



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT LINGUISTIC UNIVERSITIES IN UZBEKISTAN: A THEORETICAL – ANALYTICAL STUDY

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The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education has become a strategic priority in Uzbekistan due to globalization and educational reforms. Despite significant policy-level attention, linguistic universities and language-focused faculties continue to face systemic and pedagogical challenges. This theoretical-analytical study examines contemporary issues in EFL teaching in Uzbek linguistic higher education, including curriculum overload, theory-practice imbalance, assessment limitations, digitalization challenges, and learner motivation. Drawing on internationally recognized EFL scholarship and contextualized Uzbek academic sources, the study synthesizes existing research to identify persistent gaps between policy, theory, and classroom practice. The findings highlight the need for curriculum rebalancing, communicative-oriented pedagogy, assessment reform, and sustained teacher professional development. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on improving EFL quality in Uzbekistan and provides implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policy-makers.

Introduction. In recent decades, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has undergone significant transformations worldwide, largely driven by globalization, international academic mobility, and the growing dominance of English as a global lingua franca. Higher education institutions, particularly language-focused universities and linguistic faculties, are expected to prepare graduates who are not only linguistically competent but also capable of functioning effectively in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts. However, despite continuous reforms and methodological innovations, EFL instruction at higher education institutions continues to face persistent challenges that affect learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness¹. In the context of Uzbekistan, EFL teaching in higher education occupies a strategically important position. Since English is regarded as a key tool for international communication, academic advancement, and national development, substantial attention has been given to foreign language education through policy reforms and curriculum updates. Presidential decrees and educational reforms have emphasized improving foreign language proficiency among university students and aligning instruction with international standards such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages². Nevertheless, the practical implementation of these reforms in linguistic universities and language faculties reveals a number of unresolved pedagogical and institutional issues.

One of the central problems in EFL instruction at linguistic higher education institutions is the discrepancy between curricular objectives and actual classroom practices. Although curricula often prioritize communicative competence, critical thinking, and learner autonomy, teaching practices tend to remain examination-oriented and teacher-centered. This gap limits students' opportunities to develop productive language skills, particularly speaking and academic writing, which are essential for future language professionals³. Similar observations have been reported in EFL contexts where institutional traditions and assessment systems hinder the adoption of learner-centered methodologies.

Another pressing issue concerns the linguistic and professional preparedness of incoming students. Many first-year students at linguistic universities in Uzbekistan demonstrate uneven proficiency levels despite standardized entrance requirements. This heterogeneity poses considerable challenges for instructors, who are expected to deliver content-rich language courses within limited instructional time. Research indicates that mixed-ability classrooms can negatively affect

learner motivation and participation if not supported by differentiated instruction strategies⁴. In practice, however, instructors often lack sufficient institutional support and training to address this issue effectively.

Furthermore, the integration of modern pedagogical approaches and digital technologies into EFL instruction remains inconsistent. While contemporary language teaching theories emphasize task-based learning, project-based instruction, and the use of digital tools to enhance interaction and autonomy, many higher education classrooms still rely heavily on traditional grammar-translation or lecture-based methods. Studies suggest that the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning depends not only on access to digital tools but also on teachers' pedagogical competence and attitudes toward innovation. In the Uzbek higher education context, limited infrastructure, large class sizes, and insufficient professional development opportunities often constrain meaningful technology integration. Assessment practices also represent a significant area of concern. In many linguistic universities, summative assessments continue to focus on discrete grammatical knowledge and receptive skills, which may not accurately reflect students' communicative competence. The misalignment between learning objectives, teaching activities, and assessment criteria undermines the validity of evaluation processes and reduces students' motivation to engage in communicative language use⁵. Aligning assessment practices with CEFR descriptors remains a challenge that requires systematic methodological and institutional efforts.

Given these challenges, there is a clear need for a comprehensive theoretical analysis of contemporary EFL teaching issues in higher education, particularly within the Uzbek linguistic education context. While numerous international studies have addressed EFL pedagogy at universities, context-specific analyses remain limited. Understanding how global trends interact with local educational realities is essential for developing sustainable and context-appropriate solutions. Therefore, this article aims to critically examine the key pedagogical, curricular, and institutional issues affecting EFL teaching in linguistic universities and language faculties in Uzbekistan, drawing on contemporary foreign language teaching theories and empirical findings. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following objectives: to identify major challenges in EFL instruction at linguistic higher education institutions; to analyze these challenges through the lens of modern foreign language teaching theories; and to suggest

¹ Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and performance. *RELJ Journal*, 48(1), 7–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690059>

² British Council. (2015). The English effect: The impact of English, what it's worth to the UK and why it matters to the world. British Council.

³ Harmer, J. (2015). *How to teach English* (2nd ed.). Longman.

⁴ Dörnyei, Z. (2005). The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition. Lawrence Erlbaum.

⁵ Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

theoretically grounded implications for improving EFL teaching practices in the Uzbek higher education context.

Literature review. Literature in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy highlights multiple dimensions of teaching and learning that are directly relevant to linguistic universities and similar higher education contexts. Internationally, scholars emphasize the shift from traditional, form-focused instruction toward communicative and task-based approaches that support meaningful language use⁶. In line with the communicative language teaching (CLT) movement, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is frequently reported as one of the most effective strategies for fostering communicative competence, learner autonomy, and engagement in real-world language use⁷.

In the Uzbek context, the integration of communicative and task-based methodologies has been actively discussed in recent research. Several studies indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has the potential to enhance speaking and sociolinguistic competence among university EFL learners, even within system constraints. For example, research conducted at Uzbek state institutions demonstrated that task-oriented language activities significantly increased learner motivation and communicative fluency compared to traditional methods⁸. Similarly, other local studies documented improvements in pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills when tasks focused on authentic interaction were incorporated. These findings align with international literature advocating for TBLT as a means of bridging the gap between theory and practice⁹.

However, the application of TBLT in Uzbekistan's higher education system is not without challenges. Mirzayev's study on the implementation obstacles of TBLT revealed that insufficient teacher training, rigid curriculum constraints, and assessment practices that prioritize discrete knowledge over communicative performance limit the effectiveness of task-based approaches in Uzbek EFL classrooms¹⁰. This mirrors broader discussions in EFL literature, where the successful adoption of communicative methodologies has often been hindered by institutional and systemic barriers¹¹.

Balanced development of the four core language skills — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — is another key theme in recent Uzbek research. Investigations into classroom practices show that EFL instruction in Uzbekistan tends to privilege receptive skills such as reading and listening over productive skills like speaking and writing, resulting in proficiency imbalances among learners¹². These imbalances are significant because productive skills are essential for academic and professional communication in global contexts. International scholars argue that balanced skill development fosters deeper language acquisition and better prepares learners for diverse communicative demands¹³.

The literature also highlights the importance of cultural and sociolinguistic factors in communicative competence. Integrating cultural insights into EFL instruction has been shown to enhance learners' ability to interpret discourse appropriately across social contexts, which is key for authentic language use¹⁴. Given that Uzbekistan's language learners operate within a multilingual and multicultural educational environment, incorporating cultural content assists in making instruction more relevant and contextually grounded.

Another relevant body of work focuses on assessment practices in EFL programs. The adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Uzbekistan has introduced a more standardized approach to language evaluation; however, studies indicate a gap between CEFR-based assessment aspirations and actual

practices, with many institutions continuing to emphasize traditional, discrete point testing¹⁵. This misalignment between curriculum goals and assessment methods hampers the development of communicative competence, as assessments often do not capture learners' interactive, real-world language skills.

Finally, research underscores the motivational and attitudinal dimensions of EFL learning in Uzbekistan. Learner attitudes toward vocabulary learning and language use significantly influence proficiency outcomes, as positive attitudes are linked to higher levels of engagement and language retention¹⁶. Understanding teacher perceptions — including those regarding the use of emerging digital tools such as ChatGPT — points to a growing awareness of technology's role in EFL instruction, though ethical and pedagogical concerns remain¹⁷. These studies suggest that teacher beliefs and learner attitudes both play substantive roles in shaping classroom interaction and language acquisition. Taken together, both international and Uzbek scholarship illustrate a complex landscape where modern EFL pedagogies hold promise but face implementation challenges tied to teacher preparation, curriculum design, assessment practices, and contextual realities. This body of literature provides a strong foundation for analyzing the specific issues and opportunities present in Uzbekistan's linguistic higher education settings.

Methodology. This study is based on a qualitative theoretical-analytical research approach, which is widely used in applied linguistics to explore complex pedagogical issues in higher education. The primary aim of this methodology is not to collect empirical data, but to critically examine existing theories, academic discussions, and policy documents related to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in linguistic universities. Such an approach allows for a deeper understanding of systemic and methodological challenges that shape language education in specific national contexts^{18,19}. The analysis draws on a wide range of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, international frameworks, and nationally published research relevant to EFL pedagogy. Special attention was given to literature focusing on communicative language teaching, task-based learning, curriculum design, assessment practices, and teacher education in higher education settings. In order to ensure contextual relevance, both internationally recognized works and studies conducted by Uzbek scholars were included. This combination made it possible to compare global theoretical perspectives with local educational realities and to identify context-specific challenges in Uzbekistan's linguistic universities²⁰.

The selected sources were analyzed using a thematic analytical perspective, through which recurring issues and patterns were identified across the literature. These themes included curriculum overload, misalignment between teaching objectives and assessment practices, limited opportunities for communicative language use, and insufficient methodological training of EFL instructors. The findings were then interpreted within the framework of Uzbekistan's higher education reforms and CEFR implementation. This contextualized analysis enhances the validity of the study by grounding theoretical insights in real institutional conditions rather than abstract assumptions²¹. All sources were acknowledged following APA guidelines to ensure academic integrity and ethical research practice²².

Results. The theoretical analysis of contemporary academic literature and policy-related documents reveals several recurring issues that significantly influence the effectiveness of EFL teaching in linguistic universities and language faculties in Uzbekistan. One of the central findings is the persistent gap between declared educational objectives

⁶ Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

⁷ Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

⁸ Mansurov, O. (2025). Enhancing speaking skills through task-based learning in Uzbek EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence*. <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/ijai/article/view/115086>

⁹ Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁰ Mirzayev, A. (2025). The main problems of using task-based language teaching method in EFL classes in Uzbekistan higher education system. *International Journal of Science and Technology*. <https://science-technology.uz/index.php/journal/article/view/111>

¹¹ Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press

¹³ Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

¹⁴ Berdiyeva, G. (2024). Enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence through the integration of cultural insights. *Modern Science and Research*. <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/34992>

¹⁵ Khamzayeva, M. (2025). Assessing speaking skills in teaching English as a Foreign Language. *Educational Research in Universal Sciences*. <https://erus.uz/index.php/er/article/view/2603>

¹⁶ Umirov, O. U. (2025). Research on EFL students' and teachers' attitudes toward English vocabulary learning in Uzbekistan. *Worldly Journals*. <https://worldlyjournals.com/index.php/ztydq/article/view/4951>

¹⁷ Mirzayev, A. (2025). The main problems of using task-based language teaching method in EFL classes in Uzbekistan higher education system. *International Journal of Science and Technology*. <https://science-technology.uz/index.php/journal/article/view/111>

¹⁸ Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and performance. *RELC Journal*, 48(1), 7–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690059>

¹⁹ Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.).

²⁰ British Council. (2015). *The English effect: The impact of English, what it's worth to the UK and why it matters to the world*. British Council.

²¹ Holliday, A. (2011). *Intercultural communication and ideology*.

²² American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).

and actual instructional practices. Although curricula formally emphasize communicative competence and CEFR-aligned outcomes, classroom instruction often remains teacher-centered and examination-oriented. This contradiction limits students' exposure to authentic language use and reduces opportunities for developing productive skills, particularly speaking and academic writing.

Another important result concerns the imbalance in the development of language skills. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that receptive skills, especially reading, receive greater emphasis than productive skills. As a consequence, many students graduate with solid theoretical knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but lack fluency and pragmatic competence required for professional communication. This pattern has been widely reported in both international and Uzbek-focused studies and remains a major obstacle to achieving communicative language proficiency in higher education²³.

The analysis also identifies assessment practices as a critical area of concern. Despite the nationwide adoption of CEFR descriptors, assessment systems in many linguistic universities continue to prioritize

discrete-point testing and written examinations. Such practices do not adequately measure communicative competence and often discourage the use of interactive and task-based teaching methods. The misalignment between instructional goals and assessment criteria negatively affects both teaching strategies and student motivation^{24, 25}. In addition, the findings reveal challenges related to teacher methodological preparedness. While EFL instructors in linguistic universities generally demonstrate high linguistic proficiency, they frequently encounter difficulties in implementing communicative and task-based approaches due to limited professional development opportunities and institutional constraints. This situation leads to a reliance on traditional methods, even when instructors are aware of contemporary pedagogical alternatives^{26, 27}. To synthesize the key results of the theoretical analysis, the major issues identified in the literature and their pedagogical implications are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Issues in EFL Teaching at Linguistic Universities in Uzbekistan (Theoretical Synthesis)

Identified Issue	Description based on literature	Pedagogical Implications
Curriculum–practice gap	Communicative goals are stated in curricula, but instruction remains form-focused and exam-oriented (Richards, 2017)	Limits development of speaking and writing skills
Skill imbalance	Receptive skills prioritized over productive skills	Graduates lack communicative fluency
Assessment misalignment	Traditional testing dominates despite CEFR adoption (British Council, 2016)	Discourages interactive teaching methods
Teacher methodological constraints	Limited training in communicative and task-based approaches (Mirzayev, 2025)	Continued reliance on traditional pedagogy
Reduced learner motivation	Exam-driven instruction decreases engagement (Dörnyei, 2005)	Lower participation and language use

The results further indicate that learner motivation and engagement are directly affected by the combined influence of curriculum overload, assessment practices, and limited opportunities for authentic communication. Studies conducted in the Uzbek EFL context show that students demonstrate higher levels of participation and confidence when communicative tasks and culturally relevant content are incorporated into instruction^{28, 29}. However, such practices remain inconsistent across institutions.

The results demonstrate that the challenges identified in EFL teaching at linguistic universities are systemic and interrelated rather than isolated. Curriculum design, assessment models, teacher preparation, and learner motivation collectively shape instructional outcomes. These findings provide a strong foundation for the subsequent discussion, where the implications of these results are interpreted in relation to contemporary EFL theory and the specific conditions of higher education in Uzbekistan.

Discussion. The findings of this theoretical analysis confirm that the challenges identified in EFL teaching at linguistic universities in Uzbekistan are not isolated pedagogical issues but rather interconnected systemic problems. One of the most significant points emerging from the results is the persistent gap between officially declared communicative goals and actual classroom practices. This discrepancy reflects a broader pattern observed in many EFL contexts where curricular reforms emphasize communicative competence, yet institutional assessment systems and teaching traditions continue to prioritize form-focused instruction. As Richards argues³⁰, meaningful change in language education cannot occur unless curriculum, methodology, and assessment are aligned within a coherent

pedagogical framework. The imbalance in the development of language skills, particularly the limited emphasis on speaking and writing, can be interpreted as a consequence of examination-oriented instruction. Similar tendencies have been documented in international EFL research, where productive skills are often marginalized due to their perceived difficulty in assessment and classroom management. In the Uzbek context, this issue is further intensified by large class sizes and rigid syllabi, which restrict opportunities for interactive language use. As a result, students may demonstrate adequate theoretical knowledge of English but struggle to apply it in real communicative situations, undermining the primary objectives of linguistic education.

Assessment practices emerge as another critical factor shaping instructional outcomes. The results indicate that despite the formal adoption of CEFR descriptors, assessment systems remain largely incompatible with communicative language teaching principles. This finding supports previous observations that superficial alignment with international standards often leads to methodological inconsistency rather than genuine pedagogical improvement. From a theoretical perspective, assessment should function as an integral component of the learning process, reinforcing instructional goals rather than contradicting them³¹. Without meaningful reform in assessment practices, attempts to implement communicative and task-based methodologies are likely to remain limited in scope.

Teacher preparedness and professional development also play a decisive role in shaping EFL instruction in linguistic universities. The findings suggest that many instructors possess strong linguistic competence but face challenges in adopting innovative pedagogical approaches due to insufficient methodological support. This situation

²³ Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

²⁴ British Council. (2015). *The English effect: The impact of English, what it's worth to the UK and why it matters to the world*. British Council.

²⁵ Khamzayeva, M. (2025). Assessing speaking skills in teaching English as a Foreign Language. *Educational Research in Universal Sciences*. <https://erus.uz/index.php/er/article/view/2603>

²⁶ Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

²⁷ Mirzayev, A. (2025). The main problems of using task-based language teaching method in EFL classes in Uzbekistan higher education system. *International Journal of Science and*

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²⁸ Mansurov, O. (2025). Enhancing speaking skills through task-based learning in Uzbek EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence*. <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/ijai/article/view/115086>

²⁹ Umurov, O. U. (2025). Research on EFL students' and teachers' attitudes toward English vocabulary learning in Uzbekistan. *Worldly Journals*. <https://worldlyjournals.com/index.php/ztydq/article/view/4951>

³⁰ Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and performance. *REL C Journal*, 48(1), 7–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690059>

³¹ Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

aligns with Dörnyei's assertion³² that institutional constraints can significantly influence teacher motivation and instructional choices. In contexts undergoing rapid educational reform, such as Uzbekistan, continuous professional development is essential to ensure that teachers are equipped not only with linguistic knowledge but also with practical strategies for implementing learner-centered instruction. Learner motivation, as highlighted in the results, appears to be closely linked to instructional design and assessment practices. When students perceive language learning as primarily exam-driven, their engagement and willingness to communicate decrease. Conversely, the incorporation of communicative tasks and culturally relevant content has been shown to enhance participation and confidence among EFL learners. This finding resonates with contemporary motivational theories, which emphasize the importance of meaningful interaction and relevance in sustaining learner engagement (Dörnyei, 2005; Mansurov, 2025). In linguistic universities, where students are expected to achieve high levels of communicative competence, addressing motivational factors is particularly crucial.

Overall, the discussion underscores the need for a holistic and context-sensitive approach to EFL teaching reform in linguistic universities. Isolated methodological changes are unlikely to yield significant improvements unless they are supported by coherent curriculum design, assessment reform, and sustained teacher development. By situating the findings within both international EFL theory and the specific realities of Uzbekistan's higher education system, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural and pedagogical factors shaping foreign language education. These insights provide a conceptual foundation for the concluding section, which outlines key implications and recommendations for improving EFL teaching practice in linguistic universities.

Conclusion. This theoretical-analytical study has examined contemporary issues in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at linguistic universities and language faculties within the context of higher education in Uzbekistan. Drawing on both international scholarship and locally relevant research, the article has identified a set of interconnected pedagogical and institutional challenges that

continue to shape EFL instruction despite ongoing educational reforms. The analysis demonstrates that one of the most persistent problems lies in the misalignment between officially stated curricular goals and actual classroom practices. Although communicative competence and CEFR-aligned outcomes are emphasized at the policy level, instructional and assessment practices frequently remain examination-oriented and form-focused. This contradiction limits opportunities for meaningful language use and hinders the development of productive skills, particularly speaking and academic writing, which are central to linguistic education.

Another important conclusion concerns the imbalance in language skill development and assessment practices. The predominance of receptive-skill-oriented instruction and traditional testing formats has been shown to undermine communicative language teaching principles. Without substantial reform in assessment systems, attempts to introduce communicative and task-based methodologies are unlikely to result in sustainable improvement. The findings further indicate that teacher methodological preparedness and continuous professional development are crucial factors influencing instructional effectiveness in linguistic universities. The study also highlights learner motivation as a key component of successful EFL instruction. When language learning is perceived as test-driven and disconnected from real communicative needs, student engagement declines. Conversely, the integration of communicative tasks, culturally relevant content, and learner-centered approaches has the potential to enhance motivation and participation, thereby improving learning outcomes.

Our observations come to the point that improving EFL teaching in linguistic universities in Uzbekistan requires holistic and context-sensitive approach. Curriculum design, assessment practices, teacher education, and institutional support must be addressed collectively rather than in isolation. While the present study is limited by its nature and lack of empirical data, it provides a solid conceptual foundation for future research and offers pedagogically grounded insights that may inform policy decisions and instructional practices in higher education EFL contexts.

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³² Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Lawrence Erlbaum.