

RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY PROPOSAL OF A CHOSEN EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL

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***Abstract:** this paper is based on a proposal of language planning and policy on how to improve students' speaking skills and what steps are recommended to take to achieve the targeted results. In this research work the educational setting and the teaching methods are analyzed with proposed plan to develop speaking skills of a chosen regional school.*

***Keywords:** language planning, high stakes, actors, funding, policy, proposal, speaking skills.*

Introduction of the chosen educational setting

The chosen school is located in Uzbekistan district of Fergana region with 821 pupils and 89 staff members at the time the analysis was conducted. The district is one of the biggest districts in the region occupying 690 km² with a population of 246 000. The population of the area uses Uzbek language for communicative and administrative purposes and English is practiced as a foreign language at schools, however people who attended or go to specialized classes where Russian is taught as a first language use Russian for communicative purposes only.

As the **main goal** of this proposal is changing teaching speaking skills using online games and virtual audience to deal with anxiety and lack of confidence a group of features that will be introduced later in this proposal will be taught as possible solutions to tackle the issue.

Objectives are:

- adding extra classes to practice speaking;
- using virtual audience simulator facilities to deal with anxiety;
- reviewing school curriculum and modifying the syllabi;
- comparison of learners' needs and proposal perspectives;

Political and administrative setting

According to Decree No. 823 from the Ministry of Education, the government will subsidize the creation of additional courses to raise student performance, and teachers will be able to earn more points that will boost their pay. As to regional policy

among schools “The best English teaching school of the year” contest is held and the school has won the third place in the competition and has been rewarded with 75 million sums. This shows that teaching English language has been at the center of teaching foreign languages process in the district, region and state level.

In addition to this, the principals give students who actively participate in contests related to English lessons and memorize at least 1000 English words by memory each month an opportunity to get financial support (only once for each winner).

Decree No 2117 by the Ministry of Education states that students are assessed based on the continuous assessment, midterm controls and progress checking processes after each unit.

Formative assessment is more common in teaching speaking skills rather than summative. Teachers use clicker questions, one-minute reflection speaking about a specific topic, in-class discussions to assess learners’ progress and make clear what is being learnt and what needs to be revised. The current proposal takes into consideration the requirements of the Decree No 610 by the Ministry of Education which states that “National TV channels and mass media representatives are recommended to air programs in English that are interesting for children and youth, namely broadcasting TV shows and publishing articles for this group of viewers” and the topics for the speaking discussions will also be taken from these resources.

The stakes for Assessment

Kleeman (2012) notes “Defining the stakes of an assessment can help to plan the proposal appropriately, allocate the resources wisely and support the proposal properly” that students must know how they will be assessed and what can influence their grades.

The stakes are divided into 3 types in this proposal, namely low, medium and high stakes of assessment. In low stake assessment process, quizzes and surveys are used for low-stakes tests where there are minimal negative consequences for the pupils and hardly any liabilities. Since there is no incentive to cheat or exchange answers with others, these tests are frequently done individually. Medium stake assessment describes the process of passing/failing or working harder to pass the speaking test; there are some consequences that can influence learner’s learning process. As high stake assessment requires a great deal of planning and preparation: learners either pass or fail facing major consequences when applying to international certificates or in job interviews after graduating. Both formative and summative assessments are in use in the lessons. Teachers and speaking event leaders will document students’ progress and points that need revising and provide support where needed. In formative assessment, students will be assessed based on the results of each session during the lessons while

summative assessment will be used at the end of the project to identify what learners achieved and how they improved their speaking skills.

Students need to know what language features will be improved and how they influence assessment process before the project begins.

Target language features

In speaking part of learning English there are a few features that make speaker's ideas sound fluent, accurate and supportive. These are avoiding repetition, listening before responding, circumlocution and extending ideas.

Paraphrasing is the best solution to avoid using the same words or phrases continuously and most students can't properly use this technique. It is important to choose the appropriate synonym or alternative that is closest in meaning to the word being used and best matches the context. Repetition of certain groups of words means that students have limited vocabulary or are not confident in what they are saying that they start using same exact words over and over.

As speaking is productive skill that needs concrete set of information to respond, speakers first must listen to what their interlocutors say or ask them. To give brief and concise speeches students will work on listening to main points of conversations and discussions to perform properly using only relevant information in speaking.

Circumlocution – in this style of speech students try to explain their ideas by using indirect ways of giving explanations, especially when the topic of the discussion is not familiar to them or they don't know the right set of words to use. This can be seen as an act of replacing unknown words with more familiar ones.

Extending ideas is another most used feature in speaking process and contains a few sub-skills. One of them is giving reasons for what has already been said and this makes the answer provided complete and informative. Moving from general ideas to specific ones is another sub-skill that makes the speaking easier and more precise. Native speakers do this a lot when they talk about something they first describe it generally and then move into details.

Inventory

Observations showed that there are not enough resources to equip every classroom in the school with projectors, speakers, or headphones, and that most classrooms require connectivity to the Internet in order to use this innovative technique.

Available resources:

LCD projectors – 4

Traditional classrooms

Blackboard – one for each classroom

Teachers with less experience

Necessary resources:

LCD Projectors - 6

Classrooms equipped with headphones, speakers, access to Internet

Electronic whiteboard – 1

competent teachers who have experience in taking international tests

Methods and practices

According to current policy of the school students' lessons are organized focusing on teachers' activity during the classes. Replacing teachers with students as the main figures in speaking lessons will benefit in the following ways both the school and learners:

Student-centered approach in teaching improves memorization of materials being learnt and decreases level of anxiety and frustration, students use their knowledge in more interesting way applying new information with existing ones. Students acquire problem-solving skills related to real-life situations and practice different speaking activities like role-plays. Building the lesson around learners' interests and abilities is another goal of this approach. Using one strategy for all learners and expecting the same positive outcome has proved its inefficiency and student-centered teaching technique approaches students according to their knowledge, level and difficulties they face.

A case study in the USA, Texas proved the effectiveness of student-centered approach when a local teacher Helen Miller started applying this method in her classes and the results surprised her. Miller notes "I expected the SCL (student-centered learning) would make my students lazy and reluctant to do anything at all. But surprisingly the ability to choose how they wanted to learn improved their engagement and performance". Using student-centered approach and online games together will improve their performance as they practice new materials based on the real-life situations and expand their way of thinking and responding.

As Hasanova (2007) claims "This heavy emphasis on grammar rules and phonetic accuracy and rigid teacher-centered methods led to high proficiency in reading, writing and translation, while learners' proficiency in listening and especially in speaking lagged far behind". This shows another insufficient attention to teaching speaking at schools where teacher-centered method is dominant. Students must actively participate in lessons, be able to speak more confidently and use wider range of lexical resources, pronounce words properly, manage ideas in speaking process. As virtual audiences in speaking classes are linked to modernization and development by using online simulators they will be at the center of each speaking lesson where minimum interference required from teachers.

To meet the requirements of the mentioned assessments above, students can practice giving presentations, public speeches and discussing selected topics using online websites recommended by teachers in their free time. Low, medium and high stakes assessments prepare them to speaking quizzes, tests, and interviews and will be scored accordingly based on the criteria provided.

Recommendations and results

The teacher-centered strategy needs to be altered as this proposal focuses on teaching speaking skills and enhancing students’ speaking performances. Students need more speaking practice, and a student-centered approach will motivate them to use their speaking abilities as well as learn how to manage their nervousness and build confidence.

The topics for speaking events must be selected from materials which recommended in accordance with Decree No. 610 of the Ministry of Education, which states that "TV channels and mass media resources are highly recommended to publish and broadcast various programs and articles that will be interesting to young learners in English language", This is done to prevent using sensitive themes in the classrooms.

Groups of actors that will help in this proposal

- People with power: Regional branch of the Ministry of Education officials;
- People with expertise: event leaders, teachers, speakers;
- People with influence: celebrities, motivational trainers;
- People with interest: schoolchildren, parents.

Timeline

4 phases of this proposal must be passed to reach the intended goal of this project.

First phase: observing existing problems and learning the needs of learners (September to November);

Second phase: changing the curriculum and syllabi of English subject at school (November to December);

Phase three: equipping the classrooms, raising the fund with the help of regional branch of Ministry of Education and regional administration (January to March);

Fourth phase: implementing the suggested approach and using internet-based games in speaking classes (March to May).

Funding

Projectors	2400 \$ (6 pcs)
Classroom equipments	2400 \$
Electronic whiteboard	700\$
Teacher-training seminar expenses	2000\$
Honorarium (assistants, experts, event leaders)	2000\$
Total:	9500\$

Discussion of the resources that are reallocated after the project:

Classroom equipment are used only in the same classrooms for further listening and speaking lessons as other subjects don't require using headphones or speakers;

The electronic whiteboard will be sent to the library where students can use it for academic purposes like planning their projects or practicing giving speeches;

Projectors will be distributed between English and Informatics subject teachers as both subjects need using projectors for specific purposes.

As the **cultural** background affects learners' performance and some topics can be sensitive or irrelevant for certain groups of learners there will be monitoring process of selecting topics for speaking events. Presidential Decree No 81 states that Uzbek women (especially younger women like students) will receive both financial and academic support to improve their learning abilities and equality in each sphere of life will be guaranteed. Schoolgirls often complain about the obstacles put by families and other responsible figures that hinder them from learning so speaking events will embrace relevant topics where girls are seen as equal part of educational setting and academic development. Latest results show that schoolgirls have also achieved promising levels in international levels like winning competitions and proved they must be treated equally.

Students will learn to consider troubling issues from a wider perspective and share their ideas appropriately. Actors participating in this project share their experience of giving speeches and do it in cultural framework without contempt and keeping the basics of our cultural background when comparing or referring to other countries' culture and way of living.

Annotated Bibliography

Kleeman, H. (2012). Determining the Stakes of Assessment.

Kleeman in his article about assessment clearly shows what are the stakes for assessment and how they influence learners' performance, what they must focus on and what is expected from them in each type of assessment.

Hasanova, D. (2007). Broadening the boundaries of the Expanding Circle: English in Uzbekistan. *World Englishes*, 26(3), 276–290.

Dilbarhon Hasanova's article proved that teacher-centered approach in teaching English is half effective and there are skills that need other techniques to properly teach them.

Tiffany, M. (2022). 5 Advantages of Student-Centered Learning.

Helen Miller, a teacher of English from Texas, USA shared with her experience of applying student-centered approach in her classes and how effective it was. This new method helped her students to feel free in learning based on their needs and changing the traditional method of teaching.

References

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