

ROLE OF STUDYING ENGLISH BY UZBEKISTAN YOUTH IN THE EPOCH OF GLOBALIZATION



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Abstract. The article discusses the global position of the English language in the contemporary world, its emergence as the dominant business and socio-economic lingua-franca and the factors leading to this phenomenon. Also, the article analyzes the current English learning policy and practice in Uzbekistan, educational reforms in the country in light of the modern requirements.

Key words: significance of English, global and dominant language, educational reforms, factors and motivations of learning English.

Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to further improve foreign language learning system" №1875 from December 10, 2012 (1) is the indispensable part of the educational reforms aimed at preparation of more qualified specialists who can meet the requirements of the contemporary global labor market. This document, along with the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Education and the "National Program for Personnel Training" from August 27 (2), serves as a basis for heightening the quality of the education and the efforts being made in this direction. The decree is aimed at creating the necessary conditions of active teaching system of foreign languages, particularly, English, providing the process of foreign languages acquisition with the modern literature, methodological recommendations and supporting materials in order to make this process significantly more efficient and progressive. Besides, it is expected that this decree will facilitate the process of enabling the students to study foreign languages with more expanded use of ICT with the main purpose of enabling them to access the world information resources with less obstacles.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the main motivations to learn a foreign language were mostly under the category of “inner factors”; however the 21st century is imposing “outer factors” of motivation for learning foreign languages. These “outer factors” stem from the processes of globalization, which necessitates having one common language, *Lingua franca*, for the peoples of the world. The human civilization has seen several unsuccessful attempts to artificially create such global single languages as Esperanto, but eventually they have completely gone out of usage – none of the artificially created languages could become a live means of communication in society. Therefore, many specialists today are considering English a *Lingua franca* in the era of globalization (3). English has already become a key communication tool among the countries of the modern world. One reason for this phenomenon can be that most of internet websites and online resources are presented to the public in the English language (4) and the ability to use these sources freely has become a requirement in the society.

Apart from the fact that many developed countries such as Great Britain, the USA, Canada and Australia use English as a state language or the primary language, according to a survey by Ethnologue, in 2016, 106 countries of the world communicated in this language. This is the largest number in this regard, and, therefore, specialists believe that English will maintain its leading position for the next 50-70 years at least (5). A number of countries which were previously under the occupation of Great Britain primarily use English language in their everyday lives and state affairs alongside with their native languages. And eminent scholar of the English language and sociolinguistics David Crystal, referring to linguist Braj Kachru (6), distinguishes the dominance of the English language in three circles (7):

- (1) Inner circle –over 400 million native speakers in countries including Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa;
- (2) Outer circle – at least 600 million people have learned English in countries that have a special relationship with Britain or the USA. For example Nigeria, the Philippines, India and more than 50 other countries;
- (3) Expanding circle – more than 1 billion non-native speakers in other countries: Europe, Latin America, Japan, Russian and China.

Contemporary world order categorizes Uzbekistan in the 3rd, Expanding circle. In the context of progressing international ties of Uzbekistan with the other countries in the fields of economics, politics, culture and education, the interest of Uzbekistan’s youth in foreign countries’ lifestyle, culture and languages has been increasing. The role of foreign languages, chiefly, English is crucial in furthering these promising ties.

In his speech at the opening ceremony of the international conference “Upbringing of educated and intellectually advanced generation as the most important condition of sustainable development and modernization of the country” held in Tashkent, 2012, President Islam Karimov emphasized that “In the system of education we attach a great importance to teaching pupils not merely liberal arts and vocational skills, but also required learning of foreign

languages, for this is critical for them to maintain pro-active communication with their counterparts abroad, get extensive knowledge of everything that is going on around the globe, and command the august world of intellectual treasure.” (8)

The interest in learning English today is gaining a higher speed in the world as well as in Uzbekistan. The main factors for this phenomenon include expanding communication with the world after gaining the independence and increasing speed and scope of information exchange in the global village. The dominant position in the internet space by the language of the published content is firmly held by English, which is a strong motivation to learn English for those who wish to promote their global competences. Learning foreign languages has always been important throughout the history. In the past, people normally learned the languages of neighboring states; but this trend has shifted into studying the languages of economically advanced countries.

By the aforementioned Presidential Decree No.1875, it has been established to teach foreign languages from the 1st grade starting from 2013. For comparison, before adoption of this decree, foreign languages instruction at public schools began from the 5th grades. In light of the reforms under this decree, specialized classrooms of foreign languages were opened and equipped with latest multimedia resources and new methodological manuals, and highly qualified, experienced teachers have been appointed to manage these model classrooms. Modern teachers apply innovational and interactive methods in order to motivate the children to be engaged in more speaking activities aimed at raising their communication skills.

An old Uzbek saying say “The person who knows language, knows people”. Knowledge of foreign languages not only contributes to the international ties of the country, it also facilitates smooth communication among academic communities. Today, English language is performing the function of this bridge among the academic and scientific researchers from all the corners of the world.

After conducting a brief survey and interviews on the reasons of “Why study English?” among the students and young people (aged 15-22) of Uzbekistan, we have generalized the responses into the following 7 reasons to study English in the national conditions:

- 1. Good command of English is important in professional (vocational) improvement.** Regardless the nature and type of the occupation, it is virtually impossible to grow professionally without some knowledge of English. As we have pointed out above, while the majority of world population is using English for communication, one is required to have English skills in order to efficiently exchange experience, ideas and innovations with their colleagues from another part of the world. Most of the international conferences and workshops, where the latest innovations are presented, are held in English, and the representatives of any occupation (profession) will be required to know English in order to participate and benefit from these events. Knowledge of English gives a noticeable advantage to the holder of any profession, may it be a doctor, an architect, or an engineer, over their colleagues, who do not possess these crucial skills.

- 2. English language helps one to find their better place in society.** English is actively used not only in business and formal settings, but it is widely used in informal communication with the citizens of other countries whose language is not familiar to you. It enables one to be in know of the latest news happening around the globe and give one's opinion towards them. It is almost an unwritten rule that in order to become a full member of the global society, one must possess the knowledge of English language.
- 3. English language helps one to become more mature, culturally and spiritually more progressive.** Most of the famous novels, fictions, books, audio and video materials are prepared in English. Knowing English saves from the hassles of searching for the translations of those materials. Reading and watching the books and films in original provides much more profound experience for the consumer. It is a certainly much better option to get the information from the first source rather than through intermediate means. Besides, having one information by more than one channel gives the opportunity analytically compare the reliability of the sources, and thus enables the person to be more broad-minded with a wider specter. Therefore, we deem that the English language is essential to become more culturally and spiritually developed.
- 4. Opportunity to study abroad.** Hundreds of millions of dollars are allocated each year worldwide to educate visiting foreign students. These grants and scholarships provided by governments or universities for talented young minds are predominantly available to those who have excellent command of English. They require test results such as TOEFL or IELTS before accepting the applications. What is interesting is that not only English speaking countries, but also the schools and universities of other developed countries such as Germany, Sweden, Japan, China, and South Korea demand the sufficient knowledge of English in order to matriculate applicants in their courses. Even if you do not know the primary language, having a high score of these international tests of English will guarantee a seat at top universities and colleges in these countries. Because, prestigious world-class universities have been organizing their programs and courses in the English language for the visiting students and hire top-notch professors who may not speak a local language, which is why English automatically becomes the key communication tool at these educational settings.
- 5. More efficient use of the Internet.** More than 50 percent of the internet content is in English, and the other portals using other languages frequently use English as a second language, which makes it the language of the internet. Regardless the nature of the websites, whether it is an organizational, academic, business or entertaining, knowing English provides more mobility and efficiency in using them. Besides, it will enable you to go beyond the restrictions of using the internet only in Russian or Uzbek, which is faced by those who do not know English.
- 6. Job opportunities at joint ventures and foreign companies.** Out of two candidates for a job position who have equally high qualification and

knowledge of their own field, the employer is more likely to give the job to the one who also have good English language skills. This tendency has been rapidly spreading throughout all the sectors of industry, business, large corporations and governmental positions.

- 7. Educational benefits.** Those who win the national annual contests of the English language and get in the top three of the competition, are admitted to the universities of Uzbekistan on a governmental scholarship and are exempted from entrance examinations.

The above outlined factors summarize the main driving reasons for learning English in Uzbekistan which were revealed as a result of a small survey conducted by the authors of this paper. The authors are convinced that the motivation to study English cannot be restricted within those 7 factors – there are dozens of other social, economic, political and personal reasons to acquire and improve one’s English level.

Today, with the rapidly progressing and changing world, the need for specialists of various fields, who also possess good knowledge of English, is growing day by day. In this article, we tried to show why and how the English language has become an essential part of Uzbekistan’s socio-economic life.

As a final note, we would like to reiterate that in this era of rapid globalization, it is a requirement of a contemporary world for every person to master a foreign language, especially English at B1 level at the least. The younger generation of our republic can enjoy vast opportunities with the knowledge of English. Moreover, it is the obligation of the academic communities to deliver the rich cultural and historical heritage of Uzbek people to the world by translating the literature and academic works of our national scholars and ancestors into the English language – a very effective approach to promote the country in the international arena.

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