



PHONOLOGICAL INTERFERENCE IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract. *Learning a second language presents learners with various challenges, and pronunciation is among the most significant. Pronunciation difficulties are often explained by phonological interference, which occurs when learners rely on their native language's sound system while producing sounds in a new language (Odlin, 1989). This paper examines phonological interference among Uzbek learners of English. This is particularly relevant today, as many people learning or wishing to learn a second foreign language face similar challenges. Furthermore, the study explores the role of multimodal elements, code-switching, and linguistic hybridization in the learning process. Audio and video materials, as well as interactive tools (multimodal elements), provide learners with authentic exposure. Code-switching appears when learners alternate between Uzbek and English, while linguistic hybridization shows the blending of the two languages. Consistent practice and appropriate teaching methods help reduce phonological interference, supporting clearer and more confident communication.*

Keywords: *phonological interference, pronunciation, second language learning, Uzbek learners, language transfer, multimodal learning, code-switching, linguistic hybridization*

Introduction

Second language learning is always influenced by the learner's first language. While this influence can sometimes facilitate learning, it often creates difficulties in



pronunciation. For Uzbek learners of English, differences in vowel and consonant inventories, stress patterns, and phonotactic rules create specific challenges (Ladefoged, 2006). Modern language teaching increasingly uses multimodal elements to support learners' pronunciation development. These include videos of native speakers, audio exercises, and interactive digital applications, all of which provide learners with authentic exposure to target language sounds (Brown, 2007).

Additionally, learners often engage in code-switching, alternating between Uzbek and English when encountering gaps in vocabulary or pronunciation (Yule, 2010). Over time, some learners develop linguistic hybridization, blending features from both languages, such as applying Uzbek stress patterns to English words or combining Uzbek grammatical markers with English phrases. These strategies are not "errors" but reflect the natural process of second language acquisition and highlight the importance of targeted teaching interventions. This is because it is natural for all language learners to encounter such difficulties.

Methods

This study uses an observational-descriptive approach, focusing on classroom interactions, recordings, and teaching experience rather than large-scale experimental data. Key aspects of the analysis included: Vowel and consonant production – comparing English sounds to Uzbek equivalents. Word and sentence stress patterns – observing incorrect stress placement. Simplification of consonant clusters – noting omitted sounds in complex clusters. Occurrences of code-switching and linguistic hybridization – identifying mixed-language speech. Effectiveness of multimodal tools – observing improvements through audio, video, and app-based exercises. Data were collected during English classes and informal learner interactions, ensuring naturalistic observation.

Results

Observations revealed several recurring patterns: vowel substitution: English vowels were often replaced by closer Uzbek sounds. For example, the vowel /æ/ in "cat" may be pronounced as /a/, slightly altering the word's quality (Ellis, 1997). Consonant substitution: Sounds like /θ/ and /ð/ are challenging for Uzbek speakers



and are often replaced with /s/, /z/, or /t/ (“think” → “sink”). Stress errors: English stress patterns differ from Uzbek, leading to incorrect stress in multi-syllable words. Consonant cluster simplification: Words such as “texts” or “next” often lose one or more consonants in pronunciation. Code-switching: Learners frequently mix Uzbek and English in speech, e.g., “I went do‘konga yesterday.” Linguistic hybridization: Learners sometimes blend languages, e.g., “He is juda tired,” combining Uzbek and English lexicon or grammar. Impact of multimodal learning: Exposure to videos, audio recordings, and interactive apps helped learners notice differences in pronunciation and improve accuracy over time. Moreover, these results allow us to gauge the extent to which learners have acquired the second foreign language.

Discussion

Phonological interference is a natural and expected part of language learning, not merely a set of errors. Learners use strategies such as code-switching and linguistic hybridization to communicate effectively while acquiring new structures (Odlin, 1989). Multimodal elements support this process by providing clear models of target sounds and intonation patterns.

From a pedagogical perspective: pronunciation practice should be gradual, focusing on minimal pairs, repetition, and stress drills. Multimodal tools reinforce authentic listening and production experiences. Teachers should recognize code-switching and hybrid forms as functional strategies rather than mistakes. Increasing learners’ self-confidence and motivation further encourages engagement and progress in language learning. Effective teaching addresses interference while respecting learners’ existing linguistic frameworks.

Conclusion

Phonological interference, code-switching, and linguistic hybridization are common in second language learning, especially when native and target languages differ structurally. Uzbek learners of English often exhibit vowel substitutions, consonant replacements, stress errors, and cluster simplifications. Strategic use of multimodal elements improves pronunciation accuracy, while acknowledging code-switching and hybrid forms promotes learner confidence. With consistent practice,



targeted teaching, and exposure to authentic materials, interference can be reduced. Future research could involve longitudinal observation to examine how these phenomena develop over time and respond to different teaching methods.

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