

ONOMASTIC CONTENT AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FOR UEE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST PREPARATION

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In recent years, the challenge of effectively preparing bachelor students for high-stakes standardized English language tests, particularly the Unified Entrance Exam (UEE), has become a central concern for university language departments. Traditional test preparation methods often fail to integrate language content with practical application and deep cultural context. The purpose of this article is to examine the potential of onomastic content as a pedagogical tool to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of English language test preparation in higher education and to propose a structured model for integrating onomastics into the university curriculum. The source for this study was tests taken from educational website. This article presents the results of a study of the English language tests in the Ukraine. The scientific novelty of the study lies in its focused application and methodological exploration of onomastic resources specifically within the context of UEE preparation for bachelor students. The study details how onomastic units serve as rich contextual material to reinforce vocabulary acquisition, and deepen cultural literacy. This focus on content-driven, context-rich instruction represents a departure from rote test drills. Integrating onomastic content into the university curriculum for UEE preparation represents a significant enhancement to language teaching methodology. By leveraging the inherent cultural and linguistic richness of proper names, instructors can transform abstract language rules into engaging, memorable, and contextually grounded lessons. This approach demonstrably improves students' lexico-grammatical competence and cultural awareness, leading to increased confidence and higher scores on high-stakes standardized tests. As universities seek more effective strategies for test preparation, onomastics offers a powerful, yet often underutilized, pedagogical resource. The results of this study have significant implications for curriculum development and language pedagogy. The findings of this paper can find application in the development of work programs, the creation of English language manuals and online textbooks, as well as in the

creation of methodological recommendations for English tests preparing in different countries.

Keywords: *English tests, institutions of higher education, interdisciplinary connections, proper names, UEE.*

Problem statement. Today, in almost every country, applicants for Master's programmes are required knowledge of the English language to become a student of university. The global spread of the English language with the ongoing internationalization of higher education have significantly elevated the role of English language proficiency as a key admission requirement for Master's programmes worldwide. Applicants are typically required to provide evidence of their English proficiency through internationally recognized standardized tests. In Ukraine, for instance, admission to Master's programmes necessitates successful completion of the Unified Entrance Exam (UEE). This examination is designed to uphold principles of transparency, minimize corruption risks, ensure equal opportunities, and promote equitable access to higher education. Comparable mechanisms are employed in other national contexts. For instance, in the Republic of Poland, English is widely regarded as a language of professional advancement and economic opportunity, enjoying considerable prestige across various age cohorts and social groups. Thus, standardized English language testing has become an integral component of admission procedures for Master education in the context of global academic mobility.

The Unified Entrance Exam is a mandatory standardized test in Ukraine for applicants seeking to enter Master's degree programmes. The English test is the most common foreign language component of this exam as well. The English component of the UEE is designed to check language proficiency at the B1 – B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This exam is a standardized national assessment used for admission to Master's and doctoral programmes. It aims to ensure fairness, transparency, and unified academic requirements for all applicants across the country. Its primary purpose is to evaluate two key areas of academic readiness: a) general academic and analytical competence, which is necessary for successful study at the graduate level, b) foreign language proficiency, required for reading academic literature, participating in international academic communication, and conducting research. By combining these components, the exam provides universities with a comprehensive picture of each applicant's ability to study and conduct academic work.

The Unified Entrance Exam consists of two independent blocks: 1) The Test of General Academic Competence (ТЗНК), 2) The Foreign Language Test. Each block evaluates different skills and contributes separately to the final admission score. The Foreign Language Test combines reading comprehension skills with tasks that evaluate the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. The test includes 30 tasks, typically arranged into three main formats: 1) Matching tasks: candidates match headings, statements, or fragments of text, 2) Multiple-choice questions: used for vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension, 3) Gap-filling tasks: candidates complete missing words or grammatical forms in short texts.

The purpose of the article is to create a structured pedagogical model for integrating onomastic content into university-level English language instruction, particularly in the context of preparation for standardized tests such as the UEE. The model consists of four interconnected stages: 1. Selection Stage: Lecturers select appropriate onomastic units (anthroponyms, toponyms, etc.) from authentic test materials based on their frequency and pedagogical value. 2. Contextualization Stage: Students are introduced to proper names within meaningful contexts (reading texts, listening and speaking tasks), allowing them to associate names with cultural, historical, and geographical information about English-speaking countries. 3. Analytical Stage: Learners engage in tasks that require classification, comparison, and interpretation of proper names, developing both linguistic and critical thinking skills. 4. Application Stage: Students apply acquired knowledge in test-like tasks, role-plays, and research projects, reinforcing both language competence and contextual understanding. This model ensures a systematic integration of onomastic material into language teaching and aligns linguistic training with real examination requirements.

Recent Research and Publications Analysis. Proper names are particularly significant units in the structure of any language test because they “may contain a number of connotations or associations” [4: 440]. Proper names included in the English test sometimes help students understand the idea of the tasks. The object of this research is the process of preparing students for standardized English language tests (such as UEE) and the corresponding pedagogical tools utilized. The subject of research is the onomastic content (proper names, toponyms, etc.) as a specific pedagogical tool to develop students’

lexical and sociocultural competence necessary for success on these tests. It must be noted that researchers who have studied the content of the national tests rightly note that they include “global and local elements” [10: 263]. This dual nature primarily determines the choice of the English language tests in the Ukraine as the resource for our research, as it allows for a deeper analysis of the ratio between national and non-national onyms across various test structures. Lyle F. Bachman states: “there are two areas in which language testing and language testers must continue to grow and develop: the professionalization of the field, and validation research. However, rather than being two disparate directions, I would argue, as have others, that these are two vitally related areas that lie on the same path” [2: 18]. The internal structure of the tests further exemplifies this broad interconnection. As A. Davies points out “a proficiency test needs to be both analytical and integrative. Movement towards one or the other pole distorts the view of language provided by the test: too structural and uncontextualized at one end; too local and ungeneralizable at the other” [3: 357]. Ultimately, such technical and structural requirements cannot be isolated from broader external influences. Consequently, E. Shohamy emphasizes that tests are “viewed today as instruments connected and embedded in political, social and educational contexts [8: 117].

Against this backdrop of broad contextual and structural requirements, numerous studies have focused on the stylistic, grammatical, and lexical aspects of English language assessments. As a critical component of national mandatory or elective examinations, English tests have long remained a focal point for international researchers. For instance, some scholars examine how exam preparation impacts the teaching of English writing in Poland [7], while others conduct comparative analyses of various formats such as ZNO, UEE, TOEFL, and IELTS [5]. Further research has explored the functional features of proper names within the ZNO and UEE frameworks [6]. Despite these advancements, however, the potential of leveraging onomastic content specifically to enhance test readiness remains significantly under-researched. This research gap is particularly noteworthy because the study of proper names in language tests reveals the potential of these lexical units, which sometimes act as unique symbols that unite the historical, linguistic and cultural background experience.

Speaking about onomastics as an interdisciplinary study, J. Algeo and K. Algeo pointed out the disciplines connected with the study of names, among them “anthropology, folklore, history, linguistics”, etc. [1: 265-266]. Given that proper names are deeply embedded in culture, literature and history, they often carry a great deal of implicit information. This cultural and historical background makes proper names particularly valuable in the language tests contexts. That’s why, the cultural and historical context enclosed in proper names can be a key to understanding what’s being asked in tests.

Presentation of the main research material. Proper names are an integral part of any educational texts in the language textbooks or tests. Besides they are often intentionally incorporated into tests by their authors. Our analysis of various tasks in the tests, for instance, revealed a wide diversity of onyms (anthroponyms, toponyms, zoonyms, ethnonyms, ergonyms, etc.). Specifically, for learners, proper names can significantly enhance text comprehension and frequently provide crucial clues. To support this observation, we analyzed random samples of UEE tests from 2020 till 2022 years. Although proper names are represented in relatively small numbers, they can nonetheless serve as a valuable kind of hint or guide as students complete tests. Given their particular significance for non-native speakers, it’s important to examine onyms from this perspective. In the tests we analyzed, anthroponyms and toponyms were the most frequently encountered, sometimes acting as consistent markers that aid understanding.

The UEE English test often includes reading tasks where learners match descriptions of historical landmarks with corresponding statements. For instance, the 2020 UEE English test comprises six descriptive passages on castles: *Tintagel Castle*, *Arundel Castle*, *Ussé Castle*, *Eltz Castle*, *Leeds Castle*, *Urquhart Castle*. *Tintagel Castle* is in Great Britain, noting its origins as a Roman military outpost and later a 5th-6th century trading settlement in Cornwall. The 13th-century ruins are associated with the legend of Tristan and Isolde. Another passage presents *Arundel Castle*, still owned by the Duke of Norfolk’s family, which has served as a film location. A third example, *Ussé Castle* in France, reportedly inspired the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale and features wax figure exhibitions. The test also includes *Eltz Castle* in Germany, notable for never having been captured and remaining with the same noble family for over 800 years. The fifth text includes *Leeds Castle*, a quintessential English fortress associated with six medieval queens and

Henry VIII, later transformed into a social hub by Lady Baillie in the 1930s. The last text is about *Urquhart Castle* in Scotland, though ruined since the 17th century, remains an imposing structure on Loch Ness, now equipped with modern visitor facilities and wedding services [9].

In this context, proper names are effectively used in this task in order to provide essential context. The inclusion of proper names in Text 11, for example, *Tintagel*, *Great Britain*, *Cornwall* helps the reader grasp the core idea of the text because it involves well-known people and places. Specifically, the names of *Tristan and Isolde*, who are famous for one of the most enduring tales of forbidden, tragic love in European literature. Proper names in the Text 12 such as *Arundel Castle*, *Great Britain*, *the Duke of Norfolk* carry implicit cultural or historical weight. Onyms in Text 13 such as *Ussé Castle*, *France*, or *River Loire* serve not only as lexical items but as powerful pedagogical tools that support interdisciplinary learning in English lessons. In the text about *Ussé Castle*, proper names function as entry points for reading comprehension and contextual learning. They help students understand geographical references, historical periods, and literature. By working with proper names, teachers can develop activities that strengthen linguistic competence (spelling, pronunciation, classification of nouns), sociocultural competence (European history, castle architecture, clothing traditions), and critical thinking (why the castle inspired a fairy tale). Thus, integrating proper names into English lessons transforms a simple text into a richer learning environment, supporting interdisciplinary principles and helping learners connect language to real-world cultural contexts. The onomastic richness of these texts makes them particularly valuable for pedagogical purposes, as illustrated below.

The following analysis applies the four-stage onomastic model to Text 15 and Text 16 from the above-mentioned example. The pedagogical integration of these materials begins with the Selection Stage, where the lecturer extracts onyms from the text content, focusing on prominent anthroponyms like *Henry VIII* and *Lady Baillie* in the Leeds Castle text, and the toponym *Loch Ness* or the ergonym *National Trust for Scotland* in the *Urquhart Castle* description. Moving to the Contextualization Stage, these units are presented as meaningful cultural anchors; students do not merely see “Leeds Castle” as a label, but associate it with the historical narrative of *England’s medieval Queens* and the 20th-century *London high society*, while *Urquhart*

Castle is framed within the geographical and legendary context of the Scottish Highlands. During the Analytical Stage, learners use these onomastic markers as functional tools to decode examination tasks; for instance, they identify the correct answer regarding modern castle utilities by linking the specific ergonyms *National Trust for Scotland* and *Historic Scotland Fund* to the development of modern facilities like *visitor centres* and *parking*. Finally, in the Application Stage, students consolidate their learning through communicative practice, such as simulating a travel agency pitch for *Urquhart Castle* by highlighting its unique status as a venue for marriage ceremonies, or researching the royal lineage of *Henry VIII* to understand the “palace” status of *Leeds Castle*. This comprehensive approach ensures that students move beyond rote memorisation, utilizing the inherent cultural and linguistic wealth of proper names to achieve higher scores and greater communicative confidence.

The following text-based exercises have been developed by the author to facilitate students’ preparation for the Unified Entrance Exam in English, with a particular focus on the pedagogical potential of proper names (onyms). The exercises aim to enhance reading comprehension, cultural awareness, and interdisciplinary connections.

Exercise 1. Put each proper name into the correct group: places, people, cultural works, historical periods: *Arundel Castle*, *the Duke of Norfolk*, *Ussé Castle*, *France*, or *River Loire*, *Tintagel*, *Great Britain*, *Cornwall*, *Tristan and Isolde*.

Exercise 2. Match proper names with their descriptions

Example:

Ussé Castle — a pretty castle in France

River Loire — a river near the castle

Sleeping Beauty — a fairy tale inspired by the castle

Exercise 3. Geographical Research Project: Using a map or online resources, answer these questions:

In which part of Great Britain is Cornwall located?

What body of water is near Tintagel?

Name three other historical sites in Cornwall.

How far is Tintagel from London?

What countries did the Romans control during the period mentioned?

Exercise 4. Timeline Creation (Historical Research Project): Create a timeline using the proper names and time references from the

text. Include: Roman period, 5th and 6th centuries (trading settlement), 13th century (castle construction), Medieval period (excavations). Add one historical event from Ukraine history for each period.

Exercise 5. Regional Studies Research Project: Compare Tintagel with a historical site in Ukraine:

Feature	Tintagel, Great Britain	[Your chosen site in Ukraine]
Location (region)	Cornwall	
Time period	5th-13th centuries	
Original purpose	Roman outpost, then trading settlement	
Associated legends	Tristan and Isolde	
Current status	Castle ruins, museum	

Exercise 6. Role-Play: Museum Tour Guide

Work in pairs. Student A is a tour guide at Arundel Castle, Great Britain; Student B is a tourist. Student A must use at least 3 proper names from the text and explain the historical significance, mention the legends associated with the site, answer questions about time periods. Student B must ask at least 5 questions using proper names, request clarification about dates and historical figures.

Proper names play function as essential reference points throughout the English exam test. Their presence enhances comprehension through three core mechanisms: identification, contextualization, and elimination. They specify precisely which institution, person, or location is being discussed in the task. For example, the mention of a particular country, person or named event immediately narrows down the context to a specific tradition. Furthermore, these names act as contextual clues, as they often appear alongside particular actions or customs. This association allows readers to form mental connections between the names and the traditions they represent. Additionally, proper names assist in eliminating incorrect options. Once a name is linked to a given action, other words can be excluded from consideration, streamlining the matching process.

On the one hand, proper names can enhance textual comprehension by drawing attention. They often serve as cognitive anchors, helping readers to process and retain information more efficiently. Students

with broader interdisciplinary knowledge – particularly in subjects such as geography, history, culture and tradition studies, and literature – are generally better equipped to understand texts containing proper names. The interdisciplinary nature of onomastics plays a crucial role in the successful passing the exam. Langendonck [3: 440] also points out that proper names (like *Napoleon* or) aren't just labels but can evoke rich associative meanings. They may carry connotations related to historical figures or events, or resemble common words, thereby triggering additional associations. In terms of the language tests proper names can trigger memories or knowledge about the person who bore it, including their historical deeds, achievement. We support this statement and think that personal names in the English tests play a very powerful and fundamental role because they connect students to cultures and traditions. Learners tend to analyze proper names in the tasks using associative strategies and analogical reasoning. These strategies may involve connecting familiar names to known facts, either in their native language or in previously learned English contexts.

Conclusions. This study investigated the role of proper names in English language tests, specifically the Ukrainian UEE, taken from tests administered between 2020 and 2022. Proper names across all texts perform multiple functions: referential, cultural, historical, and pedagogical. They not only facilitate comprehension but also activate background knowledge, support interdisciplinary connections, and enhance learner engagement. The variation in types of onyms (toponyms, anthroponyms, hydronyms, ergonyms, etc.) contributes to the richness of the texts and reflects their suitability for competence-based language teaching.

Based on the findings, this article proposes a four-stage pedagogical model for integrating onomastic content into UEE preparation: 1) Selection – choosing proper names from authentic tests; 2) Contextualization – introducing names in meaningful cultural and historical contexts; 3) Analysis – classifying and interpreting onyms to develop critical thinking; 4) Application – using names in test-like tasks and role-plays. This model ensures systematic integration of onomastics into language teaching aligned with exam requirements.

The research confirms that proper names serve as essential components that facilitate the assessment of linguistic proficiency through the lens of the test-takers' socio-cultural and historical background experience. While the primary objective remains the

measurement of language skills, proper names act as cognitive and contextual anchors. They provide scaffolding for grammar, context for vocabulary, and motivation through authentic content, thereby supporting the communicative and competence-based goals of modern language testing.

The inclusion of personal names (anthroponyms), place names (toponyms), and other kinds of proper names is essential for evaluating a student's ability to navigate authentic English texts and demonstrate intercultural competence. Proper names fulfill important pedagogical and methodological functions in English lessons and play a key interdisciplinary role by simultaneously developing linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and critical thinking while connecting language study with geography, literature, history, regional studies and other disciplines. At the same time, their interdisciplinary potential allows teachers to integrate elements of literature, history, geography, mythology, and popular culture, transforming language lessons into holistic, content-based learning experiences.

The findings of this study have significant implications for curriculum development and language pedagogy. The evidence suggests that a student's ability to recognize and interpret proper names is one of the key factors for success in these language tests.

The prospect of further research. Future research should include quantitative evaluations of proper names in the language tests, comparative and interdisciplinary investigations.

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The work does not use artificial intelligence resources.

ОНОМАСТИЧНИЙ КОНТЕНТ ЯК ПЕДАГОГІЧНИЙ ІНСТРУМЕНТ ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ ДО ТЕСТУВАНЬ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ (ЄВІ)

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канд. філол. наук, доцент кафедри суспільно-гуманітарних наук
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В останні роки ефективна підготовка студентів бакалавріату до складних стандартизованих тестів з англійської мови, зокрема до Єдиного вступного

іспиту (магістратури), стала пріоритетним напрямом для мовних кафедр університетів. Традиційні методи підготовки до тестів часто не інтегрують мовний зміст із практичним застосуванням та глибоким культурним контекстом. Метою статті є вивчення потенціалу ономастичного контенту як педагогічного інструменту для підвищення ефективності та результативності підготовки до тестів з англійської мови у вищій школі та презентація структурованої моделі інтеграції ономастики в університетську програму. Джерелом для цього дослідження були тести, взяті з вебсайту «Український центр оцінювання якості освіти». Наукова новизна розвідки полягає у визначенні лінгводидактичного потенціалу ономастичних одиниць та впровадженні моделі їх інтеграції в програму підготовки до ЄВІ з англійської мови. Дослідження доводить, що ономастичні одиниці сприяють розширенню словникового запасу та формуванню соціокультурної компетентності. Цей акцент на змістовному, контекстно-орієнтованому навчанні знаменує відхід від механічних тестових вправ. Інтеграція ономастичного контенту в університетську програму для підготовки до ЄВІ є значним удосконаленням методики викладання мови. Використовуючи глибинний культурний та лінгвістичний потенціал власних назв, викладачі можуть перетворити навчання формальних мовних аспектів на захопливі, запам'ятовувані та контекстуально обґрунтовані уроки. Такий підхід помітно покращує лінгвістичну компетентність та культурну обізнаність студентів, що призводить до підвищення впевненості та вищих балів на складних стандартизованих тестах. У той час як університети шукають більш ефективні стратегії підготовки до тестів, ономастика пропонує потужний, але часто недостатньо використовуваний педагогічний ресурс. Результати цього дослідження потрібно враховувати під час розробки навчальних програм. Отримані результати можуть знайти застосування в створенні посібників з англійської мови та онлайн-підручників, а також у розробці методичних рекомендацій для підготовки до тестів з англійської мови в різних країнах.

Ключові слова: власні назви, ЄВІ, заклади вищої освіти, міжпредметні зв'язки, тести з англійської мови.

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