

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS UNIVERSITY GRADUATES NEED FOR EMPLOYMENT IN TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS INDUSTRY

A.S. Komkova, *Candidate of Philology Sciences, Associate Professor*
Siberian Transport University
 (Russia, Novosibirsk)

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Abstract. *In today's highly globalized economy, transport and logistics play an important role in value creation and national competitiveness. Transport and logistics industry of Russia is a growing sector that strongly influences the economic performance of all the others. For the transport and logistics specialists, it is essential nowadays to be able to coordinate negotiations, communicate and collaborate effectively with colleagues, clients, and business partners in the professional settings, interpret the documentation involved in the transportation of goods, such as insurance contracts and customs information that are commonly found in English. Thus, university graduates apart from the occupation-specific knowledge need to be equipped with the right English language skills determined by the ongoing development of cross-border transportation networks. The current paper aims at presenting the English language skills required most in the transport and logistics industry. The author also provides an example of how higher education institutions meet the challenges of the changeable requirements of the industry.*

Keywords: *higher education, foreign language teaching, English language skills, transport university, graduate skills, logistics, transport workforce.*

Recently, the Russian transport industry has been impacted much by the far-reaching social and economic events led to the active diversification of transit routes and development of new transport corridors, integration and joint operation of transport modes for intermodal transportation, as well as rapid digitalisation of transport infrastructure accelerated with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the structure of transport and logistics flows has changes a lot. Transport companies were forced to leverage their scale, costs, technology capabilities, brand and intellectual capital under new conditions [4]. This has also led to an urgent and growing need for highly qualified transport workforce with certain skill sets. For this reason, the Russian transport universities and colleges have to rethink their degree programs, courses and curricula in general to ensure that graduates gain relevant professional knowledge, skills and competences demanded in the present-day labour market in Russia and abroad.

Literature review has showed that graduates of transport universities apart from the *occupation-specific knowledge* must be equipped with the following skills and com-

petences: *generic* (communication, critical thinking, self-management, problem solving, creativity, collaboration), *digital* (ICT literacy, digital scholarship and media literacy, information literacy), *cultural* (cross-cultural communication, awareness of cultural differences) and *global* (awareness of global issues, such as sustainable development, local and global affairs). Besides, transport and logistics workforce have to be equipped with the right *English language skills* to communicate and collaborate effectively in the professional settings determined by the ongoing development of cross-border transportation networks [1, 2, 5].

The **purpose** of the paper is to identify the English language skills required most in the transport and logistics industry.

Recent findings suggest a strong relation between the English language proficiency and employability in the transport and logistics sector as it involves everything related to transportation and the way goods and people are organised when they get moving or are moved inside the country and abroad [3]. Employers say it is necessary to have proficiency in all four English language skills: *speaking* in an interactive way, *listening*

(presentations, announcements, technical descriptions, etc.), *writing* (emails, text messages, technical reports and documents, filing data in grids, filling in forms, etc.), and *reading* (export documentation, technical texts, etc.).

Firstly, working in this sphere – whether in administration, management, warehousing or human resources, employees need to be ready to communicate freely in various transport-related situations, and not only face-to-face. Large multinational enterprises within the transport and logistics industry often have offices and employees across the globe, in different countries and time zones. Hence, employees rarely meet with their colleagues, customers, partners, shipping agents, customs brokers or freight forwarders in person and rely on different forms of *written communication*, such as letters, emails, or text messages, *verbal communication* over the telephone, via Skype or Zoom, etc. All managers and staff must be proficient in English and e-communication in general. In certain job roles, as for staff involved in research and development, the importance of writing skills is especially stressed. Publications are the main factors when participating in joint research projects, distributing grant money and measuring the outcomes. Over 80% of academic journals in the world are written entirely in English [2].

Moreover, export documents are numerous, most of them are printed in English, some – can be in other languages too. For this reason, most transport companies today require more than one foreign language, considering English compulsory. Export documents include documents of dispatch (e.g. Standard Shipping Note, Dangerous Goods Note, Export Cargo Shipping Instruction in the UK), shipping documents (e.g. Bill of Lading, Air Waybill, Road/Rail Consignment Note, invoices, packing lists, etc.), customs documents (Customs Invoice, Certificate of Origin, ATA Carnet, Shipper's Export Declaration, Single Administrative Document, etc.), bank documents (e.g. Letter of Credit,

Bills of Exchange, etc.), insurance documents (e.g. Certificate of Insurance), and many others, depending on the country, trade term or individual customer requirements. The employees are required not only to know grammar quite well, but the technical terms and acronyms of export documents, their layouts and the procedures they represent. Knowing that is essential to read and interpret export documentation and technical texts, as well as to fill data in grids and forms correctly.

The results of such investigations may help to identify English language skills graduates need for employment in transport and logistics industry, as well as teaching and learning approaches and practices that better meet these needs. Thus, the identified industry requirements were taken into consideration when developing the foreign language courses for the students of the Siberian Transport University (STU) majoring in International Business (Master's Degree) at the International Business and Law Faculty. All students are to learn two foreign languages according to their choice. It can be either a combination of two European languages (English, French or German) or a combination of one European and one oriental language (Chinese). At present, there are two English language courses: "Foreign language (English) in professional sphere" and "Foreign language (English) in professional documentation". Students are engaged in conducting oral presentations, business meetings and negotiations in English, writing business letters, searching for relevant economic information and performing project work and in-depth case studies, interpreting and preparing the documents involved in the transportation of goods.

The obtained results emphasise the importance of studies investigating current educational trends and industry requirements for professional skills and competences, as well as comparing employers' and students' perceptions of the graduate skills, namely foreign language skills, that they are developing in higher education institutions.

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ВОСТЕБОВАННЫЕ В СФЕРЕ ТРАНСПОРТА И ЛОГИСТИКИ НАВЫКИ ВЛАДЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКИМ ЯЗЫКОМ ВЫПУСКНИКА СОВРЕМЕННОГО ВУЗА

А.С. Комкова, канд. филол. наук, доцент
Сибирский государственный университет путей сообщения
(Россия, г. Новосибирск)

***Аннотация.** В условиях глобализации транспорт и логистика играют важную роль в обеспечении конкурентоспособности национальных экономик. Транспортно-логистическая отрасль России представляет собой быстроразвивающийся сектор, оказывающий влияние на экономические показатели других отраслей страны. Подчеркивается современная потребность в специалистах, способных эффективно вести переговоры, сотрудничать с коллегами, клиентами и деловыми партнерами в профессиональных условиях, работать с транспортной документацией на английском языке. Проведен теоретический анализ литературы по теме исследования и изучены требования к выпускникам транспортных вузов в разрезе владения навыками английского языка. Приводится пример того, как высшие учебные заведения отвечают на вызовы меняющихся требований отрасли.*

***Ключевые слова:** высшее образование, языковое обучение, английский язык, транспортный университет, языковые навыки выпускников, логистика, транспорт.*