Esteemed QS Managers, Summit Organizers and Participants!

Dear colleagues!

First of all I'd like to thank you for the invitation to take part in this summit of world experts in the spheres of modern languages, communication, linguistics and education.

It is honor and pleasure for me and my colleague Olga Kochkina to speak at such an amazing conference which is technologically an unprecendented event.

Under force-majeure circumstances caused by the pandemic this QS summit gives us a great opportunity of meeting, communicating and sharing views and ideas.

Yesterday I was lucky to attend very eloquent keynote addresses and reports made by professors Proshina, Karasik, Leontovich, Dewaele, MacFarlane,

which inspired and gave much food for thought and further research. I hope that next time we'll have an opportunity to share our ideas on more specific issues of speech communication, cognition, language production and comprehension, and maybe in the long run artificial intelligence.

Today we address the summit on behalf of MGIMO University which is very young in comparison with Oxford or Moscow State University but which has gained enough positive experience in providing high level knowledge, professional skills and competence in different humanitarian areas. And this experience deserves to be shared with the academic community.

MGIMO as the Moscow State Institute of International Relations was founded in 1944.

And since then it has focused on delivering highly qualified specialists in different spheres of international activities which have always been employed in government and business structures of high levels. Though MGIMO has never been considered a linguistic higher educational institution, the University can be

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proud of profound foreign language training which has always been an essential part of professional training of its graduates.

The University provides a 52 foreign language training for general, special and academic purposes.

A customized approach to foreign language training is implemented by means of professional practice and efficiency oriented educational programs, which focus on professional communication and cultural aspects of education. Language training at MGIMO is based on the European system of language proficiency levels as well as on the criteria and scales of professional competences in foreign languages elaborated by the universities with the consideration of labour market needs and requirements of potential employers.

This year the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges.

The recent developments in the sphere of health and life security have had a great and irreversible impact on workings of MGIMO as well as all universities and other educational establishments.

In order to provide continuous educational process the university was forced to introduce urgent measures.

First of all, the organization of distant learning, including provision for adequate information technologies and tools, new e-content of traditional language training courses.

Secondly, it was necessary to build up new e-learning environment, which in its turn urged educators to adapt the traditional teaching methods and elaborate new approaches to collaboration and interaction with students in virtual environment.

These two challenges caused great concentration of cognitive and emotional abilities of both students and educators.

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Fortunately, long before the pandemic broke out the leadership of the university had devoted much attention to technological renovation of MGIMO and introduction of digital mechanisms of effective teaching and learning.

Now MGIMO University is actively elaborating its educational platform - ed.mgimo.ru. The students and educators have been taught special courses to master their digital proficiency.

It's worth mentioning that MGIMO unites professionals who are conducting active scientific research in the spheres of modern languages, professional communication, foreign language training.

World experts point out a very important aspect of virtual education: students and educators are gaining skills which are necessary for modern jobs as part of telecommuting 'virtual teams': members of such teams have 'to know how collaborate efficiently, conduct online research and analysis, use the Internet resources, master speaking and presentation skills.

They are focusing on such issues as

if the university virtual learning is capable of substituting the traditional, in-person, form of education and to what extent; what benefits remote telecommuting classes can offer; what new skills and abilities e-learning environment require and develop.

The preliminary results show that the introduction of new forms of distance learning and virtual collaboration under the COVID-19 pandemic was the right measure to provide steadiness of educational process under the lock-down and social distancing conditions:

It is evident that the word has become more digitally connected than it was before the pandemic, and the number of educators who is actively employing the tools of e-learning has increased since last year: *in 2019, before the pandemic broke out, only 25% of educators and 30% of students were in favor of distant-*

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learning, whereas in 2020 these numbers have increased up to 87% percent and 90% respectively.

Almost all educators *(99%)* now vote for blended education which provides for reasonable combination of traditional and virtual forms of education.

The research has also proved an increase in digital 'literacy' of both educators and students. It presumes that educators have acquired new digital skills and have developed new forms of distance learning and virtual collaboration (almost 99,9 % of educators have agreed that their knowledge of IT and Internet resources has multiplied), but it's worth mentioning that this shift in educational methods and challenges of e-learning have turned out to be rather stressful *(almost 87 percent of respondents pointed out the tension and stress they had to overcome in getting used to new forms of collaboration in e-learning environment).* Practically all respondents (87 percent) mentioned changes in their behavior and character while working in e-learning environment: they highlighted that on-line education and collaboration has required psychological adaption and self-discipline}.

The inquiry has demonstrated that the introduction of new forms of distance learning and virtual collaboration under the COVID-19 pandemic was the right measure to provide steadiness of educational process under the lock-down and social distancing conditions: ninety eight percent of educators and ninety nine percent of students pointed it out, stressing that this measure prevented further spread of COVID-19. It's worth mentioning that telecommuting secured the lives of elderly educators with the age of 65+ (among the respondents this category amounts to thirty nine percent. One third of educators (32% percent) noted that they had gained some experience of virtual education before the pandemic, and found it very useful in transition period towards e-learning environment. But a

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large number of respondents (nearly 60%) spoke for resuming contact work and reopening ‘physical’ classrooms after the pandemic.

Meanwhile nearly 70% of respondents noted that there would be no total reverse movement to the ‘old times’. The word has become more digitally connected than it was before the pandemic, and the number of educators who is actively employing the tools of e-learning has increased since last year: in 2019, before the pandemic broke out, only twenty five of educators and thirty percent of students were in favor of distant-learning, whereas in 2020 these numbers have increased up to eighty seven percent and ninety percent respectively. Almost all respondents (ninety nine percent) voted for blended education which provides for reasonable combination of traditional and virtual forms of education.

The research has also proved an increase in digital ‘literacy’ of both educators and students. It presumes that educators have acquired new digital skills and have developed new forms of distance learning and virtual collaboration (almost 99,9 % of educators have agreed that their knowledge of IT and Internet resources has multiplied), but it’s worth mentioning that this shift in educational methods and challenges of e-learning have turned out to be rather stressful (almost eighty seven percent of respondents pointed out the tension and stress they had to overcome in getting used to new forms of collaboration in e-learning environment). Practically all respondents (eighty seven percent) mentioned changes in their behavior and character while working in e-learning environment: they highlighted that on-line education and collaboration has required psychological adaption and self-discipline. Three thirds of educators experienced some harmful impact on their health when working in e-learning environment (mainly worsening eyesight, blood pressure, lack of exercise, headache, degenerative spine disease), while students (ninety nine percent) complained of lack of physical activities and social communication.

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As for the students, e-learning has promoted development of their cognitive abilities (information comprehension, procession, content structuring) and new skills of telecommuting, telecommunicating and telepresenting the results of their work. Three quarters of educators noted that they need further upgrading of their digital knowledge, which testifies that new challenges of e-learning have boosted cognitive abilities of both educators and students. Moreover, virtual education has provided ground for developing new skills of telecommuting which are in great demand in labor market nowadays. At the same time employers, including the university leadership is monitoring the way their staff is adapting to new e-learning: the sooner the educators master their digital proficiencies, the better off they will be. For the students working in e-learning environment is also beneficial as it expands their access to a growing number of jobs and well-paying careers

Obviously, working in e-learning environment develop cognitive abilities and psychological flexibility as well as require organizational acumen, emotional stamina, self-discipline and diligence.

And these aspects are of great scientific interest and MGIMO scholars and educators are concentrating on further research n this field. I hope we'll have an opportunity to discuss some practical results next time.

Thank you for your interest and attention!

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