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LANGUAGE PROPOSAL FOR PRESCHOOLERS. A CASE IN UZBEKISTAN.

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Abstract: The quality education in the early years is pivotal to children's future outcomes. In Uzbekistan, English is the most widely learned foreign language. However, the existing language education in the kindergartens has not shown positive results among preschoolers. This work investigates the language education process in kindergartens in Uzbekistan and offers a language learning proposal.

Keywords: Language policy, language proposal, bilingual education, monolingual education, actors, Mother Tongue Language (MTL), Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), inventory, innovative teaching, funding.

Introduction

Globalization is the current reality that the world is facing due to immigration, business, the internet. Around the three-quarters of people around the world are exposed to globalization because of political, economical, social, and environmental issues (Baldauf, 2002). As a result of globalization, worldwide social interdependence rise making people all over the world connected to each other. Globalization changes the standards and creates language demands in the societies (Baldauf, 2002). Global change has influenced the way the languages are used and spread in search of mutual understanding in individual, organizational, institutional, and governmental levels. Ammon (2006) notes that English is the most widespread and frequently used language in education, science, business, mass media. Furthermore, the English language is the official language in many countries, so, English competence is a must in the quickly changing socio-economic world (Mufwene, 2002). Thus, Uzbekistan also needs to increase the English competence of its citizens in order to be part of the global society and cooperate with it.

Language is innate, however, starting since the early age with rich environment, children can acquire any language (Chomskiy, 1965; Lennenberg). According to Wu (2011), the bilingual have higher concentration than monolingual children, consequently resulting to completing the task at hand and achieving the goals. Therefore, given the importance of preschool education, quality education in the early years is pivotal to children's future outcomes, and the development of

human capital for the 21st century workforce in a knowledge economy (Watson, Vadaketh).

In Uzbekistan, English is the most widely learned foreign language (Hasanova, 2007).

However, in Fergana region's state nursery schools educating children are not educated the English language or if educated the syllabus is not rich. So, in this paper, O would like to tackle the problem of educating second language for the preschoolers in Fergana region.

Context

The first language of the children in Uzbekistan is Uzbek, and in the minority of families it is Russian. Children start going to nursery house since the age three. Before the age three they are exposed only to their Mother Tongue Language (MTL).

English language lessons are not offered in all state kindergartens in Fergana region. The first reason is lack of vacancy for ESL teacher. The state does not provide salary for ESL teachers. However, in order to rise the quality of education some kindergarten hire an English teacher, and parents are asked to pay extra for the lesson. Moreover, the salary offered in the kindergartens for ESL teachers is quite low and most ESL teachers do not desire to work there. Ministry of preschool education provides one-year long syllabus for the children aged six, as a preparation for the primary school. However, the content is not satisfactory. It mostly focuses on learning vocabulary (Appendix 1). So, in order to educate bilingual children first of all these problems should be dealt with.

Studies have found that the three key factors that contribute to effective bilingual

acquisition are age, environment and exposure (Pearson, 2008). According to Wu (2011) the best phase to learn the language is between the ages of four and seven. So, children in Fergana region should be exposed to English from these ages, which is considered the best period time to process multiple languages on parallel paths (Pearson, 2008).

Exposure is quantity of input or the amount of time children experience something in English. As English is considered as the second language for Uzbek children the amount as well as the quality of input plays the crucial role for the language development. One of the ways to expose children is making the language of communication and instruction in English, watching cartoons and educational programs in English. Uchilkoshi (2006) mentioned that watching educational programs and parent-child book reading are the best ways to expose and improve the language of children. Exposure to the target language has profound effect not only on their vocabulary, but also enables high proficiency in grammar, and pronunciation.

Goals and objectives

Goals are important part of any project and triggers the realization of the objectives. Clear goals provides motivation, focus, and helps to track the progress of the project. Here are the goals of this project:

1. to immerse children into English environment

2. to develop foundational English language and literacy skills;
3. to reach A1 level of English competence at the end of preschool education

Here, activities will be carried out in four phases:

1. Improve language proficiency of teachers
2. Teaching the modern methodological course, introducing the technology in teaching preschoolers
3. Developing teaching aids for the teachers, developing new syllabus
4. Opening an English TV channel for children

Improve language proficiency of teachers

In Uzbekistan language proficiency of preschool teachers is low. The English language is taught while getting the Bachelors degree, however, the quality of education is low. The lessons are based on Grammar Translation Method. As a result, the Preschool teachers know some basic English grammar and vocabulary.

As the project aims to immerse children into English atmosphere, English competent educators are necessary. In order to improve the English level of preschool educators to B1 level, a General English course is necessary.

According to Cambridge English in order to get from A1 to B1 proficiency approximately 620 hours of guided practice students should get through. So, if we schedule the lessons four times a week with 2 hours lesson twice in the working days and four hour lesson in the Saturday, 12 months or a year would be needed to get B1 proficiency (Table 1).

Table 1. Guided learning hours to achieve the CEFR levels.

Levels	Approximate time to achieve time
A1	90-100
A2	180-200
B1	350-400

Teaching the modern methodological course, introducing the technology in teaching preschoolers

This training course for preschool teacher provides participants with an overview on the most **innovative teaching and pedagogy approaches for preschool education** by providing a analytical as well as a practical, cooperative, inspirational and stimulating space where to get to know, learn, experiment and practice new ideas, activities, strategies and methods.

The general aim of this course is to suggest **creating English atmosphere, fostering excellence and innovation in preschool and early childhood education** by empowering and inspiring preschool teachers and directors to discover the most effective approaches in preschool education while sharing best practices and experiences with fellow participants and trainers all over the world gaining as well a broader understanding of education in English.

Developing teaching aids for the teachers

Uzbekistan has its syllabus and teaching materials for preschoolers. However, all the teaching materials are in either Uzbek or Russian. Almost no English teaching and learning materials are available. As the goal is to immerse children into English environment and raise bilingual children, English teaching and learning resources are urgent necessary.

For this purpose, foreign materials developers should be invited. It is essential that foreign specialists work together with local specialist in order to create the materials that are English but not contradict to Uzbek culture, values, and religion.

Opening an English TV channel for children

Cartoons and shows by native speakers of English are great source of ‘real-life’ English language and the pictures will help the children to understand what is being said.

Videos/TV can also help children to:

- become familiar with different accents
- watch facial expressions, body language and gestures used in different cultures
- develop their understanding of the world and ‘real’ situations outside the classroom.

Most of all, children love learning through videos/TV. It can be a great source of motivation – one of the most important factors in language learning.

So, special new TV channel should be opened and all the programs should be aired only in English. New channels should buy the British and American cartoons and educational programs. Also, other state and commercial TV channels should be encouraged to air the cartoons, movies educational programs, or anything that might be interesting to children and that were translated into Uzbek language, in its original English language.

To realize this goals and objectives these steps should be done:

- To make a contract with English language teacher
- To free two hours from the working hours of preschool teachers
- To schedule General English lessons
- To prepare and supply all inventories
- To hire foreign preschool education trainers
- To schedule training
- To hire foreign material developer
- To develop syllabus, educational materials
- To open English educational channel
- To buy English educational programs and cartoons
- To set a coordinator

Inventory

Inventory is identifying the gap between existing and available resources (Kaiser, 2018). Inventory monitoring shows the clear picture of what tools are available and which ones should be provided. Identifying inventory is important for

the controlling the budget and tracking the realization of the project. Therefore, I also start with identifying existing and lacking resources.

Fergana pedagogical college is quite big and can provide several rooms for General English courses and trainings. All the inventories of the college can be implemented in the realization of the project. It can provide the classrooms equipped with desks, chairs, whiteboard.

However, the technological devices are lacking in the college. Laptops, a printer, a copier, a projector, loudspeakers should be purchased. With the development of technology, ESL teachers also have made them as part of teaching process. So, these tools are necessary for the successful organization of lessons and learning. Also, some stationary such as paper, pens, pencils, highlighters should be provided. Appropriate textbooks should be purchased.

Recommendations

The project is in micro level, but, the results will be in macro level. Therefore, organization and implementation of the objectives should be done diligently. The main purpose of the project is to make preschool teachers English competent so that they can create English speaking environment and instruct the children in English. So, the experienced ESL instructors with the level of English C1 should be hired to conduct General English courses.

For the creating training of preschool teachers the novices in preschool education and teaching bilingual children the Erasmus+ course can be used. This online course covers a variety of topics for successful work with preschool children: psychological needs and brain development, nature pedagogy, sport, social sciences, children at play and science for children. However, for these teachers the content of this course might not be enough. Also, they should learn and practice the fieldwork practice in instructing in English.

The syllabus and teaching materials are important part of educations. Modern English books, encyclopedias, teacher aids are produced by the publishing houses such as Oxford Press, Macmillan. A contract with the branch of these publishing houses in Tashkent should be signed for the provision of educational materials to the kindergartens.

Also, the British Council material development specialist should be hired in the development of syllabus, as one of the main goals of the BC is to promote education overseas and to develop wider knowledge of English. Moreover, in the syllabus development process Uzbek material developers should be involved, as the syllabus should be created in accordance with Uzbek culture, values, muslim religion.

When it comes to opening a TV channel, other state TV channels have aired a lot of translated versions of foreign cartoons. The original language version of these cartoons should be asked from other TV channels. New educational English programs and cartoons should be purchased from the producers.

Timeline

Phase 1 involves educating children English. According to CEFR estimations, reaching A2 and B1 levels is going to take 600 guided learning hours.

Phase 2 is educating the teachers the pedagogical novices. The course offered by Erasmus consist of ten lessons. So, this course is going to take around three weeks to complete.

Phase 3 refers to the organization of the materials and syllabus

Phase 4 deals with creation of English TV channel. Collecting database is going to take a long time, so, it should be started as early as possible.

Target language features

As the central point of the project is the organization of the course, which is aimed at the improving the language proficiency of the preschool teachers and the pedagogical skills, language features that address the proposal mainly deal with the language and teaching content. Furthermore, the environment of the project totally consists of the ESP experts, teacher-trainers, and the ESP instructors of the FSU, which means the features of the target language are used to improve the professional area. According to the objectives of the course, trainees will be able to conduct the lessons using English as the language of instruction and using modern methodologies and technology. That's why during the course, trainees will mostly practice the General English and ESP components. Moreover, all topics that they will be introduced during the course help trainees to perform better on assessments.

When it comes to the topics to be covered in one-month teacher training for early childhood educators (Table 1), it will mainly focus on the basics of early childhood education.

	TOPICS TO BE COVERED
Lesson 1	DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION IN INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD
Lesson 2	OPEN-MINDED THINKING & LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION
Lesson 3	RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF CHILD
Lesson 4	EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
Lesson 5	LANGUAGE GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN
Lesson 6	MULTIMEDIA EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN
Lesson 7	PARENT EDUCATION IN CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
Lesson 8	TEACHING MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN
Lesson 9	OBSERVATION & ANALYSIS OF CHILD BEHAVIOR
Lesson 10	EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN
Lesson 11	DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM MODEL FOR INFANTS & EARLY CHILDHOOD
Lesson12	EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

Table 1

Assessment

Assessment is one of the important part of the project. It is directly connected with the objective of the project. During the General English course teachers will be

estimated both formatively and summatively. For the formative assessment essays, summaries, monologues, reading passages will be used. IELTS or CEFR exams will serve as a summative assessment. The teachers who successfully get B1 level from CEFR or 6.5 score in the IELTS exam will have opportunity to continue their job.

For the teacher training course, formative, summative assessment and fieldwork practice will be included. Teachers will be assessed through an activity modification. In summative assessment, the teachers will be required to create a curriculum and a syllabus. In the fieldwork, they will work as an in-service teacher.

Actors

According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), this interaction of forces supports the intended direction of change of the language planning and policy (LPP) from the macro to the micro level. At the macro level, actors which possess more power, such as the government, education ministry, businesses and organisations act as initiators of change, imposing language policy from a 'top-down' direction whereas actors at the micro level such as communities and individuals support the change from a 'bottom up' direction as they do not possess the similar degree of power as the actors on top (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). In the current project I would use people with power and expertise. Powerful organisations such Ministry of Preschool Education and the Ministry of Finance will be in charge of coordinating and funding. The experienced teachers from Fergana State University, British Council, Uzbekistan World Languages University will be project's driver's. Also, we will coordinate with the organization such as American Council, Oxford University Press, Macmillan Publication house for the provision of educational resources, teaching materials. Also, we will cooperate with the TV channels such as O'zbekiston, Yoshlar for the exchange of English programs.

Funding and reallocation of resources

The overall cost of the project is 40000\$. The distribution of the funding will be:

The salary of the training staff and assistances for twelve months- 15 000\$

The lacking inventory (technology, stationery) - 3000\$

Teaching materials – 10 000\$

Opening a TV channel – 12 000\$

The financing of the program will be accomplished by the Ministry of Higher and Preschool Education- 40%, the Ministry of Finance - 30%, and Fergana regional government – 30%.

After the completion of the project, the all the inventory used in the organizing the language and teacher training course will be given to the preschool educators professional development organization that exist for many years in Fergana.

Conclusion

With early childhood being the foundation of children's life trajectory, the multiple players in the preschool landscape – government, preschools, primary schools, parents and families – need to work together to help children raise their English proficiency through the provision of quality bilingual preschool programmes

to support their transition to primary school. In order for Uzbek preschoolers to increase their ESL proficiency, they need to start young and there needs to be more qualified English speaking teachers and resources at the preschool level and greater efforts at strengthening the ESL teaching and learning at the school level. This will then better translate

the bilingual policy into reality. Given the dominant use of English in Uzbekistan, this makes English acquisition easier for young children, with the socio-political forces at work. In the preschool environment, children tend to be more exposed to English in their daily interactions, television programmes, and interpersonal relationships with their peers and adults compared to their Mother Tongue Language. Consequently, given the more exposure and frequency of English use in both home and preschool environments, children's proficiency in their also tends to be higher.

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