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university in Uzbekistan**

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## **Tolerance and Control.**

### **Developing a language policy for an EMI university in Uzbekistan.**

**Abstract:** This article presents a practical project to develop a language policy for an English-Medium-Instruction university in Uzbekistan. Although the university is de facto English-only, it presents a complex language ecology, which in turn has led to confusion and disagreement about language use on campus. The project team investigated the experience, views and attitudes of over a thousand people, including faculty, students, administrative and maintenance staff, in order to arrive at a proposed policy which would serve the whole community, based on the principle of *tolerance* and pragmatism. After outlining the relevant language and educational context and setting out the methods and approach of the underpinning research project, the article goes on to present the key findings. One of the striking findings was an appetite for control and regulation of language behaviours. Language policies in Higher Education invariably fall down at the implementation stage because of a lack of will to follow through on their principles and their specific guidelines. Language policy in international business on the other hand is characterised by a *control* stage invariably lacking in language planning in education. Uzbekistan is a polity used to control measures following from policy implementation. The article concludes by suggesting that Higher Education in Central Asia may stand a better chance of seeing through language policies around English-Medium Instruction than, for example, in northern Europe, based on the tension between tolerance on the one hand and control on the other.

**Keywords:** Policy-making; EMI; language ecology; higher education; international business; Uzbekistan

## **1. Introduction**

Books and journal issues which focus on Language Planning, Language Policy-making and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Asia (e.g. Hamid/Nguyen/Baldauf 2014) have tended not to pay attention to the countries of Central Asia. More focused studies of Asian regions (e.g. Fenton-Smith/Humphreys/Walkinshaw 2017; Barnard/Hasim 2018) have likewise not presented case studies from the former Soviet states between China and the Caspian Sea. The countries in question (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are complex multilingual ecologies in the context of complex and changing political systems, and they constitute fascinating sociolinguistic laboratories (see Liddicoat 2019 for an overview). They have all embraced EMI in Higher Education to varying degrees, and supportive and thoughtful studies are now much needed to help stakeholders in universities and in the relevant ministries in the region manage the challenges that EMI brings with it.

In this article we focus on one university in Uzbekistan, and we present the project which led to the development of a language policy for this EMI

institution. This has been a rare opportunity to work on a language policy in a little-studied context, from its genesis, through the background research, its formulation and finally to see its reception and the initial approach to its implementation. In section 2 we will explain the background to the language policy project and set out the context for our work. In section 3 we present our methods with our key findings following in section 4. In section 5 we set out the language policy recommendations we elaborated based on our research findings and also explore some of the ways in which Uzbek HE is different to that of northern Europe, where language policy-making in HE has been longer established and also thoroughly studied. In the final section we explore what the institutional response to the work has been and suggest that a tension between tolerance on the one hand and control on the other may prove to be a more fruitful basis for policy implementation than in some other language-political contexts.

## **2. Background and context**

2.1. Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT) is a private institution founded in 2002 in partnership with the University of Westminster, London, UK. It was the first higher education institution in Central Asia to offer a range of academic programmes underpinned by western quality-assurance measures in the context of a higher education system dominated by state-sponsored institutions. WIUT began with just over 100 students, and the student body now numbers over 4000, studying on pre-university, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Business, Economics and Law. All teaching is English-medium, and incoming level-four (undergraduate entry) students are required to have taken a module in Academic English and to have achieved the equivalent of at least IELTS level 6. WIUT is a prestigious institution in the region and attracts students internationally with fourteen native languages represented on campus, including Mandarin, Georgian, Korean, Turkish and Urdu.

The *de facto* language policy is and always has been English-only. The prevailing view of the students is that a good level of English is key to international mobility and employment opportunities. This is a view also held by students in the state system, as our discussions with students at national universities in Uzbekistan, as well as in neighbouring countries, have clearly shown, put plainly in this quotation from a student in Kyrgyzstan: “English will become more important because it gives access to plenty of resources and opens doors to employment opportunities.” The annual Education First English Proficiency Index (EF 2019) points to current levels of English proficiency in Uzbekistan being amongst the lowest in the world, or at least of the countries surveyed by Education First; Uzbekistan is ranked 95th out of 100 countries (‘very low proficiency’) in the 2019 table (an improvement on the 2018 position of 86th out of 88), between Cambodia and Ivory Coast.

Other providers are now entering the market for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) within Higher Education in Uzbekistan. Webster University (St Louis, Missouri) opened a campus in Tashkent in 2018 and offers courses in TESOL, Media Communications and Business Administration, joining Inha University (South Korea) and Turin Polytechnic University (Italy), focusing respectively on Computing and Engineering, in the HE landscape. It is not surprising that

international universities are waking up to the potential of the Uzbek market, with further South Korean universities gaining a foothold. Under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev from 2016 there has been a significant commitment to economic growth, recognised by positive World Bank (World Bank 2019) indicators, leading to greater international engagement. The tourism sector is buoyant with numbers of foreign tourists increasing from 2 million to 6.5 million per annum in just four years, and a climate of greater openness and accountability across the public sector is recognised and valued, although political and civil freedom indicators remain negative (see section 5.3 below).

Recent years have witnessed enhanced commitment to the teaching of English. The presidential decree *On Measures to Further Improve Foreign Language Learning System* (December 2012) introduced English from the first grade of primary school with effect from the 2013/2014 school year. Conversations with both staff and students at a number of universities suggest that there are serious challenges in implementing this policy, and that there is a reliance on private English language provision to prepare students adequately for university study. University teachers note that many students of English are nonetheless poorly equipped for university study, and there remain serious practical impediments with regard to staffing in schools, particularly outside the major urban centres. The focus of the current volume is on the practical gulf between policy development and implementation, so this should not come as any surprise, but nonetheless it can be assumed that proficiency in English across Uzbek society will increase markedly in the coming years as a key aspect of the country's push for greater international engagement.

2.2. Based on the questionnaire survey we carried out, and about which more will be reported in subsequent sections, 65.8% of the WIUT community (students and staff in all roles) speak Uzbek as their primary language and 25.3% Russian, which is slightly out of line with the ratio of 74.3%:14.2% in the wider Uzbek population of a little over 30 million (CIA 2019). Marked by the shifting political history of the region (cf. Roy 2007), Uzbekistan is a highly multilingual polity - Schlyter (2012: 198) points to over 100 languages - and WIUT reflects the multilingual nature of Uzbek society with speakers of Karakalpak, Kazakh, Tajik, Tatar and Turkmen on campus. The slightly greater representation of Russian in the university community reflects the historical prestige of Russian in socially dominant groups, but, as Hasanova (2016: 246) notes: "Russian has lost its status as the language of power. Consequently English has become the most widely learned foreign language in the country".

Against this multilingual backdrop of languages with differing perceived status levels, students in particular have felt unsure about which languages are appropriate to use in which contexts. English may be de facto the language of WIUT, but for many (as at other Uzbek institutions) it feels unnatural, even arrogant, to use English outside class, and inside class students have felt unsure about the use of other languages as pedagogical tools to help explain content, with some students criticising infringement of what they regard as the University's expected commitment to an "English everywhere" principle. When the first author of this paper first visited WIUT in 2016, this "language problem" and the perceived need by university management for a clearly articulated language policy was put to him, without management realising that Linn's recent research focus was precisely language policy development and

implementation in higher education. The opportunity to develop a language policy is one that few scholars of language planning actually get to realise, to put theory into practice, with policy development in universities more often being left to the management function. This paper is therefore a report by a researcher of language planning and language policy on his team's experience of language policy development (and challenges for implementation) in a multilingual and little studied national context.

2.3. Internationally, there have been various calls for higher education institutions to develop formal language policies. One such was a set of guidelines and recommendations published by the Higher Education Language Policy 2013 Working Group under the European Language Council (Lauridsen 2013). The chair of this group was Karen M. Lauridsen of Aarhus University in Denmark, and Scandinavia has witnessed the most substantial efforts to develop language policies in the higher education context (see Henriksen/Holmen/Kling 2019: Ch. 2). Under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers a 2018 set of guidelines for developing policies to counter excessive use of English in Nordic HEIs articulates the need as follows:

Every university should have a language policy that incorporates thinking about internationalisation policy and relates to both national language policy frameworks and to the role of the university in its local community, however that is defined. A language policy is a publicly accessible document that sets out the overarching principles for the use of language for various purposes within a university. It should be the result of a wide-ranging debate conducted at all levels and involving all groups affected, so that the principles and consequences are generally accepted. The language policy should be adopted by and explicitly embedded in the university management, so that the management pays attention to it at all times. (Gregersen et al. 2018: 17)

This is an ambitious agenda, but one whose principles we have sought to follow, most crucially acknowledging that "...actual practice [and hidden realities] should inform language policy", leading to "a coherent language policy for which all stakeholders have been consulted" (Kirkpatrick 2017: 7).

2.4. In 2017 we launched a project with this paper's two WIUT-based co-authors as researchers, to survey the experiences, realities and attitudes of the entire WIUT community to inform the language policy proposals presented to WIUT management in the autumn of 2018 (see section 5). Many of our findings were in line with the findings of research into EMI environments elsewhere in the world, but some were surprising and alerted us to the need to recognise local socio-political as well as sociolinguistic conditions as prerequisites for the development of a language policy which is fit for its purpose. The work was enabled by a joint fund to support collaborative research activity between Westminster International University in Tashkent and the University of Westminster in London.

### **3. Methodology**

3.1. In the course of the research phase preceding the policy development phase, two data collection instruments were used: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

Both were organized around three central themes: context; experiences; views and attitudes. Given the lack of data, let alone analysis, from the region, we needed to establish a rounded picture, and in so doing have followed the ecological approach to understanding a language environment, proposed by Einar Haugen and summarised by Eliasson (2015: 79) thus:

- The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. [...]
- Part of its ecology is [...] psychological: its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers.
- Another part of its ecology is sociological: its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication.
- The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others.

To be inclusive and involve as many participants in that ecology as possible, embracing not only students and teachers, who all know English, but also administrative and maintenance staff who may have no or limited knowledge of English, the questionnaire was elaborated in English, Russian and Uzbek. All three questionnaires were piloted before being operationalised. Data gathering via a questionnaire was time efficient and convenient with the questionnaires developed using Google Forms, and the links to them distributed through corporate email. However, since not all colleagues have or use email accounts, paper-based copies were also made available in several departments. (For an overview of the questionnaire questions see Appendix A.)

The questionnaire response rate was impressive with around 35% of all WIUT students, teachers, administrative and maintenance staff taking part. There were 27 open-ended and closed-ended questions based on a similar survey conducted at Stockholm University, whose results were published in Bolton/Kuteeva (2012). This approach was in order to ensure that as far as possible the growing body of information on the experience of EMI is based on a common ecological approach. After eliminating unusable responses, the final number analysed was n=1114. They were also anonymous, but participants were asked to add their email address to be eligible for the prize raffle, which functioned as a motivator to respond. Finally, SPSS software was used to analyse the collected responses.

3.2. Participants with the most interesting and thought-provoking comments garnered through the free comment section, as well as those with comments that addressed the more controversial results, were invited to take part in the semi-structured interview stage, which included 27 students and 16 members of the teaching and administrative staff; the key questions are listed in Appendix B. The interviews were organized in groups with students and administrative staff grouped separately to allow the respondents to speak freely and for neither group to feel constrained by the presence of the other. The sessions were peer-led by the WIUT-based researchers, Anastasiya Bezbodova and Saida Radjabzade, and were conducted in English (though discussants were at liberty

to use others languages), and comments were recorded anonymously. To analyse the responses and identify the main trends, NVivo software was used.

## 4. Findings

4.1. The questionnaire results showed that there is a diverse language ecology at WIUT including speakers of 14 different first languages, as noted above. For obvious reasons, Uzbek dominates with 65.5% of speakers. Russian with 25.3% is the next most used language. The full list of other languages includes Karakalpak, Kazakh, Tatar, Tajik and Turkmen from the Central Asia region, and Chinese, English, Georgian, Korean, Persian, Turkish and Urdu from further afield.

The three operating languages at the University are English, Russian and Uzbek. English is mostly spoken by students and teaching staff, while Russian is spoken by administrative and maintenance staff (Table 1). Results clearly show that English is least used by maintenance staff, which points to a social stratification of English at WIUT. Russian is more widely used across the piece than Uzbek, suggesting that Russian is actually in practice the lingua franca of the wider institution, used by the overwhelming majority of non-academic members of the language community and clearly preferred to Uzbek amongst teaching staff.

**Table 1:** Languages used at WIUT

	English	Uzbek	Russian
<b>Students</b>	95.4%	70.6%	82%
<b>Faculty</b>	95.9%	61.6%	82.2%
<b>Administrative staff</b>	67.2%	89.7%	96.6%
<b>Maintenance staff</b>	18.8%	62.5%	97.9%

We were also interested to understand to what extent stakeholders were of the view that all communication at WIUT should be in English, i.e. were in support of the de facto language policy (Table 2). The strongest agreement was shown by students (42%), while faculty as well as administrative staff members agreed, the latter being more neutral in this regard. Facility maintenance staff (almost 40%) showed disagreement and raised concerns about their future at WIUT in an English-only environment, if the language policy were to propose a hard line on that - see previous point on social stratification.

**Table 2:** Communication in English

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
<b>Students</b>	1.7%	9%	24%	21.5%	42.1%	1.3%	0.4%
<b>Faculty</b>	0%	11%	21.9%	27.4%	39.7%	0%	0%
<b>Admin. staff</b>	1.7%	20.7%	31%	12.1%	25.9%	5.2%	3.4%
<b>Maintenance staff</b>	10.4%	29.2%	27.1%	16.7%	6.3%	8.3%	0%

The results also showed that participants tended to be either neutral or positive towards the principle of linguistic diversity (Table 3). Most supported the use

of different languages (agreed or strongly agreed), although almost 30% of students showed indifference toward this case at the university. However, it is worth noting that 18.8% of maintenance staff preferred not to answer, possibly seeing this as a contentious issue.

**Table 3:** Tolerance to linguistic diversity

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer</b>
<b>Students</b>	5.7%	11.6%	29.9%	27.5%	19.7%	3.7%	1.9%
<b>Faculty</b>	2.7%	8.2%	26.0%	39.7%	20.5%	1.4%	1.4%
<b>Admin. staff</b>	3.4%	10.3%	20.7%	36.2%	25.9%	0%	3.4%
<b>Maintenance staff</b>	0%	18.8%	22.9%	31.3%	4.2%	4.2%	18.8%

Most respondents indicated that they would have wished to sign up for additional English support if it had been offered at the University (Table 4). Students, administrative and maintenance staff members were more positive, while the teachers' responses were more mixed. Almost 40% of faculty reported that they would be somewhat or very unlikely to avail themselves of this offer.

**Table 4:** Likelihood to sign up for professional English support

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Very likely</b>	<b>Somewhat likely</b>	<b>Somewhat unlikely</b>	<b>Very unlikely</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Students</b>	16.0%	38.4%	26.4%	6.2%	6.4%	0.4%	6.1%
<b>Faculty</b>	4.4%	27.9%	23.5%	20.6%	19.1%	0%	4.4%
<b>Admin. staff</b>	20.6%	46.0%	15.9%	6.3%	3.2%	1.6%	6.3%
<b>Maintenance staff</b>	35.4%	8.3%	31.3%	12.5%	0%	6.3%	6.3%

The questionnaire results also showed that both students and faculty self-evaluate their English language proficiency to be at a high level (Table 5). They tended to perceive their levels to be advanced (72.1%) and upper-intermediate (45%) respectively. The administrative staff members' responses were less homogeneous.

**Table 5:** Self-perception of English language proficiency level at WIUT

	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Pre-intermediate</b>	<b>Upper-intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Students</b>	0.4%	0.3%	17.2%	0.9%	45.0%	36.1%
<b>Faculty</b>	1.5%	0%	5.9%	0%	20.6%	72.1%
<b>Admin. staff</b>	12.9%	6.5%	17.7%	9.7%	38.7%	14.5%
<b>Maintenance staff</b>	68.3%	2.4%	4.9%	17.1%	4.9%	2.4%

Perceptions of the proficiency of others at the University were also different for all respondents (Table 6). While students and administrative staff English proficiency was typically viewed as "acceptable" and "good", the teachers' proficiency was evaluated as mostly "good" and "very good". However, the



proficiency of administrative staff was also rated as “very poor” by 18.6% of respondents, and many respondents preferred not to answer this question, which can signify either lack of experience of their English proficiency level or a preference not to judge those in a position of authority.

**Table 6:** Views on proficiency of others at WIUT

	Acceptable	Good	Very good	Poor	Very poor	I prefer not to answer
<b>Students</b>	39.0%	39.3%	8.4%	8.4%	1.2%	3.8%
<b>Faculty</b>	11.4%	31.7%	49.3%	2.4%	1.2%	4.0%
<b>Admin. staff</b>	29.9%	36.8%	0.2%	0%	18.6%	14.5%

Finally, we wanted to understand attitudes towards a potential language policy. Students tended to believe that a language policy would serve to encourage everyone to use English and increase language proficiency. Similar attitudes were held by faculty; however, they also believed that it would resolve doubts about the use of English at the University. Interestingly the option “language policy will establish the atmosphere for equal use of all languages”, i.e. that a language policy would promote language diversity, was most popular with maintenance staff.

4.2. The interview results tended to support the questionnaire findings. Students said that they mostly use English to communicate with the teachers in and outside of class, during office hours, when they prepare for exams, with the Registrar’s office and Learning Resource Centre staff members, with administrative staff and sometimes with other students outside of class. However, students admitted that they use Russian, mostly, and Uzbek, or combine these languages with English (code switch), to talk with friends in class, with faculty, and with administrative staff. Students find this more comfortable and they do not want to “bother” speaking English. Nevertheless, during the interviews with students, some of them (6 out of 27) also confessed that they are intimidated to speak English outside class because other students refer to it as “boasting”, “showing off”, “nerdy” and “weird”, making comments such as:

*While I am trying to talk in English with my peers they used to say, ‘Oh come on, we are not at the lessons’.*

*Outside of the class, students have a bad attitude towards English use as if I am boasting with my English.*

Faculty members use mainly English at the university in all professional contexts except with some of the administrative offices where they may use other languages. (It is surprising, given the English-medium teaching environment that only 95.9% of teaching staff state that they use English.) Most of the time teachers keep to English with their students even if students switch to local languages; note that 21.9% of students expressed the view that their proficiency in English met their needs at WIUT only acceptably, poorly or very poorly. Unlike with the students, English is widely used by faculty outside the

university; they refer to the use of English as 'easy' and 'natural'. While teachers use English freely, students feel pressure using English outside class, one teacher commenting:

*I use English with students all the time, no matter where I meet them or see them.*

A further striking finding was that 5 students out of 27 claimed that they started losing their English language skills after they joined WIUT. They said that, since they rarely speak English, their speaking skills have worsened. Students also showed their dissatisfaction with their teachers' level of English, and they blamed the University for hiring faculty with a low level of English proficiency. 7 out of 27 students blame faculty for using other languages (Uzbek or Russian) during the classes. Only two students stated that they are fine with faculty switching to other languages so they can better explain the concept and students understand the topic.

However, teaching faculty stated that they do their best not to use other languages than English during the classes. They claimed that they switch into Russian or Uzbek if they see that it is problematic to explain certain terminology in English. One faculty-member stated the following:

*Why not to switch to a certain language if we share the same language in the class? Students do that among themselves during group discussions or pair work.*

The ideas of punishment for using other languages besides English and control over the use of English were also raised by students. They suggested reduction of marks, disciplinary points and fines as the punishment options. However, rewards, according to some students, could also motivate members of the community to speak English. The following comment was not untypical:

*Usually the policies that have impacts are the ones that have some penalties or something else like that. So if you do not follow - this kind of thing will happen and usually this kind of policies are effective in my opinion. So if the language policy has something similar I think it will work out.*

Unlike students, faculty proposed the adoption of *guidelines* rather than a language policy per se, which would advise what language to use in particular situations. This would encourage students and staff to use language intuitively depending on the situation:

*That is the case the language should not be politicised. It is a means of communication, thus it should not be controlled. That is the thing, what if I use sign language, and no other languages. So I should not talk to anyone, or people should not talk to me?! It is also about comfort. If people feel comfortable talking in certain language, they should not be punished.*

Finally, the majority of interviewed students saw a language policy as an "English only" policy. They stated that it is a set of rules that everyone needs or

must follow. Students also thought that it would bring positive changes and everybody would start using English everywhere across campus.

*I think that if you adopt the language policy it will encourage even more people to improve their English language and use it inside the university.*

However, 8 out of 16 faculty-members were the principal proponents of linguistic diversity. They stated that in order to make a language policy helpful, it should support multiple languages at the university, and it should establish an atmosphere where students would be willing to use English.

*I do not think if it is policy it will be helpful. Better we should have English speaking corner, English speaking environment, Uzbek/Russian speaking corner.*

*The language policy that would help develop more languages at this University, new clubs and maybe for people to get multilingual, would make me happy about this kind of policy.*

Engagement with the process was positive and open across the community and provided a strong basis for a bottom-up language policy to be developed.

## **5. Policy Development**

5.1. The substantial response to the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews helped generate a climate of interest in language matters at WIUT. Andrew Linn visited Tashkent at the start and in the middle of the research phase and gave open lectures, firstly setting out the rationale for the project and some of the research context (May 2017) and then later giving an update on progress and initial findings (February 2018).

5.2. The proposed policy for an effective approach to language use in an English-medium environment, following further engagement with the community on the details, emerged as follows:

### **Teaching and learning**

1. English is the language of teaching, learning and instruction (in class, during office hours, academic counselling meetings, etc.). This policy may be waived in the following cases: where languages other than English are the object of study (e.g. extracurricular language clubs); in extracurricular clubs organised by students; talks by outside speakers (e.g. guest lectures and workshops), which must be advertised as being held in a language other than English.
2. All formal study materials, formative and summative assessment, as well as other formal teaching and learning activities and events are in English.
3. Communication on academic matters (in both written and oral form) is primarily in English. The language used may vary only if the level of

proficiency impedes communication and both parties agree to use a different language medium.

4. Exceptionally, other languages may be used in the classroom to clarify specific points, but the short-term use of another language or languages must be agreed by all participants, and the group should then share the content of the exchange in English.
5. While English is the medium of all instruction, staff and students must accept that WIUT is a multilingual environment and the occasional use of other languages can be a tool to aid instruction.

## **Research**

6. Primary research may take place in any language which is common to all participants, and the language which best facilitates research activity should be agreed by all participants at the outset.
7. Publications intended to be read by the wider academic community should normally be written in English, but this should not be an automatic decision and should be driven by the intended audience.
8. Language choice will usually be dictated by the conventions of the journal or other outlet. Where this is not the case, if the research output is written in English, there should be a summary in Russian/ Uzbek, and where the publication is in Russian, there should be a summary in English. WIUT has a duty to help nurture the health of the local languages as research languages.
9. Outputs intended for non-specialist, non-academic audiences (e.g. reports of research in local newspapers or magazines) should be written in the language which best meets the needs of readers.

## **Internal communication on academic matters**

10. All official meetings, their minutes and associated documents are in English.
11. The primary language of written communication within subject areas (e.g. e-mails, agendas, hand-outs, etc.) is English. Depending on the language needs of the participants (e.g. staff, students, guest lecturers, etc.), provided that no one is excluded by the language of communication, the language use may vary but should be discussed and agreed between participants.
12. Documentation of primary importance (e.g. policies and strategy documents) is presented in English. The language of record is English. Where the primary audience makes it necessary, other languages should be used to maximise communication (e.g. only 18.8% of maintenance staff report using English), but there must always be a summary in English.
13. The default language for enquiries and requests by students and staff (in both written and oral form) is English. Where required and practicable, requests and enquiries may be handled in other languages.
14. Support services at the university that deal with academic matters [...] assist and advise students and employees in the language of their choice, depending on the language needs of the participants (e.g. staff,

students, guest lecturers, etc.) and provided that no one is excluded by the language of communication.

### **Internal communication on personal matters**

15. Informal oral communication takes place in the language understood by the parties concerned and should be discussed and agreed by participants.
16. Support services at the university that deal with personal matters [...] assist and advise students and employees in the language of their choice depending on the language needs of the participants (e.g. staff, students, guest lecturers, etc.) and provided that no one is excluded by the language of communication. Preferred languages should be discussed and agreed by participants.

### **Language of public communication**

17. In oral and written communication with the public, the university representatives should accommodate the language preferences of the community and target audience.

### **Social events**

18. English is used at official events at the university, such as formal meetings, ceremonial occasions and inaugural talks. However, social gatherings within the university respect the right of the community to participate in the event in the language of their choice.

### **Implementation**

- 19. Fundamental to this policy is the value of tolerance. All members of WIUT must accept the following principles:**
  - **All staff and students commit to using English whenever and wherever possible, but the world is multilingual and all must respect the need for pragmatism.**
  - **Language is a key expression of an individual's identity.**
  - **All staff and students do their best to use the language resources available to them.**
  - **Individuals' actual or perceived level of language ability is not a reflection of their academic ability or their worth as a human being.**
  - **Language use and attitudes should be discussed openly and freely and any misunderstandings dealt with in an open, positive and accepting spirit.**
20. The University management must commit to and seek to implement both the letter and the spirit of this policy.
21. Any perceived infringements of the policy or issues which cannot be resolved via appeal to the principles of tolerance and pragmatism should

be reported via the normal channels for complaints and will be considered by an independent language policy group [...].

22. All staff and students have a right to the development of their language skills in order to achieve their academic and professional ambitions. Language training, both in English and other languages, should be addressed as part of the academic plan [...].

5.3. In a context where there are some strong views and quite rigid expectations, particularly amongst students, in the key paragraph 19 the policy statement emphasises the need for *tolerance* as a key principle. We also place a strong emphasis on the need to discuss language practices as a matter of course, partly to ensure that resentment or frustration do not arise, which might in turn lead to other undesirable behaviours, and partly to ensure that language diversity is kept in focus and that English does not become unreasonably fetishised. In the words of our introduction to the policy:

Russian remains in wide use as an international language in Central Asia, and the increasing role of China in the region will reinforce the currency of Chinese for professional purposes. It would be wrong to think that English is the only relevant medium for WIUT as an increasingly international player (Linn/Bezborodova/Radjabzade 2018: 1)

This overarching principle of tolerance is very much that language questions should be resolved in a spirit of pragmatism and collegiality as befits an academic institution where enquiry and debate prevail. The purpose of the proposed language policy is described as being “to clarify language practices [...] in order to promote academic quality and social equality”. We recognise that there may be occasions when views and attitudes cause conflict, and these would be addressed via the normal means for addressing complaints and grievances within the institution rather than being treated as specific infringements.

However, while WIUT is in its name an *international* university and one which also bears the name of its European partner, we do need to recognise that it is at the same time in and of *Uzbekistan*, a polity with a distinctive socio-cultural history. We were struck by the explicit views about punishment and control voiced by the students. From a western point of view it is surprising and even shocking that language behaviours might be policed, but punishment and control have been part of the way of life in Uzbekistan and, despite the commitment of the current regime, tolerance and openness, it is suggested, do not yet characterise all aspects of society. According to the *World Press Freedom Index* for 2019, compiled by the NGO Reporters Without Borders, Uzbekistan is 160th out of 180 countries for press freedom (RSF 2019). According to the 2019 *Freedom in the World Index*, produced by the independent watchdog Freedom House, Uzbekistan has a score of 9/100 alongside Libya, the Central African Republic and Tajikistan, and, of the 50 countries characterised as “not free”, Uzbekistan is listed amongst the 13 ‘worst of the worst’ (Freedom House 2019).

5.4. Monitoring and control are invariably the Achilles heel of policy, particularly in the typically democratic and open environment of Higher Education. As noted previously, some of the most active language planning and policy-making in the

Higher Education context has been in the Nordic countries. In the first decade of this century all the Nordic countries undertook major surveys of the language situation and elaborated language policies which covered the full range of domains of language use, including education (see Linn 2016: 229-235). Reflecting on this industrial-scale policy development, the former Head of the Swedish Language Council, Olle Josephson, wrote in 2009 that language policy in the Nordic countries had two characteristics:

One is that the Nordic states are developing a relatively advanced language policy with many common features. The other is that this language policy, despite the fact that it is well-founded and considered, in practice has rather weak impact. (Josephson 2009: 188)

This 'weak impact' is due to a large extent to the fact that policy proposals have not been well followed up, since language questions tend to be a relatively insignificant political topic. In 2012 the Norwegian Language Council produced a report on their 2008 paper on the language situation in Norway (*Mål og mening*) to assess its impact, and the author of the report formed the impression that:

[...] nearly four years after its launch [...] little has happened; the new offensive seems to have ground to a standstill before it has started to move. (Johansen 2012: 78)

If the impact and follow-up of language policy-making at national level in the Nordic countries appears to have been weak, the same is true of those policies elaborated specifically for the Higher Education context. In 2013 the author of the 2008 Norwegian national language review just referred to, Prof. Gjert Kristoffersen, co-authored a review of language policies in theory and practice in Norwegian HE and reached a similar conclusion to that of Johansen we just cited, namely that:

despite good beginnings in the years 2007-2010, little has since been done to translate the goals into concrete practice [...] In practice this means that little is being done and that development with regard, for example, to the language of teaching is characterised by sporadic and most often pragmatically determined individual initiatives relating to the choice of teaching language on individual topics or programmes. (Kristoffersen/Kristiansen/Røyneland 2013: 208)

So even in that part of the world with perhaps the longest experience of language planning (indeed the term *language planning* was devised by Einar Haugen in the mid-20th century to characterise the Norwegian experience), implementation is a major issue in the absence of monitoring and control as the final stage in the process of language policy development.

In private enterprise, on the other hand, monitoring and control can be and are a natural part of the process. If a business has a strategy, its employees are paid to ensure that strategy is implemented, and there will be consequences if the company strategy is not followed and operationalised, hence the need for monitoring and control. Piekkari/Welch/Welch (2014) propose a model for the process of standardization of language practices in international business (the model is further referred to as the PWW model), which is for the most part

similar to the model of *national* language standardization set out by Einar Haugen for Norwegian (Haugen 1966a: 16-26) and much emulated in studies of language standardization. (See Linn et al. (2018) for a fuller comparison between the Haugen model and the PWW model.) The fifth and final stage in the PWW model, following the Implementation and Adaptation stage (Implementation and Elaboration in Haugen [1966b]), is Performance monitoring and control (Piekkari/Welch/Welch 2014: 205). Even in business, where ‘she who pays the piper calls the tune’, it should be noted that such monitoring and control constitutes “a major managerial challenge” (Piekkari/Welch/Welch 2014: 221).

Our point here, however, is that there is more chance of an institutional language policy gaining traction in a context where performance monitoring and control are a more familiar part of the socio-cultural landscape. This is not to say that we advocate direct policing of language practices, but rather that, with the more general acceptance that the final stage of the PWW model is part of the picture, and counterbalanced by the primary commitment to tolerance, the ground for a language policy to grow beyond its development is distinctly more fertile, although the ultimate impact of the WIUT policy work still remains to be seen.

## 6. Moving forward

6.1. The final report on the project with the proposed language policy was submitted to management at WIUT in September 2018. To inform stakeholders across the institution of the results of the project, a seminar was held which generated intense debate on the role of a language policy at WIUT. Given the level of interest, there was a need to organize more meetings involving both staff and students to discuss the next steps. These subsequent meetings focused more on the detailed proposals (see section 5.2 above) from the title to comments on the metalanguage. Thereafter, the revised and edited final draft of the report was submitted for consideration by the Academic Council. Although the Academic Council did not in the end endorse the paper as a regulatory document, Council determined that it should be referred to as a research paper whenever WIUT stakeholders experience any confusion or concerns on language matters.

In order to share the experience of policy development at WIUT and to gain an outsiders' perspective on the issue, WIUT hosted a group of delegates who were participants in the *Role of English in Higher Education* conference in Tashkent organised by the British Council in October 2019. There was considerable interest in this implementation stage and the management response. In this regard, the response from the institution side was that the key thing was to ‘talk about languages and language use at WIUT’ and this ‘will simplify the policy implementation process’ (First Deputy Rector, October 2019).

In practice then WIUT appears to have begun embedding the policy principles bottom-up by encouraging and motivating members of the community to engage. Thus, as a first step, World Languages Day is going to be celebrated annually in April. The main goal of this celebration is to bring students and staff together to be proud of their mother tongues, to appreciate



language diversity and raise public awareness about the rich language ecology of WIUT.

6.2. Piller and Cho (2013: 38) address the by now well-established relationship between EMI and Neoliberalism and argue that English in HE “is not a result of the free linguistic market, but rather of a ‘systematic, organized and orchestrated policy’” that serves the interest of neoliberal free-market fundamentalism, all of it under the cover of the naturalization of English as a quantifiable index of globalization. Uzbekistan, with its growing number of HEIs with EMI, as well as other non-English-speaking countries in “the clear geopolitical focus” (Dafouz/Smit 2020: 12) of the *Expanding Circle* countries, is manifestly implicated in this.

However, it is also important not to forget that, while EMI may indeed be an instrument of globalization, it also constitutes a day-to-day reality for countless numbers of teachers, learners and educational administrators whose voices should not be drowned out by the more strident critical-theoretical one. Language policies which mediate between the management imperative on the one hand (*top-down*) and stakeholder reality on the other (*bottom-up*) must be informed by the engagement and preferences of stakeholders in both policy development and in implementation. The case of WIUT provides an interesting study of the operationalisation of a language policy in a context where tolerance and control constitute opposing forces, resulting in what may prove to be a successful tension.

## 7. Appendix A

### *Overview of Questionnaire Questions:*

#### **Context**

1. Which one of the following best describes your position at WIUT?
2. How long have you been working/studying at WIUT (years/months)?
3. What is your mother tongue?
4. What languages, other than your native language and English, do you speak?
5. Indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 how proficient you consider yourself in Uzbek/Russian/additional language.
6. What languages do you use at WIUT?
7. What do you think is your current level of English?
8. Do you speak English all the time when at university?
9. If the answer to the previous question is No, what languages do you use in the following situations? (e.g., with students outside class/during the class with teachers, during the class with classmates/with your supervisor/with Course Leader/with Module Leader/during office hours/to email/ in canteen/ in library/in sports hall, etc.)

#### **Experience**

10. How often are you exposed to English in your spare time (for example through music, computer games, or films) compared to when you are at the University?

11. Have you ever taken an international test in English, such as TOEFL or IELTS?
12. Since you started at WIUT, have you taken any courses specifically to improve your English?
13. If you were offered additional professional English support, how likely would you be to sign up?
14. How able are you to understand English in your daily activities at WIUT/ to speak English in your daily activities at WIUT/ to write English in your daily activities at WIUT/ to read English in your daily activities at WIUT/ to read written documents in English your daily activities at WIUT?
15. How able are you to discuss your academic / professional interests (having to do with your area of study or teaching) in English compared to your native language?
16. How well does your proficiency (language skills) in English meet your needs at WIUT?
17. In general, how good is the English of the teachers/students/administrators at WIUT?

### **Views and Attitudes**

18. What is your opinion of the following? (I think it is important for all teaching at WIUT to be in English/ I think that all communication at WIUT should be in English/ I think we should be more tolerant to linguistic diversity on campus/ I think that knowing English in addition to my native language is enough for me to succeed/ I like using English/ Using English on campus is just as easy as using my own language/ I like British English better than other forms of English/ It doesn't matter if someone's English pronunciation isn't very good/ I am interested in talking about language and languages/ I am interested in learning languages)
19. Do you think WIUT should have a language policy?
20. Complete the sentence: A language policy would ... (e.g., Encourage everyone at the university to use English/ establish an atmosphere for the equal use of all languages/ resolve doubts about the use of English at the university/ increase language proficiency/ other)
21. Does WIUT offer you sufficient support with English language development?
22. If the answer to the previous question is No, what additional support could be offered? (e.g., delivering English language courses/ providing more sources in English/ establishing an Academic English clinic/ other)

## **8. Appendix B**

### *Overview of Interview Questions:*

1. How often do you use English outside of the classroom and in what situations?
2. How often are you exposed to English in your spare time compared to when you are at the university?
3. Were there any situations when your English proficiency could not meet your needs at the university? What did you do?
4. What is language policy for you? How can you define it?
5. Would a language policy be helpful? And Why?

6. What is your attitude toward language diversity on campus?
7. How would people be encouraged to accept and follow any policy?

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