COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRONUNCIATION DIFFICULTIES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Annotation

This thesis examines pronunciation difficulties encountered by Uzbek-speaking learners of English through a comparative analysis of the phonetic and phonological systems of Uzbek and English. The study focuses on the differences between the two languages in the pronunciation of vowels and consonants, consonant combinations, word stress, and intonation. Particular attention is given to English sounds that are absent or represented differently in the Uzbek phonological system, as these differences may lead to pronunciation errors and difficulties in oral communication. The study also considers the role of native language interference in the acquisition of English pronunciation. By comparing the major phonetic features of Uzbek and English, the research identifies common pronunciation problems and their possible linguistic causes. The findings may contribute to a better understanding of pronunciation difficulties among Uzbek learners and provide useful implications for English language teaching. The study emphasizes the importance of contrastive phonetic analysis and systematic pronunciation practice in developing clearer and more accurate English speech.

Keywords: pronunciation, comparative analysis, Uzbek language, English language, phonetics, phonology, pronunciation difficulties, native language interference, vowels, consonants, word stress, intonation.

Introduction

Pronunciation is an important component of successful communication in a foreign language. Accurate pronunciation helps learners express their ideas clearly and understand spoken language more effectively. However, Uzbek learners of English often experience difficulties because the phonetic systems of Uzbek and English differ considerably. These differences may cause learners to transfer the pronunciation patterns of their native language into English. Therefore, a comparative analysis of Uzbek and English pronunciation is important for identifying common difficulties and improving pronunciation teaching.
Main Part

Uzbek and English belong to different language systems and have several significant phonetic and phonological differences. These differences can influence the way Uzbek-speaking learners perceive and produce English sounds. One of the main sources of pronunciation difficulty is the difference between the vowel systems of the two languages. English has a relatively complex system of vowels, including both short and long vowels as well as diphthongs. Uzbek, in comparison, has a different vowel structure and does not contain all of the vowel contrasts found in English. As a result, Uzbek learners may have difficulty distinguishing and producing certain English vowel sounds.

For example, the English sounds /ɪ/ and /iː/ can create difficulties for Uzbek learners because they represent a distinction that may not be expressed in the same way in Uzbek. Learners may pronounce words such as *ship* and *sheep* similarly, although their meanings are different. Another potential difficulty is the distinction between /æ/ and /e/, particularly in words such as *bad* and *bed*. These examples demonstrate that differences in vowel

systems can lead not only to inaccurate pronunciation but also to misunderstandings in communication.

Consonant pronunciation is another important area of difficulty. English contains several consonant sounds that are either absent from Uzbek or have different phonetic characteristics. The English dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are particularly challenging for many Uzbek-speaking learners. These sounds occur in common words such as *think*, *three*, *this*, and *mother*. Learners may replace /θ/ with /t/ or /s/, and /ð/ with /d/ or /z/. Such substitutions are often associated with the influence of the learner's first language and differences in articulatory patterns.

The English sounds /w/ and /v/ may also cause pronunciation problems. Uzbek learners can sometimes experience difficulty maintaining the distinction between these sounds, especially when they occur in unfamiliar words. The sound /w/ requires a different lip position from /v/, and learners need regular practice to produce the distinction accurately. Similarly, the English sound /r/ differs from the Uzbek pronunciation of the corresponding sound in important phonetic respects. This difference may result in the transfer of Uzbek articulatory habits into English speech.

Another significant problem concerns consonant clusters. English permits a wide range of consonant combinations, particularly at the beginning and end of words. Examples include *street*, *school*, *texts*, and *world*. Uzbek has different restrictions on consonant combinations, and learners may therefore simplify difficult English clusters. They may insert an additional vowel, omit a consonant, or change the structure of the word. For instance, a learner may add a vowel sound before or between consonants in order to make an English word easier to pronounce. Such processes can reduce pronunciation accuracy and sometimes make speech difficult for listeners to understand.

Word stress represents another major difference between Uzbek and English pronunciation. English is generally characterized by variable word stress, meaning that stress can occur on different syllables in different words. Stress may also distinguish words or grammatical forms in certain contexts. Uzbek also uses stress, but its patterns and phonological functions differ from those of English. Consequently, Uzbek learners may place stress on an incorrect syllable when pronouncing English words. Incorrect stress can affect both intelligibility and the natural rhythm of speech.

Sentence stress and rhythm are also important. English is commonly described as a stress-timed language, in which stressed syllables play a particularly prominent role in the rhythm of an utterance. Uzbek has different rhythmic characteristics. When Uzbek learners transfer their native rhythmic patterns into English, their speech may sound less natural or may become difficult to follow. Therefore, pronunciation instruction should not be limited to individual sounds. Learners should also practice stress, rhythm, connected speech, and intonation.

Intonation is closely connected with meaning and communicative intention. English speakers use changes in pitch to express questions, statements, emphasis, surprise, politeness, and other pragmatic meanings. Uzbek has its own intonational patterns, which do not always correspond directly to English patterns. As a result, learners may produce grammatically correct sentences but use inappropriate intonation. This can sometimes affect the interpretation of their intended meaning or make their speech sound unnatural.

The differences between Uzbek and English can be explained partly through the concept of native language interference. When learners acquire a foreign language, they often rely on the sound patterns and articulatory habits that are already established in their first language. Positive transfer may facilitate learning when similar structures exist in both languages. However, negative transfer occurs when learners apply first-language patterns to structures that are different in the target language. Pronunciation difficulties among Uzbek

learners can therefore be analyzed as a combination of unfamiliar English sounds, differences in phonological organization, and interference from Uzbek.

Effective pronunciation teaching should take these differences into consideration. Teachers can use contrastive analysis to identify sounds and pronunciation features that are likely to be difficult for Uzbek learners. Minimal-pair exercises can help students distinguish similar sounds, while listening activities can improve their ability to perceive phonetic contrasts. For example, practicing pairs such as *ship–sheep*, *bad–bed*, and *thin–sin* can help learners recognize and produce important sound differences.

Articulatory explanations can also be useful. Students should understand how the tongue, lips, teeth, and vocal cords are positioned when producing unfamiliar English sounds. Visual demonstrations, pronunciation diagrams, mirrors, audio recordings, and digital pronunciation tools can support this process. Repetition alone is often insufficient; learners need controlled practice followed by meaningful communicative activities.

In addition, pronunciation practice should gradually move from individual sounds to words, phrases, sentences, and spontaneous speech. This progression allows learners to develop both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. Pair and group activities can provide opportunities for students to use newly practiced sounds in communication. Teachers can also provide corrective feedback by focusing on the pronunciation features that most significantly affect intelligibility.

Thus, a comparative study of Uzbek and English pronunciation demonstrates that pronunciation difficulties are not random. They are frequently related to systematic differences between the two phonological systems. Understanding these differences can help teachers predict potential problems and select appropriate teaching techniques. It can also help learners become more aware of the differences between their native language and English and develop greater control over English pronunciation.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis shows that Uzbek-speaking learners may encounter difficulties with English vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, word stress, rhythm, and intonation. Many of these problems are connected with differences between Uzbek and English phonetic systems and with native language interference. Therefore, pronunciation instruction for Uzbek learners should include contrastive phonetic analysis, focused listening, articulatory practice, minimal-pair activities, stress and intonation exercises, and communicative pronunciation tasks. A systematic approach can contribute to clearer, more accurate, and more intelligible English speech.

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