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## Criteria-based assessment of students' progress at a foreign language practical lesson at a university

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**Abstract.** *This article is devoted to the criteria-based assessment of students' progress at a foreign language practical lesson at a university, which is undoubtedly one of the key problems in the modern methodology and didactics of teaching foreign languages. The authors generalized such concepts as assessment and criteria-based assessment. The authors examine the «Foreign Language» subject at the University, the features of teaching, its purpose, and its objectives. After analyzing the scientific and methodological work of native and foreign methodologists on the issue of assessing the students' progress in practical classes of a foreign language, the authors set the goal of this study - to develop and experimentally test a system of criteria-based assessment of students' answers, their performance in all types of speech activity, which are included in all types of works in a practical lesson of a foreign language. Based on their own experience, inconsistencies in the existing assessment system, and its shortcomings were identified. It was generally biased. The authors have developed criteria for the main types of work and based on them, an assessment system is presented in letter and digital equivalent. Using such empirical methods of research as observation, self-observation, conversation, analysis, and generalization of the existing pedagogical experience in this area of research, the authors of the article concluded foreign language teachers, which will further help to introduce this criteria-based assessment system into the educational process.*

**Keywords:** *educational process at the university, a «Foreign language» subject, criteria-based assessment, types of speech activity: speaking, listening, descriptors, language level.*

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### Introduction

The issue of assessment in the education system plays a significant role and is an integral component of educational activities since it is perhaps the only tool for determining the effectiveness of not only students but also teachers. On the one hand, the assessment received from the teacher, which is presented in the form of a mark, can be a powerful motive and incentive

for the student to further learning, on the other hand, on the contrary, it can demotivate learning activities. Today, in many scientific works, the issue of criteria-based assessment is considered, which is understood as the process of correlating the learning outcomes achieved by students with the expected learning outcomes based on well-defined criteria [1]. Despite the many scientific papers devoted to this topic, many questions remain open: the question of the objectivity

of evaluation, the correctness of criteria and descriptors, the validity of the evaluation, and a differentiated approach, despite the common goal and objectives of the course, etc.

Thus, the purpose of our work is to highlight and summarize the main aspects of assessment in the education system at universities, and using the example of the course «Foreign Language», which is a general educational subject at non-linguistic faculties in universities of Kazakhstan, to share our own positive experience on the issue of assessing students' oral answers in the classroom of a foreign language in the conditions of a block-rating system based on criteria-based assessment.

### History

Evaluation as an activation process is quite multifaceted and is examined by scientists of various sciences. For us as methodologists, this concept, first, is interesting from the philosophical, pedagogical, and psychological points of view. Since the methodology of teaching foreign languages is based on these sciences. There are many scientific schools whose scientific interests have been devoted to the study of assessment. Many interpretations and explanations of this concept have been given, but we will give some of them, which, in our opinion, reflect the essence, and largely explain the creation of an assessment system in the methodology of teaching foreign languages. So, assessment in pedagogy is considered an activity aimed at collecting information about the knowledge and skills of students, their attitude to learning, and its results [2]. In pedagogy, assessment is quality control of students' progress, a tool that allows you to determine the development of students and their progress in mastering educational material, as well as a way to further adjust actions. At the same time, assessment as a process applies not only to the activities of students but to the activities of the teacher as well. From a psychological point of view, evaluation is associated with the mental operation of comparison. According to Rubinstein, a mental operation is a particular manifestation of analysis

and synthesis at different levels of cognition. The analysis is the mental dismemberment of an object, phenomenon, or situation and the identification of its constituent elements, parts, moments, and sides. Synthesis restores the whole dissected by analysis, revealing more or less significant connections and relationships of elements identified by analysis [3]. The well-known researcher of practical intelligence R. Sternberg considered the evaluation processes in the following strategies: task identification, task definition, and presentation, creation of a task solution strategy, task information organization, resource allocation, and tracking of one's movement towards the goal, assessment of the correctness of the solution [4]. A. N. Leontiev analyzed the relationship between evaluation and emotions in line with the activity approach. With the help of emotions, A. N. Leontiev wrote, a person evaluates the current situation or a possible situation in the future, his activities in these situations, and is also able to evaluate his manifestations in situations of the present and future [5]. Thus, we can say that assessment as a psychological process includes such a mental operation as a comparison, carried out through analysis and synthesis, while human emotions affect the final result of the assessment. In philosophy, evaluation or assessment is considered as a representation, concept, or judgment about the meaning of an object or phenomenon. Values are reflected in the mind in the form of assessments. And the result of value judgments is the definition of material, spiritual values that are meaningful by a person, a group of people, or society as a whole [6].

In textbooks on the methodology of teaching foreign languages, assessment, which undoubtedly remains the main component in educational activities, is not considered and studied as a methodological aspect. The methodology of teaching foreign languages has gone through many reforms and changes. The goals and objectives are being improved, and technologies and tools are being developed, but the issue of evaluating the oral answers of students in a foreign language class remains relevant.

## **Research methods**

Based on the analysis of existing research in the field of pedagogy, psychology, and methods of teaching foreign languages, we have generalized the concept of «assessment», which is quite extensive and includes not only oral commentary by the teacher of a qualitative indicator of a student's answer, but also an assessment as a symbol or sign of this comment. Based on the methods of empirical knowledge, namely, monitoring the achievements of students in foreign language classes through the introduction of our developed scheme for evaluating students' oral responses based on our developed criteria. As well as comparing the results obtained with the previous course. And for the purity of the experiment, an anonymous survey on the effectiveness of the new assessment system was conducted among the teachers of the department and students.

## **Discussion and results**

The «Foreign Language» subject is studied by students of non-linguistic specialties and is included in the list of compulsory disciplines and studied during the first year of study. Three hours a week, students attend foreign language classes, which are practical. In extracurricular time, teachers organize the independent work of students (SRO). The purpose of the course is to develop the skills of speech activity: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, to form intercultural and communicative-functional competencies for students [7]. The difficulties in organizing practical classes are that the groups are of different levels, while the number of students in one group varies from 14 to 20, and given the fact that the subject is not their core subject, all students have different degrees of motivation and different abilities to study a foreign language. Having summarized the descriptors that apply to all types of speech activity in the context of the minimum sufficient, optimal, and high language levels, we have developed the following requirements. In the field of oral and written communication, students

at the end of the course should be able to convey information, inform the interlocutor, request the necessary information, interrogate, question, advise, recommend, convince, characterize, and express sympathy and antipathy, to highlight advantages and disadvantages. During the dialogue- conduct simple conversations on topics related to situations from everyday life, to use phrases and sentences to exchange information in the social, social, cultural, educational, and professional fields. During the monologue- to describe situations from the social, socio-cultural, educational, and professional fields of activity, exchange remarks, to use paraphrases. In the course of written communication- to write an essay on the covered speech topics, to convey communicative intentions in compliance with the regulatory requirements for registration [7].

Undoubtedly, by the end of the course, we want to see our graduates who speak a foreign language at a sufficient level, who can apply the acquired knowledge in the further educational process, as well as in their future professional activities. Skills and abilities, acquired in foreign language classes, such as the ability to carry out joint creative projects, obtain new information, the ability to evaluate and correct their work, and the ability to independently improve their language level.

So, a foreign language is a language spoken by residents of another country for an individual, it is also a language that is not spoken in the country of the individual origin [8]. L.P. Solovtseva considers a foreign language as an academic discipline as a language that is studied in the educational process under artificial conditions and which is not used in the natural environment along with other languages [9]. In these specially created language conditions in practical classes of a foreign language at the university, we teach students not only language as a sign system, but also as a means of communication, as a tool with which you can gain new knowledge. The structure of a practical lesson in a foreign language depends on the goal and objectives that the teacher must achieve. Based on our own experience, we distinguish the following types of classes:

**Table 1**

Evaluation in letter, numeric, and percentage equivalent by a 100-point system

|    | Digital equivalent<br>of points | Percentage equivalent | Grade according to the<br>traditional system |
|----|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| A  | 4,0                             | 95-100                | Excellent                                    |
| A- | 3,67                            | 90-94                 |                                              |
| B+ | 3,33                            | 85-89                 | Good                                         |
| B  | 3,0                             | 80-84                 |                                              |
| B- | 2,67                            | 75-79                 |                                              |
| C+ | 2,33                            | 70-74                 |                                              |
| C  | 2,0                             | 65-69                 | Satisfactorily                               |
| C- | 1,67                            | 60-64                 |                                              |
| D+ | 1,33                            | 55-59                 |                                              |
| D  | 1,0                             | 50-54                 |                                              |
| FX | 0,5                             | 25-49                 | Unsatisfactory                               |
| F  | 0                               | 0-24                  |                                              |

**Table 2**

| Type of work in<br>class    | Grade in letters and<br>percentage equivalent | Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Checking home<br>assignment | A-/19% - A / 20%                              | Home assignment is completed as required. The student actively uses speech topics. Answers teacher's questions. Can explain the choice of correct answers.                                                                                                            |
|                             | B-/15% - B+/18%                               | Home assignment is completed as required. The student uses 80% of the vocabulary on speech topics. Answers the teacher's questions and can explain the choice of the correct answers.                                                                                 |
|                             | C-/12%-C+/14%                                 | Home assignment is completed. The student is having difficulty with vocabulary. Vocabulary on the studied speech topic is less than 70%. The student answers the teacher's questions by reading sentences and phrases. The student cannot always explain the answers. |
|                             | D/10%- D+/11%                                 | The home assignment is partially completed. The student practically does not know the meaning of the words and phrases on which the homework is based. The student can only read and has difficulty explaining.                                                       |
|                             | F/0%- FX-9%                                   | Home assignment is completed partially / not completed. Active vocabulary is used in less than 25%. The student is unable to explain the studied topic.                                                                                                               |

- Classes where the work is being done on new material. Here, new vocabulary is introduced to the speech topic, a new grammatical topic, which is directly related to the speech topic. Students study new regional information. The work is done on the pronunciation of new words and expressions. We often conduct this type of class at the beginning of a block of each semester.

- Summarizing classes, which begin with checking homework, activating the studied material, then the new material, fixed on examples and exercises is explained.

- Creative classes, where students, working in small groups or pairs using a given algorithm by the teacher, find the information and knowledge they need in a creative search and in a new situation to complete a creative task. These can be presentations, work on a mental map, role-playing games, dialogues, interviews, mini-projects, etc.

- Classes that test residual knowledge. These classes are held at the end of each block in the

form of testing or oral questioning of the studied speech topics.

Within the framework of the block-rating system, the answers of students in each lesson should be evaluated by a 100-point system. So, the assessment is an alphabetic or numeric sign, which determines the compliance of a student's level of knowledge with the standard adopted in each country or a particular educational institution [10].

The scale for assessing student responses in the classroom at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University is presented in table No. 1

The main dissatisfaction of students in assessment is bias. It is difficult for students to understand the criteria for evaluation. For teachers, this grading system is also difficult, for example, the grade "excellent" varies from 90 to 100 and it is quite difficult for a teacher to justify the score, for example, why one student gets 93 and another 94. Based on the features of the "Foreign Language" subject itself, and based on

**Table 3**

| Type of work in class | Grade in letters and percentage equivalent | Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grammar exercises     | A-/19% - A / 20%                           | Completed grammar tasks are correct. The student makes minor mistakes, which he corrects himself. The student understands the use of grammar rules.                                                                                 |
|                       | B-/15% - B+/18%                            | Completed tasks may contain errors. 75%-85% of the given grammar tasks are completed correctly. Mistakes made by the student can be analyzed and corrected independently. The student understands the application of grammar rules. |
|                       | C-/12%-C+/14%                              | The student makes a significant number of mistakes. 40%-45% of grammar tasks are done incorrectly. The student has difficulty explaining. Doesn't understand all the grammar rules. Has difficulties with giving examples.          |
|                       | D/10%- D+/11%                              | 50% of grammar tasks are completed incorrectly. The student cannot correct his mistakes and does not understand the use of grammatical rules in practice.                                                                           |
|                       | F/0%- FX-9%                                | Grammar tasks are not completed/completed by 25% percent. The student does not understand the use of grammar rules in practice.                                                                                                     |

Table 4

| Type of work in class | Grade in letters and percentage equivalent | Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Listening             | A-/19% - A / 20%                           | The student aurally understands the content of the presented dialogues and monologues based on the studied speech material. At the same time, unfamiliar words do not interfere with understanding what is heard. The student completes the tasks correctly, and can explain the answers using information from the audio track. |
|                       | B-/15% - B+/18%                            | The student aurally understands the monologues and dialogues presented for listening. But due to unfamiliar words and expressions, there are minor errors that the student can correct on his own when listening again.                                                                                                          |
|                       | C-/12%-C+/14%                              | The student understands only dialogues and monologues based on the studied speech material. Unfamiliar words and expressions interfere with understanding, in this regard, mistakes are made.                                                                                                                                    |
|                       | D/10%- D+/11%                              | The student hardly understands what he heard, even though the monologues and dialogues for listening are built on the studied speech material. 50% of tasks are completed incorrectly.                                                                                                                                           |
|                       | F/0%- FX-9%                                | The student does not cope with the task / performs only 25%. The student understands only single words. He does not understand the general content of what he heard.                                                                                                                                                             |

the developed descriptors for all types of speech activity, as well as taking a differentiated approach into account, we offer the following assessment system to teachers of foreign languages in universities. According to the structure of the lesson, the teacher covers the following types of work: checking homework, working on grammar exercises, listening, working on an active vocabulary on speech topics, and speaking. For activity, students can get a 5 points maximum. Based on work experience, this «encouragement» undoubtedly motivates the student to work in class. And activity in the classroom is a significant condition, from a methodological point of view, for consolidating the studied material, for enhancing existing knowledge of the language. All types of work by the teacher are estimated by us in the range of 20%. Thus, we use criteria-based assessment, which is understood as a process based on comparing the educational

achievements of students with specifically developed criteria, according to language level descriptors that correspond to the goals and content of the «Foreign Language» subject [11].

In our opinion, doing homework is a key component of learning activity, so the necessary skills and abilities in the subject are formed only in systematic practice, and the most important thing is the formation of skills and abilities to work independently. Here there is several requirements that apply to the organization of homework:

- it should be clear to every student. If the groups are of different levels, then the formation of homework should be approached differently. The student should be able to cope with tasks independently without anyone's help.
- Assignments should be identical to the topics that were worked on at the lesson, so they will have training, reinforcing character.

Table 5

| Type of work in class            | Grade in letters and percentage equivalent | Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Work on speech topics vocabulary | A-/19% - A / 20%                           | The student completes the tasks correctly. Can explain new words and expressions, knows their native-language equivalents. Can make sentences and mini-situations based on the given words.                         |
|                                  | B-/15% - B+/18%                            | The student completes the assignments but makes mistakes. Can explain the meaning of words in their native language. Can find synonyms and antonyms. Can form sentences from these words and use them in speech.    |
|                                  | C-/12%-C+/14%                              | The student makes mistakes while completing the assignment. Has difficulty translating and writing sentences.                                                                                                       |
|                                  | D/10%- D+/11%                              | The student makes a large number of mistakes (50% of the task is completed), does not understand the meaning of words, experiences difficulties in making sentences, and cannot use these sentences in a situation. |
|                                  | F/0%- FX-9%                                | The student does not complete the task / performs with a large number of mistakes (25% completed correctly).                                                                                                        |

• Additional material for self-study, which is creatively developed, using modern technologies, which are relevant, useful, and interesting and will be an effective motivator in learning a foreign language.

In the following table, we have presented descriptors for checking homework, as well as an assessment in letter and percentage terms.

In the modern methodology of teaching foreign languages, the study of grammar takes place in a speech situation, immediately on «live» examples. There is an element of guesswork. Students are taught to analyze grammatical rules and examples, and independently try to apply the rules in practice, forming grammatical authorities. In Table 3, we have presented descriptors for grading grammar tasks:

The next type of speech activity that is practiced in foreign language classes is listening. Listening refers to the receptive type of speech activity and is the simultaneous perception and understanding of speech by ear [12].

Students are offered a variety of audio and video tasks that are directly related to speech and grammatical topics. In Table 4, we describe the descriptors on which we base our scoring.

An introduction to a speech topic begins with dictionary work. These can be tasks for matching words and expressions with pictures, supplementing sentences with new words and expressions, choosing answers to questions, choosing verbs in set expressions, distributing words and expressions according to the table presented, and choosing antonyms or synonyms, etc.

In the following table, we offer descriptors for grading this type of work in a practical lesson in a foreign language.

According to the requirements of modern methodology and didactics of teaching a foreign language, the leading type of speech activity in a foreign language class is speaking. Perhaps, all types of work that we organize for students are aimed at developing speaking skills. Buildings

Table 6

| Type of work in class | Grade in letters and percentage equivalent | Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Speaking              | A-/19% - A / 20%                           | The student coherently expresses himself by the learning situation, using grammatical and lexical units by the communicative task, and avoiding phonetic, stylistic, and phonemic mistakes.                                                                                      |
|                       | B-/15% - B+/18%                            | The student can speak logically within the studied lexical topic. He does not experience difficulty in conveying the main, key points of what he has read, seen, and heard. Uses grammatical and lexical constructions within the studied topic. Has a small number of mistakes. |
|                       | C-/12%-C+/14%                              | The student uses non-common sentences in speech within the framework of the studied lexical topic and makes messages with simple sentences. Experiencing a deficit in the vocabulary of words. Makes grammatical, lexical, stylistic, and phonemic mistakes.                     |
|                       | D/10%- D+/11%                              | The student finds it difficult to express his thoughts. Transmits text-based content. Does not always adequately use words and expressions. Makes grammatical errors that interfere with understanding.                                                                          |
|                       | F/0%- FX-9%                                | The student refuses to answer / talks incoherently and uses elementary lexical and grammatical constructions. Makes grammatical, lexical, stylistic, and phonemic mistakes.                                                                                                      |

for speaking are held at all stages of the lesson: the participation of students in a dialogue with the teacher, drawing up dialogues with classmates, monologues in the form of texts retellings, summing up, analyzing what has been read, making statements in the course of discussions, role-playing games, question-and-answer work based on what has been read or heard, slideshow and project presentations, etc. Taking into account all the requirements that apply to these types of work, we have developed descriptors for assessing speaking.

### Findings

The system we have developed for the criteria-based assessment of student performance in a foreign language class at a university undoubtedly has many advantages from the previously used one:

- This grading system is transparent, understandable for both students, and convenient for teachers.
- Students' knowledge is evaluated objectively based on descriptors with which students are familiar and which are compiled by the purpose and objectives of the discipline. In this regard, the assessment begins to motivate students to further study.
- There are fewer questions and complaints about the points given, both from students and their parents, and the management staff of the educational and methodological work of the university.
- This technique allows students to learn how to adequately evaluate themselves and the achievements of their fellow students.
- The student sees an improvement in their performance in each type of speech activity, and thus can correctly prioritize in preparation for the next lesson.

- Noticeable improvement in the language level of students.

### Conclusion

During the first semester of the 2021-2022 academic year, students of the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University were evaluated according to this criteria system, which is based on the principle of assessing students'

progress for each type of work. The convenience of this system and its methodological justification were confirmed by both students and teachers during conversations. Based on the results of the winter examination session, we can say that this system today meets all the requirements of modern methods and didactics of teaching foreign languages and can be actively used by teachers of foreign languages in educational institutions.

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### Студенттердің ЖОО-да шет тілі практикалық сабақтағы жұмысын критериалды бағалау

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақала университетте шет тілі бойынша практикалық сабақта студенттердің жұмысын критериалды бағалауға арналған, бұл сөзсіз шет тілдерін оқытудың заманауи әдістемесі мен дидактикасының өзекті мәселелерінің бірі болып табылады. Авторлар бағалау және критериалды бағалау сияқты ұғымдарды жалпылады. Авторлар университеттегі «Шетел тілі» пәнін, оның оқытудың ерекшеліктерін, мақсаты мен міндеттерін қарастырады. Шетел тілінің практикалық сабақтарында студенттердің үлгерімін бағалау мәселесі бойынша отандық және шетелдік әдіскерлердің ғылыми-әдістемелік жұмыстарын талдай отырып, авторлар осы зерттеудің мақсатын – критериалды бағалау жүйесін әзірлеу және эксперименталды түрде сынауды қойды. Шет тілі бойынша практикалық сабақта жұмыстардың барлық түрлеріне енетін студенттердің жауаптары, олардың сөйлеу әрекетінің барлық түрлеріндегі орындалуы. Өз тәжірибесіне сүйене отырып, қолданыстағы бағалау жүйесіндегі сәйкессіздіктер, оның жалпы біржақты сипаттағы кемшіліктері анықталды. Авторлар жұмыстың негізгі түрлерінің критерийлерін әзірледі және олардың негізінде әріптік және цифрлық баламалы түрде бағалау жүйесі ұсынды. Зерттеудің эмпирикалық әдісінің бақылау, өзін-өзі бақылау, әңгімелесу, осы зерттеу саласындағы педагогикалық тәжірибені талдау және жалпылау сияқты әдістерін қолдана отырып, мақала авторлары осы критери-

алды бағалау жүйесін оқу үдерісіне енгізу барысында шетел тілі мұғалімдеріне одан әрі көмектесетін қорытындылар жасады.

**Түйін сөздер:** университеттегі оқу процесі, «Шетел тілі» пәні, критериалды бағалау, сөйлеу әрекетінің түрлері: сөйлеу, тыңдау, дескрипторлар, тілдік деңгей.

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### **Критериальное оценивание успеваемости студентов на практическом занятии инострannого языка в вузе**

**Аннотация.** Данная статья посвящена критериальному оцениванию успеваемости студентов на практическом занятии по иностранному языку в вузе, что, несомненно, является одной из ключевых проблем в современной методике и дидактике преподавания иностранных языков. Авторами обобщены такие понятия, как оценивание и критериальное оценивание, рассмотрены дисциплина «Иностранный язык» в вузе, особенности преподавания, ее цель и задачи. Проанализировав научные и методические работы отечественных и зарубежных методистов по вопросу оценивания успеваемости студентов на практических занятиях иностранного языка, авторы определили цель данного исследования – разработать и экспериментально проверить систему критериального оценивания ответов студентов, их успеваемости по всем видам речевой деятельности, которые осуществляются на практическом занятии по иностранному языку. На основе собственного опыта были выявлены несоответствия, недостатки существующей системы оценивания, которая в целом оказалась необъективной. Авторами разработаны критерии по основным видам работы, и на их основе представлена система оценивания в буквенном и цифровом эквивалентах. Используя такие приемы эмпирического метода исследования, как наблюдение, самонаблюдение, беседа, анализ и обобщение имеющегося педагогического опыта в данной области исследования, сделали выводы для преподавателей иностранных языков, которые в дальнейшем помогут внедрить данную критериальную систему оценивания в учебный процесс.

**Ключевые слова:** учебный процесс в вузе, дисциплина «Иностранный язык», критериальное оценивание, виды речевой деятельности: говорение, аудирование, дескрипторы, языковой уровень.

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