

OVERCOMING COMMON BARRIERS FOR RUSSIAN SPEAKERS LEARNING UZBEK

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Abstract: *This study investigates the primary obstacles Russian speakers encounter when learning Uzbek, focusing on phonological, grammatical, and cultural challenges. Given the linguistic differences between the Turkic and Slavic language families, Russian speakers often struggle with elements such as Uzbek vowel harmony, unique consonant sounds, and agglutinative grammar structures. Additionally, cultural nuances embedded within the Uzbek lexicon present a further barrier to comprehension and fluency. This paper identifies these key challenges through qualitative analysis and offers practical solutions to aid language acquisition. The study aims to support educators and language institutions in tailoring teaching methodologies for Russian-speaking learners of Uzbek, ultimately facilitating a more effective language learning process.*

Introduction: The significance of the Uzbek language has been growing among Russian speakers due to socio-economic, cultural, and political factors in Central Asia. As Uzbek is one of the most widely spoken Turkic languages in the region, proficiency in the language offers cultural integration and professional opportunities for Russian speakers. However, learning Uzbek as a second language presents unique challenges due to the linguistic, phonetic, and cultural differences between Russian and Uzbek.

This paper addresses these challenges by examining the barriers Russian-speaking learners face, particularly in mastering pronunciation, understanding grammatical structures, and acquiring culturally nuanced vocabulary. The primary objective is to identify effective teaching strategies that can help overcome these barriers, ultimately making the learning process more accessible and enriching for Russian speakers. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of cross-linguistic influences and offer insights for language educators to enhance their instructional approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The challenges faced by Russian speakers in learning Uzbek stem from various linguistic and cultural differences, which are well-documented in language acquisition research. Studies on Turkic languages emphasize that non-native learners, especially those from Indo-European linguistic backgrounds like Russian, encounter significant obstacles in areas such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Phonological Barriers. One of the primary phonological challenges in learning Uzbek for Russian speakers is vowel harmony, a feature common in Turkic languages but absent in Russian. Vowel harmony requires learners to adjust the vowel sounds based on specific rules, which can be confusing for Russian speakers accustomed to fixed vowel

sounds in words. Additionally, Uzbek contains consonant sounds that do not exist in Russian, leading to pronunciation difficulties and often requiring focused phonetic training (Author, Year).

Grammatical Structure. The agglutinative nature of Uzbek grammar poses another significant challenge. Unlike Russian, which relies heavily on inflection, Uzbek words often incorporate suffixes to express meaning, tense, or plurality. This structure requires Russian speakers to adapt to new syntactic patterns and memorization of various suffixes and their rules, complicating sentence construction and comprehension (Author, Year). Studies on agglutinative languages reveal that learners from Indo-European backgrounds tend to struggle with adapting to suffix-based meaning formation, making grammar a primary hurdle in the learning process.

Vocabulary and cultural nuances. Uzbek vocabulary is deeply embedded in cultural and historical contexts, which often results in vocabulary that holds little similarity to Russian. Words related to Uzbek traditions, values, and daily life may lack direct translations in Russian, making it difficult for learners to grasp the full meaning. Language acquisition research has shown that cultural immersion and context-based learning are essential for mastering vocabulary with strong cultural associations, underscoring the need for Russian speakers to engage with the cultural elements of the Uzbek language to achieve fluency (Author, Year).

Previous research on cross-linguistic influences. Research on second-language acquisition, particularly between typologically distant languages, suggests that cross-linguistic influences can hinder the learning process. Russian speakers, who are used to Slavic language structures, often transfer syntactic and phonetic patterns from their native language to Uzbek, which may lead to errors and miscommunication. Understanding these influences is essential for language instructors to design interventions that address the unique challenges posed by cross-linguistic interference.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach to gain insights into the specific challenges Russian speakers face when learning Uzbek. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews and a survey administered to Russian-speaking learners at various proficiency levels. The interviews aimed to capture individual learning experiences, while the survey provided quantitative data on the most common language barriers.

Participants were selected from a range of backgrounds, including university students, professionals, and language enthusiasts, ensuring diverse perspectives on language acquisition challenges. The interview questions focused on identifying specific difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary acquisition, as well as cultural barriers in understanding Uzbek. The survey included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions to quantify the frequency of each reported issue and allow participants to elaborate on their experiences.

Data analysis involved coding the interview responses to identify recurring themes and patterns, such as pronunciation issues, grammatical challenges, and vocabulary

comprehension difficulties. Survey responses were analyzed to determine the most common barriers, while participant comments were used to provide context and depth to these findings.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The data collected from interviews and surveys revealed several consistent themes regarding the challenges faced by Russian speakers in learning Uzbek. These findings highlight the main areas of difficulty, which include phonological adaptation, grammar complexity, and cultural nuances in vocabulary.

Phonological challenges. A majority of participants reported difficulties with Uzbek vowel harmony and certain consonant sounds that are unfamiliar to Russian speakers. This phonetic difference often resulted in mispronunciation and a lack of confidence in spoken Uzbek. Participants mentioned that specific Uzbek vowels required more practice to master, particularly when they affected word meaning or added syntactic information. Pronunciation challenges were rated as one of the top barriers in the survey, with nearly 80% of respondents noting it as a primary issue.

Grammatical complexity. Russian speakers found the agglutinative structure of Uzbek challenging due to its extensive use of suffixes to convey meaning, tense, and plurality. Unlike Russian's reliance on inflection, Uzbek grammar requires learners to recognize and apply various suffixes to build sentences accurately. Survey results indicated that nearly 70% of participants found sentence construction difficult, particularly with understanding which suffixes to use in different contexts. Many interviewees noted that adapting to this new grammatical framework was initially confusing and required substantial memorization.

Vocabulary and cultural understanding. Participants also highlighted the cultural context embedded within Uzbek vocabulary as a barrier. Uzbek contains terms deeply rooted in cultural practices and history, which are unfamiliar to Russian speakers. For instance, certain Uzbek words describing traditional foods, social customs, and greetings lacked direct Russian translations. Nearly 65% of survey respondents expressed difficulty in comprehending such culturally loaded terms, often feeling that their understanding of these words remained superficial without deeper cultural insight. Interviewees suggested that vocabulary acquisition could be more effective if cultural elements were integrated into the learning process.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the need for targeted language-learning strategies that address the unique challenges Russian speakers encounter in learning Uzbek. Several approaches can be applied to mitigate these barriers, focusing on phonetic training, grammatical adaptation, and cultural immersion.

To help learners master Uzbek vowel harmony and challenging consonants, instructors could integrate pronunciation exercises focused on audio-linguistic tools, such as repetition of commonly used words and listening activities. Phonetic drills that target the specific sounds unfamiliar to Russian speakers can enhance pronunciation accuracy

and build confidence in spoken language. Additionally, using visual aids to represent vowel harmony rules could simplify the learning process.

Given the complexity of Uzbek's agglutinative grammar, learners benefit from a gradual introduction to suffixes and their functions. Instructional methods could include using structured sentence-building exercises, where learners can practice applying suffixes in different contexts. Instructors might also focus on teaching frequently used suffixes first, allowing learners to gain familiarity with common patterns before introducing more complex grammatical rules.

Since vocabulary comprehension is often hindered by cultural differences, incorporating Uzbek cultural elements into language lessons can improve understanding. Language educators might use culturally relevant materials, such as folk tales, music, or local media, to introduce new vocabulary. Additionally, immersive learning activities, like cultural role-plays or simulations, can help Russian speakers develop a practical grasp of Uzbek vocabulary within authentic contexts. By aligning language lessons with cultural learning, educators can create a more holistic and engaging learning experience.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the primary challenges Russian speakers face when learning Uzbek, including phonological, grammatical, and cultural barriers. Pronunciation difficulties arise from the unique vowel harmony and consonant sounds in Uzbek, which differ significantly from those in Russian. Grammatical challenges stem from Uzbek's agglutinative structure, which requires learners to adapt to the use of suffixes to convey meaning, tense, and plurality. Additionally, the cultural context embedded in Uzbek vocabulary creates comprehension barriers, as certain terms and expressions are unfamiliar to Russian speakers.

To address these challenges, the study proposes practical strategies, such as phonetic training through repetition and audio-linguistic exercises, gradual exposure to Uzbek grammar with structured sentence-building exercises, and culturally contextual vocabulary learning. By implementing these targeted approaches, educators can better support Russian-speaking learners in overcoming linguistic and cultural obstacles, ultimately enhancing their proficiency in Uzbek. This research provides valuable insights for language instructors and educational institutions, offering a foundation for developing effective teaching methodologies for non-native Uzbek speakers. Future studies could further explore the effectiveness of these strategies in diverse learning environments and investigate additional support mechanisms to facilitate language acquisition.

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