

A Critical Review of the Proposed Changes to the EFL Curriculum in Public Schools in Uzbekistan

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Introduction

Recent trends in Uzbekistan's educational policy have focused on meeting the challenges of internalization and globalization. As English has achieved the status of a major international language, the government of Uzbekistan has been actively expanding the teaching of English as an essential part of the curriculum in public schools. Starting the year of 2013, English education has become a required course for first-graders in primary school. Such mandates, however, have not been strictly followed in all primary schools around the country. The initiative of introducing English exposure to primary schools and the overall shift in English education throughout the country has followed a top-down approach. However, EFL teachers' views and beliefs on educational policies in general, and particularly on the English language curriculum they are required to implement, have been neglected. Bearing this in mind that most of the teachers have certain preconceived ideas or beliefs on how to approach English teaching, the present study is an attempt to critically review the revised public-school EFL curriculum and it puts an emphasis on views and beliefs of the teachers involved in this process.

Language planning policy in education system of Uzbekistan has followed a top-down approach for many decades and it often involved decisions of the government and the governmental education agency. The lack of transparency has been often criticized by outsiders and the insiders, EFL teachers in various primary and secondary schools in the country were often unaware of the peculiarities of language-planning policy. We, the authors of this paper, strongly believe that the findings of current study could help in better understanding of EFL curriculum reforms and innovations in Uzbekistan, and they could serve as a useful tool for EFL teachers and policy makers in inside and outside the country. The study aims at sharing the scant body of knowledge about public-school EFL teachers' views and beliefs towards recent changes in English education in Uzbekistan. It will also analyze the implementation of EFL curriculum reforms and will make an attempt to share the stories of success and failure while taking into account the ongoing developments in the area.

In Part One and Part Two, we will give a historical overview of teaching English as a foreign language and describe the current situation and latest reforms in English curriculum at public schools in Uzbekistan. Part Three examines the EFL curriculum from the year of 2013 and presents peculiarities of ongoing reforms in English education. In this part, we will also try to discuss the obstacles that hindered the implementation of curriculum changes. After defining the methodology that was used to conduct this

research in Part Four, we will make an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do English teachers view the government-initiated reforms in EFL curriculum, and what are their thoughts and feelings at the initial stage of change?
- 2) How have teachers' beliefs changed towards the new reforms after participating in training workshops?
- 3) What are EFL teachers' experiences of assessment practices and how have their attitudes towards the assessment have changed over the time?

In the final part, the conclusive remarks will be made in addition to pointing out several limitations of the current study and to giving suggestions for further research.

Part One: TEFL in Soviet Uzbekistan

In this part, we will take a close look at English education in secondary schools in Uzbekistan during the Soviet Era and in the early years of country's independence. After sharing some basic information about the country, we will give a detailed description of Uzbekistan's general education. The current situation and latest reforms of English education in Uzbekistan will be presented towards the end of this chapter.

Uzbekistan is a country with the total population of over 30 million people. It is a landlocked country and shares borders with all of Central-Asian states. According to the latest official estimates, about 80% of the population are Uzbeks, while the rest of the population is comprised of Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, and Tatars. There are also small numbers of ethnic Koreans, Meskhetian Turks, Germans, and Greeks in Uzbekistan. The state language is Uzbek, a member of a Turkic language group.

In Uzbekistan nine years of a general schooling are compulsory and free of charge, beginning with four years at primary school (7 to 10 years old) followed by five years of secondary school (11 to 15 years). In Uzbekistan, the government body Ministry of Education is in charge of building schools, purchasing equipment, textbooks and teaching materials, as well as assisting teacher education and professional development, conducting research and collecting data on education-related matters, creating curricula and developing teaching methods, and overseeing examination procedures. The academic year in the country begins on September 2nd and ends on the 25th of May, lasting for about 33 weeks. Only the students in the ninth grade are in school for the period of 36 weeks, with extra three weeks dedicated to the preparation for final examinations.

English-language education was introduced as a part of formal education by the Soviet administration in 1932. After the release of a special government decree, learning a foreign language became a part of compulsory studies for all the citizens who went beyond elementary schooling (Ornstein, 1958). However, the importance of foreign languages, particularly English language, has never been seriously questioned. Since the foreign-language study was introduced into formal education, a specific curriculum was set up within the schools from Grade Five up to Grade Ten. The Grammar Translation (GT) Method formed the basis of teaching methodology and it was predominant in Soviet TEFL

(Bartley, 1971). In the EFL curriculum of Soviet Union the number of hours for English lessons varied from year to year. The cause of this instability was in general sense of dissatisfaction high-rank Soviet administrators felt towards the work done by the academics that had direct impact onto the composition of EFL curriculum.

In Soviet times English was simply taught as one of many foreign languages. However, the country's independence provided an opportunity for a paradigm shift in the history of English education in Uzbekistan. Even though English has not yet gained the same status with Russian, current attitudes towards English language education show that in the future it is more likely to overtake other foreign languages.

Part Two: English Language Education in Independent Uzbekistan

At an early stage of its independence, Uzbekistan had a general education system that was typical of any republic in former Soviet Union. In his state address from 1991, alongside other educational changes the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan highlighted the importance of teaching and learning foreign languages. In the early years of country's independence, English education has gained a status it never had. This encouraged Uzbekistan's Ministry of Education to work with international organizations such as the British Council and the Peace Corps, and this collaboration brought several curriculum revisions in the country's English education. One remarkable change was the shift from the Grammar Translation Method to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

English had been taught as a compulsory subject at secondary schools in Soviet Uzbekistan for nearly eight decades. During that period, several versions of English language curricula and English textbooks were introduced, used, and then thrown away. More than twenty years have passed since the big change in methodology; CLT should have found its implementation in every English classroom of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, most EFL teachers in rural areas have been practicing Grammar Translation Method in their classrooms. "CLT in Uzbekistan is perceived more as a topic of discussion for teaching conferences rather than being an approach to be implemented in classroom teaching" (Hasanova, 2007).

In the year of 2010 several attempts were made to bring some changes into a stagnant situation of EFL teaching in Uzbekistan. One of the main purposes of 2010 change in EFL curriculum was to train students achieve fluency in English language and the language was seen as a tool of communication for the first time. The English-language education was divided into two stages, where the first one lasted through Grades Five and Six and offered three hours of English. In the first stage the emphasis given to developing listening and speaking skills; reading and writing were optional and were taught as additional skills. The second stage lasted through Grades Seven and Ten and all four skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening) were taught. The goal of revised public school EFL curriculum to raise students' English abilities to a communicatively-competent level. However, this top-down strategy did not result in big changes and the suggestions have not been implemented successfully due to the lack of financial support and insufficient teacher training.

Before the year of 2013, students used to receive five years of English education at secondary

schools, and they were taught English for three more years at vocational colleges and/or academic boarding schools. However, these students could neither speak nor write well in English, nor they could maintain a basic conversation in the language. In addition, English language teaching has become exam-oriented and most students learn the language for the sole purpose of passing university entrance examinations, where the main focus has been on developing grammatical competence and improving reading comprehension.

The government officials once again have realized that the status of English language teaching in Uzbekistan did not meet international standards. In December 2012, the President of Uzbekistan signed a decree “On Measures to Further Improvements in Foreign-language Teaching and Learning System”. The main purpose behind this legislation was to create equal opportunities for foreign-language teaching and learning throughout the country. Along with other legislations, the new curricula in teaching foreign language and State Educational Standards (SES) were introduced in the following year of 2013. The Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) scale has been adopted to assess the competence of English language learners. Moreover, the revised EFL curriculum of 2013 highlighted the importance of developing and designing new textbooks at all levels.

Part Three: Recent Changes in EFL Curriculum in Uzbekistan

It has been more than two decades since CLT was introduced to Uzbekistan’s EFL context. However, the English teachers as well their students generally believe that the purpose behind studying English is simply passing exams and moving to the next grade. Unfortunately, most of the real EFL classroom practices are largely based on GT method.

In 2013, the English curriculum underwent major reforms and, yet, another set of EFL textbooks and teaching materials was developed and implemented in schools as early as the academic year of 2013-2014. The content of the 2010 EFL curriculum was revised in order to improve its applicability to actual school settings, although the basic principles for English language education remained the same. There were also minimal changes in objectives and methods, and there were no specific guidelines given on assessment tools and methods. However, it is worth mentioning that the previous exclusive focus on teaching language as a system was replaced by the skills-oriented approach in line with the CEFR for languages. The CEFR was chosen as a basic instrument of the foreign language learning and teaching across the country.

The main structural change in the 2013 EFL curriculum was that English language instruction was to start in Grade One of primary school and until Grade Four children had two hours of English classes a week. From Grade Five until Grade Nine the schoolchildren would have three hours of English instruction per week. Unlike traditional teaching approaches, the 2013 EFL curriculum emphasized the importance of computer assisted and internet-based language teaching and learning. Although there was a sign of evidence of government’s attempts on improving English language education in the country, the new government policies on teaching and learning English language have set very ambitious goals both for teachers and their students, and the practitioners needed to wait and see the results of this, yet

another, top-down strategy.

The changes in EFL curriculum related to the CEFR were as follows. First, there was a precise indication that the outcomes of English language learning should be based on the CEFR level descriptions. Huge efforts were made to base the country's EFL curriculum on the CEFR, and the new learning outcomes within the EFL curriculum were benchmarked against the level descriptors of the CEFR. However, official announcements about the connection and comparison between the elements of Uzbekistan's EFL curriculum and the CEFR were yet to come.

After the latest curriculum revisions in 2013, there is a set of communicative textbooks used in public secondary schools from Grade Five to Grade Nine. The series are called *Fly High English* and *English Matters*. At the same time, with the initiative of international organizations, the authorities in English education have published a series of textbooks called *Kids English* for primary schools' first, second, third, and fourth grades. Furthermore, the government along with its international partners promised to issue new text books for fifth to ninth grades of public secondary schools in the coming years.

The training of English language teachers and their ongoing professional development were regarded as essential factors in the implementation of EFL curriculum innovations. As Malderez and Wedell (2007) point out, the effective teaching of teachers was seen as one of the key factors influencing the extent to which the effective implementation of new education policies and curriculum reforms takes place as intended. In order to bring curriculum changes into local schools, the Ministry of Education along with their international partners such as the British Council, Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), and the Regional English Language Office of the American Embassy (RELO) initiated and funded various projects. The recent pre-service teacher training programme (PRESET) was developed in partnership with British Council, NILE, and 18 pre-service teacher training institutions located in various regions of the country. The pilot project started in 2009 and resulted in nationwide training sessions and seminars from the year of 2013. Since then, the project has been training more than 1.700 future language teachers on an annual base. Moreover, starting from the year of 2013, in-service teacher training programs (INSET) were improved, and setting up three major INSET institutions in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Andijan seen as professional development centers has brought some changes across regions. These centers currently run 144-hour (lasts for one month) and 36-hour (lasts for one week) teacher-training courses for approximately 150 teachers every year.

The revised EFL curriculum of 2013 determines learning outcomes and programmes of study and it is accompanied by explanation, guidance and, more particularly, a sequence of teaching, where suggestions are made on classroom time allocations and expected levels of performance. However, it does not indicate how learners should be assessed and evaluated at any level of the programme. Neither official reports nor comprehensive evidence is available to check on learners' progress, the effect of curriculum changes on language learning processes, and how and to what extent curriculum changes have been implemented.

We need to bear in mind that curriculum innovation in language teaching is considered a complex

and dynamic process that is never without challenges (Karavas-Doukas, 1998). The lack of qualified teachers, the institutionalized requirements on entrance exams, and the insufficient funding can be seen as some of the obstacles in successful implementation of the 2013 EFL curriculum. Although all of the points above are included in the text of legislation on education reforms, and are framed in ideal terms in accordance with the government's plans, the real problems lie in their implementation and are often exacerbated by poor organization and the economic situation in the country. In conclusion, we can point out that Ministry of Education has taken fairly positive actions and made attempts to construct good collaboration with international organizations. A considerable number of teachers of English has been brought together and was involved in the program, and step-by-step introduction of new materials is taking place in elementary schools. However, one unfavorable result of these changes seems to be that the training and retraining of EFL teachers mostly focuses on methodology that forces these EFL teachers to use their existing knowledge on assessment when they need to deal with presentation of learning outcomes. Unlike previous attempts on curriculum changes, the current implementation of revised curriculum looks and sounds promising, provided that the country's Ministry of Education supports the policy with adequate financial resources to resolve many of existing constraints in rural Uzbekistan's EFL practices.

Part Four: Teachers' Attitudes towards Changes in EFL Curriculum in Uzbekistan

The present study used a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research to describe and analyze the revised Uzbek EFL curriculum, the changes in EFL teachers' beliefs, and their experiences and the attitudes toward assessment in English language teaching. The reason behind adopting the mixed method comes in line with Creswell's (2003) idea that a research problem or issue that needs to be addressed determines what kind of research method needs to be undertaken, not the other way around. The data collection methods for this study are based on a naturalistic approach that is often used to understand better EFL teachers' views of, attitudes towards, and first-hand experiences of curriculum changes in Uzbekistan's EFL context, where, as Patton asserts this, "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (2001, p. 39).

The big chunk of data was collected from the densely-populated city of Kokand, located in Ferghana region of Uzbekistan. There are some additional sources of data gathered from the capital city of Tashkent to support researchers' main arguments. The data for this study were collected through conducting paper-based and online questionnaires and interview. In this stage of this research, the paper based survey was conducted for a period of over two weeks, from August 21st to September 5th of 2015. The form of questions in the paper-based survey were closed (i.e. 'agree' or 'disagree'), and all items were in English. The initial paper-based survey was administered to a total of 24 EFL teachers at public schools of the capital city of Tashkent. All of the teachers taught English at elementary and secondary schools. Thirty three copies of the survey were distributed to these EFL teachers and out of those teachers twenty four respondents completed the survey.

In the second stage, following the quantitative phase of the study, qualitative data were collected

through interviews by asking questions to the EFL teachers in Kokand. The interview form of data collection was carried out between August 28th and September 12th of 2015. The interview questions mirrored, in one way or another, the themes in the paper-based survey. The researchers visited forty schools and had a total of 68 EFL teachers to respond to their questionnaire. However, due to some personal and other reasons, only 18 EFL teachers made themselves available for an interview with the researchers. The interviews were conducted in an attempt to determine and cross-check the EFL teachers' views, beliefs, and attitudes in relation to the revised EFL curriculum, and the extent to which these views, beliefs, and attitudes have been modified through teacher training. Interviews were administered to a total of 18 EFL teachers at sixteen public schools. Due to time constraints and the subjects' heavy work-schedule, each EFL teacher was interviewed only once. The teachers varied greatly in terms of age and the length of their teaching experience. While conducting semi-structured interviews the paper-based surveys were partially analyzed, and then interview items were modified wherever it was necessary. The researchers kept the interview guide close in order to stay within the focus area of the research. Before each interview, one of the researchers visited a school and talked directly to the local EFL teachers about their intentions, including a brief self-introduction. The interview place and time were arranged after receiving an agreement from respondents. Prior to the interviews, the interviewer had an informal conversation with the respondent to give him or her more information about the purpose of research and, more importantly, to assure the participant that the information will be kept confidential.

In addition to the questionnaire and the interview, in order to achieve triangulation and collection of systemic data, two online surveys were conducted afterwards. The Online Survey One was related to the EFL teacher' views and beliefs, and the Online Survey Two focused on English teachers experiences of assessment and their attitudes towards that process. The first Online Survey was conducted between November 20th of 2015 and January 10th of 2016. A total of 52 e-mails, containing a link to the survey were sent to the EFL teachers in Uzbekistan. In order to maximize comprehension of the participants, the survey was translated into respondents' first language, Uzbek. The items on the survey were modified and several statements were added based on the data collected in the paper-based survey. The items were closed and participants chose responses from a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree). The second Online Survey was conducted between August 3rd and December 25th of 2016. A total of 56 e-mails, containing the link to the survey were sent to the EFL teachers in the country. In contrast to the previous online survey, the second survey's items were open-ended questions. Both online surveys consisted of two attachments, demographic details and questions.

The purpose of Online Survey One was to cross-check the EFL teachers' views, beliefs and attitudes towards the revised 2013 EFL curriculum and the aim of Online Survey Two was to determine EFL teachers' assessment related experiences and attitudes. While designing the survey items, the researchers followed Brown (2001) and Dörnyei's (2007) guidelines for writing user-friendly questions. Every interviewed EFL teacher and respondent to the paper-based surveys participated in both online surveys. The online surveys were different from each other by the type of questioning: Online Survey One was

comprised of closed questions and Online Survey Two contained open-ended questions. In closed questions, the possible answers are identified and participants are asked to choose one of the answers. The questions aimed to obtain data on views, beliefs and attitudes, whereas the open questions allowed the respondents to decide the wording of the answer, the length of the answer and the kind of matters to be raised in their own responses.

The study adopted Bryman's (2004) "convenience sampling" method as the researchers found this method to be most appropriate. Since the study contained two different types of data, the process of analyzing them was also done using two different approaches: qualitative and quantitative. The researchers employed the Paper-based Survey and Online Survey One as quantitative instruments, and the Interview and Online Survey Two that contained open questions were used to generate qualitative data. These two types of data analysis strategies were inductive: emerging categories and patterns were looked for in the data.

Data analysis and discussion

In this part of the article, we will make an attempt to provide an analysis and discussion of the data in order to answer our main research questions. The discussion focuses on the 2013 EFL curriculum and its implementation in the light of the teachers' views, beliefs and experiences. First, it looks at English teachers' views and beliefs towards the EFL curriculum reforms, then it discusses the introduction curriculum innovations to the EFL teachers through teacher training, and finally, it talks about EFL teachers' experiences of and attitudes towards assessment in teaching English.

In order to make a more effective presentation of the results, items measuring similar or contrasting information were grouped together. It must be noted that the main interest of the analysis was to check how effectively the EFL teachers' beliefs, views, and experiences being affected or upgraded by the Ministry of Education in its efforts to reform English language education in Uzbekistan. The results reveal that some of EFL teachers support ongoing reforms which have been initiated by the Ministry and they are aware of the 2013 EFL curriculum's objectives, suggested methods of teaching and peculiarities of language of instruction. However, the participants are less positive in contributing additional ideas into 2013 EFL curriculum and visiting colleagues' classrooms. In contrast, the 2/3 of the participants are typical EFL teachers who still practice traditional activities, with half of them heavily relying on textbooks (See Table 1 below).

The Online Survey One reports almost the same results as the paper-based survey and can be summarized into the following three major findings.

1. The participants' attitudes toward English language education reforms are positive;
2. The participants' English language teaching beliefs are largely based on CLT and use of target language as a classroom instruction, however most participants still practice traditional approaches;
3. The survey participants view frequent in-service training as a key to the reforms and they believe it gradually affects the teaching methods.

Table 1: *EFL teachers' views and beliefs*

Question items	A (%)	D (%)	Total
1. Teaching English in younger ages is better	19 (90.5)	2 (9.5)	21
2. I love teaching English in Elementary classroom	16 (76.2)	5 (23.8)	21
3. Teaching English in Elementary classroom is difficult	8 (38.1)	13 (61.9)	21
4. Sharing ideas or feelings about English language teaching with a colleagues is useful	17 (81)	4 (19)	21
5. I would recommend to add additional changes into current English curriculum	3 (14.3)	18 (85.7)	21
6. Today's language teaching method should be only CLT	13 (61.9)	8 (38.1)	21
7. EFL teachers should visit their colleagues' English classes , because it is useful	9 (42.9)	12 (57.1)	21
8. Teaching English in English in Elementary classroom is essential	13 (61.9)	8 (38.1)	21
9. Frequently in-service teacher training is important for teaching EFL	16 (76.2)	5 (23.8)	21
10. My teaching method is changed since I started teaching English	16 (76.2)	5 (23.8)	21
11. English language teachers should be involved in curriculum development	15 (71.4)	6 (28.6)	21
12. Current curriculum goals and objectives match with teachers' needs	21 (100)	–	21
13. Current curriculum goals and objectives match with learners' needs	20 (95.2)	1 (4.8)	21
14. I easily cope with interpreting curriculum content into classroom activity	20 (95.2)	1 (4.8)	21
15. My teaching style is exactly CLT	6 (28.6)	15 (71.4)	21
16. My teaching style is mix of traditional and CLT methods	12 (57.1)	9 (42.9)	21
17. Introduced CLT method in EFL curriculum match with university entrance examination content	3 (14.3)	18 (85.7)	21
18. Teaching English in lower levels altered my teaching approach	11 (52.4)	10 (47.6)	21
19. In EFL classroom teachers' personal goals and beliefs are important	17 (81)	4 (19)	21
20. I bring supplementary materials into EFL classroom	10 (47.6)	11 (52.4)	21

Note: Agree (A), Disagree (D)

The analysis of Online Survey Two show that while assessing language skills, EFL teachers give less importance to speaking and writing skills in comparison with reading and listening skills, and that few of the teachers give equal importance to the four basic language skills in their EFL classrooms. In addition, in-service assessment training does have an impact upon the teachers' assessment attitudes and practices, indicating that their overall assessment knowledge based on pre-service education has been altered positively since they attended in-service training. Lastly, the length of work experience relates to EFL teachers' assessment practices, showing that experienced teachers are more inclined towards traditional methods of assessment, while less experienced teachers' assessment practices advocate mixed elements of communicative function and traditional assessment (See Table 2 below).

Table 2: *EFL teachers' views and beliefs*

Question items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total
1. I love teaching English in Elementary classroom	16 (44.4)	7 (19.5)	4 (11.1)	9 (25)	36
2. Sharing ideas or feelings about English language teaching with a colleagues is useful	17 (47.2)	19 (52.8)	–	–	36
3. Teaching English in younger ages is better (starting from 7 years old)	26 (72.2)	10 (27.8)	–	–	36
4. Teaching English in Elementary classroom is difficult	15 (41.7)	8 (22.2)	4 (11.1)	9 (25)	36
5. I would recommend to add additional changes into current English curriculum	3 (8.4)	5 (13.9)	16 (44.4)	12 (33.3)	36
6. Today's language teaching method should be only CLT	10 (27.8)	23 (63.9)	3 (8.3)	–	36
7. EFL teachers should visit their colleagues' English classes , because it is useful	8 (22.2)	15 (41.7)	9 (25)	4 (11.1)	36
8. Teaching English in English in Elementary classroom is essential	13 (36.1)	17 (47.2)	6 (16.7)	–	36
9. Frequently in-service teacher training is necessary (it should be held approximately once a year)	23 (63.9)	12 (33.3)	1 (2.8)	–	36
10. My teaching method is changed since I started teaching English	16 (44.4)	13 (36.1)	6 (16.7)	1 (2.8)	36
11. English language teachers should be involved in curriculum development	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)	–	–	36
12. Revised curriculum goals and objectives match with the content	6 (16.7)	25 (69.4)	5 (13.9)	–	36
13. My teaching style is exactly CLT	5 (13.9)	2 (5.6)	22 (61.1)	7 (19.5)	36
14. My teaching style is mix of traditional and CLT methods	6 (16.7)	21 (58.3)	5 (13.9)	4 (11.1)	36
15. Introduced CLT method in EFL curriculum match with university entrance examination content	4 (11.1)	13 (36.1)	12 (33.3)	7 (19.5)	36
16. Teaching English in lower levels altered my teaching approach	8 (22.2)	16 (44.4)	8 (22.2)	4 (11.1)	36
17. In EFL classroom learners' needs and wishes are important	1 (2.8)	17 (47.2)	14 (38.9)	4 (11.1)	36
18. In EFL classroom teachers' personal goals and beliefs are important	18 (50)	18 (50)	–	–	36
19. Issued materials for Elementary classroom are well developed	17 (47.2)	19 (52.8)	–	–	36
20. I bring supplementary materials into EFL classroom	17 (47.2)	17 (47.2)	2 (5.6)	–	21

Note: Agree (A), Disagree (D) Strongly Agree (SA), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Although the interviews involved only 18 subjects, the results could be found useful by other EFL teachers in the sense that every EFL teacher has his/her own teaching practices and beliefs. The results of the interviews show that some EFL teachers' beliefs are affected and modified through teacher training programs while their teaching practices do not reflect these changes and remain static. The participants believe that English teaching should follow the CLT method, but that communicative teaching method in itself causes serious difficulties in the majority of EFL classrooms. One of the reasons behind this issue might be, as some participants noted, the redundant statements on CLT theory and practice during teacher-training sessions. Some of the participants suggested organizing teacher-training sessions based more on

the local teachers' needs and these sessions should offer more of practical support for English-language classrooms. The results of the interviews also showed that EFL teachers' beliefs emerge from their own learning experiences, their own classroom practices, and most importantly, their interest in professional development.

The majority of the EFL teacher participants have positive views and beliefs about current reforms in Uzbekistan's English education. Despite their traditional language teaching practices, they believe that chosen CLT method is a way to succeed in English learning and they support the idea of having English as a language of instruction instead of using their L1, Uzbek. EFL teachers do not ignore the importance of grammar, however, they believe that teaching and learning only grammar for the sake of communication is problematic.

The surveys and interview suggest us that the main source of EFL teachers' beliefs is found in pre-service teacher education programs that has already formed academic and professional basis for their beliefs. Some of the EFL teachers noted that their teaching views have changed after attending in-service teacher education programs and these courses had a positive influence on their teaching practices

In contrast, a few EFL teachers shared less positive views regarding in-service teacher training programs, noting that the only outcome from these programs was to keep a good track of attendance and to receive a certificate. Furthermore, EFL teachers were less positive about those programmes as they offered limited seats. Some teachers have mentioned that their motivation has decline after heavily theory-oriented in-service training programs. This suggests that there is an ongoing demand for more in-service teacher training programs with more practical considerations and suggestions into EFL curriculum. Furthermore, the majority of EFL teachers complained about the work overload caused by long teaching hours and high demands on administrative work as well large classes of 40 to 50 students. These three elements were seen as major constraints on successful implementation of 2013 EFL curriculum.

Overall, EFL teachers' views were positive towards the proposed reforms by the Ministry of Education, even though their beliefs were mostly constructed during their pre-service training and were established on traditional methods of teaching. It seems that EFL teachers are willing to participate in the in-service training and show a desire to be a part of reforms despite a number of obstacles. In addition, the findings of this study reveal the complicated nature of relationship between the EFL teacher' beliefs and the realities facing Uzbekistan's English language education. This bitter reality includes and not limited to teachers' low proficiency in the target language, the mismatch between English programme's content and national entrance exams, and a hostile administrative reform environment, which altogether create obstacles in the implementation of reforms. Last but not the least, the final part of the study concerning the teachers' attitudes towards assessment raised an important issue of existing disparity between the classroom instruction and the learner assessment. EFL teachers believe in importance of assessing passive knowledge, such as the knowledge on grammar rules, rather than measuring learners' performance ability. The insufficient training on language assessment was brought up by several respondents as a cause of this disparity.

Part Five: Implications of the Research Findings

The aim of the section is to suggest a number of implications for English language education based on the results and findings of this study. The EFL teachers in Uzbekistan need to reflect upon their beliefs about English language pedagogy, their teaching practices, and their attitudes towards the government initiated reforms to see whether there are any gaps, mismatches, or self-justifications. The EFL teachers should be willing to take measures to resolve the above issues and they may be able to do so by searching for opportunities to attend more in-service programs designed to enhance English proficiency, and their understanding of teaching methods and knowledge of assessment. Moreover, when EFL teachers conduct assessment in the classroom, they may need to create expectations for each student's performance and compare these expectations with performance on a scoring guide, a check list, or a criteria sheet. The important thing for EFL teachers is to try remain consistent and create records which clearly can show how close each student is to accomplishing the learning objectives of a particular course. They will also need to keep in mind that one assessment tool does not fit all types of learners, i.e. one test cannot measure everyone's growth towards specific objectives.

In addition to the aforementioned points, local teacher education programs will need to engage a greater variety of innovative methods in order to contribute to the government-initiated reforms. The organizers of these programs need to realize that just by revising the EFL curriculum and issuing different policies, or by adopting certain international standards such as CEFR and inviting international specialists may not be enough to ensure the great outcome of educational reforms. Creating a better environment, where there is an online digital platform for sharing ideas among long teachers and where the teachers' voices are heard and questions are answered, is necessary. The officials at the Ministry of Education in Uzbekistan also need to pay attention to working with gradual changes at national entrance examinations and to try make a shift from grammar-focused tests to communication-based exams. Last but not the least would be a need for the serious state legislation that encourages and, when it's needed, requires EFL teachers to learn about language assessment along with up-to-date teaching methods.

Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Further Research

The researchers have faced several difficulties in recruiting the participants for surveys and interviews and numerous visits were made to public schools of Kokand and Tashkent cities in search of EFL teachers willing to participate in this study. Therefore, these teachers who cooperated with us may not necessarily be the most suitable representatives of EFL profession in Uzbekistan.

As for the further research, we are very interested in learning more about the attitudes of Uzbekistan's EFL teachers towards computer-assisted language learning and its implications for better assessment. Another future research on a similar topic could take the form of a longitudinal study on the possible differences between the beliefs of EFL teachers in Uzbekistan at the completion point of pre-service education programs and the beliefs these teachers would have after several years in the field, before they enroll in the programmes for in-service teachers.

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