

## The Impact of the Cefr in Testing Tatar as a Foreign Language (A2 Level)

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### Abstract

This article was devoted to the study of linguistic and methodological features of organization and conducting Tatar language certification: the description of general requirements for mastering basic levels and the structure of testing and assessment materials of Tatar language. The relevance of this topic was explained by the need to generalize pedagogical experience in order to improve the quality of teaching Tatar language and to determine forms and methods of work for the further development of linguistic abilities of students. The article considered Tatar language certification and testing of the level A2 as an effective mechanism for preserving and developing Tatar language on the territory of Russia and abroad; raising the prestige of the national language in the cultural world community; creating conditions for satisfying the language needs of the Tatars; constantly updating learning-teaching base, and taking the rapidly changing language situation into account, on the basis of a common European language standard. Within the framework of this article, it was concluded that Tatar language test could assess skills, which were significant for the future life of students including cognitive skills. The procedures, underlying all stages of the assessment cycle, were also developed in detail. They were practical, and taken together, they could form an integral and logical system of control and assessment.

**Keywords:** Language testing; Basic level; CEFR; Tests for adults; Certification; Tatar language.



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### 1. Introduction

The Government of the Russian Federation has created conditions for scientific research of the official languages of the Republic of Tatarstan, and other languages in the Republic of Tatarstan, in the relevant scientific and educational organizations of higher education; and also provided training for specialists in the state languages of this Republic. (Alpeisova *et al.*, 2018).

Reformation of educational system, with the aim to improve its efficiency, is currently one of the prior activities of the Government of the Russian Federation. The need for changes is also conditioned by the goals of Russia's integration into the global educational space. The most important component of the reform is the creation of independent system of state certification and the control of education quality as the main tool for public administration of education, whose successful functioning is impossible at present without the use of achievements in the theory of pedagogical assessments and modern test technologies (Shmeleva *et al.*, 2017).

As it is known, the methodology of teaching Tatar language and studying the issues of organization of Tatar language testing has a wide experience. At the present stage, Tatar language teaching in schools is conducted in three directions: 1) teaching Tatar at schools with the Tatar language of instruction, 2) teaching Tatar language to Tatar children at schools with the Russian language of instruction, 3) Tatar language teaching of Russian-speaking children at schools with the Russian language of instruction. (Antúnez *et al.*, 2012).

The methodology of the Tatar language teaching in different groups is very different. The first and the second directions provide for learning the Tatar language as a native language, and have their own history and long-standing traditions (Kharisova *et al.*, 2015; Shakirova *et al.*, 2017a). In recent years, the question of the use of modern information and communication technologies in the Tatar language teaching has been raised with increasing frequency (Mukharlyamova and Kharisov, 2015; Mukharlyamova *et al.*, 2016).

The methodology of teaching Tatar language to Russian-speaking audience differs radically from the first two methods. As its name says, the main contingent of students is children, who do not speak Tatar at all. In this article, the linguistic and methodological features of organization and conducting Tatar language testing, as a non-native language, was considered.

In recent years, there have been some research studies aimed at studying the methods of teaching Tatar as a foreign language to the adult population. It should be noted that the research by Fatkhullova is devoted to the description of educational model of the Tatar language teaching to various categories of students on short-term

courses, and also consideration of linguistic and methodological features of using textbooks of new-generation in the process of adult linguistic education (Fathullova, 2014), as well as to studying the linguistic and methodological features of organization and conducting Tatar language testing of students, and the testing of communicative competence during the study of Tatar (Guseynova *et al.*, 2015).

General issues of language testing, organization of a certified examination in foreign language (Solnyshkina *et al.*, 2014), parameters of the complexity of examination texts, and comparative analysis of the texts for reading have been also considered in these works (Solnyshkina *et al.*, 2014).

The purpose of the present article was to describe the general requirements for language mastering, and the structure of testing and assessment materials of Tatar language in order to summarize positive experiences in using test technology for the assessment of the level of practical knowledge of Tatar language by the adult population.

The description of general requirements for elementary level (A1) and the structure of testing and assessment materials of Tatar language have already become the subject of the research in previously published articles (Shakirova *et al.*, 2017b). In the present article, the linguistic and methodological features of organization of the Tatar language certification for the basic level – A2 were considered.

## 2. Methodology

The set of existing basic methods is effectively used in the research including descriptive method, comparative method, analytical method, and generalization one. The main method of investigation is a descriptive method, with its basic components - observation, comparison, generalization, and typology of the compared materials. Comparative method was also applied for the complex analysis of the test tasks structure. Analytical method and generalization method were further used in the research.

## 3. Results and Discussion

According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan “On approval of the Regulations on training courses for the study and improvement of knowledge of Tatar language, as the state language of the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Procedure for assessment of the level of the Tatar language acquisition” No. 22, since January 19, 2016, the assessment of linguistic knowledge is carried out in concordance with six levels: A1 - elementary level, A2 - basic level, B1 - intermediate level, B2 - upper intermediate, C1 - advanced, C2 - proficient (the level of perfect knowledge of language) (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2018). The levels of the Tatar language proficiency are also compared with European ones.

The Tatar Language Certification Center was also established in 2014, on the basis of Leo Tolstoy Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan Federal University, within the framework of the state program of the Republic of Tatarstan i.e. “Preservation, Study, and Development of the Official Languages of the Republic of Tatarstan and other Languages in the Republic of Tatarstan for 2014-2020” (State program, 2018). This center develops and evaluates tests according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

In order to understand the testing process in full, and to comply with unified requirements in accordance with the processes of multilingualism and language preservation, Kazan Federal University has become an affiliate member of the leading national certification center - ALTE (The Association of Language Testers in Europe).

When developing the testing and assessment materials of Tatar language, the authors proceeded from the assumption that, “the test is a tool, consisting of a qualimetric-verified system of test tasks, standardized procedure, and preliminary designed technology for processing and analysis of the results” (Maiorov, 2002).

To determine the level of formedness of communicative competence, the test candidates use different types of tasks on knowledge of basic types of speech activity (reading and writing, listening, speaking). The purpose of the section “Reading and Writing” is the understanding of simple written information in titles, brochures, newspapers, and magazines; “Listening” checks the understanding of ads and other oral dialogues of people, who speak slowly and legibly; “Speaking” is the testing of ability to communicate, creating a conversation, as well as answering and asking simple questions with one or two candidates, that make examination more realistic and reliable.

The fulfilment of a set of submitted tasks by the candidates makes it possible to assess the correspondence of their level of Tatar language knowledge to the basic one, in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) - A2.

### 3.1. Main Provisions of the Basic Level (A2) of Tatar Language Proficiency

The basic level of the Tatar language proficiency allows the user to meet the most necessary communicative needs in language communication with native speakers in limited and foreseen situations of daily life.

Situations of language communication at a basic level are related to the everyday, sociocultural, and educational spheres. The list of language means, providing communication in these spheres, is limited by the communicative needs of the basic level. As well, 180-200 academic hours are required to master Tatar language at a basic level (on the assumption that the subject knows Tatar at elementary level).

The basic level of communicative competences proves that the user has the ability to satisfy basic communication needs in everyday and general cultural spheres. The user of language ought to:

- understand simple sentences and frequently used phrases, related to the main spheres of life (they should be able to give basic information about themselves, about their family members, about their employment, etc.);
- be able to perform communicative tasks on familiar or general topics;

- be able to tell simple words about themselves and their family members, and to characterize the main aspects of everyday life.

### 3.2. Matter of Basic-Level Requirements

When solving communicative tasks, the user of language should be able to realize the following speech intentions:

- to enter into communication, to get acquainted, to introduce themselves and others, to greet, to say goodbye, to address someone, to express their gratitude and regret, to reply to gratitude and apology, to congratulate, and to ask;
- to say wishes without repeating; to ask, to inform about the presence or absence of fact, person, object, quantity of objects, its quality, and belonging;
- to inform about the reason of the event, subject, time, activity; to express wishes, requests, advice, invitation, agreement, opposition, promise;
- to express one's own attitude: to assess person, object, fact, activity, and event.

### 3.3. Situations and Themes of Communication

At the basic level, the user of language should be able to orient and to realize the most necessary communicative intentions, in the following communication situations.

- Family members and friends: The user of language should be able to get acquainted, to greet, and to ask about the mood and well-being. They also ought to know related names, be able to talk about their family, friends and briefly describe their appearance and character; and to talk about their profession.

- Job: The user of language should be able to talk about their occupation and workplace, about their colleagues; and to describe their appearance and character in detail. They should be also able to ask the interlocutor about their profession and workplace.

- Place of residence: The user of language should be able to describe their place of residence, house, and talk about their location. Also, the user of language should be able to talk about the positioning of certain objects in space, be able to ask about the house / apartment - the number of rooms, its location, distance from certain facilities, accommodations, etc.

He should be also able to tell about the sights of the city, their location and be able to carry on a conversation on the topic "In the village".

- Healthy lifestyle: The user of language should be able to describe their daily diet, to talk about their leisure; to be able to ask the interlocutor about their daily routine, about their leisure; to be able to talk about their the day before, their last weekend and the actions done; and be able to ask the interlocutor about their day and their actions.

The user of language should know the names of the main organs of human body, be able to ask where is a doctor's office and when they work; say what is the trouble and what medicines they take; should be able to ask about the availability of drugs in a pharmacy, and about their price and dosage regimen. The user should be able to describe a healthy person, to talk about what needs to be done to preserve health, about their support of health, and the kinds of sports in which they are engaged, etc.

### 3.4. Requirements for Speech Competence

1. Reading and writing: Tasks for finding a match, multiple-choice questions, gap-fill exercises, completion of a dialogue with the desired replica, and writing an e-mail. The abilities to understand written speech at the level of a word, phrase, sentence, replica, paragraph and a coherent text are checked. The ability of correct spelling of a word, based on the text; and writing an email in response to a received letter are also assessed.

2. Listening comprehension: It contains short exchanges of replicas, longer dialogues, and coherent texts. The ability of candidates to understand dialogical and monological speech (style from informal to neutral) on everyday topics is assessed.

3. Speaking: The language user should be able to make a short simple report on a familiar topic, answer questions for the report; enter into a communication, engage in the main issues of a discussion, give an interview on a familiar topic, ask to repeat and clarify question in the process of a conversation, if necessary; participate in a simple exchange of information; answer questions about daily activities; respond to questions about types of activities and pastime, give simple instructions and advice; ask and offer types of goods in the sphere of services; request information about a trip and public transport; ask for information in a store (about price, type, and quantity); make purchases; make a request, and also ask about time, price, quantity.

## 4. Summary

1. Teaching and assessment of the level of Tatar language proficiency are aimed at determining the levels of spoken, written speech, and the use of language in formal and informal communication in order to express the complex line of thinking of language user, and also in the process of written communication.

2. A2 level test is an exam for people, who need a global qualification in their communication skills in Tatar, at the basic level. At this level, the test is conducted with the aim to assess the following abilities and skills: 1) understanding and using basic phrases and expressions, representation, exchanging of personal information; 2) dialogue and communication in Tatar language with slowly and distinctly speaking people, as well as the ability to make simple and short notes.

3. To determine the level of formedness of communicative competence, the test candidates use different types of tasks on knowledge of basic types of speech activity (reading and writing, listening, and speaking). These sections of the exam provide for the following skills: reading and writing - the understanding of simple written information in titles, brochures, newspapers and magazines; listening - the understanding of ads and other oral dialogues of people, who speak slowly and distinctly; speaking - the testing of ability to communicate, creating a conversation, answering and asking simple questions with one or two candidates, that makes examination more realistic and reliable.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up; it should be noted that the test assessed speech abilities and language skills, reflecting the concept of communicative competence. It could also meet the requirements for the Tatar language proficiency for general academic purposes of the level A2. This test also evaluated skills, which were significant for the future life of students including cognitive skills. The requirements for testing were also taken into account in all tasks of the test. The procedures, underlying all stages of the assessment cycle, were further developed in detail. They were practical, and taken together, they formed an integral and logical system of control and assessment.

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