TEACHING ENGLISH IN UZBEKISTAN'S ACADEMIC LYCEUMS: STRATEGIES ALIGNED WITH CEFR AND IELTS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines English-language teaching in Uzbekistan's academic lyceums, with ALWIUT as a case study, through the lens of CEFR and IELTS standards. A review of literature and curricula highlights the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching, task-based and project-oriented methods, especially when integrated with authentic resources and multimedia. Findings confirm the need to structure lessons around CEFR "can-do" descriptors, boost learner motivation through Olympiads, and upgrade teacher expertise via certifications such as TEFL. A comprehensive roadmap is proposed that combines communicative tasks, exam-specific drills, and robust external monitoring.

Keywords: CEFR, IELTS, academic lyceum, communicative approach, task-based learning, Olympiad, TEFL

Introduction. The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the IELTS examination systems are exemplary for assessing English-language levels on the basis of international standards. In the Uzbek classification of the CEFR, language attainment is divided into A1–C2 levels, with particular attention given to the intermediate stages (B1–B2) and the advanced stages (C1–C2). Legally, the CEFR serves to align educational standards, curricula, and test levels [1][1]. Legally, the CEFR serves to align educational standards, curricula, and test levels. For example, according to Cambridge research, IELTS scores have been correlated with CEFR levels; however, because the exam uses a nine-band scale, an exact one-to-one correspondence is not recommended—an approximate mapping is advised.

Starting from the B1 level of English (i.e., the intermediate level), teaching

[1] Registan LC. (2018, 16 may). Ingliz tili darajalari jadvali: 6 daraja [Veb-sahifa]. Registan LC. Qaytarib olingan 15 may 2025, from https://rgn.uz/2018/05/16/ingliz-tili-darajalari-jadvali-6-daraja/

places primary emphasis on a practical, action-oriented methodology. For instance, the CEFR advocates a communicative, task-based approach: learners must perform tasks aimed at conveying meaning in real situations [2][2]. Consequently, interactive techniques—such as task-based (descriptive) activities and collaborative group work—are effective in the English-language learning process.

Hence, interactive techniques—such as task-based (descriptive) activities and collaborative group work—prove highly effective in the English-language learning process. The developments outlined in the Introduction show that methodologies aligned with CEFR standards and the IELTS examination are now widely employed worldwide in English teaching. The CEFR "can-do" descriptors for the lower (A1–B1), intermediate (B2), and higher (C1–C2) proficiency bands can be used to structure and scaffold instruction. For example, one study reported that employing communicative strategies—those specified in the CEFR—significantly enhanced intermediate English learners' performance in communicative tasks. In Uzbekistan, too, growing attention is being paid to CEFR- and IELTS-based methodologies. Schools such as the Academic Lyceum of the Unified Islamic Academy (ALWIUT), for instance, give particular emphasis in their English classes to civic communication skills, literature, and focused IELTS preparation [3][3]. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify effective teaching methods for CEFR levels above B1—drawing on both international practice and the local context—and to analyse the practical methodologies and experiences currently implemented in Uzbekistan's academic lyceums.

Method. This article is grounded in an analysis of both the literature and practical experience. First, international and national studies, pedagogical resources, and manuals that investigate the CEFR and IELTS were reviewed. In addition, the content and methodologies employed in Uzbekistan's academic lyceums—including online information, updated curricula, and the websites of university-affiliated lyceums—were analysed. For example, the annual curriculum and entrance-examination content of the ALWIUT Lyceum were examined. While examining international practice, innovative approaches—including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), task-based instruction, content-based instruction, and the integration of technological tools—were identified. Drawing on these data, a comparative analysis was conducted between CEFR-aligned teaching orientations and the

[2] Phoolaikao, W., & Sukying, A. (2021). Insights into CEFR and its implementation through the lens of preservice English teachers in Thailand. *English Language Teaching, 14*(6), 25–38. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n6p25

[3] Westminster International University in Tashkent. (n.d.). General information about the Lyceum [Veb-sahifa]. Qaytarib olingan 15 may 2025, from https://lyceum.wiut.uz/en/about-us/general-information-about-lyceum

shortcomings observed in current domestic practice. The conclusions regarding the education system and methodology were substantiated by standardized test results and independent scholarly sources.

Results and Discussion. International literature demonstrates that, for learners at CEFR level B1 and above, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and task-based methods are essential. The CEFR's action-oriented approach views learners as social agents and mandates the performance of classroom tasks built around collaborative processes [4][4]. For example, CEFR guidelines stress the importance of learners developing functional communication skills in everyday and professional contexts. Task-based instruction—such as role-plays, seminars, and project work—is effective for intermediate and advanced learners because it offers opportunities to apply the target language in authentic contexts. Integrating authentic materials and multimedia resources further enhances outcomes: presenting English versions of Uzbek sources and everyday materials enriches learners' language skills. For example, the use of audio/video lectures, international news reports, and literature readings is widely recommended in alignment with the CLT approach.

Nevertheless, relying exclusively on CEFR-based CLT is not without criticism. Recent analyses suggest that although CLT fosters learner autonomy and multicultural awareness, it may not supply sufficiently formal coverage of grammar or exam-oriented preparation [5][5]. Moreover, because the CEFR is highly adaptable, it demands targeted preparation and specific methodological approaches. IELTS, for instance, incorporates specialised exercises for the exam's four skills and its annually updated written and spoken tasks. Consequently, teachers must train learners in both communicative competence and exam-oriented accuracy. Reliable sources indicate that effective exam preparation includes hands-on practice—such as mock tests and time-management drills—and the systematic use of instructor feedback. One study found that the greatest obstacles to IELTS preparation are learners' lack of self-motivation and the limited exam-specific experience of some teachers[6]. Accordingly, introducing Olympiads and interactive learning activities is recommended to motivate English-language learners. For instance, the nationwide English Language Olympiad launched in Uzbekistan in 2021 attracted 17,800 pupils and students, including gifted participants from academic lyceums. Such initiatives are valuable because they

[4] Council of Europe. (2001, February 22). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Council of Europe Publishing. Qaytarib olingan 16 may 2025, from https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4

[5] Qasserras, L. (2023). Systematic review of communicative language teaching (CLT) in language education: A balanced perspective. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 4*(6), Article 763. https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2023.4.6.763

[6] Global Scientific Journal. (n.d.). *Global Scientific Journal* [Veb-sayt]. Qaytarib olingan 16 may 2025, from https://globalscientificjournal.com

motivate young people and foster both scholarly and practical engagement with English.

The practices of Uzbekistan's academic lyceums—ALWIUT, for instance—were likewise examined. ALWIUT's curriculum is oriented toward intensive English instruction: in addition to literature, grammar, and vocabulary, a dedicated block of classroom time is set aside for IELTS preparation. Official figures show that students receive 20 English-language periods per week throughout the academic year, and lessons are delivered at an advanced level. Moreover, the lyceum's first-stage entrance examinations are conducted entirely in English; applicants are tested on analytical mathematics and English topics that exceed national-curriculum standards. This approach presupposes that applicants to academic lyceums possess strong English-language skills; consequently, classes must employ effective techniques—such as building a solid foundation in reading comprehension and creativity—right from the start. Nevertheless, it is difficult to claim that a single standardised methodology is in place across all lyceums, because both the challenges and the levels of success can vary from school to school. On the one hand, key institutions have introduced updated curricula specifically designed to prepare students for CEFR and IELTS requirements. On the other hand, the roster of approved Olympiads and youth initiatives shows that strengthening English proficiency has become a consistent strategic priority in Uzbekistan. Equally significant is the expansion of opportunities for English-language lecturers in Uzbek teacher-training universities to obtain international certificates—such as TEFL, which is officially recognised as equivalent to CEFR level C1—thus underscoring the commitment to aligning both teaching methods and teacher qualifications with CEFR standards [7][7].

Conclusion. In sum, methodologies tailored to align with CEFR and IELTS should integrate communicative and task-oriented approaches. International studies show that assignments focused on CLT and real-life interaction boost learners' autonomy and self-regulation. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that these tools alone may not fully ensure optimal results on standardized tests such as IELTS [8][8]. In Uzbekistan, inter-school programmes that take CEFR and IELTS requirements into account are likewise being developed; for example, lyceums such as ALWIUT plan their English courses on a scientific basis, and events like Olympiads are designed to raise young people to a level where they can compete with Russian-speaking

[7] Kun.uz. (2022, 25 fevral). O'zbekistonning ingliz tili o'qituvchilari TEFL xalqaro sertifikatini olib, maoshiga qo'shimcha 50 % ustamaga ega bo'lishlari mumkin [Veb-sahifa]. Kun.uz. Qaytarib olingan 16 may 2025, from the link

[8] Qasserras, L. (2023). Systematic review of communicative language teaching (CLT) in language education: A balanced perspective. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 4*(6), Article 763. https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2023.4.6.763

scholars. On the basis of this study's findings, it is recommended that academic lyceums broaden the use of communicative, task-based, and project-oriented methods aimed at simultaneously developing essential language skills. Teachers should also receive training in designing comprehensive course plans grounded in CEFR guidelines, integrating new information-and-communication technologies, and employing authentic English texts. Given the prominence of CEFR and IELTS, more rigorous and productive external monitoring during the learning process will be required to enhance students' performance in external examinations. This comprehensive approach will greatly strengthen academic-lyceum students' ability to master English in line with both national and international standards.

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