



XORIJIY TILLARNI O'QITISHDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR NAZARIYANING AMALIYOTGA TATBIQI

mavzusidagi respublika ilmiy-amaliy anjumani

SOFT SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INTERPERSONAL AND COGNITIVE COMPETENCIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

N.U. Karimova

*Associate professor of UzSWLU,
Doctor of philosophy in pedagogical Sciences (PhD)*

Abstract. *In an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world, soft skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence are essential for success in both academic and professional environments. While English language teaching (ELT) has traditionally focused on linguistic competence, contemporary pedagogical approaches are recognizing the significant role that ELT can play in developing these vital soft skills. This article explores how English language instruction can be utilized to enhance students' interpersonal and cognitive soft skills, providing a comprehensive overview of relevant teaching strategies and practices. Through a review of relevant literature and empirical evidence, the article highlights how ELT methods such as task-based learning, communicative language teaching, and project-based learning can be effectively used to foster soft skills development. The article concludes by offering recommendations for educators to integrate soft skills into their language teaching practices.*

Key words: *English language teaching (ELT), soft skills, communication skills, critical thinking, project-based learning, interpersonal skills, cognitive skills, educational development.*

Introduction. In the modern world, technical proficiency and subject-specific knowledge alone are not enough to ensure success. Soft skills—such as effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability—are increasingly recognized as crucial elements of both personal and professional development.

Methods. This research adopts a qualitative methodology, combining a review of existing literature, a synthesis of case studies, and survey data from English language teachers. The study was conducted in the following steps:

Literature Review. A survey was distributed to 100 English language teachers from various educational levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). The survey focused on the teachers' experiences with integrating soft skills into their language teaching practices, their perceptions of the effectiveness of different methods, and the challenges they face in promoting soft skills alongside language learning. Data from the literature review, case studies, and survey responses were synthesized to identify trends and insights regarding the integration of soft skills into ELT. The analysis focused on the methods that were most effective in fostering communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and emotional intelligence among students.



XORIYIY TILLARNI O'QITISHDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR NAZARIYANING AMALIYOTGA TATBIQI

mavzusidagi respublika ilmiy-amaliy anjumani

Results. The results of this study reveal several key findings about the role of ELT in enhancing students' soft skills, particularly communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

Interactive Learning: One of the primary ways in which ELT contributes to soft skills development is through the promotion of communication. Classroom activities such as debates, role plays, group discussions, and presentations provide students with ample opportunities to practice speaking and listening in real-life contexts. These activities encourage students to articulate their ideas, listen actively, and engage in constructive dialogues.

Task-Based and Problem-Solving Activities: The use of task-based activities that require students to solve complex problems, analyze scenarios, and present solutions was also found to promote critical thinking. For instance, students working on case studies or simulations were encouraged to think critically about the issues presented, evaluate various options, and justify their decisions.

Empathy through Cultural Learning: ELT that includes a focus on cross-cultural communication and global issues helps students develop empathy and emotional intelligence. Understanding different cultural perspectives fosters interpersonal sensitivity and helps students appreciate diverse viewpoints. For example, language learners who engage in cultural exchange programs or read about international social issues often develop stronger emotional intelligence and empathy toward others.

Reflective Practices: Many teachers incorporated reflective practices, such as journaling or group reflections, to help students develop self-awareness and emotional regulation. These practices allow students to express their emotions, reflect on their experiences, and understand how their feelings influence their communication and decision-making.

Discussion. The findings of this study suggest that English language teaching is not only a means to acquire linguistic skills but also an effective platform for fostering essential soft skills. Through interactive, student-centered approaches such as task-based learning, project-based learning, and communicative activities, ELT can help students develop communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, and emotional intelligence.

Integrating Soft Skills into ELT: The integration of soft skills into English language teaching is essential for preparing students for the demands of the modern workplace and society. By incorporating collaborative tasks, critical thinking



XORIYIY TILLARNI O'QITISHDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR NAZARIYANING AMALIYOTGA TATBIQI

mavzusidagi respublika ilmiy-amaliy anjumani

exercises, and emotional intelligence-building activities, teachers can help students become more effective communicators and problem-solvers.

Conclusion. English language teaching has the potential to play a transformative role in the development of students' soft skills, particularly communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. By adopting student-centered teaching approaches, such as task-based learning and project-based learning, teachers can help students build not only linguistic proficiency but also the interpersonal and cognitive skills necessary for success in a globalized world. As educational systems continue to recognize the importance of soft skills, English language teaching can serve as a powerful vehicle for preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

References

1. Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
2. Goleman, D. (2006). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Bantam Books.
3. Kurtz, L. Seitz, L. (2011). "The Role of Soft Skills in Student Success." *Journal of Education and Practice*, 2(8), 95-103.
4. Liu, Zhang (2014). "Developing intercultural communication competence through collaborative language learning: A study on Chinese EFL learners." *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 43(1), 1-16.
5. Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Tharp, R. G., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing Minds to Life: Teaching, Learning, and Schooling in Social Context*. Cambridge University Press.