

## Testing of Student Communicative Competence During Tatar Language Study

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**Abstract:** The study deals with the organization and carrying out of the common republican testing in the Republic of Tatarstan concerning the Tatar language among the students of a basic comprehensive school with Russian language study. The study reflected the content of a single republican testing concerning the Tatar language, the analysis of the tasks is given used to identify the level of student skills development such as listening, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar skills. The implementation in basic secondary school practice of the final test control results concerning the learning activities of students in respect of the Tatar language requires a constant update of test materials, the enhancement of performance methods and the evaluation of test results. The presented material is the first experience of student testing methodical system concerning the Tatar language which gives an objective assessment of their communicative competence development. The results of this study contribute to the active use of test control methods in school practice to diagnose the levels of Tatar language proficiency as the means of verbal communication.

**Key words:** Pedagogical supervision, testing, Tatar language, evaluation of results, education quality

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### INTRODUCTION

The improvement of language education quality provides the introduction of innovative forms of work not only in the content of language teaching but also in the control system of student communication skills, providing timely diagnosis and a feedback between students and a teacher. New technologies of pedagogical control concerning the educational achievements of the Tatar language students in the Republic of Tatarstan are put into the practice of a comprehensive school gradually. The objectification of materials for the measuring and assessing of preparation level concerning the Tatar language, developed in accordance with international standards of language competence is a call of times, as control is one of the most integral parts of the whole educational process. Its primary function is to diagnose language and speech competences, developed among students in the process of the Tatar language study. According to modern linguistic methodical literature "testing as a method of teaching provides quantitative measurements to assess and compare the following criteria on their basis using special scales": the level and the quality of student training within a single educational program; the quality of different educational programs within the same subject; the quality of teaching (Kabanova and Novikov, 2008). To this end, the Republic

of Tatarstan has a compulsory common testing on Tatar language for 9 grade students and a common Republican examination on Tatar language for 11 grade students (Denmuhametova, 2010). At that the final inspection is carried out taking into account the learning of Tatar language as a mothertongue and Tatar as a foreign language. The testing on the Tatar language as a state language in secondary schools of the Republic of Tatarstan became an obligatory stage in the educational process due to potential possibilities ensuring the objective evaluation of student linguistic level.

The purpose of research is to summarize the positive experience on the use of the test technology to assess the level of Tatar language practical knowledge among the students who mastered the basic general education program in Russian groups at the schools with Russian language learning. In accordance with the program requirements the study of the Tatar language in Russian schools is aimed at the development of student communicative competence, understood as their ability and willingness to communicate using the second state language. To determine the level of the main indicators development concerning the communicative competence of the primary school graduates various types of tasks are used in testing. The performance of presented pool of tasks by students allows to evaluate the compliance with their level of language proficiency

achieved by the end of education at basic school, the level that is defined by an approximate program of Tatar language study.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The introduction of a unified republic testing on the Tatar language was carried out in stages. First of all, the measurement and control materials were developed, taking into account the basic criteria of didactic tests (validity, correctness, differentiating ability, etc.) as well as related documents (specification in Tatar and Russian languages, codifier, evaluation criteria for Part C tasks). The next stage was presented by the training seminars for school teachers involved to testing results verification. During the academic years 2010/2011, a trial testing concerning Tatar language was organized for the first time for 9 grade students of all comprehensive schools of the Republic. During the academic years 2011/2013, a full-scale testing of 9 grade students was carried out for all schools of the republic.

The main methods used in this study: the comparative method, analytical method and the method of synthesis.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

During the development of test materials for the Tatar language, we proceeded from the fact that "test is a tool consisting of qualitatively verified system of test tasks, a standardized performance procedure and a pre-designed processing technology and the analysis of results". At the same (Mayorov, 2001), we took into account the national characteristics of culture, traditions and mentality of Tatars (Fathullova *et al.*, 2014). In modern linguistic didactics, the final control is aimed at testing and the evaluation of acquired communication skills. Due to the control, we obtain an objective information about the communicative activity of pupils using the studied language. The practical significance of the pedagogical control is that the knowledge is systematized during its performance and the communicative activities of students are activated. The analysis of test control results diagnoses the gaps in language learning, provides the assessment of learning success and students achievements shows the advantages and disadvantages of training methods and means, the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher methodological research.

The preparation of the test tasks on the Tatar language is based on the following criteria of their quality: validity (adequacy of the test to the purposes set at the control stage); reliability (the test which provides

permanent results, the estimations at repeated use, at the correlation of independent expert estimates are considered as reliable ones), correctness (logical correctness of a test task), differentiating ability (the ability to distinguish weak and strong students using a test), etc. (Anonymous, 2003).

The test research on the Tatar language for Russian-speaking students is made up of four sections that contain 38 tasks. Section 1 (listening tasks) includes 8 tasks for the understanding of authentic texts (the recommended performance period makes 30 min). Section 2 (reading tasks) consists of 9 tasks (performance period-30 min). Section 3 provides 15 tasks on vocabulary and grammar (performance period-30 min). Section 4 (tasks on writing) consists of two parts. In the tasks 33-37 you need to write utterances in accordance with this communication problem (performance period 20 min). In task 38, it is proposed to write a personal letter on the situation (performance period 40 min). A graduate of a basic comprehensive school is provided with 3 tasks on matching; 9 tasks are based on the choice of a variant from two proposed ones; 6 tasks are based on the choice of a variant from three proposed ones; 15 tasks with a short response; 5 tasks for speech situations and 1 task with a detailed response.

The Tatar language testing for Russian-speaking students consists of 3 types according to the structure of tasks. The first type are the tasks with a choice of several proposed responses (multiple choice tasks) including the tasks on the correspondence obtaining. They are aimed to test the understanding of the core content of heard and read texts and finding the requested information in these texts. The second type is presented with a brief response tasks which are aimed on the checking of graduate lexical and grammatical skills. The third type is the tasks with detailed answers: the writing of utterances according to the speech situations; a personal letter writing.

In order to perform the tasks on listening the statements of interlocutors are used in common everyday communication, the pragmatic and information audio texts. At first, the students perceive the dialogues and determine their places of actions and then listen to the monologue speech and establish the correspondence between the utterances of each speaker and the statements provided in the list. Then the students perform the tasks on the understanding of the substantive content of a read text and the understanding of the requested information in the read text. In this case, they are offered with pragmatic, non-fiction, journalistic and literary texts. In order to perform the assignments on grammar a coherent authentic text is also used where separate words are missed and their initial forms are indicated next to the

sentences. Students must use those words belonging to different parts of speech, in a correct grammatical form. The control system of the Tatar language requires the consideration of a studied material linguistic features, as each language consists of the units differing by their communicative significance. The control testing concerning the Tatar language, its forms and methods, the types of tasks are conditioned by the language specifics of selected material, the uniqueness of communication structures used in Tatar speech. Taking into account everything mentioned above, a focus is made on the inclusion of those forms that are most frequently used in the Tatar language and the practical assimilation of which involves certain difficulties among Russian-speaking pupils.

The performance of the study tasks demands the high level of competency among students concerning the Tatar language as they are lexical and grammatical ones. In this research, the students experience the greatest difficulties and allow numerous errors. Students read an authentic text and instead of blanks they shall develop a new word from this root and use it in a correct grammatical form. To do this, they need to know the most productive derivational affixes which form nouns, adjectives, verbs and other separate parts of speech in the Tatar language. In order to test the development of writing skills among students in a single republican testing the tasks on the understanding of a communicative task and the writing of utterances in accordance with the given speech situation are included the writing of a personal letter on a given topic. To complete successfully the above mentioned tasks, students should learn how to use the language means to solve communication problems in different speech situations, to observe the syntactic features of the Tatar language, where the pronominal structures are presented abundantly; numerous types of affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences. It is important to teach students to use the structural types of interrogative sentences (with the particle-my/me, with interrogative pronouns); to select with regard to the situation of communication the lexical syntactic patterns and fill them correctly lexically; to transform one speech sample into another one; ask the questions without relying on a sample; the use of cliches in speech inherent to the Tatar common language; to use estimated and modal utterances in necessary situations like: Shulajmini? (Is it?) Kizik (interesting). Bikjakhshi (very good) to use the formulas of Tatar speech etiquette. As a result, students master the skills of statement development taking into account the assigned specific speech tasks while expressing its attitude towards the content of the message and using every possible means of language (expressiveness, imagery, rhythm, emotion, patterns of speech etiquette, etc.).

In this study, the texts and situations are used within the following topics: About myself and my family, family relationships, communication in everyday life, daily regime, leisure time, holidays, national holidays and customs of the Tatar and Russian peoples, congratulations. My favorite activities and games, my world and the internet, sport games, me and my friends, a man and nature, seasons, Ecology, Republic of Tatarstan. Countries and cities, travels, recreation and other activities. It should be noted that the content of test materials for the performance of single republican testing on tatar language is based on a model program (Khaydarova *et al.*, 2013; Akhmetzyanova, 2013).

The system of student test work evaluation includes the following elements the right performance of each task based on selection and a short is rewarded with 1 point. If a spelling mistake is made in a short answer, the answer is considered as an incorrect one. A wrong answer or the absence of it provides 0 points. In tasks 1, 2, 17 each correct correspondence is evaluated. The performance of task 1 provides 0-4 points, the performance of task 2 provides 0-5 points, the performance of task 17 provides 0-7 points. The level of communicative abilities development among the graduates of the basic secondary school is determined by experts specially trained to check the assignments of section 4. A feature of this section task assessment is the writing of utterances according to the given speech situation and personal letter is that this part is tested according to certain criteria. Concerning this part a graduate may get 20 points. During the evaluation of a personal letter the volume of a text is taken into account, expressed in number of words (the required amount for a personal letter makes 80 words. If a personal letter has <40 words then according to evaluation criteria of lexical and grammatical elements of the text (K3) and text spelling and punctuation (K4), the maximum score is not provided. The correct execution of all testing tasks is rewarded with 65 points.

A minimum number of points is set before testing, confirming the development of basic education program on the Tatar language by students. The minimum score for the Tatar language is determined by the volume of knowledge and skills, without which it is impossible to continue the education at secondary school. The graduates 9th grades who received less than the minimum score during testing on the Tatar language, shall demonstrate the following:

- Understanding of listened text main content
- Understanding of the information requested from a listened text
- Understanding of a read text main content

- Understanding of the information requested in a read text
- The presence of lexical and grammatical and spelling skills
- The presence of writing skills on a specific topic or an issue

The researchers developing the assignments for final testing pay a special attention to the selection of the controlled content in tests and are based on the following criteria; the relevance of the selected language and speech material; its scientific value and representativeness; systematic and comprehensive language elements. Due to the fact that a single republican testing is the final form of practical knowledge level concerning the Tatar language among students who mastered the basic general education program. During the development of test tasks GEF requirements and standard documents are taken into account and adopted in the country in the field of language education. Besides qualified philologists the work involves experienced teachers of secondary schools, as they are able to determine the level of proposed tasks difficulty better and know the possible student answers from their experience. It should be emphasized that the developed test versions are carefully examined.

As the experience of preparation to a single republican testing on the Tatar language shows, one of the actual problems is the development and publication of text books for students with a variety of options, making it possible to repeat the learned language and speech material during a course of a basic comprehensive school and to deepen communication skills. Due to these developments a teacher may teach the process of testing, strict adherence to instructions as well as the preparation for the implementation of the most complex lexical and grammatical assignments and a coherent text writing for students (Fathullova and Denmuhametova, 2015).

### **CONCLUSION**

The results of a single republican testing show that this model of monitoring system concerning the quality of Tatar language teaching makes it possible to assess objectively the level of communicative competence of students and the level of teaching, provide reliable and differentiated assessments, to analyze the process of language education obtaining statistically accurately and

see a further perspective development, to identify the gaps in the assimilation of the program material and to eliminate them in a timely manner. It is important that a single republican testing may cover the largest number of subjects and as a result we get the dynamics of communicative competence development among students and their educational achievements concerning the Tatar language.

A single Republican testing for the Tatar language is designed to help the improvement of language education quality, the development and deepening of communication skills among pupils, the further modernization of education technology.

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