

TEST MODIFICATION FOR EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the English language has been spread worldwide and most people find it attractive to learn English. This language has become a bridge to successful and bright life as most prestigious jobs require English language knowledge. For this reason, the government and the vast majority of parents are interested in learning English in countries where English is taught as a second language. Uzbekistan is not an exception; our country puts much effort to produce highly qualified teachers, second, to develop and create an atmosphere to learn the second language without any difficulties.

Keywords: *test, EFL, Samuel Messick, Brown, IELTS.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

В настоящее время английский язык распространился по всему миру, и большинство людей находят его привлекательным для изучения. Этот язык стал мостом в успешную и яркую жизнь, ведь большинство престижных профессий требуют знания английского языка. По этой причине правительство и подавляющее большинство родителей заинтересованы в изучении английского языка в странах, где английский преподается как второй язык. Узбекистан не является исключением; наша страна прилагает много усилий для подготовки высококвалифицированных учителей, во-вторых, для развития и создания атмосферы для изучения второго языка без каких-либо трудностей.

Ключевые слова: *тест, EFL, Сэмюэл Мессик, Браун, IELTS.*

INTRODUCTION

It is crucial to take some points into account in the learning process, such as testing a student's comprehension. As assessment is "appraising or estimating the level or magnitude of some attribute of a person" (Mousavi, 2009, p. 36). I mean by testing that a test should assess the knowledge according to five principles suggested by Brown (2004) that will show how a good test is developed. Validity is believed to be by Samuel Messick (1989), "an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment" (p. 11). At the same time, reliability is a dependable test that can be

solved by several students but can get the same results. Therefore, the assessment's validity and reliability are the most critical factors that should be considered.

LEARNER ASSESSMENT PROFILE

The 21st century has brought so many changes than one could ever imagine. Technology and education never stop developing in every corner of the world. Through centuries different kinds of techniques and methods were applied and experimented with to teach the second language.

As a student of mine, I chose a schoolgirl I have been tutoring for a year and her Name is Nozima Fayzullayeva. She is studying at school #40 in Fergana, 10th grade. Her nationality is Uzbek; however, in her family Russian language plays a significant role. Nozima has different hobbies such as reading books, playing a musical instrument (piano), learning languages. She is book warm and every month, she finishes a minimum of two books. She prefers science-fiction books. To improve her speaking, I try to make her retell what she has read in English after classes and this method has helped her enhance her productive skills as nowadays she does not have any border to express her ideas in English. Her parents are a businessman and housewife (they are passionate to give the daughter excellent education). As she will study for a Bachelor's degree, she chooses to go abroad to Korea and needs to take the IELTS proficiency test to earn a scholarship. This is the main reason why she learns English; however, she has the potential to acquire and grasp many languages at a time. When this student first came to me she had beginner level, and currently, her English proficiency level is intermediate and being her instructor is only a pleasure as the student needs only guidance because her knowledge increases day by day. I am glad to be her instructor on this path to success. When we tested her personality According to the "16 personality type test" by Myers Briggs, the learner has an extroverted personality which allows the teacher to held classes in an interactive way as the student is not shy but open-minded and feels free to share and state her opinion. Therefore, being a teacher is similar to the words of Dj. Kaiser- Growing your onion.

The educational setting.

Across her academic year (while teaching her), I used Oxford press books (from New English file elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate). This book is full of various topics and relevant materials that help students achieve goals without any difficulties as it is designed according to Oxford University standards. Through this book, she had an opportunity to learn and strengthen skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking from lower level to higher one. Moreover, this book gives clear explanations and prepares a student to get IELTS as from the very beginning (NEF-

beginner) a student is introduced with minor aspects that make essential sense in an academic career (pronunciation- crucial to know while taking IELTS test and any other tests). Furthermore, in this book, we found unit-based tests (summative assessment), which can help students grow step by step, acquire the knowledge, and check it right away.

The most recent placement test

Checking the skills, expectations and needs of a student helps adapt the future course materials to a student. On December 10, 2012, the implementation of the Presidential Decree №1875 on "The measures of strengthening the system of learning foreign languages" students should learn English and after graduating, they should reach B1 level. Therefore, the recent test that a student took was a school unit end test (summative assessment) where the teacher assessed students are reading skills, giving them a pre-intermediate level test. Nevertheless, to place students', teachers should organize placement tests where students could be sorted according to level (CEFR is a common standard test that students should meet). Students had a reading task with questions given below. This task included only two items to check the comprehension of the task. The student did answer all given questions correctly (her level is intermediate) as the test was created for pre-intermediate students. The test is not challenging for the student as it is not as difficult as it should be and the task given below the reading passage is not sufficient to check reading skills. In the future, this student does not need to retake it as the task's level and the student does not match. Therefore, the task is not reliable (reliability of the test should be prior). Even though the taken test results are excellent and shows that a student deserves to be called a pre-intermediate level student, she had to take a more challenging and more complex test to check her knowledge.

CRITIQUE OF AN EXISTING TEST

A teacher should find or design a test for students, carefully analyzing their needs and wants. Looking at the cultural background is also considered to be the essential part in choosing the test. A reading task was taken from the students of 10th grade where Nozima studies. A reading task consists of reading a text, answering 3 multiple choice questions and seven true/false questions. The test that deserves to be named a paragon of excellence consists of several points that should be considered while developing it. One of them is validity, "the extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment" (Gronlund, 1998, p. 226), which means the test is logically connected and related to the accuracy of a measure.

Another point that absolutely should be taken into account is reliability. It is all about the consistency of a measure, and these two terms are correlated. The following process should not be neglected: objectivity. By the name itself, we can understand that the particular test needs objective instructions based on a specific teaching objective. This task is designed for pre-intermediate level students where the task's validity lacks attention as the content validity is not appropriate to the culture of the Uzbek students (specific names of actors). The task's reliability is well organized but needs some improvements in terms of enriching tasks related to the reading (a teacher could add more tasks according to the text). Overall there are ten items to be checked and each will give 1 point.

Yakubova-5311- Test Modification Project

This task's goals and objectives should give a clear understanding of the task; however, it is not visible that the task can deliver such information. The test should be developed more carefully as according to goals and outcomes of the test, it indicates that the test is not appropriate to check reading skills for intermediate level students as there should be at least three tasks to assess the understanding of the text. From a linguistic perspective, this test is not reliable as it does not check the multiple items such as grammar, sentence construction and punctuation. From a cultural aspect, this task does not include offense ethnicity, age, nationality, or other related features, making this test free of judgment from this aspect.

When it comes to this task's strength, It is reliable as it is developed carefully without any distractors. This test is objective - it has clear responses provided after text which increases the test reliability. Moreover, this text is checked how a student can understand and relate the fixed answers to the text and this test is valid in terms of cost (it does not demand money as it is an in-class test).

However, some weaknesses were identified, and one of them lacks pre and post-tasks as it is crucial to skim and scan the text before reading it. It does not include visual aids, which would serve as an intro to the text (from which they could understand and the topic). Furthermore, the small number of tasks given after the text does not give a reliable answer to check students reading skills as a teacher needs to observe and identify the student's comprehension as well as the weak and strong points by providing a student with various tasks related to reading text.

MODIFIED VERSION OF THE CHOSEN TEST

To improve receptive skills that were neglected while choosing the test, I would like to suggest some improvements. Therefore, this reading test will have pre, while,

post stages. In the pre-reading stage, students will have to look at the picture and guess why an old man is drawn and then they will read the introductory part and get the main idea of the topic. In the while stage, students will do the exercises according to the explanation, after which they will have to guess the meaning of highlighted words that are considered to be post-stage.

Before reading any material in magazines, journals, or articles, we can see photos or even an introductory part that can help us guess what about will be the further reading. This phase aims to help in a while reading activity. A famous scientist called Garmer believes that pre-reading activity is lead. In other words, it is a preparatory part to get to know about the topic of the reading task. At this stage, the instructor can choose activities such as skimming and scanning, title/vocabulary-based prediction and brainstorming as a lead-in.

Therefore, I modified and created a pre-reading activity by providing Einstein's photo to introduce the student to the topic. There a student will have a chance to identify and brainstorm the meaning of the further exercise.

While reading activities are designed to help students achieve the class's goals, be challenged to do the exercises as it enables students to work and not stop thinking. In contrast, the activity should consist of answering the questions, matching.

A student needs to skim and scan the text in the modified version and then read carefully by highlighting keywords in the text. I should note that I completely changed the text as the previous one was short for 10th grade, intermediate level. Therefore, I suppose that a student will be able to assess her knowledge and get more precious information from the text that will give insight into the world's most famous scientist. Nozima will have 15 minutes to read the article, including skimming & scanning and highlighting the text's keywords.

After reading text, a learner will have an opportunity to watch a short video about Einstein life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjoYbsvUoO4> and a teacher can use technological application as visual aid as student are different in personalities and taking the data (visual learners, audio-lingual, kinesthetic etc.). Then she will have to answer and match the next activity by using the text as the basis of this activity. This test will help fix the knowledge and assess how well a student understood the article and can relate the definitions.

Vocabulary Spot

Match the words with their definitions.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1) Something that people wrongly believe to be true | a) humiliating |
| 2) Likely to change or become dangerous without warning | b) contribute |
| 3) Making you feel ashamed and embarrassed | c) lousy |
| 4) Someone who believes that violence is wrong and refuses to fight in wars | d) turn down |
| 5) To divide or break something into several parts | e) controversial |
| 6) A subject, opinion or decision which people don't approve of or disagree about | f) pursue |
| 7) Intended to destroy the power or influence of a government or a belief | g) lack |
| 8) A person or group who believes that important political or social changes are necessary | h) spy |
| 9) To fail a test or course | i) radical |
| 10) Bad or unpleasant | j) precarious |
| 11) To not accept an offer or request | k) split |
| 12) To follow a course of activity | l) pacifist |
| 13) To not have any or enough of something that you need | m) flunk |
| 14) Someone whose job is to find out secret information about a country or an | n) myth |
| | o) subversive |

Then she will have to answer the written form questions to identify whether a student read the text carefully. As we know, writing expands and enhances multiple skills. Therefore, I decided to add this task to develop productive skills simultaneously checking receptive skills. Moreover, by giving a chance to write to a student, we can give feedback which is the main trigger in motivating and praising a student. Natriello (1987), Crooks (1988), Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991a), Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991b), and Black and Wiliam (1998a) believed that feedback would help a student to overcome his mistakes and make progress in his future tests. However, a teacher should give constructive feedback focusing on positive-constructive-positive washback, not insulting and demotivating a student.

Reading Comprehension

Answer the questions according to the text.

- 1) What made Einstein say "I didn't see any other way out"?
- 2) Why did American officers think Einstein was a spy?
- 3) Who is Chaim Weizmann and what did he promise Einstein?
- 4) What can you say about Einstein's education life?
- 5) Why did Einstein's parent worry when he was young?
- 6) What was Einstein's role in his wife's career development?

After this activity, a student will have a chance to share her opinion and perspective by completing this task. This task will evaluate both reading comprehension and writing skills. This exercise will demonstrate how a student can deliver her idea by sharing her opinion from a linguistic perspective. Moreover, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure will play crucial roles in this exercise. Why does a student need to focus on grammar? It is believed that “grammar is central to language description and test-taker performance” (Rimmer, 2006, p. 498). Because grammar is the basis of protecting beautiful and understandable speech as we live in the century where intellectually developed people are cherished and welcomed to higher positions, this is the goal of any person in life itself. Therefore, writing grammatically correct sentences is crucial as it will help a student speak fluently in oral speech. However, Krashen (1997) believed that a student should absorb the language without being stubborn about grammar. However, I believe that beautiful speech and writing are more thoughtful than having unstructured messy sentences and erudition.

Explain these famous quotes of Einstein with your own words (Use at least 60 words for each).

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”






“I know not with what weapons World War 3 will be fought, but World War 4 will be fought with sticks and stones.”

“A person starts to live when he can live outside himself.”

“Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”

“It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.”

This test is entirely different from the initial test as I tried to include different aspects to be assessed during testing reading skills. Therefore, Nozima had appropriate tests according to her level (intermediate) and performed well in this assessment. However, she felt anxious while doing the last part of the test, where she had explained her ideas by being attentive to the grammar structure of sentences. Nevertheless, her score was more than reasonable (26/30). Furthermore, when I asked her which test she would like to do in the future classes, she said that the modified one was pretty challenging and would like to take it one more time as she had some minor mistakes in the last part.

 Excellent to Very Good 100-90	Demonstrates an excellent to very good understanding of the text and its relationships. Very good at identifying main ideas, supporting details and specific information. Almost no problems in understanding inferences. Little or no difficulty in recognizing vocabulary and structure.
 Very Good 89-80	Satisfactory understanding of the text and its relationships. Good at identifying main ideas, supporting details and specific information. Few problems in understanding inferences. Little difficulty in recognizing vocabulary and structure.
 Good 79-70	Good understanding of the text and its relationships. Able to identify main ideas, supporting details and specific information. Some problems in understanding inferences. Some difficulty in recognizing vocabulary and structure.
 Fair 69-60	Fair understanding of the text and its relationships. Still able to identify some main ideas, supporting details and specific information. Difficulty in recognizing vocabulary and structure.
 Unsatisfactory 59 or fewer	Fails to understand the text and its relationships. Unable to identify main ideas, supporting details and specific information. Many difficulties in recognizing vocabulary and structure.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this assignment helped me see the assessment and modifying/creating the test from another perspective and make me feel like a natural teacher. Now I can understand how attractive this process is and simultaneously how difficult it is to have every item of the test under control to properly assess the student's skills and create the test that will suit the student's level, cultural background. Moreover, I got to know how to plan reliable and valid tests only to bring benefits.

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