

THE PROBLEMS OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF UZBEK STUDENTS

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Abstract: *Uzbek people have a lot of difficulties when it comes to the pronunciation. The difficulty posed by pronunciation is closely related to little exposure to and interaction with native speakers, the differences between the phonological systems of English and Uzbek and the ignorance of pronunciation at school and in Higher Institutions.*

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Millions of foreign students want to learn English as well as they can. For instance it is only a matter of reading and writing it, and they will find no help here. But many learners want to be able to speak English well, with a pronunciation which can be easily understood by both other learners and English people.

According to Kenworthy (1987) pronunciation problems can be overcome if learners or speakers focus more and effort on them. He stated that an individual's native language is the most powerful factor for EFL learners' pronunciation and he pointed out that if learners are aware of the sound system of their own language, then they will be able to become successful in diagnosing their own difficulties.

Considering different language backgrounds of learners, there will be many difficulties to pronounce all of the phonemes correctly because of their L1 background.

For example, Arabic differs slightly depending on where it is spoken; there are a few pronunciation problems we can identify for Arabic learners of English. There are no silent letters in Arabic, so Arabic speakers will pronounce silent letters, such as the [s] in island or the [k] in knife. There is no [p] or [v] sound in Arabic. Instead, Arabic speakers will replace those sounds with [b] and [f] respectively. For example, pepper can be [bebber], and very can be [fery]. Consonant clusters also cause problems for

Arabic speakers, with the result that they will insert a vowel sound both before and in the cluster. For example, stress would be [esteress]. As you can imagine, this can cause huge pronunciation and comprehensibility issues.

Though Spanish speakers are generally very communicative even if their English level is quite low, their accent and pronunciation issues can cause breakdowns in communication. Firstly, Spanish doesn't differentiate between short and long sounds. This can cause problems with ship and sheep, and bit and beat, among other words. They can also find it difficult to differentiate similar vowel sounds, making words like cat and cut, and boat and bought problematic. Confusion also arises between [b] and [v], [dʒ] and [ʃ], and [dʒ] and [y]. This is evident in words like berry and very, jeep and cheap, and jot and yacht.

Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) is a tonal language. This means that a word can be pronounced with a number of different tones and each tone will convey a different meaning of the word. English by contrast is not a tonal language and only uses intonation on a sentence level. Chinese speakers may have initial difficulty understanding the differences in intonation between the two languages. Consonant clusters don't exist in Chinese. As a result, Chinese speakers may add in another syllable in a consonant cluster in an English word or they may omit one of the sounds altogether. For example, smoke could be [samoke], and words could be [wors]. This is the same for words which end in a consonant sound. For example, card could be [car] and change could be chain. The sounds [r] and [v] don't exist in Chinese and so naturally Chinese learners have difficulty pronouncing them or even identifying the difference between them. For example, rice becomes [lice] and very becomes [wewy].

Many Russian English learners mispronounce consonants or replace consonants with sounds that are more common in their native tongue. Some of the common mix-ups are: [v] – [w]: It is common to say [vot] instead of [what], [wodka] instead of [vodka], or [ven] instead of “when”. This is because Russian does not have a clear distinction between the [w] and [v] sounds. Additionally, there are no dental fricatives ([θ] and [ð]) in Russian and the [ŋ] phoneme (or the -ing sound) is not used.

Some Russian-native English learners tend to substitute this sound with the [n] sound, for example by saying [brin] instead of [bring]. The phoneme [h] may become a velar fricative, meaning it is pronounced farther forward in the vocal tract. The phoneme [r] may be trilled, whereas in English the tongue tip does not touch the roof of the mouth when pronounced. Pronunciation of certain English words by Uzbek EFL learners is a challenging task. They have pronunciation problems because English and Uzbek have different sound systems. O'. Hoshimov speaks about the peculiarities of the English phonetic system: Each letter is represented by four different sounds, i.e., six vowel letters represents twenty sounds. The excess of sound over letter. Twenty six letters correspond to more than forty sounds. The presence of diphthongs and triphthongs. The pronunciation of English sounds in the palate. Two letters represent a single sound. The presence of long and short sounds. He also states that the features are more pronounced when comparing the English phonetic system with the Uzbek phonetic system. They differ in quantity, quality and sharpness. The difference in quantity: English vowels are pronounced short and long. In Uzbek such sounds are rare. The long vowel changes the meaning in English. For example: it-eat, ship-sheep, live-leave. In terms of quality, English vowels are divided into monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs. But this is not typical of Uzbek sounds.

In English sounds are pronounced differently from Uzbek. English consonant sounds differ from Uzbek consonant sounds in sharpness, soft pronunciation, and lack of exchange. Uzbek learners pronounce [æ] as [e]. For example: had is pronounced as [hed]; [θ] is pronounced as [s] instead. For example, think is pronounced as [sink]; Instead of [ð], they pronounce [z]. For example: this is pronounced as [zis]; They pronounce [w] as [v] instead. For example: well is pronounced as [vel]; They pronounce short sounds briefly. For example: sport is pronounced as [spot], eat is pronounced as [it]; They pronounce voiceless consonants as voiced consonants before consonants. For example: dislike-disappear; Voiced consonant sounds are pronounced as voiceless. For example: his-absent; On the other hand, Henry pointed out that English orthography is influenced by other languages, such as, Greek and Latin; therefore, the correct pronunciation of many words gets

more difficult to guess when encountered. Speakers of English tend to be good at producing the English sounds correctly if they are familiar with the knowledge of Greek and Latin. He stated that if a speaker of English has knowledge about [ch] being pronounced as [k] in Greek, then it becomes easy for him or her to guess that the pronunciation of the word 'chemistry' as [kemistri]

In fact, there are many pronunciation problems among Uzbek English learners. However, this topic has not been studied in detail by Uzbek linguists. Therefore, I studied them using the comparative typology of English and Uzbek vowels, consonants and word stress in the work of theoretical phonetics of linguist A. Abduazizov to study the pronunciation problems encountered among Uzbek English learners. Problems of consonants. If we look at the table of consonants we find differences in the number and articulation of some consonants. Some of the English consonants, for example, [θ], [ð], [w] cannot be found in Uzbek. So they have problems with pronouncing these consonant sounds because of their articulation. Differentiating these sounds is very difficult for Uzbek learners. Speakers often create a heavily voiceless stop [t] instead of a voiceless fricative [θ] in a word like 'thank'. Apparently, they vocalize the sound [t] based on their language since in elementary level learners the letter 'th' is combined by a heavily aspirated [t]. So, the word three can be pronounced exactly like tree. Elementary level learners of English commonly produce [d] or [z] for [ð] sounds, so the word 'than' may sound like [dæn] or [zæn]. According to Menyuk (1968) and Schmidt (1977), dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] are the last sounds which native speakers comprehend while acquiring their own language and these sounds have the most frequent substitutes replaced by the learners of English during their learning process. In addition, the Uzbek consonants [t] and [d] are articulated in a more frontal position, being dental and dorsal, than the English consonants [t], [d], which have an alveolar and apical articulation and among the fricatives the Uzbek [s], [z], [sh], [j] may be produced in a more frontal position of the mouth cavity than the English counterparts [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ]. It takes a lot of time and effort for Uzbek learners to master the articulation of these sounds.

As to the English [l] phoneme it has two allophones: “clear” and “dark” the distinction of which is based on the pronunciation with a frontal secondary focus (“clear” [l]) and with a back secondary focus (“dark” [ɫ]). According to the horizontal movement of the tongue, English vowels may be front, front-retracted, mixed, and back-advanced and back, whereas Uzbek vowels are fully front and back. That means that they have difficulties in distinguishing and pronouncing the vowels like: [i], [ə], [ɜ:], [u], [ʌ]. They have difficulties with differentiating pronunciation the words like [live-leave] [sit-seat] [fit-feet] [hit-heat]. Besides the above differences, which comprise quality features of English and Uzbek vowels, there is a difference based on the quantity features which make clear all other differences such as tense - lax, checked - free. The Uzbek vowels are typically «middle» sounds, being neither long nor short. According to J. Jalolov students should do a lot of articulatory exercises to practice pronouncing these vowels. Otherwise, this can affect the meaning. The methodic recommendations given by S. Pit Corder may be applied to English learners of Uzbek. There may appear some difficulties in teaching English to Uzbeks. The English students of Uzbek will have to learn to distribute the total «stress energy» of his utterance more evenly over the whole utterance instead of concentrating it principally on one or two places, usually on the final syllables. Otherwise, pronunciation mistakes may occur which are caused by the rhythmical structure of Uzbek.

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