Meeting the Challenge of the External Independent Testing in English

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Key words: external independent testing, cultural challenge

It has been the second year now since the external independent testing (EIT) in English was introduced as both school-leaving and university admission assessment tool to determine the Ukrainian secondary-school leavers' communicative competence in a foreign language. This paper is to analyse the current state, testing-2009 results and stakeholders' feedback in order to find out how the Ukrainian ELT community is able to meet the EIT challenges.

The EIT is supposed to become an objective national testing system, which contributes to its becoming a high-stakes test. Using the EIT in English as an example, the paper examines what the real power of this test is and whether it is able to change the Ukrainian stakeholders' behaviour.

With all built-in features of power the Ukrainian EIT has been met positively by the society at large. Even test-takers who first met the EIT as an inevitable evil realize now that they can save their efforts and money and be assessed according their merits.

Meanwhile, on the micro-political level those who have the power to implement change in foreign language testing prove to be not interested in it at the personal level (even though they 'work for' institutes which are interested in it at the macro-political level). The main stakeholders – ministry, funders, educatonal establishments, teachers and test developers – seem not to notice the state-of-the-art language testing that is informed by the experience of establishing the national assessment systems in other countries, the UCLES expertise and the Common European Framework of reference.

The paper considers the ways for the Ukrainian ELT community to be able to meet the challenges of the EIT in English and to act as agents of change on the way to a reliable, valid and internationally recognized national language testing system.