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ON THE APPROACHES EMPLOYED IN CONSTRUCTING VOCABULARY TEST ASSESSMENTS

Abstract. The article discusses approaches to creating a vocabulary assessment tool designed to assess students' language skills. One of the primary challenges is the absence of a robust theoretical foundation for comprehending and managing foreign language speech. Moreover, there is a significant lack of thorough research regarding the treatment of difficulties with text perception, and this issue is becoming increasingly relevant in accordance with modern methodological criteria. To solve these problems, it is important to create more accurate and reliable assessment systems for secondary school graduates in the context of the Kazakh education system. There is also an important requirement to develop assessment standards that are consistent with conducting universal independent testing on a national scale. This study examines the complex relationship between vocabulary improvement and language interference, demonstrating how these aspects interact and influence one another. The tests provide a solid foundation for developing effective vocabulary assessment tools in education. They go beyond merely assessing students' vocabulary; they significantly contribute to improving teaching methods to meet varied learning requirements. Analyzing how learners obtain and utilize vocabulary enables teachers to enhance their methods, elevate language abilities, and attain improved academic outcomes. The findings demonstrate the usefulness of developing a framework for standardized vocabulary assessments in Kazakhstani secondary education, with wider ramifications for curriculum development, language policy, and teacher preparation.

Keywords: criteria, meaning, native language, Sound Form Comparison, test assessment, validity coefficient, vocabulary.

Introduction

The following factors highlight the relevance of this study:

1) There is a lack of comprehensive theoretical development concerning the control of foreign language speech and receptive types of reading disorders. This gap is particularly evident when considering the current demands of methodological science.

2) There is a need to create more suitable and reliable tests for secondary school graduates within the Kazakhstani educational system. Additionally, criteria for assessing these tests must be developed in light of the implementation of universal independent testing at the republican level.

A key component of reading comprehension that greatly affects students' capacity to grasp texts is their knowledge of an extensive array of lexical units, or vocabulary. Many experimental studies carried out by global researchers have shown a strong link between vocabulary understanding and reading comprehension results. Significantly, B. Wood indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.78 from a sample of 2,276 instances, whereas P. Hegboldt discovered an even stronger correlation of 0.82 based on a sample of 1,325 instances.

In our research, we observed a correlation coefficient of 0.85, reinforcing the perspective that vocabulary acquisition is a vital component in evaluating reading comprehension tests.

Although many vocabulary evaluation instruments have been developed in different countries for learners of English as a second language, implementing these tests directly in Kazakh schools poses difficulties. These difficulties stem from considerable variations in educational systems, encompassing curriculum designs, subject matter, and the choices of instructional resources. Every

educational environment has unique characteristics and focuses on different aspects of language learning, underscoring the necessity for tailored assessment tools that correspond with our situation.

As a result, the challenge of creating reliable and effective vocabulary assessments for secondary and higher education institutions persists as an urgent concern. These assessments must precisely evaluate students' vocabulary understanding in a manner that corresponds to their unique educational requirements and situations.

In this article, we seek to present our insights and experiences in developing vocabulary assessments, specifically concentrating on a test intended to assess the passive vocabulary of high school students.

We approached the development of this test with meticulous attention to detail. We proposed that by maintaining high levels of validity and reliability in this evaluation, we could develop a foundational model suitable for creating more vocabulary tests across various grade levels and educational environments. We aim to add to the knowledge in this field and assist educators in efficiently assessing and improving vocabulary development in students.

Literature review

The difficulty of successfully overseeing skill levels in foreign languages is among the most urgent concerns in modern language instruction approaches. This importance is highlighted by various educational reforms aimed at enhancing language acquisition and assessment techniques.

In spite of various attempts to improve conventional evaluation techniques like written exams, verbal assessments, and standardized tests these methods encounter considerable drawbacks. A significant limitation of these traditional evaluation methods is their inclination to be subjective when evaluating students' knowledge, skills, and abilities. A deficiency in objectivity may lead to evaluations that are unreliable and inconsistent in assessing a student's actual language skills.

In light of these challenges, there is an increasing interest among both national and international educational methodologists in using test-based evaluation methods for foreign language competence.

This shift is justified by the recognition that testing can provide an effective way to enhance the objectivity of language skill assessments and to optimize the overall language learning process. As Rapoport (1980) notes, these testing methods are seen as valuable tools that can significantly improve the monitoring of language competencies.

To further this goal, foreign methodologists have dedicated efforts toward creating comprehensive testing frameworks. Key figures, such as A.K. Jain and E.O. Goel (2025), Saurbayev et al. (2025), and Hidayat et al. (2023), have developed various assessments to measure communicative competence effectively.

Scholars like Zhusupova et al (2024), Jin and Charles (2025), Bhatti and M. Halliday (1970), and Savignon (1987) have explored the intricacies of communicative competence in language acquisition via empirical research.

Moreover, post-test analysis has been a significant research focus, with scholars like Alderson (2000), Rogers and MacCormac (2025), and Yang et al (2025) examining the effectiveness of assessment techniques in truly representing a learner's skill level.

The uniformity of evaluation scales has been a significant focus, as underscored in the research of Li et al (2025) and North (2000), all of which seek to ensure reliability in assessing language skills across different contexts.

Interest in language assessment has stimulated numerous methodological studies. Researchers have studied how verification can be methodically arranged to address specific elements of language and various forms of speech activities in both school and university contexts. Significant contributions in this area are attributed to scholars like Saurbayev et al (2024), Yermolova et al (2025), Ahmed and Rana (2022), Kukulska-Hulme et al (2023) among various others.

Even with progress in comprehending language assessment, a significant gap persists in the Kazakhstani literature concerning the details of language testing, especially the structure of proficiency evaluations aimed at receptive speech activities in tertiary education. This shortfall

necessitates deeper investigation and discussion regarding the creation and execution of efficient testing methods designed for educational environments.

Methods and Materials

In our research, we conducted a thorough analysis of the selected passive vocabulary using a set of specific criteria designed to highlight the complexities learners may face. The criteria are as follows:

1. Syllable Structure: We identified how a monosyllabic word could transform into a two-syllable or multi-syllable word, which can alter comprehension and pronunciation.

2. Form Variability: We examined amorphous words, which are those that possess features allowing for various word formations. This variability can lead to misunderstandings of the core meaning.

3. Polysemy vs. Unambiguity: Our analysis distinguished polysemous words – those with multiple meanings from unambiguous words that have a single, clear definition, thereby affecting clarity in communication.

4. Sound Form Comparison: We assessed the complete or partial matches between the sound forms of target words and other words in the English language. Such coincidences can create confusion and misidentification of words, thus signalling mismatches in sound forms.

5. Graphic Form Comparison: Similar to sound forms, we investigated the graphic forms of words for complete or partial overlaps with other English words. Any coincidences can lead to significant misunderstandings in reading or writing.

6. Interference Between Languages: We analyzed how the sound forms of English words might coincide with Kazakhstani words but convey different meanings. This can lead to errors in understanding, especially if the learner assumes similarity in meaning due to phonetic resemblance.

7. Usage Frequency: We assessed word frequency by observing the terms that occurred less frequently in contrast to those that appeared more often. Infrequently used words can present extra difficulties because of their uncommon presence in language, possibly affecting memory recall.

To quantify the overall difficulty coefficient for each examined word, it became essential to express our findings in numerical terms. We determined that interval calculus would not be appropriate for this analysis, and rank calculus would be overly complex. Consequently, we adopted a method of registration calculation. This method allows us to note the presence or absence of the characteristics described in criteria 1-7 systematically. We regarded factors such as syllable complexity, structural variability, polysemy, homophony, homography, differences in sound form coincidences relative to meanings in both foreign and native languages, and word frequency as specific difficulties.

Every one of these recognized challenges was designated with a «+» symbol to indicate their incorporation in our assessment.

This thorough approach fosters a better grasp of the complexities involved in vocabulary learning, thus promoting the creation of more efficient strategies designed for language students.

Results and Discussion

Instruction Manual Overview

This manual offers directions for interpreting underlined terms in various statements. Each term has four possible interpretations, and it's up to you to select the one that best aligns with the context. To do this, scrutinize every statement closely and reflect on the importance of the highlighted word

Next, select the choice you believe best represents the word in its context and give your answer along with the appropriate number. For example, consider the word «luminous». An appropriate definition for this term is «radiating a substantial amount of light», which aligns with the context as it highlights the subject's luminosity

Consider the term «shiny». When used in a sentence, it might signify «giving off a great deal of light». This interpretation is suitable as it conveys the luminosity of the subject in question.

In this situation, «bright» possesses a precise meaning.

For example, if «bright» is highlighted in a sentence and one choice is «producing a large amount of light», this interpretation may be valid depending on the context.

Here are some examples from this test:

66. The baby began to cry.

a) a very young child;

b) one who lives in Babylon;

c) a very old man;

d) a very old woman.

The correct answer is: 66-a.

Submit the letter of your chosen answer only if you are confident that it is correct. If a question feels too difficult, put it aside for now and move on to the other ones. You can always come back to it later when it's more convenient.

1. It was a lovely day.

a) bad;

b) very good;

c) rainy;

d) windy.

2. This car has a very good engine.

a) wheel;

b) engineer;

c) motor;

d) signal.

3. The pupils had a long conversation with their teacher.

a) talk;

b) walk;

c) excursion;

d) conversation book.

The validity coefficient of the test was assessed by calculating the correlation coefficient between the results obtained from the test and the results from a subsequent verification, yielding a high value of 0.92. This indicates a strong relationship between the test outcomes and the verification process. This underscores a distinct link between the test outcomes and the validation approach. The assessment demonstrated exceptional reliability, showing a stability coefficient of 0.91, verified through several tests. With an internal consistency coefficient of 0.91 as well, it shows robust validity and reliability, rendering it an excellent instrument for educational assessment.

Let us explore further the approach used for creating this test, as it is essential for grasping the reasoning behind the word choice process. The initial step focused on identifying the exact words and phrases to be part of the assessment and defining a precise set of standards for their selection.

To tackle this challenge successfully, we referred to the Secondary School Foreign Language Program. This program presents a list of vocabulary containing 1,200 words that students should be familiar with by the time they graduate. The framework highlights that this vocabulary is mainly intended for receptive learning, concentrating on reproductive comprehension.

The terminology taught during the initial and intermediate learning phases is intended to be utilized actively in both spoken communication and comprehension of written or spoken content. In the later phases of language learning, more vocabulary is added, emphasizing understanding without the requirement to reproduce it in speech or writing.

To enhance our comprehension of students' passive vocabulary, we compared the passive vocabulary compilation from the «Dictionary of the Most Commonly Used Words in the English Language» with reliable dictionaries designed for English textbooks utilized in grades 7 to 10 in secondary education. This approach allowed us to determine a more accurate makeup of students' passive vocabulary, first recognizing 257 distinct words. After a thorough evaluation, we removed

15 geographical names that were inconsistent with the test's goals, leading to an updated list of 242 words. We chose around 60 to 65 words from this detailed list to incorporate into the test's experimental version.

It is important to note that the approach used in some foreign schools and universities for selecting language materials often relies on a random sampling method. While this method can be effective with homogeneous materials, it poses challenges in ensuring relevance, as it may introduce words that are not suitable for the intended educational focus. Echoing the insights of R. Lado, we assert that a more effective strategy would involve selecting words identified as particularly challenging for learners. This assessment could be achieved through a comparative analysis of the vocabulary in both the foreign language (English) and the students' native language.

This broader strategy has not been widely used to find suitable assessments for students in Kazakh schools studying English. Although this method offers benefits, it cannot be regarded as a universal or conclusive answerю. It only addresses one aspect of the complex issues surrounding vocabulary learning. We used the frequency dictionary created by Black and Osherman to assess the occurrence of the chosen words.

This resource categorizes all words based on their frequency of usage, dividing them into eight distinct sections as follows:

- Section 1: Words with more than 1,000 documented instances of use
- Section 2: Words used between 999 and 100 times
- Section 3: Words used between 99 and 50 times
- Section 4: Words used between 49 and 20 times
- Section 5: Words used between 19 and 10 times
- Section 6: Words used between 9 and 3 times
- Section 7: Words used twice
- Section 8: Words used once

Thus, as can be seen from the analysis of the terms in sections 1-3, they are clearly high-frequency terms, while the terms in sections 4-7 are clearly low-frequency terms.

The difficulty level of each word is firmly determined by its character count, serving as a clear indicator of its complexity. The finalized list comprises 242 words, strategically divided into difficulty levels ranging from 0 to 6.

This rigorous classification provides a powerful framework for analyzing the word count associated with each difficulty level, ensuring a well-organized evaluation method (Table 1.).

Table 1 – A structured evaluation method

difficulty coefficients	**number of words**
0	13
1	37
2	50
3	40
4	47
5	45
6	10

The dictionary was categorized into three sections: easy (coefficients: 0-1; ordinal numbers: 1-16), containing 50 words, medium difficulty (coefficients: 2-4; ordinal numbers: 17-49), containing 137 words, and complex (coefficients: 5-6; ordinal numbers: 50-65), containing 55 words. Approximately half of the overall word count consists of medium complexity words, while both simple and complex words represent 25% each.

To ensure accurate presentation, grades should include 25% of basic vocabulary, 50% of standard vocabulary, and 25% of complex vocabulary.

Both foreign practice and our study show that the optimal number for inclusion in the test is 40-60 words. But since the experimental version of the test should have 20-25% more questions

than the final one, we included 65 words in our experimental version, of which 16 were taken from the easy group, 33 from the medium group and 16 from the difficult group.

Taking into account the nature of the test task (recognizing a given word in context and correlating it with one of the proposed definitions, synonymous words or phrases disguised among incorrect answers), we used as the main selection criterion the ability to clearly, accurately and simply describe this word using language means available to students.

Every test question includes a foundation (a statement where the target word appears), the right answer (a definition of the specified word that clarifies its meaning), and 3 misleading options.

During the test, the student needs to thoroughly read the fundamental sentence featuring the underlined word in question and select from the four options below the one that, in their view, best and most precisely defines the underlined term.

The student enters the letter of the chosen answer into a pre-prepared checklist, which contains the number of test questions:

1 – 36 –
2 – 37 –
3 – 38 –
35 – 65 –

Special attention was paid to the selection of the context for the tested word. This context must avoid redundancy; if not, students might infer the word's meaning from it (language inference).

It is crucial to recognize that defining a word's meaning cannot be simplified to just linguistic speculation or the way receptive vocabulary is learned, since these ideas are separate and function differently. Linguistic guessing encompasses multiple cognitive elements; it significantly depends on a student’s overall intellectual growth, their capacity to adjust to novel and frequently unexpected situations, and the targeted activities created to enhance their guessing skills. These activities generally use carefully chosen materials and texts that promote synthetic reading, prompting students to derive meanings from context instead of depending solely on memory.

Particular care was taken in choosing the context for the word being tested. It is crucial to guarantee that the context given for vocabulary learning is varied, since repetition could cause students to deduce meanings from contextual hints rather than from explicit teaching.

Establishing a word's meaning must not depend only on linguistic conjecture or the processes of receptive vocabulary growth, since these are separate entities that function independently. Linguistic inference entails multiple cognitive processes and is significantly shaped by a student’s overall cognitive growth, their ability to adjust to new or unforeseen situations, and targeted teaching methods aimed at enhancing guessing abilities successfully.

These tasks typically utilize deliberately selected materials and texts that encourage synthetic reading, leading students to infer meanings from context rather than relying only on recall.

These teaching activities often use thoughtfully selected materials and texts designed to build synthetic reading skills.

This approach motivates students to grasp meanings via context rather than relying solely on memorization. The distinction between active and passive vocabulary is particularly important. In a native language, this limit is typically adaptable and variable; on the other hand, in a foreign language, it is generally more rigidly defined.

This inflexibility enables passive vocabulary to be consistently assessed during language evaluations. In the assessments created to evaluate passive vocabulary, the selected words were shown in a context that was stylistically neutral.

This approach hindered students' ability to deduce the meanings of these words unless they had previously come across them. Nevertheless, for students who have come across these terms in some form even if they're not completely grasped the contextual hints can greatly assist in remembering their meanings. Therefore, it is essential to showcase words in familiar and typical situations, settings, or contexts where they might be applied, as this enhances the chances of students remembering and subsequently incorporating these words into their everyday language.

Great attention was given to choosing distracting factors that might influence the precision of the responses.

Keeping in mind the typical mistakes made by students, the following distractions were used:

1) Words that sound similar in Kazakh and English;
2) Full or partial homophones and homographs;
3) Other meanings of polysemous words;
4) Contextual distractions;
5) International vocabulary.

In all cases, we aimed to ensure that the chosen distracting elements would not act as psychological barriers to selecting the correct answer.

It is important to note that when selecting both the core content and the distracting elements, we had to limit ourselves to a lexical minimum appropriate for high school students. This constraint prevented us from using several lexical units that would have been suitable as distractions.

The compiled test was administered to several groups of 10th-grade students in secondary schools, with a total of 215 participants. The experimental verification of the test was conducted using the appropriate methodology.

The differentiating power and degree of difficulty were calculated for each word. Based on this data, a statistical analysis of the test questions and the alternative answers was performed. This process allowed us to finalize the test by including only those items whose effectiveness was confirmed by the results of the experimental verification.

Conclusion

To sum up, the suggested method offers a distinct and organized system for examining vocabulary categorization and various aspects of language interference. It explores the intricate connection between vocabulary growth and language interference, emphasizing how these elements impact and form one another. This method establishes a foundation for creating and structuring comprehensive vocabulary evaluations tailored for educational environments by analyzing these interactions. Our study shows that these evaluations assess students' vocabulary skills and enhance teaching methods to suit various learning contexts and needs. Grasping how students grasp and utilize vocabulary enables educators to enhance their methods, assisting learners in improving their language abilities. This approach improves learning efficiency, fostering academic advancement and language growth.

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СӨЗДІК ТЕСТ БАҒАЛАУЫН ҚҰРУДА ҚОЛДАНЫЛАТЫН ТӘСІЛДЕР ТУРАЛЫ

Аңдатпа. Мақалада оқушылардың тілдік дағдыларын бағалауға арналған сөздік бағалау құралын құру тәсілдері қарастырылады. Негізгі қиындықтардың бірі - шет тілінде сөйлеуді түсіну және басқару үшін сенімді

теориялық негіздің жоқтығы. Оның үстіне, мәтінді қабылдаудағы қиындықтарды емдеуге қатысты мұқият зерттеулер айтарлықтай жетіспейді және бұл мәселе заманауи әдістемелік критерийлерге сәйкес өзекті бола түсуде. Бұл мәселелерді шешу үшін Қазақстандық білім беру жүйесі жағдайында жалпы білім беретін мектеп бітірушілерді дәлірек және сенімді бағалау жүйесін құру маңызды. Сондай-ақ ұлттық масштабтағы әмбебап тәуелсіз тестілеуді өткізуге сәйкес келетін бағалау стандарттарын әзірлеудің маңызды талабы бар. Бұл зерттеу сөздік қорды жақсарту мен тілдің кедергісі арасындағы күрделі қатынасты зерттейді, бұл аспектілердің өзара әрекеттесетінін және бір-біріне қалай әсер ететінін көрсетеді. Тесттер білім берудегі сөздік қорын бағалаудың тиімді құралдарын әзірлеу үшін берік негіз береді. Олар студенттердің сөздік қорын бағалаумен шектелмейді; олар оқытудың әртүрлі талаптарын қанағаттандыру үшін оқыту әдістерін жетілдіруге айтарлықтай үлес қосады. Оқушылардың сөздік қорын қалай алатынын және пайдаланатынын талдау мұғалімдерге өз әдістерін жетілдіруге, тілдік қабілеттерін арттыруға және жақсартылған академиялық нәтижелерге қол жеткізуге көмектеседі. Нәтижелер оқу бағдарламаларын әзірлеуге, тіл саясаты мен мұғалімдерді дайындауға кеңірек әсер ететін қазақстандық орта білім берудегі стандартталған сөздік бағалаудың негізін жасаудың пайдалылығын көрсетеді.

Тірек сөздер: критерийлер, мағына, ана тілі, дыбыс формасын салыстыру, тест бағалау, жарамдылық коэффициенті, сөздік

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О ПОДХОДАХ, ИСПОЛЬЗУЕМЫХ ПРИ ПОСТРОЕНИИ ОЦЕНОК ТЕСТОВ НА СЛОВАРНЫЙ ЗАПАС

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются подходы к созданию инструмента оценки словарного запаса, предназначенного для оценки языковых навыков учащихся. Одной из основных проблем является отсутствие прочной теоретической базы для понимания и управления иноязычной речью. Более того, наблюдается существенный дефицит углубленных исследований, посвященных проблемам восприятия текста, и эта проблема становится все более актуальной в соответствии с современными методологическими критериями. Для решения этих проблем важно создать более точные и надежные системы оценки для выпускников средних школ в контексте казахстанской системы образования. Также существует важная потребность в разработке стандартов оценки, соответствующих проведению всеобщего независимого тестирования в национальном масштабе. В данном исследовании рассматривается сложная взаимосвязь между расширением словарного запаса и языковой интерференцией, демонстрируя, как эти аспекты взаимодействуют и влияют друг на друга. Тесты обеспечивают прочную основу для разработки эффективных инструментов оценки словарного запаса в образовании. Они выходят за рамки простой оценки словарного запаса учащихся; они вносят значительный вклад в совершенствование методов обучения для удовлетворения различных образовательных потребностей. Анализ того, как учащиеся приобретают и используют словарный запас, позволяет учителям совершенствовать свои методы, развивать языковые навыки и достигать более высоких академических результатов. Результаты демонстрируют полезность разработки структуры стандартизированной оценки словарного запаса в системе среднего образования Казахстана, что имеет более широкие последствия для разработки учебных программ, языковой политики и подготовки учителей.

Ключевые слова: критерии, значение, родной язык, сравнение звуковых форм, оценка теста, коэффициент валидности, словарный запас.

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