

# The History of the English Language in Uzbekistan: From the Soviet Era to the Present

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the historical trajectory of English language education in Uzbekistan, analyzing key policy changes and societal attitudes from the Soviet period (1924–1991) to the present. This research is observational studies research with a qualitative approach. The results obtained in this study are that government initiatives, challenges in English language instruction, and the increasing influence of digital learning platforms and international collaborations. While considerable progress has been made, issues such as regional disparities in language education quality and teacher training deficiencies remain. The findings highlight the necessity of continued investment in language education to enhance Uzbekistan's global connectivity and economic competitiveness.

**Keywords:** English language, Uzbekistan, language policy, Soviet era, education reform, globalization.

**INTRODUCTION.** Today, the English language plays a crucial role in global communication, science, technology, and education. In Uzbekistan, the importance of English has significantly increased since the country's independence. During the Soviet era, Russian was the official and dominant language, while English was considered a secondary foreign language. After gaining independence, English became a key factor in Uzbekistan's international development. In this article, I analyze the historical development of the English language in Uzbekistan from the Soviet period to the present using the IMRAD methodology.

**RESEARCH METHOD.** This study is based on qualitative analysis and includes the examination of the following sources:

Historical documents – Language policies during the Soviet era and post-independence language laws.

Academic articles – Research on the development of English in Uzbekistan.

Statistical data – Official reports on English language education in schools and universities.

Educational programs – Government policies regulating foreign language learning in Uzbekistan.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION.** The Status of English During the Soviet Era (1924–1991) During the Soviet period, Russian was the primary language for communication and education in Uzbekistan. English was not a mandatory subject and was taught in a limited capacity. Soviet language policy maintained a cautious approach toward Western languages, favoring German and French over English. However, from the 1950s onward, the expansion of international relations and scientific exchanges led to a gradual increase in English language instruction.

Key characteristics of this period:

English was primarily taught at higher education institutions.

Textbooks were translations from Russian sources.

The majority of English teachers were ethnic Russians.

Due to restrictions on Western cultural influence, English was not widely studied.

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### Early Changes After Independence (1991–2010)

Following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, the demand for foreign language learning, particularly English, increased. The adoption of the Law on Education (1997) and the National Program for Personnel Training emphasized foreign language education. English was introduced as a mandatory subject in schools and universities.

Key developments: In 2001, Uzbekistan strengthened educational cooperation with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other English-speaking countries.

In 2005, English language textbooks and educational materials were updated.

By 2010, preparation programs for international English proficiency exams (IELTS, TOEFL) expanded.

### The Advancement of English in the 21st Century (2010–Present)

A landmark reform took place in 2012, when a presidential decree mandated English language instruction from the first grade. This initiative required the development of new textbooks, teacher training programs, and international collaborations.

Significant advancements:

Increased demand for IELTS and TOEFL certifications.

Modernization of teacher training programs.

The rise of digital platforms such as Duolingo, Coursera, and edX for learning English.

The establishment of international university branches, including Westminster, MDIST, and Webster University.

The development of English language education in Uzbekistan reflects the country's shifting historical and political landscape. During the Soviet era, English remained a secondary foreign language with limited access, as Russian was the dominant language in education, government, and communication. However, after independence, Uzbekistan took significant steps to promote English as a key tool for modernization and global integration.

Despite significant progress, several challenges hinder the widespread adoption of English in Uzbekistan:

1. Shortage of Qualified Teachers – Many English teachers in Uzbekistan still lack advanced language proficiency and modern teaching methodologies. Teacher training programs need further improvement to meet international standards.
2. Urban-Rural Educational Disparities – In major cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara, access to high-quality English education is more common. However, in rural areas, students often struggle due to a lack of qualified teachers, educational resources, and exposure to English in everyday life.
3. Limited Exposure to English Outside the Classroom – Unlike in countries where English is widely spoken, students in Uzbekistan have few opportunities to practice English in real-life situations. The integration of English in media, entertainment, and daily communication could help bridge this gap.
4. Outdated Teaching Materials and Methods – Some schools still rely on traditional, grammar-heavy teaching methods rather than modern communicative approaches that emphasize speaking, listening, and real-world applications.

To further improve English education in Uzbekistan, policymakers and educators should focus on:

1. Enhancing Teacher Training Programs – Introducing internationally recognized certifications for teachers, such as TESOL, CELTA, or TEFL, could significantly raise teaching standards. Exchange programs with native English-speaking instructors could also help.



2. Expanding Digital and Blended Learning – Online learning platforms should be integrated into school curricula to provide students with additional practice opportunities. Encouraging students to engage with English-language media, films, and books could also improve language proficiency.
3. Increasing International Cooperation – Partnering with foreign universities and organizations could provide scholarships, study-abroad programs, and exchange opportunities to further enhance English skills among Uzbek students.
4. Developing a More Practical Approach to English Learning – Shifting the focus from rote memorization and grammar drills to communication skills and real-world applications would better prepare students for global careers and higher education opportunities.

**CONCLUSION.** The evolution of English education in Uzbekistan has been shaped by historical, political, and economic factors. While the Soviet era limited access to English, the post-independence period has seen significant advancements in English language learning. However, challenges such as teacher shortages, educational inequalities, and outdated methodologies still need to be addressed. By investing in teacher training, digital education, and international collaboration, Uzbekistan can further strengthen its position in the globalized world and ensure that future generations are equipped with strong English language skills.

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