment of its formation is not circumscribed by a complex of acquired skills and knowledge because knowing something or possessing a skill does not necessarily entail an ability to use it successfully in a practical situation. At that an inactive competence may mean an inability to perform an action on the part of a student as well as an ability to do so only under propitious conditions. That is why basically we assume that a competence is acquired if a subject mastering it has sequentially undergone the following stages: 1) independent use of the basic set of skills in familiar situations; 2) a flexible implementation of feasible instructions of the appropriate level; 3) performing an action requiring an independent analysis of the situation and a conscious choice of a skill; 4) an adaptive behavior in a non-standard situation, a proper reaction to novelty; 5) an intrinsically motivated cognitive and creative activity.

Generally assessment of the formation of the communicative competence is held in three forms: at an initial stage there is an entry test allowing to determine the formed level of foreign communicative competence; at regular classes there are various forms of continuous assessment and, finally, two forms of interim assessment exercised within the first two years of studying and mastering English are three credits and a final examination.

Among the distinctive features of teaching a foreign language in an educational establishment of the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation there are highly specialized competencies which are hardly compatible with the language grounding in the proper meaning of this, and a limited time budget for the formation of skills. Far more important for our research is the fact that the subject matter that cadets and trainees master is professionally related and requires rather a good command of the lexical component including complex nominative units pertinent to the professional sublanguage.

The requirements for the level of communicative competence on the part of cadets and trainees are set in line with the types of speech activity, namely Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking.

Reading is a receptive type of speech activity associated with the perception and understanding of a written text.

To understand a text in a foreign language you are to have a set of phonetic, lexical, and grammatical informative features that make the recognition process instantaneous.

Although in the real process of reading, the processes of perception and comprehension occur simultaneously and are closely interrelated, the skills and abilities that ensure this process are conventionally divided into two groups:

- a) related to the "technical" side of reading (perception of graphic signs and their correlation);
- b) providing semantic processing of the semantic links between language units of different levels.

As lexical units accumulate, many students need visual support because it is extremely difficult to perceive speech only orally. This is especially true for those students whose visual memory is better developed than auditory memory. That's why reading is so important.

According to the degree of penetration into the content of the text and depending on the communicative needs, there are viewing, searching, introductory and studying reading.

Search-and-view reading is aimed at getting the most general idea of the content of the text. The student searches the text only for information that interests him.

Introductory reading involves extracting basic information from the text, getting a general idea of the main content, and understanding the main idea of the text.

Studying reading is characterized by an accurate and complete understanding of the content of the text, reproducing the information received in the retelling, abstract, etc.

Writing is a productive type of speech activity that provides the expression of thoughts in graphic form. In the process of teaching a foreign language, writing is both the means of teaching and the purpose of teaching a foreign language. Writing is a technical component of written speech. Written speech together with speaking is a productive type of speech activity, and it is expressed in fixing any content through graphic signs.

Writing is very closely related to reading, because their system has a single graphical language system. When writing with graphic symbols, the thought is encoded; when reading, the graphic symbols are decoded.

The task of teaching written speech is to develop the following skills:

- using sentences in a written statement that correspond to the models of the language being studied;
- building language models in accordance with lexical, spelling, and grammatical norms;
- using a set of speech patterns and formulas that are typical for one or another form of written communication;
- making the statement more detailed, accurate, and definite;
- using the techniques of linguistic and semantic compression of a text;
- forming a written statement logically.

Written speech helps to preserve language and factual knowledge, serves as a reliable tool for thinking, and encourages speaking, listening, and reading in a foreign language.

Listening is a receptive type of speech activity associated with the perception and understanding of an oral message. When selecting the material that the teacher will use in his oral speech in the classroom, you should take into account the goals that he pursues:

- first, the development of students' ability to listen and understand foreign speech;
- second, the well-known expansion of the passive vocabulary of students and the development of their guesswork on the context in the process of listening.

When using a particular form or expression, the teacher must take all measures to ensure that it is correctly understood by students. To achieve this, it is advisable to keep in mind the following:

- after using a particular expression, the teacher must adhere to the same form in subsequent classes, without replacing it with an equivalent in Russian or another similar expression in a foreign language;
- the teacher must ensure that students understand not only the general meaning of the expression used, but also the individual parts;
- the accuracy of students' understanding of the teacher's speech should be checked systematically;
- each new expression must be repeated many times by the teacher, not only in the class where it was used for the first time, but also in subsequent classes.

Speaking is a productive type of speech activity through which oral verbal communication is performed. The content of speaking is the expression of thoughts in oral form. Speaking is based on pronunciation, lexical and grammatical skills.

The realizing this goal the following communication skills in the student are formed:

- a) understanding and generating foreign language utterances in accordance with the

specific communication situation, speech task, and communication intent;

b) carrying out their speech and non-speech behavior, taking into account the rules of communication and national and cultural characteristics of the country of the language being studied;

c) using rational methods of mastering a foreign language, improve yourself in it.

Speaking is performed in monological and dialogical forms.

When teaching dialogue, different forms of dialogues and forms of working with them are used: dialogue-conversation, dialogue-dramatization, conversation among students and with the teacher, pair and group forms.

The monologue is characterized by fullness, coherence, logic, validity, semantic completeness, the presence of common constructions, and grammatical design.

The lexical and grammatical component is assessed within the speech activity framework as it is instrumental to mastering all the mentioned types of speech activity. The same refers to the phonetic quality of one's speech which comes to the forefront only when it comes to assessing Speaking. Thus, the general framework of assessment which we propose is based on the types of speech activity with regard to their division into receptive (Reading and Listening) and productive (Speaking and Writing) with the inclusion of the language variety criteria and its manifestation in speech. Thus, we adhere to the idea that control in the teaching process should be aimed not only at checking the knowledge of words and operations required for the formation of various grammatical forms and structures, but also at the actions and operations with the studied linguistic phenomena in the course of the production of oral and written statements, as well as the perception and understanding of texts on hearing or reading.

The further theoretical grounding of the research is based on the following fundamental methodical premises.

Assessment is an ongoing process consistently integrated into educational practice.

Assessment can be only criteria-based. The main assessment criteria are the expected results that are in keeping with the learning objectives.

The used assessment criteria and the algorithm for marking students' papers are known in advance to both teachers and students. They can be developed and elaborated by them depending on the specificities of the task, the level of language mastery, and the needs of students.

An assessment system should be developed in such a way that students are involved in the control and assessment activities, acquiring skills and fostering the habit of self-assessment.

Research methods

The study was divided into several stages. The first stage was research-oriented. The analysis of the methodological foundations of assessment presented in research works on didactics was aimed at identifying the key points of each component of foreign communicative competence which will be subject to assessment. This analysis was coupled with the general cognitive methods of comparison and analogy when the research project was being worked out.

The second stage was the logical outcome of the first one as it presented an assessment scale.

The third stage of the research was initially based on the method of a questionnaire. We questioned three groups of subjects with the view to finding out the applicability of the suggested assessment system for the purposes of teaching and / or learning English.

The first group of subjects was composed of teachers working at the Chair of foreign and Russian languages of Orel Law Institute of the Ministry of the Interior named after V. V. Lukyanov. This group consisted of 12 subjects among which there were 6 full-time employees, 2 part-time employees and 4 dual jobholders. In this group 2 respondents were doctors of sciences, 7 respondents were candidates of science, 3 respondents did not have a scientific degree. The latter group was composed by 2 senior teachers and 1 teacher.

The second group comprised teachers of English for special purposes at Oryol State University named after I.S. Turgenev and at Orel State University of Economics and Trade. There were 68 respondents in this group with 22 candidates of philological sciences, 15 candidates of pedagogical sciences, 16 senior teachers and 15 teachers.

The third group was represented by cadets of Orel Law Institute of the Ministry of the Interior named after V. V. Lukyanov during the first and the second years of studying. The total number of respondents representing this group was 320 people. Their specialties are Legal Maintenance of National Security and Law Enforcement Activities.

The overall number of respondents tallied 400 people. As it can be seen from the general description of the working participants, the interview comprised subjects of different qualifications and different workload. As applied to students, cadets and trainees of Orel Law Institute of the Ministry of the Interior formed the target group for which the assessment scale was originally worked out, while students of civil educational establishments were the control group in the research.

All of the participants were supplied with the assessment system and asked to estimate its applicability to the educational process and their effectiveness in determining the level of mastery of a foreign language. The questionnaire also covered the most typical drawbacks of the assessment systems in use in order to work out some guidelines for improvement.

The questionnaire encompassed the following questions.

1. Are you satisfied with the assessment system employed at the educational establishment where you work / study?

- A. Yes.
- B. No.
- C. Not fully. Changes are necessary.

2. Which assessment scale is enforced in your educational establishment as the major grading scale?

- A. The five-point grading scale.
- B. The ten-point grading scale.
- C. The one-hundred-point grading scale.
- D. The cumulative grade point.
- E. The average grade point.
- F. Another scale. Specify which one: _____

3. Which aspects of the assessment scale which you have enforced do you consider to be the weakest? Mark all the answers which reflect your standpoint on the issue.

A. All the types of speech activity, different as they are, are assessed according to the same assessment scale.

B. All the assessment criteria applied to different types of speech activity are variables which are hardly liable to bringing into a strict system with a clear-cut relationship among

its elements.

C. Motivational factors are not involved.

D. Endowing marks with evaluative characteristics underlying the assessment scale is subjective.

E. Your variant: _____

4. Do you think the proposed assessment system can help gauge the level of students' mastery of a foreign language?

A. Yes.

B. No.

C. Yes, it can, but with reservations. Specify: _____

5. Which types of speech activity require more specifications?

A. Reading

B. Listening

C. Speaking

D. Writing

6. Do you think the proposed assessment scale can be applicable to teaching foreign languages in educational establishments within and outside those related to the Ministry of the Interior?

A. Yes, the system can be ubiquitously used as it encompasses various forms of control and covers multiple aspects of professional foreign communicative competence.

B. No, it is not applicable to teaching foreign languages in educational establishments outside those related to the Ministry of the Interior as the forms of control are limited.

C. It can be used for assessing the level of mastery of a foreign language on condition variability is added to each assessment criterion.

D. It can be used for assessing the level of mastery of a foreign language on condition forms of control are diversified.

E. It can be used for assessing the level of mastery of a foreign language on condition variability is added to each assessment criterion and forms of control are diversified.

F. Your opinion: _____

7. Do you consider the proposed assessment scale to be fair?

A. Yes, as it provides a numerical equivalent for each type of the task.

B. Yes, as it encompasses a variety of components of communicative competence.

C. No, as not a single assessment system is fair as it does not account for individual progress or individual speed of knowledge acquisition or mastery of skills.

D. No, as with a multiple assessment object it does not allow for all the facets of communicative competence.

8.* (*For teachers only*). How would you estimate the feasibility of the proposed assessment scale in terms of the potential time costs, provided that the points calculator is used?

A. It is time-consuming as it requires filling in too many points.

B. It is feasible; time costs are inevitable, the overall assessment scheme is more important.

C. The answer is positive, but it is highly hypothetical as I have not tried to implement the assessment system on a regular basis.

D. The answer is negative, but it is highly hypothetical as I have not implemented the assessment system on a regular basis.

The assessment scale. The overall outcome of the first stage of our research allowed us to pinpoint the criteria for assessment which are necessary for taking into consideration and including in the assessment scale.

According to the curricular requirements at the final stage of learning a foreign language a student is expected *to know*:

- lexical and grammatical minimum in the amount necessary for working with foreign texts of everyday content and socio-political nature;
- lexical and grammatical minimum in the amount necessary for working with foreign texts relating to the sphere of jurisprudence;
- the lexical and grammatical minimum in the amount necessary for working with foreign professionally oriented texts and for communication dealing with professional issues in a foreign language;
- basic concepts of the studied specialty and their lexical expression in a foreign language;
- the main language paradigms for the implementation of a full-fledged communication in a foreign language;

to be able to:

- read and understand texts of socio-political nature with the general coverage;
- understand oral speech (monologue and dialogue) in the field of everyday and professional communication;
- apply in speech practice theoretical knowledge of the phonetic side and the lexical component of speech;
- read and understand texts of socio-political and legal nature with full or general coverage of the content;
- use the most common language means in the main communicative situations of informal communication and official communication;
- participate in the discussion of the topics learned in the classroom;
- draw up and fill in the main types of personal documentation;
- search for the necessary professionally significant information on the Internet;

to master:

- skills of recognition and understanding of elementary grammar forms and structures;
- grammar norms of English to apply when translating foreign texts of socio-political and legal nature into the native tongue;
- the most common grammar skills making up for intelligible speech in the target language;
- normative phonetic skills of the target language;
- skills of reading texts in the specialty including study reading, survey reading; skimming, search reading [17];
- basic skills of translation of foreign texts of socio-political and legal nature;
- basic skills of annotating literature pertinent to the professional sphere;
- communication skills (in the forms of a monologue and a dialogue) allowing cadets to realize the basic communication needs coming out of the nature of practical activities in the field of communication [18, p. 47-52].

This set of overall components of students' communicative competence is further regarded from the standpoint of three levels of mastering the language they learn. **The basic level** is compulsory for all graduates upon completing the course (corresponds to the mark "satisfactory" in an examination as the final assessment form, or the mark "passed" in

a credit as a form of interim assessment). **The intermediate level** presupposes exceeding the mandatory characteristics of the formation of competencies for a graduate (corresponds to the mark “good” in an examination, or the mark “passed” in a credit as a form of interim assessment). **The advanced level** is the maximum possible expression of competencies (corresponds to the mark “excellent” in an examination, or the mark “passed” in a credit as a form of interim assessment).

The assessment scale is expected to satisfy the following criteria:

- a) to assess objectively students’ accomplishments;
- b) to expand the existing framework for tracking students’ progress and their acquisition of knowledge and mastery of skills;
- c) to promote the formation of introspection and self-esteem in mastering a foreign language;
- d) to implement clearly the differentiation and individualization of training revealing weaker point of communicative competence requiring self-guided work on the part of the student;
- e) to orient students towards accomplishing educational goals at each stage of learning.

The assessment scale which we have elaborated is based on the cumulative principle. The points for each type of activity are accumulated and further related to the percentage derived from the overall sum of points for each class.

The correlation is the following:

80–100 % of the overall score for the class – “excellent” corresponding to the advanced level of mastering English;

60–79 % of the overall score for the class – “good” corresponding to the intermediate level of mastering English;

40-59 % of the overall score for the class – “satisfactory” corresponding to the basic level of mastering English;

under 40 % of the overall score for the class – “unsatisfactory”.

Based on the stated thesis we devised the following assessment scale.

Table 1

The assessment scale

The type of speech activity	The object of assessment	The score
Reading	Multiple choice tests	1 point for each correct answer
	Gap-fill tests	1 point for each correct answer
	True / False tests	1 point for each correct answer
	Matching tests	1 point for each correct answer
	Multiple matching / Cross text multiple matching	1 point for each correct answer
Reading + Speaking / Writing	Answering questions pertinent to the content of the text	1 point for each correct answer
	Formulating the key idea of the text	5 points maximum
	Summarizing the text or précis-writing	5 points maximum
	Expressing one’s opinion on the content and / or the message of the text	10 points maximum

	<p>The lexical and grammatical correctness of speech (<i>relevant for all the tasks entailing Speaking and thus added to the score for them</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition of lexical units, morphological and syntactic forms; • contextual guess; • adequate use of individual resources of vocabulary, grammar and phonetics of English in the language of the profession; • lexical and grammatical transformations to avoid repetition; • recognition of elements of the socio-cultural context; • situational interpretation of the text; • identification of the genre characteristics of the text and its reference to a particular reference zone; • recognition and use of the socio-culturally determined linguistic units in various spheres and situations; • recognition and use of the terms of the language of the profession; • recognition and application of ethical-conventional norms of speech for communication in various spheres and situations. 	10 points maximum
Listening	Multiple choice tests	1 point for each correct answer
	Filling in the gaps (with or without morphological and / or syntactic reconstruction of the sentence)	1 point for each gap with minus 0,5 for misspelling
	True / False tests	1 point for each correct answer
	Multiple matching tests	1 point for each correct answer
	Writing down a dictation	5 points maximum
Listening + Speaking	Formulating the key idea of the text	5 points maximum
	Answering questions on the audio material	1 point for each correct answer
Listening + Writing	Summarizing the text or précis-writing: The quality of the works submitted by students is assessed both from the point of view of their content richness and adequacy, and from the point of view of language literacy and correct presentation. Thus, students receive a double grade, which is derived, respectively, based on two sets of the criteria, namely: a) completeness and accuracy of reproduction of the relevant content of the source text:	5 points maximum
	• not less than 70% of the content volume of the source text is explicitly presented, without serious distortions of meaning in the text of the presentation	5
	• not less than 60% of the content volume of the source text is explicitly presented, without serious distortions of meaning in the text of the presentation	4
	• not less than 50% of the content volume of the source text is explicitly presented, without serious distortions of meaning in the text of the presentation	3
	• less than 50% of the content volume of the source text is explicitly presented, without serious distortions of meaning in the text of the presentation	2
	b) the lexical richness of the language, literacy and correctness of presentation:	5 points maximum
	• the "sublanguage" of the presentation corresponds to the "sublanguage" of the source text, the work is done in a style that meets the communicative task and does not contain fundamental deviations from the basic norms of grammatical, lexical, stylistic compatibility of the means of expression used (1-2 minor errors in formulations are allowed: inaccuracies in the use of determinatives, "technical" failures in spelling, etc.)	5
	• the style and language of presentation correspond to the nature of the source and the communicative task being solved, the work demonstrates sufficient lexical diversity and adherence to the basic rules of lexical and grammatical formulation of the statement, the number of unacceptable word and form uses does not exceed 1-2 errors per page (unsuccessful choice of the nominative unit, not distorting the meaning of the utterance, violation of the norms of compatibility, correct use of grammatical forms)	4
	• the work is distinguished by a narrow lexical range and serious errors in the style of presentation; the content expressed in it is conveyed in a form that generally does not interfere with understanding, but with noticeable violations of the standards of linguistic correctness - up to 3-4 errors per page -	3
	• gross violations of the rules of structural, lexical and stylistic organization of the statement, the work is replete with linguistic errors of various types - more than 5 errors per page	2

Speaking	In monologues the following criteria are employed:	10 points maximum
	- a clear and confident realization of a communicative task, free presentation of facts and personal opinions on the topic. The monologue contains examples from the speaker's own life experience. Excellent knowledge of various language means of the corresponding register. Rich vocabulary. There are practically no grammatical errors;	10 points
	- there are several language mistakes, which are independently and immediately corrected;	9 points
	- a clear and confident realization of a communicative task, a fairly free presentation of ideas at a natural pace. The statement contains an insufficient number of examples from one's own experience, or the examples which do not fully reflect the answer to the task. The students exhibits a variety of language material. Grammar errors are rare;	8 points
	- the student tries not to go beyond the formulated problem, makes a small number of lexical and grammatical errors. There are minor register errors;	7 points
	- the communicative task is being solved, but there is a lack of logic in convincing and justifying one's own point of view. The lexico-grammatical repertoire is simplified and not wide enough to solve the problem. In facial expressions and gestures, uncertainty is felt. Incorrect use of the register; Speech is not always paused justifiably. Phonetic errors interfere with understanding the student. All in all there are 5-6 errors of a rude nature. Communicative tactics are not always adequately used.	6 points
	- superficial solution of a communicative task with a large number of lexical and grammar errors that distract directly from the task. The answer is hesitant and linguistically simple. There are frequent unjustified pauses;	5 points
	- there is illogicality, violation of cause-and-effect relationships. In speech, there are not fully relevant pieces of the learned text. Mistakes make it difficult to decipher the speech due to its bad quality;	4 points
	-the communicative task is not solved appropriately. There is a substitution of one topic for another. The message consists of short phrases with poor lexical and grammatical content	3 points
	- the communicative task is not solved. 2-4 utterances are topically related. The message contains too many errors of different nature. The phonetic side of the speech is hardly decipherable.	2 points
		1 point

	<p>In dialogues the following criteria are employed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the student clearly and confidently communicates and answers questions. The reaction is natural, the student easily communicates with the interlocutor moving freely from one topic to another. He/she takes the communicative initiative. The student is polite and exhibits excellent knowledge of various language means of the corresponding register. Non-verbal behavior responds to the communication situation; - when communicating with the interlocutor, one feels a certain interest in some topics and its lack in relation to other topics. Mistakes are corrected immediately; - the communication is sustained, the answers to the questions are logical, but not sufficiently developed. The student exhibits a natural speech rate. In general, he/she is active and polite when answering questions from the interlocutor. Lexico-grammatical errors are rare; - the student answers the questions posed, expresses an evaluative attitude, but does not substantiate his/her opinion. The questions are limited by 2-3. The answers contain doubts, uncertainty, bewilderment. The student manifests sufficient lexical diversity with a small number of lexical and grammar errors. A few errors in the style of the statement are allowed; - the student does not show interest in the discussed issues. The answers are not informative. No questions are asked. The reasoning does not demonstrate a deep understanding of the problem. There are violations of the basic norms of lexical and grammatical nature, as well as in the stylistic design of the statement; - the reasoning is very superficial and unconvincing. The reaction to the questions posed reveals the presence of problems in understanding the interlocutor. The rate of speech is slowed down. There are a few cases of unacceptable word and form use. 5-6 errors of various nature are allowed; - there are deviations from the topic in the answers to the questions. The student cannot establish contact with the interlocutor, cannot adequately correct communication failures, as a result of which the communicative task is not fully solved. A narrow lexical range is noted in the speech, there are serious errors in the style of presentation, as well as violations of the rules of the phonetic design of speech; - interaction with the interlocutor is lame due to the illogical and contradictory points of view expressed. The content does not fully answer the question posed and is conveyed in a form that does not interfere with understanding, but with noticeable violations of the standards of linguistic correctness. The speech rate is slow; - the student basically keeps silent, does not have sufficient information to answer the question and cannot express his opinion. The communicative task has not been solved. The range of language tools used is extremely limited. Gross violations of the rules of structural, lexical, stylistic and phonetic design of the statement are noted; - the student does not initiate a conversation and avoids answering questions or responding inadequately to a question asked. There are numerous errors of various types, impairing understanding. 	<p>10 points maximum</p> <p>10 points</p> <p>9 points</p> <p>8 points</p> <p>7 points</p> <p>6 points</p> <p>5 points</p> <p>4 points</p> <p>3 points</p> <p>2 points</p> <p>1 point</p>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the solution of the communicative task; • corresponding to the genre requirements; • lexical diversity; • the adequate use of professional thesaurus in English; • lack of interference; • the correctness of speech, including morphological, syntactic and spelling norms as well as the rules of lexical collocability and stylistic compliance; • organizing a coherent text; • the use of appropriate cohesive means; • observation of an adequate register of communication; • making use of various communicative types of sentences and the language units the corresponding to the functional destination of the sentence; • the use of linguistic means appropriate to the situation; • the use of appropriate communication strategies; • the adequate choice of communication tactics relevant to the situation. 	10 points maximum

Results

The questionnaire has revealed some viewpoints pertinent to the assessment system employed in educational establishments and the proposed assessment scale. 42 % of all the respondents replied that they were not satisfied with the assessment system employed at the educational establishment where they work / study. 11 % were satisfied with the system they have and 53 respondents answered that changes are necessary. The overall tendency is that students are disposed to be categorically dissatisfied (65 % of all the students questioned), whereas teachers are apt to call for changes (81 % of all the teachers questioned). Thus, the need for changes to apply to the assessment system has been established.

The variance in the assessment systems implemented in the three educational establishments the respondents represented turns out to be reduced by the five-point grading scale and the one-hundred grading scale (with the specification that this scale has its equivalents in the five-point grading scale). Additional comments provided by the respondents have revealed that in general the advantage of the one-hundred scale is that it entails greater differentiation within the standard marks. All in all, this question has brought about the opinion that the five-point grading scale is too narrow for estimation and the scope of acquired knowledge and mastered skills which equates to each of the marks is so inconsistent and so fluctuating that it inevitably calls for additional grading.

In reference to the proposed assessment scale the weakest facets of it happen to be the fact that all the assessment criteria applied to different types of speech activity are variables which are hardly liable to bringing into a strict system with a clear-cut relationship among its elements (47 % of the responses), the absence of motivational factors (18 % of the responses), subjective evaluation of the students' progress (13 % of the responses). Among the variants suggested by the respondents are the inevitable reduction of the grading scale to five points (9 %), the cumbersome multifaceted nature of calculating the score (8 %), the cumulative nature of assessment (3 %), the limited range of activities for assessment (2 %).

The question as to whether the proposed assessment system can help gauge the level of students' mastery of a foreign language was answered in the positive in the majority (83 % of the respondents). The remaining 17 % of the respondents taking part in the questionnaire noted that the assessment scale could be employed with reservations. The reservations marked by the respondents basically included the timing and the scope of activities liable for assessment.

The demand for specifications relating to particular types of speech activity was distributed as follows: writing (37 % of all the responses), speaking (31 % of all the responses), listening (23 % of the responses) and reading (9 % of the responses). The percentage can be explained by objective factors. For example, if we take reading, the overall scheme of working with reading is familiar to both teachers and students and the tasks typically set for students do not go beyond the standard formats. While if we consider writing as a speech activity it requires the elaboration of the language means which tend to be expressed in particular genres and rarely or never appear in others.

The question concerning whether the proposed assessment scale can be applicable to teaching foreign languages in educational establishments within and outside those related to the Ministry of the Interior has given the following results: 32 % of the respondents reply that the system can be ubiquitously used as it encompasses various forms of control

and covers multiple aspects of professional foreign communicative competence; 29 % of the respondents reckon that it can be used for assessing the level of mastery of a foreign language on condition variability is added to each assessment criterion. 18 % of the respondents consider that it can be used for assessing the level of mastery of a foreign language on condition forms of control are diversified. 20 % of the respondents claim that the assessment scale can be used for assessing the level of mastery of a foreign language on condition variability is added to each assessment criterion and forms of control are diversified. Only 1 % of the respondents believe that the proposed scale is not applicable to teaching foreign languages in educational establishments outside those related to the Ministry of the Interior as the forms of control are limited. It should be noted that all in all the respondents evaluated the proposed scale as applicable.

The answers to the question about fairness of the proposed assessment scale reveal that it is generally regarded as fair, which is not so much due to the fact that it provides a numerical equivalent, but because of its multifaceted nature. Not a single respondent claimed that the assessment scale does not encompass all the facets of communicative competence. 2 % of the respondents pointed out that the proposed assessment system a priori cannot be fair as it does not account for a student's individual progress or speed of knowledge acquisition or mastery of skills.

The teachers involved in the questionnaire assessed the potential feasibility of the proposed scale in terms of time costs. Basically the answers split between A and B, thus indicating that the scale is unquestionably time-consuming. 61 % of the respondents still consider it feasible.

The exploratory study has shown that there are very few papers which are not devoted to the set of assessment criteria, but focus on presenting the results of surveys or questionnaires reflecting the viewpoints of teachers and students with regard to the specificities of the assessment system and the grading scale in place. The proposed assessment scale is aimed at a special category of students, namely those attending non-specialized educational institutions of higher education. A similar type of research was carried out in Spain with school children learning English [18]. The results gleaned from such studies are informative in terms of giving guidelines as to how to organize assessment of the level of foreign communicative competence formation with regard to different categories of students.

Discussion and conclusion

Generalizing the results of the questionnaire we have come to the following conclusions. Tasks for assessment purposes relating to the receptive types of speech activity (Reading and Listening) should be accompanied by a grading scale, on the basis of which the overall grade will be derived, depending on the percentage of the assignments to the final grade. If tasks are being developed aimed at controlling the level of formation of foreign language skills of the productive types of speech activity (Speaking and Writing) with the focus on sociocultural and discursive types of competence, then the formal approach cannot be used. It is necessary to create scales consisting of a description of knowledge, skills and abilities within a particular level, taking into account the purpose and content of a specific task.

The possibilities of using the assessment scale are supported by the results of the questionnaire which revealed a relative efficiency of using the scale for assessing control tasks in practice. Having laid the foundations of assessment with the view to determining

the level of formation of communicative competence in different types of speech activity the proposed scale provides a framework for assessment by describing the levels of mastery in English.

Moreover, we can use Excel for analysis of marks. Microsoft Excel serves as a nice tool for tracking grades in different courses. Its ability to organize information in rows and columns is well known. But its use also allows a teacher to analyse results. It is possible to make this analysis of the results using simple calculation. The conversion to grade is collated on a single worksheet. The data from various worksheets can also be used.

Creating a template allows to enter the names of the students and their marks. It is important to note that this information can be automatically transferred to the mark analysis worksheet. Microsoft Excel has some useful features: for example, one can rename the worksheet easily. In this case the formula is automatically adjusted.

Using formulas and functions in Excel makes the grading process more convenient and easy. With Microsoft Excel one can sort students by names, grades or other features.

Simple calculation by addition uses a pop-up box. One should click on sum and highlight the cells which it is necessary to add up. It is also possible to input the formula to calculate the percentage, to reflect the grades for different levels or to show the number of students who got different grades. The cells will contain the grades which the students attained, the percentage of students scoring distinction and the percentage of students who passed.

One can setup a grade curve in advance. In this case Excel will automatically assign letter grades or percentages to each of students. If one changes the curve, the grades will also change automatically.

Finally, one can easily collate all the data to a worksheet for final analysis using the label button or entering the formula in the target cell and transferring the data from different cells to the Mark Analysis worksheet.

Free Gradebook Template for Excel started out as a basic grade book spreadsheet. Now it uses different types of grade books that can handle most of the major grading systems.

Percentage system is commonly used for courses that involve more subjective grading. The grade is recorded as a percentage based on performance or a subjective letter grade. It can be a calculation, such as earning 25 out of 30 points.

In Point System the grading scale is percentage-based but in the Gradebook worksheet the number of points earned on each assignment or exam is entered. However, the values listed in the Gradebook worksheet do not necessarily represent «maximum possible» points. If extra credit on a specific assignment is allowed, it is possible to earn a higher score.

In GPA system both the grade scale and the recorded grades are based on a 4.0 grade point system. It is better to use this system when all grades are subjective. In this case grades are recorded by converting the letter grade to the equivalent point value.

Free Gradebook is not designed to automatically grade on a curve. However, adjusting grades based on a curve is possible.

The results of this work can be used in the preparation and application of communicative-oriented multi-level assessment tasks at English classes, with the help of which the final and interim forms of control as well as self-control in the process of learning / studying English can be carried out. The assessment scale can also be deemed as a tool in expanding the didactic potential of the teaching and learning support kits used in the educational process. The perspectives of this research lie in its potential contribution to an adequate assessment system of the level of formation of foreign language communicative competence, necessary and sufficient for intercultural communication, to deeper consideration of the modern

national requirements for the level of knowledge of English outlined in the curricula, to taking into account national and international experience in the development of modern forms of assessing foreign communicative competence, and, finally, to acquainting students with new forms of control, namely socio-cultural cognitive search tasks or case studies. On a global scale, the given study is inextricably linked with a wider problem of the development of qualitatively new forms of control and assessment.

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