

# Re-Evaluating Business English Instruction for Undergraduate Economics Students: A Curriculum Proposal for The Tashkent Institute of Management and Economics

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**Abstract:** This paper critically examines the current English language syllabus implemented for first-year students majoring in finance, economics, and taxation at the Tashkent Institute of Management and Economics (TIME). While the course aims to develop both general and professional English skills, it suffers from a lack of needs-based curriculum development and attempts to compress both general and business English instruction into a single academic year. Drawing upon classroom experiences and relevant pedagogical research, this paper argues for a redesigned two-year curriculum: one year dedicated to general English language acquisition, followed by a second year focusing on business and professional English relevant to the students' academic disciplines. The proposal is grounded in language acquisition theory, content-based instruction, and curriculum alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

**Keywords:** Professional English skills, English instruction, Economics Students.

**Introduction:** In the context of a globalized economy, proficiency in English is essential for professionals in finance and economics. For university students in Uzbekistan, particularly those at the Tashkent Institute of Management and Economics (TIME), English offers access to international knowledge, research, and global job markets. As such, English is included in the core curriculum for freshmen majoring in finance, economics, and taxation. However, the current syllabus, while ambitious, fails to scaffold students' language development in a way that aligns with their disciplinary needs and linguistic proficiency levels.

Research on English language curriculum design (e.g., Graves, 2000; Nunan, 2004) emphasizes the importance of aligning course content with learners' needs and professional requirements. While the current program addresses general and business English skills, it lacks a needs-based approach and fails to provide a structured pathway for students to develop the language proficiency required in

professional contexts. This paper proposes an alternative approach based on language acquisition theories and curriculum design principles.

## Problem Statement

The current syllabus titled "Xorijiy Til (Ingliz Tili)" is designed to introduce students to both general and business English over the course of two semesters. However, it suffers from several shortcomings that hinder its effectiveness:

1. **Absence of Needs Analysis:** No evidence suggests that the syllabus was informed by diagnostic tests, placement assessments, or interviews with students and faculty to determine their specific language needs (Richards, 2001). As a result, the curriculum does not address the actual language demands of finance, economics, or taxation students.
2. **Overgeneralization of Content:** While business topics are included, they are not tailored to the specific terminologies and communication contexts

encountered in fields like finance or taxation. For example, topics such as "Travel," "Hotel reservation," and "Wild World" dilute the relevance to students' professional contexts (Belcher, 2006).

3. **Insufficient Duration and Misaligned Progression:** The syllabus attempts to develop both general linguistic competence and business communication skills within a single academic year. This compressed timeframe results in superficial coverage and cognitive overload (Long, 2000), which undermines effective learning.

These issues reflect a misalignment between the curricular content, the instructional time, and the linguistic and professional development goals for students in economic disciplines.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The proposed redesign is informed by several pedagogical and linguistic frameworks that emphasize the importance of language acquisition theory, needs analysis, and sequenced language progression:

- **Cummins' (1981) BICS and CALP Framework:** Cummins posits that students must first develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) before advancing to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The latter is essential for mastering the specialized language used in academic and professional settings. The current syllabus attempts to bypass this essential progression by introducing both general and business English simultaneously.
- **Content-Based Instruction (CBI):** Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) argue that integrating content knowledge with language instruction enhances motivation and contextual learning. Business English instruction should thus be based on real-world financial and economic content, facilitating more relevant and effective learning.
- **CEFR Language Progression:** According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), language learners should progress through sequenced stages of language proficiency, from A2 (basic) to B2 (independent). Attempting to condense this progression into a single academic year is unrealistic without establishing an adequate foundation of general English proficiency.

### **Proposed Solution: A Two-Year Modular English Curriculum**

#### **Year One: General English Development (A2–B1 CEFR)**

The first year of the proposed curriculum should focus on building general English proficiency. This includes fundamental aspects of grammar, vocabulary acquisition, reading and listening strategies, and both oral and written fluency. Textbooks such as Gateway B1

or English File Pre-Intermediate would provide the necessary structure for scaffolding instruction.

#### **Instructional Emphasis:**

- **Mastery of core grammatical structures** (e.g., tenses, modals, conditionals)
- **Acquisition of general vocabulary**, with emphasis on academic word lists (Coxhead, 2000)
- **Development of everyday communicative tasks**, such as interviews, presentations, and summarizing texts
- **Introduction to academic study skills in English**, such as note-taking, referencing, and paragraph writing

This phase is designed to establish a solid foundation of language skills, preparing students for more advanced study in the second year.

#### **Year Two: Business English and Professional Communication (B1–B2 CEFR)**

In the second year, the focus shifts to business and professional English relevant to finance, economics, and taxation. This stage involves discipline-specific language and texts, including business communication skills such as writing reports, financial analysis, and engaging in professional discussions.

#### **Key Components:**

- **Business correspondence:** Emails, memos, formal letters (Bhatia, 1993)
- **Oral skills:** Meetings, negotiations, presentations
- **Reading financial and economic texts**, including reports and news articles from sources like Bloomberg
- **Writing:** Business plans, CVs, reports, and executive summaries
- **Use of real-life case discussions** from international financial contexts

Appropriate course materials, such as The Business 2.0 (B1–B2) and Business Result, Market Leader, would guide instruction. Both years would be assessed through performance-based tasks (e.g., presentations, written reports), portfolios, and traditional assessments (tests, quizzes) that reflect both general and business language skills.

#### **Implementation Considerations**

Successful implementation of the proposed curriculum requires careful consideration of the following factors:

- **Teacher Training:** Instructors must be trained in both Business English methodology and financial discourse to effectively deliver Year Two content. This training ensures that teachers can effectively scaffold students' learning (Harmer, 2007).

- **Placement Testing:** A diagnostic test should be administered at the start of the program to determine students' initial proficiency levels and ensure they are streamed appropriately or provided additional support if needed.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** Collaboration with subject matter experts from the finance and taxation faculties can help ensure that the business English content aligns with the students' academic and professional needs.
- **Material Development:** Using locally contextualized business case studies and economic data in English will enhance the relevance and engagement of the materials (Flowerdew, 1998).

## **CONCLUSION**

The current English language program at the Tashkent Institute of Management and Economics, while ambitious, fails to adequately address the specific language needs of finance, economics, and taxation students. The lack of scaffolding, overgeneralized content, and misaligned progression inhibit students' ability to develop the necessary communicative and professional language skills. A sequenced two-year program—beginning with general English and followed by business English—provides a pedagogically sound alternative that aligns with international language learning standards and meets the professional demands of the global economy. The proposed curriculum aims not only to improve language proficiency but also to empower students with the communicative tools required for success in their academic and future professional careers.

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