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MATERIALS AND RESOURCES REVIEW

Abstract: This article is about materials and resources review in teaching English. In this article it is spoken about how to develop communicative competences and the language skills development sections where reading, writing and making presentations are mentioned.

Key words: obvious, mismatch, communicative, syllabus, develop skills, sections reading, writing, presentations, headings, material, students, to practice.

Language: English

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Introduction

Aim

The aim of this area of research for the baseline study is the analysis of the teaching materials ESP teachers currently use in their classroom practice.

Materials and Methods

The data collected were derived mostly from lesson observations (71) and syllabi developed institutionally based on the Ministry's standard curriculum (13) collected from three universities during the fieldwork.

The syllabi available for analysis provide a very limited picture as only three universities submitted their documents and syllabi. The data available shows a confusion in the meta language institutions use: in some universities the term 'curriculum' is used while in others 'syllabus', 'schedule' and 'calendar plan' are used for the same type of documents with themes, grammar and lexical material, aims and number of hours noted. For the purposes of this study we use the word "standard" to define state standards, 'curriculum' for the Ministry curriculum and 'syllabus' for an institutional syllabus derived from the Ministry document.

The researchers report that 75% of the lessons observed followed the institutional syllabi which must be developed in line with the standard Ministry curriculum. Although teachers claimed that they follow the institutional syllabus developed in line with standard curriculum sent out by the Ministry, many institutions base their syllabi on published materials and coursebooks: 62% institutions use Scale Up (Bakieva et al, 2014), 23% use English for ESP Students (Abdalina, 1996), and 15% use Practical Course of English for Non-Philological Students (Ismailov et al (2011) and others. The teachers and heads of departments complained of a mismatch between the curriculum and institutional syllabi. They pointed out that their syllabi derived from the prescribed textbook Scale Up do not match the standard curriculum, which does not even include Scale Up on its list of suggested books.

There is an obvious mismatch between the communicative aims stated in the syllabus documents - e.g. "to develop communicative competences" - and the language skills development sections where reading, writing and making presentations are mentioned in the introductory part of the syllabi, and the traditional headings in the tables in the syllabus documents (38% of the documents available) such as

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“Grammar material”, “Lexical material” and “Aim”, which show that students are expected to practise mostly grammar and vocabulary building. Aims stated in those syllabi are vague and focus on speaking and grammar and vocabulary building, e.g. “To develop oral speech, to fix lexical and grammatical material”, while major skills such listening, reading and writing are not mentioned. The description of grammar and phonetic materials (e.g. There is/there are constructions/Imperative mood/sounds i. e... etc.) illustrate the gap between the aim of “communicative competence” and the actual structural approach employed in most institutions, as well as between the desired level of students (B2 according to the state curriculum) and the reality teachers foresee.

Teachers and heads of department expressed their concerns about students’ language level, which according to the National standards expressed in the curriculum must be B2. When asked whether students actually reach this level by the end of the course, all the respondents stated that fewer than half of their students are able to achieve that level. Moreover, one syllabus even starts with ABC and reading rules, indicating that the department expects that students’ level of language proficiency will be beginner or elementary (A1 or even below).

31% of the syllabi available contain the heading “Pedagogical and technological methods”, but with quite unclear items, e.g. “Interactive”, “Communicative”, “Keys”, “Pinboard”, “Suggestopedia” and others. 69% of the institutions surveyed allocate around 70% of hours for classroom instruction and 30% for independent study. The topics for the independent study (e.g. “Youth today”, “The pride of Uzbekistan”, “The climate of Great Britain”) are given, and the number of hours allocated for each topic are prescribed in the institutional syllabi. In order to research existing situations with independent study, which is a very important component of the higher education system, in more depth, further work should be done in Phase 2. More evidence on how it is incorporated into the institutional teaching programme, including assessment and any assistance students are offered, is needed.

Teaching materials The research showed that three categories of materials are used in the institutions surveyed:

Nationally -published materials According to the national curriculum (2013), the textbooks

recommended for use include English for ESP Students (Abdalina, 1996), or Practical Course of English for Non-Philological Students (Ismailov et al (2011), both published in Uzbekistan, or others on a list. Teachers in 38% of the institutions surveyed use the two recommended textbooks mentioned above. The majority (62%) use the book Scale Up, published locally in 2014 and recommended by the Ministry for teaching ESP students. The majority of the books (93%) recommended in the curriculum are published in Uzbekistan. The rest (7%) include the books published in Russia, e.g. English for Journalists (Telen, 1992), and Great Britain, e.g. English Grammar in Use (Murphy, 2002).

Internationally -published materials The EnSPIRe researchers report that many teachers use internationally published textbooks like Headway (Soars, 2010, OUP) (8¹), Inside Out (Kay & Jones, 2003) (3), Straightforward (Clandfield, 2007, Macmillan)(7) and The Business (Richardson, Kavanagh & Sydes with Emmerson, Macmillan 2012) (7).

Teacher-made hand-outs or manuals Some teachers use “metodichka” developed in-house for institutional use to fit their students’ narrow ESP disciplines, e.g. English for biologists (1), English for students of nature (1). Some teachers (20% of the teachers observed) supplement textbooks by various teaching materials including videos and handouts taken from different sources, mainly from the internet. The most frequently-used materials are shown in the following diagram: 1

Analysis of teaching materials

Internationally -published materials

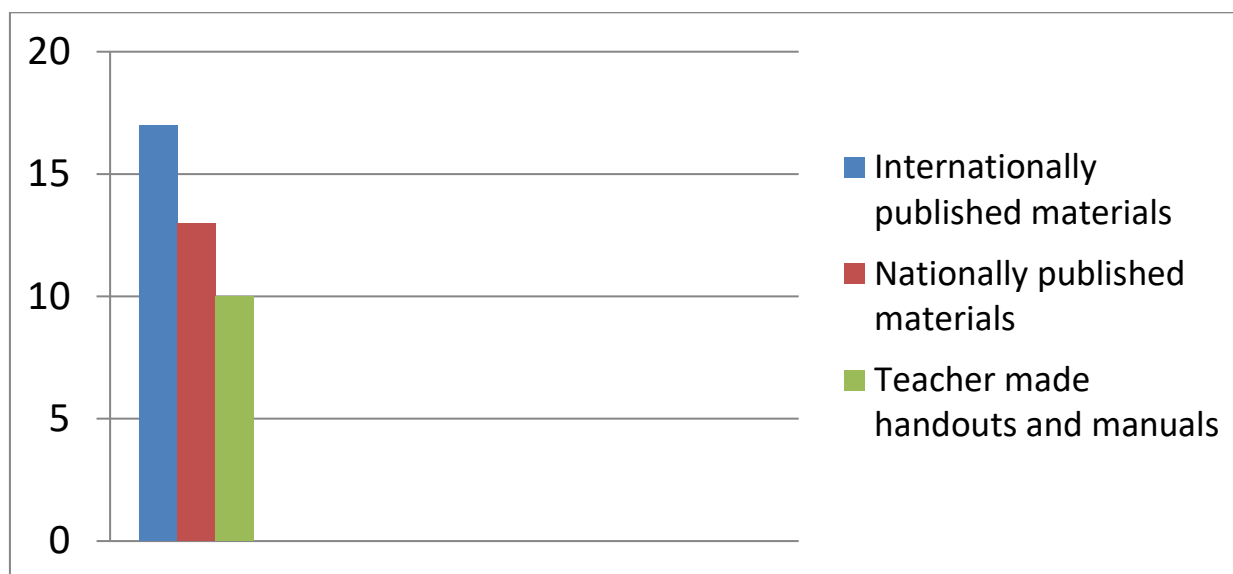
Internationally published textbooks like Headway (Soars, 2010, OUP), Inside Out (Kay & Jones, 2003) and Straightforward (Clandfield, 2007, Macmillan) have a well-established reputation in the world and offer good quality teaching materials including digital resources. These textbooks are written for teaching general English and are thus not suitable for ESP students. The data obtained from the Lesson Observation instrument show that the books mentioned above are used not only in Year 1, the focus of which is EGP, but in some cases also Years 2 and 3 as well which should be ESP oriented. The research showed that international EGP materials are used with the following frequencies in the institutions surveyed: Year 1- 45%, Year 2- 41%, and Year 3 –14%.

¹ The number indicates how many teachers in the institutions surveyed use this source.

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1 – Diagram



Nationally -published materials In most (62% of syllabi available) of the institutions teachers use a newly published book *Scale Up* for the ESP classes. This book, published in Uzbekistan, mostly covers general English (e.g. “Ubiquity of English”, “Global information and you”), study skills materials (e.g. “Learning strategies”, “Effective study skills”) and some elements of EAP (e.g. “Paragraph writing”, “Argumentative writing”, “Creative writing”). In the interviews conducted during the fieldwork, the heads of departments expressed their worries saying that the textbooks for ESP students “are written by linguistic specialists but for nonlinguistic institutions”. It was also said that the materials reportedly cover mainly general topics, lacking proper understanding of the vocational context and needs of ESP students. It is also clear from the research carried out for the EnSPIRe project that students’ needs are mostly professional (EPP) rather than academic (EAP).

The analysis of textbook *Scale Up* (see appendix A) shows that the book aims at B2 level students, and contains rather complicated language from the very beginning, e.g. ubiquity, inevitable, inveterate, infringement of copyright, meta-cognition. However, at the moment the language level of the majority of ESP students is well below the B2 target and as the heads of departments state that “less than half of their students are able to achieve that level”, the language level of the book seems rather questionable.

The syllabi analysis show that the syllabus developers who use *Scale Up* as a main textbook tried to address their learners’ level of language proficiency in various ways, e.g. instead of the four lessons allocated for one unit, they allocate from 8 to 14 lessons. Lesson observation analysis shows that teachers also try to adjust the book to address the needs and level of students (up to 50%).

Teacher-made hand-outs or manuals

According to the lesson observation data results, additional teaching materials are widely used in the lessons. They are handouts (both taken from the internet and teacher-made worksheets), and in-house published manuals (‘metodichka’) developed for institutional use, e.g. English for biologists, English for students of nature, English for specialty. In ESP departments teachers are required to prepare “metodichkas” to cover areas of specialty of their students. “Metodichkas” often contain materials (mostly photocopied) collected from different sources. In many cases these ‘metodichkas’ are of poor quality as they are published by teachers and departments who lack training in materials design. They may also violate international copyright.

The analysis of “metodichkas” shows that they contain texts on a particular specialty (e.g. Weaving, Textile production, Different food molecules) with various tasks around them. The headings in the tables of contents - Phonetics, Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading text, Reading tasks - demonstrate that listening, speaking and writing are not presented at all. A few “metodichkas” have some graphic organizers, tables and other illustrations. However, because all lessons are designed in the same way throughout the whole manual the tasks become boring and not interesting. (See Appendix B with an analysis of sample “metodichkas”).

Research done in Russian ESP institutions reported widespread use of similar in-house institutional ‘metodichkas’ which have the same type of texts and activities: “a selection of texts on the student’s specialty, a number of tasks for them, e.g. comprehension questions, vocabulary and grammar exercises” (see Winetroube & Kuznetsova (eds) 2002).

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Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the research done:

1) There is a confusion in meta language used for curriculum, syllabus, programmes and other items related to materials development.

2) The institutions surveyed use various approaches in developing institutional syllabi.

3) There is no clear guidance on syllabus and courses that institutions need to produce.

4) Material developers lack understanding of principles and methodology suitable for teaching ESP students.

5) Materials teachers use include internationally produced books, nationally produced ones including “methodichkas” which need to be revised and improved in line with the research findings and State standards requirements and modern principles of ESP materials design and methodology².

Limitations and further work

The following limitations hinder the research progress: the limited number of universities visited so far and the lack of an efficient tool for gathering data on materials.

The researchers had difficulties in analyzing the obtained data related to teaching materials. The

Lesson Observation form the researchers used in their fieldwork has a vague item i.e. “Does the teacher adapt or supplement the textbooks/materials?” in response to which the researchers just noted that teachers adapted or supplemented the textbook with no clear indication of how much teachers adapted or supplemented the main textbook.

The expanded number of universities, suggested revised Lesson observation form as well as a proper questionnaire and the collection of teacher-produced materials including “metodichkas” and handouts in phase 2 will give an opportunity to get more precise data in order to get a clearer picture and assess better how teachers use teaching materials.

Moreover the following work should be done:

1) Agreement on meta language used for curriculum, syllabus, programmes and other terminology related to material development should be developed, standardized and included in a baseline glossary.

2) Institutions must have clear guidance and training on syllabus and course development.

3) Materials developers should be trained.

4) Materials must be developed/revised/improved in line with the findings of the research done.

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² See Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2006a), which calls for the ‘development of effective

methods for teaching foreign languages’.

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