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Збірник містить матеріали міжнародної науково-практичної конференції з актуальних питань сучасних жанрів і дискурсів, літератури, вищої освіти та методики викладання професійно орієнтованої англійської мови на нефілологічних факультетах.

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ФІЛОЛОГІЧНІ ЙПЕДАГОГІЧНІ СТУДІЇ

REFLECTING ON LANGUAGE TESTING (ENGLISH AT TERTIARY LEVEL)

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Testing is familiar to every teacher or student. Various kinds and types of tests are widely used in assessing a foreign language command. They are widely applied by Ukrainian university teachers to measure students' achievements and proficiency in language teaching and learning. Tests are used for different purposes: to distribute students among groups according to their proficiency level, to diagnose their weak and strong points, to assess the results at the end of the unit or the course, etc. They are used in formative and summative assessment.

According to Hughes (Hughes, 2002: 58-74), the process of test design may be divided into several stages: stating the problem, writing the test specification, developing test items, trialing on native speakers, trialing on non-native speakers, analyzing test results, calibrating scales, validating the test, writing textbooks / manuals / instructions for those involved in test design, administration, and assessing, and for training staff. High-stake tests, including Ukrainian External Independent Test for school-leavers observe the above procedure.

However, the question arises whether tests used in teaching routine, in the classroom, follow the procedure, at least, some of the stages mentioned above, whether rank-and- file foreign language teachers are qualified for test design, whether they have enough time and skills to do the job properly. Maybe, they need some help. Language teachers are "jacks-of-al-trades," they teach, they assess, they design syllabuses, write textbooks, etc. They develop tests too. It often happens that instead of doing this time and effort consuming

131

PHILOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL STUDIES

work, language teachers use test tasks published in English text books or on the internet. They "frankenstein" (Ramirez, 2020: 195) commercially developed tests. Such tests do not completely match the particular language needs of particular students. So, teachers try their hand in test design. Unfortunately, our "home-made" tests are not flawless. They may contain mistakes. It is possible to group and divide the common mistakes in test design into several groups.

First, there may be errors which are connected with the test itself, its validity, construct irrelevance and non-reliability. The test "should reflect the instructional objectives by reference to vocabulary, structures, and skills actually taught" (Henning, 2012: 36). In other words, the test should have an objective and measure what it is to measure in accordance with the syllabus. If not, the test results are meaningless, non-reliable, and unfair. The test may be too easy or too difficult for this or that particular group of students and do not evaluate or discriminate among them in their ability. Insufficient number of items reduces the reliability of the test. It is recommended to have the number of test items bigger than 50, but not more than 100 (Henning, 2012: 33). Test should not be biased and involve themes which may be sensitive for some categories of students.

Secondly, technical errors may be detected. They are connected with characteristics of test items themselves. The test item requires matching of its content with the corresponding syllabus unit. It is understandable that students should be familiar with the language tested. In case of testing reading or use-of-English, which are based on a text, answers should not be copied from the text, using the same structures, words or word-combinations from it. The correct answer requires the comprehension of the text. Test items should not be redundant, with repetition avoided. Options / distractors should be homogeneous, plausible, and approximately of the same length. Options / distractors should not overlap, should

ФІЛОЛОГІЧНІ И ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ СТУДІЇ

not be based on general knowledge, or answered using test- takers' experience of the outside world without reading the text.

Another set of problems in testing is connected with the test administration procedure. For example, instructions are not adequate, are not clear or do not present the details necessary for the successful completion of the test. Students should be familiar with the test format, in other words, teaching and assessment should match. When students are familiar with the test format and do similar tasks again and again, they develop cognitive and metacognitive strategies and become test-wise. This contributes to successful completion of the task.

Despite the fact that there are a number of textbooks on language assessment, evaluation, and testing, and a lot of webinars devoted to them are conducted, it

happens that teachers do need training in test task design as they come into the profession without a strong knowledge and developed skills of assessment. It seems to be expedient to stimulate attention and focus on complicated problems around test creation, administration and analysis, to raise awareness for teachers to reflect on test design, to develop deeper theoretical and practical expertise. High quality assessment in language education will ensure that testing is fair, with respect to testees, and the tests produced for this purpose are valid and reliable.

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