

**Teaching Beyond Borders: My Transformative Journey as an English Teacher
at School No. 102, Urgut District, Uzbekistan**

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Abstract:

Like many meaningful opportunities, this one came unexpectedly. A close friend forwarded a recruitment announcement inviting qualified English teachers to apply for positions in Uzbekistan. Encouraged by the opportunity to contribute to an international educational environment, I submitted my application, attended the interview, and was delighted to receive an appointment.

As someone holding a Master's Degree in English Literature, a Bachelor of Education, and TESOL/TEFL certification, I had always dreamed of teaching in another country. The prospect of experiencing a different educational system, working with students from another culture, and sharing my passion for English language teaching filled me with excitement.

My journey began with a flight to Tashkent. Stepping out of the airport, I encountered something I had never experienced before—falling snow. Having grown up in tropical Kerala, snowfall had always belonged to films and photographs. Watching snowflakes gently descend from the sky was magical, although the freezing winter temperature quickly reminded me that beauty often comes with challenges.

From Tashkent, I travelled by train to Samarkand, a journey of nearly four hours. It was close to midnight when I arrived at Samarkand Railway Station. Despite the late hour and the bitter cold, the Director of School No. 102, **Mr. Obid Jon Qurbonov**, was waiting to welcome me personally. His warm smile, genuine hospitality, and thoughtful reception immediately eased my anxieties. That first meeting became a symbol of the kindness and generosity I would continue to experience throughout my stay in Uzbekistan.

Discovering the Warm Heart of Uzbekistan

Before arriving, I knew Uzbekistan through its rich history, the Silk Road, and the magnificent architecture of Samarkand. What I discovered, however, was something even more valuable—the warmth of its people.

Everywhere I went, I was greeted with cheerful smiles and the friendly word "**Salom.**" Whether in schools, markets, parks, or neighbourhoods, people treated me with remarkable respect and kindness. Their hospitality made me feel less like a visitor and more like a member of their community.

I had the opportunity to experience Uzbek traditions, enjoy delicious local cuisine, and participate in cultural celebrations such as **Navruz**, one of the country's most cherished festivals. Foods such as **Non, Osh (Plov)**, and many other traditional dishes became favourites. Every meal reflected not only the culinary richness of Uzbekistan but also the generosity of the families and colleagues who invited me to share them.

An Inspiring Educational Environment

School No. 102 immediately impressed me with its outstanding educational atmosphere. The school building was exceptionally clean, well maintained, and thoughtfully organized. Every classroom reflected discipline, creativity, and a strong commitment to learning. Modern teaching facilities, including Smart TVs and well-equipped classrooms, created an environment where technology effectively supported education.

One feature that particularly impressed me was the school's practice of dividing English classes into smaller groups. This approach allowed teachers to provide more individual attention, encourage greater student participation, and create a more interactive learning environment.

Such thoughtful planning clearly demonstrated the school's commitment to quality education.

Leadership that Inspires

Behind every successful school stands visionary leadership.

Throughout my stay, I observed the dedication and professionalism of **Director Obid Jon Qurbonov**. His leadership extended beyond administration; he actively monitored academic activities, ensured high standards of discipline, encouraged teachers' professional development, and maintained an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The Vice Director and the administrative team also played a significant role in creating a supportive working environment where teachers were encouraged to innovate and continuously improve.

Their collaborative leadership created a school culture built on accountability, teamwork, and educational excellence.

Working Alongside Outstanding Teachers

One of the greatest privileges of my experience was working with an exceptional team of educators.

The English teachers at School No. 102 demonstrated remarkable commitment to their profession. They were sincere, hardworking, punctual, and eager to learn. Every English lesson became a collaborative effort, with co-teachers providing invaluable assistance, especially during my initial weeks when language differences created communication challenges.

Although Uzbek was unfamiliar to me, my colleagues ensured that I never felt isolated. They patiently translated instructions, helped me understand students' needs, and supported classroom management whenever necessary.

Their willingness to share ideas transformed our classrooms into spaces of genuine professional collaboration.

Transforming English Language Learning

I was entrusted with teaching English to students from **Grades 5 to 11**.

From the very beginning, my objective was to make English a language to be experienced rather than merely studied. Instead of focusing exclusively on grammar and textbook exercises, I introduced **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** methodologies that emphasized speaking, listening, collaboration, and authentic communication.

Lessons became interactive through pair work, group discussions, role plays, language games, presentations, and task-based activities. Students were encouraged to express their thoughts confidently, even when their vocabulary was limited.

Initially, many students hesitated to speak English. However, with continuous encouragement and regular communicative practice, their confidence steadily increased.

Watching students who were once reluctant speakers voluntarily initiate conversations in English became one of the most rewarding moments of my teaching career.

Beyond the Classroom

My responsibilities extended beyond regular classroom teaching.

I conducted **English Speaking Clubs**, organised extracurricular language development activities, and provided specialised coaching for students preparing for **IELTS** and **CEFR** examinations.

These programmes offered students additional opportunities to strengthen their communication skills and gain greater confidence in using English for academic and professional purposes.

Witnessing their progress reinforced my belief that effective language learning flourishes when students are provided with supportive environments that encourage active participation.

Professional Development and Teacher Training

One of the most fulfilling aspects of my work involved conducting professional development sessions for fellow teachers.

Every week, we organised approximately two-hour workshops focusing on topics such as effective English speaking, academic writing, modern teaching methodologies, classroom interaction, lesson planning, and communicative language teaching.

What impressed me most was the enthusiasm of the participants.

These sessions were never passive lectures. Instead, they became lively discussions where teachers exchanged ideas, asked thoughtful questions, demonstrated remarkable curiosity, and actively sought ways to enhance their classroom practices.

Their commitment to lifelong learning reflected the school's culture of continuous professional growth.

Overcoming Challenges Together

Every international teaching experience comes with challenges, and mine was no exception.

The language barrier presented the greatest initial difficulty. Since I did not speak Uzbek, communication occasionally became challenging. Technology, particularly translation applications, provided valuable assistance, but the greatest support came from my colleagues, whose patience and cooperation made every obstacle manageable.

The cold winter weather was another new experience. Temperatures far below what I had known in Kerala required considerable adjustment. Yet, rather than viewing winter as an obstacle, I embraced it as part of the adventure. Experiencing snow for the first time remains one of my most treasured memories.

These challenges ultimately became opportunities for personal growth, teaching me resilience, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity.

Lessons Beyond Teaching

International education is never simply about delivering lessons. It is about learning alongside your students.

During my time in Uzbekistan, I discovered that effective teaching depends as much on empathy and relationships as it does on methodology and expertise.

My students taught me patience. My colleagues taught me collaboration. The school leadership demonstrated the importance of vision and discipline. The Uzbek people taught me that genuine hospitality transcends language and nationality.

These lessons will continue to shape my professional journey for years to come.

Why School No. 102 Stands Out

Having worked in educational institutions in different contexts, I can confidently say that School No. 102 possesses several qualities that distinguish it.

The school combines visionary leadership with dedicated teachers, disciplined students, modern infrastructure, and a genuine commitment to educational excellence.

Professional development is encouraged rather than imposed. Innovation is welcomed rather than resisted. Students are respected as active participants in learning. Teachers work together as one professional family.

Perhaps most importantly, the school demonstrates an openness to international collaboration that enriches both teachers and students.

Such qualities position School No. 102 as an institution capable of preparing young learners for an increasingly interconnected world.

A Journey That Will Always Remain in My Heart

As I prepared to return to India in May 2026, I realised that I was leaving behind much more than a workplace.

I was leaving behind friends who had become family, students whose enthusiasm had inspired me, colleagues whose professionalism had enriched my career, and a director whose encouragement and leadership had made my international experience successful.

Although my assignment officially concluded, the memories I carry from Uzbekistan remain vivid. I sincerely hope that the professional relationships established during these months will continue to grow through future educational collaboration between our two countries.

Conclusion

Teaching at School No. 102 was not merely an international assignment; it was an unforgettable journey of learning, friendship, and transformation.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to **Director Obid Jon Qurbonov**, the Vice Director, my fellow teachers, the students, and the entire school community for their trust, kindness, and unwavering support.

To educators considering international teaching opportunities, I offer this simple advice: embrace them with an open mind and an open heart. Beyond every classroom lies an opportunity to build bridges between cultures, inspire young minds, and discover new dimensions of yourself.

For me, Uzbekistan will always remain more than a destination on a map. It will remain a place where education crossed borders, friendships transcended languages, and a teacher from India found a second home.