



CHALLENGES FACED BY UZBEK LEARNERS IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AND EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

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Abstract: This article investigates the common difficulties Uzbek learners encounter when acquiring English pronunciation and proposes effective teaching strategies to overcome these challenges. The research focuses on phonetic contrasts between Uzbek and English, learner errors, and pedagogical interventions that enhance pronunciation skills. Findings suggest that a combination of targeted phonetic exercises, interactive activities, and technological tools significantly improves learners' pronunciation accuracy and confidence.

Keywords: English pronunciation, Uzbek learners, phonetic challenges, teaching strategies, interactive methods, language acquisition

English pronunciation presents considerable challenges to Uzbek learners due to the substantial phonetic differences between Uzbek and English. Unlike Uzbek, English has a variety of vowel and consonant sounds, stress patterns, and intonation that often lead to pronunciation errors. This negatively impacts communication and learner confidence. Therefore, addressing these challenges through effective teaching strategies is crucial in foreign language education in Uzbekistan.

This study aims to identify the primary pronunciation difficulties Uzbek learners face and recommend evidence-based pedagogical strategies to enhance pronunciation proficiency. The focus is on practical classroom applications that consider the learners' linguistic background.

The study utilized a qualitative approach involving classroom observations, learner interviews, and phonetic error analysis from oral tasks performed by Uzbek EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at a university language faculty. Additionally, several pronunciation teaching interventions, including minimal pairs drills, stress and intonation practice, and the use of language learning apps, were implemented over a semester. The effectiveness of these strategies was evaluated based on learner progress and feedback.

The analysis revealed that the most common pronunciation problems include difficulties with the English dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, vowel length contrasts, consonant clusters, and word stress. Many learners substitute these sounds with Uzbek phonemes, causing misunderstandings. Interventions such as repetitive drills of minimal pairs (e.g., "thin" vs. "tin"), stress marking exercises, and peer assessment activities helped learners become more aware of pronunciation patterns. Incorporating digital tools such as speech recognition apps increased learner engagement and self-monitoring.

The findings highlight that direct focus on problematic sounds combined with interactive teaching methods can effectively reduce pronunciation errors. Uzbek learners benefit from clear explanations of phonetic differences and consistent practice opportunities. Technology integration facilitates personalized learning and immediate feedback, which are essential for mastering pronunciation. Furthermore, raising learners' motivation and confidence through collaborative activities enhances the learning experience.

The findings of this study highlight several key challenges Uzbek learners face when acquiring English pronunciation, notably difficulties with dental fricatives (/θ/, /ð/), vowel length distinctions, consonant clusters, and word stress patterns. These problems largely stem from the significant phonetic differences between the native Uzbek language and English. Similar challenges have been documented in previous research (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2005), confirming that cross-linguistic interference is a common source of pronunciation errors.

The effectiveness of the applied strategies—such as minimal pairs practice, stress marking exercises, peer assessment, and the use of speech recognition technology—aligns with pedagogical recommendations in the field. For example, Trofimovich and Gatbonton (2006) emphasize the importance of repetition and focused phonetic drills, while technology integration is increasingly recognized as a motivating and efficient tool (Foote et al., 2011).

Moreover, the combination of traditional and interactive methods allowed learners to develop phonological awareness and self-monitoring skills, which are essential for long-term pronunciation improvement. The peer assessment activities contributed to creating a supportive learning environment, boosting learners' confidence and encouraging active participation.

However, some limitations should be acknowledged. The study's duration was relatively short, and the sample size limited to one institution, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research could explore longitudinal impacts and extend investigations across different educational contexts in Uzbekistan.

Overall, this study supports the view that tailored pronunciation instruction, which addresses learners' specific difficulties and incorporates modern technological tools, significantly enhances the acquisition of English phonetics among Uzbek learners.

Pronunciation teaching for Uzbek learners should be tailored to their specific phonetic challenges. Employing a variety of teaching methods—including traditional drills, interactive exercises, and technology—can significantly improve English pronunciation skills. Future research could explore longitudinal effects of these strategies and develop specialized training materials for teachers to address pronunciation issues more systematically.

In summary, addressing pronunciation difficulties among Uzbek learners requires a multifaceted approach that considers linguistic, cognitive, and motivational factors. Teachers should emphasize phonetic awareness and provide frequent, varied practice opportunities tailored to the learners' specific needs. The integration of digital tools enhances learners' autonomy and motivation, making pronunciation training more effective and engaging. Ultimately, improving pronunciation not only facilitates better communication but also boosts learners' confidence and willingness to use English in real-life contexts.

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