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THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENTS` OPTIONS WHILE LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE UZBEK EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

This project describes the one central proposal by suggesting more recommendations related to this issue to make the English teaching system better and improve students` proficiency level on the performance of English skills. Regarding these suggestions, this central proposal is focused on the changes of English language teaching system of the public secondary specialized school, which emphasizes more on improving students` English proficiency based on their chosen spheres (Synopsis, Umarova). The proposal deals with national policies and laws and includes goals and objectives based on the recommendations, suggested timeline along with actors and possible stakeholders and other implementation issues.

Introduction

As the English language is considered as a language of international

communication, learning English is becoming an important part of education around the world. Currently, more and more students are acquiring English language skills in order to increase their employable skills for the future career. In order to meet the requirements of the various spheres in the world, Uzbekistan has become one of the countries experiencing English teaching system in the public education. Particularly, after the resolution of the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 10, 2012 No PP-1875 “On measurement to further improve the system of learning foreign languages, more and more people regarding students at any educational settings are becoming eager to develop their English lessons. The reason is to prepare youth of Uzbekistan for the future developed society making them more proficient and specialists in every field.

However, some common problems and educational challenges still exist in our country. Particularly, students are lacking to become aware of the purposes of English language in order to be proficient English users in their field. This can be developed by teaching students in different ways, such as EAP or EGP according to their options at school.

This project describes the one central proposal by suggesting more recommendations related to this issue to make the English teaching system better and improve students` proficiency level on the performance of English skills. Regarding these suggestions, this central proposal is focused on the changes of English language teaching system of the public secondary specialized school, which emphasizes more on improving students` English proficiency based on their chosen spheres (Synopsis, Umarova). The proposal deals with national policies and laws and includes goals and objectives based on the recommendations, suggested timeline along with actors and possible stakeholders and other implementation issues.

National policies and laws

After gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan, like other countries of the world, started to pursue a comprehensive development for the internationalization

of higher education system. In the development, literacy of the population is considered as an important role in a particular state.

Regarding this, the Republic of Uzbekistan had to carry out serious reforms in the educational system in order to increase the literacy of the population. Moreover, the Republic of Uzbekistan felt a need for qualified specialists. In this case, providing youth with the higher education and improving their qualification has been a central issue in the society to meet the needs. Particularly, the “National Program of Training Personnel” was developed and adopted as a new regulatory document in 1997. This national program was a basis for fundamental reforms in the education system.

According to Hasanova and Shadiyeva (2007), “A number of projects have been implemented by the Ministry of Education to make changes for the curriculum and improve the quality of English education in Uzbekistan. However, in practice, these changes have been lacking to be implemented in rural areas by taking priority of their old teaching methods at school.” Moreover, after the resolution of the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov dated December 10, 2012 No PP-1875 “On measurement to further improve the , more opportunities were established in both teaching and learning English in any educational settings (Synopsis, Umarova). According to the decree, foreign languages, particularly English will be taught gradually throughout the country from the first year of schooling in the form of lesson-games and speaking games. The policy on teaching English has shown its positive influence on the quality of educational staff and played an important role as the main criterion of employment in the country in all spheres as well as education.

Educational setting

The public secondary specialized school №1 was established in 1995, with the recognition of the Ministry of Public Education. It is situated in 22 Navoiy Street, Hamza city, Altiarik district, Fergana Region, Uzbekistan. The school is a kind of

non-profit public specialized school by providing with free cost and equal education for everyone. The school consists of 22 different groups ranging from primary education to upper class teaching system. In the recent years, more than 700 students are being educated by the about 45 high qualified teaching staff working at school. The lessons are conducted in only Uzbek language; however, Russian and English languages are offered to learn as foreign languages. When it comes to English classes, they are conducted by 5 English teachers, including 4 highest proficient and 1 first master's degree qualification. All English teachers have a CEFR certificate at school.

English classes started to be taught in the primary education by integrating different interesting activities for fun. School students continued studying general English in the secondary and high school periods. When they acquire basic knowledge on grammar and vocabulary, they are required to focus on integrated skills of English. English lessons are organized for 45-minute time limit by offering 3 lessons in a week. Each English class consists of at least 15 students in the morning schedule. English lessons are based on communicative language teaching approach according to the standards of the CEFR. As it was seen, the help of different materials and visual aids help to conduct the lessons in order to give clear acquisition for learners. Moreover, the qualified teachers in English implement different method and approaches.

This is one of the leading schools not only in the region, but also throughout the republic of Uzbekistan. While studying, students are involved in various English competences and most of them have become winners in this kind of competences so far. Participating in language competences and sharing the ideas with other learners can create an opportunity for developing their integrated skills in English. In addition, it can provide students with the wide range of experience.

Education system on English

According to the Ministry of Public Education, the State Educational Standards were developed to promote a curriculum that improves the quality of education.

The basic goal of the revised curriculum is to provide students with sufficient knowledge in order to meet the needs of global education. For the first time, Communicative Language Teaching was promoted instead of traditional methods. Although all teachers accepted this reform, in practice, CLT is not being used in the classroom by emphasizing more on old traditional methods as grammar translation method and direct method (Hasanova, 2007). It leads students to have lack of experience in terms of integrated skills. Later, the requirements, which need to assess both teachers and learners began to be conducted according to CEFR. All materials and techniques in teaching started to focus on CEFR. Students were required to acquire English lessons based on CEFR by integrating all target skills. It is true that all school pupils ranging from primary to high-class education have been learning general English so far. They are required to acquire basic knowledge for fundamental English rather than specifying the language in certain purposes. The whole school period can be considered as a huge amount of time to learn English for only general purposes. It sometimes, does not meet the standards of both national and international education. Instead, it would be better to change the system of English teaching into another effective way of teaching; English for academic purposes as well as general purposes, which help students learn English based on their approved field.

Methods and practices

Jordan (1975) described “EAP is required to communicate for study purposes in formal education systems”. It is clear that, EAP teaching helps learners to acquire the ability to communicate and do research in English in academic settings. For example, it involves study skills such as listening to academic lectures academic writing and discussion. It can be focused on a certain discipline of the language ability required.

When it comes to EGP, it has somehow unclear teaching purposes. So, it is sometimes called as “TENOR” standing for Teaching English for No obvious reason. This concept helps learners to acquire the general English as a form of

Expression for their daily conversation such as going shopping, calling, or writing someone. According to Chinese learners, EGP is not a vital part of teaching, as they are demotivated to learn it. On the other hand, our teaching language policy on English is specialized for teaching English for general purposes. Each student in this educational setting has to learn English general English for the whole period of school. They are learning English for the same purposes until they graduate the school. Furthermore, this way of teaching was proved as an ineffective in terms of future generations' career.

If the students acquire general English in primary and secondary education and move to the selected step into different purposes of teaching, it will be solution to the challenges and problems of education of Uzbekistan. Particularly, firstly, courses would be designed for specific needs of learners. Secondly, content would be planned for specific profession. Finally, the methods and teaching focus would be different from EGP classes.

Currently, although teaching materials as books cover all integrated skills exercises, students are required to focus on more speaking and listening skills in the social and conversational style. As a result, they are lacking in acquiring reading and writing skills, as they are integral parts formal academic style. In terms of context, all learners have to be followed by the curriculum, which was developed by the government. In order to meet the requirements both nationally and globally, the proposal needs to be implemented at school. Since, if students choose their options to continue their study on EGP or EAP, they will be eager to learn English relating to their professions. Moreover, if it is implemented, it will be a great change in the education system Uzbekistan.

Goals and objectives

According to Kaiser (2018), "goals and objectives are important to articulate as they are closely connected to the context." Taking into consideration, certain goals and objectives are set to implement during the proposal introduction. The most crucial goal of the proposal is to teach high-school students differently according

to their selected options based on their future professions. To achieve this goal, some objectives are added to complete the proposal:

- To inform upper-class students about alternation of studying English and its purposes in order to identify their choices
- To train pupils enough regarding EGP(English for General Purposes) in primary and secondary level in order to meet the needs for the proficiency level of EAP(English for Academic Purposes) and ESP(English for Specific Purposes)
- To provide the necessary level of the graduate school pupils for entering the university or adding additional scores in entrance examinations after studying according to their choices
- To implement various effective teaching methods and strategies in order to meet the requirements of proficiency level in their chosen field
- To utilize up-to-date technology while teaching
- To offer experienced teachers for teaching English in all fields
- To modify the existed books for primary and secondary regarding the general English and create a new one for upper-class coming from their profession

(Exploratory Outline, Umarova)

Inventory

This part includes the list of known, available, and existing sources as well as needed, lacking, and insufficient resources to implement the proposal and to achieve its objectives. (Kaiser, 2018). As it was discussed above, there are particular problems of teaching English at school. The problems can be related to proficiency level of both teachers and students, ranging from the materials to different methods and approaches. In order to meet the needs, this inventory part should be completed with the necessary resources.

To begin with the level of students, Students are lacking in terms of integrated

skills, which CEFR requires more practice in English and are not aware completely with the conception of learning English and its benefits for the future career. Moreover, their current knowledge on English does not meet the requirements of both national and international standards, as there is no any system to teach pupils according to their options based on EAP and ESP. the most important thing is that they are learning English for only to be evaluated and get score.

In terms of other factors:

A. Materials and books

- Although all pupils are provided with the books, these ones do not coincide the requirements of a new system
- The materials are not provided with the best descriptions and guideline

B. Methods and approaches

- Traditional methods are prior at school
- The quality of teaching system is not good enough to provide with a high proficiency level
- There is no information about pupils` interested fields in English
- The acquired proficiency level of English is not so useful for their future career

C. Technology

- There is no equipped room for special English classes
- Computers, headphones are missing in some rooms
- Audio and video materials do not work because of the technical issues
- Lack of whiteboards and projectors

D. Assessment

- Testing system is not valid in terms of content and face validity
- Students are assessed in grammar and vocabulary, not including 4 integrated skills

- Assessment and testing cannot measure pupils` real knowledge

Recommendations

As Jordan (1986) said, “the authenticity of EAP course is considered in four aspects: materials, task, event, and learners` experience.” Considering the insufficient resources according Jordan, it is highly recommended to introduce a new teaching system, which considers all pupils` options and is divided into 2 main spheres, such as EGP, EAP. It would be a good idea to provide special training courses for the pupils until they become familiar with system and try possible achievements and results of the new way of teaching with volunteer pupils who are interested in participating. Moreover, the following recommendations are listed:

Materials and books

- Invite responsible people to look through and change the existed books and create new books which covers academic English and other subjects for upper-class pupils
- To solve financial issues of the books and materials to create, print and provide pupils with these items

Staff

- Invite experienced teachers in English as well as other subjects, if possible to offer native speakers to teach
- Invite the famous people in their field who can give a valuable speech and guideline based on the system
- Offer language experts to test pupils` ability and competence in their optional field and give a real assessment

Methods

- Create a new way of teaching school pupils in specific and academic English and prepare them to meet the requirements of both national and international employment

- Offer different methods and approaches in order to make learning process easier and more effective
- Leave unnecessary topics in English books and enrich them with possible and valuable information

Technology

- Create an opportunity for specific and academic English class to provide computers and headphones as well as projectors
- Equip the rooms with necessary materials and tools based on the nature of these aspects of English

In terms of assessment, it is very important to develop updated way of testing system to identify the acquisition of learners. This means, the old testing systems are not valid in this teaching system anymore. For that reason, it should be modified for each different purposes according to the principles of assessment. Furthermore, it is highly suggested to invite language experts to measure the acquired knowledge of the students at the end of the whole course and to provide with some national or international certificate to enter the university or work somewhere based on their professions.

Actors

The notion of “Actor” is one of the important elements of language planning and policy, as Cooper’s (1989) considered the role of actor as the first component to initiate any LPP program. Nevertheless, there have been different views by linguistics that who should be actors in language planning and policy. From the experiences of Chinese language policy, Zhao and Baldauf (2008) categorize actors into four criteria.

One of the crucial actors of the proposal is The Ministry of Public Education, which is described as “People with power” including national leaders and highly placed officials in the article. The role of this actor in the proposal is to alter the education system of teaching English by establishing a new decree and control the implementation of this system across the country. The next actors are language

experts belonging to the type of “People with expertise,” such as scientists, professional people in their fields. Language experts help both teachers and students to try a new system and give their recommendations as well as evaluating this system on students. Parents and teachers are also parts of my LPP proposal regarding their influence on students to acquire a new language system. They contribute into the proposal by giving clear directions and explanations about possible success for their children by going into type of “People with influence” .The last type of actors is called “People with interest” including ordinary citizens who have neither power nor the personal status according to Zhao and Baldauf (2008).

Timeline and funding

It is vital to take the possible time and funding into consideration, while introducing any language proposal. It helps to identify the period for the possible outcomes and financial resources to fund for the proposal.

- The introduction of the new way of teaching can involve 6 months and can be supported financially by the government
- The qualified teachers can be invited to prepare training courses for the 3-month period and the salary for them can be asked from the Ministry of Public Education to provide with experiences and native speakers
- Allocating financial resources to work on books, materials, and testing system can take approximately 5 months to achieve and those can be funded by the government and financial supporters
- Equipping the rooms with the best technology devices can be achieved in a month and can be supported by inviting volunteer parents to invest in this proposal
- It is ongoing funding

Culture

The school includes any students who have different cultural and family backgrounds from the society. Sometimes, teaching can cause some

misunderstanding among students. However, The proposal about changing the teaching system in English by establishing a new way of teaching upper-class students in different purposes can be effective and accessible for not only Uzbek students, but also for any cultural background students. Since, the proposal does not contribute the cultural issues and misunderstandings among different students. Instead, it can help any student regarding their age, level, identity, and culture. Overall, the implementation of the proposal would lead to the development of the education system by preparing proficient users in English and specialists in their field.

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