

**COMMON DIFFICULTIES UZBEK LEARNERS FACE IN LEARNING
ENGLISH AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola o'zbekzabon o'quvchilarning ingliz tili o'zlashtirish dinamikasidagi to'siqlarni qiyosiy-tipologik jihatdan tadqiq etadi. Ish doirasida fonetik artikulyatsiya, grammatik qurilish hamda lingvomadaniy aspektlar bilan bog'liq bo'lgan tipik xatoliklar klassifikatsiya qilingan. Muallif tomonidan o'quv jarayonidagi kognitiv qiyinchiliklarni bartaraf etishga qaratilgan metodologik yechimlar taklif etiladi. Maqola mazmuni zamonaviy til o'qitish metodikasi bilan shug'ullanuvchi mutaxassislar uchun mo'ljallangan.

Kalit so'zlar: ingliz tili o'rganish; o'zbek tilida nutq; fonetik artikulyatsiya; grammatik xatoliklar; lingvokultural aspektlar; kognitiv qiyinchiliklar; ta'lim metodikasi; taqqosiy-tipologik tadqiqot; o'quv jarayoni

Аннотация: Эта статья рассматривает препятствия, с которыми сталкиваются носители узбекского языка в процессе овладения английским языком с сравнительно-типологической точки зрения. В рамках исследования систематически классифицированы типичные ошибки, связанные с фонетической артикуляцией, грамматическими структурами и лингвокультурными аспектами. Автор предлагает методологические подходы, направленные на преодоление когнитивных трудностей, возникающих в процессе обучения. Содержание статьи предназначено в первую очередь для специалистов и исследователей, занимающихся современными методиками преподавания языков.

Ключевые слова: изучение английского языка; речь на узбекском языке; фонетическая артикуляция; грамматические ошибки; лингвокультурные аспекты; когнитивные трудности; методика преподавания; сравнительно-типологическое исследование; учебный процесс

Annotation: This article examines the obstacles encountered by Uzbek-speaking learners in the process of acquiring English from a comparative-typological perspective. Within the study, typical errors associated with phonetic articulation, grammatical structures and linguocultural dimensions are systematically classified. The author proposes methodological interventions aimed at alleviating cognitive challenges that arise during the learning process. The content of this article is primarily

intended for specialists and researchers engaged in contemporary language teaching methodologies.

Keywords: English language acquisition; Uzbek-speaking learners; phonetic articulation; grammatical errors; linguocultural aspects; cognitive difficulties; teaching methodology; comparative-typological study; learning process

Introduction

English now functions as a primary medium of international communication across various fields, and in Uzbekistan, the importance of English proficiency has grown significantly in recent years. The Uzbek government has implemented numerous educational reforms to enhance English language instruction, recognizing its value for international communication, business, and academic opportunities. However, Uzbek learners encounter specific challenges when acquiring English due to linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical factors [1.30]. (Brown, 2007). This article aims to systematically examine these primary difficulties Uzbek speakers face when learning English and propose evidence-based pedagogical strategies to address these challenges.

Phonological point one of the primary challenges for Uzbek EFL students is rooted in the differing phonological systems of Uzbek and English. Uzbek, with its Turkic linguistic background, features a simplified vowel inventory, lacking the complex set of monophthongs and diphthongs present in English. For instance, the subtle differences between high-front vowels in minimal pairs such as “slip” versus “sleep” and the open-mid back vowels in “dock” versus “duck”, often create significant perceptual and productive difficulties for learners. In addition, certain English consonants present notable obstacles due to their absence in Uzbek. The interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, found in words like “thorough” or “wreath”, are frequently substituted with alveolar plosives or sibilants such as /t/ or /z/. Furthermore, the distinction between the labiovelar approximant /w/ and the voiced labiodental fricative /v/, as seen in contrasts like “wary” versus “vary”, is often blurred, leading to articulatory overlap. This phonetic interference arises from the subconscious transfer of native pronunciation habits to English, often affecting prosodic accuracy (Ellis, 2008). Moreover, in English, many phonemes undergo systematic reduction in rapid or connected speech, a phenomenon that is central to achieving natural rhythm and fluency. For example, in conditional constructions, the auxiliary “would” is frequently shortened: I would go /aɪ wʊd/ may be realized as /aɪ wəd/ or /aɪd/ in fast, fluent speech. In contrast, in Uzbek, phonemes are generally articulated in their full form, causing learners to pronounce would completely. This illustrates a clear instance of cross-linguistic interference, where first language phonological habits are transferred into the second language. Such transfer can adversely affect the prosody

and overall naturalness of learners' spoken English. These observations emphasize the need for targeted instruction on reduction patterns and connected speech, which can significantly enhance learners' communicative proficiency and spoken fluency.

The grammatical structures of Uzbek and English differ substantially, creating numerous learning obstacles. Uzbek is an agglutinative language that uses suffixes extensively to express grammatical relationships, whereas English relies more heavily on word order and auxiliary verbs [5.87]. (Larsen-Freeman,2000). This fundamental difference affects how Uzbek learners approach English grammar. The English article system (a, an, the) poses particular difficulty since Uzbek lacks articles entirely. Learners frequently omit articles or use them incorrectly, producing sentences like “I go to hospital” when they mean “I go to the hospital” or vice versa. Similarly, the concept of countable versus uncountable nouns and their corresponding quantifiers often confuses Uzbek speakers. English verb tenses present another major challenge. While Uzbek has a relatively straightforward tense system, English employs complex aspect and tense combinations such as present perfect, past perfect continuous, and future perfect. The distinction between simple past and present perfect is particularly troublesome for Uzbek learners, who may struggle to understand when to use “I have done” versus “I did.” Additionally, English prepositions are notoriously difficult for non-native speakers, and Uzbek learners are no exception. The seemingly arbitrary nature of prepositional usage in English contrasts with the more systematic case marking in Uzbek, leading to errors such as “arrive to the hotel” instead of “arrive at the hotel.” Furthermore, English and Uzbek exhibit notable typological and syntactic differences, which often pose challenges in second language acquisition. Uzbek typically follows a subject–object–verb (SOV) word order, with the verb placed at the end of the sentence. English, in contrast, adheres to a subject–verb–object (SVO) structure, where the verb generally follows the subject. This discrepancy often leads to negative transfer, a phenomenon where learners subconsciously apply rules from their native language to the target language. Consequently, Uzbek learners of English frequently position verbs at the end of sentences, producing grammatically incorrect or unnatural constructions. For example, a learner might produce the sentence: “I to the cinema go,” reflecting the Uzbek structure “Men kinoteatrga boraman,” instead of the standard English form, “I go to the cinema.” Similar patterns can be observed in other syntactic contexts, such as questions or compound sentences, where the verb placement diverges from English norms.

Possible Grammar instruction should be contextualized and communicative rather than purely mechanical. Teachers can use visual timelines to illustrate tense relationships and provide abundant contextualized examples of article usage. Regular practice through controlled exercises followed by freer production activities helps internalize grammatical patterns. Explicit comparison between Uzbek and English

structures can raise learners' awareness of differences and help them avoid negative transfer. Incorporating authentic materials and encouraging extensive reading exposes learners to natural language use and helps them internalize correct grammatical patterns organically.

Vocabulary and False Cognates: Uzbek and English originate from fundamentally different language families, resulting in an almost complete absence of shared lexical items. This linguistic distance limits the possibility of positive transfer in vocabulary learning, as Uzbek learners cannot rely on familiar word forms or meanings when acquiring English lexicon. Consequently, vocabulary acquisition requires greater memorization effort and extended learning time compared to learners whose native languages are genetically related to English. In addition, the historical influence of Russian during the Soviet period has shaped the linguistic environment in Uzbekistan, introducing a significant number of Russian loanwords into everyday speech. This multilingual background often leads to cross-linguistic interference in English learning. Learners may incorrectly interpret English vocabulary through Russian semantic frameworks or confuse false cognates that resemble Russian words in form but differ in meaning. A clear illustration of this phenomenon can be observed when Uzbek learners associate the English term “baton” with bread products due to its usage in Russian, despite the fact that in English it primarily signifies a law enforcement tool. This mismatch in meaning reflects the impact of cross-linguistic semantic transfer, leading to incorrect lexical interpretation. In a similar vein, “fabric” is often erroneously conflated with “factory,” and “angina,” commonly perceived as a minor throat ailment, in English actually refers to a critical cardiovascular condition. These subtle lexical ambiguities pose considerable obstacles to effective vocabulary acquisition.

Possible Solutions: Systematic lexical instruction that employs a multifaceted approach can substantially enhance retention. Educators are advised to present new vocabulary within semantically rich contexts and to guide learners in maintaining meticulously organized lexical journals structured around thematic clusters or semantic families [7.47-98]. (Nation, 2013). The incorporation of cognitive supports, such as mnemonic frameworks, visual encoding strategies, and methodical spaced rehearsal through digital platforms or custom-designed flashcards, promotes durable memorization. Engagement with graded reading materials allows learners to encounter words in authentic discourse, fostering intuitive comprehension of collocational patterns and natural lexical combinations. Complementing this, interactive group-based activities, including semantic mapping, lexical chaining, or association tasks, cultivate active participation and reinforce long-term retention of vocabulary.

Pedagogical Challenges and Teacher Training: English language education in Uzbekistan is characterized by uneven instructional quality, reflecting disparities in

teacher preparation and institutional resources. In certain contexts, insufficient teacher expertise and limited pedagogical flexibility contribute to an instructional focus that remains largely structural and assessment-driven. Instruction frequently centers on the explicit teaching of grammatical forms and isolated vocabulary items, with learner progress measured predominantly through test-based evaluation, rather than through performance in communicative tasks. This pedagogical orientation tends to foster receptive knowledge of English, while learners' productive and interactive language skills remain underdeveloped, limiting their ability to function effectively in authentic communicative environments. Additionally, the lack of consistent access to contemporary teaching materials and digital learning tools in some regions further constrains the implementation of learner-centered and communicative methodologies, thereby undermining the overall advancement of English language proficiency among learners.

Possible Solutions: With the rapid development of technology and growing learner interest, English language assessment should extend beyond traditional testing. Learners might create short English videos on topics of personal interest, applying their knowledge in practice and sharing them with peers, which enhances confidence and reduces fear of errors. Simultaneously, continuous teacher professional development focused on modern methodologies, assessment literacy, and communicative competence, alongside access to up-to-date teaching materials and digital technologies, fosters interactive, learner-centered environments, ultimately improving practical language use and overall learning effectiveness.

Psychological Barriers: A significant number of learners in Uzbekistan experience psychological barriers that impede their English language development, including fear of making errors, low self-confidence, and reluctance to speak in public. In some educational contexts, instruction often prioritizes grammatical precision over communicative fluency, inadvertently discouraging students from engaging in verbal practice until they feel linguistically perfect. Ironically, this overemphasis on correctness can act as a major constraint on their overall language acquisition and communicative growth. To substantiate these observations, an anonymous survey was conducted among a cohort of approximately 120 learners via a digital platform to identify the primary factors preventing fluent speech. The empirical data shows a clear hierarchy of psychological obstacles, as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Survey results: Primary Barriers to English fluency (n=120)

Psychological barrier	Respondents (%)	Impact on learning
Fear of making mistakes	37%	High level of hesitation

Pressure for accuracy	29%	Linguistic reticence
Public speaking anxiety	20%	Performance stress
Low self-confidence	14%	Speech avoidance

Possible Solutions: Establishing a low-anxiety learning environment in which mistakes are perceived as integral to the language acquisition process is crucial for learner development. Instructors should emphasize communicative competence over grammatical perfection, acknowledging incremental improvements rather than highlighting errors. Structured pair and small-group activities prior to whole-class discussions can alleviate the stress experienced by individual students. Systematic use of positive reinforcement, targeted constructive feedback, and confidence-building exercises promotes learners' willingness to engage in communicative risk-taking, which is essential for overall language proficiency. Furthermore, equipping classrooms with features that emulate a public-speaking setting—such as designated speaking zones, appropriate seating arrangements, and supportive audio-visual aids—can help students gradually acclimate to performing in front of an audience, thereby reinforcing both confidence and practical speaking skills.

Conclusion. In essence, this research emphasizes that acquiring English as a second language for Uzbek speakers is an intricate journey influenced by phonological, grammatical, and substantial psychological components. The comparative assessment shows that language interference from the mother tongue frequently complicates the acquisition of English syntax and phonetics. Nevertheless, empirical data derived from a survey of 120 individuals indicates that psychological obstacles are just as crucial in determining communicative success. Specifically, the findings confirm that a total of 66% of learners are primarily hindered by a fear of making mistakes and institutional pressure for grammatical precision.

To tackle these challenges, the study advocates for a shift toward communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies that prioritize fluency and learner confidence. Implementing strategies to create low-anxiety classroom environments can significantly alleviate performance stress. As Uzbekistan continues its integration into the global community, adopting these evidence-based pedagogical interventions will be vital in empowering students to achieve effective and professional English proficiency. Ultimately, overcoming these obstacles requires a collaborative and persistent effort from both educators and learners to redefine mistakes as essential milestones in the journey toward linguistic mastery.

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