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MODERN APPROACHES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This overview examines the current state of English language teaching in secondary schools across the Republic of Uzbekistan. It highlights recent educational reforms, innovative teaching methodologies, and professional development initiatives for teachers. The paper addresses challenges such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom, adopting new instructional materials, and integrating modern pedagogical in schools. It also explores ongoing efforts to enhance teacher training and curriculum design to improve English proficiency among students, reflecting Uzbekistan's commitment to fostering global communication skills.

Introduction

Under the State Educational Standards, the primary objective of general secondary education is to uphold every individual's constitutional right to receive an education and moral development. In Uzbekistan, general secondary education constitutes a mandatory educational phase covering grades 1 through 11, typically accommodating children and adolescents aged 7 to 18. This educational framework is designed to provide students with a comprehensive

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foundation of knowledge, cultivate independent thinking, enhance organizational skills, and develop practical competencies. Furthermore, it aims to facilitate initial career orientation and guide students in making informed decisions regarding their future educational pathways.[1]

Materials and methods

Main Objectives of General Secondary Education in Uzbekistan:

1. Knowledge Acquisition: Equipping students with foundational knowledge across various disciplines, including mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, native languages and literature, and foreign languages.

2. Personal Development: Supporting students' intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and physical development and fostering patriotism, humanism, and responsible citizenship.

3. Social Skills: Enhancing vital life skills in students, including teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities.

4. Career Orientation: Educating students regarding prospective career paths and equipping them for vocational or higher education aligned with their interests.

5. National and Universal Values: Teaching Uzbekistan's culture, traditions, and history while fostering a global worldview.[2]

In Uzbekistan, general secondary education is free and compulsory, as stipulated in the Constitution and the Law on Education. Educational institutions implement curricula that adhere to the standards established by the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on improving the quality of education, incorporating modern technologies, and enhancing instruction in foreign languages.[3]

In Uzbekistan, all individuals are guaranteed equal rights to education, regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, or personal and social status. The stages of general secondary education (grades I-XI) include:

- Primary education covers grades I-IV;
- Secondary education (Middle school) covers grades V-IX;
- High school education covers grades X-XI;[4]

Primary education focuses on acquiring a foreign language to the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Secondary education

(Middle school) covers grades V-IX and corresponds to a language proficiency level of A2 (V-VI - A2; VII-IX - A2+). High school education includes grades X-XI, with a language proficiency level of B1. Variation across all three levels of school education promotes active acquisition and learning of any foreign language.[5]

Result and discussion

In collaboration with USAID-Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan has adopted the “Prepare” textbook series by Cambridge University Press for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in grades 7–11. This initiative is designed to enhance the quality of language education by providing internationally recognized materials adapted to the needs of Uzbek students. The core resource for this program is the “Prepare” series, particularly Level 2, which is intended for grades 7 to 8. The structured implementation plan covers 102 lessons spread across 34 weeks. The “Prepare” textbook aims to encourage independent thinking, boost motivation, and develop communicative competence among EFL learners in Uzbekistan.[6]

The “Prepare” series for grades 7–8 is designed to cover 20 units and one prior unit for 7th grade across two academic years, with students completing the first 10 units in grade 7 and the remaining 10 in grade 8. Each unit begins with an “About You” speaking activity to encourage student engagement, while activities in this textbook vary in focus and time requirements. The textbook “Prepare” is designed for students in grades 7 and 8 and consists of three components: the Student’s Book, the Workbook, and the Teacher’s Book. The Student’s Book offers comprehensive lesson plans, page references, review sessions, and examination schedules. The Workbook contains a series of activities that reinforce the topics covered in the Student’s Book. It is specifically intended to facilitate homework assignments for students.[7]

The Student’s Book of the “Prepare” textbook includes:

1. Culture Lessons: The seventh-grade curriculum features six Culture pages, while the eighth-grade curriculum includes four. Both are aimed at familiarizing students with life in English-speaking countries. These lessons are designed to incorporate projects that promote collaborative learning and enhance presentation skills, following the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

2. Life Skills Lessons: Four Life Skills pages provide students with essential practical skills applicable in everyday situations within English-speaking environments. These pages also incorporate project-based activities designed to enhance the learning experience.

3. Review and Assessment: Before examinations, students review the material using the review pages in the Student's Book or supplementary resources from the Cambridge Test Generator. Each academic quarter consists of three assessments. The initial two assessments concentrate on newly introduced units, whereas the final assessment encompasses all units studied during the quarter.

4. Homework: Homework is assigned from the Workbook and serves to reinforce the material that students engage with during class sessions. In instances where lessons do not include Workbook pages, teachers designate alternative assignments. The focus of homework encompasses grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing, while speaking and listening activities are conducted within the classroom environment. These tasks are purposefully designed to be manageable for students.

5. Supplementary Materials: Online resources, accessible to all teachers in Uzbekistan, enhance lesson planning and provide additional practice materials.[8]

The "Prepare" textbook is specifically designed to incorporate authentic materials. Authentic materials, created for native speakers rather than language learners, play a crucial role in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. In the context of the "Prepare" textbook, these materials are seamlessly integrated to stimulate student interest, promote independent thinking, and establish a dynamic learning environment. Furthermore, these materials align with the principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Project-Based Learning (PBL), both emphasizing practical, real-world language use and fostering learner-centered collaboration.[9]

The use of inappropriate teaching materials can hinder language acquisition by failing to engage learners or stimulate their motivation. Authentic materials effectively address this issue by providing culturally relevant and real-world content that resonates with students. In Uzbekistan, where the "Prepare" textbook was developed for an international audience, localizing and personalizing content are essential to ensure that lessons remain relevant and motivational. By integrating authentic materials into the curriculum, educators can cultivate a

sense of ownership and curiosity among students, encouraging them to apply their language skills in meaningful contexts.[10]

To effectively integrate authentic materials into the “Prepare” curriculum, the following strategies were employed:

1. Creative Activity Design: The activities derived from the “Prepare” units have been assessed and modified to integrate authentic materials, including news articles, videos, and social media posts from English-speaking contexts. For instance, Culture pages have been enhanced with genuine cultural artifacts, such as festival descriptions and interviews, to enrich students’ comprehension of English-speaking societies.

2. Project-Based Learning (PBL): Projects incorporated within Culture pages and Life Skills lessons were enhanced through authentic materials, such as real-world advertisements and public service announcements. This approach facilitated tasks that involved the design of posters and the presentation of community initiatives. These projects fostered collaborative problem-solving and oral reporting skills, consistent with Project-Based Learning (PBL).

3. Flipped Classroom Approach: Homework assignments focused on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills were designed using authentic materials, such as simplified blog posts and infographics. This methodology allowed for the preservation of class time for engaging speaking and listening activities. Consequently, it enhanced collaborative efforts facilitated by the instructor while simultaneously promoting independent learning among students.

4. Spelling Variations: Lessons focused on the variations in spelling between American and British English were enhanced through authentic materials, such as emails and product labels. This approach effectively illustrated the linguistic diversity present in practical contexts.[11]

The incorporation of authentic materials within the “Prepare” textbook aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Project-Based Learning (PBL). This approach fosters communicative competence along with independent and critical thinking skills. By engaging with real-world content, students acquire a comprehensive understanding of English as an instrument for

communication, rather than merely a collection of grammatical rules or vocabulary lists. Projects and presentations enhance speaking abilities and promote collaboration, while localized content increases motivation by linking lessons to students' cultural contexts. The “Prepare” textbook effectively integrates Culture and Life Skills components with project-based activities, review and assessment sessions, structured homework assignments from the Workbook, and supplementary online resources, all designed to enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in Uzbekistan. The structured timetable, supplementary materials, and strategic application of authentic resources ensure that the lessons are engaging and relevant, aligning with the specific educational needs of Uzbek learners.[12]

Students in grades 7 and 8 need to develop four types of skills through activities and language materials, including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The textbook “Prepare” is designed as authentic material for developing students’ language acquisition. In this paragraph of our research work, we examined all the units from the textbook “Prepare” for 7 grades. (See Table 2.1. below).

Table 2.1. Content of the textbook

Grade-7 (A2+) 102 hours

Units	Hours	Vocabulary	Grammar	Reading
0. Get Started!	7	Things in the classroom, Numbers and Dates	Verb be, There is / there are, have got, can, Present simple	
1. Sports and games	7	Sports /ei/ and /aɪ/ Sports equipment	Adverbs of frequency	Teenblog: Sport Try these sports!
2. This is my day	11	Daily routines Food The sound /ə/	Present continuous and simple	Tell us about your day ...

3. Great sounds	6	Music Music phrases	like, don't like, hate, love + -ing	Starting in the music business
4. It was awesome!	16	Adjectives Emotions	Past simple of <i>be(was/were)</i>	Activity days – latest reviews
5. Moments in history	7	Historical events Buildings	Dates with “in” and “on”. Past simple: regular verbs. Past simple – “ed”.	Women in history, The Great Fire
6. What a great job!	11	Jobs, Three-syllable words, Work	Past simple: negatives and questions	50 weeks, 50 states, 50 different jobs, Students at work!
7. An exciting trip	7	Holidays (1) Holidays (2) Sounds and spelling	Past simple: irregular verbs	Crossing the world on a rickshaw to see the Olympics
8. Favorite places	12	Bedroom furniture /ɜ:/ and /ɔ:/ Free-time activities	someone, anyone, etc.	Everyone needs a favourite Place. Artists' favourite places to work
9. Clothes and fashion	7	Clothes Materials, Words beginning with /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/	Pronouns and determiners	What's your best buy? They're made of ... what?

10. Buying things	11	Buying and selling, Phrases with <i>for</i>	<i>some, any, a lot of,</i> <i>a few,</i> <i>a bit of</i> Weak forms: /ə/	What kind of shopper are you? Two young entrepreneurs to watch
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By studying these units, 7th-grade students learn:

- Language Skills: Students develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing through varied activities like conversations, presentations, and storytelling. They learn to describe routines, express opinions, narrate past events, and discuss sports, history, and travel.
- Vocabulary and Grammar: Each unit introduces thematic vocabulary (e.g., sports, jobs, holidays) and grammar structures (e.g., present simple, past simple, adverbs of frequency), which are essential for building fluency.
- Cultural Awareness: Topics like the Paralympic Games, historical events, and global travel expose students to international contexts, broadening their cultural understanding.
- Practical Communication: Units focus on real-life scenarios (e.g., talking about daily routines, shopping, or describing favorite places), equipping students with language they can use in everyday situations.[13]

The units in the textbook “Prepare” for 7th grade comprise authentic, real-life materials for EFL learners as they address universal themes (sports, daily routines, holidays) relatable to 7th graders in Uzbekistan. Topics related to culture, such as the Paralympic Games and historical events, enhance authenticity by connecting language learning to real-world contexts. Some subjects, like the Olympics or descriptions of Western parties, may seem unfamiliar to Uzbek students. We recommend including local cultural references, such as Kurash. The units in the textbook “Prepare” for Grade 7 are well-structured, authentic, and beneficial for EFL learners in Uzbekistan, providing a balance of practical language skills, cultural exposure, and age-appropriate themes. With minor adaptations to Uzbek cultural elements, these units can effectively support language acquisition for 7th-grade students, helping them build fluency and confidence in English.[14]

We reviewed all the units from the textbook “Prepare” for 8th grade (see Table 2.2 below).

Table 2.2. Content of the textbook

Grade-8 (A2+) 102 hours

Units	Hours	Vocabulary	Grammar	Reading
11. Eating out	7	Food (1) Food (2) /ʌ/ and /ɒ/	<i>as ... as</i> Comparative adjectives	Menus, Street food around the world
12. The latest technology	12	Technology Computers and the internet	Superlative adjectives, Stress in superlatives	Did you know...? The history of computers
13. Healthy bodies	7	Illness, Health	<i>should/shouldn't</i> Silent consonants	What is so great about running?
14. Getting around town	10	Places in town Compound nouns	Prepositions	A description of a town A trip to Edinburgh
15. Mysteries in Nature	12	Geographical features, The weather	Past continuous, Rising and falling intonation	Is the story real? Loch Ness
16. Amazing animals	11	Animals Phrasal verbs /u:/ and /ʊ/	Past simple and past continuous	Bear to the rescue, Our animal friends
17. What are you watching?	7	Television, Entertainment	Future with <i>“going to”</i> <i>“Going to”</i>	Talent shows

18. Magazines and books.	13	Magazines <i>as, because, so,</i> and <i>when</i>	Making suggestions, Intonation	Read and Review
19. School can be fun!	7	Trip activities, School collocations	<i>have to / don't have to</i> <i>have to / has to</i>	The flipped classroom – What's it all about?
20. Families	16	Family, Adverbs of degree	Adverbs of manner, The letter <i>i</i>	What's it like to grow up in a big family?

Half of the “Prepare” level 2 book is designed for eighth-grade students in Uzbekistan and is organized into units 11 to 20. Each unit addresses a distinct theme and emphasizes essential vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills. The following offers a comprehensive breakdown of the contents:

This textbook is an important resource for eighth-grade students in Uzbekistan, encompassing the following key elements:

1. Thematic Relevance: The subjects explored, such as food, technology, travel, and family, are relatable for young learners, enhancing engagement and the practicality of English language acquisition for Uzbek students.

2. Skill-Based Learning: The text provides a balanced approach to developing listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills, contributing to a comprehensive language competence. For instance, speaking activities, including “ordering food” and “providing advice”, are practical exercises aligned with real-life communication scenarios.

3. Cultural Exposure: Units focused on topics “Scotland” and “British TV” familiarize students with global cultures, expanding their perspectives as they learn English.

4. Grammar and Vocabulary Focus: Each unit is designed to address specific grammar concepts, such as comparatives, modals, and the past continuous tense, as well as targeted vocabulary sets, offering a systematic approach to language instruction.

5. Multimedia Integration: The videos, including “Street Food” and “The World of British TV”, enhance listening skills while exposing students to authentic English accents and contexts.

6. Integration of Life Skills: Sections addressing themes like “Protecting Animals” and “Being a Good Friend” provide practical life skills and promote personal development alongside language learning.

7. Support for Educators and Learners: The textbook includes grammar references, vocabulary lists, and irregular verbs, facilitating independent study and effective classroom instruction.

8. Localized Relevance: The study of topics like family and travel strongly resonates with the cultural context of Uzbek students, and contemporary themes related to technology and entertainment align with global interests.[15]

The units presented in the “Prepare” textbook for grade 8 are designed to provide a balanced educational experience by integrating practical, everyday scenarios with cultural elements. This approach effectively engages eighth-grade students and promotes relevance and interest in the material.[16]

Conclusion

The “Prepare” book is a comprehensive English language learning resource for Grade 7-8 students in Uzbekistan. It offers a structured, engaging, and culturally diverse curriculum. The emphasis on practical language skills, integration of multimedia resources, and development of life skills contributes to its effectiveness as a tool for language acquisition. This resource effectively equips students for real-world communication while promoting personal growth.

In the following paragraph, we intend to outline principles for fostering independent thinking among students in grades 7 through 9 through the medium of English instruction.

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