OVERCOMING PHONETIC CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ORAL ENGLISH TO UZBEK STUDENTS

Yuldosheva Tursunoy
Independent researcher of
Uzbekistan State World Languages University

In today's globalized world, mastering English as an international language is not only a valuable skill but also a necessity for academic, professional, and cultural integration. For Uzbek students, learning English provides access to a wider world of opportunities; however, one of the most persistent challenges remains the development of oral communication skills, particularly pronunciation and fluency. Teaching oral speech in English lessons involves overcoming numerous pedagogical, psychological, and linguistic barriers that hinder learners' ability to express themselves confidently and clearly.

Despite significant curricular efforts, many English language classrooms in Uzbekistan still prioritize theoretical instruction over practical speaking activities, resulting in passive student engagement and limited opportunities for authentic communication. Additionally, phonetic and phonological challenges—especially those rooted in the differences between Uzbek and English sound systems—further complicate the learning process.

This article explores the main phonetic difficulties faced by Uzbek learners, reviews methodological approaches to phonetic training, and outlines practical solutions to enhance pronunciation skills through individualized and student-centered teaching strategies. It also emphasizes the importance of teacher sensitivity, motivational support, and the strategic integration of error correction to ensure learners can communicate effectively in a foreign language environment.

Teaching oral English in schools presents a complex challenge, especially within the broader goal of developing multicultural individuals equipped with linguistic and cultural competencies necessary for participation in a global society. Among the most difficult aspects of English language instruction is the development of oral communication skills, due to several reasons:

The passive nature of classroom activities;

The gap between theoretical knowledge and practical communication;

A lack or insufficiency of linguistic resources and tools;

The presence of negative experiences during collaborative discussions.

To effectively develop oral speech skills among students, certain conditions must be met:

Equal and active participation in oral communication, where both teacher and students engage interactively;

A shift in focus from teacher-led instruction to student-centered communicative interaction;

A curriculum aligned with the language proficiency level of the specific student group;

High motivation, where learners are eager and confident to express themselves in English.

When it comes to teaching the phonetic aspect of speech, the goals and methods vary depending on the learners' level. In a typical school setting, it is unrealistic to expect perfect pronunciation. Thus, instruction should rely on three primary methodological approaches:

Articulatory approach – training students to approximate standard pronunciation;

Imitative approach – encouraging learners to recognize and imitate native speech patterns;

Analytical-imitative approach – helping students analyze pronunciation models and apply learned techniques in practice.

Phonetic Challenges Faced by Uzbek Learners

Linguists offer various classifications and strategies to address phonetic difficulties. Some scholars analyze English phonetics by comparing it with learners' native languages (such as Uzbek or Russian), focusing on specific articulatory features and providing exercises to automate pronunciation skills. L. V. Shcherba categorized pronunciation issues into two main types:

Phonetic errors – issues in articulation and pronunciation;

Phonological errors – those that affect meaning due to incorrect sound patterns.

Further classifications by researchers like E. A. Ivanova and N. N. Sergeeva group phonetic difficulties into:

Linguistic challenges (sound system differences);

Age-related difficulties (developmental readiness);

Difficulties in organizing independent practice (lack of self-study strategies).

In the context of Uzbek schools, many students face challenges such as selective attention, lack of memorization techniques, and anxiety about making mistakes. Middle school learners, in particular, often experience emotional sensitivity and low self-confidence, making it essential to address both psychological and pedagogical aspects.

Practical Solutions for Uzbek Teachers

Based on research and classroom observation, a technology for error correction in oral speech has been developed (see Fig. 1). It emphasizes both anticipating and correcting mistakes, highlighting that prediction and prevention are key strategies in reducing phonetic errors.

Teachers should adopt an individualized approach, considering factors such as:

Learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic);

Self-esteem and motivation;

Cognitive development and memory capacity.

Effective pronunciation training involves integrating visual aids, repetition, associations, and physical movement to engage different senses and reinforce memory. Teachers must present materials in a clear, creative, and engaging way to ensure better comprehension and retention.

Moreover, addressing students' emotional well-being is critical. Feedback should be constructive and encouraging, helping students overcome their fear of mistakes while fostering a safe environment for experimentation and learning.

Balancing Correction and Practice

According to prominent researchers such as G. A. Kitaygorodskaya, R. P. Milrud, and E. N. Solovova, the key to successful phonetic training lies in teacher tact and student autonomy. The teacher's role is to strike a balance between:

Correcting major errors that hinder comprehension, and

Allowing students to develop fluency through practice.

In summary, the correction of phonetic errors in Uzbek learners must be supportive rather than punitive. A well-designed, student-centered approach that considers psychological, cognitive, and linguistic factors will lead to more effective oral communication in English.

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