

Foreign Language Policy Within “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030”: National Frameworks, EMI (English-Medium Instruction), And The Integration Of Digital Infrastructure; Indicators: Coverage And Use Of Digital Resources

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Abstract: This article examines how foreign language education policy in Uzbekistan can align with the national digital transformation agenda set out in “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030.” It advances a policy-and-practice framework that integrates national language planning, English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher and professional education, and the build-out of digital infrastructure and analytics. Drawing on documentary analysis of national strategies and decrees, sector reports, and EMI guidance, the study articulates measurable indicators—specifically coverage (the reach of EMI and digital access across regions and sectors) and use of digital resources (engagement with learning platforms, open educational resources, and AI-enabled tools). Conceptually, the paper argues that foreign language policy and digital policy are mutually constitutive: language objectives require robust connectivity, platforms, and data governance, while digitalization magnifies the returns to English and other foreign languages in research, trade, and innovation. Empirically informed discussion outlines the current momentum behind EMI and internationalization, identifies systemic bottlenecks in teacher development and regional equity, and proposes an implementation model that blends national frameworks with institutional autonomy, continuous professional development, and data-driven quality assurance. The contribution is twofold: a sector-specific theory of change for foreign language policy under conditions of rapid digitalization, and an indicator set that can be operationalized by ministries and universities to monitor progress and steer investment.

Keywords: Digital Uzbekistan – 2030; language policy; English-Medium Instruction (EMI); higher education; digital infrastructure; learning analytics; coverage; digital resource use; OER; teacher development.

Introduction: The accelerated digital transformation envisioned by “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030” positions education—and within it, language learning—as a strategic lever for productivity, social inclusion, and international competitiveness. The strategy emphasizes universal, affordable connectivity, platformization of public services, and the diffusion of digital tools into priority sectors including education and healthcare. These priorities create a structural demand for foreign language competencies, particularly English, which functions as the operating language of global research collaboration, software ecosystems, and cross-border professional mobility. The same logic works in reverse: the returns on investment in broadband, cloud services, and e-learning rise when learners possess the linguistic access

needed to utilize international resources, participate in open science, and engage in transnational labor markets. In this sense, foreign language policy and digital policy are complements, and their coordination is central to translating infrastructure into human capital outcomes.

Uzbekistan’s broader development agenda couples this digital push with ambitious targets for access, quality, and internationalization in education. Public communications around the “Uzbekistan-2030” strategy specify higher education expansion and quality benchmarks, including institutional rankings and accreditation goals that, in practice, depend on stronger English proficiency among faculty and students, as well as on the growth of EMI programs, joint degrees, and international publication activity.

These macro-level objectives cascade into meso- and micro-level policy tasks: updating standards, revising teacher preparation, and equipping institutions with interoperable platforms for content delivery, assessment, and analytics.

At the same time, a distinct policy line targets foreign language learning directly. Presidential initiatives in recent years have prioritized early foreign language exposure, teacher upskilling, and new institutional arrangements to coordinate reform—most notably the establishment of a national agency to promote foreign language learning. Such measures aim to raise system-wide capacity for curriculum design, materials development, and assessment while concentrating resources on the professional growth of language teachers. The policy logic links language skills to employability and international engagement and recognizes that the technological substrate—devices, bandwidth, platforms—must be aligned to realize these benefits at scale.

Within higher education, EMI has emerged as an instrument for internationalization, talent attraction, and graduate employability. Evidence from recent studies in Uzbek universities indicates growing uptake of EMI and generally positive attitudes among instructors, alongside persistent challenges in academic vocabulary, disciplinary discourse, and assessment practices adapted to multilingual cohorts. Complementary guidance produced for the Uzbek context has begun to codify the pedagogical and professional competencies required for EMI teaching, underscoring the importance of lesson design for comprehension, scaffolding of academic language, and formative feedback. Together, these developments move EMI beyond a symbolic choice of language and toward a structured approach to teaching and learning.

Bringing these threads together, this article asks how foreign language policy can be orchestrated with “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030,” how EMI should be situated within national frameworks, and how digital infrastructure and analytics can be mobilized to monitor and improve outcomes. It proposes an indicator set focused on coverage and digital resource use and presents an implementation model that unites policy, institutional capacity, and data governance.

The study adopts a qualitative policy-and-practice synthesis. First, it undertakes documentary analysis of national strategic materials publicly available on government and institutional portals to extract the digital transformation targets most salient to education and to identify explicit or implicit dependencies on foreign language competencies. Second, it examines ministerial and presidential communications that

define foreign language priorities, institutional arrangements, and teacher development incentives, focusing on their implementational feasibility in a digitalizing system. Third, it reviews the EMI literature specific to Uzbekistan and cognate contexts to surface implementation challenges and competency frameworks that can be localized. The selection principle emphasized sources with institutional authority or peer-reviewed credibility.

To bridge strategy and implementation, the article introduces an indicator architecture designed for ministries and higher education institutions. Coverage is defined along two axes. The first is programmatic coverage: the proportion of students enrolled in EMI courses or programs at the tertiary level, disaggregated by discipline, region, and institutional type, and complemented by early exposure measures in general education where relevant. The second is infrastructural coverage: the degree to which institutions, departments, and schools have reliable access to bandwidth meeting pedagogy-appropriate thresholds; the ratio of learners to functional devices; and the availability of licensed or open digital learning environments that support multilingual content and analytics. Use of digital resources refers to engagement metrics that capture whether infrastructure is converted into learning. These include active hours in the learning management system per learner per week; completion rates and time-on-task for digital modules; uptake of open educational resources (downloads, remixes, localizations); frequency and quality of interaction with machine-translation and AI-assisted writing tools within academic integrity guidelines; and participation in virtual mobility, such as online international learning projects.

Data collection for these indicators can leverage platform logs, authentication systems, and institutional research units. To safeguard validity, institutions should triangulate administrative data with learning analytics dashboards and periodic survey instruments measuring perceived accessibility, self-efficacy in digital learning, and language anxiety. Because resource distribution is uneven across regions, all metrics should be disaggregated by geography, gender, and socioeconomic markers to expose equity issues. Although the present article does not report a statistical evaluation, it treats indicators as decision tools: they allow ministries to target investment and enable universities to tune pedagogy and support services, creating a feedback loop between policy and practice.

The first finding is conceptual: when positioned within “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030,” foreign language policy functions as an amplifier of digital investment.

Infrastructure without language access risks underutilization; language initiatives without infrastructure risk small-scale, elite benefits. The joint optimization of these policy strands shifts focus from inputs to interactions. In a university that migrates to cloud-based learning environments and virtual laboratories, EMI programs unlock global resources—open textbooks, MOOCs, code repositories, and datasets—while digital platforms provide the scaffolding necessary to contextualize and assess learning. The two together support knowledge transfer into local industries and public services, exactly the effects sought by the national strategy's emphasis on modern, efficient, and inclusive digital systems.

A second result concerns governance. National frameworks should articulate ends and guardrails rather than prescribe a single path. At the policy level, ministries can define EMI eligibility criteria anchored in readiness diagnostics: evidence of faculty language and pedagogy competencies, student support systems for academic English, and guaranteed access to fit-for-purpose digital infrastructure. Accreditation bodies can embed language-in-education standards into program reviews, verifying that course design addresses comprehension and assessment fairness for multilingual cohorts. Simultaneously, institutions require autonomy to sequence reforms in line with their disciplinary profiles and regional realities. A medical university may prioritize EMI in basic sciences supported by simulation software and OER, while a teacher-training institute may phase EMI more cautiously as it invests in staff development and bilingual materials. The mechanism that reconciles national ambition with local context is a staged authorization model: programs that meet readiness thresholds proceed with EMI; others participate in a structured pathway combining intensive English for Academic Purposes, content-language integrated modules, and blended delivery that builds toward full EMI.

Teacher development is the pivotal capacity. Evidence from Uzbek higher education suggests that instructors value EMI for its career and mobility benefits but face recurrent challenges in academic vocabulary, genre-specific writing, and dialogic teaching in English. This is not a deficit of intelligence but a function of the cognitive load imposed by teaching complex content in a second language and by managing heterogeneous student proficiency. Competency frameworks tailored to Uzbekistan already exist and should be institutionalized as the basis for promotion, mentoring, and communities of practice. These frameworks emphasize lesson design for comprehensibility, interactive techniques to check understanding,

formative assessment that privileges clarity over native-like accuracy, and reflective practice anchored in peer observation. When embedded in digital platforms, these competencies can be cultivated through micro-credentials that reward incremental progress and through analytics that help instructors calibrate pace and language scaffolding.

The indicator set proposed here operationalizes the dual aims of equity and excellence. Programmatic coverage captures whether EMI and enriched foreign language offerings are reaching students beyond capital-city flagships, extending into regional universities and vocational colleges. Infrastructural coverage verifies that technology-dependent pedagogy is viable; without stable connectivity and device access, EMI risks becoming performative, disadvantaging precisely those students whom digital policy intends to include. Use-of-resources metrics translate access into behavior and learning: if learning-management data reveal low active hours or high dropout from digital modules, the appropriate remedy may be targeted academic English support, redesigned tasks that reduce extraneous load, or localized OER that connect concepts to local contexts. Monitoring must also include integrity. The increasing availability of AI-assisted writing tools necessitates transparent guidelines that permit learning-oriented use—idea generation, language feedback—while upholding authorship norms and disciplinary standards. Analytics that flag abrupt shifts in discourse sophistication or stylometric anomalies can trigger supportive interventions rather than punitive default responses.

Equity requires granular attention. Regional bandwidth disparities can be neutralized with offline-capable courseware, deliberate scheduling of synchronous sessions at bandwidth-friendly times, and device-lending pools that are tracked and replenished. For learners with disabilities, digital accessibility compliance—captioning, keyboard navigation, alternative text—is not optional, and EMI must be paired with universal design for learning so that second-language processing demands do not compound barriers. Gender gaps can be addressed by providing safe online spaces for practice, mentorship networks, and flexible pacing options that accommodate caregiving responsibilities.

Quality assurance links the micro-data of platforms to the macro-targets of the national strategy. When a university aligns its program dashboards with ministerial indicator definitions, it becomes possible to aggregate a national view of progress without suppressing local nuance. For example, coverage indicators disaggregated by discipline illuminate where EMI adds most value—internationalized STEM fields

may show faster gains—while resource-use indicators can signal where content localization or bilingual supports are needed. The policy benefit is agility: resources can be shifted toward bottlenecks, and successful models can be scaled purposefully rather than by anecdote.

The economic and reputational incentives for EMI are real, but the risks are equally concrete if implementation races ahead of capacity. In settings where faculty development lags, EMI can depress comprehension, narrow participation, and erode assessment validity. The mitigation is methodological clarity: define learning outcomes that separate content mastery from language form; adopt rubrics that reward disciplinary reasoning expressed in comprehensible English; and offer parallel support in academic writing and oral communication. Over time, as faculty and students internalize disciplinary English, the proportion of fully English-medium courses can rise. Where stakes are high—for instance, in clinical instruction or legal education—bilingual models may remain appropriate, with English used for literature engagement and research reporting, and the state language used for practice-critical interactions. Such calibrated bilingualism is consistent with national language development objectives and protects public-interest outcomes.

At the system level, Uzbekistan's internationalization targets—expanding higher-education participation and improving the position of institutions in global rankings and accreditation—depend on cohesive language-and-digital policy. Rankings and accreditation reward research output, international student ratios, and graduate outcomes, all of which correlate with English proficiency and with the presence of interoperable platforms that enable collaboration and visibility. By embedding EMI readiness and digital coverage into funding and accountability frameworks, policymakers can avoid isomorphic mimicry—declaring EMI without building capability—and move toward demonstrable gains in learning and employability.

Finally, coordination mechanisms matter. Inter-ministerial working groups that include higher education, public education, digital technologies, and labor can steward the indicator architecture and align procurement with pedagogical requirements. Public-private partnerships with reputable content providers and EdTech firms should be structured to ensure data sovereignty and sustainability; contracts must avoid vendor lock-in and secure APIs for future integration. Professional associations can host EMI practice exchanges and certify micro-credentials. Importantly, communications must frame EMI not as an erosion of national identity but as an instrument for opportunity,

while affirming the development of the state language across domains—a balance that recent language policy signals have emphasized.

Foreign language policy becomes transformative when it is treated as a design problem spanning standards, pedagogy, and infrastructure rather than as a single decision about language of instruction. Within the architecture of “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030,” the most effective path blends national frameworks that set outcomes and equity commitments with institutional autonomy to sequence EMI and invest in staff development. The practical engine of improvement is data: coverage indicators ensure that opportunity is widely distributed, and use-of-resources metrics ensure that infrastructure is converted into engagement and learning. EMI's success depends on disciplined readiness checks, robust teacher development grounded in context-specific competencies, and careful assessment design that protects validity while encouraging disciplinary English. When these elements are synchronized through interoperable platforms and transparent analytics, digital investment accelerates language outcomes, and language capability in turn unlocks the value of digital ecosystems—in research, innovation, and employability. The resulting system is not only more internationalized but also more inclusive, capable of widening participation without diluting standards, and resilient to technological and labor-market change.

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