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USING COMPETENCY-BASED TASKS FOR EVALUATING STUDENTS' LINGUISTIC TALENT: DEFINING ISSUES

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Abstract. The authors examine the use of competency-based tasks in revealing students' linguistic talent. It is supposed that competency-based tasks favour the individualization of talented student's work methods. Definitions and examples of competency-based and linguistic tasks are given. The article provides the contrastive analysis of competency-based and linguistic tasks, as well as tasks for talented students.

Keywords: competency-based task; linguistic talent; foreign language.

The problem of searching for adequate methods of diagnostics of pupils including the talented ones is getting more urgent as a result of intensifying modernization of Russian education. Such standard and strategic documents published lately as the national educational initiative "Our new school" (approved by the President of the Russian Federation on February, 4th, 2010, Pr-271), "Education Act in the RF", the Message of the President to Federal Assembly and so forth - determine the work with the talented pupils as a separate direction which is specially organized and supported by institutions of general and additional education, secondary and higher vocational education. According to the specified documents, the basic direction of the activity is defined as development and introduction of consulting and methodological support system for the subject-oriented training realised by means of individual educational programs of pupils, network interaction of educational institutions [1]. The theoretical and methodological grounds for the organization of educational process with talented students are generalised by the Russian scientists and given in "The working conception of talent" [2]. However, the given conception points out a debatable question connected with the concept "talented children" as well as frequency of display of children's talents and methods of its diagnostics: the names of talent types and their quantity vary etc.

The active use of competency-based approach on all educational levels initiates processes of didactics-methodological and scientific support [3] -

development of special curriculums, methodological textbooks, diagnostic toolkit and so forth. Innovations used in foreign language learning have quite wide organizational variety. The researchers [1, 2, 4] work on a problem of efficient use of various types of methodological support for foreign language learning, including competency-based tasks.

In the given work, we refer to N.N. Zhurba's [5] research in which talents characteristics are pedagogically grounded to the fullest extent possible: 1) intellectual level of development, 2) creative potential, 3) special abilities or possibilities, 4) cognitive activity. A possibility of display of the specified talent characteristics in educational process through the solution of competency-based tasks is of interest for us.

Basing on B. Bloom's [6] theory of cognitive complexity of learning tasks in one's work, it is possible to use it successfully considering students' talents. Discussing the problems of academic talents (including the linguistic one), he singled out the following parameters, which, in our opinion, can be diagnosed through competency-based tasks - high personal motivation at achievement of professionally significant results, single-mindedness and fast learnability to new methods.

We understand a competency-based task as a task focused on the creation of a special situation allowing of demonstrating the key and content competences of a student [7].

The use of competency-based tasks in educational process with talented students enables us to mark out its features in real educational activity, and they can also be evaluated at the level of observation of the character of students' actions. As it is, talented students' nature "to do all in their own way", therefore, our assumption is based on that competency-based tasks will contribute to individualization of talented students' work methods, acquisition of uniqueness of products of their activities. The metasubject approach used in the competency-based task will further the display of structuredness of knowledge, singling out a general thing (essential). Thus, a competency-based task will contribute to the display of originality of work methods.

Realizing one of the research problems - grounding the possibility of use of competency-based tasks for revealing linguistically talented students, a comparative analysis of three kinds of tasks was carried out in this research: competency-based, linguistic and creative (focused on students with talent signs) tasks. Generally, a competency-based task is developed on the basis of the cross-curriculum content. The content of a task is focused on the use of practical situations typical of everyday life. A task may contain the audiovisual information (film shots, fragments of musical and other sound compositions, maps, tables with digital material, graphs, photos, drawings, etc.). Tasks may be focused on the analysis and writing of not canonical (amateur) texts. Making up a task, elements of debate technology can also be

used when two stands are compared in the tabular form, grounds of each of them and corresponding arguments and facts are given. Tasks may have prognostic (on the basis of the text analysis) or heuristic (formulation of practical steps in problem solution) character. Results of the comparative analysis are presented in table.

The comparative analysis was carried out on the following parameters: task form, solution method, diagnosed indicators (tested qualities), subject content of a task and the requirements to the level of students' training. For the analysis were selected competency-based tasks for 1-11 forms which are used in various contests "Intellectual-creative potential of Russia" [8], English textbooks [9-11] and collections of linguistic tasks [12, 13].

Types of tasks used in the subject "Foreign language"

Task parameters	Competency-based tasks (foreign language)	Linguistic tasks	Tasks for students with talent signs
Task form	Creation of research situation	Ciphered linguistic phenomenon	Standard tasks of higher complexity
Solution	Presentation of different methods of intellectual operations	Logical conclusions	Work methods, character of attitude to reality and own actions
Tested qualities	Foreign communicative competence	Language intuition and ability to reason	High intelligence quotient ($IQ \geq 120$) and level of creativity development
Content	Practical situations typical of everyday life	All material needed for task solution is in statement of a task	Test grammar tasks, word formation etc., tasks on estimation, translation and transformation
Requirements to the preparation level of students	Language training on the level of acquisition of a foreign language at school	No need for additional or special knowledge or training	High or higher than medium level of intellectual development

The analysis showed that by the above singled out parameters, the tasks which are given in textbooks as creative and of higher level of complexity are used in educational process for students having high language and intellectual training. This type of tasks shows a high level of language training; however, linguistic talents are not required in most cases. Let us give an example of highly used type of tasks which in textbooks are designated as tasks of higher complexity [11: 27]:

Task № 74.

Write what you and your family members did at your last family party. Use: It was... so we went to...; Our family...; First..., Next..., At that moment..., After that..., Finally...

The task solution № 74.

It was my Grandpa's birthday so we went to his house. Our family is very friendly, so every year we gather at Grandpa's place to celebrate his birthday. When we came to our grandparents' house, my Grandma was laying the birthday table and my Grandpa was helping her. First, I gave my present to Grandpa. He opened the box and smiled. Next he took my present out of the box. It was a picture of our family which I drew myself. My Grandpa was very happy. After that, we had birthday dinner. Grandma cooked my favourite dish - chocolate cake. It was very tasty. Finally, we played forfeits and blind man's bluff. We had a great time that evening. I think I'll remember it.

Usual linguistic tasks model the activity of a linguist and are traditionally used in teaching language to check the acquired material.

A number of researchers [13, 14] speak of a self-sufficient linguistic task. A self-sufficient linguistic task is a task on a linguistic theme for which solution you do not need any additional knowledge, except proficiency in a language which is used for stating a task. These linguistic tasks are made up on the material of any languages even the most exotic, knowledge of these languages being not necessary. In our country, the famous linguist A.A. Zaliznyak is given credit for giving rise to self-sufficient linguistic tasks.

Here is an example of a typical linguistic task on the material of an unfamiliar language [12: 125]:

Task № 208 (Author M.E. Alekseev).

Some Georgian words are given with translations into Russian in the mixed order:

tvali, caltvala, calpexa, sartuli, ertsartuliani, ertadgiliani, mravalsartuliani;

Single, one-storied, an eye, one-eyed, a floor, one-legged, multi-storeyed.

The task. Match a Georgian word with its Russian translation.

The task solution № 208 [Ibid: 370].

We easily find bases "sartuli" 'floor' (met three times) and "tval" 'eye' (met twice). Hence: "mraval"- 'a lot of ', ert-...-ani, cal-...-a - 'one -'. The difference between last two bases can be defined when comparing the words *one-storied* and *one-eyed*: in the second word *one* - indicates at inferiority or lack, whereas in the first word the corresponding element has purely quantitative value. Thus: "tvali" - *an eye*, "caltvala" - *one-eyed*, "calpexa" - *one-legged*, "sartuli" - *a floor*, "mravalsartuliani" - *many-storeyed*, "ertadgiliani" - *single*, "ertsartuliani" - *one-storeyed*.

Solving similar tasks, students familiarize themselves with methods of the language analysis used in linguistics; many linguistic concepts are discovered though in the material of a task special terms are not used. Other important feature of such tasks is familiarization of a solver with various

language phenomena belonging to diverse languages. Each task contains a curious phenomenon of a language, and to discover this phenomenon means to solve a task.

The linguistic tasks cover the material of more than two hundred languages of the world. They deal with various sections of linguistics: phonetics and graphics, morphology and syntax, semantics and language history; give an idea about the basic writing systems; familiarize learners with some problems of modern linguistics; reflect the communication of linguistics with mathematics.

The competency-based tasks, taken for the analysis from competitive materials 2013 of the project “Intellectual-creative potential of Russia” [8], showed that to reveal linguistically talented students is much easier when solving a competency-based task such qualities of talents are shown as language feeling, linguistic thinking and language guess. Even having quite average indexes of mastering the school curriculum, a student is able to show flexibility of thinking, language intuition, analytical abilities and knowledge of a foreign language.

Here is an example of typical competency-based task for pupils of 5-6 forms of general secondary educational institutions [8]:

Task № 5 (Contest “Brains Challenge”)

Fill in the gaps with an anagram of the word at the end of the sentence.

1. We live in the country in the middle of a _____. softer
2. I must remember to _____ the letter on my way home tonight.

stop

3. I wish I _____ play a musical instrument. cloud
4. The child complained of a stomach _____ after eating the meal.

Each

5. My favourite _____ is “Love is ...” by A. Henri. mope
6. My grandmother cannot hear you, I'm afraid. She is _____. fade
7. One of the worst things you can ever do is to _____ at exams.

teach

8. Do you think you could give up your _____ for your country? File

The task solution № 5.

- 1) foster; 2) post; 3) could; 4) ache; 5) poem; 6) deaf; 7) cheat; 8) life.

Solving such a task, the language guess and mental abilities are developed, vocabulary is enlarged, motivation to foreign language learning increases.

Thus, the analysis of didactics-methodological support of foreign language teaching in various organizational forms (lesson, contest, project systems) has made it possible to fix the difficult problem of revealing linguistic talents among school students only through linguistic tasks or tasks of higher level of complexity. The use of competency-based tasks in work with the

talented students helps us to develop language and mental abilities, a stable interest in foreign language learning and a need for self-education. It finally contributes to achievement of the communicative competence, that is a certain level of language, country-specific, sociocultural knowledge, communicative skills and speech habits, enabling one to carry out foreign communication. The wider use of competency-based tasks in educational process of foreign language learning will further the faster and organic display of students' linguistic talents in comparison with other methodological materials.

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