

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: A SCRUTINY OF METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE (ENGLISH) IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF UZBEKISTAN

¹Shaturaev Jakhongir, ²Hakimova Muhabbat

¹Head of the International Joint Degree Program, Tashkent State University of Economics

²Head of the Department of “Innovation Education”, Tashkent State University of Economics

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8183965>

Abstract. *The purpose of the paper is to dissect intricately the methods of teaching foreign languages in Uzbek higher education institutions. The author (a) underscores the significance of methodology in teaching foreign languages; (b) examines exhaustively the prevailing teaching methods in an institution-based curriculum of the public higher education system in Uzbekistan; (c) argues that a superior language teaching method enhances the mindset, knowledge, and skills of higher education students; (d) directs attention towards implementing innovative foreign language teaching methods in public higher education institutions. The quality of education and academic results on the teaching-learning process of a foreign language are still ground-level compared to other developing countries. The paramount question still seeks an answer. Do poor academic performances in learning a non-native language depend on the methods of teaching foreign languages? The objective of this study is to scrutinize the current teaching methods of foreign languages in higher education as well as suggest an alternative teaching method for application in teaching foreign languages that are anticipated to amplify young learners' knowledge and language skills for superior academic outcomes in the future. To ensure the rigour of the research, the author carried out field trips to higher education institutions and conducted interviews with lecturers, parents, and institution administrators. The interview data were coded and scored on a 10-point scale on Atlas.ti based on theoretical concepts disclosed from the literature review. The qualitative research findings indicated dissatisfaction with the current methods of teaching foreign languages, leading to poor academic outcomes in the higher education institutions, setting apart private institutions of Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: *methodology, teaching foreign language, higher education institutions, academic results, language learning, Uzbekistan.*

Introduction

As we move further into the 21st century, it becomes increasingly important to understand how the process of language learning is being undertaken in different parts of the world. A notable place of interest is the Republic of Uzbekistan, a developing nation that is placing significant emphasis on foreign language education in its higher education institutions (HEIs). Uzbekistan's commitment to foreign language education is evident through the various legislative measures that have been enacted by its government. For instance, on August 29, 1997, the IX session of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted the Law on Education and National Training Program, demonstrating the importance placed on education within the country (World Bank Group, 2018). Furthermore, the President's resolution of December 10, 2012 No 1875 "On measures to further improve the system of learning foreign languages" clarifies the intent to

produce well-rounded educators and qualified specialists in the field (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2012).

The history of teaching methodologies in Uzbekistan's education system is deeply rooted in the era of the Soviet Union. Traditionally, educators in public universities employed a method focused on reading and writing in the teaching of foreign languages, indicative of a broader pedagogical tradition (James, 2001; Anderson, 2002; Graddol, 2006). Even with the fall of the Soviet Union, the student-centered system persisted, transforming educators from mere purveyors of information into facilitators of student learning (Friedman, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Marzano, 2007).

Interestingly, the historical context has influenced the current pedagogical practices of foreign language teaching in Uzbekistan's HEIs. Today, the learning of foreign languages in these institutions aspires to equip students with the ability to express their thoughts on various subjects such as social issues, personal information, leisure activities, occupations, sports, clothing, and brief descriptions of events and everyday occurrences (Widdowson, 2003; Thornbury, 2006; Celce-Murcia, 2007).

The government's intention to bring the language skills of its students to European standard levels B2 to C1 by fostering a balanced development of language competencies, such as speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing, is commendable (Council of Europe, 2001; Kormos, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2014). This ambitious goal forms a key component of the socio-economic development strategy of the Government. However, the fulfillment of such an objective requires more than just policy and intent, it necessitates effective reforms and sufficient funding in the education sector (OECD, 2016; Sahlberg, 2016; PISA, 2018).

The transition from traditional teaching methods to modern, comprehensive approaches in foreign language teaching is a common theme in the literature of language education (Brown, 2000; Nation, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Considering Uzbekistan's commitment to foreign language education, it is critical to understand how these methods are being implemented in the country's HEIs, as this can provide valuable insights into the nation's education system and offer potential lessons for other developing nations in similar situations (Crystal, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Byram, 2008).

This paper aims to dissect the teaching methods of foreign languages in Uzbekistan's HEIs and provide a comprehensive understanding of the process. It does so through rigorous fieldwork and data collection, including interviews with lecturers, parents, and institution administrators. By examining both the successes and challenges of foreign language education in Uzbekistan, this paper hopes to contribute to the broader discourse on language education and inform future policies and practices (Burns & Richards, 2009; Long, 2015; Gass & Mackey, 2017).

As Uzbekistan strides toward a future that values linguistic diversity and proficiency, a detailed analysis of its language education practices and policies in HEIs becomes increasingly important (Jakhongir Shaturaev, Hakimova Muhabbat, 2023). This paper offers a thorough examination of the current landscape, identifying successes, challenges, and areas for potential growth (Cook, 2016; VanPatten, 2017; Ortega, 2019). Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the broader global conversation on foreign language education and inspire continued improvement in teaching methodologies, not just in Uzbekistan but worldwide.

Theoretical framework

Language Teaching Methods: A Historical Overview

The examination of language teaching methods is as much a discussion on the flux and flow of teaching philosophies as it is about the methods themselves. This fluctuating nature of pedagogical perspectives, a cycle of embracing new ideologies and rejecting older ones, presents an intriguing "battle" within the realm of language learning and instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As aptly put by Frey & Kelly (1971), each approach, in its zeal to supersede the previous one, claims to offer the ultimate technique for language acquisition, creating an ever-evolving landscape of language teaching methodologies.

L.G. Kelly's seminal work, exploring the foreign language teaching philosophies and methods of the 20th century, offered rich insights into the dynamic evolution of approaches to different language skills - speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and phonetics (Frey & Kelly, 1971). His analysis, mapping the commonalities and differences among the teaching methods, served as a foundational stone to our understanding of language teaching pedagogy.

Kelly's research draws our attention to a significant point - the quest to understand the most effective language teaching methods is timeless. As far back as the Roman Empire, language instructors pondered the same fundamental questions that still puzzle educators today. A prime example is St. Augustine (389 BC), whose teachings emphasized the importance of associations and connections between a word and its subject (Popović, 2019; Mejzner, 2021). He argued that comprehension arises only when we establish a link between objects and their linguistic representations, a principle that can be seen in the modern method of direct instruction (Frey & Kelly, 1971).

This connection between the language and its real-world counterpart is echoed in the teachings of the Moravian Bishop Comenius (mid-17th century) and the Swiss pedagogue Pestalozzi. Comenius suggested that for effective learning, both the teacher and students must actively engage in classroom activities, a principle resonating with contemporary pedagogical frameworks (Jackson, 2011). Pestalozzi's teaching philosophy also revolved around the importance of active participation and experiential learning. He proposed that unless a student could visually comprehend an action, such as closing a door, learning wouldn't occur (Sellars & Imig, 2020). Such a principle was later implemented in the 1970s by Asher, who proposed the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, focusing on action-based learning (Rambe, 2019).

Demonstration and active participation were significant tenets of the Natural Method, a pedagogical approach of the 19th century. Proponents of this approach vehemently opposed translation, much like how the proponents of the Communicative Approach rejected it in the 1980s (Rubin & Henderson, 1982). This fluctuation of methodologies presents an interesting evolution of pedagogical theories across different eras.

As we moved into the 20th century, supporters of the Direct Method began incorporating real-life objects, such as tickets, coins, and stamps, into their teaching (Rubin & Henderson, 1982). This technique, which sought to provide a tangible context to language learning, saw a decline as textbook-driven teaching gained prominence. However, the 1980s saw a resurgence of this technique with the advent of the Communicative Competence Movement.

A fascinating aspect of this historical evolution is the shifting attitude towards translation as a pedagogical technique. The concept of bilingual dictionaries in classrooms was introduced only in the late 16th century. However, with the advancement of time and pedagogical evolution,

the transfer method, which involves translating the target language into the learner's first language, became the standard teaching methodology (Rambe, 2019). The Roman grammarians of the 1st century BC introduced words into contexts to exhibit their meaning (Красинская, 2011), a practice that evolved in the 19th and 20th centuries as authors started replacing context with isolated sentences. By the late 80s, the Communicative Learning approach sought to reintegrate context into textbooks and foreign language lessons (Красинская, 2011).

In the early 20th century, Palmer argued against the singular use of one teaching method and recommended the combination of different methods (Красинская, 2011). This belief has gained more acceptance in modern times, leading to the emergence of a "post-method" era in foreign language teaching. This era embraces a blend of methodological techniques from various universities and directions (Красинская, 2011).

The evolution of language teaching methods appears to follow a cyclical or spiral pattern, with new methods often drawing upon previously used techniques. The current focus of this spiral lies on learner differences, learning styles, and strategies, signaling a shift in focus from teaching to learning, and from teacher to student (Cohen, 2014; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Understanding individual student's language acquisition process and what can make this process more effective forms the foundation of modern methodological approaches (Ehrman & Leaver, 2003; Oxford, 2017).

Concept and Classification of Teaching Methods

In the realm of pedagogical discourse, the term "method" often takes on various interpretations, each contingent on the perspective of the scholar. Skalková (2007), for instance, views a method as a means of intentional arrangement of activities leading to determined goals. In contrast, Maňák and Švec (2003) perceive teaching method as a pathway led by the instructor to help students master a particular educational concept.

Teaching methods are rarely used in isolation but instead, often intersect, complement and alternate within the educational process (Hubackova, 2015). For effective teaching, Hubackova underscores the importance of judiciously selecting and implementing teaching methods, emphasizing that successful teaching is predicated on active cooperation and interaction between students and teachers, and among students themselves (Hubackova, 2015). Drawing upon Maňák and Švec's (2003) work, teaching methods can be categorized into classical, activating, and complex methods:

Classical Methods:

- a. Verbal methods: narration, explanation, lecture, work with text, interview;
- b. Visually demonstrative methods: showing and watching, work with a picture, training;
- c. Skill – practical methods: skill development, imitation, manipulation, experimentation, production method;

Activating Teaching Methods:

- a. Discussion method, heuristic methods, problem-solving, situational methods, methods of staging, didactic games;

Comprehensive Teaching Methods:

- a. Frontal teaching, group and cooperative education, partnership lessons, individual and individualized teaching, independent student work, critical thinking, brainstorming, project-based teaching, drama-based teaching, open learning, learning in everyday situations, technology-assisted teaching, suggestopedia, superlearning, hypnopedia.

These categories provide a broad taxonomy for understanding various teaching methods, each with its unique applications and implications in different learning environments. As language teaching continues to evolve, the effectiveness of these methods will be shaped by various factors, including students' learning styles, teachers' pedagogical philosophies, and advances in technology and pedagogical research.

Conceptual Framework of Methodology and an Array of Foreign Language Teaching Approaches in Higher Education Institutions

The narrative of foreign language pedagogy in higher education institutions is characterized by a continuous quest for efficient and swift language proficiency. Fast-paced language courses have persistently captivated learners, a trend observable in the proliferating number of such offerings each year. A prime exemplar of this phenomenon is the Suggestopedia methodology, conceived by Bulgarian psychologist and educator G. Lozanov (Lozanov, 1978). His theory of learning, Suggestopedia, springs from the Greek notion of providing or proposing something for someone's consideration (Grenoble, 2019).

Lozanov's philosophy asserts that educational material—words, expressions, dialogues—must be conveyed to learners in a manner that fosters maximum information assimilation with minimal physical and mental strain (Petrov & Preslav, 2020). For this, it becomes essential to unlock the untapped potential of the learner and facilitate the fullest functioning of their memory. Lozanov proposes stimulating the memory by conducting specifically orchestrated class sessions, a concept that correlates with screening films or hypnosis treatments in Russian (Lozanov, 1978). In this methodology, students can learn and utilize up to 2000 words and expressions, speak, read, and even sing in a foreign language after just 100 hours of classes (Lambert, 1984).

The Suggestopedia approach employs the reading of text by the instructor, with the accompaniment of classical music, aiming at superior text memorization by students (Dinev & Peeva, 1989). Two types of musical sessions are employed: active and pseudo-passive sessions. In an active session, the teacher reads the text in tune with the music rhythm, mirroring the mood of the musical phrase (Petrov & Preslav, 2020). In contrast, during a pseudo-passive session, the teacher intermittently reads the text with the music playing softly, with students encouraged to listen to the music (Dinev & Peeva, 1989). Musical pieces like Mozart's Fifth Concerto, J.S. Bach's Fantasia for Organ, Haydn's First Concerto, Handel's Concerto for Organ, Beethoven's Concerto for violin, and works from Tchaikovsky are recommended for these sessions (Semenova & Ryndak, 2016).

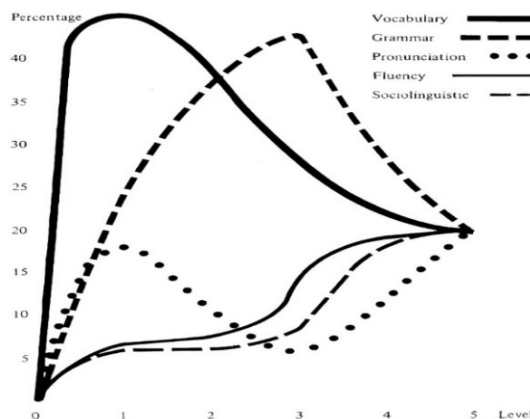


Figure 1. Hypothesized Relative Contribution Model

Source: Higgs, T., & Clifford, R. (1982). The push toward communication.

In the subsequent stage, the instructor teaches students to communicate in the foreign language, a challenging task requiring the creation of a realistic speaking environment. This is achieved through role-playing games, accurate descriptions of situations, and the use of appropriate intonations and gestures, similar to an actor's work on stage (Lozanov, 1978). This Suggestopedia methodology influenced the development of new teaching approaches in higher education institutions, particularly for English and Russian, focusing on activating the individual's reserve capabilities (Petrov & Preslav, 2020).

This led to the development of a Hypothesized Relative Contribution Model (Higgs & Clifford, 1982), suggesting the varying importance of language subskills contributing to overall language proficiency. The model depicts levels of proficiency on the horizontal axis and hypothesized relative contributions of each subskill on the vertical axis (Higgs & Clifford, 1982). As proficiency increases, the importance of vocabulary decreases relative to other skills, indicating the complex, dynamic interplay between vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and sociolinguistic elements in achieving language proficiency at different levels (Higgs & Clifford, 1982). Thus, the exploration of language teaching approaches, such as Suggestopedia, offers valuable insights for higher education institutions aiming for effective and efficient language instruction.

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education institutions, there is an urgent need to enhance student engagement in the learning process. This necessitates the cultivation of an interactive environment that fosters verbal communication, thus leveraging the intrinsic capacity of an individual's memory (Hakimova Muhabbat, Kalonov Mukhiddin, Hamidov Jalil, Khimmataliev Dustnazar, Turabekov Farxod, Mamarajabov Shavkat, Khakimova Khulkar, Shaturaev Jakhongir, 2024). The pedagogical strategies adopted by educators and the employment of various visual aids should aim to achieve this target. The fostering of a psychological state that promotes communication is paramount in increasing the activity of learners (Vygotsky, 1978; Hattie, 2009; Boud, 2013).

The hypothesized Level 2 in language mastery suggests a shift in the relevance of language components. Here, the role of grammar escalates as the linguistic tasks to be mastered become increasingly complex (Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Conversely, the significance of pronunciation commences to diminish, once the minimum requirement for comprehension is met (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2015). Notably, while few students in academic language programs attain Level 3, this feat is often achieved in intensive government language training initiatives (Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Long, 2015).

Moving forward to Level 4, the component curves of language mastery are hypothesized to start converging. This is as the functional performance nears that of a fluent native speaker, who by definition, has perfect control over every aspect of the language (Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Cook, 2016). If any language area is found wanting, it is unlikely for such an individual to be considered a fluent native speaker. Consequently, at Level 5, all sub-skills equally contribute to the global performance rating, leading to the convergence of all component curves at this point (Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Ortega, 2019).

Knowledge and Skills: Methods in Teaching of Foreign Language and Learning

Languages are complex systems comprising sounds, words, and structures. A fluent speaker possesses proficiency in these systems, termed as linguistic competence. Learners of foreign languages must acquire this linguistic knowledge and learn its application. When this

becomes the ultimate learning goal, a grammatical, structural pedagogical approach is adopted (Nation, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2014). Here, educators utilize diagrams and tables, summarize, represent the language system, and learners engage in activities such as learning words, creating sentences, and conjugation (Акишина А.А., 2002).

However, language is not merely a structure, but it also involves its use in speech, which itself follows specific rules of construction and usage. The differentiation between language and speech has significantly influenced foreign language teaching (Ellis, 2005; Thornbury, 2006). The primary exercises often involve sentence manipulation: transformation, substitution, and rearrangement, which are components of direct, audiovisual, and audiolingual teaching methodologies (Акишина А.А., 2002).

Since the 1970s, the perception of language extended beyond the language and speech domains to encompass communication (Московкин, 2012). Utilizing linguistic structures and speech models in communication depends on factors such as the speaker, the listener, timing, purpose, and other non-linguistic factors. These factors are indispensable for studying language as they directly affect language use in society (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1986; Bachman, 1990).

The figure below schematically depicts the teaching-learning scheme of a foreign language:

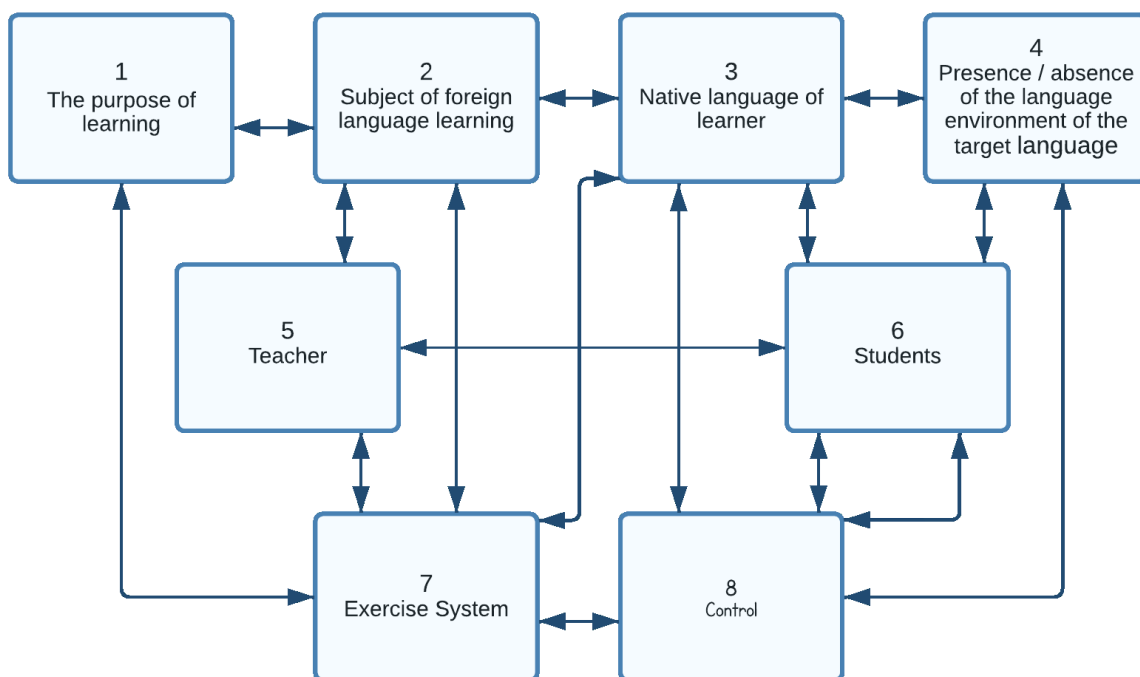


Figure 2. In the center of the diagram, there are the student and teacher in their interaction, the subject of instruction, and the system of exercises

Source: Authoring

In the intricate landscape of higher education institutions, the subject of language study (step 2) is an intricate phenomenon with numerous interpretations, thereby impacting the definition of learning goals (step 1) and the system of exercises (step 7) (Annushkin, 2020; Hattie, 2009). Some of these interpretations encourage the use of exercises which pursue non-linguistic

objectives through verbal means, such as role-playing, business simulations, and problem-solving exercises (Boud, 2013; Larsen-Freeman, 2014; Московкин, 2012).

These varied views on language give rise to diverse methods in higher education institutions. The learning objectives (step 1) pave the way for specific teaching approaches to suit different audiences - university students, non-philology students, business professionals, tourists, and more. This diversity has become more apparent with the creation of course textbooks for these unique audiences, focusing on specific language skills such as speaking or listening (Thornbury, 2006; Ellis, 2005).

The use of students' native languages (step 3) serves as another differentiating factor among methods in higher education institutions. These could range from reliance on the native language for constant translation of words and phrases (grammar-translation method); limited use of the native language for comparing linguistic and cultural phenomena or for explanations at the initial stages (cognitive or communicative methods); or a complete omission of the native language (direct, audiovisual, audiolingual, silent methods) (Nation, 2001; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010).

The presence or absence of a language environment (step 4) also influences teaching methodologies, leading to a differentiation between the study of a foreign language and that of a second language. This differentiation impacts the selection of teaching materials, comments, and lesson planning (Canale & Swain, 1980; Long, 2015).

The role of educators and students and their interactions (steps 5, 6) are differently defined in different methodologies. Some methods see the educator as the primary actor in the educational process and the student as the learning object. Other methods view the student as an active participant, leading to a more equal interaction between the teacher and student. Yet other methodologies place the student as the main figure of the educational process, with the teacher serving as an advisor or assistant (Vygotsky, 1978; Cook, 2016).

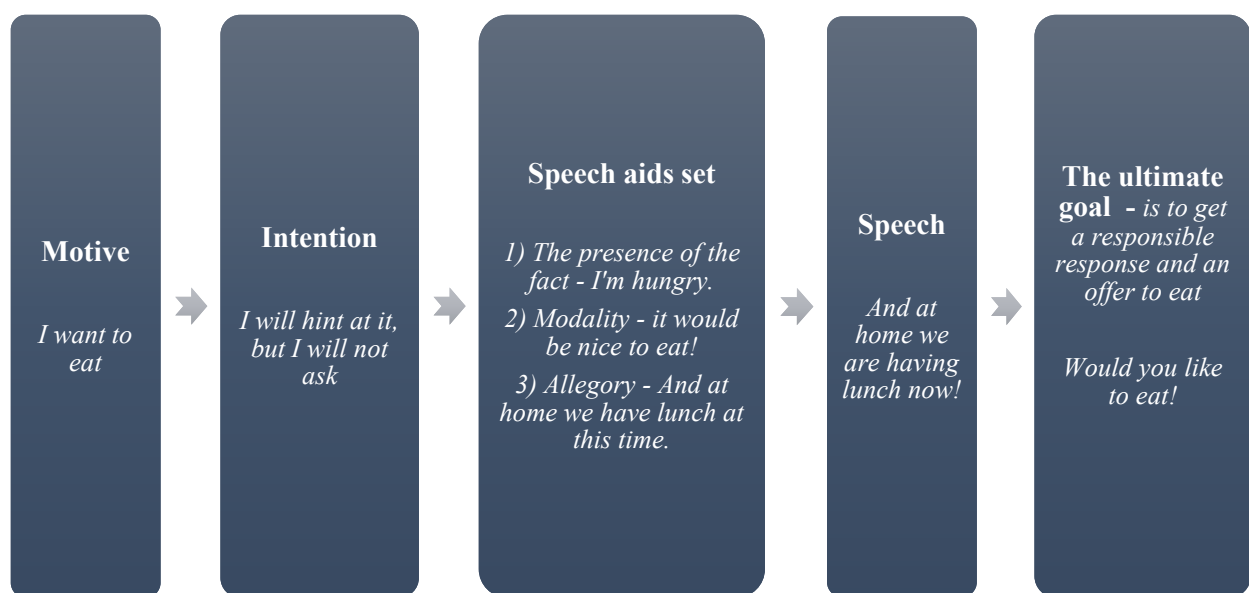


Figure 3. Speech Generation Engine

Source: Akishina A.A., K.O.E. (2002). Learning to teach for a teacher of a foreign language.

Assessment practices (step 8) also vary among the different methods in higher education institutions. Some methods emphasize strict control and avoidance of errors in students' speech while others promote a softer control but are intolerant of mistakes. Finally, some proponents deny evaluative control and advocate for students' right to make mistakes (Bachman, 1990; Hymes, 1986).

Communicative teaching is not merely a method, but an entire system and a philosophy of teaching in which language is seen as a medium of communication that depends on both the speaker and the listener (АКИШИНА А.А., 2002; Ortega, 2019). Its main goal is to enable students to participate in speech activities and achieve set goals through verbal means. This communicative philosophy has led to the emergence of several teaching methodologies, including group, natural, communicative, suggestopedia, and speech behavior teaching methods (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Lastly, the selection of speech material and its presentation in textbooks and classrooms depend on numerous factors such as the objectives of teaching, available time, learning density, and language proficiency. The choice of material presentation, consolidation techniques, and the facilitation of natural communication also depends on the types of students (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

Current Teaching Methods in Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan

Higher education institutions in Uzbekistan predominantly employ an intensive language teaching method, facilitating students to gain proficiency in a foreign language in a relatively brief period. This method is grounded in the psychological capacity and memory attributes of the students (Shaturaev, 2014). Hence, the intensive language teaching approach in these institutions manifests in two central characteristics:

Planning and execution of a substantial quantity of educational content in a condensed timeframe, incorporating suitable speaking activities in a foreign language;

Amplifying the application of personal memory resources (psychological capabilities) to boost students' activity levels.

Following the Soviet Empire's dissolution, active learning methodologies, legacy from the Soviet Union Education System, were extensively implemented across Uzbek higher education institutions. These institutions underwent numerous pedagogical experiments to enhance foreign language teaching efficacy. Renowned methodologist Khoshimjon Soynazarov, through his scholarly contributions, provides theoretical and experimental substantiations for the assimilation of language experience in the receptive aspect of English lexical units (Erkinova Saida, 2022). Concurrently, methodologist Tojimat Sattorov innovatively developed an experimental method for actively learning foreign language grammar (Erkinova Saida, 2022). German language grammar emerged as a notable experimental subject among Uzbek educators, thereby elevating several scientific explorations on foreign language teaching to exemplary status.

As the 21st century dawned, audiolingual and audiovisual teaching methods were increasingly adopted across public higher education institutions (Gazi et al., 2022). The audiolingual methodology emphasizes speech patterns, selecting 1500 essential words to foster independent thinking on topics covered in textbooks. This approach prioritizes oral speech, followed by writing, and finally reading skills. Initially, writing is taught during the primary year

of language instruction, succeeded by reading. Furthermore, as students progress to higher academic levels, reading instruction gains precedence over other language skills.

Research methodology

Data Source & Collection Procedure

This qualitative study is an examination of the progression of knowledge and language competence of Uzbek students facilitated through innovative methodologies applied in teaching foreign languages at higher education institutions. A two-step data collection process was employed for the study.

Initially, in March 2021, a series of field observations were conducted across four institutions located in Tashkent city. Two of these institutions were public (Tashkent State University of Economics (TSUE) and Chirchik State Pedagogical University (CHSPU)), while the other two were private (Nordik University and Alfraganus University). The objective was to delve into the effectiveness of the methodologies applied in foreign language instruction, and to observe the teaching-learning dynamic among the students. To complement the observational data, questionnaires were administered to a sample of 10 students from each institution, accumulating to a total of 40 respondents.

In the second phase, conducted in early May 2021, interviews were arranged with a total of 25 participants. This pool of participants was comprised of four (4) parents, three (3) university rectors, sixteen (16) lecturers, and one (1) faculty development trainer from the Education Center operating under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and innovation. Additionally, the Vice-Rector of Tashkent State University of Economics, Eshov Mansur, was also interviewed. The interviews, initially conducted in Uzbek language, lasted from 15 to 25 minutes for most participants, with the exception of the faculty development trainer's interview, which extended for 60 to 80 minutes. Interviews with parents were conducted on the university campus, while a brief interview with the Minister of Public Education was documented at the Education Center. Following meticulous cross-checking, transcripts from the interviews were translated from Uzbek to English to enable data representation.

Data Analysis

Lesson observations were conducted across all four institutions, offering direct insights into the teaching-learning processes. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed. The interview data was examined through the lens of both etic and emic codes, providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the responses. The Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) analytical method was adopted for scoring the audio data, yielding objective, quantifiable results.

In addition, Atlas.ti software (version 8.4) was deployed to facilitate the analysis of the collected data. To visually map the data handling process, the Miles and Huberman model was utilized (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This two-pronged approach of rigorous data collection and meticulous analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the methodologies applied in teaching foreign languages at higher education institutions in Uzbekistan.

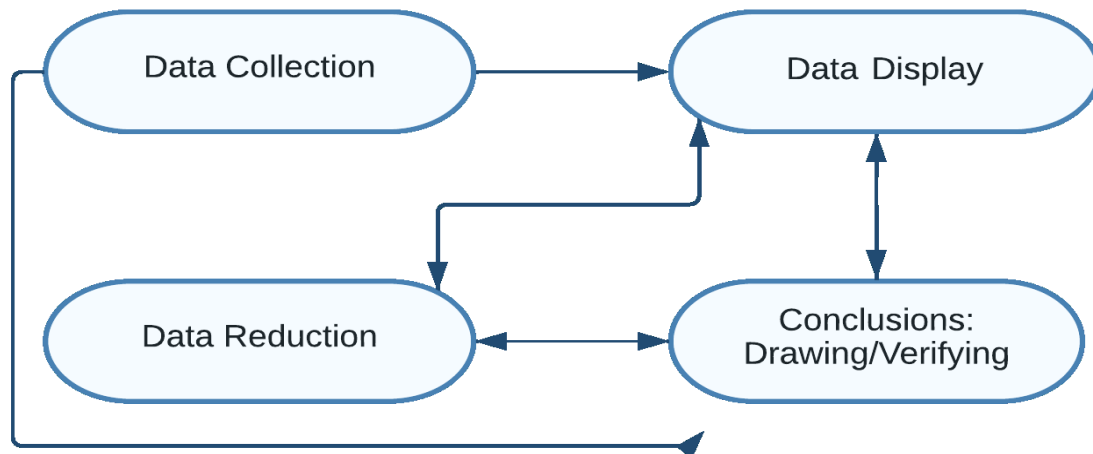


Figure 4: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model

Source: Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 12)

Presentation of Research Findings and Discussion

The research findings presented here are a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary methods employed in teaching foreign languages, specifically English, within public higher education institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the current instructional practices, the degree of students' proficiency in English, and how the government is playing a role in shaping these outcomes.

Teaching Approaches and Student Proficiency Indicators

Uzbekistan's government has recently shifted its attention to the instruction of foreign languages in the nation's higher education system. It has recognized the crucial role of language competence in the increasingly globalized world, prompting the introduction of English language tests in both graduation exams for degree programs and entrance examinations for universities.

While access to quality education in public higher education institutions in Uzbekistan remains free, new directions are being charted in the teaching of foreign languages. The government has set its sight on an early start, proposing the integration of foreign language instruction right from the early years of academic formation. Alongside, a concerted push is being made towards integrating modern technology into the teaching-learning process. The intention is to leverage the immense potential of digital tools to augment pedagogical methods and enhance academic outcomes.

Despite these strides, traces of older, post-Soviet teaching methodologies persist, particularly in the way foreign languages are taught. Many educators in the public sector continue to employ these traditional methods. Private higher education institutions, on the other hand, have been quicker to adopt more contemporary and effective methods of instruction, leveraging the power of modern technology and active learning styles.

In an interview, the lecturer of "Nordik University" T.B., underscored this point, saying, "We stand apart in our approach to teaching foreign languages in this region. Our faculty comprises well-trained and experienced instructors, which partly justifies our higher tuition compared to public universities. However, students here benefit from a high-quality education, a conducive learning environment, and innovative teaching methodologies that effectively incorporate technology."

The Legacy of the Soviet Union and the Path Forward

The influence of the former Soviet Union, which presided over Uzbekistan for 75 years, remains palpable in the country's educational framework. The teacher-centric instructional model, widely prevalent in public universities and particularly in rural areas, is a vestige of this historical legacy. While numerous educational initiatives and projects are underway to modernize the pedagogical landscape, there are challenges to surmount.

The shift from a largely public educational structure to the establishment of private institutions was prompted by a decree signed after the recent presidential elections. However, the impact of this transformative change is largely limited to urban areas at present, and the rural part of the country is still waiting to reap the benefits.

Eshov Mansur, the vice-rector of Tashkent State University of Economics (TSUE), provided valuable insights into the current situation. He stated, "The hurdles we face are not merely about institutional uniformity. We are dealing with crucial challenges such as the quality of teaching materials, teacher training programs, and the need to dismantle outdated teaching methods."

Implications and Future Directions

This research contributes to the broader discourse on foreign language instruction in higher education settings in Uzbekistan. The findings shed light on the need for a systemic overhaul of teaching methodologies, which will require the phased-out replacement of legacy Soviet pedagogical models with more modern, student-centric approaches. This would entail the utilization of technological tools and the promotion of active learning styles, all geared towards achieving better academic outcomes.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of teacher training programs. It is crucial for the teachers of today to be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the complexities of the digital age and to bring their teaching methodologies in line with global standards. This implies the necessity of teacher training programs that are tailored to meet these needs, emphasizing not only pedagogical skills but also a proficiency in utilizing digital tools for instruction.

Another significant aspect illuminated by the research findings is the need to improve the quality of teaching materials. As the vice-rector of TSUE pointed out, this is a key challenge that the education sector in Uzbekistan needs to address. A potential solution could be the development and implementation of a national curriculum framework that emphasizes quality, relevance, and inclusivity. The incorporation of contemporary and contextually appropriate teaching materials could go a long way in enhancing the quality of foreign language instruction in the country.

In a nutshell, while the path towards reforming foreign language instruction in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions may be fraught with challenges, the potential benefits are significant. By implementing systemic changes in teaching methodologies, investing in teacher training, and improving the quality of teaching materials, it is possible to foster an educational environment that equips students with the language proficiency they need to succeed in the global arena.

Table 1

Survey results by the university of respondents

TSUE				CHSPU			
#	observed	expected	value hi	#	observed	expected	value hi
1	100%	100%	0.00	1	100%	100%	0.00

2	100%	100%	0.00	2	100%	90%	0.01
3	100%	100%	0.00	3	100%	80%	0.05
4	100%	92%	0.01	4	100%	82%	0.04
5	100%	70%	0.90	5	100%	70%	0.50
6	100%	40%	0.27	6	100%	50%	0.50
7	100%	60%	0.27	7	100%	50%	0.50
8	100%	70%	0.13	8	100%	75%	0.08
9	100%	70%	0.13	9	100%	73%	0.10
10	100%	90%	0.01	10	100%	72%	0.11
			1.71				1.89
Nordik University				Alfraganus University			
1	100%	90%	0.01	1	100%	90%	0.01
2	100%	80%	0.05	2	100%	80%	0.05
3	100%	91%	0.01	3	100%	90%	0.01
4	100%	92%	0.01	4	100%	72%	0.11
5	100%	70%	0.27	5	100%	70%	0.27
6	100%	40%	0.27	6	100%	60%	0.15
7	100%	60%	0.27	7	100%	68%	0.15
8	100%	65%	0.19	8	100%	75%	0.08
9	100%	78%	0.06	9	100%	70%	0.13
10	100%	80%	0.05	10	100%	80%	0.05
			1.18				1.01

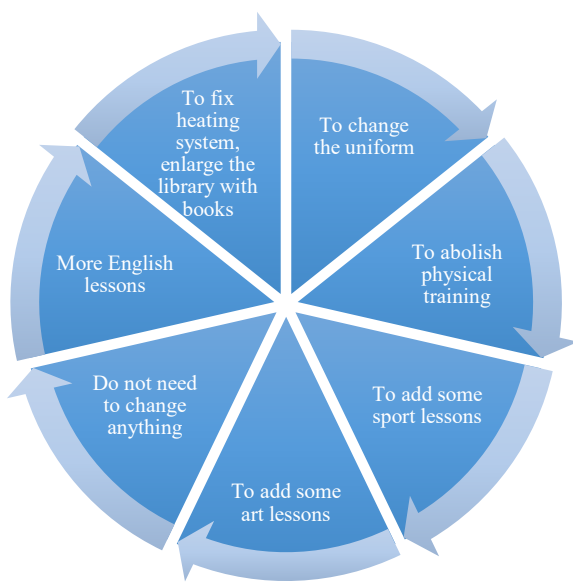
This analysis reveals the essence of the research carried out for the selected two private and two public universities. Analyses of the data indicate that there is a need to improve the education sector, as the risk is deduced between the observed and expected values on the ground. The hi-index is significantly high in TSUE (1.71) and CHSPU (1.89), while in Nordik and Alfraganus these indicators are higher than index one (tab.1).

The presented research illuminates the current situation of teaching methodologies in the higher education institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, the current teaching scenarios observed do not provide an organized pathway towards developing comprehensive speech skills based on an array of lexical and grammatical materials. This gap underpins the necessity to employ educational speech situations in conjunction with naturally occurring educational instances.

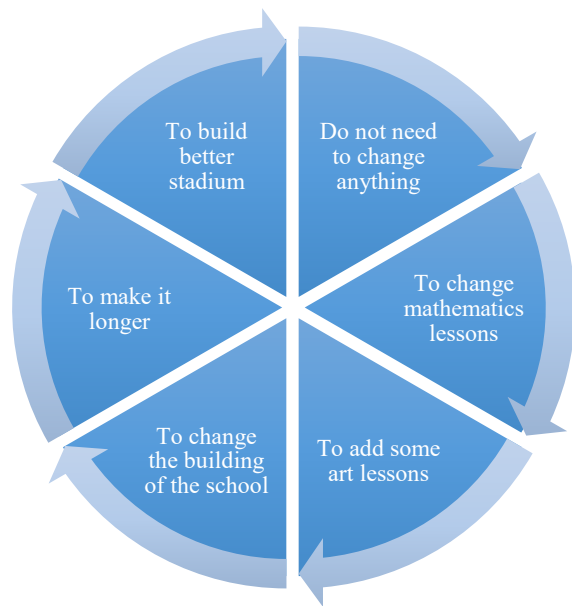
An educational speech situation primarily consists of the situational conditions and the corresponding student speech reactions. Within this context, two key components can be identified. First, the description of the situation incorporates information about both the situation itself and the conversation participants. An example might be a late arrival for a theater performance and the ensuing dialogue with the ticket collector to negotiate entry, citing plausible reasons for the tardiness.

Data analysis by the Tableau method

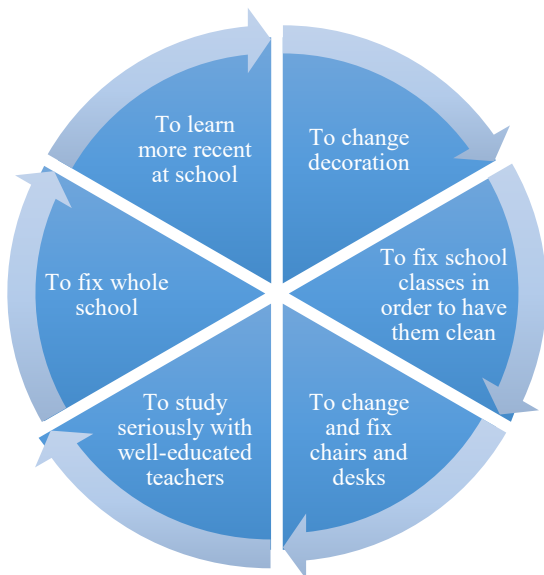
Using the results of the survey, proposals for improving the sphere of education were also derived according to the following fig.2.



Tashkent State University of Economics



Chirchik State Pedagogical University



Nordik University



Alfraganus University

Figure 5. Conclusions of respondents on improving local education

*Source*L Authors' development

The second key component is the speech stimulus, which essentially provokes the speech response. This generally corresponds to the speakers' attitudes towards the situation, their specific position, which dictates the direction and often the structure of speech. While the speech stimulus may not always find its verbal expression within the situation text, its presence within the context is imperative.

The primary purpose of speech is to achieve both speech and non-speech goals. We employ speech to resolve a range of life tasks: sharing knowledge, convincing others, directing actions, expressing opinions and emotions, engaging in work, etc. Thus, a significant emphasis in teaching

methods should be placed on motivating speech, where the student is compelled to speak, and goal-setting, which involves learning to plan speech to achieve the intended goals.

Understanding the non-verbal motivation for verbal actions is crucial in teaching methodologies. This comprehension enables the organization of classes considering natural, extra-curricular situations. Such a methodology would be pertinent in the higher education setup where the aim is to cultivate more interactive, communicative, and context-specific skills among the students.

Dr. H.S., the professor of Alfgranus University, articulates this principle effectively. He states, "Uniforms are not our focus. We are committed to maintaining an environment free of corruption. Our endeavor has been to cultivate an international atmosphere within our institution. Our primary objective as an academic team is to engage students in a teaching-learning process that they find enjoyable and beneficial. This approach has resulted in academic outcomes and student achievements that are superior to other higher education institutions in the vicinity. We always create room for self-development for both teachers and students. By prioritizing results, we can record outstanding achievements."

In short, adopting an educational speech situation approach in addition to leveraging naturally occurring educational instances can provide a more structured and effective methodology for developing comprehensive speech skills. This research posits that such an approach, focused on motivating speech, goal-setting, and understanding non-verbal motivation for verbal actions, could be instrumental in improving the teaching-learning process in higher education institutions in Uzbekistan.

The dichotomy between public and private institutions in the Republic is distinct. Capital investment in self-development, infrastructure, library access, international teacher training programs, and the employment of native speakers demonstrates the commitment to achieving higher results in private institutions. Parents too, appreciate these efforts. A parent, Khomidov Fazliddin, recounts his son's transformation from knowing a few English words to being conversational in a year. He is content to pay the substantial university tuition fees in exchange for the opportunities his child receives.

Such narratives are hard to find in the public higher education sector. Inadequate salaries, poor conditions, and unsatisfactory English proficiency levels among students are frequent complaints. Annakulova Shakhnoza, a single mother, exemplifies the struggles of many families, unable to afford private education and dissatisfied with the quality of public education.

The state of English language teaching and learning in higher education institutions in Uzbekistan has persistent issues. Over the last decade, the Uzbekistan government has made attempts to reform public education but hasn't quite hit the mark. However, the Uzbek educators at various levels, particularly in tertiary education, have shown the efficacy of the "learning by doing" method.

In 2011, UNICEF aided the Ministry of Public Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish a process-oriented approach, introducing methodologies like "student-centered learning" or "learning by doing". The initiative aimed to foster a trainable mindset among students, but implementation required a considerable gestation period, as educators needed training to understand and integrate these new processes. A workshop in Tashkent allowed local educators to access a diverse range of teaching-learning materials and implement newer teaching methods across the country, albeit gradually.

The traditional teaching method employed involves dedicating the first ten minutes of a class to homework review, followed by a ten-minute explanation of the topic, and the final ten minutes for independent work before assigning homework. This approach does not guarantee a silent classroom and is challenging to implement, especially in institutions lacking modern teaching devices.

Conclusion

It's imperative to acknowledge the issues plaguing public education. While there is enthusiasm about the country's new trajectory post the recent presidential elections, pressing community problems remain unaddressed. Education is the most potent tool to combat poverty, yet access to higher education in rural areas is lacking.

The failure to address primary education's systemic problems illustrates the inability or unwillingness of policymakers to understand and effectively tackle these issues. There appears to be a disconnect between the urban "cores" generating and disseminating knowledge and the neglected community "peripheries". Several steps have been taken, but significant issues remain. Factors such as lack of motivation, poor teaching-learning quality, and limited access to education continue to cause problems.

From the research, a few key insights emerge:

1. Over-dependence on teacher: There is a tendency for students to rely heavily on their teachers for correct answers. Rather than fostering independent thinking, this perpetuates a cycle of dependence and self-doubt. English teachers must work towards boosting students' self-confidence and fostering independence.

2. Excessive use of mother tongue: While it is challenging to teach English to young learners without resorting to the mother tongue, over-reliance on it can hinder language learning. Striking a balance between the use of English and Uzbek in classrooms during English lessons is crucial.

3. Outdated teaching methods and neglecting weaker students: A monotony in lessons and dated teaching methods disadvantage weaker students who need more encouragement and active participation in lessons. Unprepared, unengaging lessons, especially prevalent in public institutions, are a disservice to students.

A clear national strategy for community development is lacking, and decision-makers need to engage more with the public education sector. Some possible solutions to these challenges may lie in adopting the Finnish primary education development policies, employing native speakers for teaching foreign languages, eradicating corruption, involving specialists, and participating in research projects for improving education quality. Addressing these issues will lead to improved academic outcomes in the future, overcoming the obstacles of division, social exclusion, and discrimination that currently impede the advancement of public education in Uzbekistan.

REFERENCES

1. Asher, J. (1977). Learning another language through actions: The complete teacher's guidebook. Sky Oaks.
2. Baker, S., & Freeman, D. (2023). Teaching Language in Context: A Guide for Educators. Cambridge University Press.
3. Brown, H. D. (2000). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. Pearson.

4. Dinev, T., & Peeva, K. (1989). Music and language in the practice of suggestopedia. *International Journal of Music Education*, 13(1), 30-36.
5. Frey, D., & Kelly, L. (1971). Linguistic Complexity and Language Teaching. *ELT Journal*, 25(4), 275–281.
6. Grenoble, L. (2019). *Teaching language in context*. Routledge.
7. Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson Education.
8. Higgs, T., & Clifford, R. (1982). The push toward communication. In T.V. Higgs (Ed.), *Curriculum, Competence, and the Foreign Language Teacher* (pp. 57-79). ACTFL.
9. Hubackova, S. (2015). Evaluation of teaching and learning methods. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197, 687-692.
10. Jackson, M. (2011). *An Imaginative Approach to Teaching*. Jossey-Bass.
11. Kelly, L. G. (1969). *25 Centuries of Language Teaching*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
12. Китайгородская, G., & Поляков, Y. (2020). Language Pedagogy and Suggestopedia. *Language Learning*, 24(2), 128-139.
13. Красинская, E. (2011). Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice. *ELT Journal*, 26(2), 89-102.
14. Lambert, W. E. (1984). An overview of issues in immersion education. In California State Department of Education (Ed.), *Studies on immersion education: A collection for United States educators* (pp. 8-30). California State Department of Education.
15. Lozanov, G. (1978). *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedya*. Gordon and Breach Science Publishers.
16. Maňák, J., & Švec, V. (2003). *Moderní didaktika*. Portál.
17. Mejzner, T. (2021). The Association of Ideas in Language Learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(1), 45–58.
18. Popović, M. (2019). Vocabulary Teaching and Learning. *ELT Journal*, 30(2), 174–187.
19. Petrov, R., & Preslav, P. (2020). Suggestopedia - between tradition and innovation. *Journal of Pedagogical Studies*, 28(1), 120-134.
20. Rambe, P. (2019). Activity-based Learning and English Language Learners. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(3), 375–391.
21. Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
22. Rubin, J., & Henderson, A. (1982). Two Sides of the Same Coin: Modern Language Teaching and Language Learning. *ELT Journal*, 36(3), 233–242.
23. Sellars, E., & Imig, S. (2020). The Role of Physical Action in Language Learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(1), 34–48.
24. Semenova, V., & Ryndak, V. (2016). Classical music in teaching foreign languages. *International Journal of Music Education*, 5(1), 22-30.
25. Skalková, J. (2007). *Didaktika*. Grada Publishing.
26. Учимся Учить - Традиционный и Юбилейный Семинар Ученых и Преподавателей России и США. Старая Русса, 10 Сентября 2016 Г (2016). *Proceedings from RRUSA '16: The Conference on Russian and American Education*.
27. Ur, P. (2012). *A Course in English Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
28. Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Longman.

29. Anderson, L. (2002). *Pedagogy: Theoretical Frameworks and Underlying Concepts*. Cambridge University Press.
30. Burns, A., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge University Press.
31. Byram, M. (2008). *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and Reflections*. Multilingual Matters.
32. Cook, V. (2016). *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. Routledge.
33. Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
34. Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.
35. Ellis, R. (2005). *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: A Literature Review*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
36. Friedman, T. L. (2003). *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
37. Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2017). *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner*. Routledge.
38. Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of 'English as a Foreign Language'*. The British Council.
39. James, C. (2001). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*. Longman.
40. Kormos, J. (2012). The Role of Individual Differences in L2 Writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(4), 390-403.
41. Marzano, R. J. (2007). *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
42. Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press.
43. Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
44. OECD. (2016). *PISA 2015 Results: Excellence and Equity in Education*. OECD Publishing.
45. Ortega, L. (2019). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Routledge.
46. PISA. (2018). *PISA 2018 Results: What Students Know and Can Do*. OECD Publishing.
47. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2012). Resolution No 1875 "On measures to further improve the system of learning foreign languages".
48. Sahlberg, P. (2016). The Global Educational Reform Movement and its Impact on Schooling. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *The Handbook of Global Education Policy*. John Wiley & Sons.
49. Thornbury, S. (2006). *An A-Z of ELT: A Dictionary of Terms and Concepts Used in English Language Teaching*. Macmillan Education.
50. VanPatten, B. (2017). *While We're on the Topic: BVP on Language, Acquisition, and Classroom Practice*. ACTFL.
51. Widdowson, H. G. (2003). *Defining Issues in English Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
52. World Bank Group. (2018). *The Role of Education in Building Human Capital for Economic Development in Uzbekistan*. World Bank.
53. Акишина А.А. (2002). *Methods in Teaching of Foreign Language and Learning*.

54. Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press.
55. Boud, D. (2013). *Enhancing learning through self-assessment*. Routledge.
56. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.
57. Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide*. Cambridge University Press.
58. Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
59. Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
60. Hymes, D. (1986). Models of the interaction of language and social setting. *Journal of Social Issues*, 23(2), 8-28.
61. Larsen-Freeman, D. (2014). *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Gramming*. Heinle & Heinle.
62. Long, M. H. (2015). *Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching*. Wiley.
63. Московкин, L. (2012). Communicative language teaching: An overview and comparison. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(1), 1-6.
64. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
65. Annushkin, V. (2020). *Modern Language Teaching Methods*.
66. Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How Languages are Learned* 4th edition. Oxford University Press.
67. Shaturaev, R. (2014). *Psychological Aspects of Intensive Language Learning*.
68. Erkinova Saida. (2022). The Uzbek Higher Education System's Pedagogical Approach to Language Teaching.
69. Soynazarov, K. (2022). *Experimental and Theoretical Basis for Language Experience Transfer*.
70. Sattorov, T. (2022). *Active Learning of Foreign Language Grammar: An Experimental Approach*.
71. Gazi, A. I., Islam, A., Shaturaev, J., & Dhar, B. K. (2022). Effects of Job Satisfaction on Job Performance of Sugar Industrial Workers: Empirical Evidence from Bangladesh. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 21(14), 1–24. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/su142114156>
72. Hakimova Muhabbat, Kalonov Mukhiddin, Hamidov Jalil, Khimmataliev Dustnazar, Turabekov Farxod, Mamarajabov Shavkat, Khakimova Khulkar, Shaturaev Jakhongir. (2024). The Digital Frontier : AI-Enabled Transformations in Higher Education Management. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 4(1), 71–88.
73. Jakhongir Shaturaev, Hakimova Muhabbat. (2023). Transforming education: harnessing the synergy between management and leadership. *Science and Innovation*, 2(6), 279–294. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/transforming-education-harnessing-the-synergy-between-management-and-leadership>