The Formation Level Assessment of Foreign Language Communicative Competence in Multi-level Groups

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Abstract: The article deals with the foreign language communicative competence formation level assessment organization among the language faculty students at the university. The relevance of the problem is clear in the conditions of training the specialists who are ready to solve professional and life tasks. The article analyzes the possibilities of using the alternative means for evaluating the learning in higher education, and examines the experience of using this complex at the Language Theory Department and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages Department in Kursk State University. The described complex includes writing an essay, keeping a reflective diary, talking, etc. The article examines the results of a students survey in 2018 and 2020, demonstrating the positive impact of the proposed set of alternative monitoring and evaluation tools on the students attitude to learning a foreign language.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the key areas of the modern Russian economy is the education and training of specialists who are ready to meet professional challenges of various complexity (the program "Digital Economy in the Russian Federation" (approved by Government Decree No. 1632 of 28/07/2017)). Therefore, the task of improving the foreign language education quality in the context of higher education is more urgent than ever (Bolotov, 2015).

The growing number of multi-level groups and the current and intermediate control orientation provided for in the curriculum and program to the "average" student make it difficult to assess each individual student results in the context of an individual educational trajectory, which has led to a decrease in the students motivation to learn foreign languages over the past few years.

Obviously, there is a need to find and implement non-traditional assessment forms that are designed to demonstrate the real foreign language communicative competence formation level among students, to track their individual progress, as well as to create an educational process comprehensive control, while contributing to the motivation growth (Abramova, 2017).

Taking into account these requirements, the Language Theory and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages Department of Kursk State University (KSU) professors have created a set of monitoring and evaluation tools. The priority task is to maintain and stimulate students' interest in learning English at various levels of mastery, taking into account the students diversity.

A prerequisite for the using this complex can be considered the current and intermediate rather low student learning outcomes analysis, which, in our opinion, is due to the factor of multilevelness within one group, including citizens of near and far abroad, as well as the generally accepted system for monitoring and evaluation, which does not track progress, difficulties and individual achievements.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

During the implementation, both general scientific methods and empirical research methods were used,

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i.e. questionnaires, observation and experimental training. The experimental training (2018-2020) involved 360 students of the Foreign Languages Faculty of KSU aged from 17 to 22 years and 8 teachers. 100 students participated in the experiment to identify the impact of alternative tools for monitoring and evaluating the the foreign language competence development results and on the students motivation to learn English. The experiment included several stages.

3 RESEARCH RESULTS

At the first stage (2018), a questionnaire was developed and conducted to determine the intended areas of a foreign language use in future professional activities, as well as to identify problems/barriers that prevent the individual results improvement and, as a result, reduce the motivation to master a foreign language. 100 students of the Foreign Languages Faculty of KSU (epy Teacher Education field) took part in the survey. The results showed that 65% of students study a foreign language in order to use it for professional activities in a school or linguistic center as a foreign language teacher, while 35% are going to continue their studies abroad after graduation, do research work, 25% plan to use a foreign language as an additional skill to their main job (lawyer, economist, manager). The question "Do you agree that the test papers and the test/exam fully demonstrate your individual results of mastering the discipline?" was answered "affirmative" by only 25% of students, and the question "Do you think that it is necessary to use additional assessment tools (reflection, portfolio, etc.)" was answered "affirmative" by 75% of students. The survey results analysis led to the conclusion that the majority of students are not motivated to improve their English proficiency level, primarily due to the lack of a clear picture on individual results, the difficulties and gaps in knowledge causes, as well as a clear understanding of the future professional competencies application, which prompted a change, including the approach to monitor and evaluate the learning outcomes, to make it more individual, which would increase the students interest (Abramova, 2018; Bachman, 2004).

The second stage included the development and testing of a set of tools for monitoring and evaluating the foreign language communicative competence results assessment.

In the unified control and evaluation system, the monitoring, rating system, pedagogical tests, portfolio, information test technologies, reflexive diary, writing articles, projects, and the game method were used (Kirianova, 2016; Semenova, 2020). Let's look at some of them:

1. Monitoring.

Monitoring as a form of level of competence formation control is understood as monitoring the educational process state for the purpose of assessment, control or prediction. Such monitoring should be carried out systematically (Common European Framework 2011).

In our case, this is a result didactic, statistical monitoring, i.e. we need to track the knowledge, skills and abilities acquisition in a particular discipline, the level of compliance with the Federal State Educational Standard requirements and statistically show what was done by each student from the volume of material planned by the teacher and what was obtained as a result.

Monitoring is implemented in several stages. At the initial stage, a cross-section of students residual knowledge in the disciplines preceding the course study is carried out. Such a diagnostic test allows to get a complete picture of the necessary competencies formation. Based on the test results, some recommendations are developed for each student, and the educational process is planned for a specific discipline. A diagnostic test can be used to determine how well students are prepared to learn a new discipline, and what measures should be taken to fill the gaps (Popham, 2009).

Then, at the next monitoring stage, students are given intermediate tasks of various types, which test the acquired knowledge and skills application. The intermediate tasks results are also written in the table for the formation of cumulative points at the end of the discipline. This control allows to identify an educational material assimilation objective picture of each individual student and the group as a whole. Based on the test results analysis, a professor differentiates the educational process and develops individual training routes. At the same time, the most effective, purposeful adjustment of students knowledge is carried out.

At the final stage, it is very important to conduct a final exam test that allows to get an objective picture of the students discipline assimilation as a whole and, if possible, identifies the reasons why students did not learn some program material topics.

The professor then prepares individual reports for each student and a summary report for the group as a whole. Such data allows to determine how well students are prepared to learn the next discipline or course. All statistics are written by a professor into the matrix (Up-to-date Approaches 2019).

4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Let's consider how monitoring is carried out on the example of the discipline "Lexical and grammatical aspects of foreign language communication", which is studied by students of the 2-3 courses of the Foreign Languages Faculty of KSU, the education field is Pedagogical education. This discipline is divided into two courses (2-3) and two semesters (4-5). Here is an example of the students foreign language communicative competence formation level monitoring in the 5th semester of the 3rd year.

First, the students write a diagnostic test for the residual knowledge they received in the 4th semester of the 2nd year. Then, in the course of further discipline study, they perform control tasks. All results are written in the matrix as a percentage of completed tasks or as points. The evaluation criteria are developed for each type of task. For example, the presentation of a dialogue on a topic under study can be evaluated according to the following criteria: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, communication skills and compliance with a given topic. For each criterion, the points ranking is given (see Table 1).

Table 1: Assessment criteria of level of foreign language competence for the discipline "Lexico-grammatical aspects of foreign language communication".

Points	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Grammar	Communication skills skills	Discursive skills
5	Sounds and words are pronounced correctly, intonation, pauses and phrasal stress correspond to the norms, no more than 1 phonetic error is allowed	Vocabulary is at high complexity level with a variety of synonyms, antonyms, the ability to paraphrase, 1-2 lexical errors are allowed	Grammatical forms are used correctly, 1-2 grammatical errors are allowed in complex constructions	Supports and develops communication at a high level, reacts to the interlocutor's remarks in accordance with the topic	High level of ability to logically construct a statement, organize a coherent text, express own point of view, 1 logical error or 1 error in the means of communication is allowed
4	Sounds and words are pronounced correctly in most cases, intonation, pauses and phrasal stress practically correspond to the norms, and no more than 2-3 phonetic errors are allowed	Vocabulary is at advanced complexity level with a variety of synonyms, antonyms, the ability to paraphrase, 3-4 lexical errors are allowed	Grammatical forms are mostly used correctly, 3-4 grammatical errors in complex constructions are allowed	Supports and develops communication at a good level, mainly reacts to the interlocutor's remarks in accordance with the topic	A good level of ability to logically construct a statement, organize a coherent text, express own point of view, 2-3 logical errors or 2-3 errors in communication tools are allowed
3	Sounds and words are mostly pronounced correctly, intonation, pauses and phrasal stress do not always correspond to the norms, no more than 4-5 phonetic errors are allowed	Vocabulary is at medium complexity level with the presence of synonyms, antonyms, the ability to paraphrase is not very well developed, 5-6 lexical errors are allowed	Grammatical forms are mostly used correctly, 5-6 grammatical errors are allowed in complex constructions	Supports and develops communication at an average level, does not always respond to the interlocutor's remarks in accordance with the topic	Average level of ability to logically construct a statement, organize a coherent text, express own point of view, 4-5 logical errors or 4-5 errors in communication tools are allowed
2	Sounds and words are often pronounced incorrectly, intonation, pauses and phrasal stress do not always	Vocabulary is at a low complexity level with a rare use of synonyms, antonyms, the ability to paraphrase is not	Grammatical forms are often used incorrectly, 7-8 grammatical errors are allowed in complex	Supports and develops communication at a low level, does not react to the interlocutor's remarks	Low level of ability to logically construct a statement, organize a coherent text, express own point of view, 6-7 logical errors or 6-7 errors in

	correspond to the norms, no more than 6-7 phonetic errors are allowed	developed, 7-8 lexical errors are allowed	constructions or 5-6 errors in simple constructions	in accordance with the topic	communication tools are allowed
1	Sounds and words are often pronounced incorrectly, intonation, pauses, and phrasal stress do not correspond to the norms, no more than 8-9 phonetic errors are allowed	Vocabulary is at low complexity level, synonyms, antonyms are absent, the ability to paraphrase is not developed, 9-10 lexical errors are allowed	Grammatical forms are used incorrectly, 9-10 grammatical errors are allowed in complex constructions or 7-8 errors in simple constructions	Does not know how to maintain and develop communication, does not respond to the interlocutor's remarks in accordance with the topic	Does not know how to logically construct a statement, organize a coherent text, express own point of view, 8-9 logical errors or 8-9 errors in the means of communication are allowed
0	Speech is unintelligible. Sounds and words are pronounced incorrectly, intonation, pauses and phrasal stress do not correspond to the norms, no more than 10-11 phonetic errors are allowed	Vocabulary is at the basic complexity level, synonyms, antonyms are absent, the ability to paraphrase is not developed, more than 11 lexical errors are allowed	Grammatical forms are used incorrectly, more than 11 grammatical errors are allowed in complex constructions or more than 9 errors in simple constructions	Does not know how to maintain and develop communication, does not respond to the interlocutor's remarks in accordance with the topic, does not understand the interlocutor's speech	Does not know how to logically construct a statement, organize a coherent text, express own point of view, more than 10 logical errors or more than 10 errors in the means of communication are allowed

The points for each criterion are summed up and the arithmetic mean score for the entire task is output: 5 (pronunciation) + 4 (vocabulary) + 4 (grammar) + 5 (communication skills) + 5 (discursive skills) = 23 points should be divided by 5= 4.6. The result is written in the matrix (see Table 2).

Table 2: Record of results of foreign language competence formation for the discipline "Lexico-grammatical aspects of foreign language communication".

№	Student's full name	Tasks for students												
		Diagnostic test	Listening skills 1	Dialogue on topic 1	Summary 1	Text retelling 1	Monologue on topic 1	Essay	Text analysis 1	Intermediate result	⋮		Grammar Test	Final result
1	student 1	5	4.9	5	4.8	5	4.5	4.7	5	4.8				
2	student 2	4.8	5	5	4.5	5	4.3	4.2	4.9	4.7				
3	student 3	3.6	4.1	4	3.8	4	3.9	3.5	4.2	3.8				
4	student 4	2.8	3.4	4	3	3	3.1	2.5	3.6	3.1				
5	student 5	4.5	4.8	4.2	4	5	4.6	4.7	4	4.4				
6	student 6	3.2	3.2	3.6	3.5	3	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.3				

At the end of the topic or section study, an intermediate result is summed up. Similarly, the work on the next topic or section is organized. Then the final result is calculated.

The intermediate result is necessarily discussed in an individual conversation between the professor and each student. During the conversation, the problems faced by the student are identified, the causes of these problems are analyzed, recommendations are formulated and solutions are outlined.

2. Rating assessment system.

The rating system is designed to identify the student studying level at each stage of the educational process, as well as to differentiate the grades received by students for performing various types of work (current and final control, home work, independent work, etc.) (Belozertseva, 2015).

The rating system involves the development of a number of modules that will form an assessment of the level of competence formation among students. In the case of studying a particular discipline, for example, "Lexical and grammatical aspects of foreign language communication", the following modules can be distinguished: academic, motivational, Olympic, leadership.

For each module, the highest score is set at 20 and the significance coefficient, depending on the degree of the module importance in the overall assessment system. The final score for the discipline is formed on the basis of the results for each module, expressed as a percentage and then transferred to points on a 5-point scale.

The summary table of students achievements may look as follows (see Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of students' achievements for the discipline "Lexico-grammatical aspects of foreign language communication".

Student's full name	Academic module 20 points the coefficient is 1.5		Motivational module 20 points the coefficient is 0.5			Olympic module 20 points the coefficient is 0.5 – 3.0		Leadership module 20 points the coefficient is 1.0		Final score 100 points
	The final score for topic 1 (10)	The final score for topic 2 (10)	Attendance rate (5)	Activity in the classroom (10)	Preparation for classes (5)	Participation in English language Olympiads and competitions. (10)	Participation in scientific conferences (10)	Teaching English to schoolchildren (10)	The participation in the faculty career guidance activities (10)	
Student 1	10	10	5	10	5	10	10	10	10	100
Student 2	10	8	5	8	4	-	-	10	5	75

For the academic module, the student can get 20 points maximum. These points are made up from the final grades for each topic. Next, the module significance factor is applied for the discipline development. In this case, the coefficient is set to 1.5, i.e. the points received are multiplied by the coefficient. A student who gets 20 points will eventually have 30 points. For the motivational module, the coefficient is 0.5, since attendance, preparation for classes and activity are undoubtedly important, but can not overtake academic knowledge. A student who scores 20 points in this module will eventually have 10 points.

In the Olympic module, a high coefficient was set, since here it is assumed that the student knows the discipline very well and is able to compete with other students at the regional, federal or international level. In this case, the coefficient is different: for the 1st place it is 3.0, for the 2nd place it is 2.0, for the 3rd place it is 1.0. For participation in the event the coefficient is 0.5. Some extra points can be added for the event level: + 1 point for the regional level, + 2 points for the federal level, and + 3 points for the international level. The leadership module involves the participation in the English language activities with students. Therefore, the coefficient here is average. As a result, a student can score 100 or more points.

The points received are transformed on a 5-point scale into an assessment that corresponds to the "credited" rating when setting the score on a test or can be set as an exam score for the studied discipline.

3. Keeping a reflective diary.

A means of developing students' constructive skills is a reflexive diary, which contributes to the students predictive, reflexive, and self-assessment skills formation and development. These skills can be tracked in the following sections: "My learning

opportunities and forecasting" (fixed at the beginning of the month); "My learning opportunities and the learning activities result" (at the end of the observed period); "Final self-assessment of the opportunities level in academic subjects", etc. The self-analysis and self-assessment skills development dynamics are

recorded in the sections: "Classes reflexive analysis", "Achievements for the week", "The educational results self-analysis". Working with a reflexive diary is expected for a week daily in all disciplines (Baranova, 2015; Alderson, 2006) (see Table 4).

Table 4: Reflection diary for the discipline "Lexico-grammatical aspects of foreign language communication".

Date	Lesson topic	Questions	My answer	Recommendations to myself
17/09/ 2019	The modal verb "can"	1. What functions of the modal verb do I find difficult? 2. What functions of the modal verb do I consider simple and can I use them in speech? 3. I know what infinitive forms to use after a modal verb. 4. What did I not understand? 5. How did I work?	*1. Strong doubt, astonishment. 2. Mental, physical, circumstantial ability, permission, prohibition. 3. Yes, a simple infinitive for mental, physical, circumstantial ability, permission, prohibition, a simple or perfect infinitive after can/could in the strong doubt, astonishment function. 4. It is difficult to construct a sentence with an expression of doubt in a negative form. 5. I have understood the theory, but I need more practical tasks.*	*1. To create a table with the forms of the modal verb in different functions with examples. 2. To perform 5-10 exercises of different types on this material. 3. To apply the modal verb in different functions in speech in other English language speech practice classes.*

Answering the questions, students control their grammatical material assimilation, determine the points that are difficult for them and require improvement, and determine the further movement vector.

"Non-marking" (qualitative) assessment:

1. Game method (multimedia educational game, board game).

The game method of assessing the students' competencies formation has proven itself well. When studying the discipline "Lexical and grammatical aspects of foreign language communication", students independently developed various multimedia and board games. Especially popular among students is the multimedia platform Kahoot, using which they create various quizzes or games.

First, the form is selected: with or without a playing field. Games with a game board like "Snakes and Ladders" allow to exercise and test both lexical and grammatical skills. The playing field is created by the students themselves, then tasks and steps are developed. So, for example, the game field called "Planes and trains" looks like this. Tasks for the game included questions on English modal verbs knowledge repetition and control (Romanova, 2017). Players make moves and perform various kinds of grammar tasks presented on the cards. The color of the circle on the map corresponds to the color of the card. Cards contain different types of tasks: make

sentences..., ask a question to the sentence, put the word in the plural form, etc.

Figure 1: The game field "Planes and Trains"

The game process revealed all the "gaps" in the students knowledge on the topic, allowed them to understand the complex cases of using modal verbs, and to acquire new knowledge in a relaxed way (Cockey 2014; McCaslin, 2009).

Another variant of the board game is grammar cards for modal verbs. On one map there is a picture and the beginning of the sentence, on the other there is a possible variant of the end of the sentence. For example:
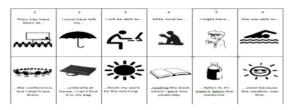
Figure 2: Example of a grammar map for modal verbs.

Obviously, the students not only have a stake in the result of creating the game, but also control each other's knowledge.

2. Participation in various events (conferences, grants, etc.).

At the third stage of the study (2020), a survey and questionnaire were conducted in order to identify the effectiveness of the used set of additional tools for monitoring and evaluating the foreign language competence formation level among students. 100 students of the faculty took part in the survey and questionnaire containing questions of open and closed types. It should be noted that in comparison with the results of the survey and observation in 2018, there was a positive trend. 65% of respondents stated the need to improve their foreign language proficiency for academic and professional purposes, to continue their master's studies at foreign universities, etc. 70% of respondents noted reflexive diary and monitoring as effective ways to evaluate individual results. 80% answered positively to the question "Do you think the rating system is effective in learning a foreign language?".

5 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study indicate that the proposed set of additional tools for monitoring and evaluating the foreign language competence formation level gives a clearer picture of the learning outcomes within the students individual educational trajectory. The students achievements are their personal acquisitions, their individual progress in mastering a foreign language, the personal and professional competencies development, a clear understanding of knowledge gaps, their causes and ways to eliminate them. The use of various assessment formats that track personal development and individual progress, the necessary competencies formation level increases the degree of assessment individuality, which, without a doubt, stimulates the growth of interest in the subject, as well as motivates more in-depth and purposeful students work. The proposed formats for evaluating the foreign language communicative competence formation results in other areas of training are the prospect of further research in the field of effective methods in higher education control.

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