

## COMMON PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS THAT ESL AND EFL STUDENTS FACE

**Khalmuratova Manzura Khoshmuratovna**

Master's student at the National University of Uzbekistan  
named after Mirzo Ulugbek Faculty of Foreign Philology  
Department of English Linguistics

***Abstract.** Pronunciation is the cornerstone of efficient spoken communication. If the speakers' pronunciation is incorrect, their utterances will be incomprehensible to listeners, and they will not be successful in their communication. The goals of this study were to look into EFL students' English pronunciation issues and the elements that influence their English pronunciation. The discovery found that English phonemes at the initial syllable position that cause pupils problems included /ð/, /θ/, /dʒ/, /ʒ/, /v/ and /z/ sound respectively and the /ð/, /θ/, /v/, /f/, /s/, and /l/ sound at the final syllable position. According to this study, the students' basic grasp of English pronunciation was the most significant contributor to this difficulty. However, another key cause of their pronunciation issues was the gap between the Uzbek and English sound systems.*

*To 'g'ri talaffuz samarali og'zaki muloqotning asosidir. Agar so'zlovchilarning talaffuzi noto'g'ri bo'lsa, ularning gaplari tinglovchilarga tushunarsiz bo'lib qoladi, muloqotda muvaffaqiyat qozonmaydi. Ushbu tadqiqotning maqsadi EFL talabalarining ingliz tilini talaffuz qilish muammolari va ularning ingliz tilidagi talaffuziga ta'sir qiluvchi omillarni o'rganish hisoblanadi. Izlanishlar shuni ko'rsatdiki, o'quvchilarda muammolarga olib keladigan boshlang'ich bo'g'in pozitsiyasidagi ingliz fonemalariga mos ravishda /ð/, /θ/, /dʒ/, /ʒ/, /v/ va /z/ tovushlari va /ð/, /θ/ kiradi. , /v/, /f/, /s/ va /l/ tovushi oxirgi bo'g'in o'rnida. Ushbu tadqiqotga ko'ra, talabalarining ingliz tilidagi eng katta qiyinchiliklari yuqoridagi tovushlar talaffuziga tushinish bo'ldi. Shuningdek, ingliz va o'zbek tilidagi tovush tizimidagi tafovutlar talaffuzdagi muammolarga asos hisoblanadi.*

*Правильное произношение – основа эффективного устного общения. Если произношение говорящих неправильное, их слова будут непонятны слушателям, и общение не будет успешным. Целью данного исследования является изучение проблем английского произношения студентов EFL и факторов, влияющих на их английское произношение. Исследования показали, что английские фонемы с началом слога, вызывающие проблемы у учащихся, — это /ð/, /th/, /dz/, /ʒ/, /v/ и /z/ соответственно, а также включают /ð/, /й/, /v/, /f/, /s/ и /l/ звучат в последней позиции слога. Согласно этому исследованию, самой большой трудностью для студентов в английском языке было понимание произношения вышеперечисленных звуков. Также в основе проблем произношения лежат различия в звуковом строе английского и узбекского языков.*

**Keywords:** *Pronunciation problem, Factors affecting English pronunciation, sound systems.*

**Introduction.** English is an international language used as a medium in sharing information, trading, education, and many others across the world. Learning English, therefore, becomes a must for students all around the world, specifically the students that study English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL students). For the importance of learning English mentioned above, this led to all students including EFL students in many countries to learn English from the kindergarten level to tertiary level. However, learning English especially speaking skill causes various problems for EFL students. As Kirkpatrick mentioned, EFL students use the language only on certain occasion and for specific purposes [1]. Moreover, the lack of English roles in society causes learning English for EFL students to be more challenged. As a result of the limited role of using English by EFL students, they have bigger learning problems than other learners who use English in their daily life. Additionally, pronunciation is the basic of communication and it is essential when it comes to distinguishing meanings or to produce comprehensible utterances, especially for EFL students. However,

learners consider pronunciation as the main cause of their communication problems. Learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners with bad pronunciation will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect. From the above-mentioned functions of pronunciation, it is very vital for communication and it is the most important issue for EFL students to recognize [2].

### **EFL students in Uzbekistan and challenges pronunciation English words correctly.**

In Uzbekistan, EFL students have to study English which is a fundamental subject in the curriculum from the kindergarten level to the highest educational level. However, it has been stated that teaching English has not been successful. EFL students in schools learn English for more than ten years, but most of them cannot use English to communicate or convey their ideas effectively. One reason that causes this problem is pronunciation. Most students lack adequate pronunciation practice opportunity which is also one of the primary causes of their English pronunciation problems. Mavlonova claimed that Uzbek students have inadequate practicing time in English pronunciation and they need more speaking opportunity in real situations both in and outside the school environment [3]. Furthermore, the linguistic differences can be another factor that caused the problem; for instance, the difference of phonology, word order, and verbal system. Similarly, another study observed that many pronunciation errors are caused by the phonological transfer of aspects of their first language (L1). This correspond to many research studies which suggested that Uzbek students are very prone to pronounce English sounds by using Uzbek consonant sounds instead.

By the time we have grown up the habits of our own language are so strong that they are very difficult to break. In our own language, we have a fairly small number of sound units which we put together in many different combinations to form the words and sentences we use every day. And as we get older we are dominated by this small number of units. It is as if we had in our heads a certain fixed number of boxes for

sounds. When we listen to our own language we hear the sounds and put each into the right box, and when we speak we go to the boxes and take out the sounds we want in the order we want them [4]. And as we do this over the years the boxes get stronger and stronger until everything we hear, whether it is our own language or another, has to be put into one of these boxes, and everything we say comes out of English boxes contains the sounds at the beginning of the words *fin*, *thin*, and *sin*, that is *f*, *th* and *s*. As children progress through the discovery of language in their first three years, there are predictable patterns in the emergence and development of many features of the language they are learning. For example, children do not use temporal adverbs such as “tomorrow” or “last week” until they develop some understanding of time. [5] Learners of English often expect to be able to speak that language like a native speaker. However, they encounter many factors to gain their desire. One of the common factors that they find difficult is the pronunciation of another sound system. Learners find that their mother tongue influences their pronunciation of English. And also, we can see some problems with consonant sounds. Especially Uzbek learners of English will have some difficulties in the pronunciation of sounds which do not exist in the native language. For instance, /s/ and /z/ is considered confusable in usage. The learners pronounce /s/ instead of /z/ so that a word such as *peas* is pronounced as *peace*. Consequently, the meaning will also be changed. And some consonants are written but not pronounced. This is either because they were once pronounced (*knock*) or come from a foreign language (*psychology*). [6] Initial position — *kn* — *knock*, *knee*, *knife* — *ps* — *psychology*, *psychiatry* End position — *mb* — *lamb*, *climb*, *thumb* — *mn* — *condemn*, *autumn*, *column* Besides, we have a lot of pronunciation mistakes in the consonant sounds /θ/ and /ð/. Differing these sounds are very difficult for Uzbek learners too. 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 a *tree*.

Elementary-level learners of English commonly produce /d/ or /z/ for /ð/ sounds, so the word may sound like /dæn/ or /zæn/. In the Uzbek language, the voiceless stop /p/ does not occur in the initial position of words. And our speakers can substitute a voiced stop /b/ or a voiceless fricative /f/ for /p/. As a result, the word pool may sound like a fool, and pop may sound like bop. [7] In contrast, in the final positions, these consonants often provoke confusion for learners. For example, a lab might sound like a lap. Except that there is a problem with grammatical endings. When words end in s in form of consonant vowel consonant, the /s/ sound is frequently omitted. For example, sits may turn to /sit/ and wants may become /wan/. Sometimes, our speakers tend to omit both /t/ and /s/ sounds in the world wants. Some other final consonant clusters such as /kt/ as in walked, /t/ as in washed, /d/ as in judged, and /ld/ as in filled are very difficult for our elementary-level learners to pronounce. To clarify, the words world may be pronounced as /w/, and myself may be pronounced as /mayse/. These mistakes can be very difficult for our learners to overcome. The results of the experiment held among beginners in English language learning show that process of pronouncing phonemes correctly should be accomplished in three steps: 1) to pronounce consonant and vowel sounds that do not exist in the Uzbek language separately. For example, consonants [ð, θ, r, w, f, v] and vowels [u, ou, ai, ue]. 2) to pronounce the words with a voiced consonant at the end [b, d, g, v,]. 3) To pronounce “similar” consonants (consonants that exist in both English and Uzbek languages) in phrases [m, g, b, s, z, n. d, p, t, k,]. [8]

### **Factors affecting students’ pronunciation**

The students’ basic knowledge of English pronunciation reflected as factors resulting in a very serious pronunciation problem. Next was the instruction of teachers, the frequency of using English pronunciation, respectively. Additionally, it showed that the English sounds that do not exist in the mother tongue which were considered difficult for study is important in presenting some important difficulties of pronunciation that affect the conversation process. According to studies, English learning background is a very important factor which makes

students face the difficulty in their pronunciation. Therefore, students' lack of basic knowledge of English pronunciation is another vital issue to be considered. Furthermore, a study among Uzbek learners indicated that English teachers who have linguistic background knowledge could help the students' pronunciation problems. From the interview, it was found that the learning material and teaching method were important factors that cause the EFL students' pronunciation problem. Specialists of this field found that learning materials as well as an instructional design were important factors to the pronunciation of another language. Thus, EFL teachers who teach English must pay attention to teaching methods while teaching. Moreover, from the interview, EFL students also requested for the foreign teachers in pronunciation classes. Regarding to the EFL teachers, if it is not possible to have the foreign teachers, English instructors should obtain adequate knowledge of English pronunciation so that the students can learn how to produce English sounds correctly. Pronunciation learners would be successful in pronunciation class with the instructor's help, good preparation, wide variety of listening, speaking and pronunciation drills. Furthermore, using games is another way that teachers can use to improve the students' listening and speaking skills and to enhance their communicative competence. Therefore, the teacher should be recognized to the ways to improve students' pronunciation and they are as the model of pronunciation for the language learners. The EFL teacher is supposed to possess at least, a native-like pronunciation capability and try to get a pronunciation that is acceptable and intelligible. Thus, EFL teachers' pronunciation, materials and teaching method play a vital role in the success of EFL students to learn accurate, intelligible and acceptable pronunciation

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, there are a number of problems with English pronunciation for EFL students or non-native speakers of the English language. The findings of this study may allow EFL students to obtain an awareness of the phonetic differences between their own pronunciations and English. Besides, the factors

affecting EFL students' pronunciation such as the basic knowledge of English pronunciation, the instruction of teachers, and the frequency of using English pronunciation need to be recognized. Although it is not easy for EFL students to pronounce the words exactly as they are pronounced by a native speaker, it is not too difficult for them if they are aware of these problems and try to practice improving their pronunciation. More importantly, the findings are also beneficial to educators and administrators to recognize and set up the curriculum, preparing the teachers, finding the materials, and provide the environment to support EFL students' effective pronunciation capability. Learning the pronunciation of some words is combined with the degree of easy and difficult sounds. That means some English sounds are difficult to pronounce. The teacher utters one sound and this way is named "saying speech sounds" and "listening sounds by elementary level learners" level. The learners should pay attention to the content of the phrase and should understand the meaning of that new word or phrase. Elementary-level learners must listen and then perceive those sounds. In conclusion, the mistakes made by Uzbek learners in pronouncing English sounds may be corrected by the teacher step by step based on some well-known theories and practices. The lessons in English will be more productive if the teachers take into account the above-given proposals in making curriculum and lesson plans.

### References:

1. Al Yaqoobi, Z., Ali, F. & Sulan, N. (2016). An Analysis of Errors Caused by Omani EFL Learners in Pronouncing Certain Consonant Sounds. *International Journal of Languages and Education and Applied Linguistics*, 2016. P 59.
2. Frederika Gebhard "English Pronunciation" The second edition 2010–2011. p. 14
3. J . D. O'Connor "Better English Pronunciation" Cambridge University Press. Second edition. 1980. p.70.

4. Kirkpatrick, A. World English. In The Routledge companion to English studies. 2014. Pp. 63-75. Routledge.
5. Marion Williams, Tony Wright “A Course in Language Teaching” Cambridge University Press. First edition, 1999. p.22.
6. Nguyen Tien Dung, Faculty of Foreign Languages, the professor of Ba Ria — Vung Tau University, from his lecture
7. Patsy M. Lightbown, Nina Spada “How Languages are Learned” Oxford University Press. Third edition 2010. p.2.
8. Жамол Жалолов. “Чет Тили Укитиш Методикаси”. Toshkent 1996. pp. 178.179