



WHY LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IS IMPORTANT IN THE 21st CENTURY

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Annotation. Research article examines the importance of learning foreign languages in the 21st century. The study emphasizes how globalization has intensified the need for multilingual skills and how individuals can benefit academically, professionally, and personally by acquiring new languages. Key themes include cognitive development, career advancement, technological tools in education, cultural competence, and national policies. The role of foreign languages in Uzbekistan's education system is also explored, demonstrating the government's dedication to improving language instruction for global integration.

Key words. Foreign languages, globalization, education, multilingualism, career, technology, Uzbekistan, culture.

The arrival of the information age and the rapid expansion of globalization has made knowing multiple languages and essential skill. In business and diplomacy, as in cultural exchange and higher education, familiarity with foreign languages provides a skill set for making one's way in an increasingly interconnected world. As Flora Lewis (1982) states, "Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things." This paper provides a critical insight into why it is vital to learn foreign languages in the 21st century; with the focus on developing societies, such as Uzbekistan.

Globalization and Language

The world is smaller than it has ever been because of globalization. The geography is becoming irrelevant due to international trade, migration, tourism, education, and digital communication. Therefore, people are forced to live in a multilingual society. According to Fellini, "A different language is a different vision of life." learning a new language offers more than just the ability to communicate; it provides a new perspective on the world and its cultures. Learning foreign languages enables people to work across borders, comprehend alternative viewpoints and engage in conversations with the world. Language is not just communication - it is also a way of bridging cultures.

Cognitive and Educational Effects

Research has already demonstrated that bilingual and multilingual individuals frequently have an edge when it comes to memory, multitasking and problem solving, convincingly outperforming their monoglot counterparts. Studies by Bialystok et al. show that bilingualism can delay the onset of dementia and enhance cognitive flexibility. Language learners also score higher on standardized tests and



think more critically, read more intelligently, and even perform better in math (Cummins, 2000). Learning a foreign language is a valuable skill that opens up a world of opportunities. It can enhance your career prospects, allow you to experience different cultures, and improve your cognitive abilities. As globalization marches forward, the ability to communicate across languages is becoming essential for both personal and professional success

Employment and Career Growth

With a highly competitive job market, being bilingual is an advantageous skill to have. Many employees want or need to talk to international clients and partners at multinationals. According to Grin (2001), multilingual individuals tend to earn more and have greater career mobility, especially in globalized industries. Professions such as international business, education, tourism, medicine, diplomacy, and information technology demand language skills.

Technology and Modern Learning Tools

Technology has revolutionized the way people learn languages. Applications such as Duolingo, Memrise, and Babbel, along with platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom, make it possible to study anywhere, anytime. Artificial intelligence, gamified learning, and online tutors have increased engagement and personalization. This accessibility is particularly beneficial in regions with limited educational infrastructure.

Cultural Awareness and Global Citizenship

Language learning helps develop empathy, tolerance, and intercultural competence. Charlemagne famously stated, "To have another language is to possess a second soul." By understanding another language, individuals gain insight into the values, beliefs, customs, and history of its speakers. This reduces prejudice, fosters mutual respect, and promotes peaceful coexistence. As Byram argues, language education also nurtures intercultural communication, a necessary skill for peacebuilding in today's global society.

Language Policy in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is actively working to promote foreign language learning. English is taught from early grades, and the government has introduced national reforms to improve language education. Programs for teacher training, standardized testing, and international partnerships are part of the state's strategy. In 2023, English lessons in Uzbekistan were introduced from Grade 1, covering nearly 5 million pupils.

Conclusion



Foreign language learning is not merely an academic pursuit—it is a lifelong skill essential for personal development and global integration. It enhances cognitive abilities, improves career prospects, fosters intercultural understanding, and strengthens national progress. In the 21st century, the question is no longer whether to learn a foreign language, but how many.

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