Teaching Specialized Subjects in Foreign Languages at the Universities of Uzbekistan, Problems and Their Solutions

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Abstract: Objective: The research paper addresses the crucial necessity of preparing students as competent professionals capable of meeting the requirements of the modern world, with a focus on the essential role of mastering languages in this preparation. The primary goal is to pinpoint issues in teaching foreign languages in technical fields, offer practical solutions, and suggest effective language teaching methods for Uzbekistan universities.

Methods: The study utilizes author's research, various theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and practical insights, including in-depth analyses of cases, and group discussions to explore opinions and ideas. The practical experience and theories of famous scholars and linguists such as Cora Lindsay, Leila Ranta, Angela Hildyard, Nematov Khamid, and Alibek Rustamov have been scrutinized.

Results: The challenges identified, such as insufficient language proficiency, result from the lack of language requirements in technical fields, inadequate language instruction hours, and a lack of motivation among technical students. Proposed solutions involve introducing language requirements for admission, increasing dedicated language instruction hours, and encouraging educators to become proficient in foreign languages. Additionally, it is recommended to implement the comprehensive integration of Suggestopedia, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methods across all universities as a holistic approach to overcoming language proficiency challenges.

Keywords: urgent problems, demands, practical application, language exams, mechanisms, assignments, methodological point, textbooks, gadgets, model for the teaching, methods, strategies, language environment, suggestopedia, immersion, simulation.

INTRODUCTION

As it is known from history, many scientists considered it very important to master foreign languages. As noted by the famous psycholinguist Frank Smith; "One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way". This assertion not only resonates with the past but also gains increased relevance in the contemporary context of our rapidly evolving world. In this swiftly changing landscape, people's views, wishes, and demands are also changing. The development of social networks and the IT sector motivates a student to know foreign languages at least at a spoken level. Moreover, studies have demonstrated the cognitive benefits of learning another language regardless of a person's age.

In today's educational environment, the problem of training specialists who know foreign languages well is especially relevant. However, arousing the interest of students and training non-philological specialists to learn a language poses some difficulties for pedagogues. There are several problems, especially in the teaching of specialized subjects in foreign languages. Without

finding a solution to such daunting issues, it is impossible to see the positive effect of teaching foreign languages.

One of the first and most urgent problems of the formation of linguistic education in higher education institutions is that many students entering universities in technical specialties do not study a foreign language as an entrance exam, and as a result, most of them do not have enough linguistic knowledge. As an illustration, a foreign language requirement is not present in applying for majors in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology in Uzbek universities. The proposal is that a foreign language certificate must be required from all admitted students, though with lower requirements. For example, IELTS 5.5 or Duolingo 100 should be a prerequisite for technical majors as well. Although some universities such as Tashkent State University, the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, and Fergana Polytechnic Institute have similar language requirements, this does not relate to the vast majority of other institutes. By requiring technical majors to study a foreign language, universities can better prepare their students for success in the global marketplace. Furthermore, learning a foreign language can enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Bilingual individuals tend to be better at multitasking, have improved memory and attention, and exhibit greater creativity. These cognitive benefits are highly relevant to technical majors, as students in these fields are often required to tackle complex challenges and think outside the box. By developing these cognitive skills through the study of a foreign language, students can become more well-rounded and effective professionals.

The next issue is that, according to the curricula developed in technical universities, a very small number of practical hours are allocated for learning a foreign language (compared to specialized subjects, even in the world practice of teaching foreign languages a mere of 2 hours per week is included in curricula). Institutions are forced to limit the hours of humanities, giving priority to professional sciences, which hurts the final result of learning languages. Meanwhile, semester language exams can frequently be taken according to quite strict standards. One approach is for universities to reevaluate their curriculum and make foreign language courses a frequent mandatory component of the student's academic program. Additionally, universities can offer more language courses and provide students with the option to take additional language classes as electives such as Korean, Arabic, or French. Another way is to integrate language learning into technical courses and projects so that students can apply their language skills in real-world situations. One example of a university that applied this method is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). MIT offers a program called "Global Languages" which integrates language learning into technical courses and projects. Students can apply their language skills in real-world situations through hands-on projects and collaborations with international partners. In the theory put forward by Sandra Lee McKay, she criticizes current culture of learning theories, (especially those regarding Asian culture), saying that the "comparison of various non-western cultures with western ones suggests that in some ways the latter are the standard, and hence should provide the model for the teaching of English. This illustrates that Asian countries have much to acquire from the Western world to aim for high standards of language teaching.

Another way forward to boost a student's language skills is for a university to offer more exchange programs, which not only aid them in mastering their field but also learn a local language. Unfortunately, the majority of state universities in Uzbekistan do not provide students with enough exchange opportunities. The University of California, Berkeley, in the United States has various exchange programs and partnerships with Chinese universities, allowing students to study abroad and engage in cultural and academic exchange. During this time, the student is fully immersed in the language and culture, living with a Chinese host family and taking all of their classes in Mandarin. They also have the opportunity to participate in a technical internship at a local tech company, where they are required to communicate and work in Mandarin. In addition to the immersion experience, the student's language learning is also based on task-based learning. For example, they are given real-life tasks such as conducting interviews with Chinese professionals in the tech industry, writing technical reports in Mandarin, and presenting their findings in front of a Chinese audience. These tasks not only help the student improve their language skills but also give them valuable experience in using Mandarin in a professional,

technical context. This unique approach to language learning helps the student fulfill their academic requirements and prepares them for a successful career in the global tech industry.

Another crucial issue is the development of students' motivation to learn foreign languages. Students in technical majors may lack motivation to learn a foreign language for several reasons:

1. Limited time and heavy workload: Technical majors often have demanding coursework and intensive schedules, leaving students with little time or energy to dedicate to language learning.

2. Perceived lack of relevance: Students in technical majors may feel that learning a foreign language is not directly relevant to their future careers, and therefore they may prioritize other academic or professional skills over language acquisition.

3. Lack of interest: Some students simply may not have a personal interest or passion for learning a foreign language, and thus may struggle to find motivation to engage with the material.

Sometimes the territorial location of the educational institution can be of primary importance for the emergence of a foreign language communication environment. Therefore, regardless of the geographical location of the university, the artificial creation of such an environment allows for the formation of a stable inspiration for learning. In this regard, one of the effective ways to create a foreign language communication environment is to organize online and offline presentations in that language, open classes, international conferences, inter-university student exchanges, and interesting meetings. Such an approach requires a large-scale professional retraining of subject professors, who must have sufficient skills in foreign language speech (especially technical spoken language). If work is carried out based on such an approach, students will be motivated to learn foreign languages. Taking into account the specific features of teaching languages, John Amos Comenius noted that language learning should be based on gradualism, usefulness, consistency, strength, and the practice of giving independence, taking into account individual differences.

One of the most urgent problems of the teaching of specialized subjects in foreign languages in non-philological fields is the lack of specialist pedagogues who know foreign languages well. To solve this problem, the Ministry of Higher Education must implement specific policies. These include the setting of monthly salary increments for any employee who has a certificate indicating the level of language knowledge (IELTS, Duolingo, TOEFL, etc.), and appropriate rewards for specialists who create textbooks and manuals in foreign languages. It can motivate more teachers to master a foreign language. However, it is not easy for pedagogues to learn foreign languages in addition to their professional activities. The solution is to create textbooks, AI manuals, thematic and terminological dictionaries, audio and video blogs that can be used by both the student and the expert teacher. Using materials from Oxford University Press is one of the optimal solutions as these materials are created in a unique and innovative method. The press publishes materials across a wide range of subjects, from humanities and social sciences to science and medicine, providing comprehensive resources for students, educators, and researchers. It is of the utmost importance to materially and methodically enrich each subject by creating electronic textbooks and terminological dictionaries. Through such auxiliary manuals, any specialist can achieve the effect of conducting professional education in foreign languages to a certain extent.

Language integration teaching methods

Based on the above-mentioned principles, it is necessary to apply effective methods for teaching specialized subjects in foreign languages. The teaching method is a system of purposeful actions to organize educational activities for students, to ensure that they master the content and thereby achieve the educational goal. Educational techniques are specific actions and operations of the teacher, the purpose of which is to impart knowledge, develop skills and abilities, and stimulate the educational activities of students to solve specific problems of the educational process.

1) Task-based learning: In task-based learning, students learn the language by completing specific tasks or projects related to their field of study. For instance, engineering students might be assigned a project to design and present a technical solution in a foreign language, or business students might be tasked with writing a business report in a foreign language.

2) Content-based instruction: Content-based instruction involves teaching the language through technical content that is relevant to the student's area of study. For instance, students in a medical program might use medical journals or case studies in a foreign language to learn and practice their language skills.

3) Communicative language teaching: This method focuses on using the language for authentic communication. As an illustration, students studying environmental science might engage in debates and discussions about renewable energy sources or environmental policies in a foreign language.

4) Blended learning: Blended learning combines traditional classroom instruction with online resources. For example, students might use language learning apps to practice vocabulary and grammar or participate in virtual simulations that allow them to practice technical conversations and interactions in a foreign language.

5) Vocabulary and terminology building: This method focuses on teaching technical vocabulary and terminology specific to the student's field of study. Computer science students might use flashcards and word lists to learn programming language terminology in a foreign language.

7) Role-playing and simulations: Role-playing and simulations allow students to practice real-life technical communication scenarios in a foreign language. For example, engineering students might engage in a simulation of a technical project meeting, where they must communicate and problem-solve in a foreign language.

Another successful teaching method is suggestopedia developed by Bulgarian educator Georgi Lozanov in the 1970s. It is based on the idea that people can learn more effectively when they are relaxed and in a positive mental state. It emphasizes the importance of creating a comfortable and confident atmosphere in the classroom and incorporates various techniques such as art and music into language instruction. The pedagogy of suggestopedia involves three main phases: deciphering, concert session, and elaboration.

1. During the deciphering phase, students are introduced to written or spoken content, often with a translation provided.

2. The concert session includes both active and passive sessions, with the teacher reading the text at a normal speed and the students listening while relaxing to background music.

3. In the elaboration phase, students demonstrate their learning through acting and songs.

Some variations of suggestopedia also include a production phase, where students spontaneously communicate and interact in the target language without interruption or correction.

Here are a couple of examples of universities that successfully implemented Suggestopedia:

Georgetown University - School of Continuing Studies (Washington, D.C., USA):

Georgetown University has been known for its innovative language programs, and the School of Continuing Studies, in particular, has implemented teaching methods that align with Suggestopedia principles. They have focused on creating a positive and relaxed learning environment, integrating music, art, and movement to enhance language learning experiences.

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (Sofia, Bulgaria):

As the birthplace of suggestopedia, Sofia University has naturally been a center for its application. While the specific application may vary across departments or language programs, the university has integrated suggestopedia-inspired techniques into language teaching and has been a hub for research and development in this field.

Furthermore, the introduction of a famous teaching method CLIL into a university class is one of the most successful measures. CLIL, which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning, is an approach to teaching and learning that combines the teaching of a subject with the teaching of a second language. This approach aims to develop both students' language skills and their understanding of a particular subject, such as history, science, or mathematics, through the medium of the second language. The CLIL approach is based on the premise that students learn best when they are engaged in meaningful, real-life tasks and that learning a second language is more effective when it is integrated with the learning of other subjects. In a CLIL classroom, students are exposed to and encouraged to use the second language in context, as they explore and understand the subject matter.

In a CLIL classroom, teachers use a range of strategies and techniques to support students in learning both the content and the language. These may include the use of visual aids, realia, and other resources to help make the content more accessible to students, as well as the use of scaffolding and differentiation to support students with varying language proficiency levels.

Here's an example of how CLIL might be implemented in a university course:

Scenario: Teaching Environmental Science in English. Course Title: Environmental Science and Sustainability

Subject Matter: The course focuses on environmental science, covering topics such as climate change, renewable energy sources, and environmental policies.

Language Integration: The medium of instruction for the course is English, even though it may not be the student's first language. All lectures, discussions, and materials, including textbooks and readings, are presented in English.

Interactive Discussions: Class discussions and debates are an integral part of the course, encouraging students to express their opinions and ideas in English. Students are prompted to discuss environmental issues, share their perspectives, and engage in debates about sustainable practices.

Field Trips and Experiences: CLIL involves real-life experiences that go beyond the classroom. In this case, students might go on field trips to environmental research centers, and renewable energy facilities, or participate in community-based sustainability initiatives. Engaging with professionals in the field provides opportunities for students to use English in authentic contexts.

Multimodal Resources: In addition to traditional lectures, instructors may use multimedia resources, documentaries, and scientific articles in English to diversify the learning experience. Visual aids, graphs, and charts further support comprehension and language acquisition.

Renowned universities that integrated the CLIL teaching method are the following:

University of Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä, Finland):

Finland is known for its successful education system, and the University of Jyväskylä has been at the forefront of implementing innovative teaching methods, including CLIL. With a focus on bilingual education, the university integrates language learning with subject content across various disciplines, providing students with a rich and immersive learning experience.

University of Maastricht (Maastricht, Netherlands):

The University of Maastricht has embraced CLIL principles in its approach to education. Particularly in programs such as International Business, European Studies, and other multidisciplinary fields, students have the opportunity to study subjects in a language other than their native language. This not only enhances their language proficiency but also allows for a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

In conclusion, it is essential to prepare our students to become competent professionals who can meet the demands of the modern world. The main task of every pedagogue is to create a mature expert in his field. However, the demand for such personnel in the world market will also depend

on how well they master foreign languages. It is one of the most urgent issues to investigate existing problems and eradicate them to achieve a result. The requirement of a foreign language for admission, increasing the number of hours allocated for language learning, and motivating pedagogues to master a foreign language can be integrated into higher education institutions. Modern methods of teaching foreign languages should be developed and applied for each university class. Task-based learning, content-based instruction, and communication language teaching must be included. The application of Suggestopedia and CLIL methods of teaching should be effectively implemented in all universities. The future outcome depends on the dedication to implementing these particular measures. Failing to incorporate these steps makes improving the language proficiency of students in technical fields a significant hurdle. Addressing these challenges and providing high-quality education ensures not only the academic success of students but also establishes a strong basis for the future prosperity and global competitiveness of Uzbekistan.

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