

**TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE SECONDARY
SCHOOLS OF UZBEKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates the characteristics of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the education system of Uzbekistan as well as the implementation of Common European Framework of References for languages (CEFR) in the whole system of foreign languages learning.

Key words: Continuous education system, EFL, CEFR, national state standards, language police

INTRODUCTION

Education is highly important for the development of any country as well as the sustained growth of its nation. The Uzbek government lays great emphasis to the education of the youth and it is free for children attending for private schools. Although, the measures are being taken for a rapid development of education in Uzbekistan, and its internationalization, there are still traces from the past of the educational system that bear the characteristics of Islamic education, Secular education introduced by Tsarist Russia, and a great influence of Soviet education which existed in the country for seven decades[5].

Uzbekistan has a long enough tradition of teaching foreign languages to young children. The evidence to support the idea dates back from the “Great Silk Road” period when the present day territory of Uzbekistan used to be a center for world trade, science and culture. Uzbek merchants were fluent speakers in distinctively different languages such as Persian, Arabic or Chinese because bilingualism or monolingualism always had practical concern to study, to make business and for intercultural communication. [3].

MAIN BODY

New researches show that the official appearance of the English language in the education system of Uzbekistan dates back to 1932 when the Soviet government released a decree in this year promoting the necessity of incorporating FL education into the teaching curriculum of secondary schools. Although the Soviet government was well aware of the importance of foreign languages, it paid little attention to foreign language teaching, especially English language teaching[2]. In the pre-independence period, in foreign language classes most of the class time was devoted to analytical readings, grammatical analysis of sentences, translation exercises, and mastering grammatical rules. Students were required to construct sentences in the target language with the help of well studied grammar rules.

The end of 1990’s and beginning of 2000’s marked a new era in foreign languages teaching in Uzbekistan when all stakeholders including teachers, students, schools, colleges, and universities started to feel that they were ready for change in the way foreign languages were taught and learned.

In 1991 after gaining independence from the Soviet Union, the government has been paying great attention to the reforms in education sector in order to provide an adequate place for the Republic of Uzbekistan in the world community. According to Hasanova, one of the first changes implemented into the system of

education in the wake of independence and educational reforms was to give the Uzbek language the status of the only official language of the country[2]. Indeed, it was impossible to provide the independent economy, social and political stability, and development of intellectual and spiritual potential of the nation without rebuilding the system of education.

In 1997 the “National Program for Specialist Training” was developed and adopted by 56 the Oliy Majlis (Parliament). The main purpose of this program is to train spiritually rich and morally mature citizens who possess up-to-date knowledge and take an active civil position; they are independent thinking specialists who are capable of deliberating on decisions, or, in other words, who are a harmoniously developed generation who have the capability of bringing progress and prosperity to Uzbekistan in the new historical era. A system of continuing education aimed at training personnel was developed through wide scale studies of foreign experience and a critical analysis of the existing system of education.

Uzbek government gradually reformed foreign language teaching, therefore foreign language curricula has been changed from grammar-translation methods to communicative language teaching in order to improve student’s awareness of linguistic knowledge and communication skills in foreign languages. A new textbook, Fly High English, has been published by the Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan with the help of the British Council Uzbekistan. The content of new course book was quite different from the English textbooks used during the Soviet times. However, because of different state standards for schools, academic lyceum and colleges, there was no inconsistency in foreign language teaching. The repetition of some topics and themes occurred many times in the course books of different stages of education.

The next big step in language policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan was the President Decree “On measures to further improve foreign language learning system” in 2012. According to the Decree, foreign languages, mainly English, gradually throughout the country is taught from the first year of schooling in the form of lesson-games and speaking games, continuing to learning the alphabet, reading and spelling in the second grade. Starting from the 2013-2014 academic year, foreign language teaching has been introduced in general secondary schools from the 1st grade through Kid’s English book. The above-mentioned State Education Standard was developed on the basis of the European Union's CEFR document and was the first step in the introduction of international standards in foreign language learning, teaching and assessment.

New state standard can clearly represent objectives and outcomes of learning and teaching English in each levels and stages of education. Thus, analysis of the system of teaching and learning foreign languages carried out by the group of experts from Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, and Ministry of Public Education revealed that the former curricula on foreign language teaching, standards for different levels of education were not efficient in terms of finance and effort.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed by a Council of Europe’s international working party set up by the Language Policy Division with a view to promoting transparency and coherence in the learning and teaching of modern languages in Europe. After a pilot scheme involving extensive field consultation, the Framework was officially published in 2001, the European Year of Languages, and has since been translated and published in almost 40 languages – in Europe and beyond. The

CEFR is based on an action-oriented approach to language learning and use. It includes six proficiency levels for foreign language learning.

As we approach the millennium, the learning of modern foreign languages plays a central role to provide the possibility of practical communication; it is also a source of valuable intellectual stimulation and enjoyment; it cultivates broader perspectives and insights into other cultures and enables people to gain insights into their own culture and language through contrast. But an early start to foreign language learning has particular advantages and to successfully teach children a foreign language in Uzbekistan context requires specific skills and intuitions that differ from those appropriate for European countries[3].

The first levels are A1 and A2 and called the levels of a ‘basic user’, B1 and B2 are the levels of an ‘Independent user’, and people who command C1 and C2 are considered ‘Proficient Users’. According to the adoption of CEFR in Uzbekistan, A1 is for the pupils of 1 to 4 grades. A1 has three subdivisions: A1/1 is for the first grade, A1/2 is for the second and third grade and A1/3 is for the fourth grade pupils. Pupils are required to obtain indicated competences through each levels. A2 level has also three subdivisions: A2/1 is for the fifth and sixth grade, A2/2 is for the seventh and eighth grade and A2/3 is for the pupils of grade 9.

CONCLUSION

Additionally above mentioned educational reforms, the Government has recently adopted a number of legislative documents aimed at structural and system reforms in the public education. In particular, the Presidential Decree from 5 September 2018 (UP-5538) “On additional measures to improve the management system of the public education” intended at further improvement of the systems of public education through introduction of new management mechanisms and quality standards in the educational process, increasing the prestige of the teaching profession in the society, improving the material and technical condition of educational institutions[1].

As an instrument for realising the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the President signed a decree On Uzbekistan’s Development Strategy 2017-2021 which approved the *National Action Strategy on Five Priority Development Areas 2017-2021*. The Action Strategy was developed as a five year strategic plan developed by the new Government which assumed office in 2016, on the basis of a comprehensive study of topical issues, analysis of the current legislation, law enforcement practices and the best international practices, and following public discussion. All these educational reforms are the requirement of time and have a big impact on foreign language teaching police.

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