

MONITORING TECHNIQUES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AT ENGINEERING UNIVERSITIES

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The article is devoted to the issues of monitoring the results of students' learning activities to determine the degree of learning objectives achievement and the level of foreign language and speech competence in the process of foreign language training in a technical higher education institution. It is noted that the development of the system of objective control is one of the important directions of foreign language teaching in technical universities, as it allows controlling knowledge and training efficiency objectively, and the control is an integral element of any activity, including foreign language teaching.

The article deals with the system of monitoring in foreign language classes, allowing the teachers to stimulate learning activity, ensure the systematization of the previously learned materials, develop students' self-analysis and systematic work, and prevent the development of incorrect skills; the advantages and disadvantages of testing foreign language knowledge of students are highlighted. The author defines the criteria to be followed in compiling tests. The article pays special attention to electronic testing, playing a significant role in the process of organizing control in foreign language classes at technical universities; its key characteristics include validity, reliability, representativeness and discriminating ability; the criteria of designing, types and forms of monitoring on the example of the Department of Foreign Language Training, European Integration and International Cooperation (UEPA) and the advantages of testing on the Moodle platform are highlighted. The author emphasizes that electronic testing should not completely replace traditional forms of control. A reasonable combination of traditional and computer-based control is necessary to obtain a stable result of knowledge assessment in the process of foreign language teaching. Computer-based tests on a certain topic (Entry Test, Diagnostic/Progress Test, Achievement Test), as well as the final test at the end of a semester and academic year, can serve as an excellent supplement to such traditional forms of control as oral questioning during practical classes, written control translation, essays, colloquiums, and oral exams.

The article concludes that, in the process of organizing a foreign language course at a higher technical education institution, the improvement of the system of foreign language teaching is directly related to improving the system of control. ICT applications for assessing students' knowledge and skills can significantly improve the efficiency of the work in this direction.

Keywords: testing, teaching and monitoring methods, objective control, foreign language, technical university, learning diagnostics, Moodle platform.

О.Бринцева «Види і форми контролю на заняттях з іноземної мови у технічному ЗВО».

Стаття присвячена питанням моніторингу результатів навчальної діяльності студентів з метою визначення ступеня досягнення цілей навчання та рівня іншомовної та мовленнєвої компетенції у процесі навчання іноземній мові у технічному ЗВО. Наголошується, що розробка системи об'єктивного контролю є одним із важливих напрямів методики викладання іноземних мов у технічному вищому навчальному закладі, оскільки дозволяє об'єктивно контролювати знання та ефективність навчання, а контроль – це невід'ємний елемент будь-якої діяльності, у тому числі й навчання іноземній мові.

У статті розглядається система моніторингу на заняттях з іноземної мови, яка дозволяє стимулювати навчальну діяльність, забезпечити систематизацію раніше вивченого матеріалу, розвивати у студентів самоаналіз та систематичну роботу, запобігти формуванню неправильних навичок; висвітлюються переваги та недоліки тестування іншомовних знань студентів. Авторка визначає критерії, яким необхідно слідувати при складанні тестів. Особливу увагу у статті приділяється електронному тестуванню, що відіграє значну роль у процесі організації контролю на заняттях з іноземної мови у технічному ЗВО: визначаються його ключові характеристики: валідність,

надійність, репрезентативність та дискримінаційна спроможність; критерії конструювання та види й форми моніторингу на прикладі кафедри Іншомовної підготовки, Європейської інтеграції та міжнародного співробітництва (УІПА); висвітлюються переваги проведення тестування на платформі Moodle. Авторка підкреслює, що електронне тестування не повинно повністю замінювати традиційні форми контролю. Для отримання стабільного результату оцінки знань у процесі навчання іноземної мови необхідно розумне поєднання традиційного та комп'ютерного контролю. Комп'ютерні тести з певної теми (вступний, поточний, навчальний), а також підсумковий після закінчення семестру та навчального року можуть послужити прекрасним доповненням до таких традиційних форм контролю як усне опитування на практичних заняттях, письмовий контрольний переклад, есе, реферат, колоквіум, усний іспит.

У статті зроблено висновки, що у процесі організації курсу іноземної мови у вищому навчальному технічному закладі покращення системи викладання іноземної мови безпосередньо пов'язане з покращенням системи контролю. ІКТ додатки з метою оцінювання знань та умінь студентів дозволяють значно підвищити ефективність роботи в рамках цього напрямку.

Ключові слова: тестування, методи навчання та контролю, об'єктивний контроль, іноземна мова, технічний ЗВО, діагностика навчання, платформа Moodle.

Problem statement. Nowadays, as a part of globalization and expansion of international contacts, particular attention is being devoted to foreign language learning and teaching of foreign languages in higher engineering education. At the present stage, the goals of teaching foreign languages are becoming more and more complex. To achieve them, it is necessary to improve the existing methods of teaching and monitoring. The active implementation of information technologies into the learning process and its management requires, on the one hand, improving the used educational resources and, on the other hand, the methods of teaching and monitoring. Many scientists highlight that one of the ways to intensify this process is to optimize the management of the learning process. This becomes possible by providing effective feedback in the course of learning material assimilation. It is achievable to optimize the management process based on an objective assessment of the information obtained because of such feedback. The program of foreign language teaching in an engineering university includes knowledge of the system of the target language, development of skills and abilities of speech activity within the limits of the purpose of the training course.

Monitoring the results of students' learning activities in order to determine the degree of achievement of learning objectives and the level of language and speech competence seems to be an important stage in the process of foreign language teaching at technical university. Therefore, the development of the system of objective control is one of the important directions of foreign language teaching methodology. Testing is rapidly becoming an important component of foreign language teaching, as it

allows objective control of knowledge and learning effectiveness, and monitoring is an integral element of any activity, including the teaching of a foreign language.

Literature review. The increasing interest in testing is also because in addition to its main function - control, it can serve as a means of diagnosing difficulties of the language material for students, a measure of learning and a way of predicting the success or failure of training process in the context of foreign language learning. Z. Devterova highlights the prognostic value of testing; particularly the possibility of using its results in the process of further training, to adjust the learning trajectory or to carry out poorly mastered material[2].

Testing as a method of pedagogical research is a system of tasks, the performance of which allows characterizing the level of foreign language proficiency through a special scale of results. Tests are also widely used to determine abilities, mental development and other personality characteristics[3], which explains their popularity not only in the national methodology (O. Galustyan, N. Gutareva, E. Zarutskaya, I. Rapoport, I. Kراسiuk) but also in foreign scientific and educational literature (M. Byram, J. Alderson, G. Bick, L. Bond, T. Brian, M. Canale, C. Weir, D. Douglas, R. Ellis, W. Taylor, A. Green, J. Heaton, A. Hughes, D. Nutall, M. Poehner, R. Riley, L. Bachman, B. Spolsky, M. Swain, N. Underhill, and others).

According to L. Yarotskaya, foreign researchers in contexts correlated with the situation of monitoring use not only the term "testing", but also the concept of evaluation (assessment, estimation, determination of the quality of something, analysis) and assessment (estimation, evaluation) [4].

The purpose of the article is to consider the system of monitoring in foreign language classroom in a technical university, to identify key characteristics of electronic testing, to highlight the benefits of testing foreign language knowledge on Moodle platform.

The statement of the main material.

The effectiveness of the modern educational process in the context of foreign language teaching in an engineering university is largely determined by the ability of the foreign language teacher to properly organize the interaction with students. For effective monitoring of the level and quality of mastering a foreign language, the development of personal abilities of students, a monitoring system can provide invaluable assistance. In addition, such a system allows the teacher to assess the real level of students' development of speech and socio-cultural competence in a foreign language, to determine the effectiveness of certain techniques and teaching methods. The monitoring system in the foreign language classroom allows students:

- to encourage learning activities (stimulating function),
- to provide systematization of previously learned material (learning function),
- to develop students' self-reflection and systematic work (educating function),
- to prevent the formation of incorrect skills (corrective function).

In other words, monitoring in the learning and educational process is a mechanism for adjusting educational goals, ways to achieve them, and is mutually beneficial to all participants in the educational process. The age of universal and compulsory introduction of External Independent Evaluation (EIE), Common Entrance Examination (CEE) also imposes its own conditions to how to organize the monitoring of foreign language proficiency. Previously, the verbal form of control was mainly used in the teaching of foreign languages in technical university, but recently the written form has been more widely applied. There is a certain logic in this trend, of course. Mistakes in written work are easier to qualify and analyze, while oral form of control is difficult to regulate. However, for all its advantages, a written test cannot be used to check all the skills, such as ability to express an opinion on a topic or to have a spontaneous conversation in a specific communicative situation.

One of the main and most common organizational forms of monitoring in English lessons remains a frontal control. First, it is

convenient because it provides maximum coverage of students per unit of time. From our point of view, the frontal form is appropriate to use for monitoring the learning of language material on the topic, it can be carried out several times during the lesson. The advantage of this form is also that the attention of all students is maximized, as each of them can be questioned at any moment. However, this type of monitoring is not particularly effective for testing the skills of monological or dialogical speech. To test these skills it is better to use a paired or group form of work. However, the highest efficiency has the individual control, which allows assessing the level of development of skills in different types of foreign language speech activity of each individual student.

For any type of control, whether it is input, intermediate or final, basic characteristics such as consistency, systematicity, transparency and reflexivity must be observed. It is important that students clearly understand the procedure, the object of control and the criteria for evaluation. In addition, a necessary factor for successful monitoring is the students' ability to analyze their results, identify problem areas and make a plan to eliminate gaps in foreign language knowledge.

These days test is considered as one of the most common and effective means of monitoring in foreign language classrooms in higher technical educational institutions. This organization of the system of tasks allows teachers to assess quickly the structure and level of mastering knowledge, skills, and abilities in a foreign language. Evaluation like this develops test competence, that is, the ability to recognize and perform tasks. Authentic test competence implies, particularly, a high level of foreign language knowledge, mastery of strategies for preparing and performing test tasks.

However, most tests are mainly designed to examine foreign language lexico-grammatical material and logical thinking skills. Of course, testing has a number of disadvantages: errors due to guessing technique; preventing the development of oral and written communication skills, interpretation and translation skills.

Despite the obvious disadvantages of the testing system, it is impossible not to mention the following advantages: objective verification results; test automation capability; time saving; the possibility of using information and communications technologies.

Whatever the purpose of testing, test development should always take into consideration a number of criteria that need to be met. The

following requirements are imposed on tests as standardized tasks, the results of which are used to evaluate the competence of the test taker: validity, certainty, reliability, practicality, ease of use, predictive value. So, according to Bachmann [6], the difficulty of monitoring foreign language effectiveness according to the leading language testers is that many fundamental questions need to be reconsidered; first it is necessary to recognize what it is appropriate to assess, how we understood it, and what we need to accomplish in order to justify the way in which we use our estimates. Since our grades can be used to make predictions about students' productivity, the priority tasks and activities to achieve the goals of the monitoring remain unchanged, specifically, the need and ability to use one's knowledge of a foreign language outside the test. These issues relate to task selection, approach, and test administration.

On the other hand, Braen[7] discusses the usefulness and necessity of testing, both for evaluating students' knowledge and for independently seeking answers to the questions presented. The author claims that students should retrieve the necessary information from the tests, as well as get the necessary support in their theoretical and practical research.

The point is that the test should be a useful experience for students, the test preparation is informative, and not just for evaluating one or another knowledge, skills or abilities. The main value characteristic of a foreign language test is its validity (match between the format of the test task and its content) and reliability (getting a credible assessment of students' knowledge, gained skills and ability to work with foreign-language information). Considering the monitoring in the testing format, it is necessary to emphasize that it should contain integrated tasks (these tasks include questions, which we used to check their grammatical, lexical, phonetic, cross-cultural knowledge). The specialized text in the test tasks is compulsory and necessary, so the choice of text content will depend on the professional orientation of the student.

A significant role in the organization of monitoring is given to testing, in particular, electronic testing. An electronic (computer-based) test is a test, all stages of which are computer-controlled. A test on forms followed by electronic processing is not computer-based. Electronic testing has its own characteristics: validity, reliability, representations, and discriminatory power. Test validity are parameters, reflecting the ability of the test to obtain results in accordance

with the task. The reliability of the test means such features as accuracy, correspondence of the results in the first and second performance of the test by the same test takers. The representation points to the observance of testing standards, i.e. the number of items in the test should be as many as required to summarize the students' mastery of the material on a particular topic. Discriminatory power is related to the value of differentiability of test results. If almost all students (strong and weak) perform the test with the same results, it means low discriminatory power of the test.

The features of computer-based testing also include the possibility of randomization and adaptability, time management, the presence of interactivity and multimedia. Randomization, i.e. the arrangement of tasks in a random order, makes it possible to individualize the options in the synchronous performance of the test.

Adaptability is ensured by the flexibility of the computer testing system. If the student copes with the task, he or she begins to perform a more complex task. If a mistake is made, it is necessary to return to the easier tasks or to a reference to a supporting theory or rule. Time management means the technical ability to enter a time limit for the entire test or an individual task. An important feature of electronic tests is the presence of feedback, which is provided by the interactivity of the test and allows a foreign language teacher to automatically calculate the correct answers, mark task, as well as inform the students about the test result.

When developing computer-based tests, certain rules should be followed. The electronic test includes the most significant questions on the topic, which should be clear, understandable, and unambiguous and have a sufficient number of answer options (3-10). It is impractical to construct more extended test. There should be no clues in the wording of the questions. Provocative questions, insignificant details also do not meet the requirements for an electronic test. Interconnected items provide the integrity of the test. The principle from simple to complex should be followed in test construction.

Moodle platform is used to develop computerized foreign language tests at the department of foreign languages training, European integration and international cooperation in UEPA. Moodle platform has extensive tools, such as: direct (automated) control of the tests results / surveys; the ability to make corrections to previously completed tasks, group or individual projects, compositions and essays; function for the teacher to comment on the task, recommend or

correct online; rapid feedback, in which both the teacher and the student have the opportunity to quickly exchange information and comments; automatic do performance reporting (including in the form of charts and comparative tables); the ability to individualize the scale of assessment of completed tasks. In addition, sites, providing the opportunity to perform online tests on various aspects of the language are used both for students' independent work and for work in the classroom. For instance, Pearson English Benchmark Test is a simple and modern test for detailed assessment of progress in English language skills. Each candidate is given the opportunity to take the test at the beginning, middle, and end of the academic year/course. This test is designed to provide the teacher with information about the progress of their students/students and to help improve the students' learning process. The test assesses proficiency in four speech skills, each of which is provided with a detailed description. This test will primarily be useful to teachers who want to understand their students' skill levels, track their progress in detail, and get advice on the learning process of a concrete student. The Benchmark test is aimed at students of all levels. The test questions are designed to assess skills relevant to a particular level. As a result, the test provides reliable and objective results with detailed comments, allowing students to improve their English proficiency.

Pearson Versant Tests is a series of automated computer-based tests for quick and objective determining students' English language level, which objectively reflect an assessment of the practical speech skills necessary for effective communication in an English-speaking environment. Pearson Versant test is suitable for use both at the beginning and at the end of a course to assess students' English language proficiency. This test will help instructors establish clear baselines and closely monitor students' progress. Results are presented in the form of a detailed report and are available in a few minutes of passing the test. The report includes information on the candidate's overall English level and an evaluation of each speech skill separately, as well as recommendations for further study focus. The results exclude any human factor and are objective and impartial, since the test is carried out by means of artificial intelligence. Among the benefits of Versant tests are: integrated assessment (students receive an assessment of the practical language skills needed to communicate effectively in English. Reports include details of the test taker's general abilities as well as skills such as fluency, pronunciation,

vocabulary, and sentence construction. After passing the test, the candidate can receive an electronic certificate with the test results); impartial testing (test allows to assess all test takers using objective, impartial scoring. Robust artificial intelligence technology ensures consistent, efficient, and what is most important, objective testing), optimized administration (using computer or mobile app, students can easily take Versant test. The Versant testing system automatically displays a detailed report with grades).

The website offers the following tests - Versant Student Placement Test automatically evaluates speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills with detailed report on the results. Grades are given according to the standard GSE and CEFR systems; Versant Professional English Test evaluates speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. It can be used for comparative analysis and assessment as part of business English course. The questions are based on real-life professional situations, the teachers can find out if their students are ready for an international work environment. Candidates receive 10 different types of questions to assess speaking, listening, reading and writing skills; Versant English Speaking Test evaluates students' level of spoken English, vocabulary and pronunciation; Versant English Writing Test can be taken online and offline. Students answer questions and solve situations, requiring written English: taking notes, resumes, answering emails, etc.

The following types of electronic tests: Entry Test, Diagnostic/Progress Test, Achievement Tests are applied at the department of foreign languages training, European integration and international cooperation in UEPA.

Since thematic material precedes *Entry Test*, it contains references to theory and information on the topic. Testing time is unlimited. If students fail the test, they have an opportunity to take the test again (preferably with a positive result).

Diagnostic/Progress Test is carried out on the results of the lessons learned on the topic. The purpose of the current control is to check the degree and quality of mastering of the studied material by students. As a rule, testing time is limited. At the teacher's discretion, the test can be taken more than once. The test also includes the teacher's recommendations for explanation of the most difficult questions.

Achievement Tests are carried out at the end of a semester or academic year. The test must have high reliability and validity, since the

evaluation of the final control is based on the criteria provided by the curriculum and educational standards. Testing time is limited. The test is completed once, and the grade for the test is part of the rating grade.

We believe that *cloze tests* play an important role in the process of foreign language and speech skills development. In a cloze test, the students can use repetition of the same task in different versions and at different speeds. Cloze tests can be completed both synchronously in the classroom and asynchronously as a part of independent work. Tests can be of the closed and opened types. Cloze procedures are tests of vocabulary, spelling and an understanding of a foreign language. As well as testing vocabulary and spelling, cloze tests require students to think critically and analytically about a text, and to think about meaning as they are reading. They also involve a sound knowledge of grammar. Cloze exercises are beneficial for students in many ways, but the most important are that these tests have real-world application; provide students with natural-like settings; to meet students' learning needs they should be flexibly and personally constructed.

A *multiple-choice question (MCQ)* consists of two parts: a stem, identifying the question or problem, and a set of alternatives or possible answers, containing a key that is the most appropriate answer to the question, and a number of distractors that are possible but incorrect answers to the question. Students respond to MCQs by indicating the alternative that they believe best answers or completes the stem. There are many benefits to applying MCQs for monitoring foreign language knowledge. One principal advantage is that the questions are easy to mark and can even be scored by a computer, making them an attractive monitoring approach for foreign language classes. Appropriately, designed MCQs provide testing for a wide scope of content and goals and ensure an objective measurement of student ability.

Matching test questions evaluate the students' skills to connect speech units, complete sentences, or pair speech units with their definition. The matching test as a rule contains two columns, including one with a definition or phrase, and another with a word, number, or symbol. These tests evaluate the students' skills to recollect information under time constraints.

Short answer questions (or SAQs) are open-ended questions, where a learner should create a response. These tests can be written to reveal a student's skills to explain, reason, describe, create, synthesize, analyze as well as evaluate.

These tests provide learners to show higher-level skills and knowledge, allows them to elaborate on responses in a limited way, help to assess students' writing ability. They can be less time consuming to prepare than other tests and structured in a range of different ways, requiring a range of responses from a few words to an extract.

In that way, it is advisable to choose professionally oriented articles supplemented by matching and/or multiple-choice tests, and the tests can be placed either after each semantic part or after the entire lecture.

If a student has a satisfactory test result, he will be able to move on to the next extract. If a student has insufficient results, he will go back to the beginning of the task and revise the material. Audio and video materials (movies, radio, video reports, etc.) and tasks for them can be downloaded at the Moodle platform. If the results of completed exercises and tests are unsatisfactory, the user will be able to return to the beginning of the audio or video material and re-performs the task, taking into consideration the comments and corrections. Writing skills can be developed through the writing essay and multiple-choice tests. In this case, prewriting is important: for example, students are offered to take a test concerning using articles, logical conjunctions, and punctuation. Most often, an unlimited number of attempts is given (so that students have a chance to think over the text several times, make corrections, exchange opinions with the teacher) - this is an excellent motivation not only to achieve the best result, but also to work independently in the process of a foreign language learning.

Comparing Moodle testing with traditional methods and ways of monitoring, practitioners come to the following conclusions about the advantages of the electronic form. Firstly, online exercises contain integrated tasks (testing grammar and lexical material, writing, reading, listening skills), and it allows to check the degree of students' learning and the level of learning efficiency. Secondly, students work at a convenient time in a suitable place, quickly receiving an answer to the completed tasks. Thirdly, the monitoring is not only carried out directly by the teacher; Moodle has a toolbox for mutual monitoring, in which students evaluate each other's learning activities. Fourth, the online evaluation option implies online reporting, allowing users to monitor grades, examine their own progress, analyze, and plan their future course [5].

Therefore, the range of monitored skills and abilities can be significantly expanded using

innovative technologies. In addition, the quality and objectivity of the testing results: the testing system gives the teacher an opportunity not only to control the level of students' knowledge, but also to analyze the difficulties arising in the process of mastering the foreign language material, as well as to save teacher's time. However, we believe that electronic testing should not completely replace traditional forms of monitoring. A reasonable combination of traditional and computer-based control is necessary to obtain a stable result of knowledge assessment in the process of foreign language teaching in technical universities [1]. Computer tests on a certain topic (Entry Test, Diagnostic/Progress Test, Achievement Test), as well as the final test at the end of a semester and academic year can serve as an excellent

supplement to such traditional forms of monitoring as oral questioning in practical classes, written control translation, essay, reference paper, colloquium, oral exam.

Conclusion and further research prospects. At the current stage of upgrading the content of higher education, not only the role of control in teaching a foreign language is greatly increased, but also there is a need to develop new technologies of monitoring and evaluation. To summarize, we can conclude that the improvement of the teaching system is directly related to the improvement of the monitoring system. ICT applications for evaluating students' foreign language knowledge and skills can significantly increase the effectiveness in this area of activity.

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