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VI. UNIFIED STATE EXAMINATION: IMPLEMENTATION, RESULTS, OPINIONS AND PROBLEMS OF PERFECTION



FEATURES OF THE UNIFIED STATE EXAMINATION IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN THE VLADIMIR REGION

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Summary. The article deals with the unified state exam (USE) in the French language, the changes that have taken place in its control and measuring materials in order to improve them. The author also reveals the positive impact of the USE on the methods of teaching foreign languages, on the quality of education within the framework of this academic subject. The results of the unified state exam in the French language in the Vladimir region during the period from 2009 to 2021 were analyzed in the article.

Keywords: unified state exam (USE); the French language; the Vladimir region; final state certification; secondary school; control and measuring materials (CMM); communicative and activity approach; the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation; methods of teaching foreign languages; productive skills; meta-subject skills; productive speech activity; special learning skills; productive skills.

Nowadays the unified state examination (USE) is the main form of the final state certification of secondary schools graduates of the Russian Federation. The purpose of the USE in foreign languages is to evaluate school graduates' general education in a foreign language for the purpose of their state certification and competitive selection to institutions of secondary and higher professional education. The USE in foreign languages is an elective examination and it has been held since 2009.

Control and measuring materials (CMM) in foreign languages are of an activity nature and are based on communicative and activity approaches. They do not check what the examinee knows about the language, but they check how much he (she) really knows a foreign language.

Over the years of the unified state examination in foreign languages, the Scientific and Methodological Council of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation has been making changes in control and measuring materials in order to improve them. Therefore, while maintaining the structure and content of control and measuring materials, in 2012 the time for completing tasks in the "Writing" section was increased to 80 minutes and the criteria for evaluating tasks in this section were clarified. It is also important to clarify the plan for task

C2: it gives even clearer instructions to the examinee about what is expected of him (her) in terms of the content and structure of the written statement.

The need for these changes is dictated by the fact that a certain part of the examinees performs only task C1 and does not start task C2, and therefore, when assessing their ability to produce a written text, knowledge of lexical units, grammatical structures and skills in operating with them in a communicatively meaningful context are not taken into account at all and are not evaluated at all. It is not uncommon for very weak written works in terms of language on assignment C1 to receive a high score.

The experience of conducting a unified state exam in foreign languages had a positive impact on methods of teaching foreign languages, on the quality of teaching this academic subject.

This influence can be identified in the following areas:

- 1. There has been a balanced training in all four types of speech activity. Prior to this, teaching often focused only on reading and speaking, understood more as an oral reproduction of a text learned by heart than as proper oral communication.
- 2. Active work on productive skills has begun. Before that, reproductive skills were mainly formed.
- 3. Work on the formation of meta-subject (general educational and special educational) skills has intensified.
- 4. Approaches to assessment have changed and the use of criterion scales in assessment has expanded.

The most striking example of the first trend is listening assignments. Today listening is firmly established in the practice of teaching foreign languages at school. Something similar happens in the field of writing.

In addition, the unified state examination made teachers and students realize that there is no "listening in general" or "reading in general", that these types of speech activity in different situations have different communicative tasks that require the use of different strategies.

As an example of the second trend, we note that the unified state examination in foreign languages is focused on productive speech activity. The tasks analysis of the unified state examination allowed teachers to select situations for communication more adequately and problems for written statements in such a way that students tried to reason by comparing facts. For example, what is more important, what is more interesting and why. The proposed tasks in the unified state examination and the situations of communication by analogy, compiled by teachers, correspond to the social experience of students, are close to real ones and serve as an impetus for reflection and argumentation of their point of view. Understanding the importance of oral expression was reflected in the return of the "Speaking" section to the unified state examination in 2013.

As for the third trend, in the unified state examination, along with communication skills, general educational and special educational skills, universal methods of activity are also tested. For example, the ability to use a certain read-

ing / listening strategy depending on the communicative task, to predict content by keywords, the ability to analyze, compare, prove one's point of view, giving arguments and counterarguments, etc. The need to learn strategies for performing tasks of different types and different types of speech activity is a priority in teaching foreign languages.

The fourth trend was manifested in the fact that, until recently, the number of lexical and grammatical mistakes mainly determined the success of a student's work and the mark was set without taking into account the performance of the communicative task. At the same time, the assessment would be purely subjective: there were no assessment criteria or scales that would allow one to switch to a more objective assessment. Recently, teachers themselves are using increasingly the criteria developed for evaluating the unified state examination when evaluating students' oral and written answers, and teach them to use the criteria for self-examination and evaluation of classmates' works.

In the Vladimir region, as well as throughout the country, the number of schoolchildren who choose the French language is small. Nevertheless, one can trace a trend towards a qualitative increase in the results of the unified state examination over the period from 2009 to 2021. In 2009, 17 pupils passed the unified state examination in the French language, the average score was 45.5, and the maximum score was 67. In 2012, 8 schoolchildren took the examination, the average score was 61, the maximum score was 87, and the minimum score was 35. In 2015, 16 pupils passed the examination, the average score was 48.5, the maximum score was 69, and the minimum score was 28. In 2021, 8 students passed the French language, the average score was 65.9, the maximum score was 95, and the minimum score was 44.

Taking a direct part in the verification of the fulfillment of the "Writing" section tasks, we would like to focus our attention on this section.

It should be noted that, despite the tightening of work requirements, examinees showed good results when completing task C1 "Personal Letter". In most works, the communicative task was completed. Students presented the necessary information in their manuscripts, the texts were a coherent logical whole using a variety of means of communication, showed the course of reasoning. Grades had been lowered for basic level mistakes.

Task C2 presents the greatest difficulty. It is necessary to write a reasoned statement on the topic "Your opinion". This task belongs to the advanced level of difficulty. Nevertheless, it should be noted that school teachers do a lot of methodological work to instill in students the skills of written expression, accustom them to the rules of the language design of written speech, to comply with the required volume, which was not the case before.

Typical mistakes in completing tasks were analyzed by the commission and presented in the report on the exam results. The commission has also developed recommendations for teachers and students that they can use in preparing for the unified state examination in the French language. The analysis of the assignments results showed that all examinees apply different listening and read-

ing strategies more or less adequately, possess a certain level of formation of productive skills in writing, the correctness of the speech language design, a certain breadth of lexical and grammatical stock, etc. That is, if we consider the results of the exam from the point of view of solving specific communicative tasks by students, it can be noted that participants who have reached advanced and high levels are able to solve the same communicative tasks with a difference in the quality of performance.

Thus, the statistical data on the unified state examination results, the questioning of teachers and students, the data of the Scientific and Methodological Council on Foreign Languages of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, the materials of scientific and practical conferences on teaching foreign languages confirm the positive impact of the USE on the process of teaching foreign languages.

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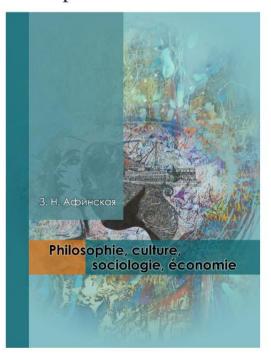
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