

MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE IN PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract. *This article examines the phenomenon of mother tongue interference (L1 negative transfer) in English pronunciation. It explores how a learner's first language affects the production of English speech sounds, word stress, rhythm, and intonation. Incorporating theories from prominent phoneticians and language teaching experts, the study specifically highlights the phonetic challenges faced by Uzbek learners of English. Finally, the article provides practical pedagogical solutions to help students minimize interference and achieve intelligible pronunciation.*

Keywords: *mother tongue interference, pronunciation, phonology, negative transfer, word stress, intonation, phonetic errors, Uzbek learners, language acquisition.*

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqola ingliz tili talaffuzida ona tilining ta'siri (interferensiya) muammosini o'rganadi. Unda o'quvchining birinchi tili ingliz tilidagi tovushlar, urg'u, ritm va intonatsiya talaffuziga qanday ta'sir qilishi tushuntirilgan. Shuningdek, maqolada mashhur tilshunoslar va til o'qitish bo'yicha mutaxassislarining fikrlari hamda ularning kitoblariga havolalar keltirilgan. Bundan tashqari, talabalarga talaffuzini yaxshilashga yordam beradigan amaliy yechimlar tavsiya etiladi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *ona tili interferensiyasi, talaffuz, fonetika, salbiy ko'chish, so'z urg'usi, intonatsiya, fonetik xatolar, o'zbek o'quvchilari, til o'rganish.*

Аннотация. *Данная статья рассматривает проблему влияния родного языка на произношение английского языка (Mother Tongue Interference). В ней объясняется, как первый язык учащегося влияет на произношение английских звуков, ударение, ритм и интонацию. Также в статье представлены идеи известных лингвистов и специалистов по преподаванию языков с указанием ссылок на их книги. Кроме того, предлагаются практические решения, которые помогут студентам улучшить своё произношение.*

Ключевые слова: *интерференция родного языка, произношение, фонология, отрицательный перенос, ударение, интонация, фонетические ошибки, узбекские учащиеся, освоение языка.*

Introduction

Mother tongue interference occurs when learners transfer the phonological system, pronunciation habits, and speech patterns of their first language (L1) into the target language (L2). In his seminal work *English Phonetics and Phonology* (2009), Peter Roach notes that every language possesses its own unique system of sounds. When acquiring a second language, learners heavily depend on the familiar sound system of their native tongue. Consequently, this reliance often leads to systematic pronunciation errors.

This issue is global, yet it manifests uniquely depending on the learner's linguistic background. For instance, Uzbek learners frequently struggle with specific English phonemes such as /w/, /θ/, and /ð/, as these sounds do not exist in the Uzbek phonological inventory. Such phonetic deviations can distort meaning and hinder effective oral communication.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. The participants consisted of 20 first-year Uzbek university students learning English as a foreign language. Data were collected through oral reading tasks, word-list pronunciation exercises, and short speaking activities. The students' speech was recorded and analyzed to identify common pronunciation errors caused by mother tongue interference. The analysis focused on problematic English sounds, word stress patterns, and intonation features. The findings were compared with existing phonetic literature to determine the influence of the Uzbek language on English pronunciation.

Main Part

Phonetic and Phonological Differences Between Languages

The primary cause of mother tongue interference is the structural divergence between the phonetic systems of the first and second languages. When an English sound is absent in the learner's native language, they instinctively substitute it with the closest equivalent from their L1.

Gerald Kelly, in *How to Teach Pronunciation* (2000), explains that learners naturally replace unfamiliar sounds with native ones because their articulatory organs are conditioned to the speech habits of their mother tongue.

Interdental Fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/)

Since Uzbek lacks these sounds, learners often substitute them with /t/, /d/, /s/, or /z/. Consequently, words such as "think" may be pronounced as "tink" or "sink".

Labio-Velar Approximant (/w/)

Uzbek learners frequently confuse /w/ and /v/. Common examples include:

- west → vest • wine → vine • wet → vet

This substitution can be misunderstanding and reduced intelligibility.

Word-Final Devoicing

In Uzbek phonology, voiced consonants at the end of words often become voiceless. When transferred into English pronunciation, this habit results in errors such as:

- dog → dok • bag → bak • road → rote

Pedagogical Activities

1.Minimal Pair Drills

Problem: Confusion between similar English sounds. Example Error: west → vest. Recommended Activity: Practice minimal pairs such as ship/sheep and west/vest. Expected Outcome: Improved auditory discrimination and pronunciation accuracy.

2.Articulatory Instruction

Problem: Incorrect tongue and lip placement. Example Error: think → tink. Recommended Activity: Study IPA charts and speech organ diagrams. Expected Outcome: Better awareness of sound production mechanisms.

3.Shadowing Technique

Problem: Unnatural rhythm and intonation. Example Error: Monotonous speech. Recommended Activity: Repeat native-speaker recordings immediately after listening. Expected Outcome: Improved fluency, rhythm, and connected speech.

4.Acoustic Self-Analysis

Problem: Lack of awareness of pronunciation errors. Example Error: Persistent L1-influenced pronunciation. Recommended Activity: Record and compare speech with native models. Expected Outcome: Increased self-correction and pronunciation monitoring.

Stress and Intonation Problems

Beyond individual sounds, mother tongue interference also affects prosodic features such as stress and intonation.

English is generally described as a stress-timed language in which stressed syllables occur at relatively regular intervals and unstressed vowels are frequently reduced to the schwa /ə/. Differences between English and Uzbek rhythmic patterns may contribute to stress placement difficulties among learners.

For instance, the word “table” should be pronounced TAbble, with stress on the first syllable. Some learners incorrectly pronounce it as taBLE, placing stress on the second syllable.

Joanne Kenworthy, in Teaching English Pronunciation (1987), emphasizes that incorrect stress patterns can impair intelligibility even more than the mispronunciation of individual sounds because misplaced stress changes the acoustic shape of the word.

Conclusion

Mother tongue interference is an inevitable yet manageable obstacle in mastering English pronunciation. It deeply influences individual speech sounds, lexical stress, and overall sentence intonation. Because learners naturally rely on their long-established L1 habits, errors are bound to occur. However, through targeted listening exercises, formal

phonetic training, consistent drilling, and structured feedback, students can systematically overcome these native language barriers.

This study has several limitations. The analysis focuses mainly on common pronunciation difficulties experienced by Uzbek learners and does not examine all aspects of English phonology. Future research may investigate larger learner populations and explore the effectiveness of technology-assisted pronunciation training. The findings may help English teachers develop more targeted pronunciation instruction in Uzbek classrooms.

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