



Characteristics of Developing Effective Language Skills for Successful Passing of the Interregional English Language Competition

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Abstract

The article provides insight into the idiosyncrasies of honing language skills that are necessary for passing the Interregional English Language Contest's Use of English section. The authors' extensive experience coaching English language contestants at universities and the Republican Olympic Centre for Gifted/ Talented Students forms the basis of the research findings. The article provides an overview of the notion of "Use of English," including its goals, function, and importance in studying foreign languages. It also outlines the prerequisites for the National English Language Contest's Use of English module and its evaluation standards. The authors are able to draw several conclusions from the research data that was gathered with the aid of conventional research techniques, including literature reviews, observations, interviews, and product analyses. One of the most important things to note is that passing the Use of English module requires more than just a thorough understanding of grammar and vocabulary; it also requires experience, which can be obtained by closely examining the test requirements, practicing particular skills, and learning about the cultures of the English-speaking world. It enables students to successfully finish both short and long answer writing assignments, presentations, practice for standardized tests, and advanced written communication tasks needed for the National English Language Contest, such as various forms of informal and formal letters, reports, reviews, stories, notes, and articles. The Use of English module's tasks, which include word formation in the context of the full text, crossword puzzles, anagrams, and error detection, focus more on the student's capacity for quick and creative problem-solving than they do on language proficiency. The authors' extensive experience and their extensive interviewing of contestants regarding the development of advanced language and supportive skills to enhance their competitiveness in the National English Language Contest, as mentioned in the article, provide unwavering support for the opinions expressed in the paper.

Keywords: English Language; Language Skills; Student.

1. Introduction

Many intellectual competitions are held in academic institutions each year. Each student who participates in them has the chance to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities beyond what is taught in the basic curriculum (Makhmuryan & Melchina, 2015). Young English language learners strive to compete in and win multiple interregional English language competitions, known locally as "English Olympiads," in an effort to master communication in a foreign language. According to Vyatyutnev (1977), an Olympiad is an organized competition in any field of knowledge or skill. Olympiads look for young talent and pick the smartest, most accomplished students who have demonstrated a keen interest in the subject being studied. Such language contests have the following objectives: 1) to encourage research and spark interest in it; 2) to identify gifted and talented children; 3) to improve the caliber of extracurricular activities for students, such as research societies and elective courses; and 4) to provide career counseling to senior high school students. Nonetheless, the Olympiad, as a cerebral contest, can boast a number of unique characteristics, such as: students' voluntary participation who exhibit a hunger for knowledge and internal motivation; they understand the significance of participating in Olympiads as it offers them social advancement and development; Student participation is free of charge, meaning that all Olympiad expenses are covered by the organizers; a multi-tiered participation system that operates at the regional and national levels, featuring online or in-person qualifying rounds and a final stage aided by a proctoring system; Participation of a large number of students in qualifying rounds, which permits school dropouts to compete in Olympiads

as well as fourth through tenth graders to experience the atmosphere of the Olympiad, grow, and gain knowledge from such competitions; state-maintained information support, free online access to information about the Olympiad's planning and preparation, including official documents, previous papers, and jury remarks; a range of activities to test language proficiency and creativity, openness in the evaluation process, impartial evaluation standards, and the chance to get comments on each paper or contest the outcomes if needed; Olympic tasks should be created and reviewed according to a clear process, and their validation should be transparent and supported by safety precautions to prevent competition materials from leaking.

2. Literature Review

The study's theoretical framework is exemplified by the research conducted by Russian and international scientists regarding the challenges associated with teaching foreign languages through a communicative approach. The principles and characteristics of the communicative method were developed by Passov (1991); its practical aspects were investigated by Littlewood (2009) and Mitchell (1994); the psychological underpinnings of the communicative-oriented approach in foreign-language teaching were studied by Gulov (2021) and Leontyev (1986); and Vyatutnev (1977) by Milrud (2004).

The goal of the study was to prepare Omsk State Agrarian University (OmSAU) students for both scheduled and impromptu English-speaking assignments. We employed research techniques frequently used in pedagogical diagnostics, such as the testing, questioning, and observation of 38 OmSAU students who competed in academic competitions in English in 2021–2022, as well as statistical and mathematical techniques for handling quantitative data, to gather and analyze the required data (Kanunnikova et al., 2022).

The Olympiad, then, is a free mass intellectual competition for schoolchildren, with state participation or support, that is held at the regional and national levels. Students compete in previously unpublished tasks that foster their creativity. Participating in competitions of this kind also boosts stress resistance and boosts self-confidence. Naturally, the Olympiad increases stress, and being able to conquer this stress and any associated fear is crucial for living a successful "adult" life. Hence, taking part in a subject competition is a great way to train and grow as a person in addition to testing knowledge learned in school (Babenko & Sabirova, 2015). A university will add extra points to the final exam score of English Olympiad winners in the final round. Winners of Interregional English Olympiads have the opportunity to enroll in university without taking required exams as long as the academic program they are applying to is focused on English, such as linguistics, which requires a major entrance exam.

3. Methodology

Foreign language olympiads are held in English, Spanish, German, and French, among other subjects. Olympiads are voluntary events for students in grades 5 through 11 both domestically and abroad. There is no cost to participate (Sabirova et al., 2019). The distant mode stage's absolute winners and prize winners advance to the final round. Absolute winners and prize winners of the previous year's final stage may enter the relevant subject's Olympiad final stage without having to pass through the qualifying round. The final stage's absolute winners cannot make up more than 8% of all participants in any given subject, and the total number of winners and prize winners cannot exceed 25% of all participants in any given subject. The Ministry of Education's List of Olympiads includes KFU Interregional Subject Olympiads. These Olympiads are designed to foster intellectual and creative skills, physical education and sports abilities, interest in science (research), engineering and technology, inventive, creative, physical-sports activities, and promotion of knowledge, creative, and athletic achievements for the academic year 2022–2023. The government database on gifted children includes the names of winners and prize winners. The Interregional English Language Contest (Olympiad) tasks are generally conceptually based on the assessment principles used in international exams, like the TOEFL, CPE, CAE, and IELTS. Simultaneously, tasks at the regional and final stages have declared levels of complexity ranging from B2 to C1. However, a unique creative approach to task development and some of the vocabulary used in the texts raise the complexity of individual tasks to C2. The goal of learning a foreign language is for the student to become proficient in both understanding and producing such samples. This method uses the text as a sample for analysis and simulates it using its model, making organization the subject of mastery.

4. Results

Any student in grades 9 through 11 who has an Advanced level of English or above is expected to possess a broad knowledge of grammar in order to successfully complete a variety of Use of English tasks. A solid understanding of tenses and passives, articles and nouns, adjectives and adverbs, modal verbs and subjunctives, non-finite forms and relative clauses, etc., will give any candidate a secure path to obtaining the highest possible score in the Olympiad. The English language requirements for students in the same years as stated in the school syllabus are clearly exceeded by the grammar skills tested in this competition. This is because the school syllabus primarily targets students who do not demonstrate exceptional linguistic abilities but are expected to be able to communicate at rather Intermediate or Upper-Intermediate levels. The current situation makes it abundantly evident that gifted and talented students should study grammar independently outside of the classroom, concentrating on topics that will come up on tests. For instance, in a cloze test, students are supposed to add the missing words to the gapped text. Prepositions as components of fixed expressions, collocations, linking words, articles, pronouns, and determiners are among the words that are commonly gapped. Discourse clozes, which comprise of a text or passage with gaps, are one type of cloze test variation that might exist. There is a word or phrase in a task's list for every gap. There are no more than three distractions on the list, all of which, upon first inspection, might grammatically fill in some gaps, but which, as will become clear upon closer inspection, do not make sense. Sentence transformation is another common task in the Use of English section. The grammar rules that are tested here the most frequently are conditionals, inverted sentence forms, modals, passives, word transformations, etc. The second sentence must be paraphrased by a competitor such that its meaning is comparable to that of the first. The second sentence's beginning and, occasionally, conclusion are provided. There's also a word limit indication. In addition to having a strong command of grammar, competitors in the KFU Interregional English Language Contest are required to have a large vocabulary that includes proper names, idioms, proverbs, collocations, similes, binomials, and homonyms. Additionally, it is critical to understand the terms used in both formal and informal registers. Another task that is absent from all TOEFL, IELTS, and Cambridge exams is the gap-filling exercise containing portions of proverbs or idioms.

The crossword has the appearance of a typical, well-known crossword. Students' creativity and curiosity are tested by this task. The task that requires candidates to either add or remove several letters (usually one or two) from the provided words in order to form new ones is equally difficult. The task includes definitions for the new words. The tests for the KFU Interregional English Language Contest's final round include additional creative tasks that evaluate candidates' extensive vocabulary knowledge. Since the competition offers finalists special admission rights to universities, the tasks vary every year, adding new ones while maintaining the ones that are known. There is typically one task in every KFU Interregional English Language Contest that assesses the participants' proficiency in country study. The assignments center on well-known locations, well-known figures in literature, art, and science, as well as festivals, customs, and other aspects of English-speaking nations. Because these nations are largely associated with the English language, English-speaking culture, and English history, the UK and the USA typically present these nations. Tasks involving country studies may assess an individual's understanding of internationally recognized acronyms and abbreviations, including NATO, UN, and others, as well as the operational roles they carry out.

5. Discussion

Candidates for the KFU Interregional English Language Contest should be encouraged to pursue self-development activities in addition to the school curriculum to enhance their grammar skills. There are currently a lot of level grammar books available online and in bookstores. It is advised that candidates concentrate on the most common grammar structures listed above and practice grammar using past exams or course materials for English language assessments like the CAE and CPE. In order to succeed in the Olympiad, candidates need to make these drills a regular practice. In order to successfully finish vocabulary-testing assignments, candidates need to read a lot of original fiction and non-fiction. It should become a routine to consult English-English dictionaries for any unfamiliar words in addition to grammar drills. It's also advised to pay close attention to words and their equivalents in various registers, as well as synonyms and antonyms. Students also need to learn the majority of common idioms and phrasal verbs. For English language exams like the CAE and CPE, new vocabulary should be practiced in a variety of exercises derived from past papers or course books. Since country-study skills encompass a substantial amount of historical and cultural knowledge that can only be acquired through education, they also demand particular consideration and study. It is suggested that watching documentaries about the history, way of life, and culture of English-speaking nations will aid students in

learning background information more efficiently. Students should also read encyclopedias and other reference materials to learn more about the accomplishments of humanity and the individuals who made them possible. Additionally, this strategy needs to be a regular activity for students.

6. Conclusion

The following stand out as important aspects of how the tasks for the English Olympiad were developed: lack of a strict framework that developers must adhere to and any codifiers that restrict theme or format options; extensive use of "creative" tasks that demand unconventional thinking and wide knowledge, like rebuses, crossword puzzles, and anagrams; the presence of a section of background knowledge questions about country studies, covering cultural sites in the nations where the language is being studied (most of the questions focus on the realities of the United States and Great Britain); Use of "modified" tasks: these involve giving participants a format that is identifiable and comparable to international exams, but with some specific differences (meaning that a careless reading or misreading of the task text could result in a misconception of the task's main objectives); The use of integrated tasks, such as when combining writing and reading skills is required to complete the task successfully. The following "pillars" can serve as the foundation for an extensive Olympiad preparation program: a confident command of the language at the proficiency and advanced levels; knowledge of international examinations and the capacity to manage time effectively when completing routine tasks; familiarity with Olympiad past papers; thorough familiarity with American and British customs and culture, including an understanding of geography, politics, literature, history, and other subjects; The creation of diverse training tasks that offer fresh, unexpected formats while adhering to the same principles as the actual tasks from previous years, enables you to hone your analytical skills and pay attention to detail. When coaching a contestant in the Interregional English Language Contest, it is important to consider the methods, principles, techniques, and learning objectives of the practice of using English skills. But control is the most crucial element. Using this technology makes it very difficult to assess students' work because it primarily allows for the evaluation of the written text's grammatical structure. Thus, the design of the educational process should ensure that the lessons are not only engaging and inspiring but also instructive.

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