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O‘ZBEK VA INGLIZ TILLARIDAGI UNLI TOVUSH TIZIMLARINING QIYOSIY TAHLILI

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Annotatsiya
Ushbu maqolada o'zbek va ingliz tillaridagi unli tovushlar tizimlari qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot doirasida ikki tilning unlilar inventari, ularning artikulyatsion va akustik xususiyatlari, hamda tizimiy farqlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Mazkur farqlar til o'rganuvchilar uchun fonetik interferensiya sababchisi ekanligi va chet til ta'limida amaliy ahamiyatga ega ekanligi asoslab beriladi.
Kalit so'zlar: qiyosiy tilshunoslik, unli tovushlar, fonetika, fonologiya, o'zbek tili, ingliz tili, artikulyatsiya, interferensiya.

СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ СИСТЕМ ГЛАСНЫХ ЗВУКОВ В УЗБЕКСКОМ И АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

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Аннотация
В данной статье проводится сопоставительный анализ систем гласных звуков узбекского и английского языков. В рамках исследования рассматриваются инвентари гласных обоих языков, их артикуляционные и акустические характеристики, а также системные различия. Показано, что данные различия являются причиной фонетической интерференции у изучающих язык и имеют существенное значение для обучения иностранным языкам.
Ключевые слова: сопоставительное языкознание, гласные звуки, фонетика, фонология, узбекский язык, английский язык, артикуляция, интерференция.

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF VOWEL SYSTEMS IN THE UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract
This article presents a contrastive analysis of vowel systems in the Uzbek and English languages. The study examines the vowel inventories of both languages, their articulatory and acoustic characteristics, and their systemic differences**.** These differences are shown to cause phonetic interference for language learners, with significant implications for foreign language instruction.
Keywords: contrastive linguistics, vowel sounds, phonetics, phonology, Uzbek language, English language, articulation, interference.

Contrastive linguistics is the branch of linguistics that analyzes two or more languages in relation to one another. This field is of particular importance for foreign language teaching methodology, translation studies, and general typological research. [1; 12-b.] Vowel sounds form the foundation of any language's phonetic system, and their comparative study helps deepen our understanding of speech production and perception.

Uzbek and English differ considerably from one another in typological terms: Uzbek belongs to the Turkic language family, while English belongs to the Indo-European language family. [6; 8-b.] Nevertheless, with the advance of globalization, the mutual interaction of these two languages and the number of people studying them continue to grow. For this reason, a comparative study of the vowel

systems of these two languages is considered relevant from both theoretical and practical standpoints.

The aim of this research is to identify the similarities and differences in the number, articulatory characteristics, and distribution of vowel sounds in Uzbek and English, as well as to demonstrate the effect of these differences on the speech of language learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of significant studies have been conducted in the field of contrastive phonetics. Robert Lado (1957), in his work Linguistics Across Cultures, was the first to provide a theoretical foundation for the role of contrastive analysis of the sound systems of two languages in language teaching. [2; 1-b.] He identified interference — that is, the mispronunciation of foreign language sounds under the influence of the native language — as the primary problem. [2; 58-b.]

For Uzbek language phonetics, the works of S. Rahmatullayev, A. Nurmonov, and B. To'ychiboyev serve as primary sources. They described in detail the six principal vowels of Uzbek (a, e, i, o, u, o') and their variations in connected speech. English phonology has been thoroughly studied by P. Roach, D. Crystal, and J. Wells, who place the total number of monophthongs and diphthongs in English at 12–15. [5; 17-b.; 7; 42-b.]

Specialized studies on the contrastive phonetics of Uzbek and English remain insufficient. In this respect, the present article serves to fill that existing gap.

METHODS

The following methods were employed in the research:

1. the descriptive method — the vowel system of each language was described separately;
2. the contrastive method — the vowel inventories, articulatory features, and phonetic characteristics of the two languages were compared;
3. typological analysis — the number of vowels and the systemic structure of each language were compared against general typological data. [8; 52–55-b.]

Materials for the research were drawn from normative dictionaries of Uzbek (Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, 2006–2008), phonological sources on English (Roach, 2009; Wells, 2008), and the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) charts. The parameters used as the basis for comparison were place of articulation, lip position, and degree of tongue height. [5; 12–13-b.]

RESULTS

4.1. The Vowel System of Uzbek

Standard literary Uzbek has 6 phonemic vowels: a, e, i, o, u, o'. [6; 14-b.] They are classified according to place of articulation (front–back) and degree of tongue height (high–mid–low). Uzbek vowels are also distinguished on the basis of lip rounding: o, u, o' are rounded vowels, while a, e, i are unrounded.

Vowel	Height	Place of Articulation	Rounding
a	Low	Central	Unrounded
e	Mid	Front	Unrounded
i	High	Front	Unrounded
o	Mid	Back	Rounded
u	High	Back	Rounded
o'	Mid-high	Central-back	Rounded

Table 1. The Vowel System of Uzbek

4.2. The Vowel System of English

In the phonetics of English (British Received Pronunciation — RP), 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs are recorded. This study focuses primarily on the 12 monophthongs, which are presented in the table below:

IPA Symbol	Example Word	Height	Place of Articulation
/iː/	see	High	Front
/ɪ/	sit	High-mid	Front
/e/	bed	Mid	Front
/æ/	cat	Low-mid	Front
/ɑː/	car	Low	Back
/ɒ/	hot	Low	Back
/ɔː/	saw	Mid	Back
/ʊ/	put	High	Back

/uː/	too	High	Back
/ʌ/	cup	Mid-low	Central
/ɜː/	bird	Mid	Central
/ə/	about	Mid	Central

Table 2. The Monophthong Vowel System of English (RP)

4.3. Results of the Contrastive Analysis

The results of the analysis show that there is a substantial quantitative difference between Uzbek (6 vowels) and English (12 monophthongs + 8 diphthongs). [5; 17-b.; 6; 14-b.] While high front vowels (/i/ — Uzbek “i”, English /iː/, /ɪ/) and low back vowels (/a/ — Uzbek “a”, English /ɑː/) are qualitatively similar in both languages, English contains multiple distinct phonemic vowels at the same place of articulation (for example, in the front mid position: /e/ and /æ/).

The Uzbek vowel o' stands apart — it is a rounded, central-back vowel with no full equivalent in English. Conversely, the reduced central vowel /ə/ (schwa) is used very widely in English, while no such independent phoneme exists in Uzbek. [5; 22-b.]

DISCUSSION

The results obtained allow for a number of important conclusions from the perspective of contrastive linguistics and comparative phonology. First of all, the analysis shows that the vowel system of English is considerably broader, more variable, and structurally more complex than that of Uzbek. [5; 17-b.; 6; 14-b.] This difference is especially important in the process of foreign language acquisition, since the learner usually interprets unfamiliar sounds through the phonological system of the native language. Therefore, when Uzbek-speaking learners study English, they often rely on the vowel categories available in Uzbek. As a result, the absence of certain English vowel phonemes in Uzbek increases the risk of phonetic interference, mispronunciation, and difficulties in auditory perception.

In particular, English vowels such as /æ/, /ɒ/, /ə/, and /ɜː/ are entirely absent in Uzbek. These sounds do not have direct equivalents in the Uzbek vowel system, which creates a specific difficulty for Uzbek learners of English. As a result, Uzbek-speaking learners tend to substitute these vowels with the closest sounds existing in their native language. [2; 60-b.] For example, the English vowel /æ/ in words such as *cat*, *bad*, and *man* may be pronounced closer to the Uzbek “a”, while /ɒ/ in words such as *hot*, *not*, and *clock* may be replaced by a more familiar Uzbek “o” or “a”-like sound. Such substitutions may not always prevent communication, but they can affect pronunciation accuracy and, in some cases, lead to misunderstanding.

A particularly problematic sound for Uzbek learners is the English central vowel /ɜː/, which occurs in words such as *bird*, *girl*, *work*, and *first*. Since this vowel does not exist in Uzbek, learners often replace it with “i” or “e”. For example, the /ɜː/ sound in the English word *bird* is frequently replaced with “i” or “e”, resulting in a pronunciation closer to “berd” instead of the correct form. [5; 21-b.] This example clearly demonstrates how native-language phonological habits influence the pronunciation of a foreign language. The learner does not simply pronounce the sound incorrectly; rather, they adapt the foreign sound to the closest available category in their own phonetic system.

Second, the distinctly Uzbek vowel *o‘* is unfamiliar to English and, conversely, may present difficulties for native English speakers learning Uzbek. This shows that phonetic interference is not a one-sided phenomenon. While Uzbek learners face challenges in mastering specific English vowels, English-speaking learners may also experience difficulty in pronouncing and distinguishing Uzbek-specific vowel sounds. Therefore, the comparison of the two vowel systems illustrates the existence of symmetric phonetic challenges in bilingual education. Each language has phonological features that may be unfamiliar to speakers of the other language, and these differences should be taken into account in teaching pronunciation.

Third, the widespread use of /ə/ — the schwa sound — in English and the absence of its equivalent in Uzbek produce noticeable differences in the pronunciation of unstressed syllables. In English, schwa is one of the most frequent vowel sounds and appears mainly in unstressed positions. It plays an important role in the rhythm, fluency, and naturalness of English speech. In contrast, Uzbek does not have an equivalent reduced vowel phoneme. While all syllables in Uzbek are pronounced with approximately equal clarity [6; 20-b.], the reduction of unstressed syllables to schwa is a typical feature of English. This difference causes Uzbek learners to pronounce English words more clearly and fully than native speakers usually do, especially in unstressed syllables. For instance, words such as *about*, *teacher*, *problem*, and *family* may be pronounced with excessive vowel clarity, which makes speech sound unnatural from the

point of view of English phonetics.

Furthermore, English distinguishes vowel phonemes not only by tongue position, height, backness, and lip rounding, but also by vowel length and tenseness. Pairs such as /iː/–/ɪ/ and /uː/–/ʊ/ carry semantic distinctions in English, whereas vowel length does not function phonemically in Uzbek. This means that in English, the difference between a long and short vowel can change the meaning of a word. For example, *sheep* and *ship*, *seat* and *sit*, *pool* and *pull* differ mainly through vowel quality and length. Uzbek learners may find it difficult to hear and produce these contrasts because their native language does not use vowel length as a meaning-distinguishing feature. Consequently, this difference creates additional pronunciation and listening difficulties for Uzbek learners.

Another important point is that English vowels are strongly connected with stress and rhythm. The quality of an English vowel may change depending on whether the syllable is stressed or unstressed. In unstressed syllables, vowels are often weakened or reduced, while in stressed syllables they are pronounced more clearly and prominently. Uzbek, however, has a more stable pronunciation pattern, and vowel reduction is not as systematic or significant as in English. This typological distinction affects not only pronunciation but also listening comprehension. Uzbek learners may have difficulty recognizing familiar English words in natural speech because reduced vowels and weak forms make the words sound different from their written form.

The findings also indicate that Uzbek has a more symmetrical and stable vowel system, while English vowels demonstrate greater contextual variation depending on stress, intonation, phonetic environment, and speech tempo. Uzbek vowels are generally more consistent in pronunciation and less dependent on reduction processes. English vowels, on the other hand, are more dynamic and variable. This difference reflects broader typological distinctions between the phonological systems of the two languages. English has a vowel system with a larger number of phonemic oppositions, while Uzbek has a relatively smaller and more regular vowel inventory.

From a methodological point of view, these findings are important for teaching English pronunciation to Uzbek learners. Teachers should pay special attention to those English vowels that do not exist in Uzbek, especially /æ/, /ɒ/, /ə/, /ɜː/, /ɪ/, and /ʊ/. Pronunciation exercises should not be limited to repetition only; they should also include listening discrimination, minimal pair practice, articulation explanation, and contextual pronunciation tasks. Learners need to understand not only how a sound is pronounced, but also how it functions in words, phrases, and connected speech.

Through the contrastive analysis of vowel systems in Uzbek and English, this study concludes that the two languages differ significantly in both the number and quality of vowel phonemes. Uzbek has 6 phonemic vowels, while English includes 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs [5; 17-b.], which makes the English vowel system considerably broader. Although some high front and low back vowels show qualitative similarity in both languages, important articulatory differences remain. The Uzbek vowel o‘ and the English vowels /ə/, /æ/, and /ɜː/ are the most distinctive elements between the two systems [6; 18-b.; 5; 19–22-b.]. In addition, vowel reduction and phonemic vowel length, which are characteristic of English, are absent in Uzbek phonology. These differences become a major source of phonetic interference in foreign language learning and should be considered in pronunciation teaching methodology [2; 72-b.]. Overall, contrastive phonetic analysis is important for improving pronunciation, listening comprehension, and bilingual phonological competence.

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