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AMERICAN ESOL STATE LICENSURE EXAMS: REASSURANCE FOR PUBLIC, OBJECTIVITY FOR TEACHERS, IMPARTIALITY FOR UNIVERSITIES

**Formulation and substantiation of the urgency of the problem.** Since the early colonial times, American ESL/ EFL teachers' work has

always been a very complex socio-cultural activity. For centuries, good ESL/EFL teachers had to possess a wide range of different professional

knowledge, skills and abilities: they needed to know how to motivate their students, how to provide them with the safe environment, and the most importantly, how to effectively teach them. However, complaints about the lack of their professional competence date as far back as the colonial era and are still loudly heard in a modern U.S. society on a regular basis.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** In order to guarantee a minimum level of professional competence of ESL/EFL teachers for demanding American public, U.S. educational authorities enacted for all college graduates to pass mandatory state board license tests, such as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Before becoming teachers-of-record, all potential candidates must demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed for effective professional practice: «*The primary goal of licensing beginning teachers is to ensure that all students have competent teachers*» [6, p. 34]. In other words, American state boards of education truly believe no candidate should ever be called a “teacher” without clear demonstrating the real knowledge of their subject.

TESOL is an acronym that stands for *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. It concerns teaching English to all non-native English speakers both abroad and in English-speaking countries. TEFL stands for *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. It refers to teaching English in countries where English is not a primary language (rather, it is a *foreign* language).

TEFL and TESOL are two terms that are usually used interchangeably; both certificates will meet the mandatory requirements for jobs teaching English, employers will regard them the same. Only one exception to this is reference to college-level or university-level degrees. When American undergraduates, graduates, or postgraduates earn a degree, all those degrees will be in TESOL, not in TEFL. Therefore, the term TEFL *usually* takes place in non-English-speaking countries, while the term TESOL takes place in the English-speaking world.

In the U.S. teacher licensing is under local state authority. There are 50 unique and unlike licensure systems: every state selects its own tests and establishes its own passing score. Historically, any state licensure followed a «*Do Not Harm policy*» setting minimum qualification requirements for educators before let them enter into classrooms. The modern licensure process still serves as a gateway to the profession, allowing only those who have met minimum standards of competence to practice, yet an average failure rate is approximately 15 % [3].

It is also worth to mention that as technical terms «certification» and «licensure» are not synonymous. Certification designed for teachers

who have been in the classroom for at least 3 years and is a matter of professional pride for them: it is occupational recognition of higher standards of accomplishment and granted only to those who demonstrate exemplary knowledge and skill. As a rule, certification is associated with the additional advanced course of study and real teaching practice *whereas* licensure – with the basic entry-level teacher education and zero vocational practice.

Some modern American licensure exam critics, such as R. Fowler, R. Mitchell, P. Barth claim that passing licensure test is very different from real teaching; passing test scores only reflect what is known, they really don't reflect whether the candidates can teach. Moreover, they specifically underline that test questions are embarrassingly simplistic, mostly cover basic knowledge at the high school level, and «found no evidence of content at the baccalaureate level» [2; 5]. However, U.S. federal government and local state boards of education clearly point out the list of its undisputable benefits. Firstly, the licensure test is a real accountability mechanism designed to determine ESL/EFL teacher quality and to protect public from their possible educational negligence or malpractice. Secondly, it is an important tool for measuring of what graduating teachers-to-be have really learned in their colleges and universities. Finally, it is an excellent and, more importantly, *fair* source for an approval or an accreditation of different teachers' educational programs.

**The purpose of the article.** The purpose of this article is to analyze of the recent official versions of U.S. state licensure ESOL tests in order to determine its value and, more importantly, its relation to ESL/EFL teacher professional competitiveness.

**The main material of the study.** The study materials are the recent official versions of two licensure ESOL tests (#5361 and #507) which are mandatory for all potential American ESL/EFL teachers to pass and which are fully approved by all 50 U.S. state boards of education of North America.

There are two primary commercial producers of ESOL teacher licensure test: the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and National Evaluation Systems (NES), which check the potential candidates' knowledge and skills necessary to effectively instruct various English language learners in different settings. Both above-mentioned test developers work in close collaboration with state teacher educators, higher education content specialists, accomplished practicing teachers to keep their tests continuously updated and highly representative to current U.S. federal and local standards.

The purpose of the both tests is to ensure that all candidates are fully accountable practitioners and qualified to practice safe, effective, entry-level

teaching. Both tests are CAT – Computer Adaptive Test – consisting mainly of multiple-choice questions which are frequently used in U.S. schools to evaluate student progress throughout teaching curricula. It was created in an effort to expose candidates to objective testing and fully eliminate subjectivity of human examiners. They are objective, time efficient, and can assess comprehensively candidates' understanding of any curriculum content in depth and breadth. Each CAT question has an assigned degree of difficulty. Based on prior answers – correct or incorrect – the computer selects the next question: if candidates got it right, they are given a slightly harder question, if wrong – a slightly easier one. It allows each candidate to answer fewer questions overall and the computer to make a more honed assessment of their abilities. Tests continue until the computer software calculate with a 95 percent degree of confidence that potential candidates fall into the competent group or do not. But the most importantly, there is no two absolute identical tests, each test is unique as the computer draws from a large pool of thousand different questions. The results of the test are forwarded to the board of teaching to which candidates applied for licensure. For failed candidates an additional failure report is provided with clear identification of the specific areas of their professional weakness.

The basic framework for both test is ESL/EFL student needs, which are organized into several major categories and many of its subcategories. The first test –English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL #5361) – is developed by ETS and was designed to measure the basic linguistic and pedagogical knowledge within the context of teaching English as second language in various academic environments. It consists of approximately 120 selected-response questions and includes 4 major content categories and 15 subcategories. The first category – *Foundation of Linguistics and Language Learning* – covers 40% of all content of the examination and consists of 48 questions; the second one – *Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction* – 30 % and 36 questions; the third one – *Assessment* – 15% and 18 questions; the fourth one – *Cultural and Professional Aspects of the Job* – 15% and 18 questions. Besides, all of the above-mentioned content categories are included equally important additional domains – clearly defined mandatory knowledge, skills, abilities, or other characteristics for ESL/EFL teachers.

The first above-mentioned major category – *Foundation of Linguistics and Language Learning* – consists of 4 chief domains: *linguistic theory, language and culture, second language learning, and literacy*. The *linguistic theory domain* includes the knowledge of phonetic transcription and terminology, stress and intonation pattern, the effects of phonetic environment on pronunciation,

types of morphemes, English syntax, basic features of semantics (phrases, sentences, idioms), familiarity with differences among languages in terms of their phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The *language and culture domain* consists of basic understanding of concepts of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, communicative competence, range of social and academic language required for English-language proficiency. The *second-language learning domain* includes familiarity with all research-based models for second-language learning and acquisition (cognitive, behaviorist, constructivist), second-language acquisition, first-language acquisition, L-1 interference, accent, code switching, stages of second-language acquisition (silent period, interlanguage, morpheme acquisition order), types of student motivations (intrinsic and extrinsic) and their implications for the second-language learning process, comprehensive input and output, scaffolding in language learning. The *literacy domain* explains relationships between English phonemes and graphemes as well as the differences between English pronunciation and spelling, conventions of standard written English and the range of genres and rhetorical patterns used in written English, familiarity with current approaches to literacy development, stages of English literacy development and the importance of oral language skills to literacy development, influence of the first language literacy on the development of English literacy.

The previously-mentioned second major category – *Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction* – includes the following 4 subcategories: *instructional theory, teaching technique, materials, managing the classroom and students*. The *instructional theory domain* tests potential teacher's knowledge about appropriate use of methods in second-language learning (the direct method, total physical response, the natural approach), various instructional delivery models (push in, pull out, sheltered instruction). The *teaching techniques domain* demonstrates candidate's abilities of organizing learning around content and language objectives and aligning learning with standards, age-appropriateness of language instruction, various methods for promoting students, acquisition of productive and receptive language skills in both social and academic contexts, strategies for teaching language skills both discretely and interactively, strategies for supporting content-based language learning, lessons and activities that help students become more effective language learners by developing their cognitive and metacognitive strategies, techniques that help students activate prior knowledge and support appropriate transfer of language and literacy skills from L-1 to L-2, activities and assignments that provide students with authentic language use and meaningful

interaction in English, best practices for teaching English literacy to both literate and even nonliterate English-language learners. The *materials domain* demonstrates potential teacher's abilities to locate, select, modify, and create proper instructional materials that support individual students' learning styles and needs, select culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and linguistically, accessible teaching materials and resources that support ESL instruction. The *managing the classroom domain* includes factors that affect student performance, such as age, limited formal schooling, educational interruptions, safe and orderly environment, lack of a language rich environment at an appropriate level, numerous techniques to become more independent learners (using dictionaries, context clues, self-editing).

The third major category – *Assessment* – includes the following 3 subcategories: *knowledge of tests and standards, appropriate use of tests, interpreting and applying assessment results*. The first one – *knowledge of tests and standards* – shows candidate's knowledge about individual and group literacy assessments, methods, both formal and informal, to assess productive and receptive language skills and progress, assessments that measure English-language learners' progress toward meeting state and national standards, preparing English-language learners to use self-assessment techniques. The second one – *appropriate use of tests* – demonstrates assessment-related issues such as validity, reliability, language and cultural bias, and scoring concerns, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments and how to use them with English-language learners. The third one – *interpreting and applying assessment results* – indicates potential teacher's ability to use assessment results for a variety of decisions (placement, advancement, exit of students, etc).

The fourth major category – *Cultural and Professional Aspects of the Job* – includes the following 4 domains: *cultural understanding, legal and ethical issues, role of the ESL teacher, professional development*. The *cultural understanding domain* demonstrates teacher's understanding of relationships between language and culture, individualism versus collectivism, awareness how teaching and learning styles vary across cultures, how to incorporate the diverse cultures of students into instruction, and how to explain English cultural norms to English-language learners. The *legal and ethical issues domain* clarifies teacher's understanding about all U.S. federal and state regulations, legal and ethical implication of the most important laws and court decisions related to the national education sphere. The *role of the ESL teacher domain* demonstrates potential teacher's readiness to serve as a professional expert and an advocate for their

students and their families. The *professional development domain* checks teacher's understanding about the crucial importance of constant, non-stopping, lifelong growing in the field of ESL [8].

The second test – English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL #507) – is developed by National Evaluation Series and consists of approximately 150 multiple-choice questions, 3 major content categories and 10 subcategories. The first category – *Foundation of Language and Language Acquisition* – covers 20% of all content of the examination and designed to demonstrate teacher's understanding of linguistics and sociolinguistic concepts, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse, different dialects, theories and processes of language acquisition and literacy development, bilingualism, multilingualism. The second one – *Foundation of ESOL Instruction* – covers 40 % of all content of examination and should demonstrate teacher's knowledge about principles of standards-based instructions, validity and reliability of all types of assessment used in ESOL programs, the role of culture in language learning and academic achievement, cross-cultural differences in values and beliefs. The third one – *Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners* – covers 40 % of all examinational content and supposes to demonstrate research-based best practices in ESOL instruction, such as comprehensive input and output, mandatory integration of the four English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, etc.

Therefore, both tests are very alike, both check potential ESL/EFL teacher's knowledge related to fundamentals of linguistics, ESL instruction, learning and assessment. The only difference is: the first one – ESOL #5361 developed by ETS – pays additional attention to the professional development of ESL teachers whereas the second one – ESOL #507 developed by NES – doesn't.

**Conclusions and prospects for further researches of directions.** The detailed analysis of the recent official versions of two mandatory U.S. state licensure exams – ESOL #5361 and ESOL #507 – has revealed that despite of many opponents of such an independent evaluation, they have several undisputable merits. Firstly, the licensure provides U.S. public with state assurance that all future ESL/EFL educators have met minimally required educational teaching standards and have demonstrated their readiness to teach. Secondly, it helps to hold all higher education institutions fully accountable for the quality of their graduates by easily identifying low-performing preparation programs and prohibiting them from further enrolling potential students. Thirdly, it protects all novice-graduates and

reapplying teachers-to-be from unfairness, subjectivity human examiners.

Further researches of direction can be provided in more research to clearly established whether those candidates who successfully passed the tests make the best teachers.

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### ПРОБЛЕМА ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ЗДОРОВ'ЯЗБЕРЕЖУВАЛЬНИХ ТЕХНОЛОГІЙ В ОСВІТНЬОМУ ПРОЦЕСІ ВИЩОЇ ШКОЛИ У ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯХ

**Постановка та обґрунтування актуальності проблеми.** Використання здоров'язбережувальних технологій в освітньому процесі бере свій початок з часів Київської Русі, тому що здоров'я для слов'ян уже на той час було важливою цінністю, щоб виховати сильних і мужніх воїнів. Вже в той час проводилась велика робота з виховання у воїнів таких якостей як: хоробрість, витривалість, фізична сила, психічна стійкість, це допомагало їм у захисті власних територій від ворогів.

З часів Київської Русі було впроваджено використання засобів і методів, які використовувались для фізичного виховання та фізичного розвитку. Одним із основних методичних прийомів у педагогічний процес було продовження використання рухливих ігор, які сприяли тренуванню опорно-рухового апарату, реакції, уваги, командної взаємодії, прийняття швидкісних і

відповідальних рішень, які дуже важливі при виході із критичних ситуацій. Рухливі ігри сприяли у створенні емоційно-психологічних аспектів, проявів позитивного настроїв, змагального духу, взаємоповаги один до одного. У вітчизняній педагогічній науці вже тривалий час існує концепція здоров'язбереження. На початку ХХ століття були розроблені і впроваджені основні підходи реалізації здоров'язбережувальних технологій: антропологічний, гігієнічний, гуманістичний, фізкультурний. Але така концепція на початку ХХ століття базувалась методом галузевого підходу (фізкультура, медицина, освіта) і не носила цілісного характеру. Така організація здоров'я збереження у закладах освіти була не системною і не враховувала індивідуальні особливості кожної людини.

Науково-технічна революція яка почала розвиватися у другій половині ХХ століття сприяла переходу від індустріальної цивілізації