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# The Lingua Spectrum

*Cogito, ergo sum*

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“A special kind of beauty exists which is born in language, of language, and for language.”

**GASTON  
BACHELARD**



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## Professional development of EFL teachers in Uzbekistan: from traditional methods to global competency standards

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**Annotation:** *The development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Uzbekistan is experiencing a significant transformation. This article discusses the shift from traditional, teacher-centered training methods toward modern, global competency standards that emphasize communicative skills, digital literacy, and intercultural competence. International cooperation and technological advances have played a critical role in this evolution. Despite challenges such as unequal access and resistance to change, ongoing reforms suggest promising progress in improving English language education in Uzbekistan. The article highlights the need for continuous support and adaptation to local contexts to achieve sustainable development in teacher training.*

**Keywords:** *professional development, EFL teachers, Uzbekistan, global competency standards, teacher training, English education*

## Профессиональное развитие преподавателей английского языка как иностранного в Узбекистане: от традиционных методов к глобальным стандартам компетентности

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**Аннотация:** *В статье рассматривается трансформация профессионального развития преподавателей английского языка как иностранного в Узбекистане. Описывается переход от традиционных методов к глобальным стандартам компетентности, которые включают коммуникативные навыки, цифровую грамотность и межкультурную компетентность. Подчеркивается роль международного сотрудничества и технологий. Несмотря на существующие проблемы, проводимые реформы обещают улучшение качества преподавания английского.*

**Ключевые слова:** *профессиональное развитие, преподаватели английского, Узбекистан, глобальные стандарты компетентности, подготовка учителей, обучение английскому*

## O'zbekistonda chet tili sifatida ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining kasbiy rivojlanishi: an'anaviy usullardan global standartlarga o'tish

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**Annotatsiya:** *Maqolada O'zbekistonda chet tili sifatida ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining kasbiy rivojlanishi tahlil qilingan. An'anaviy usullardan kommunikativ ko'nikmalar, raqamli savodxonlik va madaniy aloqalarni o'z ichiga olgan global standartlarga o'tish ta'kidlangan. Xalqaro hamkorlik va texnologiyalarning o'rni qayd etilgan. Qiyinchiliklarga qaramay, amalga oshirilayotgan islohotlar ta'lim sifatiga ijobiy ta'sir ko'rsatadi.*

***Kalit soʻzlar: kasbiy rivojlanish, ingliz tili oʻqituvchilari, Oʻzbekiston, global kompetentsiyalar standartlari, murabbiylarni tayyorlash, ingliz tili taʼlimi***

The development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Uzbekistan has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past several decades, reflecting the country's broader shifts in educational philosophy, policy, and international engagement. For many years, the legacy of the Soviet educational system dominated teacher training and language instruction. Under this system, teaching English was heavily centered on the grammar-translation method, where the focus was primarily on memorization, the mastery of grammatical rules, and translating texts from English to Russian or Uzbek. While this approach offered a systematic framework and ensured a certain level of linguistic accuracy, it often left students without practical communication skills or the ability to engage in interactive language use. Teachers themselves were trained to be authoritative transmitters of knowledge, which limited their flexibility and creativity in the classroom and hindered the development of communicative competence in their students (Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020).

Following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, the country faced the daunting challenge of reforming its educational institutions and practices to align with a rapidly changing global context. The English language, once just a foreign subject taught through rote learning, became recognized as an essential skill for international business, diplomacy, science, and technology. However, the transition was not immediate or smooth. The entrenched Soviet-style methods persisted in many schools and universities, and teacher training programs continued to emphasize theory over practice. This lag created a noticeable gap between Uzbekistan's local teaching practices and the evolving international standards in language education. As global trends increasingly emphasized communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and learner-centered approaches, Uzbekistan's EFL teachers found themselves needing to adapt to methodologies quite different from what they had been taught and what they had been practicing (TESOL International Association, 2019).

In response to these challenges, recent years have seen a growing commitment from the Uzbek government and educational authorities to modernize English language teaching. Recognizing that the ability to communicate effectively in English is a strategic national priority, reforms have been introduced to update curricula, enhance teacher training, and integrate technology into the classroom (Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). These efforts reflect a broader shift away from traditional, teacher-centered approaches toward more dynamic, learner-centered models. Modern teacher development programs emphasize the cultivation of a range of competencies beyond linguistic knowledge, including critical thinking, digital literacy, intercultural communication, and innovative pedagogical skills (British Council, 2021). The objective is to prepare teachers who can create engaging, interactive learning environments where students are not passive recipients but active participants, collaborating and applying their language skills in real-life contexts.

International collaboration has played a pivotal role in this transformation. Partnerships with organizations such as the British Council, UNESCO, and USAID have facilitated the exchange of knowledge and the introduction of best practices in language teaching (USAID, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). Through these collaborations, Uzbek educators have gained access to contemporary teaching materials, training workshops, and professional development opportunities that were previously unavailable or limited (British Council, 2021). Exchange programs have allowed teachers to experience educational systems abroad, broadening their pedagogical horizons and motivating them to experiment with new methods upon returning to their classrooms. These international partnerships have also helped align Uzbekistan's teacher training standards with global frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), providing a clear benchmark for language proficiency and teaching competencies (TESOL International Association, 2019).

The integration of technology has been another transformative factor. Uzbek teachers have increasingly adopted digital tools such as multimedia resources, language learning software, online dictionaries, and interactive platforms to enrich the teaching and learning process. Technology has not only made lessons more engaging but also enabled differentiated instruction tailored to students' individual needs (UNESCO, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend dramatically. With physical classrooms closed, educators were forced to switch rapidly to online teaching, mastering new platforms and remote assessment techniques. This unexpected shift expanded teachers' digital competencies and highlighted the critical importance of technology literacy in the modern educational landscape (USAID, 2023). It also exposed infrastructure gaps, especially in rural and remote areas where internet access and digital devices remain limited, revealing inequalities in professional development opportunities across the country (UNESCO, 2022).

Despite the significant progress, challenges remain substantial. Many rural and underserved regions struggle with inadequate facilities, unreliable internet connections, and a lack of access to up-to-date teaching materials and continuous professional development (Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). These disparities contribute to uneven educational quality and restrict teachers' ability to implement innovative methods effectively. Moreover, some educators exhibit resistance to change, whether due to unfamiliarity with new pedagogical approaches, lack of motivation, or insufficient institutional support. This resistance is sometimes rooted in a comfort with the traditional methods they were trained in or concerns about their own proficiency with digital tools (TESOL International Association, 2019). Addressing these obstacles requires ongoing investment not only in physical infrastructure but also in the human dimension of teacher development. Continuous professional development must be accessible, practical, and tailored to teachers' evolving needs. Incentives such as career advancement opportunities, recognition, and rewards for innovative practices can foster a culture of lifelong learning and pedagogical innovation (UNESCO, 2022).

An important strategy to support teachers through this transformation has been the establishment of mentorship programs and professional learning communities. Experienced educators and trainers serve as mentors to less experienced teachers, providing guidance, encouragement, and a platform to share best practices. These communities of practice enable teachers to collaborate, reflect on their teaching, and stay motivated as they navigate the challenges of adopting new methodologies (British Council, 2021). This peer support mechanism helps sustain reforms and contributes to building a professional culture that values innovation and continuous improvement.

The evolving role of the EFL teacher in Uzbekistan today is multifaceted. Teachers are no longer expected to be mere conveyors of linguistic rules but facilitators who nurture critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural awareness among their students (TESOL International Association, 2019). They are called to prepare learners not only to pass exams but also to thrive in diverse cultural and professional environments, equipped with the skills necessary for global citizenship. To meet these expectations, teacher education programs increasingly focus on developing reflective practitioners who can adapt to changing educational demands and student needs. These programs promote interdisciplinary knowledge and emphasize learner autonomy, formative assessment, and inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learners (UNESCO, 2022).

Looking to the future, the development of EFL teachers in Uzbekistan hinges on sustained efforts and strategic investments. The government's role remains critical in ensuring equitable access to quality professional development opportunities, especially for teachers in remote areas (Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). Expanding online learning platforms that offer flexible and accessible training courses can help bridge the gap caused by geographical and infrastructural limitations. Continued international cooperation will also be vital in bringing fresh perspectives and resources to the teacher education system (USAID, 2023). Encouraging teacher-

led research and innovation can foster a sense of ownership and professionalism, enabling educators to adapt global best practices to local contexts creatively (British Council, 2021).

In conclusion, the trajectory of English language teacher development in Uzbekistan illustrates a dynamic and ongoing journey from a rigid, theory-driven past toward a more flexible, learner-centered future. This journey reflects the country's broader aspirations for educational modernization and global integration. While significant challenges remain—especially regarding infrastructure, equity, and motivation—the progress achieved thus far is encouraging. By equipping teachers with diverse competencies that include digital literacy, intercultural communication, and critical pedagogy, Uzbekistan is laying the foundation for a more effective and relevant English language education system. Such a system not only enhances language proficiency but also prepares learners to engage critically and confidently in the interconnected global landscape. Ultimately, the success of this vision depends on continuous collaboration between the government, educational institutions, international partners, and the teachers themselves—who stand at the forefront of shaping the future of English language education in Uzbekistan.

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