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QUALITY OF LANGUAGE EXAMS IN EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The article is devoted to the quality of some popular language exams to assess the level of professional English-language communicative competence. The paper analyzes the structure of popular international exams in English and English for specific purposes. Requirements for the level of English proficiency of medical students in accordance with CEFR have been determined. The article highlights the purpose and objectives of the exams KROK-1 (ESP), CAE, TOLES, BEC, APTIS, OET in terms of their structure. The standards of international English language exams have been considered and groups of exams that are mandatory for admission to universities, for work abroad and for assessing the level of English for professional purposes in medicine are identified. The structure and content of the exams have been revealed. The quality of the qualification exam KROK-1(ESP) in comparison with the existing CAE, TOLES, BEC, APTIS, OET on checking the level of professional communicative competence of medical students has been analyzed. The purpose of exams that reveal the level of English language proficiency at the professional level was considered. The structure of each exam was analyzed, namely the mandatory parts of the exam that must be passed and the duration of the tasks, their types. Certain skills that are tested during the exam have been identified. This article also considered the quality parameters of the qualification exam KROK-1(ESP) in accordance with the requirements of the level of English language proficiency according to the CEFR. The obtained results were compared, and conclusions were drawn on the validity of the tests for comprehensive assessment of the level of professional English-language communicative competence.

Key words: structure of international language exams, level of English language proficiency, Language for specific purposes, Cambridge Exams, TOLES, BEC, APTIS, OET, KROK-1(ESP).

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ЯКІСТЬ МОВНИХ ІСПИТІВ У ОЦІНЮВАННІ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ

Статтю присвячено питанням якості іспитів щодо оцінювання рівня професійної англомовної комунікативної компетенції. У роботі проаналізовано структуру популярних міжнародних іспитів з англійської мови та з англійської мови професійного спрямування. Визначено вимоги до рівня володіння англійською мовою професійного спрямування у студентів медиків відповідно до CEFR. У статті виокремлено мету та завдання іспитів КРОК-1 (АМПС), CAE, TOLES, BEC, APTIS, OET у розрізі їхньої структури. Розглянуто стандарти міжнародних іспитів з англійської мови та виявлено групи іспитів, які є обов'язковими для вступу до вишів, для отримання роботи за кордоном та загалом є кваліфікаційними іспитами для оцінювання рівня англійської мови професійного спрямування у галузі медицини. Розкрито структуру та наповнюваність іспитів професійного спрямування та загальних іспитів. Проаналізовано якість кваліфікаційного іспиту КРОК-1 (АМПС) у порівнянні з існуючими CAE, TOLES, BEC, APTIS, OET щодо перевірки рівня професійної комунікативної компетенції студентів медиків. Розглянуто мету іспитів, які виявляють рівень володіння англійською мовою на професійному рівні. Проаналізовано структуру кожного іспиту, а саме обов'язкові частини іспиту, які необхідно скласти та тривалість виконання завдань, їх типи. Виявлено певні навички, які перевіряються під час іспиту. У статті також було проаналізовано параметри якості кваліфікаційного іспиту КРОК-1 (АМПС) відповідно до вимог рівня володіння англійською мовою згідно до CEFR. Отримані результати було зіставлено та зроблено висновки щодо валідності тестів для комплексного оцінювання рівня професійної англомовної комунікативної компетенції.

Ключові слова: структура міжнародних мовних іспитів, рівень володіння англійською мовою, мова для спеціальних цілей, Cambridge Exams, TOLES, BEC, APTIS, OET, КРОК-1 (АМПС).

Statement of the problem. Nowadays the degree seeking applicants are required to be competitive on the educational market and quickly adapted to changes in the global world. These changes require from students not only high-quality language proficiency, but also a sufficient level of profession English skill. The level of proficiency must be determined by the results of international and qualified examinations. At present time correspondence of exams with international requirements is important. The validity of KROK-1(ESP) qualified exam raises certain doubts as for effective evaluation of English-speaking communicative competence in full.

Research analysis. An analytical review of literature has demonstrated the interest of scientists

in this issue and showed that researchers focus their attention on the following aspects. So, T.V. Kravchyna in her article "Classification of international English examinations and certificates" considers the standards according to which English international examinations are developed. The author divides international exams into three categories: for admission to higher educational institution abroad, or for work abroad; for restricted professional activity; for self-testing. The first group includes general language proficiency exams, the second one includes tests to check general language skills and the third one includes intermediate level exams (Kravchyna, 2017: 406). Jo Tomlinson in his article "Which English Language Test Is Right for You?" analyzes

international language tests and assessment criteria. He reviews the main points of exams and their structure and highlights the general standards at all stages of language testing. Oleg Ridkous in his article "Overview of International Tests" makes a brief analysis of international exams that can be taken in Ukraine and abroad. James S. Johnston classifies in his article "New Standards: MBA students" the exams that should be passed to study and work in business area (Lyulko, 2015:188).

According to the article "Classification of international English exams and certificates" by T.V. Kravchyna CPE exam (Cambridge Proficiency Examination) confirms professional language skills that all universities and commercial institutions in English-speaking countries recognize. CPE is the most difficult and oldest of the Cambridge exams. A successful CPE means language proficiency as native English speakers. The exam consists of five parts: Reading, Writing, Use of English, Listening, Speaking. The certificate is issued under the same conditions as FCE/CAE. Another exam that tests the knowledge of professional vocabulary is Business English Certificate (BEC) – a series of three exams for knowledge of business English, where the British version is tested. BEC Vantage is the easiest of the exams which complication level corresponds to PET, BEC Vantage to FCE and BEC Higher to CAE. Each of the exams consists of four parts: Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking and lasts 3-4 hours. BEC series exams certificates are issued only in case of upon successful passing: a score at least 60% of correct answers should be obtained to get C, at least 75% to get B and more than 80% to get A (the highest mark) (Kravchyna, 2017:407). The results of literature analytical review analysis demonstrate the actuality of our work that is in the fact that for the first time an attempt is made to analyze the structure and content of the qualification exam KROK-1(ESP) (Unified State Qualifying Examination) regarding the verification of the level of professional communicative competence of students in the English-speaking medical discourse.

The purpose of the article is to determine the validity of popular language exams in accordance with the requirements of English proficiency level as per CEFR for assessment level of English for specific purposes.

Presentation of the main material. The analysis of the structure of professional examinations in foreign language with professional orientation and the requirements for the level of English proficiency of medical students in accordance with CEFR showed the particularities of their structure and content to assess the level of English. The following exams

were involved in the analysis: Cambridge Exams, KROK -1(ESP) qualified exam, TOLES, BEC, OET, APTIS. The results of the analysis of the purposes, structure, types and content of the tasks of these well-known and professional exams revealed the following characteristics.

KROK-1 (English for specific purposes (ESP)).

Objective: according to the Procedure for realization of the Unified State Qualifying Examination for higher education master's degree applicants in the specialties of the field of knowledge "22 Health Care" approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated March 28, 2018 №334, "KROK -1(ESP)" is an exam in general scientific disciplines which is passed after studying the main fundamental disciplines. This exam is conducted and administered by the Testing Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

Structure: the duration of the test exam "KROK -1(ESP)" is two hours and a half, during this time students should answer 150 questions. The professional English exam lasts an hour. Those students who have not passed the Unified State Qualifying Examination are given one more attempt to pass it. "KROK-1(ESP)" exam is a standardized tool for diagnosing the level of professional competence of a specialist, which establishes the compliance of specialists training quality with the standards of higher education.

Purpose: a practical (clinical) exam is an exam that assesses the readiness of a graduate to carry out professional activities in accordance with the requirements of a higher education standard by demonstrating practical (clinical) components of professional competence on a real object (person) or on a model (phantom, moulage, simulators, etc.). An International exam in the basics of medicine is an international exam in fundamental and clinical disciplines used at the international level and is developed and organized by one of the foreign agencies for assessment the quality of applicants knowledge level of and established by the state organization "Center for Testing the Professional Competence of Specialists with Higher Education in «Medicine», "Pharmacy" under the Ministry of Health of Ukraine» (The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2018:2).

KROK-1(ESP) is an important and extremely challenging exam that all medical students must take. It is the first in a series of three exams that comprise Ukraine Medical Licensing Examination, all of which students must pass in order to become a licensed physician in Ukraine.

KROK-1 (English for specific purposes (ESP)) part of Exam is made up to test only medical knowledge

of candidates which covers these traditionally defined disciplines: anatomy, behavioral sciences, biochemistry, biostatistics and epidemiology, microbiology, pathology, pharmacology and physiology. It also touches upon these interdisciplinary areas: genetics, aging, immunology, nutrition and molecular and cell biology.

This Exam tests students on their understanding and application of the basic sciences to the practice of medicine, focusing especially on the principles of health, disease, and therapeutic interventions.

Also, KROK-1(ESP) English Part for specific purposes may implicitly test candidates reading skills in English. It is not made to test such English language skills as listening, writing and speaking.

Thus, we can say that KROK-1(ESP) Exam's purpose is not to test English, but to test medical knowledge and skills by means of the English language.

Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) is a certificate of high English proficiency, it is a British exam for obtaining a certificate of English language proficiency at C1 level according to ZEP scale.

Objective: The certificate serves as a proof that you can carry out comprehensive research and communicate effectively in English at professional level.

Purpose: to test and confirm knowledge of English at the advanced level with a comprehensive exam that includes four types of work.

Structure: the exam consists of four parts. It is not necessary to complete all four parts to receive a certificate. The duration of the exam is 4 hours. There are three grades: A, B, C. Having passed A grade exam, C2 level certificate is obtained, having passed B or C grade exam, C1 level certificate is obtained. If the score obtained is not enough for C grade, B2 level certificate can be obtained, if it is demonstrated an appropriate level on the exam. Task types:

Part I – “Reading and Use of English”. The duration is 1 hour 30 minutes. It checks the text perception skills, the level of grammar and lexical knowledge of applicant. It contains 8 subparagraphs. It checks the skills of text comprehension, the level of grammar and lexical knowledge of candidate. It contains 8 subparagraphs:

subparagraphs from 1 to 4 contain texts including grammar and lexical tasks, subparagraphs from 5 to 8 contain a list of texts including tasks for their understanding. The total number of tasks is 56.

Part II – “Writing”. The duration is 1 hour 30 minutes. It checks the ability to write texts according to the appropriate style and type. It contains 2 subparagraphs:

in subparagraphs 1 it is necessary to write an essay appealing to the two points of view provided, in subparagraphs 2 it is necessary to choose one type of text from those offered for choice (report, review, letter, proposal). The total number of tasks is 2.

Part III – “Listening”. The duration is approximately 40 minutes. It tests the ability to understand and analyze information phonetically. All recordings are played twice. It contains 4 subparagraphs: in subparagraph 1 it is required to listen to a recording with three short texts and answer two questions for each, in subparagraph 2 it is required to listen to the recording and enter the required word or complete the sentence, in subparagraph 3 it is required to listen to the recording and answer six questions, in subparagraph 4, it is required to listen to a recording with five short texts and answer two questions as for the main points for each. The total number of tasks is 30.

Part IV – “Speaking”. The duration is 15 minutes. It checks grammar, lexical, communication skills, pronunciation and logical presentation of ideas. More often, two candidates and two examiners take part in the conversation. It contains 4 subparagraphs: free interview between candidates and examiners, each candidate should demonstrate in his turn his skills, describe the proposed images, a dialogue between two candidates on a proposed topic, a free interview between candidates and examiners on the topic proposed in the previous subparagraph (5).



Pic. 1. Illustration of the exam material

Test of Legal English Skills (TOLES) is an international legal English exam administered by Global Legal English Ltd.

Objective: the results of this exam confirm the qualified knowledge of English of law, recognized in most international and regional law companies.

Purpose: to test exceptionally the candidate practical skills in the field of English of law, namely reading and writing, which are priority in the legal profession.

Structure: there are three levels of this exam: TOLES Foundation (basic level), TOLES Higher (high level) and TOLES Advanced (advanced level). We consider the structure based on the example of TOLES Advanced exam. Total duration of exam is 2 hours. It consists of two parts, the first tests use of English, the second tests understanding of language and attentiveness when working with written contracts. The rating scale of this exam is the following: Gold – advanced level, Orange – high level, Red – good level, Purple – satisfactory level, Blue – level close to satisfactory, Green – basic level.

Task types: Part I – “Use of language”. It contains subparagraph from 1 to 6:

- 1) a short text with a task to it (10 missing words)
- 2) lexical questions (12 sentences with a missing word)
- 3) 10 sentences with a missing preposition
- 4) a text that is a letter with a task to it (12 missing words)
- 5) a text in which it is necessary to correct the wrong form of the word (10 words)
- 6) 10 sentences are divided into three sections, where one of the section contains a mistake (one should find the section with a mistake).

Part II – “Understanding and accuracy while working with written contracts”.

To understand the language while working with written contracts. Contains subparagraphs 7–12.

7. The part of the contract with 10 missing fragments (one should find the appropriate).

8. The part of the commercial contract with 10 underlined words/phrases with the task (one should find the equivalent of the text to the proposed notion).

9. The part of the credit agreement with 10 missing words.

10. The part of the contract with 5 missed prepositions.

11. 10 sentences, which are divided into three sections, where one of the section contains a mistake (one should find the section with a mistake).

12. Three points from one contract with 5 missed fragments (one should select the appropriate fragment) (9).

Business English Certificate (BEC) – Certificate in Business English – a British exam that tests knowledge of business English.

Aim: to confirm the level of English language proficiency for everyday use in the business environment for candidates who works or who is planning to work in business, including branches of marketing, production, financial services and general work in office.

Objective: to check the appropriate level of business English for using in business.

Structure: there are three levels of this exam: B1 Business Preliminary (BEC Preliminary), B2 Business Vantage (BEC Vantage) and C1 Business Higher (BEC Higher). Let's consider the structure of this exam using the example of BEC Higher. The total duration of the exam is a little more than 3 hours. The exam consists of four parts. There are three grades: A, B, C. When you take the exam for grade A, you get a certificate of level C2, when you pass the exam for grade B or C – a certificate of level C1. If you do not get enough points for a C grade, you can still get a BEC Vantage B2 level certificate if you demonstrate the appropriate level at the exam.

Task types: Part I – “Reading”. The duration is 1 hour. It tests the skills of understanding the text, its structure and details. It contains subparagraphs, each subparagraph tests text perception skills, determine its main idea, understand the structure, lexical knowledge, identify the characteristics of the text and understand the structure of sentences. The total number of the tasks is 52.

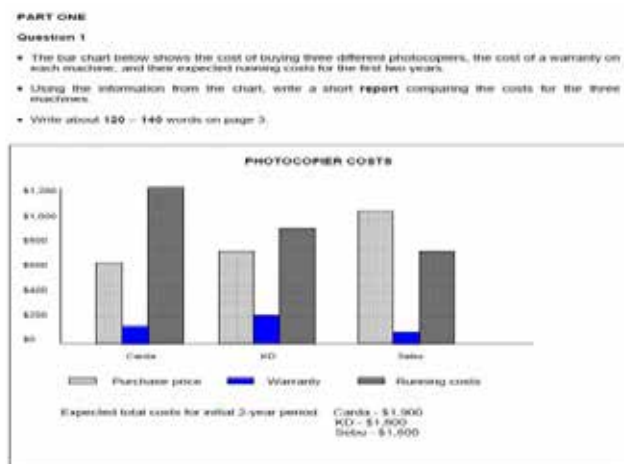
Part II – “Writing” – Writing skills. The duration is 1 hour 10 minutes. It tests the ability to write the texts on the appropriate type. It contains 2 subparagraphs: in subparagraph 1 it is necessary to write a short report based on certain input data in the form of graphs, histograms or charts, in subparagraph 2 it is necessary to choose one type of the text from the three offered (report, letter, proposal). The total number of the tasks is 2.

Part III – “Listening”. The duration is about 40 minutes. It tests the ability to perceive and analyze information aurally. All recordings are listened to twice. It contains 3 subparagraphs: in subparagraph 1 you need to listen to a recording of the monologue and put down the required word or phrase (up to three words), in the subparagraph 2 one should listen to a recording of five monologues related to one topic and answer two questions about the main points for each, in subparagraph 3 one should listen to a recording of a conversation between several people and answer eight questions. The total number of the tasks is 30.



Pic. 2. Illustration of the exam material

Part IV – “Speaking” – Communication. The duration is 16 minutes. It tests grammatical, lexical, communicative skills, pronunciation and logical presentation of the ideas. Two candidates and two examiners take part in the interview. It contains 3 subparagraphs: free interview – questions on personal or work-related topics, “mini-presentation” of each of the candidate on one of the proposed business topics, discussion between two candidates for a situation proposed by the examiner and make a definite decision (6).



Pic. 3. Illustration of the exam material

Aptis – English Computer Testing is a multi-level and flexible computerized English language test from the British Council.

Aim: to confirm the required level of English proficiency by choosing individual skills for testing or a comprehensive exam at once.

Objective: to test the level of English by comprehensive testing, assess all four skills on the CEFR scale separately – reading, writing, listening and speaking, or some of them at the candidate's choice, as well as grammar and lexical knowledge.

Structure: the exam consists of five components – basic (grammar and vocabulary) and four skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking). Everyone who takes this exam prepares for the main component, as well as the skill components selected by the client. You can choose one skill or all at once. The total duration of the exam is 2 hours 42 minutes.

Task types: The main part – “Grammar and vocabulary”. The duration is 25 minutes.

The component to choose is Reading. The duration is 35 minutes. The component to choose is Listening. The duration is about 40 minutes. The component to choose is Writing skills. The duration is 50 minutes. The component to choose is Speaking, Communication. The duration is 12 minutes (8).

Aptis core test (grammar and vocabulary)

The core test is the same for Aptis and Aptis Academic. It consists of two parts. The first part examines your knowledge of English grammar. The second part examines your knowledge of English vocabulary.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Grammar	In this part of the test, you will answer 25 questions. None of the questions test formal written English. A small number of questions test spoken English skills, such as knowing the appropriate grammar to use in a particular situation (formal or informal situations, for example). All 25 questions are in the format of a English multiple choice. Complete a sentence by choosing the correct word.	To know which parts of grammar are tested, see the Words (Grammar) section on the website. This is free and available online at: http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning/prepare/prepare-grammar-vocabulary One great way to prepare for the grammar test is to use the British Council's Learning English Grammar App: http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning/prepare/prepare-grammar-vocabulary
Part 2 Vocabulary	In this part of the test, you have 25 questions. These are presented in pairs of five words. The words are in bold with two options from which to choose. There are a number of question types: Word matching Find a word with a meaning similar to the target word. Word definitions Match a definition to the correct word. Word origin Complete a sentence by choosing the correct word. Word pairs or word combinations There are usually the most difficult questions, as you need to know what word (there is) is most commonly found with the target word (e.g. 'believe' and 'common' but 'believe' is not).	To help you prepare for this part of the test, the Learning English website has games and activities to help you improve your vocabulary: http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning/prepare/prepare-grammar-vocabulary There are also mobile word-a-likes, for example: http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning/prepare/prepare-grammar-vocabulary Another useful tip is to take notes of interesting words or word combinations when you read English texts.

Pic. 4. Illustration of the exam material

Occupational English Test (OET) – Professional English Testing is an international professional English language test for medical workers.

Aim: to confirm the required level of English language proficiency for studying and working in the English-speaking field of health care.

Objective: to test the level of professional English of medical workers with a comprehensive exam that includes four basic skills.

Structure: the exam contains of four parts. The total duration of the exam is 2 hours and 50 minutes. Reading and listening include general topics for all medical workers, writing skills and communication are specialized for a particular profession, based on typical work situations.

Part I – “Listening”. The duration is about 50 minutes. It tests the ability to perceive and analyze information aurally, to capture details. All recordings are listened to only once. It contains 3 subparagraphs: in subparagraph 1, two records of patient consulting should be listened to and professional notes should be filled, in sub-paragraph 2, one should listen to six recordings of professional conversational situations and answer one question to each situations, in subparagraph 3, two recordings of different professional situations should be listened to and six questions should be answered. The total number of tasks is 42.

Part II – “Reading”. The duration is 60 minutes. It tests the skills of perception of specific information, the ability to analyze, pay attention to detail and determine the essence. It contains 3 subparagraphs: in subparagraph 1 it is necessary to read four short texts related to one medical topic and answer 20 questions, in subparagraph 2 it is necessary to read six short texts on professional situations and answer 1 question, in subparagraph 3 it is necessary to read two texts on the topic of interest in medical workers and answer 8 questions. The total number of questions is 42.

Part III – “Writing” – Writing skills. The duration is 45 minutes.

It tests the skills of writing standard documents for a specific medical specialty.

It contains 1 subparagraph in which you need to write a certain type of text, specialized for a particular medical field. It may be a letter of recommendation, a letter of transfer or a discharge letter from the hospital. It can also be a prescription or recommendation for the pharmaceutical, veterinary and other fields. The total number of tasks is 1.

Part IV – “Speaking” – Communication. The duration is 20 minutes. It tests professional communicative skills. The candidate receives cards with the necessary information to play a certain role (7).

The comparison of the obtained results made it possible to generalize the inclusion of the test of language competences in each of the exams.

Table 1

The inclusion of language competences in popular English language proficiency exams

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
KROK-1	-	-	+	-
CAE	+	+	+	+
TOLES	-	+	+	+
BEC	+	+	+	+
APTIS	+	+	+	+
OET	+	+	+	+



Pic. 5. Illustration of the exam material

Conclusions. It was concluded that analyzed exams evaluate all communicative skills of students, but in its turn, the qualification exam KROK-1(ESP) in its structure and content is not a qualitative exam for a comprehensive assessment of all communicative competencies of medical students, and it assesses only the level of professional knowledge, but not the level of English for specific purposes proficiency.

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