

RENOVATION IN TASHKENT INSTITUTE OF RAILWAY ENGINEERING

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews current status of English as a second language in Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineering and suggests some changes to increase students' understanding of the language. The paper covers data concerning educational setting, the role of English at the university, several problems including materials for teaching, and provides possible recommendations to improve the language level of students.

Keywords: Teaching different levels, ESP content, CLT methods, materials, training.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

In today's modern world, English is one of the global languages spreading all over the globe and is being edified in numerous countries as a second or foreign language. In order to teach a foreign language, any country starts with language planning prepared by government which may cause to some social and linguistic changes amid this country's population (Kaplan, 2011). Our government also focused on some particular factors while making a language planning and policy yet it happened after independence of the Soviet era (Hasanova, 2007). Precisely, the decree in 2012 provided the great improvement of teaching English in every level of education (Azizova, 2014). According to this decree, technical and international specialties should be taught in foreign languages in tertiary education which encouraged the researcher to learn and research how ESP content is being taught in Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineering. This research is a micro planning which is likely to become local aspect with impacts on innovating macro level (Kheng and Baldauf,2011). English should be taught as ESP content in the institute to achieve B2 level by the end of bachelor's degree since students are able to use special terms in their professional performance. This language policy proposes to develop students' lexical resource by using new methods (like CLT) and improve assessments (formative and summative) and textbooks in order to meet the standards and achieve target level.

I. Context

Educational Setting

Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineering (TashIRE)- is a unique technical institute in Central Asia producing the railway engineers. It was constructed in 1931 and named as The Railway Engineers Institute of Central Asia but since 1937, it was commenced calling Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineering and nowadays it works cooperatively with 'The Uzbekistan Temir Yullari'. The institute is located in Mirabad district, Tashkent. Mirabad has approximately 130,000 inhabitants and 8 colleges (high schools), 3 academic lyceums, 17 secondary schools. A quarter of total graduates are likely to apply for TashIRE. In fact, the number of applicants who want to study the institute has been increasing:

Years	Bachelor			Masters
	Daytime	Special correspondence course	Correspondence course	
2016-2017	4486	0	0	145
2017-2018	6323	423	0	166
2018-2019	6360	770	996	186

Table1. Information about the number applications to TashIRE between 2016 and 2019 (www.tashiit.uz)

The most noticeable increase can be observed all types of courses last year. For 2018-2019 academic years, the institute accepted 1275 students for bachelor, 90 bachelors for correspondence course and 80 bachelors for expanded fee (contract). Students come from different regions of Uzbekistan and Tashkent, around 18-30 aged. There are multi-national students, majority of them are boys and men. It should be stated that some students are visual impairment – they need special attention while teaching.

Main faculties of the institute are Organization of transportation and logistics, Electromechanical faculty, Construction faculty, Economics faculty which prepare students on those different professionals. Courses are conducted in different parts of day as morning, afternoon and evening shifts because they have special evening lessons starting from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The institute has Department of Foreign Languages which consists of Russian, English, French and German languages.

The English language situation in TashIRE

As the institute produces railway engineers, in the state-mandated entrance exam there is no English for placement test to be accepted. Obviously, average level of students is A1 or A2 when they start studying (with little exception, some of them might have B1). The duration of a lesson is 80 minutes and English is taught once a week from Year 1 to Master's degree. At the end of study as bachelor, students will be evaluated on English via state-mandated exit test before graduating. Furthermore, when students are eager to continue their study in Master's degree they have an exam of English. If candidates get 5,5 from IELTS or B2 level from CEFR skill-based test, they are given maximum 50 points from this exam. Another option is for students who do not have any certificate that they will have 50 questions on grammar as multiple choice items and each correct answer stands for 1 point. That is why, the great number of students tries to learn English well and attend extra intensive courses.

Political/Administrative Setting

Before the independence, Russian was official language in Uzbekistan but use of Uzbek was found amid local citizens. English was taught as a foreign language at schools yet all textbooks for English were written in Russian (Hasanova,2007). The post-Soviet era made a change this situation and in 1997, National program on training cadres with 3 phases (including from 1997 till now) was designed and established. According to the third stage of this program, graduate students are required to know and use one or several foreign languages. In fact, the main focus on teaching foreign languages commenced after the president's decree in 2012. It is about 'On further enhancement of measures on foreign language learning system' and was declared on 10 December, 2012(Decree, On further enhancement of measures on foreign language learning system', 11.12.2012, N240). The decree aims to teach foreign languages (English as well)

from first year classes of secondary schools via games, technical and international specialties should be taught in foreign languages in higher educational institutions which indicates why Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineers needs ESP. Additionally, on May 8, 2013 this decree was supported by creating state educational standard on foreign languages of continuous educational system. State educational standard indicates that B2 level should be achieved by tertiary education learners, they should be able to understand and use in communication. B2 level is likely to show speaking competence, linguistic competence, lexical, grammatical competence and pragmatic competence.

II. Goals and objectives

Target language features

It can be noticed that the Presidential decree in 2012 focuses on B2 level of English in diverse non specialty educational places to use a language in their working spheres when students graduate. In fact, Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineers also provides lessons on English from 1 Year to meet the standards. Therefore, taking existing micro and macro policies into count, the central goal of this proposal is to reach B2 within 3-year period enabling students to be able to use English in their professional career. In the term of objectives, initially, the proposal offers to teach ESP content via CLT methods; through teaching ESP and CLT based classes, students may be encouraged more to learn English for their profession. The reason is why ESP should be trained because Wright (1992) thinks while learning ESP, there are learning speed, learning efficiency and leaning effectiveness as well. Precisely, when ESP is taught, learners can understand required linguistic items quickly. Moreover, teachers utilize their learning resource maximally to make learners study well. To teach ESP content, Maleki (2008) claims ESP teachers should know English language itself, how to design a course and they should possess knowledge of their specialty in English. However, the majority of them are whether good at a subject itself and do not know English well or have an ability of teaching English than a subject. Another aspect which is important for ESP teachers is to understand learners' needs and design appropriate syllabus for their needs, be flexible and assess them appropriately (Venkatraman and Prema, 2007). Furthermore, conducting lessons with CLT methods might be effective to make learners communicate more and improve other skills. The reason is that 'CLT is very context-based, relies on language education policies, educational cultures, assessment practices and also having enough materials and well-experienced teachers (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014). State educational standard requires getting B2 and improving communicative competence. Communicative competence shows knowledge of using a language for different purposes, understanding and production of different texts, essays. Richards (2006) states CLT can be used in teaching ESP but primarily learners' needs should be analyzed. While teaching ESP, discrepancy may be found in particular skills, or vocabulary choice, even grammar.

Another objective of this proposal is to modernize textbooks. Textbooks and materials should lead students to meet state education standard which is aligned with International Standards of 'Common European Framework of Reference'. After improvement of teaching materials, assessment also needs to be modified. Both summative and formative assessment must focus on evaluating learners' skills, they should be valid.

III. Inventory

It is investigated that there are gaps between the real situation of the institute and planned language education in TashIRE. There is no ESP teaching but students are taught well on General English but mostly grammar- translation method has been used. The grammar-translation method is more teacher-centered, relies on grammar explanation in a first language,

translating early readings and there is little or no use of spoken language (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014). Albeit students learn grammars rules and have a little reading skill, it is still hard to obtain B2 level. Secondly, their main course book 'English for technical institutions' by Kurbasova et al.,(1988) is a bit outdated to be used in all courses. It was published in 1988, that's why, this book has Russian instructions more, consists of texts, vocabulary, grammar exercises and students might not achieve the target level without other skills. After textbook is renewed and teacher-centered lessons modified, assessment will also be adapted for them. In spite of well-organized formative assessment, the majority of students face to some problems on their summative assessment. They are given a reading passage with some exercises to complete and retell the text itself which reveals other skills will not be checked.

IV. Recommendation & Actors

1. Methods and Practices

As aforementioned above teachers pay attention to teach more General English rather than ESP education. This proposal recommends adding ESP lessons after 2 Year when learners have enough basic background knowledge of English. Taking into count efficiency of previous methods, instead of the grammar- translation method, teaching CLT is more essential. By the help of CLT, not only communication is taught but also there will be link with reading, writing and listening as well, grammar rules are studied by students inductively during lessons, they will be able to utilize in the real word what they are taught in the classroom, students will improve both their accuracy and fluency (Richards, 2006). Various group works, multimodality presentations, project- based tasks can be implement as tools of CLT. It provides more opportunity to hit the standards. Zhao (2011) states actors should be involved in accomplishing any objective; therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education, 'people with power, can design a new module with people with expertise- English and subject teachers together. British Council is another actor, people with power and can work on collaboratively teaching ESP in the institution because it has ESP Reform Project started from 2016 (www.fledu.uz) to investigate the ways of teaching English in non-linguistic majors. This project enables teachers to be trained by British experts, design a new curriculum and improvement of teaching materials. The next suggestion to achieve the second objective of the proposal is to renovate teaching materials and textbooks. As it is mentioned in 'Inventory' part, their textbook which is used for sophomore and older students becomes a little bit old including grammar-translation activities. However, for freshmen in the institute, teachers use 'Scale up' since 2018. This book is designed by Uzbek experts to teach non-linguistic majors. Likely, the proposal offers 'Headway Academic Skills'(Philpot, 2017) level 2 and 3 student books for Year 2 and 3 students in order to improve their academic skills and get B1+ /B2 level on CEFR standards. Additionally, 'English for Transport and Logistics' (D'Acunto, 2016) is suggested by the proposal writer to utilize ESP education. In terms of accepting these recommended textbooks, teachers, the head of language department and his group need collaborative effort people with power i.e., the Ministry of Higher Education. One more important point of the textbooks is these student's books are planned to design Word format because as it is stated in the educational setting, the institute has some people with the disability of visualization. Modern computers have special programs for the blind which can read the all documents. During the observation, it is analyzed that people with visual impaired people quickly remember what they listen and do the tasks according to their listening (Walczak, 2017). However, it should be mentioned that while observing analyzing the problems of the institute, there was less demand to renew and supply with technical devices and modern technologies like projectors, computers and others. That's why; this part has not been emphasized in the proposal.

The Stakes for Assessments

After accomplishment of these two objectives, assessment system also needs to be developed. Students collect their 40% of evaluation during lessons, other 60% accounts for a midterm and final as summative assessment. Formative assessment during lessons is well-organized and valid; it aims to check with different reading, grammar and sometimes speaking activities. Summative assessment is likely to have to be developed because while interviewing with teacher, she told that they give students reading passages to translate and retell the general meaning of these texts yet students responded the level of the texts is different and it makes them be evaluated differently. According to main principals of assessment (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010), it is not valid and reliable enough with negative washback. In order to improve validity of the assessment, tasks should be altered into a 4-section exam including reading, writing, listening and speaking and to increase reliability each section have to be evaluated with key or rubric (Bennet, 2011) . Likewise, state mandate exit test which is evaluated at the end of 4-year study should be changed 50 items on grammar into skill-based proficiency test. Finally, these tests should also be organized in computer-based version because of the blind students who study at the institute. Implementing these assessments, students can be checked whether they are able to meet the standards or not.

V. Timeline & Funding

This proposal is planned to achieve within 3-year period.

Years	Objectives
1 Year	ESP education with CLT methods, Level- A2
2Year	Renovating textbooks, improving assessments, Level- B1/B+
3Year	Observation, supervision of new proposal, Level-B2

As can be noticed from the table, first 2 years go for renovating the system and from 3 Year it might be analyzed how far a new proposal has worked and been adequate for the institute.

To support financially, mostly these changes are planned to be done via students' fee that is paid for the contract. Precisely, the institute accepts some students who don't collect enough score from state mandate entrance exam and pay 20 mln, or 88mln according to the difference between their total score and the minimum score in the exam .

Possible results can be achieving target levels gradually after this proposal, and students will be able to utilize special English for their profession.

VI. Conclusion

To sum up, this proposal aims to investigate some lacks of the language education in Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineers and offer several recommendations to provide possible solutions.

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