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S.I. MEDYNSKA,
*Senior Lecturer, the Department of International Tourism,
Hotel and Restaurant Business and Language Training, Alfred Nobel University*

THE SCOPE OF APPLICATION OF COMPUTER TESTING IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL AND MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS WHILE FORMING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF UNDERGRADUATE TOURISM STUDENTS

The article deals with the relevant issues of computer testing as a means of control of the acquired skills while forming the foreign language competence with a view to defining the reasonable scope of its application with the undergraduate tourism students taken as an example. Constraints of computer testing application have been considered taking into account the motivational and cultural aspects, as well as recommendations on improving efficiency of the existing test systems and defining the scope of their application have been made.

Key words: computer testing, motivation, foreign language competence, cultural model.

Introduction. In the age of rapid IT development with the latest advancements in the computer industry the use of computers as well as online technologies in the education system has become a common phenomenon having largely replaced paper tests by computer testing or online testing which has created a natural technological setting for the students who are millennials and post-millennials.

Despite all the benefits of using the latest technologies in the learning process, in particular in forming the foreign language competence with the undergraduate tourism students taken as an example, computer testing, which has recently become popular as a means of objective evaluation with rapid processing of results, has a number of shortcomings that can be eliminated through proper analysis and clear understanding of the ancillary character of computer testing applied for interim and final assessment.

Literature review. A number of issues connected with testing are actively researched in the methodology of teaching foreign languages including the principles of using test techniques during the compilation of tests, methods of testing, methods of selecting teaching materials for testing various types of linguistic activity, methodical aspects of the use of test control with the determination of its advantages over traditional forms of control and psychological impact on students [5, 6, 7]. Models and computer technologies of adequate testing processes were developed by Bateshov Ye. A. and Sisikh I. V. [4, 8]. The issue of the introduction of computer evaluation was also actively studied by foreign researchers, in particular by T. Atkinson, J. Brown, B. Gawalis, etc. Consideration was also given to defining the shortcomings of computer testing, but these studies are rather general without outlining the ways to overcome the drawbacks and the scope of application of computer testing in the educational process taking into account cultural peculiarities of the students and relevance of the motivational drives involved in computer testing.

The **aim** of the article is to determine the limitations of computer testing and the scope of its application on the basis of cultural specifics and motivational drives while forming the foreign language competence of undergraduate tourism students.

Findings. The use of computer testing is not limited to the form of control, as it is also used as a form of self-assessment to determine the level of mastering a particular subject. However, testing cannot be regarded as the only unique form of control at all the stages of the educational process and in the study of all subjects, since it, to a greater extent, tests the knowledge of certain facts, laws, phenomena and rules that are sufficient for a few subjects but it is not applicable to check the level of creative, non-reproductive speaking or writing as well as professional competence, since the availability of options for choosing automatically limits the scope of the creative approach to finding a solution to the problem or analyzing the case and allows students with well-developed intuitive thinking show far better results than real ones. That is, computer testing is the most effective and economical form of control for testing the knowledge of some theoretical aspects, vocabulary and grammar on a particular topic or the level of formation of reading and listening skills. However, when it comes to obtaining results on the creative application of knowledge, skills and abilities in the conditions close to reality, the tests do not give an objective assessment, since the purpose of testing is to obtain information without reflecting the real level of the linguistic competence and determining the undergraduate tourism students' linguistic behavior in real life situations like dealing with customer complaints, negotiating, making product presentations at various trade fairs and exhibitions or in other situations which any experts in tourism encounter in their business activities.

Moreover, regular computer tests eliminate the feeling of reality and necessity of real life communication immersing students in the natural technological surrounding distorting the sense of achievement in face-to-face communication and creative writing, which can become an impediment in future professional activity. As a result, the quantitative criteria of assessment replace the qualitative ones, which can lead to the use of a perfunctory approach to training and misperception of the genuine meaning of the concept of fluency in a foreign language.

Supporters of computer testing enlist a number of its advantages including a low level of stress compared with traditional (especially oral) forms of control, which has been proved by psychological research. At the same time, psychologists noted an increased level of anxiety precisely when performing computer tests at the initial stage of the introduction of this method of control, which took place in the 1990s due to the lack of the developed computer skills, fear of technologies and innovations, a large number of additional errors due to improper use of the computer program etc. At the present stage, the situation has changed dramatically: computer testing evokes a lower level of anxiety than traditional forms, since computers have become an integral part of students' lives, an element which is stress-free for them and that has always helped them in solving problems. Computer testing used to be applied as a means of enhancing motivation by introducing innovations and technology not available to the public then, but now it is a practical method of automated testing and processing of results, that is, a purely technical application with the effect of reducing anxiety by creating a familiar environment.

However, in practice, this seeming benefit turns to a drawback while forming the foreign language competence, since in real communication with native speakers it is not the language but the psychological barrier expressed in the fear of speaking a foreign language, making mistakes or looking funny in the eyes of the interlocutor that plays a crucial role and disrupts effective communication. This self-doubt is the result of the teacher's constant work on reducing the level of stress and lingual anxiety in the classroom to increase the efficiency and productivity of learning, but for realities this has a reverse effect. By constant application of computer testing we try to obtain results about the level of the foreign language competence in the "artificial" environment, thereby leading the students to false self-assessment of the real in contrast to virtual skills that they can actually apply in practice.

Traditionally, the benefits of testing include:

- the individual nature of the control, the ability to control the work of each student, their personal learning activities, and also the opportunity to get results of the group's success, which will help assess the effectiveness of the methods and techniques used in the classroom;
- the possibility of systematic testing at all stages of the learning process;
- the possibility of combining it with other traditional forms of control;
- objectivity of this form of control, which eliminates the subjective judgments and conclusions of the teacher;
- possibility of computerized (on a local network) and paper version of testing;
- consideration of individual peculiarities of students, which requires the application of these methods in accordance with the various methods of test development and test tasks depending on the level of their linguistic competence;

- high content validity of testing based on the inclusion of the studied units of the training program in the test task [7].

Despite all the above-mentioned advantages, lately, there has been a tendency towards a slowdown in using computer testing in comparison with the past years. This is predetermined, first of all, by the weak computer test system. Testing has ambivalent character because of some restrictions that might affect the validity of results, so its shortcomings can outweigh benefits if there is lack of analysis of its feasibility in each particular situation that could have a negative impact on the objectivity of the results of self-assessment and peer assessment as well as distort effectiveness of the applied teaching methods and techniques.

In a broader sense of the term, testing methods include rather diverse tasks in terms of the form and structure since besides tasks with the options such as multiple choice, filling in the gaps, matching, true / false / not given etc. [6] there can be more creative tasks, e.g. an essay or monologue. Computer testing does not enable such creative tasks to be included in the list of tests because of impediments in their automatic verification and evaluation.

Besides computer testing limitations to only a few types of tasks, it also does not take into account individual psychological peculiarities of students, in particular, peculiarities of attention, the level of productive memory and its functioning, the speed of the thinking process, the level of flexibility of verbal-logical thinking, persistence, strengths and weaknesses of the nervous system etc, thereby it does not provide students with the ability to perform tasks under equal conditions, which reduces the validity of the results of computer testing. To mitigate the above mentioned drawbacks and enhance efficiency of computer testing it is expedient to apply a number of technical ways to improve the test software making it more student-oriented [5, p.188] although it is still necessary to understand clearly the purpose and scope of application of computer testing.

Use of technologies in the classroom is considered to be an effective tool of heightening students' interest in the educational process due to its appeal to the young generation through its ubiquity but it also has to be applied prudently as a motivational tool because of its restrictions in this respect. Proper motivation is one of the influential factors enhancing the academic performance of the undergraduate tourism students since motivation is a system component based on enhancement of the human factor, conscious determination of a certain line of behaviour by extrinsic drives and intrinsic motives and purposeful people's encouragement by regular impact on their needs, interests and aims.

There is a lot of research conducted in the area of motivation but the motivational theory on the basis of emotional drives suggested by N. Nohria [3] seems to be quite innovative and comprehensive. It is based on the assumption that people are motivated by four main emotional drives to acquire, bond, comprehend and defend, and it also offers a set of primary levers and actions to be taken to fulfill these drives and encourage people as shown in Table 1. The researcher considers these emotional drives in the context of staff motivation but this theory can be effectively applicable in education. The key idea is to satisfy all the four drives simultaneously.

Table 1

The Motivation Model Based on Emotional Drives

Drive	Primary lever	Actions
Acquire (obtain scarce goods, including intangibles such as social status)	Reward system	- Sharply differentiate good performers from average and poor performers - Tie rewards clearly to performance
Bond (form connections with individuals and groups)	Culture	- Foster mutual reliance and friendship among coworkers - Value collaboration and teamwork
Comprehend (satisfy our curiosity and master the world around us)	Job design	- Design jobs that have distinct and important roles in the organization - Design jobs that are meaningful and foster a sense of contribution to the organization
Defend (protect against external threats and promote justice)	Performance management and resource allocation processes	- Increase the transparency of all processes - Emphasize their fairness

Source: [3]

Analyzing the four emotional drives and computer testing it can be noted that the latter satisfies only two drives such as acquire and defend since it leads to rewarding those who show high scores with a high grade while demonstrating a pretty good level of fairness due to the objectivity of assessment on the basis of quantitative criteria. Meanwhile, applying technologies in the educational process as a whole and computer testing in particular can have a detrimental effect for satisfying the other two drives (bond and comprehend) by replacing real life communication and interaction with the virtual world with virtual rewards. Control of the level of the foreign language competence via team projects and team presentations with the use of computer technologies satisfies the four emotional drives that is why computer testing can be used only as an ancillary tool in this respect.

The definition of an optimal system of motivation in the educational process should also take into account cultural aspects to use appropriate external and internal factors of motivation. Two main cultural models were developed by G. Hofstede and E. Hall. The former includes five aspects such as individualism vs collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity and long-term orientation vs short-term orientation. The latter is focused on differentiation of cultures into high-context or low-context on the basis of specifics of such factors as overtness of messages, locus of control and attribution for failure, use of non-verbal communication, expression of reaction, cohesion and separation of groups, people bonds, level of commitment to relationships and flexibility of time [1].

According to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that cultural characteristics offered by G. Hofstede and E. Hall have complementary character and show clear proneness of the Ukrainians to relationships and teamwork due to a high level of collectivism and femininity with predominance of the features which are characteristic of high-context cultures as well as a high level of uncertainty avoidance which leads to the conclusion of necessity of fairness in assessment (Fig.1).

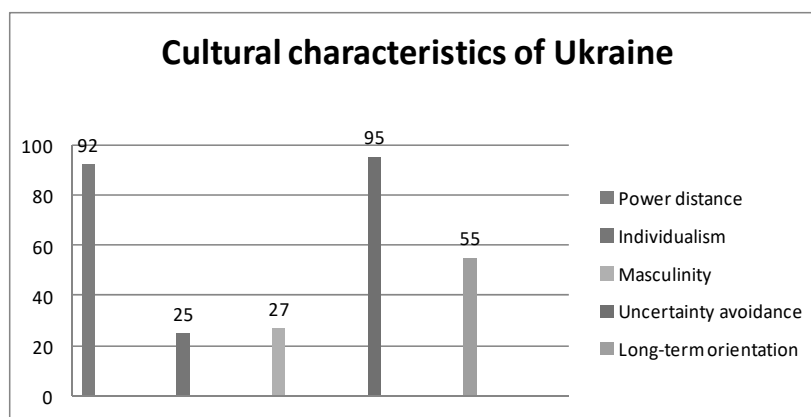


Fig. 1. Cultural characteristics of Ukraine [2]

As a result, it is possible to make some recommendations on the ways of enhancing motivation through testing, namely:

- ensuring validity of testing results and clear understanding of the components of the grade (uncertainty avoidance);
- rewards for achievements at once after the actual performance to build trust (uncertainty avoidance);
- group assessment for teamwork (collectivism);
- involvement of students in decision-making but with the crucial decisions taken by team leaders via peer assessment of team presentations or projects etc (collectivism and power distance);
- keeping students informed about intended learning outcomes with regular reviews of achievements (uncertainty avoidance and collectivism);

- combination of motivation components including emphasis on integrity and sincerity through regulation as an extrinsic drive, leadership behaviour as a reinforcing drive and innovation and knowledge as a tool for change management (uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, femininity and power distance).

Conclusions. Computer testing actually has some advantages over traditional forms of control, but it is not a panacea since it requires significant advancements in the test system aimed at expanding the capabilities of computer test frames with their optimal adaptation to the peculiarities of forming the foreign language competence.

Thus, computer testing as a method of interim and final control should be used along with the other forms of control like making presentations, writing business letters and essays, summarizing articles etc., i.e. those controlling techniques which require creating a linguistic product to demonstrate the realistic level of the foreign language competence and satisfy the four emotional drives of motivation corresponding to the distinctive features of the Ukrainian culture.

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У статті розглядаються актуальні питання комп'ютерного тестування як засобу контролю набутих навичок при формуванні іншомовної компетенції з метою визначення раціональних меж його застосування на прикладі студентів галузі туризму. Розглянуто обмеження при застосуванні комп'ютерного тестування з урахуванням мотиваційних і культурних аспектів, а також запропоновано рекомендації щодо підвищення ефективності існуючих тестових систем та визначення сфери їх застосування.

Ключові слова: комп'ютерне тестування, мотивація, іншомовна компетентність, культурологічна модель.

В статье рассматриваются актуальные вопросы компьютерного тестирования как средства контроля приобретенных навыков при формировании иноязычной компетенции с целью определения рациональных границ его применения на примере студентов сферы туризма. Рассмотрены ограничения при применении компьютерного тестирования с учетом мотивационных и культурных аспектов, а также предложены рекомендации по повышению эффективности существующих тестовых систем и определения сферы их применения.

Ключевые слова: компьютерное тестирование, мотивация, иноязычная компетентность, культурологическая модель.

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