

EFFECTIVE METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO SLOW-LEARNING UZBEK-SPEAKING LEARNERS AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION, GENDER, AND CULTURE

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Abstract. Are you, as a foreign language teacher, experiencing challenges in teaching foreign languages to school students? Does working with *slow learners* in your classroom particularly concern you? Do issues such as low learning achievement, lack of motivation, and the influence of cultural and social factors affect your teaching process? If these questions sound familiar, then this academic article is written especially for you.

Building on these practical concerns, the present study examines effective methods of teaching foreign languages to low-achieving Turkic-speaking learners through an interdisciplinary framework combining philology and pedagogics. The article analyzes common linguistic difficulties faced by Turkic-speaking students, including phonological, lexical, and grammatical interference, which often impede successful foreign language acquisition, particularly among slow learners in school environments. From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the importance of differentiated instruction, scaffolded learning activities, and learner-centered approaches aimed at increasing motivation and academic engagement. Special attention is given to the role of religion, gender, and culture as key socio-cultural factors influencing learners' attitudes toward foreign language education. Respect for religious values, the application of gender-sensitive teaching strategies, and the integration of culturally relevant materials are discussed as effective means of reducing affective barriers such as anxiety and low self-confidence.

The findings indicate that combining linguistic analysis with culturally responsive pedagogical practices leads to improved participation and learning outcomes among low-achieving Turkic-speaking students. The article concludes by

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offering practical methodological recommendations for foreign language teachers working in multilingual and culturally diverse educational contexts, particularly within Central Eurasian school settings.

Keywords:foreign language teaching, Turkic-speaking learners, slow learners, low-achieving students, philology, pedagogics, culture, gender, religion, Central Eurasia, "**professional amnesia**", "**mental map**"

Introduction. The "**New Uzbekistan**" era has established foreign language proficiency as a pillar of national development. Since the **2012 Presidential Decree PQ-1875**, foreign languages have been compulsory from the first year of schooling. However, a significant portion of the student population—classified as "**slow learners**"—struggles to keep pace with standardized curricula. These learners do not necessarily possess cognitive disabilities but require more time, repetition, and varied stimuli to internalize linguistic data. The primary hurdle is not a lack of aptitude but a "**clash of systems.**" Slow learners are often caught between the analytical demands of Indo-European languages (like English) and the **agglutinative structure of their native Uzbek**. Furthermore, the transition between Latin and Cyrillic scripts adds a layer of cognitive load that can lead to "**professional amnesia**" in the classroom. Well, what are the main reasons for this problems and how are they solved? Let's discuss briefly.

Main Part. Firstly, **The Shift from Rote to Reality** Contemporary research in Uzbekistan emphasizes a transition from teacher-centered to learner-centered classrooms. Secondly, **communicative didactics**. Modern pedagogical development encourages the use of natural speech situations—such as advertisements or telephone conversations—to prioritize "understanding" over "correcting".

In addition, **scaffolding and TPR**. In primary and secondary contexts, scaffolding providing temporary support as students develop new skills—has proven essential for slow learners. Total Physical Response (TPR), which connects language to movement, is particularly effective for students who find abstract grammar rules overwhelming. Next, **technology-enhanced learning**. Tools like Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and mobile apps provide the spaced repetition necessary for slow learners to move vocabulary into long-term memory.

Moreover, **the role of religion**. Theolinguistic Bridges In Uzbekistan, Islam provides a deep "**mental map**" that educators can use as a teaching tool. Theolinguistic Influence: The Uzbek lexicon is rich in Arabic-origin loanwords (e.g., ilm for knowledge, kitob for book). For a slow learner, identifying these "**sacred cognates**" in a foreign language (such as the Arabic-influenced Spanish word libro) can act as a cognitive anchor. Religious Discourse as Practice: Religious speech in Uzbekistan often begins with specific Arabic phrases (e.g., Bismillah) and follows a predictable

pragmatic structure. Teachers can use this familiarity with structured ritual language to help slow learners master highly structured foreign language genres, such as formal letter writing or introductions.

Also, **motivation through values**. Framing the acquisition of a foreign language as a means of achieving "universal values" of tolerance and respect (**baghrikenglik**) aligns with local religious ethics, potentially increasing the learner's "investment" in a difficult task.

As we know **gender dynamics in the Uzbek classroom** gender roles significantly influence how Uzbek students interact with foreign languages. Research indicates that Uzbek female learners often employ more polite, expressive, and cooperative styles. In contrast, male learners may prioritize goal-oriented or pragmatic approaches, often performing better in competitive or task-based activities. While myths suggest *females are naturally better at languages, empirical data shows that instructional context is more critical*. However, in many Uzbek settings, females show a higher use of compensation strategies—using synonyms or gestures when they forget a word which is a vital skill for slow learners. Thus, educators should recognize that "**verbal behavior**" can lead to misunderstandings; for instance, a female student's "**shyness**" may be a stylistic choice of politeness rather than a lack of knowledge.

In fact, **cultural identity and the "andisha"** barrier are also another factors which must be paid attention while teaching. The cultural **concept of andisha** (modesty/shyness) is perhaps the greatest psychological hurdle for the slow learner.

Besides, we must say that **fear of negative evaluation** are also one of the main barriers. Uzbek culture highly values humility and "**saving face**." For a slow learner, the prospect of making a grammatical mistake in front of peers is often seen as a public **shame (sharmanda)**, leading to **Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)**. Qualitative research in Uzbekistan shows that students with high anxiety avoid participation and struggle to retain material. However, when teachers use authentic materials related to Uzbek culture (e.g., **describing a wedding or Navruz**), learners feel more "affirmed" in their identity and their anxiety levels drop significantly.

Pedagogical Recommendations. Strategies for Enhancing Instructional Effectiveness based on the psychological, cultural, and religious factors analyzed in this study, the following systematic strategies are recommended for educators working with slow-learning Uzbek-speaking students:

a) Implementing a Multisensory Integration Approach

To mitigate the cognitive load caused by the "script divide" (navigating between Latin, Cyrillic, and foreign alphabets), visual and auditory stimuli alone are insufficient.

Recommendation: Utilize the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, where students associate new verbs and vocabulary with physical movements. Educators

should also incorporate "tactile memory" by having students trace letters in sand or on textured surfaces. Color-coding grammatical structures (e.g., blue for masculine, pink for feminine) transforms abstract rules into concrete mental anchors.

b) Overcoming the 'Andisha' Barrier via Digital Mediation

The cultural values of modesty (*andisha*) and the fear of public shaming (*sharmanda*) often lead slow learners to remain passive to avoid visible failure.

Recommendation: Integrate anonymous digital platforms such as Duolingo for Schools, Quizizz, or Kahoot. These tools allow students to practice independently in a "face-saving" environment. By removing the immediate gaze of the teacher and peers, the learner is free to make mistakes and learn from them without social anxiety, gradually building the confidence necessary for classroom participation.

c) Utilizing Theolinguistic Bridges

An Uzbek student's religious and cultural worldview should be viewed as an asset rather than an obstacle.

Recommendation: Leverage the abundance of Arabic and Persian loanwords in the Uzbek lexicon (e.g., *ilm*, *kitob*, *adolat*) to explain foreign concepts. For instance, connecting the English word "justice" to the familiar Uzbek-Islamic concept of *Adolat* provides a cognitive shortcut. Furthermore, framing language acquisition as a form of "seeking knowledge" (*ilm izlash*)—a sacred duty in Islamic ethics—can significantly boost the internal motivation of the learner.

d) Cultural Contextualization and Meaningful Communication

Slow learners often struggle with the "double burden" of learning a new language alongside unfamiliar foreign cultural concepts.

Recommendation: Ground initial lessons in authentic Uzbek cultural materials. Instead of discussing London's geography, tasks should focus on familiar topics like "Navruz Traditions," "Mahalla Life," or "Hospitality Ethics." When the content is familiar, the learner's cognitive resources are freed to focus entirely on linguistic acquisition rather than trying to decode a foreign culture simultaneously.

e) Gender-Sensitive Differential Instruction

Recognizing the distinct communication styles of male and female students in Uzbekistan allows for a more personalized learning experience.

Recommendation: Employ flexible grouping strategies. Occasionally utilizing single-gender small groups can provide a "comfort zone" for slow learners to speak without the social pressure of mixed-gender dynamics. Provide female learners with collaborative, expressive tasks, while offering male learners goal-oriented, task-based challenges that provide a sense of tangible achievement.

f) Prioritizing Communication Over Correction

Constant correction of minor errors reinforces a slow learner's sense of inadequacy and halts the flow of speech.

Recommendation: Adopt a "Deep Learning" approach that prioritizes communicative intent over grammatical perfection. If a student successfully transmits an idea, they have achieved a victory. Educators should withhold immediate correction during speech, instead taking notes to provide general feedback at the end of the session, thereby lowering the student's "Affective Filter."

Conclusion. The successful instruction of slow-learning Uzbek speakers depends on the educator's ability to view the student as a "cultural-religious whole." By moving away from "dry" grammar and embracing theolinguistic bridges, gender-sensitive strategies, and technological scaffolding, we can transform the foreign language classroom from a place of anxiety into a space of intercultural growth. Future research should focus on developing a standardized "Uzbek-Specific" curriculum for slow learners that explicitly integrates these socio-cultural factors.

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