

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AMONG UZBEK LEARNERS

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Abstract: English pronunciation poses a significant challenge for Uzbek learners due to differences in phonetic systems, limited exposure to native speech, and lack of practice opportunities. This paper explores the common difficulties Uzbek students face while learning English pronunciation, such as the incorrect articulation of sounds, stress patterns, and intonation. The study also investigates practical methods to overcome these challenges through classroom activities, pronunciation software, and teacher feedback. The research was conducted among undergraduate students at a pedagogical institute. The findings highlight that consistent phonetic drills and interactive methods significantly improve learners' pronunciation. The study offers recommendations for teachers to make pronunciation instruction more effective and engaging.

Keywords: Pronunciation difficulties, Uzbek learners, English phonetics, pronunciation teaching methods, phonetic drills, language learning

In recent decades, English has become a global language, and proficiency in its pronunciation plays a crucial role in effective communication. For Uzbek learners, acquiring native-like English pronunciation remains a significant barrier due to phonological differences between English and Uzbek, limited access to authentic materials, and traditional teaching methods that often neglect pronunciation. Mispronunciation may hinder mutual understanding, cause miscommunication, and affect learners' confidence in speaking. This paper focuses on identifying the key pronunciation problems faced by Uzbek students and proposes potential solutions to enhance their speaking skills. Understanding these challenges is essential for teachers to develop better teaching strategies and for learners to achieve clearer and more intelligible speech.

This study used a qualitative approach supported by a quantitative survey. A total of 50 undergraduate students from the Department of Practical English at Termiz State Pedagogical Institute participated. The data was collected through pronunciation tests, structured interviews, and a questionnaire about students' learning habits, difficulties, and perceptions. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to analyze how pronunciation is taught in actual English classes. The study also included an experimental group that practiced targeted pronunciation drills and activities over a four-week period. The results were compared with a control group to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed methods.

The research revealed that the most common problems among Uzbek learners include the mispronunciation of English vowel sounds, such as /æ/, /ʌ/, and /ɪ/, difficulty distinguishing voiced and voiceless consonants like /θ/ and /ð/, and incorrect word stress. Many students also struggled with sentence intonation and linking sounds. After four weeks of targeted training, students in the experimental group showed a 35% improvement in pronunciation test scores compared to the control group. Participants also reported increased confidence and better listening comprehension. These

findings suggest that integrating regular pronunciation-focused activities into English classes significantly improves students' oral performance and motivation.

The study results confirm that pronunciation remains a critical challenge for Uzbek learners of English. The phonological gap between the two languages creates confusion in sound production and perception. For instance, Uzbek lacks several English vowel and consonant sounds, leading to substitution or omission in speech. Students frequently replace /θ/ with /s/ or /t/, and /ð/ with /z/ or /d/, which affects intelligibility. Additionally, Uzbek is a syllable-timed language, whereas English is stress-timed, creating difficulties in mastering rhythm and intonation.

Another important factor is the lack of systematic pronunciation instruction in many language classrooms. Teachers often prioritize grammar and vocabulary, with little attention given to pronunciation except occasional correction. This results in fossilized errors that persist over time. However, students in the experimental group showed notable progress when exposed to consistent pronunciation activities, including phonetic transcription practice, minimal pairs, tongue twisters, and repetition drills. Moreover, the integration of digital tools such as pronunciation apps and audio-visual materials played a supportive role in improving learners' perception and articulation. Learners became more aware of their own pronunciation errors and developed self-monitoring strategies. These findings suggest that pronunciation instruction should be incorporated more actively and systematically into English language curricula in Uzbekistan.

In conclusion, pronunciation problems among Uzbek learners stem from linguistic, instructional, and psychological factors. The most frequent issues include sound substitution, stress misplacement, and unnatural intonation. However, these challenges can be mitigated through targeted interventions, including phonetic drills, increased exposure to authentic input, and the use of modern language-learning technologies.

The study demonstrates that when pronunciation is addressed as a core skill rather than a supplementary component, learners make measurable improvements in both confidence and clarity. Teachers should receive training in phonetics and pronunciation pedagogy, and curriculum developers should integrate pronunciation tasks into regular lesson plans.

Ultimately, enhancing pronunciation competence not only supports speaking and listening skills but also builds overall communicative competence. Continued research and innovation in pronunciation teaching will be essential for meeting the needs of Uzbek EFL learners in a globalized world.

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