



COMPARISON OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH ESSAY STRUCTURES

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DISCUSSION

After the signing of a decree “On measures to further improve foreign language learning system” by Islam Karimov, significant changes have taken place concerning the teaching English language in primary, secondary and higher education [1]. From then on, English was taught starting from the first grade at primary schools. Much attention has been paid to the improvement of pronunciation and speaking fluency of EFL learners. Teachers are expected to teach English implementing communicative language teaching method. This process of extending the role of English throughout the country of Uzbekistan helps develop learners’ ability

to use English for communication purposes. That having been said, writing remains as one of the most problematic aspects for Uzbek students. While English learners easily intervene into English speaking environment by communicating in English, most of them find it difficult to express their thoughts in the target language. This, in turn, has influenced the results Uzbek learners receive when they take international tests such as IELTS and TOEFL. That is to say, the statistics reported for 2015 Academic IELTS test takers in Uzbekistan show that mean band score for Listening section is 5.4, for Reading section 5.5, for Speaking section 5.5 and for Writing section 5.2 [2].

Figure 1. Mean band score for Uzbekistan (Academic)

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall
Uzbekistan	5.4	5.5	5.2	5.5	5.4

From the above figure, we can conclude that EFL learners in Uzbekistan are troubled when enacting writing tasks. Although it has not been investigated, I think the most hardship is caused by Task two, which involves communicating the author’s opinion. In IELTS Task two, students are required, depending on the question type, perform the following higher order thinking abilities:

- ✓ Agree or disagree and justify their opinion;
- ✓ State whether the situations is a positive or a negative change;
- ✓ Outline advantages and/or disadvantages of particular situations and/or demonstrate their own consideration;
- ✓ Think of problems in relation to the given situation and suggest solutions;
- ✓ Outline causes and effects;
- ✓ Answer the directly asked questions while supporting the thesis.

As was mentioned, these obligate learners to employ their HOT (higher order thinking skills) in writing their essays. From my experience, most of EFL learners lack ideas to share and discuss as well as the ability to construct their ideas into a logical and easy to follow format. Another reason advocated by Ballard and Clanchy (1984) is presenting a reasoned argument in writing as the

realization of the analytical and critical style of thinking is hard for the university students [3]. Apart from idea generating, instructors should not forget the need for teaching learners different rhetorical features of essay writing in the target language. Arsyad (1999) states different languages possess different rhetorical features [4], which serves as the main thesis for our comparative analysis in the given article. This article will look at Uzbek essay organization very closely since it is possible that learners’ inability to perform well in IELTS writing results from the total differentiation of mother tongue essay structure to that of English. The likeliness of effect of L1 essay structure on L2 writing anticipates a broader investigation, so the article by no means intends to prove the possible hypothesis for a potential PhD research. It should also be noted that essay structure in Uzbek language will be compared and contrasted by English language essay structure, in particular, IELTS writing format.

According to “Mother tongue” course book for Uzbek children in grade eight[5], the essay is a short work that describes the author’s opinion on a particular subject in a written form. It reflects the writer’s ability to use words, capability to think, his/her knowledge, worldview and literacy. In order to master writing essays, one must gain



sufficient knowledge. As the only way to improve writing essays is suggested lots of practice. If we look at the English definition of the same notion, we can see it is determined by a famous English essayist Aldous Huxley [6] as a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything. However, this is too broad a definition which can be specified by Oxford Dictionary. It says essay is a short piece of writing on a particular subject. All in all, the term has been defined almost identically in both languages. That is, in Uzbek and English, the essay is a composition involving author's arguments on one particular topic.

As for essay writing, after brainstorming a learner should organize his/her thoughts into a plan. The plan involves two types:

- ✓ Simple
- ✓ Complex

Simple essay plan consists of three main parts equally revealed by author's opinion and details. One good example for the topic of "Friendship" is suggested by Sadullayeva (2013) in her research paper named "Essay as a written control work" [7]:

1. My understanding of friendship.
2. A true friend is tested in your difficult times.
3. Friendship and brotherhood lead mankind to prosperity.

Many Uzbek schoolchildren usually create simple essay plans until they are introduced to complex plans in grade 8. This means for seven years, they write three paragraphs choosing any idea as the main idea of their paragraphs. Then, they discuss those issues with any details they want as there is no definite rule for supporting the topic. We cannot compare the plan of this type with the English language because IELTS does not assume writing under such plan.

However, complex essay plan in Uzbek is similar to IELTS essay outline in general. It is as follows:

- I. Introduction
- II. Main Body
- III. Conclusion

Toulmin (1979) in his Argument Model of an Academic Essay records that there are three following stages of Argumentative essay [8]:

- ✓ Lead-in
- ✓ Thesis statement
- ✓ Deduction

Although this seems to be quite identical to Uzbek essay plan, in fact, each step in IELTS essay outline includes several sub-steps in itself. For example, Lead-in part for Argument essay comprises four sentences with reference to Ryan Higgins (2015)[9]:

Introduction:

1. Background sentence
2. Detailed background sentence
3. Thesis statement
4. Outline sentence

The data shows there should be four sentences, which play a certain role in an introductory paragraph. Background sentence leads the reader to the topic by presenting a general idea. This idea usually becomes specific by the help of the detailed background sentence, which gives way to the main idea of the essay. It either ascertains that the reader knows what to expect of the subsequent paragraphs (e.g. *This essay will analyze the advantages and disadvantages that arise when a person lives and works in the same place*) or expresses the author's opinion (e.g. *However, it is felt that this trend has more benefits than drawbacks*). The last sentence lists advantages, disadvantages, solutions, effects and reasons why author decided to agree or disagree with the IELTS question (e.g. *The jobs international and economic ties create through this practice will be analyzed to prove this thesis true*). In contrast, the essay plan rendered in the mother tongue course book does not suggest such a detailed model. Since the majority of topics in exercises are of expository (*The flag of Uzbekistan, Book is a source of knowledge – definition essay; My impressions on the poem "You are not an orphan", Abdulla Kahhor – a master of writing short stories – reflection essay*) and descriptive essay (*Description of heroism "Alpamish", Description of motherland in the poetry of Muhammad Yusuf*), the student has to explain or define the topic using facts and statistics along with describing the notions in his/her own view of the poem, story or a novel. In the example essay plan, the introduction for the topic "Uzbekistan – my motherland" is "About the history and the future of Uzbekistan". The introductory paragraph is expected to discuss the history and future depending on the facts and evidence that a student knows or finds. In fact, the plan does not stimulate the author's views or critical thinking on the subject because it does not require student to agree or disagree with the topic. Also, there is no clear instruction on how to compose the introduction.

The thesis statement (body) of IELTS essay is composed of the following steps:

1. Topic sentence
2. Example
3. Discussion
4. Conclusion

The topic sentence introduces the first idea in the outline sentence and is often followed by an appropriate example. If we have a topic asking the author to agree or disagree with the fact that robots will replace teachers in near future, it is possible to provide specific instances such as a Japanese robot Honda Asimov or a broader example like any type of a robot conducting a lesson in the classroom. The discussion explains why this example is used and expands it. In the conclusion part, the author should connect all the details to the thesis statement in introduction, which provides with the coherence on a n essay level. This pattern is applied to all the body



paragraphs with only small changes depending on the essay type. If we compare it with Uzbek essay plan, there is no distinct structure for writing body paragraphs. According to the example essay plan, the body looks like this:

1. Why do I love Uzbekistan?
2. Natural resources of my country.
3. My motherland – center of flourishing industry.
4. Description of Uzbekistan in the works of poets and writers.

As in IELTS essay, there is no definite limits for the number of paragraphs to be written. However, four paragraphs each focus on four different ideas like love, natural resources, industry and literature, which is quite uncommon for any type of essay in English. All in all, the student can concentrate on any idea if it relates to the topic and is not bothered to weave them together over the essay.

Concluding paragraph consists of three sentences:

1. Summary
2. Restatement of thesis
3. Prediction or recommendation

The first sentence sums up the ideas in the body paragraphs while the second sentence paraphrases the thesis. These help the reader to recall essay's main points. The author predicts the future concerning the topic or proposes ideas for further development of what has been discussed. In the Uzbek essay, the last idea for conclusion is "Uzbekistan is looking at the world", which is closely connected to the topic, but irrelevant to introduction and body. In IELTS, concluding paragraph always repeats the previous ideas; nevertheless, it is usually a broader new idea in Uzbek essay plans. Again, students do not bother themselves to tie the ideas together across the whole essay.

In addition, the length of essays depends on the author's age. In the course book, student in grade eight is expected to write a 5-6 page essay. While IELTS obliges test takers to write at least 250 words, the length in Uzbek essays is determined by how many pages the work has. This shows that the main focus in Uzbek essay writing is on the completion of a 12-page notebook with little to no attention to the content quality. This could be another factor in students' difficulty in arranging their ideas into a short 250-300 worded essay. This could have taken its roots from learners' habit of concentrating on the length rather than the organization of ideas.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the essays and their structure in mother tongue course books differ significantly from IELTS essays in several ways. Firstly, the essay types schoolchildren learn at schools are mainly descriptive and expository, which do not motivate students' critical thinking as compared with argumentative, problem/solution and etc. types of IELTS essays. Secondly, students give great emphasis on varying their ideas by providing different points in each

paragraph. The cohesion, coherence and connectivity are not encouraged as much as diversity within paragraphs. Last but not least, the length of the essay is so much that the student has to spend most of time and energy on completing those designated pages. All these, to my mind, lead to the lack of critical thinking skills of Uzbek students who take IELTS. Moreover, since they have become accustomed to varying their ideas, Uzbek students might have trouble linking all ideas into one central point. I think this is a topic which should be discussed further.

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