Abstract
The article focuses on a new form of a course-leaving exam after 1-year Russian language preparation course for foreign students coming to study in Russia. The authors specify the correlation between the exam content and the communicative purposes of the foreign students who enter higher educational establishment in the Russian Federation.

The exam takes into consideration the importance of the academic adaptation process of foreign students and analyses its influence on the exam requirements and content.

The exam model described by the authors incorporates Russian as a foreign language traditional exam model and the new approaches. The new exam format developers take into consideration the important role of the professional vocabulary. The exam tasks check not only the knowledge of the Russian as a foreign language but also the knowledge of the scientific terminology.

The authors believe that it is necessary to expand the vocabulary of the 1st Certification level which is considered the basis for the new examination format. The test content has to correspond to the requirements of the communication spheres typical for a foreign student living and studying in Russia. The new exam requirements, in is turn, will influence the core curriculum of 1-year preparatory course for foreign students getting ready to enter a higher education establishment in the Russian Federation.

The suggested new exam format was preceded by extensive research of curricula and academic achievements of the foreign students; the research was supported by exam results monitoring.

The paper proves the necessity of the preparation course for the foreign students and highlights the specific role of the course-leaving exam as a motivating factor to make education process more efficient.

Keywords: course-leaving exam, certification, students.

1 INTRODUCTION
Knowledge assessment is one of the key problems of the education process not only in Russia but also in many other countries. The structure and the forms of the knowledge assessment and control are in correlation with the education purposes and its content. While learning a new language, a student must be able to see the progress and to compare his or her academic achievements with the results of the other students that actually is one of the main motivating factors. At the same time language proficiency assessment plays the role of the feedback, the test results show to what extent the language competence and the necessary skills are developed. This feedback, in its turn, is necessary to individualise the approach to every student and the teacher is able to improve the work in the classroom.

Traditionally foreign students entering a higher educational institution in the Russian Federation have to provide a B 1 level certificate (1st Certification level of the Russian as a foreign language for general purposes) as one of the application documents. They can get this certificate in two ways: by passing a course-leaving exam after one year of pre-university preparatory course or taking a language exam in any certification centre in Russia without taking a preparatory language course.

The content of the traditional B 1 level exam and the language requirements are accurately described and formalized in the official documents (Standard; Sample tests). At the same time, one must take into consideration that foreign students studying in Russia have special language purposes that reflect the peculiarities of the academic process. These purposes are not covered with the vocabulary and grammar of B 1 level and include more vocabulary units than are provided by the B 1 Level Standard. [1], [2]
The foreign students have to complete various academic tasks, all of these tasks require the knowledge of special vocabulary (the so-called “university vocabulary”). The vocabulary scope of B1 level does not include this vocabulary. So at present there is an urgent need to review and redesign the present course-leaving exam and the course content, accordingly. The new course-leaving exam format suggested by the authors is based on the language requirements of B1 level, but there is a difference: the vocabulary scope of the new exam is enlarged from 2300 to 3000 words with the academic and general scientific vocabulary.

2 METHODOLOGY

The authors conducted a monitoring among the first year foreign students of RUDN University. The purpose of this monitoring was to see if there is any progress in Russian as a foreign language among the students-respondents, and what are the possible causes of the test failure. Over 350 students of different university faculties participated in the monitoring that was arranged in November, two months after the beginning of the 1st term of the academic year. There were two categories of foreign students-respondents:

- the students who underwent pre-university preparatory course (either in RUDN University or in any other educational institution);
- the students who entered the university without any preparatory course

The authors chose B1 level test in Russian as a foreign language (for general purposes) as the monitoring instrument. The only difference from the standard test content was that there was a special part to check the knowledge of the general academic and scientific vocabulary. This vocabulary is especially important for the 1st year students to successfully cope with the educational process. B1 level is considered a threshold to enter a university. The authors also conducted a post-monitoring survey among the students who demonstrated unsuccessful test results.

3 RESULTS

The authors reveal causal relationships between language proficiency of foreign students and their academic achievements. The results of the post-monitoring survey indicate that most respondents support the idea of the new exam format, because it would help the potential students to focus on the necessary vocabulary and grammar during their pre-university preparatory course. They understand the importance of pre-university preparatory course for the adaptation to the academic environment in Russia.

3.1 Monitoring results

The monitoring did not reveal any difference in the Russian language knowledge among the students who took a preparatory course at RUDN University or at the other universities of Russia. All of the students showed practically the same results.

The monitoring test results (see Table one) demonstrate that part of the students experience difficulties coping with the academic program. The post-monitoring survey indicate that the problem was in the academic and scientific vocabulary part of the test. 92% of the students who got unsuccessful test results said that they had trouble in the adaptation to the academic process in Russia because of the lack of general academic and scientific vocabulary. At the pre-university stage, they were not sure about the professional specialization they are finally going to choose so they were not able to focus on dealing with the necessary vocabulary. On the other hand, they state that if they had known that the academic and general scientific vocabulary was the part of the course-leaving exam they would have focused on learning it properly.
Table 1. Russian as a foreign language test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>“SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED” (66 – 100 SCORES) %</th>
<th>“NOT COMPLETED” (BELOW 66 SCORES) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>above 66 scores (%)</td>
<td>above 95 scores (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Academy</td>
<td>94,4</td>
<td>21,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics and Mathematics Faculty</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology Faculty</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Humanitarian and Social Sciences</td>
<td>91,5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute of Medicine</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro-Technological Institute</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philological Faculty</td>
<td>92,5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Institute</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute of Economy</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>22,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 CONCLUSIONS

The authors are sure that the existing preparatory course-leaving exam model (B 1 level) does not prove to be effective enough. They suggest introducing a new unified exam that would take into consideration all the language needs of the foreign students studying in Russia and would be a transparent and efficient way of the language proficiency assessment. They offer the concept of this exam, which incorporates Russian as a foreign language traditional test and the part checking the general academic and scientific vocabulary necessary for every student to cope with the program of the first year of studies.

The test content corresponds to the requirements of the communication spheres typical for a potential foreign student. The new exam requirements, in is turn, will influence the core curriculum of 1-year preparatory course for foreign students getting ready to enter a higher education establishment in the Russian Federation.

As the new exam concept reflects the specific language needs of a foreign student in the Russian academic process, it satisfies the requirements of a pre-university course-leaving exam. On the other hand, the students who do not want to pass any pre-university course can pass this exam independently thus getting the right to enter a Russian Federation university or institute.

The above-described concept makes it possible to create a more objective and transparent assessment model. The quality of the entrance exam influences the quality of the language course that allows the foreign student to focus on the language spheres necessary for him. The exam requirements will influence the core curriculum and the content of preparatory course at pre-university level making positive changes to the quality of education and connecting the preparatory course and 1st year of studies.

There is one more thing worth mentioning. The new exam is universal covering the language needs of all professional specializations. Potential students need to feel secure that they are choosing the right course to enable them to learn Russian. They must be sure that the preparatory course they are taking will give them the necessary language level independently of the professional aspect they are choosing in the future.

The findings presented in the article help to explore the new exam perspectives: its implementation will be followed by the changes in the pre-university course curriculum.

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REFERENCES
