

# Assessment of Language Proficiency in Azerbaijan Based on International Experience

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**Abstract.** Language proficiency assessment is considered one of the most significant issues in the world. The paper investigates language acquisition and assessment and its adaptation to international standards with the application of ICT. Current international standards in the field of evaluation of language skills have been analysed. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), used in Europe and more than 40 countries for language learning and assessment, has been extensively analysed. In the study, the IELTS and TOEFL exam systems designed according to this standard and widely used in many countries, as well as in our country, were investigated to assess the language proficiency of English language learners. The paper also highlights the current problems of studying and evaluating the Azerbaijani language. The role of the "National Curriculum" concept in teaching the Azerbaijani language has been investigated. The current state of the acquisition and assessment of the Azerbaijani language, its adaptation to modern requirements and the role of ICT in this field are shown. Various proposals were given to improve the methods for learning and assessing the Azerbaijani language based on international experience and the application of ICT.

**Keywords:** language proficiency assessment; language skills; Azerbaijani language; CEFR; ICT.

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalisation, where information and communication technologies (ICT) are developing rapidly, special attention is paid to the issues of language development, teaching, and assessment. Various studies have been conducted in this field, and different approaches and methods have been proposed. Studies in this field show that language policy is essential in language development and preservation. Language policy greatly influences language teaching in schools [1]. The importance of language policy in language teaching and acquisition is emphasised, and the enlightenment of language teachers in this area is considered significant [2]. Language teaching is mainly based on a learner-centred communicative approach [3]. The increase of cultural and ethnic diversity within the country leads to the emergence of a multicultural environment. The existence of a purely ethnic state is impossible in a world "invaded" by globalisation

and transnational movements, and language policy and language planning are undoubtedly among the priorities in today's multinational state [4].

The innovations in the field of linguistics in the world require special attention to studying the possibilities of the Azerbaijani language and the further development of the science of linguistics in the country. The rapid growth of ICT and its impact on the development, learning, and assessment of languages requires promoting the work carried out to enrich the Azerbaijani language and the expansion of its possibilities of use to a new level of interlanguage communication. Interlingual communication refers to the changes occurring in the other language due to the influence of one language during the contact of two languages. The integration of languages and the development of science and technology affect the creation of new words and the enrichment of this language. These effects can be positive or nega-

tive. These changes sometimes lead to violations of language norms. Thus, it is necessary to accept significant measures at the state level to protect the purity of the language and carry it to the ranks of developed world languages [5].

Language is essential to state policy, and language construction, teaching, accurate usage, and assessment are among today's priorities. To support the language policy implemented as a constitutional requirement in the country, the Azerbaijani language learning and adapting its teaching and assessment to modern requirements and international standards without damaging the rules, styles, and norms of the literary language is one of the main tasks. For this purpose, we investigated the world experience in the assessment of language skills. During the research, various standards were defined for language proficiency assessment. Among them, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [6] and Interagency Language Roundtable Scale (ILR) [7] are mainly used in the United States of America, Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) [8] is designed for European countries. The above standards form the basis of tests and certification systems designed to assess language skills. These tests are used for immigration, employment, university admissions, college credits, teacher certification, and other purposes [9].

The expansion of economic, political, social, and cultural relationships between the countries, especially in science and education, results in hundreds of foreign citizens migrating to the Republic of Azerbaijan every year to study and work. It is a significant issue that enables foreign citizens visiting our country to learn the Azerbaijani language to facilitate their adaptation to the Azerbaijani society. Several outcomes have been taken in this field. We can see that the "Hello Azerbaijan" project is the most successful one. The main goal of this project is to prepare a set of textbooks for A, B, and C levels following world standards for foreigners who want to learn the Azerbaijani language. As a result of this project, some achievements have been gained in teaching the Azerbaijani language to foreign citizens. Within the framework of this project, the set of teaching aids can be used mainly by foreigners who want to study at the doctoral, master's, or bachelor's level in Azerbaijan's research institutes and universities, as well as by other people

who want to learn the Azerbaijani language fundamentally [10]. However, the teaching and assessment issues of the Azerbaijani language should be considered in a broader aspect. Thus, it is necessary to assess language skills in Azerbaijani by levels while the admission of foreign citizens and native speakers to work and higher educational institutions. Several studies have been conducted in Azerbaijan, and various approaches have been proposed [11]. However, considering the actuality of the problem, there is a need to deepen the research in this field and investigate the issue in a broader aspect. Science, information and technology play an essential role in every field of human life. Even in education, technological developments have opened a new page. The development of ICT leads to a decrease in the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and the emergence of more innovative methods [12]. For this purpose, the article analyses the role of ICT in language learning and assessment. In particular, the impact of e-learning and its components on language learning has been determined. Today, language learning through distance learning is dominant worldwide and can be done through the Internet, multimedia, CDs, DVDs, and other means. Language learning is a complex, time-consuming and, in some cases, expensive process. By using distance education and e-learning, we can reduce costs and save time.

To develop the Azerbaijani language and increase its prestige worldwide, it is appropriate to change approaches to language teaching issues radically. Today, we observe insufficient and incorrect use of the possibilities of our language, as well as a gross violation of the norms of the literary language, usage of everyday speech, foreign words and expressions in television and radio channels, Internet resources, print publications, and advertising media. It causes particular obstructions in protecting the purity of the language. Also, increasing the prestige of the Azerbaijani language among world languages, ensuring its accessibility for people interested in it, and providing its use in the electronic space are vital issues. For this purpose, several noteworthy measures have been taken at the state level, and decrees and orders have been signed. The main goal of our research is to support the language policy implemented by the state.

Thus, the *main goal* of the research is to develop the teaching and assessing mechanisms of the

Azerbaijani language by applying contemporary information and communication technologies based on international experience.

### Literature reviewed

The existing standards in the field of language proficiency assessment are reflected in the studies of many researchers. A study [13] shows how language policy is developed in European countries and investigates the impact of CEFR recommendations in this direction. They consider the CEFR a language proficiency assessment concept rather than a factor influencing language policy. Study [14] shows the role of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in language learning in higher education, particularly in defining learning outcomes and assessing students' language learning abilities. Research [15] highlighted that the standards adopted in language teaching and learning based on the CEFR allow overcoming obstacles to academic and professional mobility due to the inconsistency of diplomas and other educational documents. In [16], the compatibility between the set of CEFR and the Deutsch Englisch Schülerleistungen International (DESI) test system designed for the assessment of the German language was investigated, as well as the time spent on learning a foreign language, the types of learning, compatibility between the native and the studied foreign language were analysed. Also, [17] investigates separate components of language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) according to their characteristics at different levels. For instance, symbolic skills have been studied in various levels of writing in a second language. Studies have even been conducted on individual language skills of the standards. Authors [18] compared ACTFL/ILR and CEFR-based reading tests and concluded that it is possible to correlate ILR/ACTFL-based tests with CEFR-based tests. Thus, the ACTFL Intermediate and CEFR A levels, ACTFL Advanced and CEFR B levels, and ACTFL Superior and CEFR C1 levels are appropriate for each other. Another study compared International English Language Tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, and TOEIC based on the CEFR standard and determined their main differences [19].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### World Experience in Language Proficiency Assessment

Studying the world's language acquisition and evaluation mechanisms, we observe that special attention is paid to language teaching and language skills assessment. When evaluating language skills, an individual's language competence is divided into social and academic. Individuals with social language competence use well-known high-frequency vocabulary and long, simple sentences. In contrast, the academic language level requires academic and specialised vocabulary and more complex sentences [20]. We characterise academic language as more formal and general language as informal/social. This language varies depending on the learner's goal. If a person needs only a language to communicate in his social life, then he is recommended to learn a general language. For other purposes, for instance, to work or study in the academic field, the Academic language is preferred. In this regard, language-level exams are organised in two forms: general and academic.

Different tools and strategies can be used when testing language skills. For instance, tests are used for assessing language skills mainly to check reading comprehension and listening, as well as grammatical knowledge; essays on various topics are considered to determine the level of the vocabulary of writing and grammatical knowledge; and interview is used to assess speaking ability. The methods and tools (tests, essays, interviews and other tasks) used in language proficiency assessment are based on specific standards (CEFR, ACTFL/ILR, etc.).

*The Interagency Language Roundtable Scale (ILR)* was developed by the Foreign Service Institute of the US Department of State in 1968 and has been adopted as the standard for assessing language skills for all US government agencies [7, 21]. The tests designed based on the ILR scale are considered to measure the language skills of US government employees only. The main goal of the ILR scale is the standardisation of test criteria, provision of cooperation in inter-organisational training, testing and translation methodology, and creation of requirements for disseminating new language-related information and practices both in the public arena and abroad.

According to the ILR standard, the minimum language skills that a person should know include listening, reading, speaking, writing, translating and interpreting. According to the ILR standard, people's language skills are assessed on a five-point scale. If a person's language skills significantly exceed one skill level and do not fully satisfy the next level, his score is set with "+" (in the form of 0+, 1+, 2+, 3+ or 4+). Scores can be as-

signed separately for different skills, such as reading, speaking, listening, writing, interpreting, audio interpreting, and intercultural communication. For each skill, the level may be referred to by an abbreviation, for example, S-1 for Speaking Level 1 [21].

The table below demonstrates the levels of the ILR scale and the characteristics and specific requirements of each level [21].

Table 1 – Characteristics of the ILR scale on levels

Levels	Characteristics	User's language skills
<b>ILR level – 0 No proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is the lowest level</li> <li>- the person hasn't any language skills,</li> <li>- is rated as 0/1</li> <li>- corresponds to level A1 of the CEFR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The user knows a limited number of words</li> <li>Can't make sentences and continue a conversation</li> <li>Can only read numbers, person and place names such as street, office, shop, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>ILR level – 1 Elementary proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is called elementary level</li> <li>- is rated with 1+.</li> <li>- the person has some language skills</li> <li>- corresponds to level A2 of the CEFR.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The user can ask and answer questions using simple words and phrases</li> <li>Can introduce yourself during communication</li> <li>Uses simple speech etiquette that conveys politeness</li> <li>Depending on the native speaker's speed and repetitions, the user can understand him.</li> </ul>
<b>ILR level – 2 Limited working proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is called limited working proficiency</li> <li>- is rated with 2/2+ on the scale</li> <li>- corresponds to level B1 of the CEFR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can use business and social expressions</li> <li>They have limited conversations at work about their personal lives</li> <li>For more detailed discussions, they need help</li> </ul>
<b>ILR level – 3 Professional working proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is called professional working proficiency</li> <li>- is rated with 3/3+ on the scale</li> <li>- corresponds to level B2 of the CEFR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The language user can demonstrate the proficiency required.</li> <li>Can speak the language at an average speed</li> <li>Has a sufficiently rich vocabulary.</li> <li>But they pronounce the words with a peculiar intonation and emphasis.</li> </ul>
<b>ILR level – 4 Full professional proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is called full professional proficiency</li> <li>- is considered an acceptable level</li> <li>- is rated with four on the scale</li> <li>- corresponds to level C1 of the CEFR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The language learner can discuss various technical topics such as current events, business, and finance.</li> <li>They rarely make mistakes in pronunciation and grammar</li> <li>Their vocabulary is quite rich</li> <li>They can easily continue their conversation in any situation</li> </ul>
<b>ILR level – 5 Native or bilingual proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is the highest level</li> <li>- is called native or bilingual proficiency</li> <li>- is rated with 4+ on the scale.</li> <li>- corresponds to level C2 of the CEFR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The user's language skills are equivalent to the language proficiency of a native speaker.</li> </ul>

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages standard (ACTFL) is a set of recommendations to improve and assess language pro-

iciency by levels [22]. It was founded in the 1980s as a minor Modern Language Association (MLA) branch based on the ILR scale. Academic

institutions, government agencies, and private corporations worldwide use ACTFL's proficiency tests. The ACTFL has eleven levels for assessing language skills. Five of them are considered basic levels. The primary levels are divided into three sub-levels [22]. The ACTFL scale, based on the ILR scale, has five basic levels (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior and Distinguished), the first 3 of which are divided into three sub-levels (low, middle and high). A graphical description of the ACTFL scale is as follows.

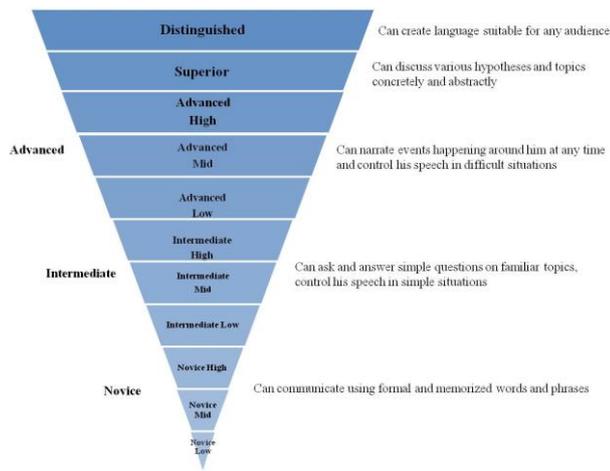


Figure 1 – A graphical description of the ACTFL scale on levels

As seen in Figure 1, the levels described in the ACTFL guidelines cover the appropriate language ability of the user from beginner to fluent level. These guidelines present language abilities at different levels, regardless of where, when, or how the language is learned, and explain the individual's skills at each level. These levels form a hierarchy, each building on the previous level. The guidelines are not based on any specific theory, pedagogical method or curriculum. Furthermore, the guidelines do not describe or recommend any style for individual language learning. The straightforward purpose of instruction is to assess functional language skills. The guidelines are designed for global assessment in academic and professional environments [23].

*The Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR)* is an international standard for teaching and assessing language skills with the support of the Council of Europe and the University of Cambridge [24]. At a symposium held in Switzerland in 1991, the idea of creating a "Common European Framework of References

for Languages " was put forward, and the final official version of the document was published in January 2001. "The Common European Framework of References for Languages - English and French, and later it was translated into about 40 languages worldwide. Thus, CEFR has become the leading international standard in teaching and assessment of language skills [24].

CEFR assesses language skills at six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). Table 1 presents the distribution of language proficiency levels. A language learner may have different indicators of language skills. While the user's writing and reading are low, listening and speaking can show an average result. Thus, in the assessment carried out on levels, the language skills of the language learner are checked separately, and the evaluation is carried out accordingly [25].

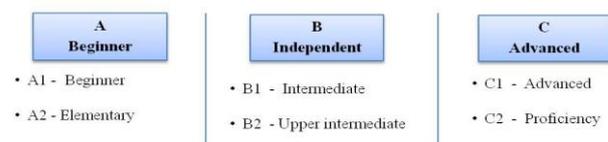


Figure 2 – Distribution of users' language skills in the CEFR by levels

Let's analyse the general characteristics of the levels on the CEFR [25]:

Beginner (A1) – Communicates using simple words and phrases used in everyday life. He can give information about himself and his family, where he lives, and people he knows, and he answers questions clearly and concisely.

Elementary (A2) - He understands frequently used phrases and sentences, explains what he sees, and discusses the events around him. Different from the beginner level, he is not satisfied with making sentences; he can speak on specific topics, and in short, he can divide information.

Intermediate (B1) - He understands standard topics, can control the situation he finds himself in, composes texts on subjects of interest and expresses his opinions relatively quickly. He can express himself while travelling.

Upper intermediate (B2) - He understands the specific idea of a complicated text, including technical discussions and exchanges of ideas in his field. Can communicate with native speakers as comfortably as possible. He can produce clear, detailed text on different subjects and express his opinion on current issues.

Advanced (C1) - Able to understand complex and huge texts and subtext. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce explicit, well-structured, detailed texts on complex topics.

Mastery (C2) - He can easily understand everything he hears or reads. They can summarise information from various oral and written sources and make arguments. He can express himself freely, fluently, and accurately, distinguishing the subtlest shades of meaning of words, even in complex situations.

CEFR focuses on language learning, teaching, and assessment. The essential purpose of the CEFR is to provide language professionals with a standard base and to eliminate obstacles caused by the existence of distinguishable education systems. The CEFR standard uses a "can do" approach to assess language proficiency [26]. This approach assists learners in determining what language skills they are at and what level they have to progress. With the help of this approach, both language learners and language educators can evaluate the level of their students' language skills. This is called Self-Assessment. In "Self-Assessment", language knowledge is assessed under three leading indicators: Understanding, Speaking, and Writing [24, 27].



Figure 3 – "Self-Assessment" Three leading indicators

Based on this division, the CEFR Self-Assessment Table was compiled. The table shows the requirements for each language skill at different levels (levels A1-C2) [28].

Using the CEFR self-assessment table, we can assess the level of our knowledge of the language we are learning, which skills we still need to improve, and what we need to work on.

*Comparison of standards.* Many researchers have investigated the standards designed to assess language skills. Inevitable comparisons were made during the investigation, and their similarities and differences were studied. For instance, the two American scales, ILR and ACTFL, are similar regarding their instructions. Thus, the lowest four of ILR's five basic skill levels—0, 1, 2, and 3—correspond to ACTFL's Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. This includes various subscales within those ranges on both scales. The other ILR levels, 4 and 5, fully correspond to the Superior level designation of ACTFL. A table provided by the American University Center of Provenance shows the following correlations between ILR, CEFR, and ACTFL language proficiency scales [29].

Table 3 – Correspondence between the requirements of the ILR, CEFR and ACTFL [29]

CEFR	ILR	ACTFL
A1	0/0+	NL, NM, NH
A2	1	IL, IM
B1	1+	IH
B2	2/2+	AL, AM, AH
C1	3/3+	S
C2	4/4+	D

Looking at the comparison of the ACTFL and CEFR standards, we observe that although both standards are based on the same goal, language skills assessment, they have some differences. While both language standards form the basis of accredited testing and certification systems in their respective regions, ACTFL focuses primarily on assessing oral skills. At the same time, CEFR is a language teaching methodology.

In other words, CEFR is a document intended for the development of curricula, tests, assessment criteria and teaching materials. CEFR mainly focuses on three language competencies such as reception, interaction and production and five criteria such as range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence, meaning that language competence is measured in terms of the objectives and content the candidate is expected to achieve.

The advantage of CEFR is that it is not designed for a specific language. In using this set of recommendations, the internal linguistic characteristics of each language should be considered.

*Language test systems.* Today, many developed and developing countries have created and successfully implemented examination test systems for their languages designed based on CEFR. For instance, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of German as a Foreign Language (TestDaF), Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), The Czech Language Certificate Examination (CCE), The Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TOCFL), The Test of Russian as a Foreign Language (TPKI/TORFL), Turkish Proficiency Exam (TYS/TPE) and so on [30]. Although the test systems mentioned above are based on the CEFR recommendations, each has requirements, similarities, and differences. To clarify the issue, we compared two world-famous exam systems, i.e. IELTS and TOEFL.

The international exam system IELTS is a British brand, so the system was formed based on the British version of the English language [31]. The IELTS belongs to the British Council, the Australian Universities International Development Program (IDP) and Cambridge University English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). IELTS is officially recognised and accepted by over 10,000 organisations, universities and institutions. Currently, IELTS tests are organised in 121 countries of the world. IELTS test questions are regularly developed and updated by teams of language experts operating in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain and the United States. They work based on test specifications that reflect specific requirements while considering the characteristics of the four IELTS components (writing, reading, listening, speaking). They also guide how to approach the writing process, including selecting appropriate material and questions.

The language test system TOEFL belongs to the USA's Educational Testing Service (ETS) company [32]. TOEFL is accepted by more than 11,000 universities and institutes in more than 150 countries. TOEFL is "the world's most popular and widely used language assessment system" [33]. It was first developed in the United States

1963 to assess non-native speakers' language proficiency. As a test type, it is a standardised English proficiency test administered by the Princeton Educational Testing Service. It is widely used to measure the English language proficiency of non-native students desiring admission to American colleges and universities. One of the most significant achievements of the TOEFL examination system was the launch of a more innovative test in 2005 - the iBTOELF, Internet-based TOEFL. iBTOELF is considered a substantial improvement over previous TOEFL forms and TOEFL CBT (Computer-Based Test). Key features of the iBTOELF include a speaking section with independent and integrated skills tasks, a listening section with longer lectures and conversations, a reading section with test-taker questions, and a summary and writing section for categorising information and completing a chart. Today, TOEFL is an exemplary test for students, undergraduates and postgraduates, teachers and researchers working in universities and higher education institutions who wish to pursue higher education and further develop their research [34].

Table 5 shows the comparison of the IELTS and TOEFL exam systems.

Table 5 – Distinctions between IELTS and TOEFL

IELTS	TOEFL
First, as a British brand, the system was formed based on the British version of the English language.	TOEFL is an American brand, so it is based on the American version of the English language.
The IELTS exam is conducted both on paper and in electronic form.	Although the TOEFL system also has a paper-based exam format, it is mainly conducted electronically.
There are two forms of the IELTS exam: General IELTS for job and migration and Academic IELTS for studying abroad.	As a rule, TOEFL is prepared in an academic format.
The participants' overall score is between 0 and 9 points in the IELTS system. The IELTS test scores for each part are added up and divided by 4.	The results are evaluated between 0 and 120 points in the TOEFL system. The maximum score for the TOEFL parts is 30. At the end, the points of the parts are added.
IELTS tests are held three times a week.	TOEFL is held once a week.

The exam parts are the same in both systems. Both consist of sections of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Both certificates are valid for two years. There is no difference between them regarding difficulty levels [34].

The language level exams (TOEFL, IELTS, TOPIK, TestDaf, etc.) mentioned above are also used in our country to evaluate foreign language skills.

### **The Current Condition and Problems of the Azerbaijan Language Teaching**

The first decade of the 21st century is characterised as a period of radical changes in the educational system of Azerbaijan. 2003-2013 is the implementation period of the reform program based on the II loan agreement with the World Bank [35]. As a result of the mentioned initiatives, many reforms have been implemented in the education system of Azerbaijan. We can point to the "National Curriculum" concept as the most significant result [36]. The "National Curriculum" concept was formed based on new standards. Here, national interests and the teaching of the native language are considered essential issues from the point of view of statehood. Thus, language is the leading indicator of a person's activity, which ensures the formation of an independent, creative and free-thinking personality in society. As the teaching of the mother tongue is an essential tool in the formation of national thinking in the countries of the world, the concept of "National Curriculum" brings the teaching of the mother tongue to the fore [36]. The National Curriculum is based on the Western approach, where language teaching is based on the "four pillars" principle. According to this approach, the four language skills mentioned above are not just language components. They are also considered meta-skills and tools used in all fields of science. In education, meta-skills are understood as qualities such as learning to learn and self-management - that is, social communication skills. Western educators believe that anyone who has mastered these four skills at a high level can be successful in any field of science. Note that most US and European universities accept foreigners based on the results of the TOEFL and IELTS exams. These exams are based on the verification of speech skills. Reading and understanding a problematic scientific mass text, speaking fluently and interestingly, writing according to the norms of the literary language, understand-

ing what you have heard in detail and expressing your opinion are the leading indicators of intelligence. In the curriculum system, several task models are presented to develop reading comprehension and to verify the obtained result: determining the place of the sentence (paragraph) extracted from the text, restoring the sequence of the non-sequential text, defining the cause-and-effect relationships of the events in the text, naming the text and parts of texts, presenting scientific information in the text in the form of graphic details, etc.

Native language teaching in the correct form expands students' communication opportunities and forms their way of thinking, learning, and speaking skills along with the types of speech activity. In an international and national assessment conducted to determine the general development level of education, special attention is paid to mastering the standards of the native language. All this is related to the exceptional role of the mother tongue as a subject in forming personality [35].

One of the shortcomings of the traditional educational system in Azerbaijan before the concept of the "National Curriculum" was teaching the Azerbaijani language based on linguistics rather than language skills. Thus, the methodology for developing and assessing language skills has yet to be constructed. This, in turn, created various problems in language learning and assessment of language skills. Also, the negligence of oral communication skills, especially listening and speaking, makes it challenging for most children and adolescents to express themselves fluently, even in their native language. The mentioned factors create difficulties in ensuring a complete transition to the curriculum system.

Note that there has been a significant increase in the migration of foreigners from other countries to Azerbaijan in recent years. Every year, hundreds of citizens of foreign countries migrate to our country for various purposes (to study, work, establish business relations, etc.). So, the uncertainty in the state of knowledge of the Azerbaijani language among the country's citizens and foreigners and the need to take necessary measures for its elimination is one of the urgent issues. Also, it is essential to create stimulating means (issuance of certificates) and other opportunities for the citizens of the republic and foreigners to develop their knowledge of the Azerbaijani language.

## The Role of ICT in Teaching and Assessing the Azerbaijani Language Proficiency

During the rapid development of ICT, creating a high-tech national economy and information society has been considered one of the priority directions of the country's state policy. ICT has become a significant factor in considerable fields and actively influences states' political, economic, and social activities. It has also impacted the globalisation of the economy and social relations.

The application of ICT in the field of education is of great importance. In particular, thanks to the opportunities provided by contemporary technologies, it is possible to achieve better results in language learning. Studies conducted by language experts show that the application of ICT in language teaching leads to an increase in the quality of learning, the creation of access to existing information and knowledge, the reduction of educational costs, the improvement of the quality and accuracy of academic and scientific texts, and the increase of interest in learning. Also, using ICT enables teachers to assess students' language knowledge and skills. New technological tools allow language learners to communicate, edit texts, express themselves, and produce text quickly and flexibly [12].

English language teachers worldwide use ICT tools during lessons for various purposes, such as improving speech and language skills, increasing professional skills, creating didactic material for working on projects of different levels, and developing information and writing skills. Using multimedia resources is essential to making the lesson more effective and delivering it to the students, especially for forming speaking and listening skills. Thus, achieving better results using computer technology images with special effects and sounds or audiovisual means is possible [37].

The application of ICT should also be used to improve the methodology of teaching and assessment of the Azerbaijani language based on international experience and development mechanisms. However, the lack of Internet resources and electronic textbooks to teach the Azerbaijani language and sufficient information about the Azerbaijani language in the electronic space can create difficulties in developing language assessment methodology and mechanisms.

In this direction, several significant measures have been taken by the state. The Decree approving the "State Program on the use of the Azerbaijani language by the demand of the time and the development of linguistics in the country" is the most apparent sample. In the adopted state program are reflected such issues as systematisation of vocabulary and grammar norms of the Azerbaijani language, provision of more intensive preparation of educational materials for foreign citizens learning the Azerbaijani language and Azerbaijanis who want to learn a foreign language, creation of appropriate Internet resources to ensure flexibility in the correct processing of the Azerbaijani language, Internet resources in the Azerbaijani language, doing work in the field of creating electronic and interactive textbooks, etc. [38].

For the teaching and evaluation of the Azerbaijani language, the creation of a joint information base, the preparation of terminological dictionaries, the creation of Internet resources, electronic and interactive textbooks in the Azerbaijani language, the creation of machine translation systems, and other modern application linguistic technologies are important priority directions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Studies demonstrate that proper language teaching and assessment organisation is essential for language development and preservation. The study focuses on assessing Azerbaijani language skills based on European experience and existing standards and developing new criteria. The following suggestions and recommendations should be considered in this field:

- supporting the realisation of the tasks arising from the language policy implemented in the country;
- elimination of indeterminacy about the Azerbaijani language knowledge of the native speakers and foreigners;
- development of Azerbaijani language teaching and assessment technologies based on international experience and standards for multiple criteria (reading, writing, listening and speaking);
- to create a stimulating environment and opportunities for native speakers and foreigners to develop their Azerbaijani language knowledge;



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