

**BRIDGING THE LINGUISTIC DIVIDE: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR
MITIGATING NATIVE LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE IN ENGLISH ACQUISITION
AMONG UZBEK SCHOOLCHILDREN**

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Abstract

As Uzbekistan accelerates its integration into the globalized world, English language proficiency has become a cornerstone of its national educational reforms. However, teaching English to Uzbek-speaking schoolchildren presents unique linguistic challenges, primarily due to "negative transfer," or native language (L1) interference. Because English (an Indo-European language) and Uzbek (an agglutinative Turkic language) possess fundamentally different morphological, syntactic, and phonological structures, learners frequently project their L1 rules onto the target language. This analytical article explores the root causes of Uzbek-English interference and proposes a comprehensive, evidence-based methodology to mitigate these challenges in primary and secondary educational settings.

Introduction: Understanding the Nature of L1 Interference

In second language acquisition (SLA), "interference" refers to the subconscious application of native language rules—such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation—to a second language. While

"positive transfer" occurs when both languages share structural similarities, "negative transfer" (interference) leads to persistent errors.

For Uzbek schoolchildren, the linguistic distance between Uzbek and English is vast. Without targeted pedagogical intervention, students often develop "fossilized" errors. To effectively address this, educators must shift from traditional, rote-translation methodologies to targeted, contrastive, and communicative frameworks.

Analytical Breakdown of Uzbek-English Interference

To formulate an effective methodology, it is vital to first dissect where interference occurs. The friction points generally fall into three categories:

A. Morpho-Syntactic Interference

- **Word Order:** English relies on a strict Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) sentence structure. Uzbek uses a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structure. A typical Uzbek student might subconsciously construct a sentence like *"I the book read"* (*Men kitobni o'qidim*), displacing the verb to the end.

- **The Article System:** The English definite and indefinite articles (*a, an, the*) do not exist in Uzbek. Consequently, Uzbek learners either omit articles entirely or misuse them, relying on the Uzbek word *"bir"* (one) as a flawed substitute for *"a/an"*.

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- **Agglutination vs. Prepositions:** Uzbek expresses relationships of time, place, and direction through suffixes attached to root words (e.g., *Maktab-ga = to school*). English utilizes separate prepositions. This often results in prepositional omission or confusion in English output.



B. Phonological Interference

- **Consonant Clusters and Dental Fricatives:** English sounds such as the voiceless /θ/ (*think*) and voiced /ð/ (*this*) are absent in Uzbek phonology. Uzbek students often substitute these with /s/, /z/, or /d/ (e.g., "*sink*" instead of "*think*"). Furthermore, Uzbek phonotactics do not naturally support complex consonant clusters at the beginning or end of words, leading to vowel insertion (e.g., pronouncing "*sports*" as "*sipors*").
- **Vowel Quality:** The distinction between short and long vowels in English (e.g., *ship* vs. *sheep*, *bit* vs. *beat*) is subtle or non-existent in Uzbek, leading to mispronunciation and semantic confusion.

C. Lexico-Semantic Interference

Uzbek students frequently rely on direct translation. For example, the Uzbek verb "*o'qimoq*" means to read, but it is also used colloquially to mean "to study" at a school or university. This results in sentences like "*I am reading at university*" instead of "*I am studying at university.*"

A Multi-Tiered Methodology to Overcome Interference

To combat these deeply ingrained linguistic habits, teachers in Uzbekistan must employ a blended methodology that combines Cognitive-Contrastive Analysis, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and focused Audio-Lingual drills.

Step 1: Conscious Contrastive Analysis (CCA)

Rather than simply correcting an error, teachers should use CCA to help students consciously understand *why* they are making it.

- **Implementation:** The teacher explicitly maps the differences on the board. For example, using color-coding to highlight the SVO structure in English versus the SOV structure in Uzbek. By making the subconscious interference conscious, older schoolchildren (grades 5–11) can mentally cross-check their own sentences before speaking.
- **Rule of thumb:** Limit native language use only to brief, targeted structural comparisons. The rest of the lesson must remain in English.

Step 2: The "Chunking" and Lexical Approach

Because translating word-for-word from Uzbek to English creates syntactic chaos, students must be taught in "chunks" or collocations.

- **Implementation:** Instead of teaching the word "*listen*" and the preposition "*to*" separately, teach "*listen to music*" as one inseparable unit. This bypasses the student's instinct to search for an Uzbek suffix equivalent and builds natural English fluency.

Step 3: Tactile and Visual Phonology Training

To fix phonological interference, teachers must act as vocal coaches. Since Uzbek children do not have muscle memory for sounds like /θ/ and /w/, simply repeating an audio track is insufficient.



- **Implementation:** Teachers must demonstrate the exact physical placement of the tongue and teeth. Using mirrors in the classroom allows young learners to see if their tongue is correctly placed between their teeth for the "th" sound. "Minimal Pair" drills (e.g., *bat/bet*, *tree/three*) should be gamified to train the ear to hear distinctions that do not exist in Uzbek.

Step 4: Contextualized Grammar for Article Acquisition

Because explaining the rules of English articles theoretically is highly abstract for an Uzbek speaker, implicit learning through context is more effective.

- **Implementation:** Extensive reading and storytelling. Teachers should use "Input Flooding"—providing texts where articles are heavily highlighted. Over time, students develop a "feel" for when a noun requires a determiner, transitioning from rule-based guessing to intuitive usage.

Step 5: Fostering an "English-Only" Micro-Environment

To stop the mental translation process (L1 → L2), the classroom must stimulate direct L2 thought.

- **Implementation:** Employ Total Physical Response (TPR) for primary schoolchildren. When students physically act out English commands (e.g., "*Put the book on the table*"), they associate the English phrase directly with the action, entirely bypassing the Uzbek language pathways in the brain.

Implementation in the Uzbek Educational Context

For this methodology to be successful, continuous professional development (CPD) for local teachers is imperative. Many local educators themselves learned English through outdated grammar-translation methods and may unknowingly pass fossilized errors to their students.

Teacher training programs in Uzbekistan should prioritize practical classroom management techniques that maximize Student Talking Time (STT). Furthermore, textbooks should be localized—not by translating them into Uzbek, but by designing curricula that anticipate and proactively address the specific errors native Uzbek speakers are guaranteed to make.

Conclusion

Interference from the native language is a natural, unavoidable phase in second language acquisition. For Uzbek schoolchildren learning English, the vast typological differences between the two languages make negative transfer particularly pronounced. However, interference should not be viewed as a defect, but as a diagnostic tool.

By applying a methodology rooted in Conscious Contrastive Analysis, Lexical Chunking, and targeted Phonological training, educators can effectively dismantle linguistic barriers. Ultimately, shifting the pedagogical paradigm from rote memorization to active, structurally-aware communication will equip the next generation of Uzbek students with genuine, confident English fluency.

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