

CEFR AND UZBEK STANDARD, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

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ANNOTATION: This article explores the relationship between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and Uzbekistan's national language policy. It examines how CEFR has been implemented in Uzbek foreign language education and how it aligns with or differs from the country's national and legal language requirements. The study emphasizes the balance between international language standards and the protection of the Uzbek language as the state language. It also discusses current reforms, challenges, and recommendations for harmonizing national and international standards.

Key words: CEFR, Uzbek language policy, national standard, language requirements, foreign language assessment, education reform.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has taken important steps to modernize its education system, aligning it with international standards while preserving national identity. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has become a fundamental reference in developing foreign language curricula, especially in English teaching. Simultaneously, the Uzbek government enforces national language standards to ensure the prominence of the Uzbek language as the state language. This dual focus reflects Uzbekistan's broader educational and linguistic policy that aims to balance global integration with cultural preservation. According to the Presidential Decree No. 1875, "On Measures to Further Improve the System of Learning Foreign Languages" (2012), foreign language instruction in Uzbekistan must follow international standards based on the CEFR structure [Tolibjonov, 2020].

CEFR: Global Framework and Its Application

The CEFR, established by the Council of Europe in 2001, provides a standardized system to assess and describe language proficiency in six levels (A1–C2). It promotes comparability and transparency in language education across Europe and beyond. The framework describes what learners "can do" at each level, serving as a common reference for curriculum design, assessment, and certification (Council of Europe, 2020). Uzbekistan adopted CEFR-based reforms to enhance the effectiveness of foreign language teaching. The Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education recommended that all English curricula be restructured according to CEFR levels (A1–C1). This change aimed to produce graduates who could compete internationally [Musoeva, 2021]. Teacher training programs have also been updated to reflect CEFR principles, promoting communicative competence and learner-centered approaches [British Council, 2019]. However, the implementation remains uneven due to limited resources and varying levels of teacher preparedness.

National Language Policy and Legal Framework: The Uzbek language holds a unique status as the state language under the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1989, revised 2019). This law guarantees the right of citizens to receive education in the state language and requires official documents to be published in Uzbek [Legislationline, 2019].

Moreover, beginning in 2025, graduates from schools where the instruction is not in Uzbek will be required to pass a state language exam to receive certification [UzDaily, 2023]. This reform reflects the government's commitment to maintaining the Uzbek language as a unifying factor in education and public life. Parallel to this, foreign language proficiency has become an academic and professional requirement. University applicants are now required to hold CEFR-aligned English certificates (at least B2 for most programs and C1 for linguistic fields , [Government of Uzbekistan, 2022]. Thus, Uzbekistan's educational policy simultaneously enforces national language proficiency while encouraging foreign language competence according to CEFR levels.

Purpose To standardize foreign language proficiency globally. To maintain the Uzbek language as the official and educational language. Levels A1–C2 (six levels of competence). National grading and state language exam system. Scope Mainly English and other foreign languages. Uzbek as the state and educational language. Legal Force Advisory, not legally binding. Enforced by national law and education policy. Certificates IELTS, TOEFL, CEFR-based tests. State Language Certificate (for civil service, education).Main Challenge Localization and training. Balancing inclusivity and national identity. While CEFR focuses on communicative competence, Uzbek national standards emphasize linguistic unity and state identity. The two frameworks serve different purposes but can complement each other through balanced educational policies [Bakhtiyorov, 2020].

The process of aligning CEFR with Uzbek educational standards presents several difficulties:

1. Teacher Competence: Many teachers were educated before CEFR's introduction and lack training in its application [Musoeva, 2021].
2. Assessment Tools: Locally developed tests sometimes fail to reflect authentic CEFR “can-do” descriptors [British Council, 2019].
3. Regional Inequality: Schools in rural areas face shortages of qualified teachers and materials.
4. Policy Ambiguity: Some legal documents overlap between CEFR-based and national systems, leading to confusion in higher-education admissions [Government of Uzbekistan, 2022].

5. Cultural Considerations: There is a risk of prioritizing English over Uzbek, which may weaken national identity if not managed properly [Ismailov, 2020].

The integration of CEFR has had notable benefits for Uzbekistan's education sector. It has modernized teaching methods, standardized assessment practices, and increased international recognition of language qualifications. At the same time, state language reforms have strengthened national cohesion and linguistic rights.

The coexistence of CEFR and national standards promotes bilingual and multicultural competence, preparing citizens for both global and national participation. However, to sustain this dual progress, continuous teacher development and policy coordination are essential [Turaeva, 2022].

To ensure the effective balance between CEFR and national language requirements, the following measures are recommended:

Policy Harmonization: Establish an official mapping between CEFR levels and Uzbek national exam grades.

Teacher Development: Implement continuous professional training focused on CEFR-based instruction.

Localized Testing: Develop CEFR-aligned tests suitable for Uzbek learners' context.

Monitoring: Create a national monitoring system to track CEFR outcomes and Uzbek language proficiency simultaneously.

Public Awareness: Conduct campaigns to explain the importance of both foreign and state language proficiency for career development.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's educational landscape is evolving under the influence of both global and national linguistic frameworks. CEFR brings international credibility and quality assurance to foreign language education, while the national standard ensures the preservation and promotion of the Uzbek language. The coexistence of these frameworks reflects Uzbekistan's vision of modernization that does not sacrifice cultural and linguistic identity. Through harmonized policy and sustainable teacher training, Uzbekistan can successfully integrate CEFR standards without compromising its national linguistic heritage.

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