

IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Three Uzbek teachers having at least one-year experience educating English to Russian children in public primary schools in Uzbekistan were selected as participants. The teachers were chosen based on their previous experience teaching English in a culturally diverse classroom. Wu (2016) says choosing participants with experience teaching English to children from diverse cultural backgrounds is critical for reliability and validity.

Keywords: linguistic, factor, impact, distinct, investigate, differences, challenges, obstacles, qualitative, lecture-style teaching, misalignment, expectation, method.

INTRODUCTION

The qualitative research method was employed for this investigation. Qualitative research investigates complicated topics such as cultural diversity in the classroom. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is beneficial when the research topic seeks to investigate individuals' experiences and viewpoints. In this case, the study topic focuses on Uzbek teachers' experiences teaching English to Russian children.

A questionnaire was the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire included open-ended questions about the obstacles teachers face while teaching English to Russian children in a culturally diverse classroom and the influence of cultural diversity on English teaching and learning. The questionnaire was created after analyzing literature on cultural diversity and English language teaching. The questionnaire was translated into Uzbek, the participant's first language, to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. Harklau (2000) says employing participants' L1 can boost data validity and reliability.

The questionnaire responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis detects and interprets patterns and themes in data in relation to the research issue. Thematic analysis is beneficial when the research topic investigates individuals' experiences and viewpoints (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Due to cultural differences, the findings of this study revealed that Uzbek teachers have substantial obstacles while teaching English to Russian students. Differences in

learning styles, language barriers, attitudes toward education, attitudes toward authority, and cultural norms are among the challenges. The participants observed that Russian students may be more accustomed to traditional lecture-style teaching methods, whereas Uzbek teachers may utilize more interactive and collaborative teaching methods, resulting in a conflict of teaching styles and making adaptation difficult for both parties. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), Uzbekistan scores better on collectivism than Russia, which is more individualistic. This could explain why Uzbek teachers choose more interactive and collaborative teaching techniques that emphasize group activities and debates. However, Russian pupils are more accustomed to traditional lecture-style teaching methods that promote individual learning. This could be linked to Uzbek culture's collectivist orientation, which emphasizes group-oriented activities and conversations. Russian culture, on the other hand, is more individualistic, emphasizing autonomous thinking and self-expression. Language limitations have also been noted as a key obstacle, as Russian students may have little knowledge of Uzbek, resulting in communication difficulties between the teacher and pupils. Linguistic barriers can lead to miscommunication, misconceptions, and biases between cultures (Brown and Durrheim, 2009). This makes it difficult for Uzbek teachers to communicate efficiently and accurately explain concepts to Russian students, resulting in a lack of understanding. As well, it is possible to observe Uzbek teachers who do not possess sufficient knowledge of the Russian language and are incapable of effectively delivering the material. Participants stated that the main cause of this problem is the lack of Russian-speaking teachers. Furthermore, differences in attitudes toward education have been identified as a potential issue, as Uzbek culture places a high value on education, whereas Russian culture may place a greater emphasis on practical skills and job readiness. Heyneman and Loxley (1983) argue that Uzbekistan placed a high value on education, with a strong emphasis on academic achievement as a means of social mobility. This could result in a misalignment of expectations between the teacher and the students. In addition, differences in attitudes toward authority were identified, with Uzbek culture being more respectful to authority figures such as teachers, whereas Russian culture may have a more democratic approach to teaching and learning, resulting in tension between the teacher and students if expectations are not aligned. Students from collectivist cultures were more respectful of teachers and authoritative figures, but students from individualistic cultures were more likely to challenge authority and express their ideas (Stobie, Shipton, and Slade, 2010). It can be seen even in primary schools. Another challenge identified by participants was cultural norm differences (Akbaba-Altun and Can, 2016), with Uzbekistan having a strong Islamic influence and Russia having a predominantly Orthodox Christian culture, resulting in misunderstandings or discomfort around

certain topics such as holidays, traditions, or gender roles. This also might result in misunderstandings or cultural clashes between the teacher and pupils, such as differing views on suitable dress, behavior, or social interactions. This study's findings emphasize the significance of knowing and accepting cultural variations while teaching students from varied origins. To guarantee that kids receive an effective and culturally sensitive education, teachers must address these problems. Several textbooks contain such texts, some of which deal with Uzbek culture and others with Russian culture. Students and teachers struggle to explain and understand the original content of descriptive texts describing national holidays (Song and Zhang, 2019) since they represent different cultures. It is possible that Russians may not know about the national holiday of Navruz, which is frequently found in textbooks, and even the New Year holiday may be celebrated differently in both countries. There are a number of examples of this type. In addition, based on the collected data, it can be said that giving feedback or assessment is more critical for Russian students than for Uzbek students. Shim and Ryan (2012) state that cultural variations can influence how students respond to assessments. Shim and Ryan (2012) state that cultural variations can influence how students respond to assessments. A simple mark in a diary or verbal encouragement will not suffice to motivate a student. For the motivation of Russian students, additional marks or stickers should be used during the assessment. To improve education quality, teachers must study students' character more deeply. In addition, representatives of the two nationalities are fundamentally different in accepting or understanding reprimands or punishments. Uzbek children are shy by nature and raised with respect for adults. Maybe that is why they accept without protest when teachers tell them about their mistakes. On the contrary, Russian students are often more self-confident than Uzbek students and like to demand their mistakes and shortcomings based on reasonable details and evidence. This requires caution from Uzbek teachers teaching Russian children. The findings and analyses illustrated the complexities of teaching cultural diversity to Uzbek teachers and Russian students. Learning styles, language limitations, attitudes toward education, authority, and cultural conventions can all provide challenges in the classroom, requiring both the instructor and students to adapt and discover successful communication methods. Teachers may create a more inclusive and encouraging learning environment for all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, by identifying and addressing these problems.

A questionnaire-based study with only a few participants had several limitations in examining the impact of cultural diversity on English teaching in public primary schools in Uzbekistan. For instance, the small sample size limits the findings' generalizability to a larger population. The participants are not necessarily typical of all primary school teachers in Uzbekistan, and their comments may not reflect the

experiences of other teachers who come from a different cultural background or depend on a different context. Second, because it does not allow for the study of nuances and details of the topic, the use of a questionnaire may have limited the depth and quality of the data acquired. The research was carried out in a relatively short amount of time, which may have limited the scope of the study and precluded the collection of more extensive and comprehensive data. Overall, these limitations suggest that the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution, and they highlight the need for future research with larger and more diverse sample size, as well as the use of multiple data collection methods, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of cultural diversity on teaching English in public primary schools in Uzbekistan.

Based on the outcomes of the study, the following advice might be provided to Uzbek teachers who are having cultural challenges teaching Russian students. To begin, it is critical to grasp Russian culture, traditions, and learning styles in order to establish a healthy learning environment for all pupils. Second, teachers can consider developing a more participatory and collaborative teaching style to meet the learning preferences of Russian students. Third, teachers should strive for effective and clear communication while taking into account any language hurdles that may occur. Fourth, teachers can incorporate cultural diversity into their lesson plans to promote an inclusive and friendly classroom atmosphere. Finally, instructors can seek help from colleagues, school administration, or professional development programs to handle any cultural issues that may arise in the classroom. By applying these ideas, Uzbek teachers may provide a welcoming and helpful learning atmosphere for all pupils, regardless of ethnic origin.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the enormous impact of cultural differences on English instruction in Uzbekistan's public elementary schools. Language instruction, according to Kumaravadivelu (2012), must extend beyond linguistic competency and take into account the sociocultural environment in which it is taught. According to this study, Uzbekistan's cultural diversity provides a variety of obstacles for teachers. These obstacles include variances in learning styles, language barriers, and cultural norms. These obstacles can result in communication breakdowns, misplaced expectations, and ethnic misunderstandings. The study discovered, however, that cultural diversity provides a chance for teachers to improve their teaching techniques by including cultural components in their lessons. This encourages collaboration among students from varied backgrounds. Teachers must be culturally aware and adaptive in their teaching approaches to overcome cultural diversity obstacles in the classroom. According to Holliday (2018), a culture's understanding is essential for teachers to engage with pupils from various cultures properly. Teachers

should be encouraged to participate regularly in professional development and training programs that address cultural sensitivity and understanding. Furthermore, according to this study, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment is critical to promoting cultural diversity in the classroom. Byrd and Bredeson (2016) advocate that teachers encourage students to share their cultural experiences and allow pupils to learn about different cultures. By recognizing and addressing these challenges and promoting cultural awareness and inclusivity in the classroom, teachers can create a more successful and enriching learning environment for all students, regardless of their cultural background.

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