



THE GROWTH OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract *In today's world, English is recognized as a global language and serves as the main medium of communication in numerous countries. Knowing a foreign language has become essential for individuals to support their nation's international relations, as well as in political and economic sectors. This research will explore the reasons behind the growing popularity of English in Uzbekistan's education system and examine how it has overtaken other foreign languages in prominence. The study also discusses the benefits that English language proficiency brings to Uzbek people, such as greater access to international education and career opportunities. Furthermore, it addresses policy changes that have influenced English language teaching and learning in the country. Additionally, the research highlights the challenges learners face in developing the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.*

Key words: *English language, Uzbekistan, education system, benefits, international education, career opportunities, policy changes, language skills.*

Introduction

English has become the primary language for international communication, academic achievement, and career advancement. In Uzbekistan, interest in learning English increased significantly between 2014 and 2024, with the country ranking 98th out of 114 on the 2024 English Proficiency Index. Factors such as globalization, educational reforms, and a national emphasis on preparing youth for international opportunities have contributed to this trend. Furthermore, the expansion of English instruction in schools, the growth of private language centers, and government initiatives have played crucial roles. This study examines the impact of English

language learning on Uzbekistan's education system and social development over the past decade.

Key policy changes in English language education

Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has introduced a range of new policies aimed at strengthening English language skills nationwide. In 2021, a presidential decree required all newly appointed English teachers to demonstrate at least a B2 level of proficiency, as measured by the CEFR or an equivalent certification. Teachers who fail to meet this standard by the 2025 and 2026 academic year will no longer be eligible to teach (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). In 2017, a mandatory professional qualification exam was implemented for new foreign language teachers, raising the bar for English instruction and reinforcing the link between certification and employment (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2017). This move has encouraged the adoption of modern, communicative teaching methods in classrooms. In 2023, with support from the Ministry of Pre-school and School Education and the British Council, a new national English curriculum was introduced. This updated curriculum places greater emphasis on communicative skills, academic writing, and speaking, and is fully aligned with CEFR standards (British Council, 2023). That same year, the Presidential Agency for Educational Affairs launched the "Language Owner" hiring program, which seeks to bring thousands of native and non-native English-speaking teachers into schools to enhance students' speaking abilities (Ministry of Pre-school and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). Since 2021, teachers who obtain international language certificates such as IELTS or CEFR have also been eligible for monthly salary bonuses of up to 50 percent (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). Collectively, these policy changes demonstrate the government's strong commitment to making English a central pillar of Uzbekistan's education system.

The reasons for the rise of English language learning

The significance of English in the modern world is undeniable, though the reasons for its importance can vary. In Uzbekistan, several key factors have driven the rapid growth of English language learning. Over time, private foreign language schools were established, and English became the main foreign language taught in the national education system. These changes laid a strong foundation for English learning throughout the country. Another important factor is the development of teacher training programs. According to the Uzbekistan Teachers of English Association (UzTEA), approximately 3,000 teachers are currently involved in UzTEA's Teacher Development Project, which offers 16 training modules across four qualification levels. More than 120 teachers have advanced to the fourth module of the first level (Uzbekistan Teachers of English Association, 2025). Additionally, through the ESN Program supported by the U.S. Embassy, around 18,000 public school English teachers have received intensive professional training. As a result, 452 teachers earned TESOL certificates after completing 140 hours of training, and 693 became trainer-mentors who can provide local training. These large-scale training initiatives have greatly improved the quality of English instruction in Uzbekistan (U.S. Embassy Tashkent, 2023). Globalization and increased international opportunities have also played a significant role. As Uzbekistan has become more involved in the global community, English has become essential for accessing international education, jobs, and cultural exchanges. Scholarship programs like "El-yurt umidi" and the arrival of foreign universities have encouraged many students to learn English. Exams such as IELTS and CEFR are now required for many academic and professional opportunities. In Uzbekistan, students who achieve a B2 level or higher on these exams are exempt from the English section of the national entrance exam, motivating thousands to improve their language skills. The rapid growth of private language centers is another contributing factor. Over the past decade, the number of private English centers has risen sharply, offering flexible and intensive courses mainly focused on IELTS and CEFR

preparation in both urban and rural areas. By 2024, there are estimated to be over 500 language centers serving more than 150,000 students. Technological advancements and media have also made a big impact. With widespread access to smartphones and other devices, learners can use online resources like YouTube, IELTS Speaking apps, and Telegram groups to study English independently. Many mentors are also available to help learners practice speaking and identify areas for improvement. Finally, job prospects have made English proficiency increasingly valuable in Uzbekistan's job market. Employers in fields such as IT, business, and tourism often prefer candidates with at least intermediate or advanced English skills. Being proficient in English opens up more job opportunities, often with higher salaries or the chance to work internationally. Altogether, these factors have created an environment where learning English is more accessible and appealing to people across Uzbekistan.

Benefits of learning the English language

In the last ten years, an increasing number of Uzbek students have gained significant advantages from learning English. This progress has opened up academic, career, and personal opportunities for thousands of young people throughout the country.

1. Admission to Foreign Universities: Knowing English allows students to pursue higher education in some of the world's most developed countries, such as South Korea, the USA, the UK, Germany, Turkey, and Australia. In March 2024, media outlets reported the creation of the Uzbekistan Students Union in the UK, which supports Uzbek students at top British universities. Currently, over 600 Uzbek students are enrolled at prestigious institutions like Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, the London School of Economics, and Imperial College London, with 120 of them studying through the El Yurt Umid Foundation ([UzDaily.uz](https://uzdaily.uz), 2024). English proficiency has also helped many Uzbek students secure full scholarships at renowned universities like Harvard, Oxford, and Cambridge, through programs such

as the Harvard Financial Aid Initiative, Oxford's Reach Scholarship, and the Gates Cambridge Scholarship. These scholarships require strong English skills, academic excellence, and effective communication. For instance, Azizbek Zaylobiddinov, a 17-year-old from the Fergana region, achieved an 8.0 on the IELTS and was awarded a full scholarship to Harvard University in December 2024 ([Qalampir.uz](https://qalampir.uz), 2024).

2. Employment with International Companies: Proficiency in English is now essential for many positions in the global job market, especially in fields like IT, tourism, medicine, and business. For example, 23-year-old Azimjon completed a summer internship at Facebook London and later began working at Amazon. In an interview with [Kun.uz](https://kun.uz) (2022), he said, "Thousands of Uzbeks will start working in giant companies in the next 5 years." Proficiency in English was instrumental in helping him gain employment at this leading company.

3. Boosted Confidence and Global Communication Skills: Learning English greatly increases students' self-confidence and enables them to take part in international academic events and youth conferences. These experiences help develop leadership, improve public speaking, and expand professional networks.

4. Participation in International Programs and Olympiads: English proficiency has allowed Uzbek students to join international exchange programs, academic Olympiads, and enrichment opportunities abroad. In 2020, 14 Uzbek graduates won competitive Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree scholarships to top universities across Europe, demonstrating their strong English skills and academic achievements (erasmusplus.uz, 2020).

5. Ease of Travel: Being able to speak English is especially helpful for those traveling to English-speaking countries, as it makes it much easier to communicate and navigate language barriers. Overall, these benefits show how learning English has positively impacted the lives of Uzbek students, opening doors to new experiences and opportunities around the world.

Exploring the rise in IELTS band scores among students in Uzbekistan

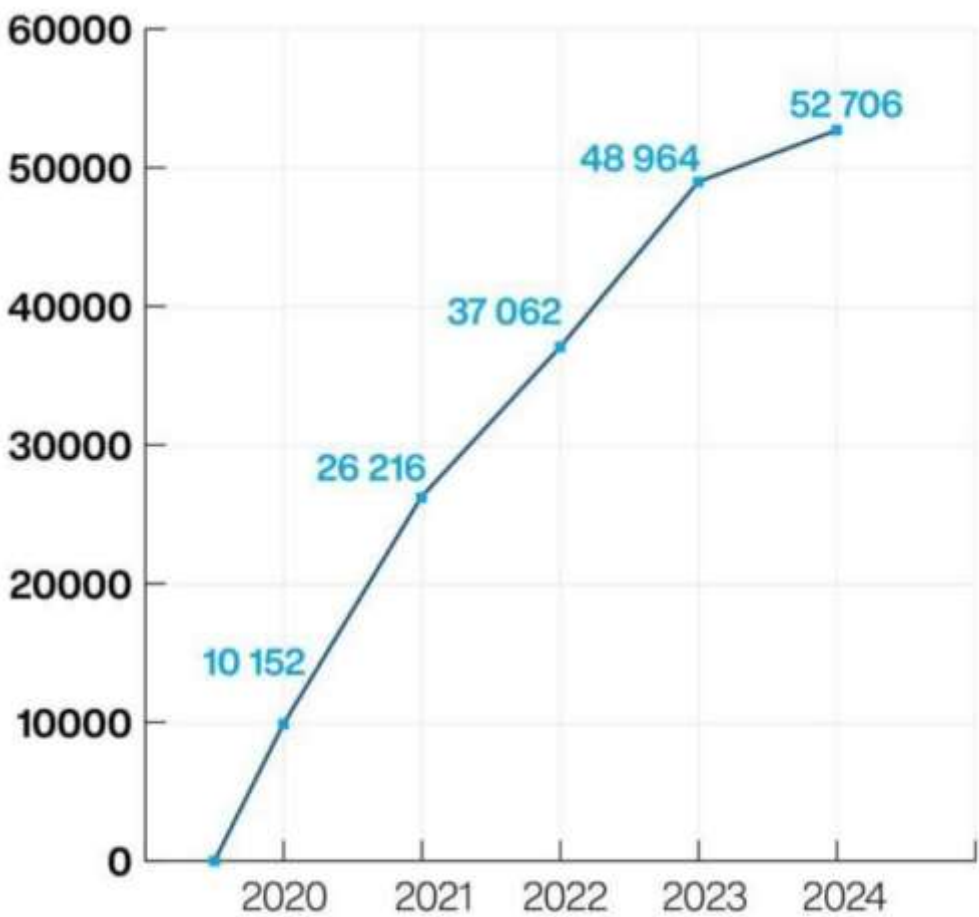
Over the past ten years, more English language learners have been achieving higher IELTS band scores, including C1 (bands 7–8) and C2 (bands 8.5–9), thanks to several key factors. Policy reforms, greater access to resources, and the presence of highly qualified teachers have all played important roles. For example, students who reached C1-level results often had their IELTS exam fees fully covered by the government. According to Daryo.uz, the Youth Affairs Agency of Uzbekistan reimbursed the IELTS exam fees for 10,356 young people who achieved high scores ([Daryo.uz](https://daryo.uz), 2023), which provided strong motivation and led to a noticeable increase in the number of test-takers. Online English courses and learning platforms have also made a significant impact. Free resources like the E2 IELTS and IELTS Advantage YouTube channels have helped many learners prepare thoroughly for the exam. In addition, many teachers at private language centers now hold perfect IELTS scores of 9.0, ensuring that students are learning from true experts. All of these factors have contributed to improved IELTS results among learners. Overall, these developments have had a positive effect on English language education and have inspired many young people to aim for higher levels of achievement.

IELTS BAND SCORES (2020-2024)

IELTS BAND SCORES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
5.5	3,596	9,200	11,703	13,509	14,006
6.0	2,924	7,403	10,516	13,050	14,246
6.5	1,811	4,728	7,210	10,071	11,006
7.0	1,073	2,991	4,496	6,862	7,616
7.5	553	1,405	2,209	3,716	4,008
8.0	181	436	818	1,470	1,490

8.5	14	50	110	273	310
9.0	0	1	0	13	22

The number of people achieving the top scores between 8.5 and 9, which matches the CEFR C2 level has grown significantly. Back in 2020, just 14 individuals reached this level. By 2024, that number had jumped to 332, showing that Uzbek youth are becoming much more proficient in English. ([Kun.uz](#), 2024). The table shows that many learners improved their IELTS band scores and achieved excellent results in 2024.



The line graph illustrates a dramatic rise in English proficiency in Uzbekistan between 2014 and 2024. ([Kun.uz](#) , 2024)

Challenges in learning the English language

Learning a new global language can open up many opportunities, but the process often comes with its own set of challenges. The difficulties people encounter when learning and mastering a second or foreign language can vary widely from person to person, depending on their individual abilities (NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, 2007). For instance, many people find learning English as a second language challenging because it requires developing four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are crucial for effective communication and overall language proficiency (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Despite advances in language education, students in rural areas still face obstacles such as limited internet access and a lack of resources, which make learning even more difficult. One of the most common challenges is the language barrier itself. Many learners hesitate to speak English because they worry about their pronunciation or lack confidence, which can hold them back from practicing and improving. However, by building their confidence and being willing to make mistakes, learners can grow and improve through these experiences. To gain a better understanding of these challenges, I interviewed 15 language learners about their experiences with the four main language skills. Their responses were quite insightful, and I will share the results below.

Which skill seems the most difficult to improve?

Four skills	numbers of learners	percentage of learners
Listening	2	13.3%
Reading	3	20%
Speaking	4	26.7%
Writing	6	40%

The table shows that many students struggle most with speaking and writing skills. Fortunately, there are a variety of techniques and expert recommendations that can help overcome these language learning challenges.

Useful techniques and recommendations for learning English effectively

1. Daily Practice: Setting aside at least 30 minutes each day for study helps students retain new vocabulary and grammar rules.

2. Listening to Music and Watching English Movies: Enjoying your favorite songs and singing along can improve pronunciation, while watching movies or TV shows in English sharpens listening skills. Listening is a fundamental part of language learning, as effective communication depends on it (Nunan, 1998).

3. Engaging in Conversations: According to Professor Baltasar Fra-Molinero, language learning thrives in a community setting. It's important to practice speaking with groups of people, not just one-on-one.

4. Using Flash Cards: O'Higgins suggests using note cards or a notebook to keep vocabulary organized and up to date. While it may seem simple, this method is highly effective.

5. Presentations and Debates: Participating in presentations and debates in English is one of the best ways to boost speaking skills, as it encourages learning new words and exchanging ideas.

6. Creative Writing: Writing poems and short stories is a helpful way to overcome difficulties with writing and to develop stronger writing skills.

7. Shadowing: This popular technique involves listening to native speakers in podcasts or videos and repeating what they say. It's a great way to improve pronunciation and speaking fluency. These strategies have proven effective for many language learners and are widely regarded as some of the best ways to tackle common challenges in learning English.

The future outlook of English language learning

The advancement of English language education in Uzbekistan is poised to benefit thousands of people across different sectors, including education and the workforce. Government-led initiatives are expected to raise the quality of teaching and improve student achievement, helping to develop a new generation of confident English speakers. Updates to school curricula such as introducing English lessons from first through eleventh grade will enhance students' language skills and better prepare them for exams like the IELTS. The increasing availability of free online courses and new educational apps will also make learning English more accessible and enjoyable. Technology provides limitless resources for language learners. With more tools and opportunities available, the foundation for language education in Uzbekistan will become even stronger.

Conclusion

In this modern world, English is the most widely used language in many countries and serves as the main language for education, tourism, and international relations. The growing emphasis on English language learning in Uzbekistan is a clear indicator of the country's development and modernization. Recent changes to the school curriculum and increased government support are expected to accelerate the spread of English in the coming years. Although learners still face several challenges, the popularity of English continues to rise, thanks to government initiatives that provide financial assistance and expand access to educational resources. If Uzbekistan maintains its focus and investment in education, it is likely to strengthen its diplomatic relations and foster a new generation of young leaders.

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