

Сведения об авторах

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PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT IN THE UNIFIED NATIONAL TESTING (UNT) ENGLISH SECTION

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Abstract: This article is devoted to the analysis of the current state of assessment (UNT) Unified National Testing of the English language in secondary schools of Kazakhstan. In the study, the authors attempted to identify the shortcomings of the English language competence assessment section of the Unified National Testing, with particular emphasis on the lack of tasks aimed at assessing oral speech and listening skills. The paper analyzes the existing approaches to testing the language competencies of students, and also examines the impact of a limited testing format on the objectivity of assessing the level of English language proficiency. The current system is more focused on testing grammatical and lexical knowledge, while communication skills remain insufficiently covered. According to the results of the study, the introduction of tests to assess oral speech and listening skills will allow students to gain a more complete and objective understanding of their language skills, increase their level of communicative competence and contribute to the development of practical knowledge of a foreign language. In addition, such changes will help students better prepare for the difficulties that arise both in the educational process and in future professional activities, where oral communication and listening skills are of particular importance. Suggestions are offered for improving the UNT to assess all fundamental linguistic abilities while preserving reliability and fairness.

Keywords: Unified National Testing, UNT, assessment, psychometric assessment, graduates, secondary school.

Introduction. The UNT plays a very important role in determining whether school graduates are prepared to enter higher education in Kazakhstan. It was implemented in 2004 with the aim of assessment and certification of the complex knowledge of school graduates for further entry to higher education institutes. However, such a high-stakes test must be strictly tested by psychometric principles to ascertain its efficiency as well as its fairness. For example, the first objective of the UNT is to verify what knowledge school graduates have. The test, however, cannot measure pupils' actual knowledge because its questions only test 'factual' knowledge and not understanding. Concerning this matter, Kanat Nurov, who represents the scientific and educational platform "Aspandau," asserted

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that it is imperative to remove questions that require factual recall, as they do not prepare students for solving real-world problems (ENT sposobstvuet “utechke mozgov”, 2013).

Psychometric assessment is one method of testing an individual's proficiency in a language. Special tests are designed to check different skills such as how well the person understands grammar, reads, listens, writes, and speaks in that language. Psychometric principles are the standard scientific methods of measurement for assessing individuals' mental capabilities and behavioural style. Psychometric assessment measures whether test items well designed, whether the exam is free from bias and how effectively measures students' ability. Despite the critical role of psychometrics research has been conducted on the UNT system especially English section analyzing its strengths and weaknesses. Psychometric testing informs of students' academic strengths and shortcomings. A student may be good in verbal reasoning but poor in completing numerical problems. Speaking and listening to English is equally important in real life language use as reading and writing either in social, professional or academic contexts. If such skills are ignored, then UNT would present incorrect ideas about the actual English skills of the students, and this might result in serious gaps in their language competence, especially in those aspects that require listening skills and active communicational interaction.

The relevance of the work lies in the evaluating the psychometric characteristics of the UNT English section and examine the difficulties arising from its restricted emphasis on speaking and listening. However, English section in UNT mostly emphasizes reading comprehension and grammar little focus on writing and speaking. The research will analyze in depth how accurate and complete the test is in confirming students' language capacity and how it can affect how they use language in their day-to-day lives. By establishing gaps, the research aims to suggest ways of including all principal language skills.

The aim of the research is to determine the gaps in UNT English section as well as analyze students' real English ability is affected by the absence of speaking and listening tests and propose enhancements to give a more holistic assessment of students' English proficiency. For this purpose, this research will try to address the following questions:

- what are the psychometric properties (validity, reliability, and fairness) of the current UNT English section of reading comprehension and grammar testing?
- in what ways does the lack of speaking and listening tests in the UNT English section affect overall English proficiency measurement for students?
- what are the consequences of an English test with an emphasis on reading and grammar on the English use of students in real academic and working environments?
- in what ways could speaking and listening tests be included in the UNT English section without compromising the reliability, validity, and fairness of the psychometric process.

The English section of the UNT is a vital tool for determining the readiness of students for higher educational institution but the present emphasis on grammar and reading comprehension alone fails to evaluate the English abilities of students. When everything in the world is being globalized at a fast pace, speaking and comprehending English in real-life contexts is vital. The incorporation of speaking and listening tests to the UNT English component can enable students to succeed both academically and professionally and better measure students' English language proficiency. The change would enhance the UNT validity and equity as a measure of students' preparation for communication in the real world, both inside and outside the classroom.

Literature review

The education system in Kazakhstan creates conditions for developing new standards and assessment mechanisms that are consistent with not just modern trends in pedagogical assessment but also with the specific features of the socio-cultural development of the country. Criteria-referenced assessment is based on two main types of assessment: formative and summative. Formative assessment is a type of assessment that in the course of daily work in classroom is aimed at evaluating the performance of an educational task, which is obligatory at this point in the process of cognition and learning. It is a current measure of student's progress and provides feedback between

a student and a teacher. It helps to identify a student's difficulties, to determine his ability to achieve better results [1].

The analysis of foreign scientific papers on the research topic shows that different researchers distinguish different principles for evaluating the process of learning a foreign language. But they all boil down to 2 main areas: teachers should help students track their own progress, and, using a scaffolding strategy, help students identify their weak points. Numerous studies and reports describe and define these two aspects in favor of promoting student learning [2-4].

To many teachers (and students), “assessment” simply means giving students tests and assigning them grades. Educational assessment involves gathering and evaluating data evolving from planned learning activities or programs. This form of assessment is often referred to as evaluation (see section below on Assessment versus Evaluation). Learner assessment represents a particular type of educational assessment normally conducted by teachers and designed to serve several related purposes [5].

First and foremost, assessment is important because it drives students learning (Brissenden and Slater, n.d.). Whether we like it or not, most students tend to focus their energies on the best or most expeditious way to pass their ‘tests.’ Based on this knowledge, we can use our assessment strategies to manipulate the kinds of learning that takes place. For instance, the practice of assessments that rely more on memorizing facts is likely to encourage shallow learning. Conversely, selecting assessment processes that require critical thinking or creative problem-solving is likely to drive student performance or achievement [6].

Materials and methods

The qualitative method was used to select respondents participating in the study. The respondents were selected on the basis of certain characteristics, in particular, they were English teachers who currently teach in public schools especially who prepare 11th grade for UNT exams. To get the most representative sample, the questionnaire was sent out to as many teachers as possible using social media. The questionnaires were distributed to schools №171, №149, №205, №87, №209, №184 and Karasay Batyr named school in Almaty city. An online survey was conducted in December 2024 with 50 students and 50 teachers. The English teachers who teach students for the UNT test were selected since they have firsthand experience with the test's structure and would be able to provide constructive feedback on its advantages and disadvantages. An initial notification message was delivered to alert possible respondents of the survey, followed by a second follow-up message that included the link to the questionnaire. GOOGLE FORM was the tool used in delivering the survey questionnaire online. The data were examined using thematic analysis in order to determine salient themes for identifying the perceived benefits and limitations of the UNT English section. The research instrument employed for this study was a self-report questionnaire with two parts. The first part included questions that characterized the participants, such as teaching experience, types of educational institutions, working experience with UNT exam and second part for pupils who study at 11th grade. The questionnaire consisted of 14 statements and interview questions which allowed checking the level of efficiency of UNT exam.

Results and Discussions

The answers of the respondents were examined and grouped to answer 3 main questions regarding the research question. What should be prioritized in English assessment section in Kazakhstan?

The data suggest that the absence of focus on speaking and listening skills, which comprise 75% of the difficulty, is the most significant barrier to the development of English language proficiency in Kazakhstan (fig. 1). It merits serious consideration since speaking and listening skills constitute crucial aspects of language use in daily life, but they are typically overlooked in traditional models of language teaching.

The main difficulty in the formation of English language competences in Kazakhstan is connected with the country's educational system, which traditionally put emphasis on reading and writing abilities instead of speaking and listening ones. Teaching English typically includes the study

of grammar rules, learning vocabulary, and reading skills; however, these spheres of emphasis do not necessarily result in effective communication in everyday situations. The opportunity for most students in Kazakhstan to use English for speaking outside the classroom setting may be restricted. Such students might find it difficult to develop their confidence and oral skills without practice in conversation (fig. 2).

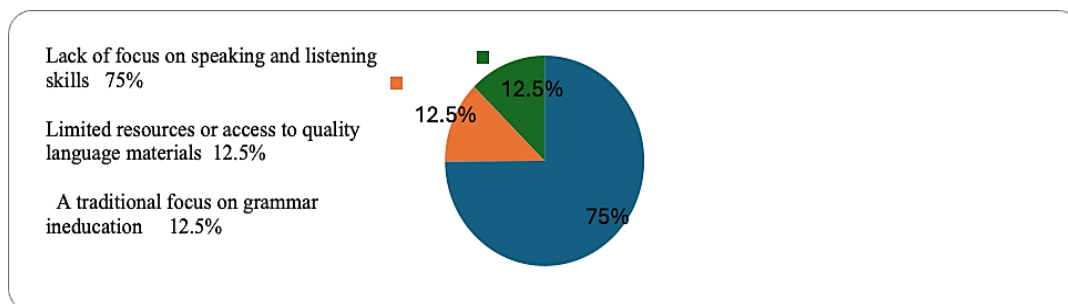


Figure1 – The main difficulty in the formation of English language competences in Kazakhstan

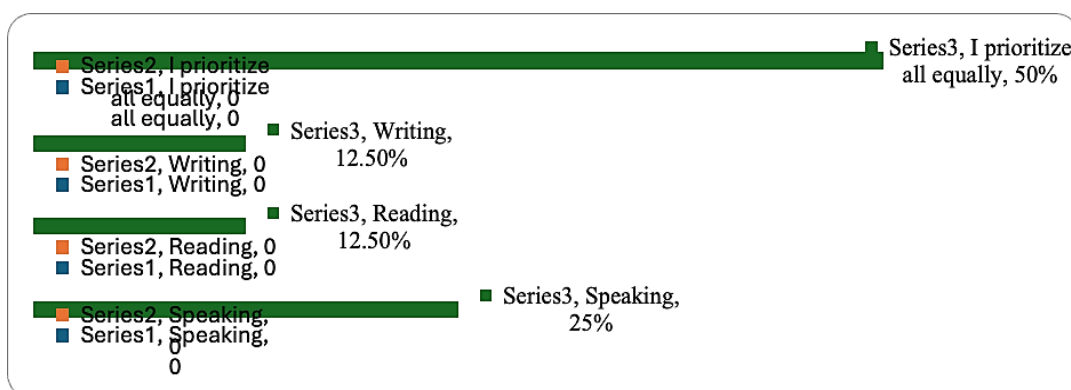


Figure 2 – What should be prioritized first when incorporating more practical language skills into the UNT exam

According to survey outcomes (fig. 3), 25% of the respondents to the survey chose speaking as the priority skill to add to the Unified National Testing (UNT). 12.5% of the respondents mentioned reading and writing as their areas of emphasis, which means that they are important, they might not be considered as essential areas of development in the UNT.

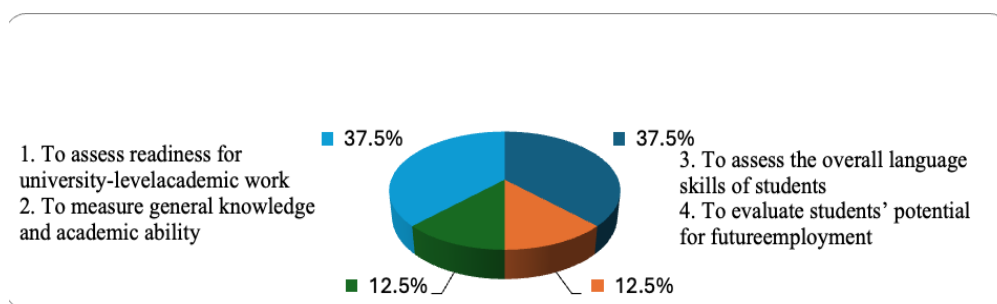


Figure 3 – The primary purpose of the UNT exam English section

It is striking that half of the respondents reported giving equal importance to all language skills, suggesting an intuition that speaking, listening, reading, and writing are all part of a general measure of linguistic proficiency.

When answering the question regarding the primary objective of the English section of the Unified National Testing (UNT), 37.5% of the respondents find its purpose in assessing readiness for studies at the higher education level. The other 37.5% of the participants expressed that the primary

purpose of the UNT English section is to examine students' skills for their prospective jobs, hence the significance of language proficiency in the professional arena. By comparison, 12.5% of the participants indicated the exam was intended to examine general knowledge and academic skills, whereas another 12.5% believed it was intended to examine language skills in general. The findings indicate that the participants highlight the role of UNT in positioning students for higher education and subsequent employment, meaning that the test is also viewed as both an educational and career-based test (fig. 3).

10% of the students can report that they utilize textbooks and classroom notes to revise. These are viewed as critical to practice certain question types (e.g., grammar practice, reading comprehension questions). 5% of the students can report that they utilize online resources such as Khan Academy or YouTube to supplement lessons. These students prefer to learn at their own pace and target areas of difficulty where they struggle.

Analysis of Instructor Responses: Educators would probably emphasize formal classroom learning, such as explicit grammar drill, reading comprehension activities, and writing exercises. 75% of examinees may believe that the exam's emphasis on grammatical accuracy and academic vocabulary is not enough to prepare one for everyday, real-life communication according to the question "Do you feel the UNT English exam tests skills that are useful in real-life scenarios? Why or why not? For instance, they can claim that the test doesn't assess the application of informal language, for instance, using language in meetings or writing casual emails, which is typical for the majority of workplaces.

Besides, in Kazakhstan since 2004, all students sit for the Unified National Test (UNT) upon completion of Grade 11, which includes five subjects: Kazakh, Russian, Mathematics, History of Kazakhstan and one elective subject. In its different components, the English part assumes increasing significance as English is becoming increasingly crucial for academic, professional, and global communication. Typically, the test in the English language has 40 tasks (fig. 4). Among them:

- 15 exercises to analyze and identify lexical and grammatical phenomena in context;
- 25 exercises to test knowledge and skills for practical application of material learned.

Correct form
.....any windows.

☐ A) There is

☐ B) There isn't

☐ C) There are

☐ D) There aren't

Match questions to the following

A) Special question	Whose car is this? ☒
B) Tag question	You have a car, don't you? ☒

Figure 4 – Sample test from UNT English section

The test assignments are divided by level of difficulty to basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Test assignments are divided into three levels of difficulty: 50% at the basic level (A), 30% at the intermediate level (B), and 20% at the advanced level (C).

The UNT English section (Fig. 4) manifests an acceptable level of the reliability, especially for grammar and reading comprehension. A reliability of tests refers to whether the test's results are repeatable over a period of time and among many test-takers. Reading and grammar tests from the UNT are objective. Thus, every score can be determined consistently, but the test type and degree of question difficulty may affect that consistency. For example, tag questions such as "You have a car, don't you?" and simpler grammar questions such as "Whose car is this?" tend to have clear cut and unambiguous answers, so that it is easier to mark them uniformly. The test's actual measurement of what it is supposed to measure is referred to as validity.

Since grammar and reading are major parts of the whole language, the UNT's emphasis on the said matters is generally legitimate for studying students' mastery of the English language.

Conversely, while grammatically items such as "Whose car is this?" and "You have a car, don't you?" test the precise mastery of grammar, the items do not test other vital language skills that apply in real life, such as speaking and listening. It therefore affects the total assessment of a student's overall English proficiency due to its exclusion of two key language skills needed in communication daily. Grammar items such as "Whose car is this?" and tag questions such as "You have a car, don't you?" are focused upon. It only measures the student's knowledge of linguistic structures rather than the use of the structure in a more authentic speaking situation.

This entails a basic appreciation of question wording in English and subject-verb agreement—two fundamental aspects of the language.

This is also one of the access entry-level questions in the UNT English portion because it involves simple sentence forms and simple diction, thereby making it fit for a broad number of takers. It is easy to get what one has to do because of its plainness. However, students will likely become perplexed by the question due to the lack of context, especially when the choice between the singular and plural is not clear. The question is also less reflective of real-language use since it presumes that vocabulary and reading comprehension are not two other crucial forms of language competencies. The emphasis on a single grammatical problem may also not attain the higher competence which third-level work expects. The following activities can be added to test speaking, writing, and listening skills comprehensively to expand the UNT English section and give a more complete understanding of the proficiency in language. In an oral interview, students can be questioned about anything. Their pronunciation, fluency, and ability to develop logical answers would be checked. The assignment targets fluency, lexical range, and coherence of response.

Task: "Imagine you are at a hotel and encounter an issue with your room. Explain the problem to the hotel manager." This type of assessment focuses on pragmatic language skills, fluency, and interaction.

Task: Students take an exam that consists of multiple-choice grammar questions (such as those found in the current UNT format), followed by a short listening task and a speaking task. For instance: Grammar Question: "Tag Question: You have a car, don't you?"

Listening Task: Listen to a conversation about travel plans and answer related questions.

Speaking Assignment: The student is required to respond to the following question after listening: "If you were organizing a trip, what would be the most important factors in choosing your destination?" The assessment will be: Because each component is scored independently, consistency and equity across various skill levels are guaranteed. While hearing is graded using automated systems for multiple-choice responses, speaking can be evaluated using a standardized rubric.

Conclusion

The UNT English section has only grammar and reading comprehension, it cannot assess other critical communication skills, such as speaking and listening. Other critical skills involve speaking and listening, which the UNT English section could incorporate with an oral interview or a listening comprehension task. Fairness and reliability of the test could be maintained by using standardized procedures, expert raters, and organized rubrics. In today's global community, speaking and understanding English is crucially important for success both in the classroom and the workplace. Kazakhstan's educational system may ensure that students are better prepared for both the professional and higher education world if the UNT English section is improved to properly assess the speaking and listening skills. By enhancing the UNT English section to be able to better assess speaking and listening skills, Kazakhstan's education system could make sure that students are better prepared for the demands of higher education and the professional world.

As such, this paper declares some of the new directions for UNT testing system, which may be considered as the practical value of the investigation in the comparative analysis of assessment types that will best suit all kinds of learner styles. This study carries a practical value in informing the design of an increasingly inclusive and precise evaluation of English proficiency that meets the standards globally demanded and prepares students for success across a wide variety of professional and

academic settings.

The main limitation is that their implementation will depend on many factors, which are beyond the scope of this study and include institutional policies, government support, and available resources, each of which may pose different challenges in practical application.

In sum, this study indicates some valuable directions to improve the English section at UNT, but further research is needed to confirm these recommendations and further investigate potential limitations. Conflict of interests The paper contains no conflict of interest that could prevent it from publication.

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ҰЛТТЫҚ БІРЫҢҒАЙ ТЕСТІЛЕУ (ҰБТ) АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛ БӨЛІМІНЕ ПСИХОМЕТРИЯЛЫҚ БАҒАЛАУ

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Аңдатпа: Мақалада Қазақстан мектептерінде ағылшын тілін Ұлттық бірыңғай тестілеу (ҰБТ) жүйесінде бағалау жағдайы талданады. Зерттеуде авторлар ауызша сөйлеу мен тыңдау дағдыларын бағалауға бағытталған тапсырмалардың жоқтығына ерекше назар аудара отырып, ұлттық бірыңғай тестілеудің ағылшын тілі бойынша құзыреттіліктерді бағалау бөлімінің кемшіліктерін анықтауға тырысты. Жұмыста білім алушылардың тілдік құзыреттіліктерін тексерудің қолданыстағы тәсілдері талданады, сондай-ақ тестілеудің шектеулі форматының ағылшын тілін меңгеру деңгейін бағалаудың объективтілігіне әсері қарастырылады. Қолданыстағы жүйе грамматикалық және лексикалық білімді тексеруге бағытталған, ал коммуникативті дағдылар жеткіліксіз қамтылған. Зерттеу нәтижелеріне сәйкес, ауызша сөйлеу мен тыңдауды бағалау бойынша тесттерді енгізу студенттерге өздерінің тілдік дағдылары туралы неғұрлым толық және объективті түсінік алуға мүмкіндік береді, олардың коммуникативтік құзыреттілік деңгейін арттырады және шет тілін практикалық меңгеруді дамытуға ықпал етеді. Сонымен қатар, мұндай өзгерістер студенттерге оқу процесінде де, болашақ кәсіби қызметте де туындайтын қиындықтарға жақсы дайындалуға көмектеседі, мұнда ауызша қарым-қатынас және ақпаратты есту арқылы қабылдау дағдылары ерекше маңызға ие. ҰБТ-ға тілдік дағдыларды бағалайтын, сонымен қатар сенімділік пен әділдікті сақтайтын түрде жетілдіру бойынша ұсыныстар жасалды.

Түйінді сөздер: ұлттық бірыңғай тестілеу, ҰБТ, бағалау, психометриялық бағалау, түлектер, орта мектеп.

ПСИХОМЕТРИЧЕСКАЯ ОЦЕНКА В РАЗДЕЛЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ЕДИНОГО НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО ТЕСТИРОВАНИЯ (ЕНТ)

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Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена анализу текущего состояния оценки знаний английского языка в рамках Единого национального тестирования (ЕНТ) в школах Казахстана. В исследовании авторами предпринята попытка выявления недостатков раздела оценивания компетенций по английскому языку Единого национального тестирования, с особым акцентом на отсутствие заданий, направленных на оценивание устной речи и навыков аудирования. В работе анализируются существующие подходы к проверке языковых компетенций обучающихся, а также рассматривается влияние ограниченного формата тестирования на объективность оценки уровня владения английским языком. Действующая система в большей степени ориентирована на проверку грамматических и лексических знаний, тогда как коммуникативные навыки остаются недостаточно охваченными. Согласно результатам исследования, внедрение тестов по оцениванию устной речи и аудирования позволит студентам получить более полное и объективное представление о своих языковых навыках, повысит уровень их коммуникативной компетенции и будет способствовать развитию практического владения иностранным языком. Кроме того, подобные изменения помогут обучающимся лучше подготовиться к трудностям, возникающим как в учебном процессе, так и в будущей профессиональной деятельности, где навыки устного общения и восприятия информации на слух имеют особое значение. В статье предлагаются рекомендации по улучшению ЕНТ с целью оценки всех основных языковых способностей при сохранении надежности и справедливости.

Ключевые слова: единое национальное тестирование, ЕНТ, оценивание, психометрическое оценивание, выпускники, средняя школа.

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THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF GIFTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to investigate the problems of formation and peculiarities of a young person's sphere of values and senses at the modern stage of the society development. The study analyses the nature, structure, mechanisms and factors of a person's sphere of values and senses as well as psychological and pedagogical approaches to its research. Nature and relevance of the system of values to personal growth are investigated. The given study underlines the lack of scientific and theoretical as well as practical research, aimed at the study of psychological mechanisms of high potential formation and social self-realization of gifted youth. The person's sphere of values and senses or the system of value orientation is viewed as one of the significant mechanisms of the phenomenon development and social realization of giftedness. The study comprises the results of

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