

ONE IN A THOUSAND — FOREIGN LANGUAGE ESSAY CONTEST WINNER FROM UZBEKISTAN SHARES HIS THOUGHTS

Today, the youth of Uzbekistan are looking at the world with another outlook, winning competitions in an international arena, in academics, sports and other spheres. Today, any prestigious university in the world includes students from Uzbekistan, any esteemed academic establishment partners with Uzbek universities. To cut the long story short, with a huge potential and opportunities created by the government of the country, modern active youth of this land are becoming world-class specialists.

Sardor Khusanov, 24, master's student of Tashkent Chemical Technologies Institute is one of this kind of young people. Travelled to many foreign countries and active in many social projects in Uzbekistan, Sardor is today pursuing a career on Quality Management. He has been an activist of youth health organizations for many years, he takes an active part in students' events and fora, and he is natural language and cultures learner. All these make him an interesting person to talk, especially about how learning foreign languages is popularizing in our republic what it is to represent youth of contemporary Uzbekistan.



— First of all, we would like to ask about your opinion about modern Uzbek youth. How should they be like? What should they know? And how would you assess the role of foreign languages fluency in their set of skills?

— In the first place, I would like to thank the editorial team of Fledu.uz for the interest expressed in me. When it comes to the question itself, to my mind, modern young people of Uzbekistan have to be initiative, energetic, open and friendly to novelties and to the progress. Certainly, it is hard to achieve all these without wide outlook and deep understanding of current issues around the world. It requires education. Yet it is not about pursuing a degree of a vocational college or a higher educational institution, but it is about working on oneself continuously, addressing reliable and accurate sources (they are usually official media, statements of governmental bodies) and searching information there, being up to date about global and local news. Also it is about contributing to important laws, decrees of the government and reforms with one's behavior.

Learning languages is to play key roles in this process and it does not matter what language youngsters learn. Be it English, German, French, Russian or their native, Uzbek, the languages open a new world for us. They give us access to original sources, modern knowledge and results of latest scientific researches, advanced education through reading an appropriate literature and/or opportunity to get trained abroad by the best professors.

Speaking one of foreign languages, we can link relations, build up and carry on a dialogue. We need a breakthrough and it comes through acquiring knowledge and information, through creation of modern and advanced technologies, through creativity and through victories in international contests, scholastic achievements, etc. It is the only way of showing what we have got.

— As a student who participated in different international youth conferences and global events, how would you assess the contribution of foreign languages fluency to your achievements?

— Taking responsibility to my words, I can say that it was namely foreign languages that helped me. If I did not speak a language, no matter what kind of perfect candidate I was, I would not have got selected to international programs. Certainly, fluency in languages solely does not guarantee an unconditional victory in all contests, but exactly due to the mastery in languages, we can open a world of opportunities for us, show our potential and abilities. One should keep in mind that self-growth and development of personal abilities are as important as acquiring language skills.

— This year, probably, is to stay in your memory as the one when you first visited the United States. You won UN's Many Languages, One World international essay contest and attended UN Academic Impact and ELS (Berlitz) youth forum in New York. Please, tell us about it and your essay.

— It was surely an unforgettable event. We were told that the day when we made speeches from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly Hall would remain in our minds forever, it would change us and they were right.

— In order to win the competition among 3,500 entrants, I had to write a good essay about how foreign languages help understand this multipolar world. The submission had to reflect on my global, regional, national and personal background relevant to foreign languages. I wrote about how languages help people communicate with one another, share information and get introduced with new cultures of other nations. Special emphasis I made on what is being done in my home country. I did mention about the Presidential Decree from December 2012 *On Measures of Further Improving Foreign Languages Teaching System*. The fact that this kind of important document has been promulgated in Uzbekistan shows what a huge attention is paid to teaching and learning of foreign languages. As well, I could not neglect a group of excellent young people who conduct free-of-charge language classes in the National Library of Uzbekistan named under Alisher Navoiy. They call their team *Your School*. They teach more than 5 languages and several school subjects. I follow their activity and, taking the chance, would like to wish them the best luck.



— *Your performance in UN General Assembly tribune, in short period of time, became popular among the internet users of Uzbekistan. Could you tell us about the preparation process to the speech and what you felt when you made a speech?*

— Yes, as you understand it was not an easy process. We were to present Sustainable Development Goals, that came instead of Millennium Development Goals. By the way, MDGs had one of the best results in Uzbekistan. Our group was asked to speak about the goal #16 — *Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies*. Each participant picked one relevant topic, and I decided to speak about combatting terrorism. We had two-days training and we were given a night to prepare for our speeches. I was so motivated, and I wanted to talk about so many things, but our speeches had to be about 2 minutes long. General Assembly is strict about time-limits, little time — much work, we could not take other delegates' time. So I had to stay awake, write and reason. At the end I had sharpened, all-embracing, to my mind, idea. This was what I pronounced in the high rostrum of the world diplomats.

I was of course nervous before my performance. This is that indescribable feeling that should come ahead of such important events. I cannot say that my knees trembled, but I did worry. Coming to the stage and looking at people's eyes, I got rid of this anxiety. I was contented of my speech, I guess, as the rest audience was.

— *Aware of education policies in many countries around the world, acquainted with youth from different continents, what do you think about the trends of education system development in Uzbekistan? What should we continue learning from the world and what can we show as examples to it?*

— We have a strong education system; I suppose no one argues about it. Only National Personnel Training Program is so much important with its continuous process of teaching. I think it is something that we can be proud of. When it comes to speaking about the things that we should work on is the integration of education to industry. You know, I see this opportunity in implementation of IT into educational process. The presentations and slides, to me, seem already outdated, though. It is high time to make education distant, leaving professor lectures as the only personal contact between a teacher and a learner. Students should work on their specialism and study distantly, applying the acquired knowledge and information directly into the real practice. It lets us cut down expenses for constructions of campuses and equipment, increase the number of students and decrease the cost of higher education. In addition, organizational moments like getting information sheets, assessment, timetable, viewing exam results, etc., can be distant. We are gradually going to it actually.

As well, I am very happy to observing how we are dynamically moving forward the Bologna Process. I look forward to that moment, when students from Uzbekistan can easily transfer to foreign universities for one or two semesters, and vice versa, foreign students can study in our country. Initiations of this are seen today in our education system, which is good. One should not forget about the Credits System, too: today two higher educational institutions have successfully running launched it and I hope it will pay for itself soon and will be distributed country wide. Generally, our universities are not going behind the world's top academic institutions and we do have a lot to boast with.

— *Talking to you, one can understand you have an experience of making a fair analysis and telling about Uzbekistan to foreign people. You have plenty of friends globally due to your travelling habits and activeness online. If you were to list features of Uzbekistan education system that makes it different from others, what would your list include?*

— It is an interesting question. Thinking about the peculiarities of our education, I noticed the following:

First, it is universal, meaning you study not a narrow specialty, but wide spectrum of subjects that broaden your outlook (basics of spirituality, culturology, religious studies, law, etc).

Second, it is continuous that is guaranteed throughout the education process. Institutions for advanced training and professional development for teachers, doctors, lawyers and others function in all parts of Uzbekistan.

Third, it provides vocational education, meaning after graduating compulsory 12 years education, you own a particular specialty. Personally, I am a specialist of microcrediting according to my college diploma, and according to university diploma, quality manager.

Fourth, it is available to everyone. Despite higher education is limited to 60 thousand people a year, you can pursue a vocational college diploma that helps you start working in different establishments, even if you did not enrolled at higher educational institutions.

Finally, it is free of charge. Yes, our education is not charged, at least first 12 years that are enough to acquire a particular job's set of skills. Later, it depends on how fortunate you are or how well you prepared for university entrance exams that take place across the country in one day. You study either on tuition fee based educational contract or on governmental grant basis. In person, I experienced how it is to get education totally free of charge. I enrolled bachelor's on the basis of governmental grants and studies four years. In addition, I got stipends to reimburse my studentship costs. Then later I thought about masters, and I realized that it will not be easy to pay 8-9 million UZS yearly. I decided to push my luck and I appeared to collect enough score to pursue masters due to the governmental budget resources. As you see, it is absolutely real to get degrees not paying any penny.

Leaping at the opportunity, I would like to thank the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the support of all kind it is offering.

— Thank you, Sardor, for an interesting and a very informative talk. On behalf of our team, I wish you health, energy and successes in your future life. Happy New Year!

By Saidaziz Azamov.