



## THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN UZBEKISTAN (1991–2025)

**Shohjaxon Shirinov Bakhtiyor o‘g‘li**

*Millat Umidi University, IT-105-Global, 1st year*

**Annotation.** This article explores how foreign language education in Uzbekistan has evolved between 1991 and 2025. It looks at the main reforms, state initiatives, and modern teaching trends that have shaped this field over the years. Special attention is given to teacher training, the adoption of international standards like the CEFR, and the gradual integration of digital learning tools. The analysis suggests that, step by step, the quality of language instruction in the country has grown stronger and is now moving closer to global benchmarks.

**Keywords:** foreign language, education reform, teaching methods, CEFR, innovation, teacher development, communicative approach, digital learning, learner motivation, language proficiency.

### Introduction

When Uzbekistan became an independent state in 1991, the country began carrying out wide-ranging reforms in almost every area of life. Among these,

education—especially the teaching of foreign languages—quickly turned into one of the government’s top priorities. The ability to communicate in foreign languages was seen as a crucial tool for global cooperation and competitiveness in the modern world.

Before independence, foreign languages were mainly taught through grammar and translation exercises, with very little focus on real communication. Starting from the 1990s, however, this situation began to change. The government introduced new educational standards, revised curricula, and opened specialized schools and universities aimed at improving language proficiency.

A major milestone came with the Presidential Decree No. PQ–5117, adopted on May 19, 2021, “*On Measures to Further Improve the System of Learning Foreign Languages.*” The decree called for foreign language instruction at all levels of education—from preschool to higher education—to meet CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) standards. At the same time, teacher retraining programs, digital learning initiatives, and modern teaching approaches began to spread widely.

## **1. The First Stage (1991–2000): Formation and Foundation**

In the first years of independence, Uzbekistan focused on building its own national education system. The *National Program for Personnel Training (1997)* played a key role in this process and became one of the first official documents to highlight the importance of mastering foreign languages for professional and personal growth. It recognized that foreign language competence was essential for international communication and integration into the world community.

During this period, the first specialized foreign language schools were established, and new locally authored textbooks started to appear. The teaching

focus gradually began to shift from memorization and translation toward a communicative approach. However, there were still significant obstacles—chiefly a lack of qualified teachers and up-to-date materials. Cooperation with international organizations such as the British Council and the Goethe Institute helped bridge these gaps and encouraged the introduction of new teaching methods.

## **2. The Second Stage (2001–2012): Modernization and Innovation**

The early 2000s brought noticeable modernization to the education system. With the growing use of computers and the internet, teachers began incorporating multimedia resources into their lessons. Audio and video materials, interactive exercises, and online dictionaries became a normal part of classroom practice.

The *Law on Education (2005)* strengthened the legal foundation for continuous improvement in language learning. Universities expanded their language departments, and new teacher training centers were established to improve professional qualifications. Around this time, discussions began regarding the adoption of CEFR standards, which emphasized practical communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing rather than rote grammar learning.

International language exams like IELTS and TOEFL also started gaining popularity among students. This opened doors for young Uzbeks to pursue education abroad and changed the mindset of many learners: language learning was no longer just a formality but a real means of achieving progress and success in life.

## **3. The Third Stage (2013–2025): Global Standards and Digital Transformation**

A new chapter began with the *Presidential Decree No. PQ-1875* (December 10, 2012), which introduced the teaching of foreign languages from the first grade of general education schools. This was a truly revolutionary step that shifted the focus from theoretical grammar to active communication and speaking skills. New textbooks were developed, language laboratories were opened, and communicative methodology became the foundation of modern lessons.

Under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, foreign language education entered a new, digitally driven phase. The 2021–2025 reforms were aimed at deeper modernization and included several strategic goals:

- Integration of CEFR levels (A1–C2) into curricula and assessment systems;
- Large-scale teacher retraining based on “IELTS for Teachers” and international programs;
- Development of digital platforms such as *Online Maktab*, *MyEnglish*, *EduMarket*, and *UzTEFL*;
- Active collaboration with international partners including the British Council, KOICA, and JICA;
- Growth in motivation among students preparing for international exams.

By 2024, more than 60,000 students in Uzbekistan had taken the IELTS exam—nearly four times more than in 2021. English-speaking clubs, online courses, and YouTube-based learning became part of everyday practice for many learners. Even in remote districts, schools gained access to the internet and multimedia tools, though some technical and resource-related challenges remain.

#### **4. Results and Observations**

Between 2021 and 2025, Uzbekistan achieved several impressive outcomes in foreign language teaching and learning:

1. **Unified standards:** CEFR-based curricula and assessment systems were implemented throughout the country.
2. **Teacher development:** Over 20,000 English teachers received international-level training and certification.
3. **Digital learning:** The launch of online platforms made self-study and remote education accessible to a much larger audience.
4. **Early learning:** Foreign languages became mandatory even in preschool education.
5. **Global cooperation:** Joint programs with international institutions helped improve teaching quality and teacher mobility.
6. **Increased motivation:** Students' interest in foreign language exams and study-abroad opportunities grew significantly.

However, several issues still exist. These include uneven internet quality in rural regions, a shortage of native-speaking instructors, and limited access to modern textbooks and teaching resources. Addressing these problems remains an important task for the years ahead.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Over the past three decades, foreign language teaching in Uzbekistan has undergone profound transformation. From a traditional, grammar-based model inherited from the Soviet era, it has evolved into a dynamic and communicative system aligned with international standards. The reforms implemented between 2021 and 2025 have been particularly important, promoting digital learning, modern pedagogical approaches, and the integration of global benchmarks.

To maintain this progress and continue improving language education, several measures are recommended:

1. Establish regional **Linguistic Innovation Centers** to support research and practice.
2. Provide **continuous online professional training** for teachers.
3. **Regularly update** textbooks in accordance with CEFR guidelines.
4. Include **international exam preparation** (IELTS, TOEFL, DELF, HSK) within school curricula.
5. Expand **internet access and technology infrastructure**, especially in rural areas.

If these steps are taken, Uzbekistan will further strengthen its position as a nation with a young, multilingual generation ready to participate fully in the global community.

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