

ENGLISH CURRICULUM ADAPTATION TO LOCAL (UZBEKISTAN) POPULATION: LANGUAGE POLICY PROPOSAL

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АДАПТАЦИЯ УЧЕБНОЙ ПРОГРАММЫ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ПОД МЕСТНОЕ НАСЕЛЕНИЕ (УЗБЕКИСТАН): ПРЕДЛОЖЕНИЕ ПО ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot ishida Toshkent shahridagi Inha universiteti (TIU) uchun til o'rgatilishi bo'yicha rejalashtirish va yangi siyosat taklifi — o'quv dasturiga o'zgartirishlar keltirilgan. Jumladan, u hozirgi ingliz tili o'quv dasturiga O'zbekiston konteksti (universitet talabalari) ehtiyojlariga moslashtirib o'zgartirishlar kiritishni taklif qiladi — bunda, talabalarning ham lingvistik, ham madaniy o'ziga xosliklari hisobga olindi. Tadqiqot uchun ma'lumot to'plash metodlariga kelsak, eng maqbul yondashuv qanday bo'lishi kerakligini aniqlash maqsadida, ham sifatli ham miqdoriy usullardan foydalanildi. Tadqiqotni to'plash jarayoni o'quv dasturining mazmuni va uning samaradorligi bo'yicha manfaatdor tomonlarning bir qator yuzma-yuz suhbatlari hamda ingliz tili bo'limi o'qituvchilari bilan onlayn so'rovnoma, shuningdek, akademik ma'muriyatning bir nechta vakillari bilan norasmiy intervyulari orqali fikrlarini to'plashni o'z ichiga oldi. Bundan tashqari, tadqiqotni puxtaligini oshirish uchun, ushbu universitetning hozirgi kunda ilm olayotgan talabalari orasida ham onlayn so'rovnoma o'tkazildi. Mavjud adabiyotlarni tadqiq etish kelgusida amalga oshirish taklif rejasining ishonchliligi va maqsadga muvofiqligini oqlash uchun o'tkazildi. Agar ushbu til siyosati bo'yicha taklif universitet ma'muriyati tomonidan ma'qullansa va sinov boshlanishi qo'llab quvvatlansa, taklif qilingan o'quv dasturining ushbu sinov jarayoni hozirgi kundagi talabalar uchun hamma bosqichlarini boshidan o'tkazishi uchun eng kamida ikki yoki

uch to'liq o'quv yili kerak bo'ladi. O'z o'rnida, ushbu bosib o'tilishi lozim bo'lgan bosqichlar va modullar, keyinchalik yangi modulning samaradorligini ko'rsatishi kutilmoqda.

Kalit so'zlar: o'quv dasturini o'zgartirish; o'quv dasturini moslashtirish; lingvistik va madaniy xususiyatlar; tilni bilish; integrasiyalashgan ko'nikmalar; mikro va makro darajalar.

Аннотация. В настоящей статье представлены предложения по языковому планированию и политике для Университета Инха в городе Ташкенте (УИТ) — поправки к учебной программе. В частности, автор предлагает внести изменения в действующую программу изучения английского языка, адаптировав ее к потребностям Узбекистана (студенты университетов) с учетом языковых и культурных особенностей учащихся. Что касается методов исследований, то для определения оптимального подхода использовались как качественные, так и количественные методы. Исследование включало в себя сбор мнений различных заинтересованных сторон относительно содержания и эффективности учебных программ с помощью серии индивидуальных опросов — интервью и онлайн-опрос преподавателей факультета английского языка, а также неструктурированные интервью с несколькими представителями администрации по академическим вопросам. В конечном итоге среди нынешних студентов этого университета был также проведен онлайн-опрос. Исследование существующей литературы было проведено в целях обоснования достоверности и практической осуществимости этого предложения для будущего осуществления. При условии, что администрация университета примет предложение в отношении языковой политики и предложит приступить к апробированию, этот экспериментальный процесс предлагаемой учебной программы потребует не менее двух — трех полных академических лет для того, чтобы нынешнее поколение учащихся прошло через все этапы и модули, что может затем продемонстрировать эффективность ее нового модуля.

Ключевые слова: изменение учебной программы; адаптация учебной программы; лингвистические и культурные особенности; знание языков; комплексные навыки; микро- и макроуровни.

Abstract. This research paper presents language planning and policy proposal for Inha University in Tashkent (IUT) — amendments for the curriculum. It suggests modifications to the current English curriculum by adapting it to the needs of Uzbekistan context (university students) — considering their both linguistic and cultural peculiarities. Regarding research methods, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to identify what the optimum approach should be.

The investigation involved the collection of multiple stakeholders' opinions on the syllabus content and its effectiveness through a series of one-on-one interviews and an online questionnaire with the lecturers of the English language department, along with unstructured interviews with a few academic administration representatives. Eventually, an online questionnaire was conducted among the current students at this university. The research on existing literature was conducted to justify the credibility and feasibility of the proposal for future implementation. Providing that the language policy proposal is accepted by the university administration and encouraged for the launch of the trialling, this piloting process of the suggested curriculum is anticipated to require at least two or three full academic years for the present generation of students to go through all stages and modules, which can then demonstrate the effectiveness of its new module.

Key words: curriculum modification; curriculum adaptation; linguistic and cultural peculiarities; language proficiency; integrated skills; micro and macro levels.

Introduction. Language planning and policy proposal pertain to the learners in Inha University in Tashkent (IUT), an international branch of INHA University in Incheon, South Korea (INHA Korea). Currently, there are two functioning schools such as *School of Computer Science and Engineering* (SOCIE) and *the School of Logistics* (SOL). Learners all belong to different nationalities, with the vast majority belonging to Uzbek and the remaining constituting Russian, Korean, Tadjik, Kazakh, Tatar, and other speakers. The medium of instruction is English. The teaching faculty is made up of international specialists from South Korea, India, Italy, the UK, the USA and Uzbekistan. According to admission guidelines, applicants sit exams on core subjects and present their certificate of English proficiency level. According to the official website of the university (2), the minimum eligibility criteria for entrance shows that to enroll in SOCIE, applicants must have an IELTS band score of 5.0 (TOEFL iBT - 50), while to be accepted to SOL, applicants should hold IELTS band score 5.5 (TOEFL iBT-71).

All academic courses, such as core and optional subjects, are taught precisely following the curriculum provided by the administration at INHA Korea. This also means that all textbooks or other academic materials germane to studies are recommended or strictly asked to be employed in teaching by the Korean administration. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that despite these rules, the administrations of IUT and INHA Korea sometimes can make exceptions and accept slight modifications in the curriculum to meet the needs of the Uzbek population to achieve fruitful results. Commonly, it is represented from the bottom-up level — from teachers to INHA administration, which is a positive phenomenon. As a matter of fact, “*teachers hold power as they are placed in mediator between the policy and the pupils...*” (8, 937). Fortunately, this view is supported by both IUT and INHA Korea.

The Context of the Current Problem. At present, there is a problem linked with the English Curriculum of IUT in terms of its

implementation. As a matter of fact, it was originally aimed towards Korean learners, where it was first established at the macro level. Kheng & Baldauf (8, 936) maintain that macro language planners are supposed to examine all activities at the micro-level to understand how effective their policies can be. However, it was not remodified and/or adapted for the Uzbek population when being imposed to IUT application for use at the micro-level. Thus, at IUT today, this curriculum is not very efficient. There are several reasons for this, such as,

a) Uzbek students have their particular strengths, weaknesses, and needs (linguistic and cultural), which are incomparable with Korean learners; As a result of applying the present curriculum, students are not taking a sufficient advantage which would otherwise be necessary for their improvement in their English language skills;

b) There was recently suggested a possible amendment in the graduation policies in IUT: all graduates may need to obtain an IELTS band score of 7.0. The reason for this suggestion is that the IUT administration plans to guarantee a successful future for their graduates by enabling them to apply to Graduate Schools to earn Master's Degrees and eventually work for international organizations as logisticians, IT programmers and engineers. However, the English curriculum is only two years long and might not sufficiently equip university learners with future perspectives. Thus, a policy needs to be implemented to scaffold this very establishment — at the micro-level. Kheng, Baldauf & Richard (8, 936) explain that classical language planning pertinent to the macro level only can occur at the microlevel and not necessarily reach the macro level.

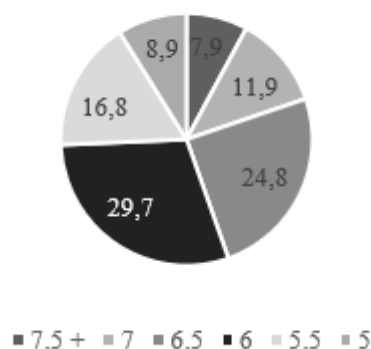
English curriculum at IUT lasts two academic years (see figure 1). In year one, students take two English modules concurrently per semester. For example, in semester 1, they study Academic English 1, which focuses exclusively on listening and speaking skills. The Academic Reading module focuses on reading strategies. During the subsequent semester, students study Academic English 2, which again focuses on listening and speaking skills, and another course - Technical Writing and Discussion, which emphasizes writing skills. As for the next year, they have only Academic English 3 and 4 modules that integrate all four skills in both semesters. However, there is still a heavy reliance on listening, speaking, and some reading, although the book integrates all four skills.

Figure 1: *English Courses Division of IUT*

Semester	Module	Weekly frequency	Weekly hours	Credit	Focus
1	Academic English 1	2	3	2	Listening, speaking
1	Academic Reading	1	2	2	Reading strategies
2	Academic English 2	2	3	2	Listening, speaking
2	Technical Writing & Discussion	1	2	1	Writing strategies
3	Academic English 3	2	3	2	Integrated Skills
4	Academic English 4	2	3	2	Integrated Skills

One drawback of this program is that most or too much emphasis is made on listening and speaking skills. Seminars are held twice a week and taught during four semesters. As regards reading and writing skills, which are the weakest points of IUT students, according to their IELTS results (see figure 2), they are taught only one semester each and are held only once a week. There is too much emphasis on listening and speaking, which are not meeting the learners' real needs, but the length of the English program (only two years) is also insufficient to help IUT students gain IELTS 7.0 upon graduation. As Moore (5) indicates, this condition makes the graduates' mission of graduates almost impossible because increasing IELTS band score by one point usually requires most learners to spend approximately 200–3000 hours of study.

Figure 2: *Current IELTS band scores of IUT students*



Main Part. The goal of this proposal is to explore the research question — whether the English curriculum suggested by the administration of INHA Korea is effective in the case of IUT, and the sub-question is concerned if the curriculum is addressing English language learners (ELLs) needs (linguistic and cultural) in the context of Uzbekistan. These questions will also be challenged from several perspectives: EFL instructors, IUT administration, and current students of IUT. Attempts have been made in this paper to provide an overview of the literature to answer this research question.

Discussing the peculiarities of two target populations justifies the hypothesis's feasibility that the existing curriculum needs to be modified. This can be achieved through needs analysis — accumulating information about the learners and then analyzing it to set precise goals and make certain decisions concerning the subsequent actions. Richards (6, 51) believes that the prime principle of the curriculum must be based upon an analysis of learners' needs. Similarly, Celce Murcia (1, 56) explains that we need to find a gap between two ends: what our learners can do now and what they need to know. Actually, "...this information includes the learners' needs and purposes for learning, their current abilities, and what they are expected to know and do with the language at different stages of the program" (1, 54). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were implemented in this paper. The research attempts to study needs analysis

held among learners and collect data employing questionnaires for the learners and EFL teachers of IUT and interviews with English teachers.

Existing Facilities. As for inventories that can be in handy in implementing this language curriculum, there are already sufficient auditoriums furnished with embedded loudspeakers in the corners, installed desktop computers, fixed overhead projectors, and library facilities that contain some textbooks used nowadays and ample space for studying. These existing amenities will be necessary to implement a new English curriculum. However, more textbooks will be needed to purchase to reach the efficacy of the new curriculum.

Moving to the *actors* that are expected to be involved in the realization of the proposal, they are students, teachers, and university administration, or as Zhao (11,907) describes, "people with expertise" and "people with interest". Regarding the teachers recruited to IUT, there are both international and local professionals. Their role is pivotal since *"teachers are the gatekeepers of the language policy, and they can either enhance or diminish the effectiveness of the policies"* (8, 938).

Besides, international teachers have from 21 to 45 years of experience teaching English in many aspects, while locally employed teachers have IELTS band scores between 7.5 and 8.5. Their teaching experiences also vary between 3 to 23 years. Hence, all EFL teachers' levels and expertise are expected to support the implementation of the modified curriculum. Meanwhile, IUT students will contribute by their direct experiences and probation of the new curriculum; their attained proficiency levels upon graduation period will reveal the language plan's efficacy. The university administration will be asked to assist in decision-making and realization processes of piloting along with procurement issues such as purchasing and supplying textbooks and their approval from INHA Korea.

Finally, piloting the curriculum will most probably take at least 2 or 3 full academic years for the present generation of university students to go through all stages and modules, which can then demonstrate the outcomes. The function of the EFL teachers here will be frequent meetings with the faculty and IUT administration to update with changes, analysis, and ongoing results of the newly established language plan. Such a strategy could help to observe the plan's inside and short observation.

Results and Discussion. First and foremost, there is a significant discrepancy among the two target populations of INHA University: students in Korea and students in Uzbekistan.

One reason is that the Uzbek population has different language inclinations like strengths and weaknesses, and needs. First, imposed curriculum from the macro-level that was initially aimed towards the Korean people (see figure 1) puts immense stress on listening and speaking skills throughout four semesters and only one semester of reading and writing courses. One reason for such a need to improve Korean ELLs' listening and speaking skills is because of Korean learners' inbuilt intonation, stress, and speech style. In fact, the Korean language uses neither syllable nor word stress and has almost no sentence stress concerning other sentences. Virtually all polysyllabic English words have at least one of the syllables stressed, while Korean words, on the contrary, sound very flat and unmusical. As a result, *"the differences that stressing*

one word can make to the meaning of a sentence are completely foreign to the Korean learner and require concentrated attention to be perceived or produced" (9, 328).

Linguistic Peculiarities of students. Given the above, INHA University in Incheon curriculum developers, knowing such peculiarities of the Korean population, must have stressed on perceiving and producing English through listening and speaking. Thus, for Korean ELLs, an English native speaker's speech may sound very "histrionic" — excessively dramatic and overdone. Similarly, Korean speaker's English speech "often sounds monotonous, bored and therefore, boring to the English ear; this can make Korean English difficult to understand" (9, 329).

As a result of the global IELTS test statistics analysis, a questionnaire conducted among the IUT students and professors, one can observe clear evidence of the need to change the curriculum focus from mainly listening and speaking-oriented to more integrated skills with increased emphasis on writing. First, according to IELTS website statistics for 2017 (3), the results of test-takers from Uzbekistan show the following data (see figure 3):

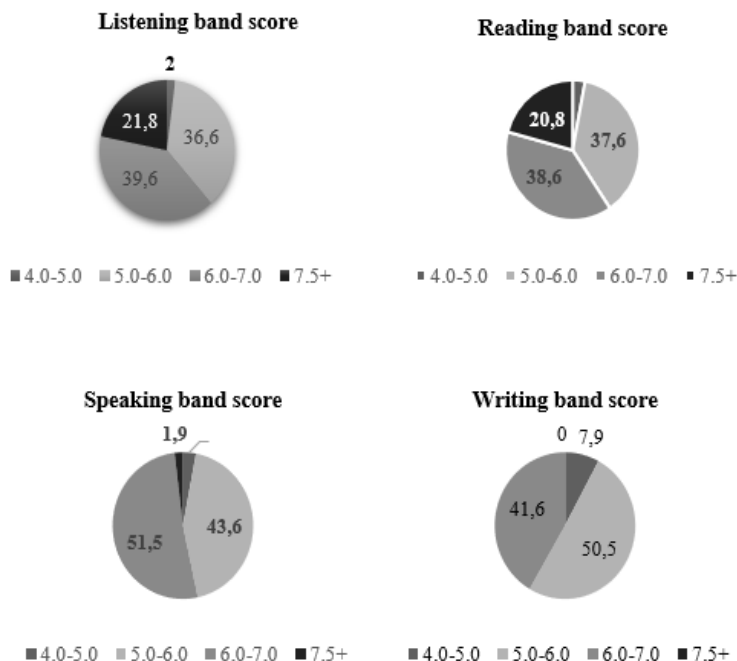
Figure 3: IELTS test statistics for 2017
Mean band score for the most frequent countries or regions of origin (Academic)

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall
Uzbekistan	5.63	5.63	5.27	5.61	5.60

As can be seen, mean band score distributions over all four skills are relatively close, ranging between 5.63 and 5.27. While listening, reading, and speaking skills are close to one another, writing score is slightly lagging. This data again shows that the Uzbek population should be provided with a curriculum that equally stresses all skills simultaneously with more emphasis on writing. Narrowing the scales of IELTS band scores towards IUT students, as the questionnaire shows, their overall band scores vary between 5.0 and over 7.5, with the majority with band scores 6.0–6.5 at about 54 per cent (see figure 2).

As for the sub-section scores (see figures 4 and 5), the proportions of listening and reading scores are relatively similar, ranging between 5.0 and 7.5. Meanwhile, over 90 per cent of students have their speaking between 5.0 and 6.0.

Figure 4: Distribution of IELTS band scores (by skills) of IUT students



Interestingly, although about 91 per cent of respondents claim that their writing is between 5.0 and 6.0, the number of those who have very low sub-scores for writing is also relatively more significant than that in other skills, at seven per cent who have IELTS 4.0-5.0. This again reflects the trends in global statistics for Uzbek populations; the first three skills are relatively at a similar level except writing, which is lower.

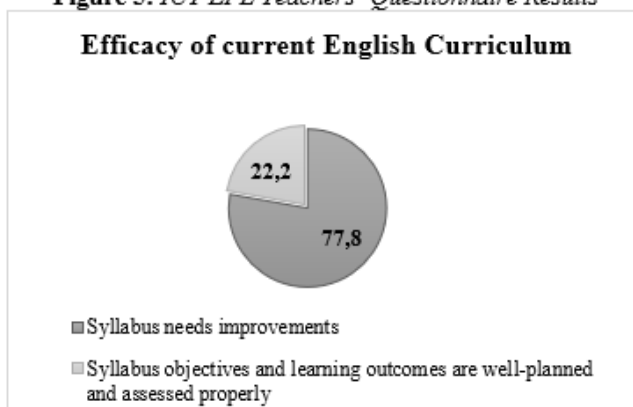
Cultural Peculiarities of students. Another effect that impedes the efficiency of the curriculum imposed by INHA Korea is probably culture. While one reason for an excessive emphasis on listening and speaking could be Korean culture; actually, Korean learners, despite their age, always feel shy or unsure to speak, in general. As Swan (9, 341) mentions, this is often triggered by their cultural perspective that to speak; one must be confident that whatever is said is correct. This could be interpreted so that their culture may prevent them from speaking ample English even in classrooms. According to their ingrained culture, their speech must carry correct information and accuracy, covering lexical and grammatical aspects and the validity of exchanged data. Presumably, there is little room for guessing, suggesting, and spontaneity in speaking, which of course, as Swan (9, 341) maintains, impacts Korean learners' participation level in class.

In contrast, the Uzbek population is usually known to be very gregarious and sociable, despite mistakes and the level of proficiency in the English language, they tend to be quite talkative anyway. However, there are some other aspects too. According to Sia (7,57), he maintains that international branch campuses (IBC) in Uzbekistan need to consider the culture of the Uzbek population when implementing methods or

curriculum in education. For example, he states that to the surprise of transnational faculty members, students even in IBCs may be sitting in the last rows of the classroom chatting with friends, playing games on laptops or messaging on their cell phones. The core of the problem in implementing foreign education methods and curriculum is that Uzbek learners are used to the teacher-led, spoon-feeding format of lessons. They often require that the teacher must teach and explain all concepts without even considering self-studying, *“they are not able to adopt an independent approach to learning and problem-solving, especially applying critical analysis to essay writing and coursework preparation”* (7, 58). This implies that the IUT curriculum needs to consider the linguistic abilities and needs of IUT learners and the cultural aspects to adapt the curriculum. This article once again solidifies the hypothesis that writing is one of the weakest skills of Uzbek learners.

Based on the questionnaire held with the EFL instructors of IUT, the majority (77.8 per cent) maintains that the textbooks are too easy for the learners. Furthermore, as we know, especially year-1 books focus mainly on listening and speaking (see figure 5).

Figure 5: IUT EFL Teachers' Questionnaire Results



As an explanation for the choice, Teacher 1 (see figure 6) claims that the curriculum must be reconstructed to cover the different levels of the learners and integrate all four skills. Meanwhile, another English teacher (Teacher 2) maintains that the existing curriculum does not consider the cultural aspect of the Uzbek population (see figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6: Teacher 1's opinion on the need to change the curriculum

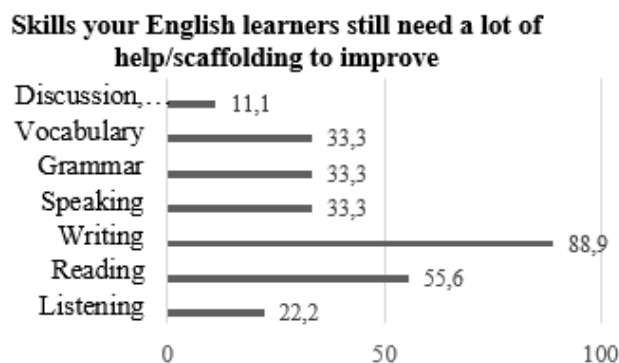
I can only speak for Academic English-2. An effective curriculum encourages learning in all students who hold different levels of English. I think the existing curriculum needs to be reconstructed to effectively reach different levels of students. It also needs to specifically state and integrate all four skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading) and how they are enhanced.

Figure 7: Teacher 2's opinion on the need to change the curriculum

Syllabus does not take into consideration the background of Uzbek students. Some subjects do not have foundation, for example, Technical Writing and Discussion would be better to start with writing paragraphs and extend it to writing theses (so the subject would last more more terms).

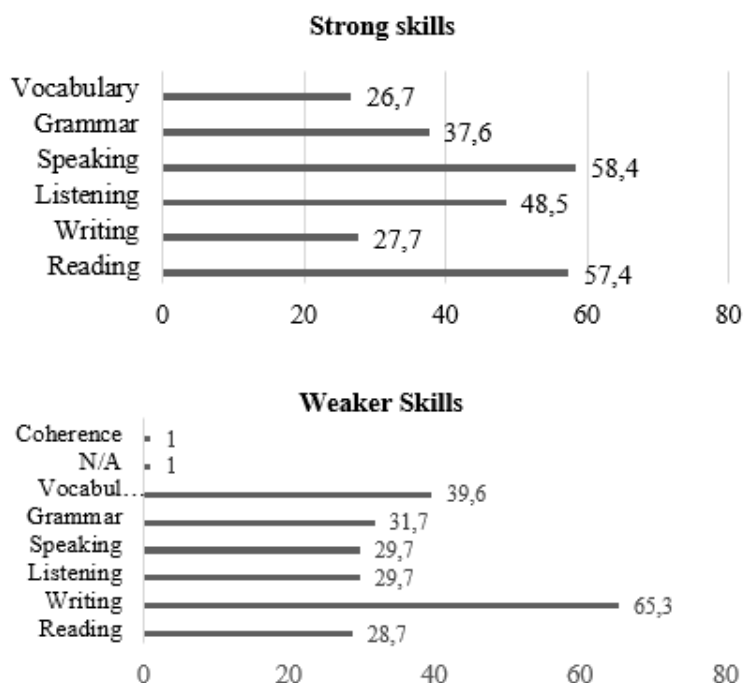
Interestingly, there seems to be a consensus among almost all teachers that one skill that needs immediate attention is writing while other skills are roughly at similar priorities (see figure 8).

Figure 8: *IUT teacher's opinions on the need to change the curriculum*



As for the needs analysis of IUT students held in the form of a questionnaire, the majority of the respondents indicate their listening, reading and speaking skills as their strengths at roughly 49, 58, and 59 per cent, respectively. Moreover, they indicate writing as the weakest one at 66 per cent (see figure 9). Thus, even personal opinion of students shows that they are relatively content about their listening, reading, and speaking skills but are unsure of their writing capabilities.

Figure 9: *Opinions of IUT students on their English proficiency*



Conclusion and Recommendations. Data collection and literature review convey that there is indeed a difference between Korean and Uzbek learners in terms of language capabilities, personal needs, and

culture. While the imposed curriculum is certainly tailored under the Korean population, it does not seem to fully equip IUT students to maintain, improve and attain better English results.

It is suggested that an alternative could be implemented to make the English curriculum fit the Uzbek population in IUT. First, as Celce-Murcia (1, 51) explains, this alternative curriculum will employ *the gradation* concept, which means moving from *an easier and lower level towards a more complex and higher level*. This can ensure a better penetration and adaptability of the curriculum for learners. In particular, the following changes are recommended:

A. A newly designed curriculum can be a four-year program instead of a two-year program that focuses heavily on listening and speaking skills. One way to do this would be to shift the consecutiveness of modules (reading and writing) and replace existing ones (see figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10: Existing English Curriculum of IUT

Semester	Modules	Hrs per week	Credit points	Focus
1	Academic English 1	3	2	Listening/speaking
1	Academic Reading	2	2	Reading strategies
2	Academic English 2	3	2	Listening/speaking
2	Technical Writing & discussion	2	1	Writing
3	Academic English 3	3	2	Integrated skills
4	Academic English 4	3	2	Integrated skills

Year-1 is expected to focus on students' writing and reading skills in academic aspects. Usually, first-year students struggle to write assignments and understand specific literature on core subjects because of the terminology and complex concepts. Thus, during the entire year-1, students will improve their weakest skills, such as writing strategies and reading strategies. Starting from year-2 until graduation, students will be taught Academic English in an integrated skills format. Although until the end of year-2, they can earn two credits per semester, starting from year-3 and onwards, it will drop to only one credit. One reason is that English should not deprive them of earning enough credits (at least 14) per semester since they will have many other core subjects on programming and computer languages. However, it will be just enough to motivate them to do English courses and improve their skills in a continuous mode.

Figure 11: Modified English Curriculum of IUT

Semester №	Modules	Hrs per week	Credit points	Focus
1	Technical Writing & Discuss	2	2	Writing
1	Academic Reading	2	2	Reading
2	Technical Writing and Discuss	2	2	Writing
2	Academic Reading	2	2	Reading
3	Academic English 1	3	2	Integrated skills
4	Academic English 2	3	2	Integrated skills
5	Academic English 3	3	1	Integrated skills
6	Academic English 4	3	1	Integrated skills
7	Academic English 5	3	1	Integrated skills
8	Academic English 5	3	1	Integrated skills

B. In addition, this continuous English curriculum would ensure they are working on all skills simultaneously, which eventually can help students earn IELTS 7.0 by graduation, which is expected to be introduced as a policy for future part of a requirement for all IUT students. This will necessitate changing the textbooks or using them differently. To make the transformation less harmful to IUT financial status, on top of purchasing new textbooks, modified utilization of existing textbooks also will be implemented (see figure 13).

At present, the year-1 English program uses *Skills for Success 4* and 5 for Academic English Courses focusing only on listening and speaking. Concurrently, *Great Writing 4* is used for Technical Writing and Discussion course, while *Focus 3* is used for the Academic Reading module. Year-2 uses the Life 6 (C2) level for the entire year (see figure 12).

Figure 12: Current textbooks used in IUT English Curriculum

Semester	Module	Textbook	Focus	Level
1	Academic English	Skills for Success	Listening, speaking	B2
1	Academic Reading	Focus 3	Reading	B2
2	Academic English	Skills for Success	Listening, speaking	C1
2	Technical Writing and Discussion	Great Writing 4	Writing	C1
3	Academic English	Life 6	Integrated Skills	C2
4	Academic English	Life 6	Integrated Skills	C2

Meanwhile, suggested for implementing new curriculum will use the following textbooks, which are the other levels from the same series and editions (see figure 13).

Figure 13: Proposed textbooks for IUT English Curriculum

Semester №	Module	Textbook	Focus	Level
1	Technical Writing & Discuss	Great Writing 3	Writing	B2
1	Academic Reading	Focus 3	Reading	B2
2	Technical Writing & Discuss	Great Writing 4	Writing	C1
2	Academic Reading	Focus 4	Reading	C1
3	Academic English 1	Skills for Success	Listening, Speaking	B2
		Skills for Success	Reading, Writing	
4	Academic English 2	Skills for Success	Listening, Speaking	C1
		Skills for Success	Reading, Writing	
5	Academic English 3	Life 5	Integrated Skills	C1
6	Academic English 4	Life 5	Integrated Skills	C1
7	Academic English 5	Life 6	Integrated Skills	C2
8	Academic English 6	Life 6	Integrated Skills	C2

According to Yoshimitsu (10, 256), micro or local planning at a level and the maintenance of language stability can be a dynamic process since this planning is not solely a design of texts, actions, and outcomes. Indeed, one should also consider different variables like the culture and language skills of the learners. The proposal put forward will require a piloting period of several full academic years until at least one generation taken in goes through all the phases of the proposed new curriculum for the students at this university. The outcomes of the implemented curriculum would show how much applicable it can be in the future of IUT.

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