

# ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

July, 2023

## THE CHALLENGE

Under the umbrella of the English Speaking Nation initiative, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE) envisions a transformative educational system. By 2030, this system aims to foster grade 11 graduates who possess at least a B1 level proficiency in English as measured by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages.

To realize this ambitious goal, MoPSE acknowledges the importance of enhancing both the language proficiency of English educators and the effectiveness of their teaching methods. Additionally, the Ministry is committed to providing students and teachers with a comprehensive, high-quality suite of English teaching and learning materials. These materials will be meticulously interconnected across different grades and levels, providing a cohesive learning experience aligned with national standards. Leveraging the significant contributions made by MoPSE partners, the USAID Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program (UEEP) was strategically designed to enhance and support current initiatives.

## THE SOLUTION

Developing the standards for EFL education is a major step towards the Uzbekistan's vision of an English-speaking nation by 2030. MoPSE experts and Program technical advisors developed a set of EFL standards as the basis of a standards-based curriculum. This brief provides an overview of the development and review of EFL student learning standards for grades 1-11.

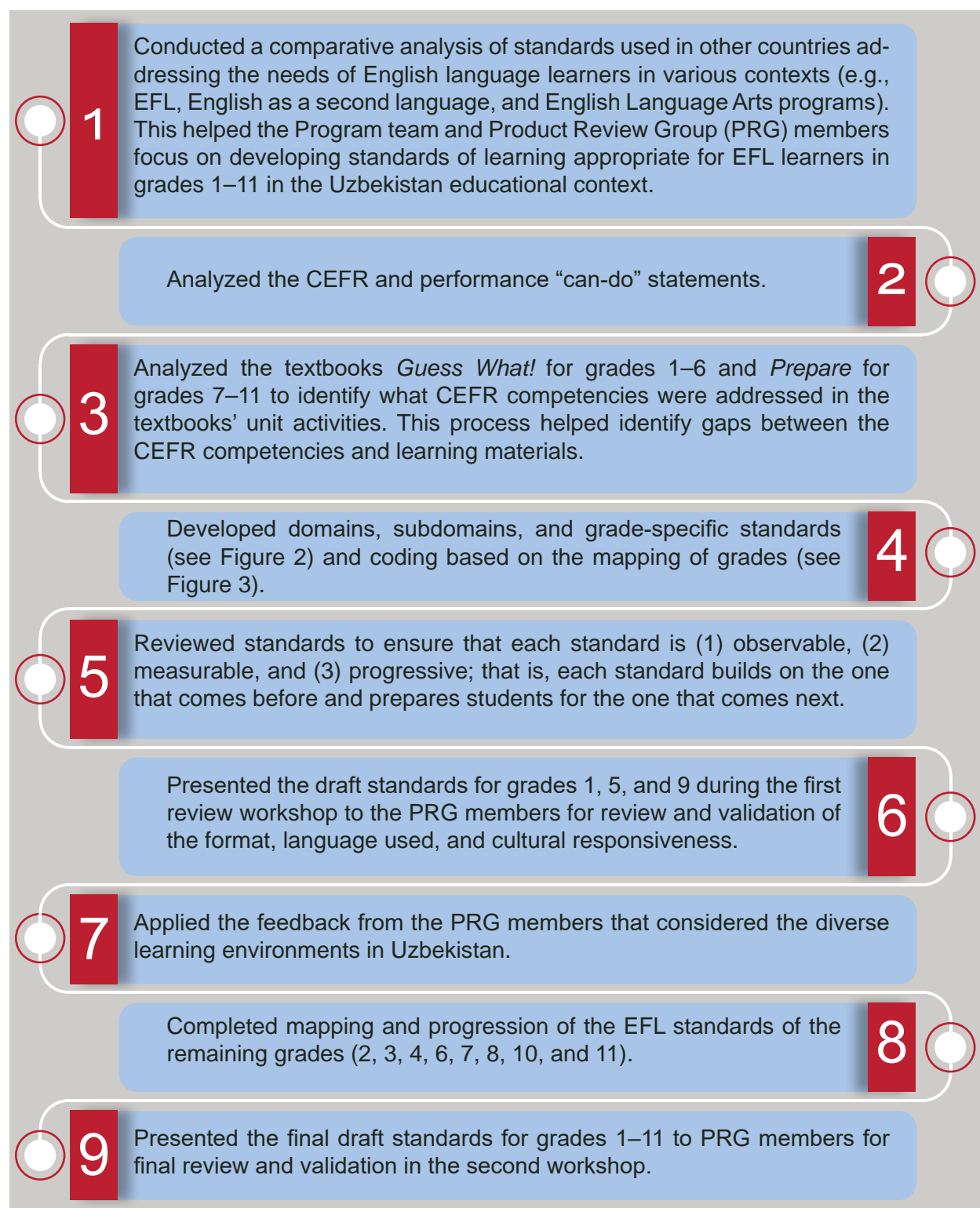
EFL student learning standards, referred to in this brief as standards, are the English-language learning goals for what students should know and be able to do in English at each grade level.

Standards help inform teachers of what content to teach, what language teaching methodologies to apply, and what learning materials would be appropriate for their students. Standards serve as guidelines for the curriculum and help in the selection or development of textbooks and learning materials that will best help students meet the standards-based learning goals. Standards also provide guidance for assessment of what are the minimum expectations of learning for all students, so that they are fair, measurable, and useful to teachers, students, and parents. It is important to keep in mind that standards do not describe or mandate any teaching practice, curriculum, or assessment method; however, the standards guide them.



## THE STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

The following is an overview of the standard development process over a 6-month period.



## THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE STANDARDS

The standards and textbook series for EFL were two key elements of a standards-based curriculum to meet the goals of improving EFL teaching and learning. The Program and MoPSE developed learning standards aligned with *Guess What!* and *Prepare*, utilizing the CEFR, which was used in Uzbekistan prior to the implementation of the Program.

The standards were written for EFL as a subject in the Uzbekistan school curriculum and were devised to accommodate academic progression from grades 1-11. To develop the standards for EFL, the Program first developed a template that drew from the CEFR levels and that was based on (1) the needs of learners in EFL contexts; (2) the range of skills and content typical of EFL coursebooks; (3) the goals specified by the MoPSE. The Program then mapped the content of the *Guess What!* (Grades 1-6) and *Prepare* (Grades 7-11) series of student books for all grades against the CEFR-level benchmarks (A1-B1) and across each domain (speaking, listening, reading, writing, and linguistic) to develop a template to align the textbooks and standards. The CEFR levels, their overall descriptions, and their correspondence to each grade level are shown in Figure 1<sup>1</sup>.

The CEFR is a performance framework of reference that uses benchmarks based on “can-do statements.” These statements describe what language learners typically can do with the language at various levels and in different contexts. This allows for flexibility and creativity for both curriculum developers and classroom teachers in determining methodology, content, and activities that meet the standards. There are no specific or prescribed content requirements. The use of the CEFR provides a meaningful and useful point of reference that is understood globally and informs both instruction and assessment.

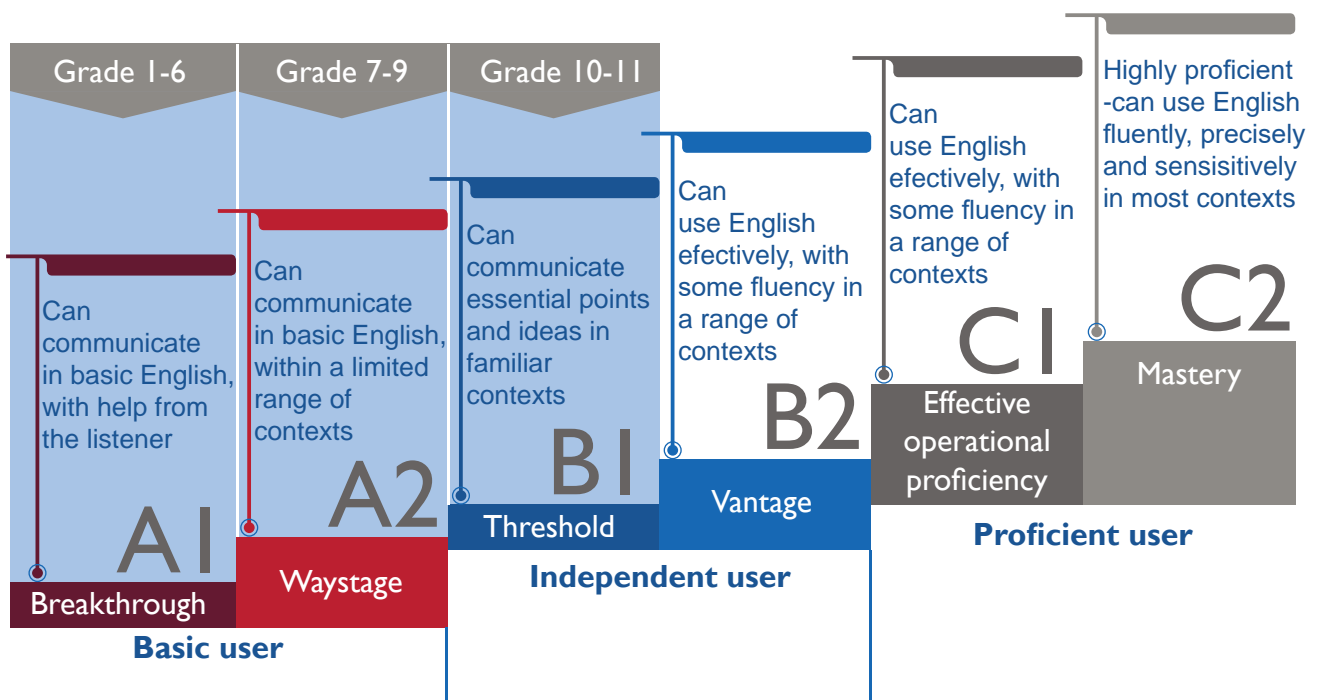


Figure 1. CEFR descriptors and equivalency of grade levels in Uzbekistan

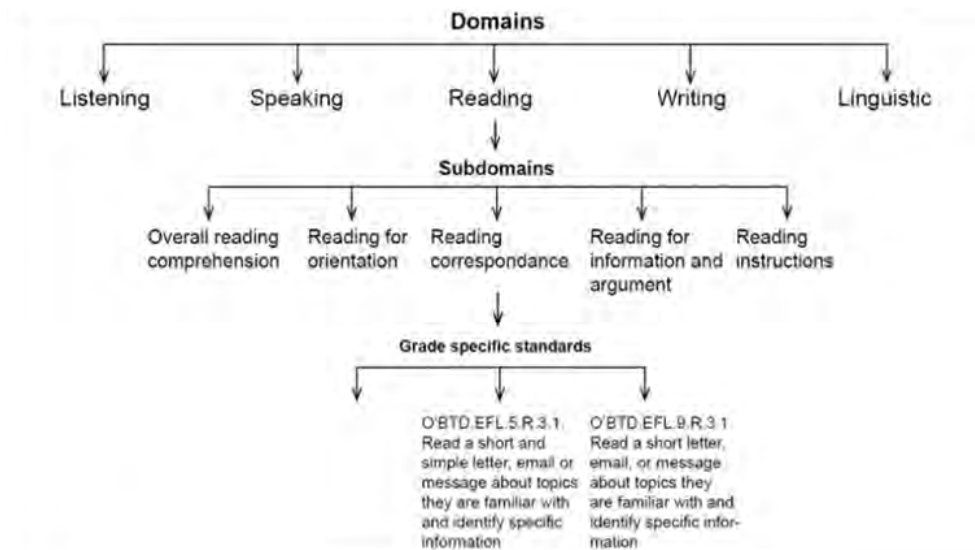
<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions#:~:tex=t=The%20CEFR%20organises%20language%20proficiency,needs%20of%20the%20local%20context>

The Program (1) devised the organization, coding, and wrote the EFL student standards and (2) engaged the PRG members in the review and validation of the standards.

## ORGANIZATION AND CODING OF EFL STANDARDS OF LEARNING

**Figure 2** shows a graphic with the five domains of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and linguistic (grammar and vocabulary). Each domain is divided into subdomains and grade-specific standards. The chart shows examples for grades 5 and 9 to demonstrate standard progression across different grade levels.

**Figure 2.** EFL standards organization

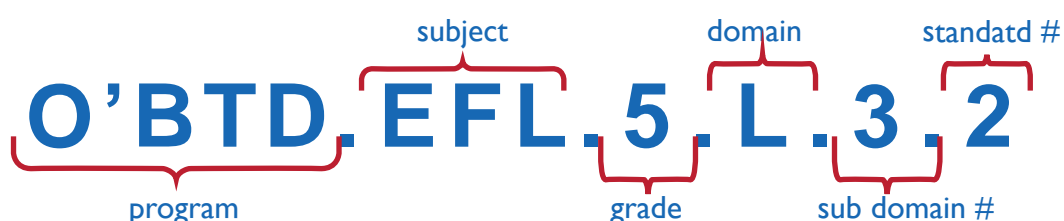


To provide consistency in coding of educational standards, the coding of 2022 EFL Standards follows a specific pattern. The Program included the identifiers listed here and illustrated in Figure 3.

Coding of the EFL Standards:

- Program (O'BDT)
- Subject (EFL)
- Grade (will vary 1-11)
- Domain (will vary: L=Listening, S=Speaking, R=Reading, W=Writing, Ling=Linguistic)
- Subdomain number (will vary)
- Standard number (will vary)

**Figure 3.** Coding of the EFL standards



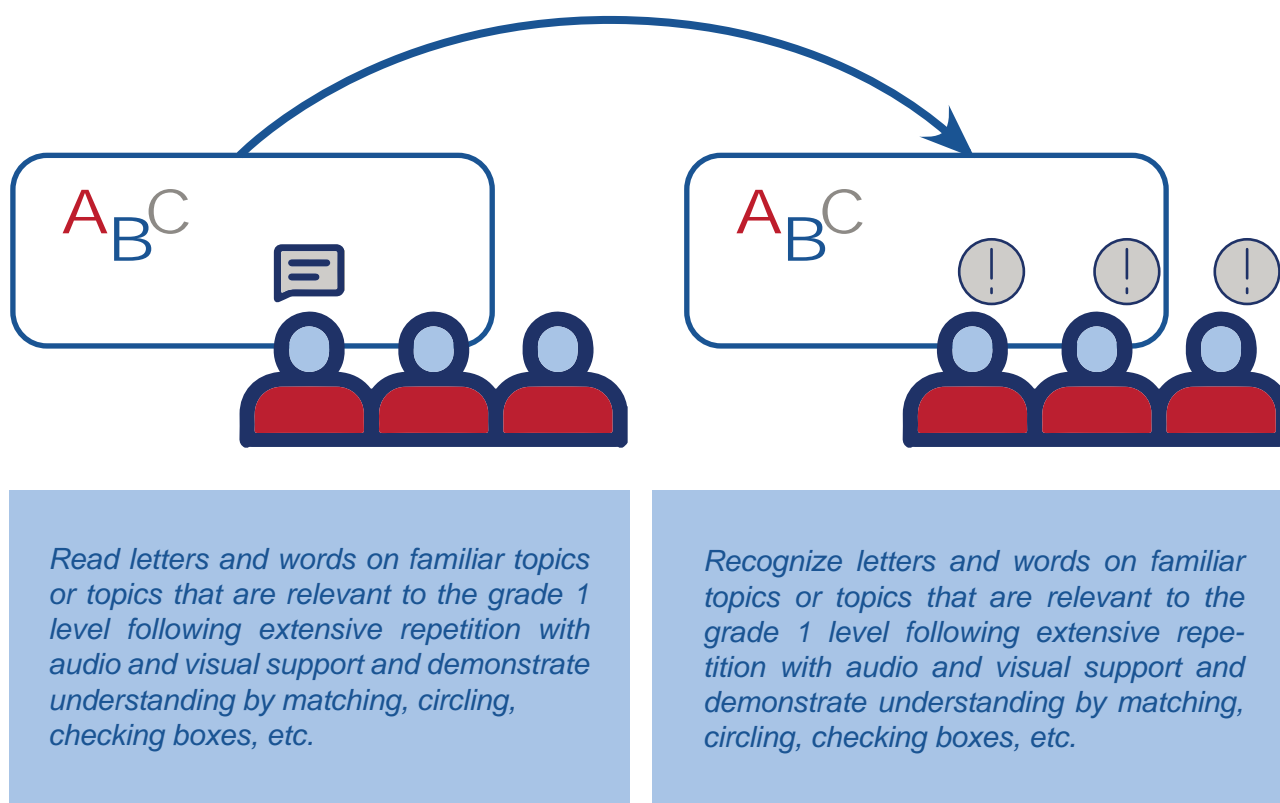
Descriptions of this coding system and organization of the standards are provided in the teacher's guides in the *Guess What!* and *Prepare* series, as well as in the teacher support videos produced by the Program.

## BUILDING CAPACITY

A critical aspect to the standards development process was the feedback from educational experts in Uzbekistan. The MoPSE identified, among the best English language teachers and teacher educators to serve as members of the PRG. All were English language proficient and had experience teaching and supervising EFL instructors at the primary, secondary, and/or university levels.

The PRG reviewed and validated the EFL standards for grades 1-11 in a series of workshops. They reviewed the standards for each grade level and the progression of the student standards from grade to grade. The PRG considered the appropriateness, progression, implementation, and clarity of the standards, as well as potential challenges and opportunities. They confirmed that the standards were grade appropriate, rigorous, and applicable.

The most significant feedback from the review process is the inclusion of reading in grade one. Some PRG members felt that students in grade one should not be required to read because they are just beginning to develop literacy skills in their first language. Other members of the PRG felt that students in grade one should be required to read and that they can read in a second language while developing literacy in their first. After much deliberation, further research, and because standards represent the minimum of what students should be able to do by the end of each grade level, the team decided to change the wording



By making the change “read” to “recognize”, students will be able to begin to develop literacy in English without the burden of having to decode until grade 2 once their first language literacy skills are more firmly established.

Workshop activities built the capacity of MoPSE and PRG members to review and sustain the development of a standards-based curriculum for EFL in grades 1-11, using the current tools and resources provided by the Program.

## THE IMPACT

The international textbook series *Guess What!* and *Prepare* provided a framework for mapping EFL standards. These standards can serve as a valuable reference for the development of teaching and learning materials, as well as for assessing student learning. Additionally, the standards that were developed can be considered when developing future curricula. It is important to note that standards must be regularly evaluated and modified to meet the evolving needs and cultural and linguistic contexts of students in Uzbekistan. Implementing a standards-based curriculum is a positive step towards achieving Uzbekistan's goal of becoming an English-speaking nation by 2030. However, sustained support and capacity-building are necessary to ensure that approaches to English language education are culturally appropriate, effective, and responsive to the educational needs and goals of Uzbekistan's multilingual and diverse population. By building on the foundation of the standards-based curriculum and continuing to tailor approaches to the unique needs of Uzbekistan's students, the country can make significant progress towards achieving its goal of becoming a proficient English-speaking nation by 2030.

**DEVELOPED**  
Grade 1-11  
EFL Standards



**BUILT CAPACITY**  
of PRG members to  
review standards



**DEVELOPED**  
Online Digital  
Platform for teachers  
to access the  
Standards



## NEXT STEPS

Although the MoPSE has used a standards-based document to guide teachers in all subjects, the concept of a standards-based curriculum aligned with teaching and learning materials and student learning assessments tied to the standards by grade level are new developments for the teaching of English in grades 1-11.

To support the successful implementation of EFL standards MoPSE may track and review the implementation of the EFL standards by piloting the standards at the school level to ensure the users (i.e., EFL teachers, students, parents, policymakers, teacher trainers, testing and assessment developers) can fully benefit from having the standards by grade levels.



1. Make the EFL student standards for all grade levels available to teachers to help sustain current gains and build the capacity of teacher educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers i.e. translate and disseminate, promote online resources, train teachers.



2. Collect teacher and student feedback on the new textbooks and their alignment with standards.



3. Review and revise standards as needed after certain period of utilization—usually every 3 to 5 years, with input of relevant stakeholders.





Photos from workshops on developing standards-based curriculum and instructional materials.

### Program Summary:

USAID partners with the Government of Uzbekistan to enhance student learning in English, information and communication technology, reading and mathematics. The USAID UEEP supports the MoPSE to revise student learning standards, provide new teaching and learning materials and comprehensive teacher training aligned to these standards, and conduct rigorous monitoring and research. Working closely with the Ministry, our consortium – led by RTI International includes Florida State University and Mississippi State University – brings the experience and expertise of international and local experts to drive effective Program implementation. Together, we aim to foster student engagement and improve learning outcomes.



