ICT STUDY IN ENGLISH IN THE EYES OF POLISH AND KYRGYZ STUDENTS

Marek Milosz¹, Nella Israilova², Elzbieta Milosz¹

¹ Lublin University of Technology (POLAND)
² Iskhak Razzakov Kyrgyz State Technical University (KYRGYZSTAN)

Abstract

The ICT industry is amenable to globalisation. In the global market operating ICT companies the most commonly used language is English. As a consequence, companies need specialists fluent in this language, including elements of the jargon of the trade. At the same time, higher education in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia is gradually upgrading. One of the directions is the internationalisation of education. In the area of ICT internationalisation studies primarily means the development and implementation of study curricula in English.

The requirements of the labour market in the area of ICT are recognised by both students and teachers. This paper presents the results of research into the interest of undergraduate ICT students in continuing postgraduate education in English.

During the study, mainly three hypotheses were tested:

H1. ICT undergraduate students are ready and willing to study in English at Master's level.

H2. The primary motive for studying in English is a higher salary at work.

H3. Fear of studies in English is the main de-motivator in choosing this option.

The research was carried out by a questionnaire among ICT students of two technical universities: the Lublin University of Technology (Lublin, Poland) and the Iskhak Razzakov Kyrgyz State Technical University (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan). The study involved more than 70% of the ICT undergraduate students. Both survey groups were subjected to the same methodology of research and processing of results.

The paper presents the research methodology and results of research. Differences between the perception of the problem by the Polish and Kyrgyz ICT students are discussed in detail.

Keywords: globalization of ICT industry, study in English, students' readiness.

1 INTRODUCTION

The special sensitivity of the ICT industry to internationalization is due to the fact that both software and ICT services are easily distributed through computer networks [1], [2]. The capabilities of modern communication tools allow IT specialists to work in international teams, where English is the working language [3].

That is why the universities face the task in parallel with the professional preparation of the conduct and language training of students, which will make it possible to widely use specialized technical English, including ICT jargon [4].

The Kyrgyz Republic has been consistently modernizing the system of higher education for several years. The modernization process consists in borrowing the best experience of international higher education, improving the quality of education [5]. The process is determined by the transition to the Bologna system, the three-stage preparation, the growth of academic mobility, the openness to international educational programs and the support of the state in this direction of development. Kyrgyz Republic uses different educational programmes to support of this process [6].

Many universities in Poland, following the recommendations of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, are developing programs for the professionalization and internationalization of the education system [7], [8] and it modernization [9] to adjust programs to the industry needs [10], [11]. The level of internationalization of education in Polish universities is one of the lowest among the OECD countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) [12].
2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

The results of the researches [13] showed a high level of satisfaction of the undergraduates of the Lublin University of Technology (LUT). LUT decided to use the results of the conducted research and prepare research in the field of ICT in English. In May 2016, the Lublin University of Technology (LUT) conducted a research among students in computer science (CS). The research was aimed at identifying the demand for training in English. From a scientific point of view, the studies were intended to validate or refute the following hypotheses [14]:

H1. LUT students are ready and willing to study in English at Master's level.

H2. The primary motive for studying in English is a higher salary at work.

H3. Fear of studies in English is the main de-motivator in choosing this option.

The subject of the research was CS students of all semesters in the year 2015/16. The hypothesis H1 and H3 is fully confirmed [14]. On the contrary, the H2 hypothesis is only partially confirmed. The financial gain was the fourth in the list of reasons to study in English, but was in first place in the favor expected by Polish graduates who are studying English.

A similar research was conducted among students of the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after Razzakov I., who is also preparing to conduct research in English on ICT.

3 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

At the Razakov Kyrgyz State Technical University, a similar research methodology was used as in the LTU [14]. The same list of issues was translated into the Kyrgyz language.

The questionnaire addressed to students, in addition to the metric, included questions about their self-assessment of their level of English, the desire to obtain a master's degree in English, the motivation to learn English and the expected benefits. The survey also included the question of support expected by students from the university.

The study was conducted in such a way as to guarantee the anonymity of the respondents, that is, to use pencil and paper in large groups of students.

The questionnaires filled in incorrectly or inconsistently completed were rejected. Data filled with duly completed questionnaires were subjected to simple statistical processing.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

Surveys were carried out among full-time CS students at the Lublin University of Technology in May 2016, and among ICT students of the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after Razzakov I. in February 2017. The study involved nearly 76% [14] of all undergraduate CS students at the Lublin University of Technology and more than 70% of CS students at the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after Razzakov I. The percentage of women at the LUT was 11.8%, and at the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after Razzakov I. – 17.9%.

The level of interest in Master's studies in English among Kyrgyz students much more than in Polish – see Fig. 1. 59% of Kyrgyz students say yes for this question in contrast to 20% of Polish students (Fig. 1).

The possibility of studying in English is conditioned by knowledge of the language. The results of self-assessment of the knowledge of English made by the Kyrgyz and Polish students are shown in Fig. 2. In this area Polish students better assess their level of English proficiency (good and very good – 64%) than Kyrgyz students (only 13%) – Fig. 2.

Studying in a foreign language is usually associated with an increased effort during its course. Such increased effort is usually connected with specific causes of its undertaking. Fig. 3 shows the reasons why students want to study in English. In this area Polish students most expect better start in the labour market (69%) as opposed to Kyrgyz students which expect language improvement (64%).

From 16% to 27% of students were unwilling to take the ICT/CS Master's Degree in English – Fig. 1. The reasons for this state of affairs are shown in Fig. 4. The biggest reasons for the unwillingness to study in English among Kyrgyz and Polish students are different: for Polish students is a fear (58%) in contrast to Kyrgyz – the lack of benefits (40%).
In an effort to study in English, students expect that after graduation they will have additional benefits in relation to students graduating in the national language. The results of testing this point are shown in Fig. 5. Polish students most expect financial benefits (64%) in contrast to Kyrgyz – the higher position in work (45%).

During their studies in English the university can further assist students in the process. Expectations of Kyrgyz and Polish students in relation to the university in this area are shown in Fig. 6. Polish students most expect internships in international companies (65%) in contrast to Kyrgyz – additional English courses (70%). This last corresponds with low level of English knowledge among Kyrgyz students.

Figure 1. The interest in graduate studies in English among the Kyrgyz (KG) and Polish (PL) students.

Figure 2. Knowledge of English as self-assessed by the Kyrgyz (KG) and Polish (PL) students.
Figure 3. Reasons for the willingness to study in English among the Kyrgyz (KG) and Polish (PL) students.

Figure 4. Reasons for the unwillingness to study in English among the Kyrgyz (KG) and Polish (PL) students.
The Discussion

Approximately the same percentage of Kyrgyz (83%) and Polish (73%) students are ready to choose or consider the possibility of teaching in English (Fig. 1). Moreover, Kyrgyz students are more inclined to this opportunity, 50% of students definitely want to study in English, compared to 20% of Polish students. The lack of desire to learn in English (Fig. 4) is associated with the lack of noticeable benefits (40%) and unwillingness to extra effort (25%) among students from Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, the biggest obstacle for Polish students is the fear of this kind of research (58%) and the lack of desire to make additional efforts (32%). This can be partly explained by the very high demand for ICT specialists in the Polish market and in the European Union, which is not observed in the Kyrgyz market.

The results of the survey also show that the level of knowledge of English among Polish students is much higher than among the Kyrgyz students (Fig. 2). The proportion of students who speak good and
very good English is almost four times higher among Polish students towards their Kyrgyz counterparts. From this it follows that a low level of knowledge directly influences the reason for the lack of interest in studying English among undergraduates from Kyrgyzstan (Fig. 4).

Students from Kyrgyzstan who want to learn English, motivates the opportunity to participate in student movements (Fig. 3), whereas Polish students - the best start in the labor market. A similar percentage of students see in studies in English the opportunity to improve their level of language proficiency. Similarly, students from both countries want to study in English because of future financial benefits.

Students directly asked about the benefits that they expected after graduation in English, clearly indicated the financial advantages (Fig. 5) and the priority of work in international teams (Fig. 5).

Kyrgyz and Polish students differed in their expectations of additional support from universities. For students from Kyrgyzstan, the most anticipated were additional language courses (70%, Fig. 6), which is explained by the rather low level of language skills of students. Polish students expected more internships in international companies and trainings abroad (Fig. 6). Polish students also appreciated the importance of e-learning materials compared to Kyrgyz students.

6 CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of surveys carried out in two universities, the following main conclusions can be drawn: Confirmation of the assumption that both Kyrgyz and Polish students of ICT/CS have a desire to study in English at the master's level. It follows that both universities must develop proposals for their students.

The results of the studies revealed significant differences in the opportunities and expectations of Kyrgyz and Polish students. It turned out that Kyrgyz students have low language skills than Polish students. This indicates that it is necessary to pay attention to language training at the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after Razzakov I. and the possible expansion of the training offer for the Master’s program with additional English courses. Lublin University of Technology must offer its students practice and study abroad, as Polish students noted this option.

The analysis of demotivation to learn in English more than 15% of students indicates the need for educational work among students. Students from Kyrgyzstan should be aware of the potential benefits of teaching in English, and Polish students should help overcome the fear of this kind of research.

Kyrgyz State Technical University I.Razzakova also should expand possibilities for the organization of the international student's mobility.

REFERENCES


