

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO UZBEK-RUSSIAN BILINGUALS

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Abstract: *This article explores the challenges faced by Uzbek-Russian bilinguals in learning English, focusing on linguistic interference, grammar complexities, and pronunciation difficulties. It discusses the impact of their dual-language background on English acquisition and offers real-life examples from Uzbek classrooms. The study highlights practical teaching strategies to overcome these barriers.*

Keywords: *bilingualism, linguistic interference, English acquisition, pronunciation, grammar, language learning strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The process of learning English in Uzbekistan presents unique challenges for bilingual students who speak both Uzbek and Russian. Linguists such as Cummins (1979) have studied how bilingualism affects language learning, particularly when learners frequently switch between two structurally different languages. In Uzbek classrooms, teachers often observe that bilingual students struggle with English grammar and pronunciation due to interference from their native languages. This article explores these challenges and provides practical strategies for English teachers in Uzbekistan.

MAIN PART

1. Linguistic Interference from Uzbek and Russian

One of the biggest obstacles faced by Uzbek-Russian bilinguals is linguistic interference. Uzbek is an agglutinative language with a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order, while Russian follows a more flexible structure with case endings. English, on the other hand, has a fixed subject-verb-object (SVO) word order. This causes confusion in sentence construction.

A student might say, "Yesterday I to the shop went" instead of "Yesterday I went to the shop," because they apply Uzbek syntax to English. Similarly, some Russian-influenced errors include dropping definite and indefinite articles, as Russian does not use them.

2. Pronunciation difficulties

Uzbek-Russian bilinguals often struggle with English pronunciation, particularly with sounds that do not exist in their native languages.

□ "Th" Sound: Many students replace th with s or z because Uzbek and Russian do not have a voiced dental fricative. For example, "this" becomes "zis."

□ Short and Long Vowels: Russian and Uzbek do not differentiate vowel length in the same way English does, making it difficult to distinguish between words like ship and sheep.

During an English lesson, a teacher asked students to pronounce "thirty-three" and received variations like "sirty-sree" and "tirti-tri."

3. Grammar challenges

English tenses, especially perfect tenses, pose difficulties for bilingual learners. Russian and Uzbek both lack an equivalent to the present perfect tense, leading to errors like:

- ☐ "I have seen this movie yesterday" instead of "I saw this movie yesterday."
- ☐ "She already did her homework" instead of "She has already done her homework."

A teacher at an Uzbek school noticed that students consistently struggled with past perfect exercises. To address this, she introduced a timeline activity showing past events visually, helping students grasp the concept more effectively.

4. Code-Switching in Classrooms

Many Uzbek-Russian bilinguals mix languages when speaking English, leading to code-switching. This can be beneficial in early learning stages but may hinder full immersion.

During a classroom discussion, a student answered: "I went to park, потом я встретил друга, и мы пошли домой." (...then I met my friend, and we went home.)

While this shows comprehension, it also highlights the need for stronger English immersion strategies.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English to Uzbek-Russian bilinguals presents unique linguistic and cultural challenges, but with targeted teaching strategies, these difficulties can be minimized. Educators should focus on error correction techniques, pronunciation drills, and immersive activities to help students overcome linguistic interference. By understanding the influence of Uzbek and Russian on English learning, teachers can create more effective lesson plans that cater to bilingual students' needs.

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