

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS MAJORING AGRICULTURE

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Abstract: *The identification of specialized learners' goal tasks is a critical initial step in language teaching and learning. Schools in Uzbekistan that provide vocational education and training (VET) programs in agriculture frequently employ English language programs that are not tailored to meet the target language demands of this specialized set of students. This report summarizes the results of a needs assessment that looked at the English language requirements of agricultural technicians in Uzbekistan. It also investigated how these demands are seen by actors working in agricultural sectors and those interested in this group's education.*

Keywords: *agricultural institutes, English language*

INTRODUCTION

Workplace globalization and the continuous usage of English have resulted in a rise in demand for language courses targeting vocational and/or workplace demands. Agriculture is a major vocational sector in Uzbekistan, which has benefited from globalization and international trade agreements during the previous two decades. These accords have meant not just worldwide integration for the country, but also the requirement for agricultural experts to improve their English language abilities. Uzbekistan is mostly an agricultural country. Many of the employees are agricultural technicians who play an important part in the growth of this vital sector and are engaged in all divisions of the agricultural business. They contribute to human capital and have the ability to boost agricultural output levels in order to compete in a highly competitive worldwide market. Technicians, in general, provide technical help in agricultural production, agricultural machinery and supplies, technical supervision of agrochemicals, and quality control, among other things. They are adaptable professionals whose duties, responsibilities, employment positions, and work domains differ depending on their technical knowledge and abilities, experience, and studies. In terms of education, Uzbekistan, for example, provides secondary and postsecondary vocational education and training (VET) programs in agriculture. High school VET programs give students with specialized training in the area, prepare them for the workforce, and support post-secondary study continuity. VET programs equip students with high level

technical and specialized knowledge and abilities, as well as increase leadership qualities. If a high school graduate obtains a tertiary VET professional or technical degree, they can work as high-level technicians. Technical courses linked to the field of study are taught in the Uzbek language within the VET agriculture program, particularly at the secondary school level, and hence the English language tends to play a secondary role. For example, pupils only study one English topic for two hours every week. English is taught as a foreign language in this environment, with a curriculum, language programs, and textbooks that are standardized at the national level but are not geared to handle the particular agricultural context. As a result, a broad English approach to language instruction may triumph over a more specialised one that addresses the students' target language requirements. Furthermore, EFL teachers at these institutions are rarely given training on the subject and issues that are more relevant to the specialized set of pupils with whom they work. Because there may be a possible disconnect between the teaching and learning of English and the language abilities required by the labor sector, this circumstance frequently leaves learners ill-prepared for the demands of their future professions. As a result, "high-quality vocational programs that embed core academic skills into an occupationally focused curriculum" are critical. With this purpose in mind, the current study explores the amount to which the English language is required for the job of technicians, as well as the extent to which these demands are understood by various industry players, as well as the education and training of these individuals. Examining the perspectives of school professionals is especially important in this respect since, at different levels (school and classroom), teachers' perspectives impact curricular decision-making. Because previous agricultural research is sparse, this is an exploratory study based on a qualitative methodological approach, with the overarching goal of discovering new ideas and insights in an area where little is known.

The major concentration remains general English. All teachers, including the principal, agreed that agricultural students needed to master both general and technical English. Interestingly, while admitting a lack of acquaintance with the students' field of study, the EFL teachers recommended that students should be taught not just general English but also English focused on the students' discipline. Furthermore, all five educators agreed that broad English should be taught to 9th and 10th grade students, with an emphasis on technical information related to the students' speciality for 11th graders. Regarding the language material given to agriculture program students, both EFL teachers reported that their courses tended to be more focused on general English and broad subjects. However, based on their intuitions, both teachers attempted to

incorporate or redirect some general topics to the agricultural area, as neither the program (syllabus) nor the teaching materials provided by the Ministry of Education covered technical areas or technical language related to the students' field of study. They also stated that in order to teach the language based on agricultural issues, they had to explore the Internet for additional materials to supplement their sessions. For example, in an attempt to teach agricultural English, a student wrote, "I created a couple of lesson plans in connection with the agricultural field, which was meant to teach vocabulary and to understand processes like photosynthesis... they [students] should learn more vocabulary related to agriculture, they should know processes in English that are related to this field, for example, plants, photosynthesis" and Finally, he was the only English instructor who periodically collaborated with a technical teacher to devise educational activities relevant to the students' area of study. However, the issues covered in such activities were more concerned with environmental sustainability than with agriculture in general [3; 2]. English is seen as a tool for advancing one's employment prospects. Eight of the ten participants (from school and firm) agreed that learning English offered technicians an edge in terms of employment chances and opportunity to work/travel overseas. "There are a lot of technicians and agronomists who receive fruit from other countries; it's a job where companies send technicians to do quality control," one technician explained [5;8]. Another technician stated, "When you are younger, after you finish high school, you may be offered a job to work abroad as quality control in the United States." [7; 3]. "As a machine operator, it [knowledge of English] would give me the opportunity to work on a ship to operate in a cryogenic room," another worker added. [6;2]. CONCLUSION Other respondents stated that English was an important tool in assisting technicians in obtaining better employment positions and, as a result, boosting their salary. As one technician put it, "you can find a better job that is better paid, and there are opportunities to work overseas." Similarly, the school administrator remarked that "English proficiency can be much more decisive than technical aspects, so English proficiency in agriculture is that important, especially with exporting companies".

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