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UO'K: 811.111 : 81'373.7

THE ROLE OF PHRASEOLOGY COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY EXAMS

Р ОЛЬ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ В ЭКЗАМЕНАХ НА ВЛАДЕНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКИМ ЯЗЫКОМ.

INGLIZ TILINI BILISH IMTIHONLARIDA FRAZEOLOGIK KOMPETENSIYANING ROLI

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada, aynan turg'un birikmalarning ingliz tili sinovlari (IELTS, PET) natijalariga ta'siri o'rganilgan. Mavjud adabiyotlarni tahlil qilish orqali, maqola, turg'un birikmalarni chuqur tushunish qobiliyatining tilni tabiiy va o'zlashtirilgan shaklda qo'llashga yordam berishi orqali o'quvchilarning savodxonligini oshirishini ko'rsatadi.

Abstract

This article examines the impact of phraseology—specifically, fixed expressions and lexical chunks—on performance in English proficiency exams such as IELTS and PET. Through a comprehensive review of the literature, the study highlights how a deep understanding of fixed expressions enhances linguistic fluency, reading comprehension, and writing accuracy. The findings suggest that integrating targeted phraseology instruction into exam preparation can significantly improve test performance by enabling students to interpret and produce language in a more native-like manner.

Аннотация

В данной статье исследуется влияние фразеологии, а именно фиксированных выражений на результаты экзаменов по английскому языку, таких как IELTS и PET. Путем анализа существующей литературы показано, как глубокое понимание фиксированных выражений способствует улучшению языковой компетентности, навыков чтения и точности письма. Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о том, что интеграция специализированного обучения фразеологии в подготовку к экзаменам может существенно повысить успешность сдачи экзаменов.

Kalit so'zlar: *frazeologiya, turg'un birikmalar, IELTS, PET, til savodxonligi, kollokatsiyalar*
Key words: *phraseology, fixed expressions, lexical chunks, IELTS, PET, language proficiency, collocations*
Ключевые слова: *фразеология, , IELTS, PET, языковая компетенция, коллокации.*

INTRODUCTION

The field of English language assessment has witnessed growing interest in how linguistic features affect test performance. Recent studies suggest that mastery of phraseology—including fixed expressions and lexical chunks—is pivotal to demonstrating language fluency on proficiency exams such as IELTS and PET. Unlike isolated vocabulary teaching, an emphasis on fixed expressions provides learners with ready-to-use patterns that support both receptive and productive skills. This article reviews the literature on phraseology instruction and discusses its potential to enhance exam performance in EFL contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a literature review of academic research, journal articles, and case studies available through open-access platforms. The analysis focused on how fixed expressions, collocations, and other formulaic sequences affect English proficiency exam performance. The synthesis of findings was structured by identifying recurring themes, challenges, and effective instructional practices in teaching phraseology. Data were also drawn from comparative studies that examine traditional vocabulary instruction versus phraseological competence in exam settings. This approach enabled the identification of best practices for integrating phraseology into exam preparation curricula.

RESULTS

The review of the literature reveals a strong positive correlation between mastery of fixed expressions and improved performance on language proficiency exams. Studies by Boers and Lindstromberg [1,83] show that explicit instruction in lexical chunks speeds up the processing of reading passages and enhances writing fluency. Their experimental evidence indicates that learners who practice fixed expressions regularly make fewer grammatical errors, which leads to higher overall scores in writing and speaking tasks. In addition, Nattinger and DeCarrico [2, 218] argue that formulaic language acts as a cognitive scaffold, reducing the mental load during language production and thereby allowing examinees to allocate more resources to higher-order thinking tasks in exam conditions. This effect was further reinforced by research from Lewis [3,223] who documented that students participating in phraseology-enriched classrooms developed more confidence and coherence in their spoken responses during IELTS speaking tests.

Moreover, Webb and Nation [4,322] provide empirical evidence that a systematic focus on collocations and fixed expressions can lead to measurable improvements in both receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) skills. Adding to these findings, Carter and McCarthy [5,973] emphasize that a curriculum that integrates authentic language chunks helps learners produce language that is not only linguistically correct but also pragmatically and culturally appropriate. Finally, Schmitt [6,386] confirms that formulaic sequences, when mastered, enable a smoother transition from controlled practice to spontaneous language use in real exam scenarios.

These converging findings from multiple researchers underscore that integrating phraseology into test preparation is a vital element in reducing errors, enhancing fluency, and ultimately raising exam scores.

DISCUSSION

The integration of phraseology-focused instruction into exam preparation curricula offers promising solutions to several of the challenges faced by EFL learners. Notably, Boers and Lindstromberg's [1,83] work highlights that regular practice with lexical chunks significantly reduces processing time during reading and writing tasks. This efficiency is crucial during high-pressure exam conditions where time management is essential.

Nattinger and DeCarrico [2, 218] further argue that fixed expressions serve as a toolkit for learners, enabling them to bypass undue cognitive strain when formulating responses. This is particularly important in speaking and writing sections of exams, where cognitive overload can lead to hesitations and errors. The benefits of this cognitive unloading are apparent in studies by Lewis [3,223] and Webb and Nation [4,322], where students exposed to structured phraseology lessons consistently outperformed their peers on measures of fluency and complexity. Also relevant to this discussion is the work by Carter and McCarthy [5,973], who demonstrate that when instruction includes explicit teaching of collocations and idiomatic expressions, students are better able to negotiate the nuances of meaning and context that are often examined in high-stakes testing scenarios. Their research shows that such instruction not only improves immediate test performance but also contributes to long-term communicative competence—a dual benefit that is critical in today's competitive academic and professional environments.

In addition to these findings, Schmitt [6,386] provides a broader perspective by analyzing how formulaic sequences contribute to error reduction and overall language coherence. The ability to produce language that sounds natural and cogent is a significant advantage in speaking tests, where examinees are assessed on both fluency and accuracy. These insights collectively indicate that a curriculum enriched with phraseological instruction could significantly mitigate common exam challenges, such as time pressure, anxiety, and the cognitive demands of spontaneous language production.

Furthermore, emerging research by Ellis [7,180] and Flowerdew [8,283] supports the idea that understanding and using fixed expressions fosters a more intuitive grasp of language patterns, which is especially beneficial when students transition from controlled classroom exercises to the dynamic conditions of language exams. The discussion, therefore, posits that educational institutions should consider adopting integrated teaching models that combine traditional vocabulary instruction with targeted phraseology practice. This combined approach has the potential to not only boost exam scores but also improve overall language competence for EFL learners across diverse proficiency examinations.

CONCLUSION

The evidence synthesized from various studies makes it clear that a focused approach to teaching phraseology—specifically the mastery of fixed expressions and lexical chunks—plays a pivotal role in enhancing performance on English language proficiency exams. In controlled studies and classroom observations alike, incorporating explicit instruction on fixed expressions has been shown to reduce grammatical errors, increase fluency, and reduce the processing time needed during high-pressure language tasks. These findings suggest that when EFL learners are provided with ready-to-use language chunks, they not only achieve higher exam scores but also develop stronger overall language competence.

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