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LANGUAGE EXAM IN COMPUTER-BASED FORMAT: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Among the trends in conducting international exams for foreign language proficiency, the testing in computer-based format is one of the quickly developing forms of testing. Such exam has the advantages of fast results processing, comparative ease of administration, and is motivating for younger generation.

Both traditional and computer-based forms of international exams require personal presence at the examination centre, which are, as a rule, specialized licensed centres with the process of identification the person taking the exam. One more possible format for conducting exams is computer-based format, or Internet exam, is conducting an exam remotely on an electronic platform with examination materials and partial or fully computerized verification.

Taking language exams in computer-based format is one of the progressive ideas but difficult for implementation, especially with a large number of examinees. The scientists regard computer-based examination to be in demand for local exams as a part of blended or distance learning at universities. The Internet or computer-based examination can also be used as control measures in the remote interaction mode, when all educational institutions are forced to switch to distance learning.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of examination in computer-based format and consider the compliance of the electronic platforms technical capabilities for conducting foreign languages exam at university in distance exam session.

The final language examination for the undergraduate bachelor students was conducted this year at our university. A new format of the language exam was developed and introduced, since the former ways of control at non-linguistic faculties have no longer met the requirements of online studying.

The structure of the new exam included the following sections: listening, reading (four different types), use of English (lexical and grammar component), writing, and speaking. All tasks for students of different technical specialities were developed by the language teachers of our department for a number of electronic

platforms. The listening, use of English and reading sections were checked automatically, and the writing section was manually checked by the teachers.

In the context of a quick transition to distance learning in the last academic years all parts of the exam at university are conducted employing digital technologies, even the speaking section, which are organized in the form of videoconferencing between teachers and students. The criteria for assessing an oral response in the traditional format are also applicable to the electronic exam. Various platforms permit to see and hear several interlocutors at once, exchange files, and even, if necessary, record the event.

Comparing traditional examination written on paper with computer-based format permits to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of the latter. One of the main advantages of the computer-based format is the possibility of simultaneous access of a large group of examinees, which permits to conduct a controlled event with a significant number of students, for example, an entire course, and prevents the chances to copy the examination tasks for sharing them with the exam takers in the following days. For developers of test materials, this is a great help, since the preparation of even one set of examination materials requires considerable effort and time.

The second indisputable advantage is the high speed of automated checking instead of involving the staff in the verification of close-ended tasks. The freed up time the teachers can direct to more careful evaluation of open-ended tasks, such as for example, the assessment of each work by two specialists. In addition, automated testing makes it possible to increase the objectivity of assessment due to the absence of a human factor such as teacher's fatigue, poor handwriting of an examinee, etc.

A third advantage of the computer-based format is that the examinees do not need to write the answers on special answer sheets, which are traditionally subjected to verification and evaluation. In a traditional exam, transferring answers from a draft to a final copy, students often make mistakes, including those related to the correctness of filling out the answer forms. In the computer-based format, students either choose answers from the given, or type their answers into special boxes. However, it should be noted that after the student confirms the answer, some systems do not permit to make adjustments.

Along with the advantages of computer-based exam format, there are also some disadvantages that can potentially become an obstacle to the widespread control and testing activities on digital platforms.

Firstly, the technical difficulties or unstable Internet connection can destroy the entire teacher's efforts. The teachers, as a ruler, do not have IT competence at a professional level [3], and require a system administrator to manage the materials uploads and the site maintenance with regular updates and necessary changes.

Secondly, psychological difficulties related to the unwillingness to use computer technologies in education are possible. Despite the commitment of younger generation to digital technologies, there are always those who feel more

confident working with material on paper, since in this case one can make notes in the margins, underline the main ideas in the text, etc.

There is always a possibility that some students try to cheat or ask someone else to take the exam under their account. This situation can be avoided by using a number of settings, such as making access to the test via a special personal code, setting the exact starting time of the exam, creating a limit on attempts and time for completing the tasks, adjusting a delayed feedback mode for tasks verification [6].

Good results in preventing the attempts of cheating were received from the system of monitoring the examinees' actions by using specially trained people for observation. They can monitor the student in real time by checking their ID cards, inspecting the examination premises before the test, observing the examination process and preventing attempts to use additional materials. Also, the exam can be recorded with a camera, and the recording is later reviewed and analysed. One more way to keep track of the examination process is to use a biometric method for the examinees' identification as well as monitoring changes in behaviour and the environment. For example, it records the examinee's absence at the workplace, the appearance of strangers, additional sounds, turnings off of the camera / microphone, etc. The system notes the moments of suspicious behaviour, which after additional analyses can help an observer to draw a conclusion about the possibility/impossibility of crediting the exam results [7].

The monitoring process can also have some negative effect on students and add to excessive emotional and psychological stress during the test. Sometimes the quality of image and sound might be poor due to the camera technical characteristics, bad Internet connection, high workload on the observer during the examination sessions and as the result – the decrease in the attention level.

In the context of a quick transition to distance learning, the computer-based examination can be a worthy replacement for a traditional exam. Assignments with close-ended tasks are checked automatically, which ensures high speed and quality of evaluation, frees up the teacher's time for a more thorough check of open-ended tasks. The realization of positive and negative aspects of conducting computer-based examination will help the university teachers together with the technical support and monitoring stuff organize the professional support to help the student successfully demonstrate their language skills obtained during the academic year.

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PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE LEGAL SPECIALISTS IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The concept of professional and ethical education in the system of training legal specialists should be aimed at the formation of moral and psychological qualities and the awareness of responsibility for the results of one's research activities. They must possess not only language competence, but also professional and ethical competence, and be able to synthesize scientific materials in view of the moral and psychological aspect of this type of activity in higher educational institutions.

The analysis of the scientific discourse of foreign ethicists (Friedman A. [1], Patenaude J. [2], Cheetham G., Chivers G. [3]) has led to certain conclusions: firstly, the essence of ethical competence is considered as: knowledge of ethical norms of behavior ; ability to solve ethical dilemmas; skills regarding willingness to take responsibility; other competencies, in particular moral judgment; secondly, ethical competence implies such psychological and personal qualities as intuition, insight, rationality.

Taking into account the above-mentioned provisions, we define ethical competence as the ability to act in accordance with the moral code and professional responsibility, including qualities based on the system of relevant values. It should be noted that ethical competence implies compliance with moral norms, ethical principles and rules, considered through the concept of moral consciousness. Universal moral values are the basis for the moral and psychological qualities formation. This is how the norms of conduct for professional research activities, called professional codes, appear. The mentioned codes represent a characteristic feature of the legal specialists' moral progress, as they reflect the growing value of