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My very dear and very true friends and colleagues, my heartiest congratulations to you on the brilliant idea to put out a professional online journal!

Teaching is a lonely profession. Each of us is a lonely hero or heroine, a fearless knight fighting dragon-like obstacles, barriers, bureaucracy and our language lessons are invariably one-hero-battle, one-actor-performance. However, the best way out of this situation is – surprise, surprise: professional associations! This is why our motto is “Professionals of the world, unite!” This is the right way to solve our problems, to respond to challenges, to clear up our confusions – with the help of professional associations. This is the best way to overcome our loneliness, to withstand some unacceptable ideas from numerous bureaucrats who try to “improve” our work having neither knowledge, nor experience in this kind of activity.

Our job is extremely difficult, confusing and scary because we are leading our students into an alien, strange world full of hidden dangers. And the world is alien and hostile to both – the non-native teacher and the student. In this case nothing helps more than a well-educated, thoughtful teacher who loves both – what and whom he teaches and is supported by professional associations.

Svetlana Ter-Minasova

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING (FLLT) AS THE MOST WIDELY-SPREAD WAY OF SHATTERING BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION. A VIEW FROM RUSSIA.

SVETLANA TER-MINASOVA

Founding Honorable President of NATE, Russia

What is the situation with foreign language learning and teaching in Russia nowadays? An answer to this question is supposed to reveal the culmination of FLLT evolution at present. The present is now habitually called “the era of globalization” and its characteristic feature is supposed to be, among other things, swift, exciting changes and development in almost every sphere of human life and activity. Indeed, nowadays the words global, globalization are absolute champions both in popularity and, consequently, in the frequency and variety of usage. Both words, as is well-known, mean something international, relating to the whole world, which is now seen – and called – the global village defined as “all countries of the world when thought of as being closely connected by modern communications ...”¹. But the global village cannot survive without a global language.

However, the global village peoples still stubbornly speak their national languages. The word stubbornly is supposed to draw attention to the fact that teaching the native language which is undergoing great changes under the pressure of the global language and culture is not less needed or important than teaching foreign languages which now, actually, implies, mostly and invariably, English. This is not clearly seen by either the peoples of the global language, or even by the speakers of national “non-global” languages. Russia – alas – illustrates the underestimation of the problem quite powerfully.

All this makes the profession of both foreign and native language teacher extremely necessary and important – like never before. Consequently, the development of modern language learning and teaching has been accelerating – like never before, either. What is the modern language teacher nowadays? An expert in a great “bunch” of spheres of knowledge and life: the language she/he teaches, pedagogy, psychology, anthropology, social studies, cultural studies, arts, politics, technology, etc.? The modern language student, then, is a recipient of all this knowledge.

I will try and discuss the state of the art in this very creative and artistic profession which is both most necessary and most difficult nowadays.

First of all, some preliminary remarks.

The tradition of profound love for foreign cultures and languages is a kind of backdrop on the stage where FLLT lives and works, suffers and flourishes. It is on this stage, with this backdrop that FL teachers and students live and work.

Before I come to the actual traditional ways of teaching the basic language issues it is necessary to make a few brief historical comments about our heritage from the closest immediate past: the Soviet time.

1. In those days – or rather years (decades) – we got the following experience: how to learn and teach our beloved foreign (mainly European) languages when it is not prestigious or rewarding in any way, but suspicious and even dangerous because they were seen as languages of hostile nations and potential enemies. (The same situation was with Russian in “the capitalist countries” (especially the world leaders – Great Britain and the USA, both English-speaking, which made doing English to us even more suspicious). So, one had to be a hero - rather a heroine! to do it.

2. Thus, the history of the Soviet Union has provided Foreign Language Learning and Teaching with an extremely interesting experiment. Indeed, FLLT in the USSR was an experiment – enormous in scale and with amazing consequences – in how to learn and teach a foreign language if both learners and teachers are completely isolated from the world where this foreign language is naturally used. “Completely” in this context means just that, with no leakage in the form of radio, television, native speakers, books, newspapers, language teaching materials, no hint of what is called the culture of the

nation in the broad, anthropological sense of the word, where "culture" does not mean "arts" but means "the way people live" (how they see the world, what they believe in, how they work, how they rest, what and how they eat, what kind of homes they have, etc.)

Under these circumstances Soviet teachers of English, this most unpopular language in the eyes of the Soviet government, were teaching only one of the four main language skills: reading. Indeed, there was nobody to speak to, nobody to listen to and nobody to write to. This last item – writing – was especially dangerous and, consequently, practically non-existent because a paper of any sort written to a native speaker of a suspicious foreign language was a document confirming “communication with foreigners”.

Now the two most important discoveries, trends, tendencies, innovations born after Perestroika and developing in this country at present.

The revolution of the early nineties last century in Russia, the collapse of the Soviet Union concerned the area of FLLT very greatly because it meant the advance of the era of free international communication at a mass scale after many years spent behind the Iron Curtain.

The language barrier immediately has become an irritating obstacle preventing people from enjoying “the luxury of communication” which includes all the privileges, advantages and opportunities that open, mass international communication has offered.

It was then that “a discovery” of another serious obstacle on the way of international communication took place: the cultural barrier. Thus, an ever-increasing interest in cross-cultural studies is a natural result of the previous history of the country when it was bottled up for so many years. The triumph of the communicative approach, the urgent need for speech production skills inevitably has led to the idea that the use of language largely depends on the background knowledge of the world where this language is actually used as a means of communication.

The problem of “what to teach” seems to be more important and more difficult than “how to teach”. As you understand, it is an eternal question of form-and-content relationship: both are equal in importance but, quoting George Orwell, one is more equal than the other.

Our practice of FLLT has shown that learning rules of grammar (and we always did it in full splendour, i.e. with all the minutest exceptions to the rules) as well as learning vocabulary (which usually implies learning the so-called “meanings of words”) is not enough to enable learners to use the language, to communicate, to develop active skills, the skills of speech production. That is where the issue of cultural awareness comes to the forefront.

One of the main reasons for this is that the concept of meaning invariably leads to extra-linguistic reality, to the native speakers’ world reflected by the language. Indeed, the meaning of the word is usually defined as referring a complex of sounds (oral speech) or that of graphic signs (written speech) to a certain object or phenomenon of the real world. Thus, metaphorically speaking, the meaning of the word is a thread or a path connecting the world of language/speech with the real world. Consequently, the meaning of a foreign word leads to the foreign world where this word lives and functions.

A burst of interest in cultural studies is caused by “a discovery” that actual communication is impossible without profound background knowledge of the world of the target language. Indeed, our broad experience of teaching English as a foreign language at a very large scale has shown very clearly that this sociocultural component of ELT is extremely important because the actual communication, the process of speech production (speaking, writing) is impossible without the background knowledge of the English-speaking world, i.e. of the culture, mode of living, traditions, history and moral codes of the language users.

Thus, if a lack of cultural background knowledge kills a foreign language, turns it into a dead one, then cultural studies are the magic wand that revives it, returns it to life. That is why, in present-day Russia, where real, live communicative skills are in such an incredible and unimaginable demand, cultural studies have become an indispensable part of Foreign Language Teaching.

That is why at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies, Moscow State University, some important innovations have been introduced:

1) a new discipline in the curriculum “The World of the Language under Study” which has been given one third of the time allocated to the studies of foreign languages (the world of English/French/German,

etc.). This includes the world of Russian, the state language of this country and the mother tongue of the majority of population;

2) a new idea of adding “area studies” (in Russian *регионоведение*) as another choice for students of foreign languages which results in their acquiring two qualifications 1) an expert in a particular area/region (the North America – USA, Canada, Western Europe – the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Russia), 2) an interpreter/translator of at least two foreign languages: the language of the region and another one by the choice of students. That is why the former name of “The Faculty of Foreign Languages” was changed for “The Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies”;

3) a new – “revolutionary”! – idea that FLLT must be accompanied by profound studies of the students’ native world, language, culture, history, in our case – Russian. From the very start of educational activities at our School of International Studies an annual course “The Russian World” was introduced for all first-year students from all programmes. Another course “The Russian World in the Context of World Civilizations” has been read to all second-year students. These courses are considered to be indispensable for training experts in international communication because the partners of our graduates will be interested mainly in getting information about their native, that is, Russian world.

We have been doing this since 1992 when the newly-born Faculty of Foreign Languages recruited its first students. About 15 years later this idea was supported at the State level by the latest Federal State Education Standard which was introduced by the Ministry of Education. It proclaimed that “basic national values are the essential element of the fundamental core of education content”.

Here are a few pieces of evidence that the idea has been supported both in Russia and abroad.

“I am very glad that the programme of our local Olympiad in Perm includes questions and tasks concerning Russian history and culture. Here, in Perm we have been pondering how to cultivate patriotism in our students of English” (Perm Association of Teachers of English).

“The good mission – to be the bearer of Russian basic cultural values – has become a duty of the foreign language teacher” (Tatiana Gorbunova, Kungur, Perm Region).

“It’s an admirable idea to teach your students about their own country. I was struck when I was at last able to talk freely to Russians in 1988 about how ignorant many people were of their own history. Of course, history had been distorted and suppressed in the Soviet times. In Britain people are also ignorant of their own history, let alone anyone else’s; and without any excuse”, Sir Roderick Braithwaite, British ambassador in Russia (1988 – 1992), wrote in January, 2016.

“For many years in China in the process of FLT greatest attention was paid to giving students a lot of background knowledge about the world of the languages under study while their ability to inform speakers of these languages, about China and Chinese culture was neglected. It exerted negative influence on the cultural orientation of the students, on the efficiency of foreign language studies”, Dr. Yang Ke, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China. Concerning the Question of Including Information about Chinese Culture in the Syllabus of Teaching Russian in Chinese Universities (*Philologicheskkiye nauki. Voprosi Teorii i Praktiki*. 2014, №11. Tambov, 2014).

Consequently, Russia has been included in our programme of Area Studies as a most important region. The goodwill mission of this programme’s graduates is to let the world know about a view on Russia through the eyes of Russians in the languages of the world.

This idea is supported by the well-known quotation from the great Goethe saying that one must also study foreign languages so as to get a better grip on one’s own.

INTERGRATION OF LANGUAGE TESTING AND ASSESSMENT TERMS FROM ENGLISH INTO RUSSIAN

YULIA POLSHINA¹, EKATERINA BONDAREVA²

Abstract

Today language studies are one of the most popular international practices, both for everyday purposes and academic reasons. That is why development and implementation of reliable tools and methods for testing and assessment of language proficiency have become an important goal for instructors and linguists across the globe. To promote a universal understanding of the concepts in this area of knowledge there should exist a comprehensive terminology system of testing and assessment. Borrowing of terms from a more developed terminology system has become a common practice, but whether it always brings satisfactory results remains to be seen. This research paper aims at describing the techniques of integrating English language testing and assessment terms into Russian. In order to establish those techniques we conducted the comparative analysis of the most frequently used English terms on language testing and assessment based on their appearance in specialized texts on the subject and their Russian equivalents. The analysis procedure involved examining the phonetic and orthographic form, definitions and contextual usage of both the original terms and their equivalent borrowed into Russian language. Based on that, we can point out the most productive ways of transferring these terms into Russian, in particular, using calques, half-calques and transformational translation. Those methods prove to be effective in terms of securing the transparency of the meaning and providing a universal understanding of the concepts behind the terms which is necessary for successful communication of the experts in the field on international level and development of valid testing instruments. Nevertheless, integration of some terms is less successful due to the significant discrepancies in meaning between the original and borrowed terms leading to misunderstanding and potentially faulty testing and assessment practices. Therefore, the subject matter of borrowing terms in the abovementioned area shall be addressed in a more thorough fashion, and there should be more studies conducted on this issue.

Key Words: testing and assessment, terminology system, term translation, language borrowing, calque, transformational translation, intercultural contacts

INTRODUCTION

Modern science is characterized both by its interdisciplinary nature and internationality. Accessibility of information in the Internet, frequent communication among researchers and teachers as well globalization trends in education determine specific conditions of interaction in science and education. One of the most crucial elements of successful communication in any sphere is transparency or universal understanding of the described phenomena, methods and tools used by researchers, and this transparency can be achieved through creation of specific terminology in the corresponding languages of communication that would facilitate adequate interpretation of terms and prevent misunderstanding of their meaning. Since national languages do not always have terminological system developed for all areas of knowledge, borrowing terms from other languages helps to fill these gaps.

One example of the sphere in need of such borrowings is testing and assessment in foreign language teaching. Standard tests designed for different purposes, including assessment of language proficiency have become very popular for both European and Asian languages. The need for their development emerged in the context of the current international migration processes, labor and educational mobility and opportunities for studying and communicating online. The most well-known language tests include TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English

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Language Testing System), Cambridge Tests from YLE Starters to CPE and beyond, plus many others for English, TestDaF (Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache), DTZ (Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer), DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber) for German, DELE (Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera) for Spanish, TORFL (Test of Russian as a Foreign Language) for Russian, DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue Française) and DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française) for French, HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) for Chinese, JLPT (Japanese-Language Proficiency Test) for Japanese, and TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) for Korean. Also, language testing is practiced at the national level where it serves different purposes – starting from formative assessment of language teaching and learning within one classroom or one institution to assessing language proficiency on a different scale. This stimulates the exchange of information and expertise in terms of testing and assessment methodology among experts from different countries.

Russia also starts to become increasingly interested in modern testing and assessment methods in foreign language teaching, especially in relation to English. This interest is determined by a plethora of factors, including the introduction of standardized tests for high school graduation/college application – the Unified State Exam in high school and the Basic State Exam in middle school, as well as taking international language proficiency tests for different purposes, availability of many text books and manuals published abroad, intensification of intercultural exchange with colleagues from all over the world, access to research papers on foreign language testing and assessment written in English. The traditional Russian system of pedagogic assessment and the foreign methodology have been developing mostly independently. That resulted in creation of two terminological systems that are basically different from each other despite having some correlation. Today these systems “exist in parallel universes, borrowing tools and justifications of their usage from different methodological approaches, thus creating chaos in everyday teaching practice” (Gvozdeva, 2014). This situation becomes even more complicated due to introduction of many terms borrowed without proper understanding of the concepts they represent. For instance, alternative assessment becomes equal to formative assessment (Klimenko, 2015) while teachers dwell on the advantages of using IELTS method of teaching, even though IELTS is a test, not a teaching method or tool (Vernigorova, 2010), and try to determine whether a test is reliable before its results are obtained (Sukhorukova, Martysheva, Sentsov, 2011). The term “test” is set against the traditional Russian term “контрольная работа (literal translation – control work/assignment)” by numerous non-existing parameters while their similarity is neglected (Kashkareva, 2016). These are few of the examples that confirm difficulties that Russian teachers and researchers face in the relatively new field of Testing and Assessment.

The amount of scientific and instruction materials on language testing and assessment in English is enormous. It suffices to say that many leading publishing houses such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Routledge, etc. publish special series devoted to this particular topic. Moreover, there is a multitude of specialized journals devoted to language testing and assessment. As for the thematic dictionaries, it is worth mentioning the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics having a significant amount of terms related to language testing and assessment, the Dictionary of Language Testing (272 p.) by A. Davis, Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms containing terms in 10 languages (unfortunately, Russian not being one of them), An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language Testing (1026 p.) by A. Mousavi.

Russian language covers much fewer aspects of both testing and assessment and pedagogic supervision. Mostly these problems are discussed in a handful of articles, while, unfortunately, there are no journals completely dedicated to this area of applied linguistics.

There are few specialized dictionaries as well. In this respect we can mention a quite extensive New Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts by Azimov E.G. and Schukin A.N. that contains some terms of the abovementioned sphere, English-Russian Reference Book on Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching by Kolesnikova I.L. and Dolgina O.A. that has a section devoted to testing and assessment terms, Thesaurus of Methodological Terms on Foreign Language by Zharkova T.I. and Sorokovykh G.V. that also has a section on terms related to assessment of foreign language skills, and the Dictionary of Terms and Concepts of Testing by T. M. Balykhyna that shows some discrepancies between the terms in English and Russian, but, unfortunately, the examples are given

without any systematic approach. All these factors prove the topicality of more thorough research of translating language testing and assessment terms from English into Russian.

Studying the peculiarities of terms translation shall be commenced with describing a term as a linguistic unit. The ambiguous nature of this concept is denoted by many researchers (Danilenko, 1977; Golovin, 2008; Tsitkina, 1988). The main difficulty in defining and describing terms comes from basic linguistic principles, in particular, a distinction between linguistic representations of everyday and professional world outlook, idea of vocabulary registers, complexity of a word meaning, etc. (Kandelaki, 1977:4), as well as an existing variety of approaches to describing this linguistic phenomenon. V.M. Leichik cites the definitions of a term from philosophical, logical, semiotic, informational and linguistic standpoints, also providing his own definition from the perspective of terminology studies. He states that a term is “a lexical unit of a certain language used for specific purposes, denoting a general – concrete or abstract – theoretical concept from a specific area of knowledge or activity” (Leichik, 2007:31-32). A broader definition is given by Khomenko S.A. who defines a term as “a word or word partnership naming a certain concept of a specific area of knowledge – science, technology, art, being a part of standard vocabulary and having the same properties, but devoid of emotional colouring” (Khomenko, 2004:24).

While defining the term, it is also important to emphasize a crucial difference between terms and common words that is reflected in a functional aspect dominating over a nominative one, as some researchers point out (Gak, 1974:69; Golovin, 1972:30-31; Vinokur, 1939:3-54). The functional spectrum of a term is defined by the amount of areas where it is applied (Leichik, 2007:90). The functional spectrum of a term is quite broad and includes the functions characteristic of any other element of vocabulary, such as nominative, signifying, definitive, communicative, pragmatic, epistemic and metalinguistic functions, and the latter one is entwined with the communicative and epistemic ones (Popova, 2011:35).

The origins of terms are also heterogeneous, and the methods of their creation include morphological, syntactical, morpho-syntactical and semantic ones, with borrowing being classified as a part of the latter type. Semantic methods are considered to be less popular when it comes to creating new terms, but for emerging terminological systems they are used more frequently (Grinev-Grinevich, 2008:125, 128). Sometimes borrowing of terms is considered as a separate method (Vinogradov, 2003:118-119). Rivlina A.A. notes that nowadays borrowings resulting from the contacts of English and Russian tend to have a root from the original language with an added Russian morpheme or inflexion (Rivlina, 2010:11), but this method does not guarantee the semantic transparency of the word that is important for its correct interpretation and functioning. Lotte D.S. singles out the translated terms from the borrowed ones and divides them into literally translated and modified ones, stating that this type of borrowings makes it difficult to talk about dominance of either language, since the forms of these borrowed units appear to be fully adapted to the receiving language. Their only distinguishing feature is the simplicity or complexity of their structure (Lotte, 1982:12).

Translation of terms is a challenging task for many reasons, namely, because of the subject nature of this process that depends on both a translator’s personality and the context where a certain term functions (Bazalina, 2009:102-103), as well as on ambiguousness and possible errors in the term interpretation when there is not enough information about the functioning of this term in a certain terminological system (Marshman, 2014:227). Another difficulty comes from such properties of terms as complex structure and polysemantic nature (Kovalenko, 2003:256-261).

The main approach to translation of foreign terms involves finding a regular equivalent that is contextually independent. Such equivalents can completely or partially cover the original meaning spectrum, they can also be absolute (having the same properties and connotations) and relative (Retsker, 2007:13). Another classification includes one-way (term interpretation in one possible way) and two-way (term interpretation in two possible ways) equivalence (Shveitser, 1973:19). Also translation of terms is affected by variation when the target language does not have a certain equivalent, and choosing from several possible variants depends on both a specific terminological system, and the context (Alimov, 2015:64). If we translate an element that is new for the target terminological system, we need to aim for unambiguousness and minimal variability of the new term so that it would not have an unclear meaning. But if the frequency of borrowing terms from one language into another grows, it results in so called “terminological dependency” of a target language from its donor, thus indicating

the asymmetry of their relationship. In order to lower the level of this dependence it is important to maintain a semantic equivalence rather than a structural one (Ibáñez, 2014:172, 192 -195).

Translation of terms includes two basic types: literal or word-by-word translation that is possible if there is structural or metalinguistic parallelism of information, and it can be achieved through mechanical copying or calques, and non-literal translation, involving transformations (Komissarov, 1990:166-169). This research aims at discovering the most widely-used methods of translating testing and assessment terms.

When translating terms into another language, it is not their original form that shall be rendered in the first place, because literal approach to translation can interfere with understanding and interpretation of these terms without a constant reference to the original language. A term needs to be transparent, if possible, so that its form will allow to understand the concept behind it, but without violating the rules of collocation existing in the target language. That is why both literal translation, i.e. calques and half-calques, and transformations, as well as combination of these methods are possible in terms of transferring a term from one language into another.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research paper studies basic English terms related to the sphere of testing and assessment that were selected for The Dictionary of Language Testing and Assessment (by Yulia Polshina) using such criteria as their frequency, topicality and practical application in the abovementioned area. The terms were selected from such fundamental reference books as The Dictionary of Language Testing by Alan Davies, Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms, Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning, The Routledge Handbook of Language Testing as well as works of such acclaimed researchers in the sphere of testing and assessment as L.F. Bachman, A.S. Palmer, K.M. Bailey, C. Weir, J.D. Brown, C.A. Coombe, G. Fulcher, A. Green, A. Hughes, T. McNamara, S. Messik, N. Underhill and others. In total, there were used over 70 English language sources. As a result, 153 terms that had been translated from English into Russian were discovered.

The next stage of the study involved comparative analysis of original English terms and their equivalents in Russian language from the standpoint of their structure and meaning. The structural analysis was conducted to determine the most productive way of borrowing terms from this area of knowledge. This stage included phonetic, orthographical and morphological analysis of the material. Analysis of definitions and contextual meaning allowed to discover discrepancies between the meanings of the original term and the borrowed one. This stage was necessary to establish whether a term can be considered universal, and what the spheres of functioning exist in the area testing and assessment in different cultures. Divergence of the terms can indicate erroneous interpretation of the original unit and/or inaccurate application of the term that might lead to miscommunication in professional discussion and creation of faulty instruments of testing and assessment in the target culture.

RESULTS

The analysis of the original and translated units showed that the majority of terms had been transferred into Russian using calques (26%) and mixed calques (26%), while half-calques and transformations were used less frequently (20% and 16% respectively). Mixed half-calques, transcription and transliteration were the least used methods (4% each).

The examples of calques and mixed calques include the following ones: альтернативное оценивание (alternative assessment), аналитическая шкала (analytic scale), цикл оценивания (assessment cycle), прямой тест (direct test), формирующее оценивание (formative assessment), холистическая шкала (holistic scale), метод расщепления (split-half method), etc.

The group of half-calques is represented by such terms as бальная валидность (scoring validity), прогностическая валидность (predictive validity), степень трудности тестового задания (item difficulty), тестовая батарея (test battery), ретестовый метод (test-retest method), etc.

The terms created with transformation can be distributed into several groups depending on the transformation type. They involve metonymic translation (19 examples, e.g., погрешность измерения (error score), метод параллельных форм (parallel form reliability)), modulation (15 examples, e.g., беспристрастность (absence of bias), прямой тест (performance test)) and explicatory translation (10

examples, e.g., степень трудности тестового задания (item facility), дифференцирующая способность тестового задания (item discrimination)). Less frequently used transformations were reduction, addition, specification (8 examples each), substitution of noun number category (4), part of speech substitution (3), metaphoric translation (2), conversion (2), generalization (1).

DISCUSSION

The data show that calques and mixed calques are the most frequently used means of transferring English terms of testing and assessment into Russian. It is necessary to point out that in this research paper calques are defined as a literal translation of all elements of the term, while mixed calques are a combination of literal translation and transformation (if a unit consists of two or more elements rendered in a different way). These methods appear to be more productive (26% for each group, 52% combined) due to their ability to preserve the core semantic component of the term without significant alteration of the whole meaning which is important for the correct functioning of a new term in the target language and allows to avoid misunderstanding between the experts with different language backgrounds.

Recreation of the original term structure facilitates its understanding and helps to create a homogenous environment for the experts' communication as well as develop an adequate system of testing and assessment. Failure to achieve that can result in developing faulty measurement instruments and unreliable tests. Nevertheless, some examples appear to do exactly that due to their incorrect rendering. A special attention should be paid to the term "error of measurement" that means a difference between a measured value and a true value of some parameter. The Russian equivalent is a result of its literal translation (ошибка измерения), and it can be interpreted as a mistake made during the measurement which shows a significant discrepancy with the original meaning of the term and can lead to serious misunderstanding.

The second widely used technique of transferring English terms into Russian is using half-calques that combine literal translation of one part of the terminological unit with transcribing or transliterating another part, i.e. using the letters of the target language to render the original phonetic or orthographic form of the term. As the data show, this method is used a little less frequently than the previous one (20% vs. 26%), and this small difference can be attributed to that fact of half-calques are a transitory stage between the calques and mechanical copying. The majority of half-calques are words with transcribed or transliterated root and a Russian affix or inflection that determines what part of speech the term belongs to and how it functions in the Russian syntax.

The terms created with transformation of original units represent a smaller percentage of the studied material with 16%. This method of borrowing terms is used when a term might be unclear or incorrectly understood in case of literal translation or using transcription/transliteration. A more frequent application of metonymic translation modulation and explicatory translation in comparison with the others (reduction, addition, generalization/specification, substitutions of grammar categories, metaphoric translation, conversion) can be explained by the fact that they allow to achieve a higher level of term transparency. For instance, in case of metonymic translation, the elements of the original term and their the Russian equivalents correlate with each other based on the contiguity of denoted concepts, mostly belonging to the cause-and-effect type of relationship and emphasizing the result of the test rather than a process. Modulation involves a logical development of the original notion that makes it clearer for the recipients of the target language. Explicatory translation is used when it is impossible to translate the original term with a single word and retain the clarity of its meaning. As a rule, such terms describe a concept that is non-existent or very complex for the target language and can be classified as a lexical gap. Examples of such gaps are "washback effect", "washback" or, less frequently, "backwash" (in Russian - обратное воздействие/влияние/эффект) that refers to either positive or negative influence that a test has on the teaching methods used in a classroom and students themselves. Introduction and using this test or another assessment tool makes them do something that can either stimulate better results in foreign language acquisition (positive washback effect), or inhibit this process (negative washback effect) (Messik, 1996:241). Washback effect of a test or any other assessment tool is most frequently reflected in the way a teacher holds classes, what and how student are taught, what amount of information is provided and how it is structured, what attitude towards the

content and methods of teaching is displayed by the participants of this process (Fulcher, 2010:277). It should be taken into account that many foreign testing experts distinguish the concepts of “an impact” and “a washback/backwash”, with the former being a term with a more general meaning, an effect produced on a certain person by the test, standards and protocols of studying methods in a class, school, educational system or even a society as a whole (Wall, 1997), while a washback/backwash is more specific and education-related, like in the following example: “For example, if a test requires that students spell a number of unusual (or “low frequency”) words and recite their definitions, then students facing this test are likely to spend their time memorizing the spelling and the definitions of such words. This would be an instance of negative washback in a course promoting communication skills, since these endeavors would probably not promote the learners’ abilities to use the target language for their day-to-day communication needs” (Bailey, 1998:3). Obviously, it is the complexity of washback/backwash that results in creation of several equivalents in the Russian language.

As it was mentioned before, mixed half-calques (combination of a half-calque with transcription/transliteration or transformation), transcribed and transliterated terms (4% each) are used less of all. This qualitative difference in comparison with other methods can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, these techniques are more convenient when transferring one-word terms, since in this case there is no need for coordinating the syntagmatic and semantic structure of the word partnership. Our selection mostly includes complex units consisting of more than one word that is why other methods are more relevant in order to acquire a necessary level of transparency for a Russian equivalent of the original term. Secondly, some terms or term elements already exist in the target language in transcribed or transliterated form, so using a different way of translating these terms seems irrelevant. Testing and assessment in foreign language teaching is currently on the rise. Undoubtedly, a uniform understanding of concepts and procedures in terms of testing and assessment, synchronizing terminological systems in the English and Russian languages that terminology translation is ultimately aiming at, will allow to deal with existing issues of understanding, or rather misunderstanding, and interpretation of certain terms and concepts they denote, thus promoting better testing and assessment practices and quality research of this area.

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USING CLOZE PASSAGES TO ESTIMATE READABILITY FOR RUSSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Abstract

This preliminary study examines the relationships between each of six first language (L1) readability indexes and the cloze passage mean performances of Russian EFL students. The cloze passages were created by randomly selecting 50 text passages from an American public library and deleting every 12th word in each passage to create a 30-item cloze procedure. The participants were 5170 EFL students from 38 universities in the Russian Federation. Each student was randomly assigned to take one of the 30-item cloze passages. The L1 readability indexes calculated for each of the 50 passages were the Flesch, Flesch-Kincaid, Fry, Gunning, Fog, and modified Gunning-Fog indexes. The preliminary results indicate that the L1 readability indexes were moderately to highly correlated with each other, but only somewhat correlated with the mean performances of Russian university students on cloze versions of those same passages. These results are discussed in terms of why the L1 readability indexes are moderately to highly correlated with each other but only somewhat correlated to the Russian EFL means. The authors also explain what they are planning in terms of further linguistic analyses (e.g., of variables like average word length, percent of function words, number of syllables per sentence, number of words per paragraph, frequencies of words in the passages, and so forth) and statistical analyses (including at least factor analysis, multiple regression analyses, and structural equation modeling) of these data.

Key Words: second language readability, English language teaching.

INTRODUCTION

First Language Readability

Readability is a concept that describes the degree to which a text is easy or difficult to read. A *readability index* is a numerical scale that estimates the readability or degree reading difficulty that native speakers are likely to have in reading a particular text. For example, the Fry (1977) readability scale is expressed in grade levels for students in the United States ranging from 1 (first grade) to 17+ (graduate school and beyond). Thus a passage with a Fry scale index of 3.5, would be fairly easy because it would be appropriate for children who are native speakers of English in the second half of third grade (or about 8 years old), whereas a passage with an index of 13 would be more difficult because it would be suitable for first-year university-level native speakers of English.

The findings from one study (Brown, Chen, & Wang, 1984) led the first author believe that such L1 readability indexes might be useful indicators of relative passage difficulty in EFL settings. Brown, Chen, and Wang studied the readability of the cards in Stanford Research Associates (SRA) classroom reading kits. Those kits have cards at different grade levels (coded by color) that had previously been established by research into the actual performances on those cards of North American children. Brown, Chen, and Wang started by calculating the Fry readability index for each of the SRA cards. They then compared the resulting Fry scale indexes with the actual native-speaker grade-level performances.

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Table 1. *The Accuracy of L1 Fry Readability Estimates (Adapted from Brown, Wang, & Chen, 1984)*

SRA Kit	Passage Grades Based on Student Performance				
		Mean	SD	Min	Max
3A	3.5	3.22	1.20	2	6
	4	4.56	1.42	3	6
	4.5	5.56	0.88	4	7
	5	6.44	0.73	5	7
	6	7.11	0.93	6	8
	7	8.22	2.17	6	13
	8	8.67	1.50	6	10
	9	9.56	1.67	6	12
	10	10.22	1.48	7	12
	11	10.11	2.15	6	12
	4A	8	8.56	1.13	6
9		9.44	0.88	8	10
10		10.44	1.74	9	14
11		11.11	1.83	7	13
12		12.56	1.51	11	16
13		13.11	3.30	9	17+
14		13.25	1.98	9	15

Table 1 shows results for the 3A and 4A SRA kits separately. The grade levels shown in column two were established by research into the performances of L1 native speakers (each grade level consisted of 12 to 14 cards). The mean¹, standard deviation² (*SD*), minimum³ (*Min*), and maximum⁴ (*Max*) for the Fry scale readability estimates for each grade or half-grade level are shown in the last four columns. Notice, in the third column, that the mean grade levels for the Fry index are remarkably close to the actual grade levels of the cards as established by student performance. Clearly, this study demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between the mean grade levels estimated by the Fry scale and the grade levels established on the basis of native-speaker performances.

A large number of English as a first language (L1) readability indexes have been invented over the past 60 years. Chall (1958), Klare (1963; 1984), Zakaluk and Samuels (1988), or Zamanian and Heydari (2012) all provide overviews of the first language readability literature. The L1 readability indexes examined in the current paper are: the Flesch reading ease formula (Flesch, 1948), the Flesch-Kincaid readability index (as described in Klare, 1984), the Fry readability scale (see Fry, 1985), as well as the Gunning, Fog, and modified Gunning-Fog readability indexes (see Larson, 1987).

The simplest way to explain the *L1 readability indexes* is to show the equations that define them. For example, Flesch's (1948) equation multiplies the average number of syllables per word in the text by .846, then subtracts the result from 206.835. From this result, the equation subtracts 1.015 times the average number of words per sentence. The actual equation for the Flesch reading ease index is:

1. Flesch Reading Ease Formula (Flesch, 1948)

$$= 206.835 - .846(\text{syllables} / \text{words}) - 1.015(\text{words} / \text{sentences})$$

The other indexes described below (numbers 2 to 6) are similar manipulations of the numbers of syllables, words, long words, easy words, hard words, sentences, etc. For those who are interested, we also provide a seminal reference for each equation.

2. Flesch-Kincaid Index (as cited in Klare, 1984)

$$= .39(\text{words} / \text{sentences}) + 11.8(\text{syllables} / \text{words}) - 15.59$$

3. Fry Scale (Fry, 1977 or 1985)

= on the Fry reading graph (see Fry, 1985), the grade value at the point where the coordinates for sentences per 100 words and syllables per 100 words cross

¹ Here the *mean* can be interpreted as the more familiar arithmetic *average*.

² The *standard deviation* is a sort of average of the distances from the mean of all the values in the data; as such, it is an indicator of how much the values are dispersed around the mean.

³ The *minimum* is the lowest value in the set of numbers.

⁴ The *maximum* is the highest value in the set of numbers.

4. Gunning Index (as cited in Carrell, 1987)

$$= .40(\text{words} / \text{sentences} + \% \text{ of words over two syllables})$$

5. Fog Count (as cited in Carrell, 1987)

$$= \frac{\left\{ \frac{\text{easy words} + 3(\text{hard words})}{\text{sentences}} - 3 \right\}}{2}$$

6. Gunning-Fog Index (Larson, 1987)

$$= \left\{ \frac{\text{words}}{\text{sentences}} + 100 \right\} \times \left\{ \frac{\text{long words}}{\text{sentences}} \frac{\text{sentences}}{\text{words}} \right\}$$

Second Language Readability

In contrast to the rather large literature on L1 readability indexes, very little work has been done on readability indexes applied to second language (L2) students. A few such studies have investigated readability in languages other than English. For example, Nguyen and Henkin (1982) did so for Vietnamese, and Gilliam, Peña, and Mountain (1980) did so for Spanish. Moreover, Klare (1963) provided a survey of nine other early readability studies for French, German, Japanese, and Spanish.

For ESL, Haskell (1973) found that cloze procedure successfully distinguished among texts regardless of their length, the scoring method used, the deletion rate, and so forth. Hamsik (1984) found fairly strong associations (ranging from .78 to .82) between student performances on cloze tests and four different readability indexes. Brown (1998) showed that the mean performances of Japanese university students on the same 50 passages used in the present study correlated with the same readability estimates used in this study ranging from .48 to .55. Greenfield (1999) replicated Brown (1998) with different passages and found that the traditional L1 readability indexes correlated strongly with Japanese students' performances on cloze tests. Greenfield (2004) reported similar results and concluded that the traditional L1 readability indexes "are valid for EFL use" (p. 5).

Cloze Procedure and Readability

The first reference to cloze procedure was Taylor (1953), who studied the value of this sort of test for estimating the readability of reading materials used in U.S. public schools. Over the ensuing years, other key studies on cloze readability have included Bickley, Ellington, and Bickley (1970), Bormuth (1966, 1968), Brown (1998), Greenfield (1999, 2004), Miller and Coleman (1967), Moyle (1970), Ransom (1968), and Taylor (1957). All of these studies have shown that performances on cloze tests are at least somewhat related to readability.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the degrees of relationship between each of the L1 readability estimates and Russian EFL students' performances on actual cloze passages. To that end, the following research questions were posed:

1. Are randomly selected cloze tests reliable and valid tools for gathering data on passage difficulty?
2. To what degree are traditional first language readability indexes related to the average cloze scores for the same passages (when administered to Russian EFL students)?

METHOD

Participants

This study focused on the performances of 5170 Russian EFL students. The participants were selected as intact EFL classes from 38 different universities across Russia.¹ The participants ranged in

¹ We would like to thank all of our colleagues who helped at various stages of this project by administering the cloze tests at 38 universities in the following 25 towns and cities: Chelyabinsk, Kazan, Kolomna, Krasnodar, Moscow,

age from 14 to 45 with a mean of 18.59 (48 participants did not answer this question); 71.7% of the participants were female, 28.0% males, and 0.3% did not specify their gender. All 50 cloze procedures were administered in such a way that all students were randomly assigned across all testing sessions to particular cloze tests. The purpose of doing this was to ensure that the results of the different groups could reasonably be assumed to be comparable across the 50 passages. An average of 103.4 students took each cloze test (with individual passages ranging from 90 to 122 students).

The participants were mostly undergraduate students from non-linguistic universities and departments, though, some students were linguistics majors. Their levels of proficiency can generally be said to represent the English proficiency of university students in Russia who are studying subjects other than English or linguistics. While the participants in this study were not randomly sampled from all Russian university students, it can be said that the sample is fairly large and homogeneous with regard to the nationality, language background, and educational level of the students.

Materials

The 50 cloze procedures used in this study were developed by randomly selecting 50 books from the adult reading section of the Leon County Public Library in Tallahassee, Florida, and then randomly choosing a passage from each book to create a 350 to 450-word long passage, beginning from a semantically logical starting point. Clearly, these passages were not selected in a completely arbitrary manner, but they were selected so that they would form independent and cohesive passages. The resulting 50 cloze passages ended up ranging from 366 to 478 words with an average of 412.1 words in each passage. Based on random selection, the resulting set of 50 passages is assumed to represent the reading passages encountered in U.S. public library books.

To create the cloze passages, every 12th word was deleted from each text and was replaced with a standard length blank. A 12th word deletion pattern was chosen instead the more traditional 7th word deletion so that 30 items could be constructed far enough apart to minimize the effect of answering one item correctly (or incorrectly) on answering other items. In addition, one sentence was left unmodified by blanks at the beginning of each passage and one or two were left intact at the end of each passage. Additional spaces were then added at the top for the students' name, sex, age, native language, and country of passport. Directions were also given that explained what the students must do to fill in the blanks and how they would be scored. Sample directions and 12 sample items are shown in Appendix B, which was taken from Brown (1989).

An additional very short 10-item cloze passage was also created and attached to all 50 of the cloze tests. This 10-item cloze test was developed on the basis of pretesting reported in Brown (1989), using procedures similar to those applied in Brown (1988), so that only those blanks that had proven very effective in an item analysis were kept in the test. The purpose of this short anchor test was to provide a common metric for making comparisons among the fifty groups of students and for anchoring item response theory analyses, which will be reported in future studies.

Procedures

The data for this paper were collected by a large number of teachers at 38 universities in various locations throughout the Russian Federation (see footnote 5 for those locations). The cloze passages were randomly distributed in a manner that assured that all students had an equal chance of getting any of the 50 cloze tests. They were administered by the teachers in classroom. The directions were clarified as necessary, and a total of 25 minutes was allowed for completing both the 30-item and ten-item cloze tests. According to teacher feedback, 25 minutes was sufficient time for students to finish.

Exact-answer scoring was used in this research. Exact-answer scoring involves counting only the original word that had occupied the blank as a correct answer. We felt that this was justified because research has repeatedly shown high correlations between exact-answer scores and other more elaborate scoring procedures (Alderson, 1978, 1979; Brown, 1978, 1980).

Novocherkassk, Novosibirsk, Orenburg, Rostov/Don, Ryazan, Samara, Saransk, Saratov, Smolensk, Solykamsk, St. Petersburg, Surgut, Syktyvkar, Syzran, Taganrog, Togliatti, Tomsk, Ulyanovsk, Voronezh, and Yoshkar-Ola. For a list of the cooperating institutions, see Appendix A.

Analyses

The variables in this study were chosen because, they were known to be related to readability and because they were quantifiable. In other words, these variables were chosen because they might explain statistically the variations in readability levels of the cloze passages in this research. Only seven variables are included in this preliminary report: (a) six L1 readability indexes and (b) the means produced by the Russian EFL students who took these tests.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the 50 cloze tests ($k = 30$). These statistics include the mean, standard deviation (*SD*), minimum score obtained (Min), maximum score (Max), the number of participants who took the particular cloze (*N*), and the Cronbach alpha internal consistency reliability estimate for each test.

One obvious result which jumps out of Table 2 is that the means for the 50 cloze passages range from a low of 1.60 to a high of 12.82 out of 30. Since random selection promotes the equality of these groups in terms of overall English proficiency, the variation in means revealed in Table 2 is probably due to considerable variation in the difficulty levels of the passages involved. It is worth noting that these means are fairly low for tests with 30 items each. However, similarly low means have been commonly reported for cloze tests scored using the exact-answer method.

Notice also that the standard deviations range from a low of 2.27 to a high of 6.96. This range indicates substantial variation in the degree to which the students' scores were spread out around the means of these cloze passages. The minimum (Min) values are all 0. The maximum (Max) values ranged from 10 to 30, which indicates substantial variations in the ways these cloze passage scores spread out around their respective means. The number of participants on each cloze passage also ranged from 90 to 122.¹ The reliability of the 50 cloze tests likewise varied considerably. Notice that the lowest internal consistency Cronbach alpha reliability was .646, while the highest was .919. Such reliability estimates indicate the proportion of reliability or consistency in the scores. For example, .646 indicates that 64.6% of the variance in scores for that cloze test was reliable but also, by extension, that 35.4% was unreliable ($100\% - 64.6\% = 35.4\%$). Reliability estimates are important in any statistical research because a study can only be as reliable as the measures upon which it is based.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for 50 Cloze Passages*

Test	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N	Reliability
1	6.78	3.99	0	16	120	0.745
2	7.06	4.94	0	19	102	0.853
3	3.94	3.71	0	14	103	0.811
4	9.82	6.12	0	21	105	0.887
5	6.54	4.38	0	22	106	0.822
6	5.34	4.19	0	16	102	0.828
7	8.07	6.22	0	20	103	0.896
8	3.13	3.67	0	24	101	0.859
9	4.08	3.67	0	23	105	0.808
10	3.77	4.24	0	22	102	0.869
11	5.74	4.53	0	17	101	0.845
12	9.27	4.86	0	20	115	0.834
13	3.30	3.89	0	17	105	0.855
14	5.10	4.70	0	17	107	0.866
15	8.10	5.60	0	21	106	0.893
16	2.30	2.70	0	11	115	0.773
17	2.55	2.29	0	10	109	0.646
18	1.60	2.27	0	15	100	0.775
19	6.15	5.08	0	30	102	0.882

¹ Note that, for reasons that we do not yet understand, Passage 1 originally had an unusually high number of participants with 170. We randomly selected 120 to remain in our data so that the sample sizes would all be approximately the same.

20	5.41	5.01	0	24	97	0.887
21	10.32	6.96	0	27	103	0.919
22	3.74	3.64	0	14	102	0.825
23	3.58	3.36	0	14	102	0.789
24	2.13	2.37	0	10	101	0.712
25	4.63	4.55	0	15	102	0.873
26	4.35	3.25	0	21	100	0.770
27	3.48	3.07	0	15	100	0.751
28	4.01	3.81	0	18	102	0.837
29	3.39	2.70	0	11	102	0.702
30	12.82	5.39	0	22	111	0.834
31	4.88	3.89	0	14	101	0.815
32	4.96	3.22	0	12	101	0.785
33	2.82	2.57	0	10	102	0.713
34	7.11	4.43	0	18	102	0.828
35	6.72	5.54	0	25	103	0.873
36	4.81	4.11	0	16	96	0.834
37	8.38	5.46	0	24	103	0.872
38	2.42	2.44	0	14	106	0.743
39	3.62	3.44	0	12	103	0.804
40	3.87	4.39	0	24	90	0.877
41	4.53	3.56	0	14	101	0.794
42	4.78	4.10	0	20	93	0.836
43	2.09	2.56	0	15	99	0.760
44	4.80	4.28	0	19	102	0.854
45	9.24	6.59	0	21	101	0.909
46	3.69	3.49	0	14	93	0.803
47	3.19	2.79	0	12	104	0.729
48	2.98	3.36	0	18	108	0.753
49	4.39	4.10	0	15	122	0.858
50	3.57	3.04	0	13	109	0.758

Table 3 displays the results for the L1 readability indexes examined in this research. They are arranged not by the passage numbers as they were in the previous table, but rather in order from the easiest to most difficult as indicated by the means in the last column. In other words, high means on passages (like the 12.82 for passage 30) indicate that the Russian students found them to be relatively easy, and low means (like the 1.60 for passage 18) indicate that the students found them to be relatively difficult.

Table 3: *L1 Readability Estimates and Russian Means for 50 Passages*

Passage	Flesch-			Gunning-			Mean
	Flesch	Kincaid	Fry	Gunning	Fog	Fog	
30	4.63	6.5	5	5.08	6.0	22	12.82
21	4.74	7.5	5	4.85	5.9	24	10.32
4	5.95	7.6	6	6.41	8.4	28	9.82
12	8.59	11.0	10	5.67	8.1	32	9.27
45	8.47	11.1	8	6.72	10.0	36	9.24
37	6.03	8.6	2	6.81	9.3	31	8.38
15	9.69	12.0	10	6.41	10.0	38	8.10
7	9.37	9.9	10	6.07	10.0	43	8.07
34	10.69	12.8	10	8.48	13.0	42	7.11
2	10.71	13.5	13	6.07	10.0	42	7.06
1	6.78	9.6	7	6.15	8.7	32	6.78
35	3.69	4.8	4	4.09	4.8	22	6.72
5	11.00	13.9	10	6.57	10.0	40	6.54

19	8.27	10.2	8	6.40	9.4	35	6.15
11	2.71	5.0	3	3.05	3.2	20	5.74
20	8.30	10.8	8	7.03	10.0	35	5.41
6	5.18	7.0	6	4.11	5.2	27	5.34
14	4.79	8.5	6	4.26	5.5	27	5.10
32	7.80	9.6	8	5.94	8.1	30	4.96
31	8.13	11.6	10	5.26	8.1	37	4.88
36	7.88	11.3	8	5.82	9.4	40	4.81
44	11.6	13.9	11	7.81	13.0	43	4.80
42	7.10	9.1	8	5.19	7.2	31	4.78
25	7.72	10.2	7	7.09	9.7	31	4.63
41	12.26	14.3	12	9.33	15.0	47	4.53
49	7.59	10.3	7	8.19	12.0	37	4.39
26	13.95	16.6	14	9.05	17.0	54	4.35
9	12.30	15.3	12	9.34	16.0	49	4.08
28	12.00	14.4	14	8.23	14.0	49	4.01
3	2.83	4.8	3	3.25	3.5	21	3.94
40	5.69	8.1	6	5.47	7.5	30	3.87
10	11.86	15.2	10	9.61	16.0	46	3.77
22	8.97	10.8	9	7.16	11.0	37	3.74
46	8.78	11.2	9	5.80	8.5	34	3.69
39	5.09	6.7	6	5.81	7.5	27	3.62
23	11.45	13.9	13	7.35	13.0	46	3.58
50	18.51	21.3	15	13.48	25.0	64	3.57
27	9.36	10.0	9	7.20	11.0	38	3.48
29	13.58	16.0	11	11.00	17.0	46	3.39
13	10.65	12.1	10	8.83	14.0	40	3.30
47	9.99	11.9	9	8.24	13.0	40	3.19
8	8.46	11.2	8	7.83	11.0	36	3.13
48	8.51	11.2	8	6.95	12.0	44	2.98
33	13.82	16.3	12	11.01	21.0	59	2.82
17	15.60	20.4	14	9.78	19.0	58	2.55
38	11.01	12.9	11	8.13	13.0	42	2.42
16	8.90	13.0	9	8.99	16.0	50	2.30
24	10.69	13.1	10	8.95	14.0	40	2.13
43	11.51	13.9	10	9.72	15.0	43	2.09
18	9.69	12.7	12	6.06	9.7	40	1.60

The remaining columns in Table 3 show the readability estimates for each passage using the Flesch, Flesch-Kincaid, Fry, Gunning, Fog, and Gunning-Fog indexes. All of these indexes, except for the Gunning-Fog index, are meant to be on scales that represent grade levels in U.S. schools. It is interesting that they are fairly comparable in some cases, thus indicating similar relative difficulties for the passages. In other words, passages that appear to be relatively easy on one index also tend to be relatively easy on the other ones as well, while passages that appear to be relatively difficult on one index are also relatively difficult on the others.

Table 4 shows the correlation coefficients for all possible pairs of the L1 readability estimates in this study and the Russian means. The darker cells that spread across the table diagonally indicate the correlations of each variable with itself, which in each case is of course 1.00. Note then that while a perfect correlation is 1.00 and total lack of correlation would equal .00, all the values in the table are somewhere between the two extremes. Notice also that the correlations in the last light gray column are negative values indicating that the means range from easy to difficult in the opposite direction from the L1 readability indexes. In other words, cloze passages with high means are relatively easy while those with low means are difficult. This is the opposite (thus negative) from the readability indexes where high values indicate difficult passages (suitable for higher grades) and low values indicate easy

passages (suitable for lower grades). It turns out that the L1 indexes are all moderately to highly correlated with each other (between .70 and .98) depending on which one is examined. It also turns out that there is a relatively low degree of relationship between the Russian means and the various L1 readability indexes. All in all, these L1 indexes are more highly related to each other than they are to the Russian means.

Table 4: *Correlation Coefficients L1 Readability Indexes and Russian Mean Difficulty¹*

	Flesch	Flesch-Kincaid	Fry	Gunning	Fog	Gunning-Fog	Means
Flesch	1.00	.98	.92	.89	.93	.95	-.42
Flesch-Kincaid		1.00	.90	.87	.92	.95	-.44
Fry			1.00	.70	.78	.88	-.41
Gunning				1.00	.98	.87	-.45
Fog					1.00	.95	-.48
Gunning-Fog						1.00	-.48
Russian Means							1.00

DISCUSSION

The discussion will now return to the original research questions and will address each question separately. The implications of these findings for Russian EFL readability estimations will be explored in the Conclusions section.

1. Are Randomly Selected Cloze Tests Reliable and Valid Tools for Gathering Data on Passage Difficulty?

In terms of reliability, Table 2 indicates that the cloze passages in this study are reasonably reliable, though individual tests varied somewhat with Cronbach alpha reliability estimates ranging from a moderate .646 to a relatively high .919. This means that these passages ranged from being about two-thirds reliable (64.6%) to being more than nine-tenths reliable (91.9%). To some degree, such variation in reliability can be related to the distributions of scores. The magnitudes of the means (some of which were as low as 1.60) and standard deviations (many of which were almost as large as their corresponding means) indicate that many of these distributions were probably positively skewed—a fact that would tend to depress the values of Cronbach alpha. Nonetheless, these estimates represent the reliability of these cloze tests when used under these conditions with these students.

In terms of validity, an argument can be built for the validity of the scores on these 50 cloze tests as follows. Given that the cloze passages were constructed from randomly selected public library books and that the items for the passages were semi-randomly selected (i.e., every 12th word deletion), sampling theory would indicate that the passages form a representative sample of the English language found in those library books. Therefore, it can be argued that the items form a representative sample of the blanks that can be created from public library books. Given that the validity of the scores from a set of items is defined as the degree to which they are measuring what they purport to measure, the validity argument here is that these cloze items have a high degree of content validity because they can be said to form representative samples of the universe of all possible items (after Cronbach, 1970), if that universe is defined as blanks created from the written language found in an American public library. [For much more on the reliability and validity of these passages, see Brown, 1993; for more on test reliability and validity issues, see Brown, 2005.]

¹ Note that all of the correlation coefficients in Table 4 are statistically significant at $p < .01$ (one-tailed).

2. To What Degree Are Traditional First Language Readability Indexes Related to the Average Cloze Scores for the Same Passages (When Administered to Russian EFL Students)?

Tables 3 and 4 both show some degree of relationship between each of the L1 readability indexes and the Russian means. Table 3 allows readers to actually inspect these relationships. However, Table 4 shows the degree to which the L1 readability indexes are moderately to very highly correlated with each other (ranging from .70 to .98). Thus, the L1 readability indexes appear to be moderately to highly interrelated, which makes sense given that they are all based on the same sorts of counts of syllables, words, sentences, etc. Table 4 also shows that L1 readability indexes are somewhat related to the performances of Russian EFL students as indicated by the correlations of -.41 to -.48. Remember that these coefficients are on a scale from no correlation (.00) to perfect correlation (1.00) and that they are negative values because the L1 readability and Russian mean scales indicate passage difficulty in opposite directions. Naturally, all of this can be said to be true only for Russian university EFL students as sampled in this study and for the cloze passages used here.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results of this preliminary study indicate that there is certainly reason to move forward with further analyses. It has shown that a variety of L1 readability indexes for this set of 50 passages are somewhat correlated with the average performances of Russian university students on cloze versions of those same passages. This finding is important to think about. Why are the L1 readability indexes only somewhat related to the Russian EFL means? This lack of relationship could be due to any of the following: (a) that these L1 readability estimates are fine indicators of passage readability for native speakers but not for Russian EFL learners; (b) that the cloze passages are measuring something different from the simple readability measured by the L1 indexes; (c) that the Russian EFL learner's scores on the cloze passages are measuring something much more complex than simple readability—something like the students' *overall proficiency* levels rather than the *reading* difficulty of the passages.

We are hoping that the analyses that we are planning to perform on these data in the future will help us to better understand these and other aspects of these cloze passages. In particular, the directions we anticipate pursuing at the moment should lead us to answers to the following research questions:

1. What other linguistic text variables (e.g., word length, word frequency for each blank, the length of the sentence in which the blank is found, whether the word is of Germanic or Latinate origin, etc.) should be included in such research?
2. How well do those linguistic text variables predict Russian EFL performances at the passage level? At the item level? And in what combinations? [Using item-response theory, factor analysis, multiple-regression analyses, and structural equation modeling—all of which will be explained in subsequent papers.]
3. What hierarchies of difficulty are found at the passage level for any of the linguistic variables (separately or combined) that would have implications for second language acquisition research? Similarly, what hierarchies of difficulty are found at the item level?
4. What differences and similarities would occur if the results of this study were compared with the similar data gathered in Japan? With students from other language groups? With students at other levels of study? Or at other ages?

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES

We owe a great debt of gratitude to our colleagues at the following 38 institutions who helped us gather the data upon which this study is based. Without their cooperation and help, and the efforts of their students, this research project would simply not exist.

1. Chelyabinsk Law Institute
2. Chelyabinsk State University
3. International Market Institute (Samara)
4. Kazan branch of the Russian International Academy for Tourism
5. Kazan Military Institute
6. Kazan State Technical University
7. Kolomna State Pedagogical University
8. Krasnodar State University
9. Mordovian State University
10. Lomonosov Moscow State University
11. Novocherkassk Polytechnic Institute
12. Novosibirsk State University
13. Orenburg State University
14. Presidential Cadet College (Orenburg)
15. Rostov/Don Institute of Management, Business and Law
16. Rostov/Don State University
17. Ryazan State University
18. Korolyov Samara Aerospace university
19. Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities
20. Samara State University
21. Samara State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering
22. Saratov State Pedagogical University
23. Saratov State University
24. Smolensk University for the Humanities
25. Solykamsk State Pedagogical University
26. South-Ural State University
27. St. Petersburg State University
28. Surgut State University
29. Syktyvkar State University
30. Syzran branch of Samara State Technical University
31. Taganrog Institute of Management and Economics
32. Taganrog State Pedagogical University
33. Togliatti Academy of Management
34. Tomsk Polytechnic University
35. Ulyanovsk State University Institute for International Relations
36. Volga State University of Technology (former Mari State Technical University)
37. Voronezh State University
38. Voronezh State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE CLOZE PASSAGE

(ADAPTED FROM BROWN, 1989)

Name _____ Native Language _____
(Last) (First)
Sex _____ Age _____ Country of Passport _____

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read the passage quickly to get the general meaning.
2. Write *only one* word in each blank. Contractions (example: *don't*) and possessives (*John's bicycle*) are one word.
3. Check your answers.

NOTE: Spelling will *not* count against you as long as the scorer can read the word.

EXAMPLE: The boy walked up the street. He stepped on a piece of ice. He fell
(1) _____, but he didn't hurt himself.

A FATHER AND SON

Michael Beal was just out of the service. His father had helped him get his job at Western. The (1) _____ few weeks Mike and his father had lunch together almost every (2) _____. Mike talked a lot about his father. He was worried about (3) _____ hard he was working, holding down two jobs.

"You know," Mike (4) _____, "before I went in the service my father could do just (5) _____ anything. But he's really kind of tired these days. Working two (6) _____ takes a lot out of him. He doesn't have as much (7) _____. I tell him that he should stop the second job, but (8) _____ won't listen.

During a smoking break, Mike introduced me to his (9) _____. Bill mentioned that he had four children. I casually remarked that (10) _____ hoped the others were better than Mike. He took my joking (11) _____ and, putting his arm on Mike's shoulder, he said, "I'll be (12) _____ if they turn out as well as Mike."
(continues ...)

TO ACCEPT, OR NOT TO ACCEPT: PREREQUISITES TO ENSURE QUALITY TEACHER TRAINING

EKATERINA SHCHAVELEVA¹

Abstract

The research focuses on the problem of acceptability of applicants with the minimal level of the Unified State Exam (the USE) to teacher training programs, and coinage of language teachers with under-developed language competency, the latter being fated to turn insufficient for preparing school students for the USE. In the article the author answers the following two research questions: what level of language competency should be demonstrated by a teacher who works in a Russian regular secondary school; what the initial level of language mastery of applicants of teacher training programmes, measured with the USE and demonstrated with its results, would be adequate for them to be academically and linguistically agile for passing the exam which is known as the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE). The methods of the research included the content analysis of official documents regulating the requirements towards teacher competency and examination procedures and assessment; longitudinal observations on language competency development (330 students were observed throughout six years); comparative analysis of examination results. The outcomes of this research may be of high value to teacher training institutions in terms of the determination of categories of programme applicants who have stronger or weaker chances to graduate as competent (job market relevant) teachers.

Key Words: teacher training programme, language competency, English language teacher, Unified State Examination, CAE, quality of teaching

According to the current educational policy, the government implements new projects to enhance the quality of teaching, which presumes a certain quality level of teachers. Though Professional Standards (The portal of Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education, 2018a, 2018b), describe a whole list of competencies a qualified teacher should possess, subject knowledge plays a minor part in it; the government emphasizes that any teacher whose subject competency is low-levelled cannot be considered to be good. The National System of Teachers' Growth, the latest project commissioned by the government (Muzaev, 2018), also defines the subject competency as one of the four competencies that compose the professional competency of a teacher.

Furthermore, *Rosobrnadzor* (Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science) conducted a test to check the level of subject competency of 20 000 teachers of certain subjects in 67 regions of the Russian Federation (The Federal Portal *Russian Education*, 2018). It was held on a voluntary basis – i.e. teachers could opt out of participation – but nevertheless the results showed insufficiency of teachers' knowledge of the subject they teach. Although the Ministry of Education questioned (The official site of *RIA Novosti*, 2018) the relevance of the test and it did not encompass all subjects, it is evident that subject competency is a key issue that concerns all stakeholders of the educational process.

If the subject competency of language teachers is scrutinized, language competency can easily be assessed if the CEFR-based test is offered.

According to Cambridge English Teaching Framework (2014), there are four levels, or categories, of professional competency of a language teacher, which correlates with CEFR in terms of language ability. This document provides experts with a full list of descriptors within various aspects of the teaching profession in relation to the given categories, including language ability (Table 1).

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Table 1. Categories of Teachers and Relevant Language Ability

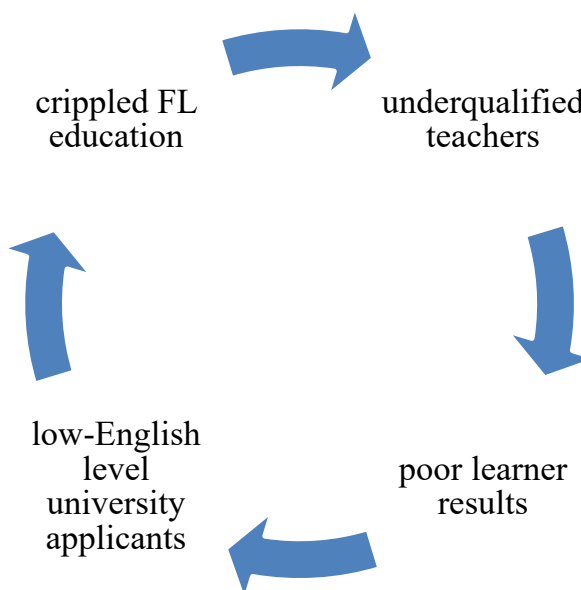
Categories of Teachers	Language ability (CEFR level)
Foundation	At least A2
Developing	At least B1
Proficiency	At least B2
Expert	At least C1

It is obvious that language teachers in the Foundation category demonstrate at least A2 level. This contradicts the fact that most teacher refresher programmes including Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2018), require applicants to achieve B2 as the minimum level of language competency, while at the same time the expectation for the CELTA course is C1-C2. Noteworthy, there are no clear explanations or reasons why such high levels of language competency are established as a threshold, assumptions seem relevant that written assignments, compulsory to complete the course, require English proficiency.

International language schools normally require CELTA as an admission, consequently language teachers applying for a job with them need to prove C1 as a minimal level of language ability. This raises the first research question: what level of language competency should be required of teachers who work in Russian regular secondary schools?

Looking into the issue of final outcomes of language education programmes for schools, B2 is to be attained: according to the documents (Specification of Assessment Materials for Unified State Examination in Foreign Languages, 2013), this is established as the highest result in the Unified State Examination (the USE). Subsequently, B2 is insufficient for teachers who prepare their students for the USE, and it is presumably C1 that most likely will guarantee the expected student performance on the national school exit exam. There is strong logical background to believe that low-level teachers breed low-level students and thus it becomes a perpetual loop if the latter opt for teaching as their future job (Fig.1.)

Fig.1. The Loop of Poor Teacher Breeding



Consequently, the teacher language competency herein should read as Expert level in terms of the language ability characterized in the Cambridge English Teaching Framework [6].

MISIS programme administrators hypothesised that teachers should possess a higher level than he/she prepares his/her students for. Thus, the developers of the teacher training programs should take into consideration that graduates' language competency needs to be at least at the C1 level if the Ministry intends to secure the university graduate's proficiency in the linguistic component of secondary education. Otherwise the insufficient linguistic capability of language teachers may cause some deficiencies during their in-service period. Moreover, if graduates' employability is an issue, this level will be sufficient for securing jobs for young teachers with international language schools.

The Linguistic Bachelor Programme which is offered by the National University of Science and Technology 'MISIS' (NUST 'MISIS) aims to train future teachers, translators and interpreters. Since launching the programme in 2011, administrators have been promoting the ideal that all graduates should be advanced users of the language in relation to CEFR and demonstrate high-level language competency at the pre-service stage of their professional development. The curriculum is designed so that all students can sit the mock CAE exam by the end of their second year. As English is a medium of instruction throughout junior and undergraduate courses, C1 level is expected.

Experience shows that not all linguistic programme students are capable of passing CAE, although all of them are to demonstrate a sound linguistic background as they have successfully passed the USE. Therefore, the second research question that the author poses in the article relates to the initial level of language mastery of MISIS linguistic programme applicants, measured with the USE and demonstrated with its results, which would be adequate for them to be academically and linguistically capable of passing CAE.

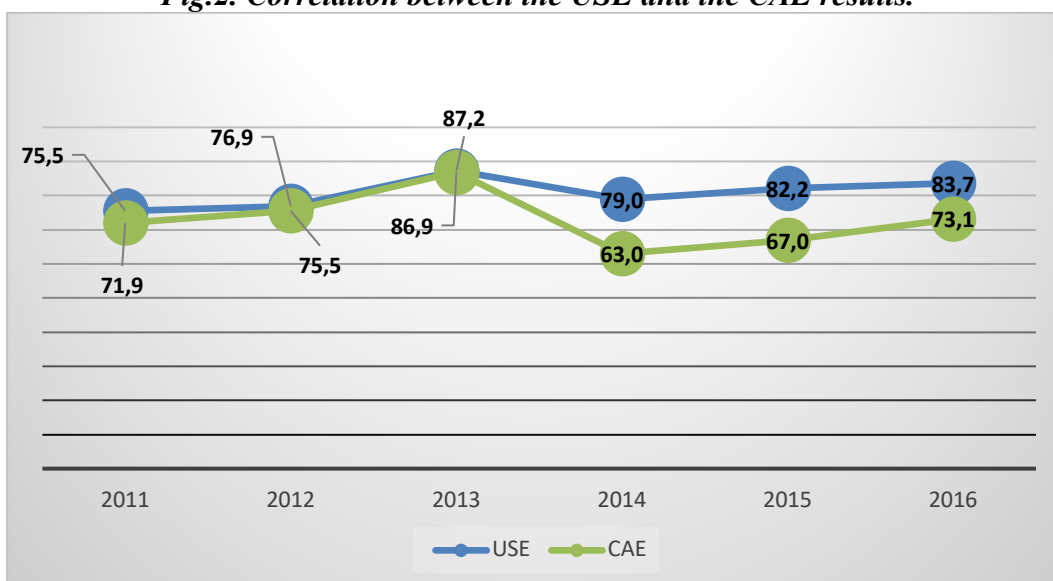
Though the USE is declared to be CEFR-based and B2-targeted, the Project documents on the USE development do not stipulate on the scale for converting the final results of the USE into CEFR levels (Specification of Assessment Materials for Unified State Examination in Foreign Languages, 2013). Hence, it is highly challenging to identify the initial level of applicants against the CEFR-scale. It hinders the perception of the baseline of the students' linguistic background in relation to CEFR.

Conversely, CAE as a Cambridge examination is CEFR-based with clear indicators of passing, i.e. 60% on average of its four parts (Reading and Use of English, Listening, Writing, Speaking). Candidates whose percentage ranges from 60 to 74 are awarded grade C; if their performance is between 75 and 84 they are given grade B; 85% or more provides the student with grade A and entitles them to a C2-level certificate.

The longitudinal research in question was conducted at NUST 'MISIS' between 2011 and 2018, and included six groups with a total of 330 students. The research method employed was a comparative analysis of the students' English language mastery level when entering the Programme (the USE performance) and their CAE results they demonstrated after two years of training. Notably, only 236 students managed to cope with the pace of the Programme and passed through the complete research (training) procedure.

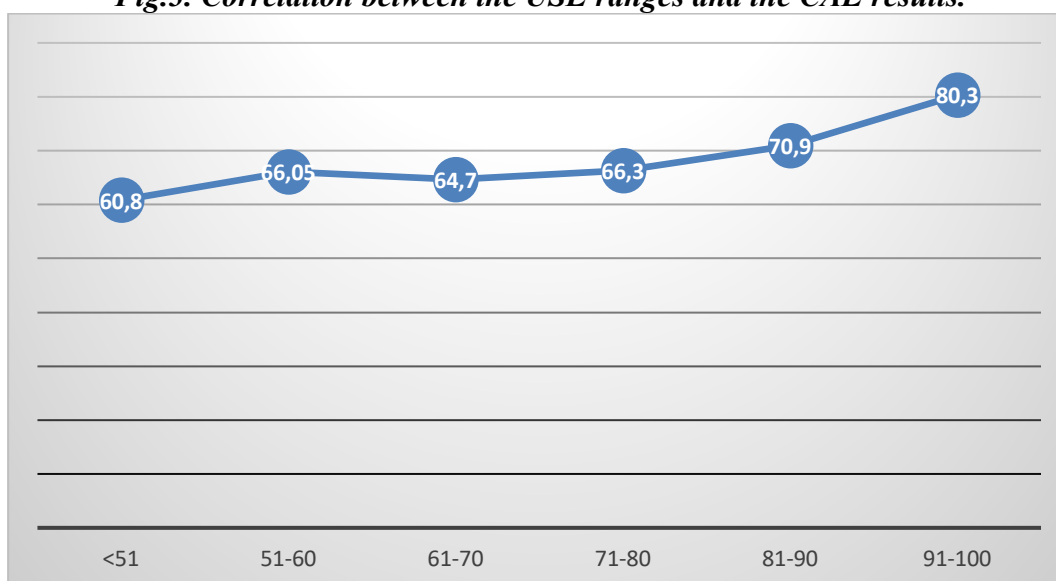
Fig.2. depicts the average data of the initial the USE level of the students and their CAE results. The figure shows that in different years the average result in the USE ranged from 75.5 to 83.7 (upper line). Hypothetically, it affected the final result of the average CAE of the same group (the lower line). The group who demonstrated the highest outcomes in the USE (in 2013) also performed best in CAE. Before 2015, a better consistency of the USE and CAE can be observed. In 2015 when Cambridge amended the format of the examination and it became more challenging, we registered the discrepancy between the USE and the CAE outcomes, which suggests the feasible hypothesis that this associates with the faults of the USE scaling.

Fig.2. Correlation between the USE and the CAE results.



We also examined the range of the initial the USE-levels (in ranges of tens) and the performance of relevant students in CAE across the whole period of the research. Figure 3 visualizes the positive correlation between the two variables.

Fig.3. Correlation between the USE ranges and the CAE results.



Students who passed the USE with lower than 50 points barely passed CAE and showed low results, while those, whose the USE was high (i.e. 91-100 points) in terms of potential C2 achievement, would, on the average, underscore in CAE to attain the C2-transfer level.

Fig.4. The correlation between the percentile of the CAE-passers and their USE-levels.

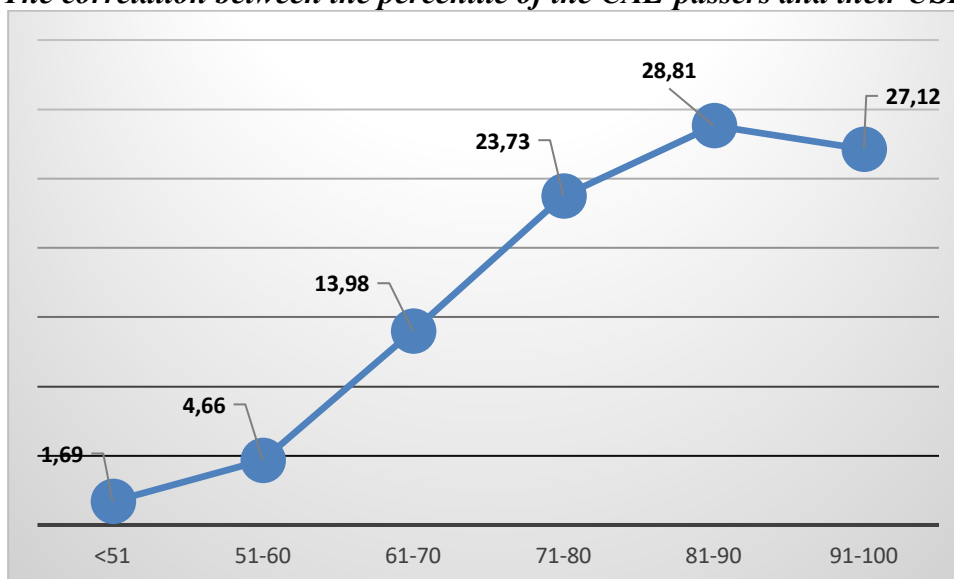


Figure 4 shows that only 1.69% of all the CAE-passers featured less than 50 points in the USE, which is probably associated with their success throughout their schooling. Thus, there is a trend of progression observed here (with some statistical deviation at the point of the USE range of 91-100).

Fig.5. Correlation between the CAE grades and background the USE points

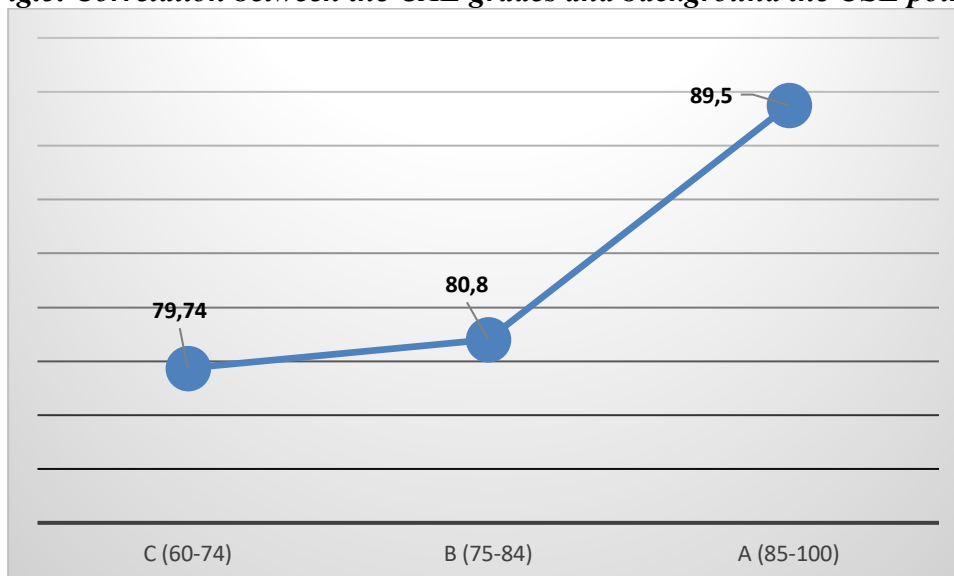
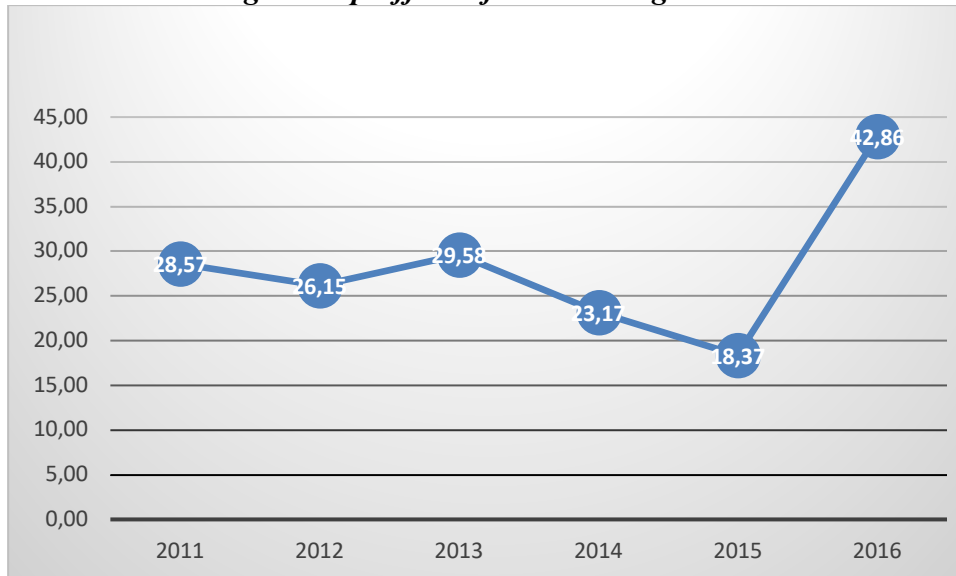


Figure 5 illustrates the correlation between grades that were awarded to candidates in CAE and those candidates' background the USE achievements. Figure 5 also implicitly demonstrates that those Programme applicants whose level neared 80 points in the USE have stronger chances to pass CAE. Thus, those who scored less than 80 appear to be weaker Programme candidates and feature less chances to become professional English teachers with the expected level of language mastery.

Within the first two years of the Programme a certain drop-off rate was observed (shown in Fig 6).

Fig.6. Drop-off rate from the Programme



The average drop-off rate throughout the considered period amounted to 28.12%. This may have been triggered by a number of reasons:

- insufficient level of pre-entry language competency;
- advanced pace of the Programme;
- opting out of linguistics as a subject field and career path;
- personal reasons (e.g. financial problems of tuition-paying students or leaving the city).

Our university experience indicates that the first two reasons appear to be the primary ones.

Fig.7. Average the USE of drop-off students

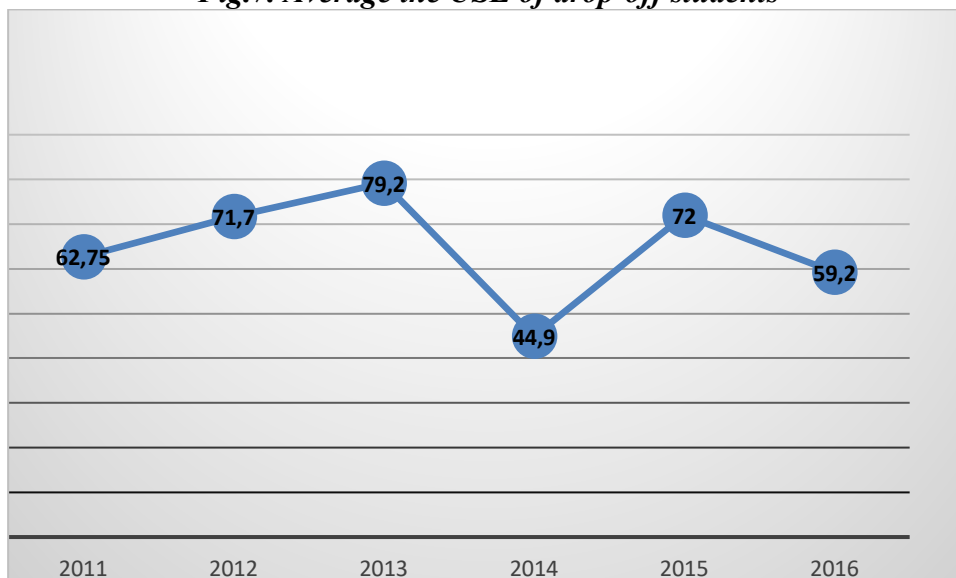


Figure 7 illustrates that the year-average the USE of those who did not cope with the Programme ranges between 44.9 and 79.2, though there is a clear tendency that those are the USE low-graders who would normally drop-off.

The average the USE results of the drop-off students for the whole research period is estimated to be 64.96. This can be nailed down to several reasons:

- this result is not sufficient for taking CAE, which is pinpointed by the previous findings that showed that on average around 80 points gained in the USE lead to successful results of CAE;

- the USE does not always give an accurate picture of the language competency of a Programme applicant;
- some situational reasons should also be taken into consideration.

Summarizing the research outcomes, it is reasonable to conclude that those who are admitted with low the USE levels do not achieve the required English language mastery to cope with the Programme, attain the profession-expected C1 level (tested with CAE as diagnostic procedure). Thus, those the USE low-graders have poor background and are highly unlikely to complete the course and subsequently be able to prepare their potential secondary school learners for passing the USE successfully.

The results of the research have soundly proved that tangible teacher-training results can be attained by those who enter the Programme with the optimal minimum the USE score of 80. So school administrators should prioritize those applicants who demonstrate 80-plus points. Others have to persevere to endure the Programme.

To meet the requirements, curriculum design may encounter some challenges: (1) teacher-training programme is to be based on C1-relevant materials to guarantee job-relevant student' outcomes; (2) mock CAE should be introduced as a language competency measuring instrument; (3) assessment procedures and rating systems should be designed in concordance with CAE. As a subsequent recommendation, universities need to be empowered to fail and expel the students who underperform in CAE.

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THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES AND ENGLISH PROFILE

ANTHONY GREEN¹

The Russian Federation is one of the forty-seven member states that make up the Council of Europe. The Council is probably best known for its work in the fields of human rights and legal affairs, but it has also played a key role in language education with many important initiatives, most notably its central role the introduction and promotion of the ‘communicative approach’ to language teaching.

LEARNER-CENTRED LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Before the 1970s, language teaching tended to focus on building up knowledge of linguistic systems: mastery of grammatical transformations and long lists of vocabulary. In contrast, the Council of Europe argued that the starting point for language education should be what learners might actually want to do with the language they were learning – the activities they might need to carry out and the ideas they might want to express. This did not imply a neglect of grammar, but involved introducing learners to the grammatical concepts they would need in order to function as effective language users. In 1975 the Council of Europe published van Ek’s Threshold Level. This was a specification of the level of language needed for a language learner to live independently in a country where that language was spoken. The intention was to provide learners with a linguistic repertoire that would allow them to express themselves flexibly, but efficiently in the foreign language and to participate as fully as possible in the life of the society. Almost forty years of work has followed, during which other levels of functional ability have been defined both below Threshold (Waystage) and above it (Vantage). This project culminated in 2001 with the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), intended to inform the development of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations and textbooks for learners of languages in different countries studying in a wide variety of educational systems.

It is part of the Council of Europe’s educational philosophy that learners should be able to move seamlessly between schools, universities, workplace training courses and informal study to pick up the practical skills that they need. This is much more straightforward if everyone shares the same basic terminology for talking about teaching and learning. If a ‘beginner’ level class in school number 1 is like an ‘elementary’ level class in school number 2 or a ‘preliminary’ class in school number 3 and the ‘Novice’ book in the Practical English textbook series is like the ‘Grade 2’ book in the Useful English series, life in the English classroom can soon get very confusing for the uninitiated.

Although it acknowledges that learners will have different language learning needs in line with their purposes for learning, one of the aims of the CEFR is to provide a common system of levels. These go from Basic (A1 and A2), through Independent (B1 and B2) up to Proficient (C1 and C2) – defined in terms of what learners at each level can typically do with a language. For example, at the A1 level a learner, ‘can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where he/she lives and people he/she knows’, but at B2 a learner ‘can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest’.

The CEFR has had a profound influence well beyond the member states of the Council of Europe. It has now been translated into thirty-nine languages, including Japanese, Chinese and Arabic as well as Russian. Increasingly English language textbooks, like the Cambridge Face to Face series, incorporate CEFR ‘can do’ objectives into each unit. Many North and South American, Asian and

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Australian tests now report scores in terms of the CEFR levels. This helps employers or schools in other countries to understand how they compare to local qualifications.

QUESTIONS AND RESERVATIONS

The spread of the CEFR has naturally given rise to criticisms and concerns. Some have worried that the CEFR imposes teaching methodologies that may not suit every context. In my view, this concern is not justified. There is no consensus across Europe on the methods that should be used and the CEFR is not a recipe book that sets out a particular technique or insists on a fixed approach. What it does offer is sets of questions that help users to think about, describe and explain why they choose to learn, teach or test a language in the way that they do. Flexibility and pluralism are seen to be essential. If the illustrative descriptions of what learners are able to do are not suitable for a particular group, the CEFR makes it clear that users are free to develop alternative descriptions that work better for them and suggests ways of doing exactly that.

More worryingly, it has become clear that people working in different places may be interpreting the CEFR levels in very different ways. One would naturally expect that language courses and tests for different groups of learners in different countries would cover different areas of language (a course for doctors should involve different elements to a course for tour guides or a course for priests). On the other hand, if results are going to be meaningful for test users, the B2 level on one test of general language abilities should represent a very similar challenge to a B2 level on any other. If there is no shared understanding of the levels many of the potential benefits of the CEFR will be lost.

Because the CEFR is designed to apply across languages: to learners of Arabic, Bulgarian and Chinese as well as English, it can say nothing about specific words or structures that learners might be able to use at each level. Reports repeatedly show that users of the framework feel the need for more detailed explanations. They would like to know what exactly is meant by ‘simple phrases’ or ‘a wide range of subjects’ and they want more concrete examples of what learners at the different levels can do: recordings of learners speaking, samples of their writing or of the texts that they can understand.

Recognizing the need to provide more guidance, the Council of Europe has asked for ‘Reference Level Descriptions’ which will show in much greater detail how the CEFR applies to specific languages. For English, a good deal of work has already been done. Threshold (updated in 1990) is effectively a specification of the B1 level and other books cover CEFR A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Waystage) and B2 and above (Vantage). All of these are available as e-books that can be downloaded from the English Profile website: www.englishprofile.org.

ENGLISH PROFILE

Launched in 2005, the English Profile is a collaborative programme of research which aims to take this work further. The core partners include the University of Bedfordshire, the University of Cambridge, the British Council and English UK, but the Profile also involves, through the English Profile Network, researchers from all over the world. A major aim is to identify key features of language use - the English actually produced or understood by learners - that are characteristic of each CEFR level:

One strand of English Profile research is concerned with input: what learners read or listen to at each level. We are building up a picture of what learners are expected to understand and what conditions apply: how complex are the texts that learners are able to read? What range of vocabulary can they cope with? how fast is the speech they listen to? It appears, for example, that a C1 level of reading may be needed when students collect and evaluate information from a number of advanced texts – as university students need to do when learning about an academic subject.

English Profile researchers are also interested in the input learners receive from teachers and textbooks. What grammar points are being taught to learners at different levels? How many words are learners expected to know or use and in what contexts? What are learners being taught to do with the language they learn: introduce themselves? describe people? exchange opinions? This has indicated, for example, that adapting language to different audiences (being more or less formal, using idioms, slang, and technical language) tends to be a particular focus for teaching at the (highest) C levels.

A second strand is concerned with learner output: the speech and writing that learners produce. Cambridge English Language Assessment and Cambridge University Press have for many years been building up a corpus of learner language (the Cambridge Learner Corpus). This is a computerised collection of the language produced by learners taking Cambridge exams at different levels. The corpus now extends to over 45 million words. Errors of grammar or word choice are coded according to a scheme that has been refined over the years. With help from the University's Computer Laboratory, this process has been partially automated and it is now possible to search the corpus to identify at each level which error types are found most often and which grammatical forms are used accurately at each CEFR level.

Interesting and sometimes surprising findings have emerged and are being incorporated into the English Grammar Profile, which will become a valuable resource for teachers. For example, higher level learners make fewer verb tense errors, but B2 and C1 level learners tend to make more verb agreement errors (three birds is singing) than do B1 learners. It seems that learners at B1 level can accurately use questions (can/will Olga read? what does Olga read?) and negations (Olga can/will/does not drive), while only at C1 level are learners able to use relative clause types like 'the professor whose book I read'.

The English Vocabulary Profile is also based on insights into how language is used by learners at different levels. The different senses of frequent words in English that are taught in language classrooms around the world and which are typically found in learner writing at each level are listed, together with brief definitions and examples of how they are used, both by first language speakers and by learners of English. To take the word 'date' for example, at the A1 level it generally refers to a particular day as in 'the date of the class is 7 June' while phrases like 'up to date' and 'out of date' are found at B1 level.

Reflecting the Council of Europe's concern for practical language use, the English Grammar Profile and English Vocabulary Profile are linked through the developing English Functions Profile, which will show how learners at each CEFR level can use their language resources to communicate their intended meanings. What language can an A1 level learner use when he or she wants to apologise. How can a B2 level learner use his or her resources to make an apology that is more effective or appropriate to the context?

Of course, learners' first languages play a role in how they learn English, as does the kind of teaching they experience. The English Profile research pays particular attention to these. Within the corpus it is possible to search for texts produced by speakers of different languages. It will come as no surprise to Russian teachers and learners of English that, regardless of level, speakers of languages that do not have articles make more missing article errors than speakers of languages with articles.

COLLECTING MORE EVIDENCE

A limitation on what it has been possible to achieve through the English Profile to date ('to date', by the way, is at B2 level) has been the amount of data available. The Cambridge Learner Corpus is predominantly based on Writing tasks from Cambridge exams and Cambridge reading and listening tasks have been analysed as input. For the future, it is vital that English Profile should draw on the widest possible range of teaching and learning contexts so that it can be relevant to all. The English Profile partners are now making a concerted effort to gather material from a wide variety of institutions for analysis. Data collection involves partners from all over the world and a particular effort is being made to find more spoken language data. As more evidence becomes available, the information the descriptions of learner language can be further refined.

To keep up with developments in the English Profile, please visit the English Profile website: www.englishprofile.org.

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