

English Language Policy And Language Planning In Uzbekistan Context: Challenges And Considerations

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ABSTRACT

Language planning and policy play a crucial role in shaping the linguistic landscape of a nation, particularly in a diverse country like Uzbekistan. In the wake of independence from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has embarked on a strategic path to promote English as a foreign language, recognizing its potential to bridge the nation to global opportunities. This article examines the intricate interplay of language planning and policy initiatives undertaken in Uzbekistan, focusing on the specific role of English in fostering economic development, social progress, and technological advancement. The analysis delves into the historical context of linguistic evolution in Uzbekistan, exploring the transition from Russian dominance to the current emphasis on English. It then examines specific language planning strategies implemented by the Uzbek government, including curriculum reform, teacher training programs, international collaborations, and the utilization of media and technology to promote English language acquisition. Furthermore, the article explores the challenges and opportunities associated with these efforts, highlighting issues such as regional disparities in English proficiency, resource constraints, and language attitudes. By analyzing these factors, the article sheds light on the complexities of language planning in Uzbekistan and its implications for the country's linguistic future.

Key words— economic development, educational reform, language policy, language planning, social transformation, Uzbekistan

I. INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has witnessed a dynamic period of economic and social reforms, accompanied by a significant reorientation of its language policy and planning strategies.

Language planning and language policy in Uzbekistan play a crucial role in shaping the linguistic landscape of the country. With a diverse population and a rich cultural heritage, Uzbekistan has been actively involved in language planning efforts to promote multilingualism and preserve its linguistic diversity.

One of the key aspects of language planning in Uzbekistan is the promotion of English as a foreign language. English has gained significant importance as a global language of communication, commerce, and technology. In Uzbekistan, the government has recognized the importance of English proficiency for international communication and has implemented various policies to promote the learning of English as a foreign language.

The recent reform in Uzbekistan has sparked a range of prominent developments within the nation. The present paper explores the country's language policy and planning in the context of the country's reform with a special focus on the growing importance of the English language. Given the country's increasing presence in the global space, it is vital to evaluate the changing linguistic context and its implications for the country's economic and social development.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Uzbekistan's linguistic landscape has been shaped by its historical and geopolitical developments. The Soviet era left a lasting imprint on the country's linguistic framework, with Russian established as the dominant language, alongside Uzbek as the state language. The aftermath of this legacy has continued to influence the contemporary linguistic makeup of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan, a nation with diverse cultural backgrounds, officially designates the Uzbek language as its sole state language. Russian, meanwhile, acts as a common language among the country's ethnic minority groups and is often spoken as a second native language. Nonetheless, following the country's declaration of independence, the prevalence of English has grown across various aspects of Uzbek society [7].

Ref. [8] claims, that despite gaining independence over two decades ago, Uzbek remains firmly established as both the official and national language of Uzbekistan. This period has seen an increase in the proportion of ethnic Uzbeks within the population, rising from 73% to 80%. This trend is reflected in education, with nearly 80% of public schools offering instruction exclusively in Uzbek.

However, Uzbekistan's linguistic landscape remains remarkably diverse, much like it was in the 1920s when the republic was established. Russian, as a strong and competitive language, maintains a significant presence at the state level, demonstrating the multilingual nature of the country [8].

Acknowledging its rich cultural identity and heritage, the Uzbek language was rightfully designated as the state language. However, with the increasing trends of globalization and the necessity to partake in the global economy, there has been a growing emphasis on fostering English language proficiency among its populace.

III. LANGUAGE PLANNING INITIATIVES

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a part of the area Kachru referred to as the "Expanding Circle" [2], [7]. In Uzbekistan, English is considered to be a foreign language [9], [7]. The government, on the other hand, is interested to see the language adopted by society as a second language, particularly by the younger generation [7].

Due to evolving objectives, the Uzbek government has issued several decrees and documents regarding language planning. This initiative reflects the government's commitment to fostering connections with the global community and preparing professionals to meet the standards required in the international market [7]. The Uzbek government has prioritized promoting English language learning through various strategic measures. In the wake of President Mirziyoyev's transformative agenda, notable initiatives have been undertaken to modernize the education system and facilitate greater integration of English language instruction across educational institutions, from primary to higher education. In 2017, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a significant decree aimed at enhancing the quality of English language education across schools and universities in the country. The decree underscored the pivotal role of English proficiency in driving the country's economic development and bolstering its international relations [6].

Ref. [1] states, that Uzbek government has introduced English language education reforms in schools to improve English language proficiency among students. These reforms include the development of English language curricula, training of English language teachers, and the provision of resources for English language learning. The goal is to equip students with the necessary language skills to engage in global communication and compete in the international job market.

Furthermore, the Uzbek government has also encouraged the establishment of English language learning centers and institutes to provide additional opportunities for students and professionals to improve their English language skills. These centers offer English language courses, workshops, and study abroad programs to enhance language proficiency and cultural exchange.

Besides, the Ministry of Public Education in Uzbekistan designed strong English language programs at schools at a young age which helps to lay a strong foundation for students in the English language. Each language is made up of thousands of special characters arranged in a specific order [5]. Moreover, the government initiated scholarships' programs to encourage students looking forward to pursuing studies in higher educational institutions in English language and literature [6]. This focus on English language proficiency can be seen as a strategic effort to make Uzbekistan more competitive on the global level internationally. This pivot away from the traditional Russocentric focus on Russian languages increases its visibility in the international community.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The growing emphasis placed on English language mastery in Uzbekistan has major implications for the economic growth of the country. Indeed, English proficiency has increasingly become a critical competency for global employment as well as participation in a globalized economic landscape. Therefore, the pursuit for mastering English is consistent with the need to attract foreign investments in Uzbekistan, expand countries' trading networks, and promote technology. Also, the incorporation of English language learning into schools,

colleges, and university curriculums is set out to ensure that the country's workforce has the needed English communication skills to work with multinational companies as well as in global markets. Moreover, the integration of English language instruction in educational institutions is positioned to equip the Uzbek workforce with the language skills necessary for engagement with multinational corporations and international markets.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The evolving linguistic landscape of Uzbekistan, marked by a growing emphasis on English, carries significant implications for social transformation. While English opens doors to global opportunities, it also necessitates a careful approach to ensure inclusivity and cultural preservation.

English proficiency holds the potential to be a catalyst for social mobility and educational empowerment. Mastery of the language can unlock access to international academic resources, scholarships, and collaborative research endeavors, potentially elevating educational standards and fostering a globally competitive workforce. Furthermore, English proficiency facilitates cultural exchange and cross-border dialogue, fostering a more cosmopolitan outlook among the Uzbek populace. This can lead to increased understanding and tolerance across cultures, fostering a more inclusive and interconnected society [3].

However, concerns regarding the potential marginalization of indigenous languages and the impact on national identity require careful consideration. While embracing English for global engagement is essential, preserving Uzbekistan's rich linguistic diversity is equally important. The unique languages and dialects spoken in Uzbekistan represent a vital thread in the fabric of national identity and cultural heritage. These languages hold valuable knowledge and traditions that should be nurtured and passed on to future generations.

The challenge lies in striking a balance between promoting English proficiency and safeguarding the richness of indigenous languages. This necessitates a multifaceted approach that encourages multilingualism, preserves cultural heritage, and fosters inclusivity. By embracing a balanced and inclusive approach, Uzbekistan can harness the transformative power of English while preserving its vibrant cultural tapestry, paving the way for a society that is both globally connected and proudly rooted in its cultural heritage.

VI. CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

However, there are several challenges and considerations that the government should keep in mind as the Uzbek language policy is recalibrated to meet the demands of the world that has become highly interconnected. From the perspective of language, raising proficiency in English should not undermine the promotion or preservation of native languages. Therefore, a delicate balance between the English policy and a policy that promotes multilingualism can help preserve the diversity of languages in Uzbekistan. Ref. [3] reported that many participants noted the shortage of highly qualified English language teachers in Uzbekistan. The inadequate number of qualified English teachers is considered one of the most important barriers to the high-quality delivery of language education services. Additionally, increased prospects may mitigate emphasis on English, which raises awareness of related quantification.

Moreover, efforts to ensure that English language instruction complements rather than supplants the teaching of Uzbek and other indigenous languages will be pivotal in safeguarding linguistic diversity

CONCLUSION

To sum up, language planning and policy in Uzbekistan significantly contribute to the development of English as a foreign language. The government has a solid base to pursue continued success in the implementation of English, but there are several issues and challenges that should be addressed to secure long-term benefits. The issue of balance between English promotion and cultural awareness and native language preservation is especially pertinent to Uzbekistan policymakers.

The evolution of language policy and the burgeoning emphasis on English language proficiency in Uzbekistan reflect the country's endeavors to engage with the global community and carve out a place in the international arena. However, this shift also raises important questions about the preservation of linguistic diversity and the promotion of multilingualism. As Uzbekistan navigates its language planning strategies, it is paramount to strike a delicate balance between embracing English language proficiency and safeguarding the rich linguistic tapestry that constitutes the nation's heritage. The future of language planning in Uzbekistan will necessitate careful navigation to harness the opportunities presented by English language proficiency while upholding the diverse linguistic legacy of the nation.

All in all, language planning and language policy in Uzbekistan regarding English as a foreign language reflect the country's commitment to promoting multilingualism and preparing its citizens for global communication and collaboration. By investing in English language education and providing opportunities for language learning, Uzbekistan aims to equip its population with the necessary skills to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. By prioritizing English language proficiency, Uzbekistan is opening doors to new

opportunities for its citizens to connect, collaborate, and succeed on an international scale.

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