



IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT MATTER OF ENGLISH AT VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

Having great dreams about promising career demands to work towards ambitious goals. The ways of how to reach goals are commonly shown by teachers at educational settings. Whereas, not every time the learners' needs and requirements of the preset curriculum can coincide. In this case "structural-situational approach" (Robert O' Nell, 1950) is needed to be taken into account, which means new teaching approaches, methods, assessments, contextualized teaching points and even the subject matter should be redesigned in order to achieve the targets. The central point of considerable accomplishment for learners is to learn what they need. As for vocational college students, they highly prone to apply jobs, rather than continuing tertiary education. Therefore, they tend to study job-related subjects, including English, however the subject is mastered through inappropriate matter. For this reason, it is high time to think about changing the subject matter of English, although it is not easy.

EDUCATIONAL SETTING

The vocational college, which is our chosen setting, as an obvious example of learners, who study English to get better job prospects. It was established according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on August 29, 1996. Following proposal is directed to this governmental setting, Tashkent Banking College working with more than 110 staff and 1556 students from eight different regions of Uzbekistan. According to the annual statistics of Banking college, it has become one of the prestigious colleges among 124 vocational colleges in Tashkent, after 79.9% of graduates have found their jobs, while figure for graduates, who continued in tertiary education, constituted 21.1 %. As a significant number of students are prone to apply for jobs, they need to learn English for a job market, in order to find better job prospects. Additionally, according to the Presidential Decree of "Uzbekistan's Development

Strategy for 2017-2021" educational settings are required "to train qualified personnel in accordance with the demand of the labor market" (Section 4.4 February, 8.2017)

POLITICAL SETTING: NATIONAL AND STATE DECREES IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING.

As an attention was commenced to pay from the very beginning of Independence of Uzbekistan, from 1991 up to now, there have been "more than 200 of laws, decrees, enactments and legislative documents" (Azizova, 2014) which have focused on seeking ways to increase the productivity of education. "The National Program of Personal Training" (1997), Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, №1875 "On measures to further improve of foreign language learning system" (2012), Cabinet of Minister issued Resolution "On approving state

educational standard on foreign languages of continuous educational system” (2013) can be the prove for National Laws and legislations.

New expectations have emerged after being signed the Presidential Decree of “Uzbekistan’s Development Strategy for 2017-2021” (February, 8,2017). According to this Decree, Section 4.4 “Development of education and science” covers “achieving major improvement in quality of general secondary education, **facilitating in-depth study of foreign languages**” in order to improve the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “About the State Youth Policy” (August 12, 2016). Adhering these policies means to master the young specialists as creative, intellectual and certainly acquiring English as a foreign language. The ways of achieving the target through language features will be discussed in further sections.

TARGET LANGUAGE FEATURES

According to Einar Haugen (1959) the term, “language planning” means making an attempt to improve a language, not just making predictions in near future. Therefore, looking at the content and language objectives in terms of analyzing the phases of LPP might be an appropriate way.

- **The target subject matter:** General English will be substituted with Business English. As Richards (2001) highlighted, “Is there any value in teaching students a foreign language at school if they have to no practical need for it?”. Since the majority number of graduates find the English language as a communicative tool in business situation and do need this language in order to feel job satisfaction and speaking English is considered one of the job requirements, English should be taught as ESP.
- **Content objective:** The list of “WHAT do the students do?” will face a new requirement, SWBAT:
 - a. Communicate in the field of Business, Finance and Insurance
 - b. Show the ability of thinking critically
 - c. Demonstrate presentation skills
 - d. Write formal letters
 - e. Comprehend authentic materials
 - f. Think creatively and work within a team
- **Language objective:** The list of “HOW do the students acquire the language?” will also enlarged through following ways:
 - a. Speaking on job-related topics, themes, situations
 - b. Stating and asking opinions in various situations
 - c. Gradually presenting Power Point Presentations

- d. Being introduced how to write Business Reports, Letters and CVs
- e. Giving the learners the articles from Business magazines
- f. Focusing on working both individually and as a member in a team-work.

- **The target language skills:** productive skills will be mastered, as Anne Lazaraton (2007) mentioned, “...speech almost always involves interaction”. Hence the students will be required to communicate in their job places, speaking and listening skills should be taken into consideration. The function of the language is here as a communicative tool.

THE STAKES FOR ASSESSMENT

Regarding the assessments, tests will also see some changes, from formative test to summative assessment. According to Black and William’s (1998) analysis, both formative and summative assessment were found as a core point of classroom teaching. Since these tests show how the teaching process is going, the testing validity and practicality will be analyzed briefly, adding authentic tasks and giving washback to learners. Besides that, current traditional and *criterion-referenced testing* (Brown, 2006) evaluation system will alter as well. The types of *alternative assessments* (Walker, 2004) will design in order to increase the performance of the learners. The reason of changing the testing system is as Samuel Messick (1984) mentioned “an integrated evaluative judgement of the degree to which empirical evidence supports the adequacy of interference and actions based on test scores”. Additionally, the tests should offer useful information through meaningful tasks. As alternative testing gives the students chance to perform independently, “use real-world contexts, focus on processes as well as products” (Hudson, 1998, pp.654-655), the result of tests will tend to be higher than traditional tests. Writing reflections, peer-checking processes, oral presentations, doing “jigsaw” activities are considered effective continuous long-term assessments.

CURRENT POLICY, APPROACH AND METHODS USED IN THE CLASSROOM

After the Presidential Decree № 1875 (2012) the methods in teaching foreign languages changed significantly. The notion of *Input Hypothesis* “input which is ‘a bit beyond’ one’s level of competence – is the only true cause of second language acquisition” (Krashen, 1984, p.61) was paid governmental attention. Based on this hypothesis, the approach of teaching also faced a change, from “*the grammar-translation*” which was “instruction is given in native language of the student and there is a little use of *the target language for communication*” (Kelly, 1969) into “*the communicative approach*” which describes as

“the content of a language course will include semantic notions and social functions and the goal of a language is to communicate in a target language” (Kagan, 1994). As for methods, “*silent way*” using different visuals during the lessons and “*Total Physical Response*” physical activities are highly practiced to comprehend the theme, have been widely adopted so far.

Specific approaches to meet the learners’ needs

In order to put into practice of Long’s *Interaction Hypotheses* (1995, 2007) which “focus materials and curriculum developers on creating the optimal environments and tasks for input and interaction such that the learner will create his/her own target language”, it is high time to change the subject matter for Banking College students. If the proposal is achieved, “*Communicative Competence*” as Hymes (1972) described, “enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts will hopefully be achieved. The reason of the proposed proposal is to master the students in specific contexts, such as job places, at daily basis and during the job-related interviews, through following strategies:

- A) “maximize learning opportunities” creating and managing various opportunities to acquire the language
- B) “facilitate negotiated interaction” the teacher-centered style will be changed into student-centered interaction
- C) “foster language awareness” the teacher will compare and contrast the properties of L2 with L1.

Reaching these goals required several phases, which will be discussed below.

The ways of reaching proposed policy

It will mainly focus on different actors, such as:

- Higher and Secondary Education Ministry of Republic, the proposal should be approved by this authority. (actors with power)
- The principles of Vocational College, as funding part will have to been provided by reallocation, besides that the schedule for extracurricular classes should be also set by deputies. (actors with influence)
- Gatekeepers/teachers. Since the teachers are considered the vital part of teaching, they should also witness some changes as well. They will have to retrained in terms of Business English structure on the job trainings. (actors with expertise)

Hence, implementing these recommendations requires some financial subsidizing, there are also possible reallocations:

Funding of principle of Vocational College; annually 40 % of entire budget is granted as extra funding to colleges and the head of the setting is responsible to spend for increasing productivity of study. Therefore, a chosen setting might be subsidized by extra funding.

In case these reallocations can be implemented, the matter of time plays a main role, mentioning the culture as well.

- 2019-2020 teacher training seminars; As Martin (2005) highlighted the role of implementing language policy, the teachers formulate the policy in classes. Therefore, there is huge need to establish day release programs and ongoing trainings within a year. After introducing the sources and methods of mastering, next stage will come in practice.
- 2020-2022 teaching process; as the duration of studying years at colleges was shortened (2017), from three to two-year-academic year, it will hopefully meet the needs of both authorities and the learners
- By 2023, after witnessing progress of proposal, the Micro Language Planning will be carried out in other educational settings.
- As culture is one of the central part of language, successful teaching proposal should maintain the role of culture, because learning foreign language means introducing the foreign culture as well. In my language policy, the elements of foreign culture, such as social acts, attitudes towards people, ways of communications, behaving in social contexts even the motivational rules of public speaking.

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