



Входящее тестирование и его результаты

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Placement testing and what results can tell us

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Аннотация

Оценка знаний учащихся — это ключевой момент в обучении языку. Входящее тестирование используется для того, чтобы помочь учителям корректно сформировать группы, а также подобрать наиболее отвечающий требованиям УМК. В статье освещаются требования, предъявляемые ко входящему тестированию, какими характеристиками должен обладать надежный, практичный и эффективный тест; обращается внимание на то, каким образом входящее тестирование побуждает учителей понимать потребности своих учеников.

Abstract

Assessing students is a key part of teaching a language. Placement tests are used to help teachers set up learner groups that can work together, and to inform decisions ranging from choosing the most suitable course book to devising the teaching content to suit a particular group of students. The article explores

what functions a placement test must fulfill, what essential qualities a valid, reliable and practical test must have — and how these qualities can be ensured.

Ключевые слова: тестирование, английский, обучение, экзамены, онлайн.

Keywords: placement, tests, English, online, exams.

Introduction

Testing and assessing students is a part of teacher's job. There is an element of testing in everything we do during our lessons.

A «diagnostic test» is a test that helps the teacher and learners identify problems that they have with the language. You can then assign further remedial work to the identified problem areas [Cook J, 2016].

You also use tests to check students' **progress** against your course book syllabus — i.e. how much they have learnt. Tests also identify problem areas in your **syllabus**. Each learner group is different, so even if something worked in the past,



you need regular feedback to check if it still works with your present group. When most of your group gets a certain point wrong in a test, it might suggest they have not learnt it properly, or more likely, that you will need to go over that area again, perhaps from a different point of view or through different activities.

Tests also show how good students can perform in **communicative situations**. Even non-communicative tasks (e.g. multiple choice) have been shown through research to be good indicators of communicative competence.

In many schools, it is a legal requirement that you regularly give marks for students' **performance**. Tests allow you to award objective marks, and compare students against one another as well as against a set standard (or specific level).

In day-to-day teaching, teachers also use tests not to evaluate the students but to teach them how tests work – in other words, to provide them with an opportunity to rehearse and refine their **exam-taking skills**. The first type of test we are likely to use with a student is a «placement test» [Hughes J, 2016].

Placement testing

It has recently been noted that although «placement testing» is probably one of the most widely used tests within institutions, there is relatively little research literature relating to the reliability and validity of such measures [Wall, Claptram and A-Iderson, 1994]. Publications which deal with placement tests frequently provide qualitative assessments of instruments [Goodbody, 1993], or are concerned with the placement of linguistic minority students in programs which are not related to language teaching [Schmitz and DelMas, 1990]. We will try to explore what functions a «placement test» must fulfill, what essential qualities a valid, reliable

and practical test must have — and how these qualities can be ensured. We will also look at how the «placement test» empowers teachers to understand their learners.

The vast majority of schools will want to know the level of a student so that he or she can be placed in an appropriate class according to their level. In business English we often teach one-to-one so this is less essential, but a teacher will still want to have a clear understanding of the student's level so that is an appropriate course book can be chosen [Hughes J, 2016].

So what should a perfect «placement test» be like? Most teachers will mention the following points:

The test should be relatively short, so it would be easy and quick

It should measure more than knowledge of grammar forms and meanings of vocabulary, but also the learners' ability to listen and read in English.

It should be reliable and accurate – despite its length. In other words, teachers want to be sure that it is a particular student's real current ability that they are measuring.

Results should be easy to interpret, with a clear-cut, single answer to placement questions – but preferably with further details available, should a more nuanced differentiation need to be made.

It should be flexible, so institutions can test candidates both within the school or remotely, through email or the internet, and it should also be customisable so any institution could add further information or criteria to help them take other factors in consideration and make appropriate placement decisions.

Finally, that the results should contain more detailed feedback on student performance to help teachers plan their syllabus catering to each group's or student's particular needs and



expectations as well as determine the need as well as content of any necessary remedial action.

Ingredients of the placement testing

Every test must contain 4 **essential ingredients**.

A test must be valid. «Validity» refers to how well a test measures what it is purported to measure.

There are two aspects to the concept of validity [Schmitz and DelMas, 1990].

The first, **intrinsic** aspect is a theoretical property of the test itself.

The other, **extrinsic** aspect of validity relates to how the test results are used. Every good placement test has to have a clear primary objective. For example, placing a student into an appropriate class, and, as a consequence, also that of informing the teacher's decision about adopting the appropriate course book for any group created through the placement test.

A test must be **reliable** – in other words, we must be able to trust its results and relate it to the candidates' competence.

A **reliable** test will test what it says it will test, consistently. So a student taking the test one week and then retaking the test a week later, when there has been no significant change in learning, should achieve similar results [Wall, Claptram and Alderson, 1994].

We must be able to **interpret** the test results – to understand what any numerical score means in terms of student ability.

Finally, the test must **serve our purposes**. Rather than just giving us a measurement, it should also give us relevant information to inform our decisions.

Conclusion

A placement test is a crucial component for both, teachers and students.

It reveals a student's linguistic strength and weaknesses and this will help you plan your course. The placement test is normally carried out with a diagnostic needs analysis as this enables you to assess the student's speaking level whilst also finding out the student's aims and objectives for learning.

The goal of placement testing is to reduce to an absolute minimum the number of students who may face problems or even fail their academic degrees because of poor language ability or study skills.

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