

THE PROBLEM OF PHONOSTYLISTIC INTERFERENCE IN ENGLISH AND
UZBEK LINGUISTICS

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Abstract: Phonostylistic interference constitutes a major challenge in second-language acquisition, particularly in contexts where learners navigate typologically distinct phonological systems. This article examines the problem of phonostylistic interference between English and Uzbek, focusing on how the structural divergence of segmental and suprasegmental features contributes to habitual mispronunciation and prosodic deviation. Drawing on contemporary research in contrastive phonetics and applied linguistics, the study analyses core areas of interference, including vowel quantity and quality, consonantal substitutions, stress assignment, rhythmic timing, and intonational contouring. Through comparative examples from English and Uzbek, the article demonstrates how L1-induced phonostylistic transfer affects intelligibility, communicative efficiency, and stylistic appropriateness in L2 English. The pedagogical implications highlight the need for explicit prosodic instruction, perceptual training, and targeted pronunciation interventions. The article argues that a theoretically grounded understanding of cross-linguistic phonostylistic asymmetries is essential for designing effective teaching methodologies in multilingual educational contexts.

Keywords: phonostylistic interference; English phonology; Uzbek phonology; suprasegmentals; contrastive analysis; second-language acquisition; prosody

Phonostylistic interference refers to the transfer of phonetic, prosodic, and articulatory features from a speaker's first language (L1) into a second language (L2), resulting in systematic deviations from target-language norms (Weinreich, 1953). This phenomenon is particularly salient when the phonological systems of the two languages differ significantly, as in the case of English and Uzbek. English, a stress-timed Indo-European language, exhibits complex vowel contrasts, variable lexical stress, extensive reduction phenomena, and a wide pitch range. Uzbek, a Turkic and primarily syllable-timed language, displays stable vowel qualities, predictable stress, simpler syllable structures, and a narrower intonational range. These typological disparities create fertile ground for phonostylistic interference among Uzbek learners of English. The significance of phonostylistic interference extends beyond surface pronunciation errors; it affects intelligibility, pragmatic interpretation, and perceived communicative competence. In academic pedagogy, understanding the mechanisms of interference is essential for designing effective pronunciation instruction and for aiding learners in acquiring target-like prosody. The present article investigates both segmental and suprasegmental sources of interference and offers comparative analyses illustrating how specific Uzbek phonostylistic features influence English speech production.

Phonostylistics, as developed within modern phonetics, examines speech variation across communicative contexts, stylistic registers, and speaker intentions. It addresses how intonation, tempo, loudness, pausing, and articulatory settings shape meaning beyond the segmental level. Interference occurs when these stylistic features are transferred inappropriately into an L2, producing non-native patterns that may hinder comprehension.

Contrastive analysis (Lado, 1957) provides a methodological basis for predicting areas of difficulty in L2 acquisition by identifying mismatches between linguistic systems. Contemporary models, such as Flege's Speech Learning Model and Best's Perceptual Assimilation Theory, support the view that learners assimilate unfamiliar L2 sounds into their existing L1 categories, producing systematic phonostylistic substitution patterns.

Studies on Uzbek learners of English (Abduazizov, 2007; Mavlonova, 2018) consistently document patterns of negative transfer, especially in the production of interdental fricatives, vowel length distinctions, consonant clusters, and intonational contours. These findings underscore the relevance of segmental and suprasegmental incompatibilities between English and Uzbek.

Vowel Interference

English possesses a rich vowel system with contrasts in height, backness, tenseness, and length (e.g., /ɪ/ vs. /i:/, /ʊ/ vs. /u:/, and multiple diphthongs). Uzbek vowels, by contrast, are fewer, more stable, and lack diphthongization. This structural disparity results in neutralization errors such as:

- English ship /ʃɪp/ vs. sheep /ʃi:p/
→ Uzbek learners may pronounce both as [ʃɪp].
 - English diphthong face /feɪs/
→ Often realized as monophthong [fes] due to Uzbek monophthongal inventory.
- Uzbek's absence of vowel reduction further causes learners to pronounce unstressed vowels with full quality, producing syllables like photograph /'fotəgræf/ as ['fo:togra:f].

Consonantal Interference

Uzbek lacks several English consonants, most notably the interdental fricatives:

- /θ/ → [t] or [s] (e.g., think → tink or sink)
- /ð/ → [d] or [z] (e.g., this → dis or zis)

Other recurrent interference patterns include:

- Uzbek /q/ and /ɣ/ are substituted for English /k/ and /g/, producing hyper-back articulation.
- English /w/ is often replaced by Uzbek /v/, merging wine and vine.
- Consonant clusters such as /str/, /spl/, /nd/, /ld/ are frequently simplified either by epenthesis (street → [sə'tirit]) or deletion (world → [wɜ:]).

These deviations reflect Uzbek phonotactic constraints and articulatory habits.

Stress Placement

English stress is lexically contrastive (record vs. record), whereas Uzbek stress is predominantly final and non-contrastive. Uzbek learners thus systematically shift stress to the last syllable:

- English DEvelopment → Uzbek-influenced developMENT
- English FAMily → faMily

These stress shifts reduce intelligibility and can change perceived meaning.

Rhythm

English rhythm is stress-timed; Uzbek rhythm is syllable-timed. As a result:

- English unstressed function words (e.g., to, and) are pronounced fully rather than reduced.
- Learners produce equal-length syllables, creating a staccato rhythm incongruent with English prosody.

Intonation

English employs rising, falling, and complex contour patterns to signal modality, discourse structure, and attitude. Uzbek intonation is less dynamic and more predictable. Typical interference includes:

- Rising intonation on wh-questions (e.g., Where are you going? with a rising tone).
- Flat intonational contours lacking pragmatic nuance.

These intonational transfers influence listener perception of politeness, certainty, or emotional stance.

English Target Form	Uzbek-influenced Output	Cause of Interference
think /θɪŋk/	tink /tɪŋk/	No /θ/ in Uzbek
go /goʊ/	go /go/	Lack of diphthongs
important /ɪmˈpɔːrtənt/	imporTANT	Final stress habit
I want to go	I want tu go	No vowel reduction
Where are you going?	rising intonation	Uzbek intonation norms

Phonostylistic interference between English and Uzbek arises from profound typological differences in their phonological and prosodic systems. The persistent transfer of Uzbek articulatory and prosodic patterns into English affects intelligibility, stylistic appropriateness, and communicative competence. A theoretically grounded understanding of these interference mechanisms enables educators to design informed, targeted pedagogical interventions. The interplay between segmental and suprasegmental features underscores the necessity of teaching pronunciation not as isolated sounds but as an integrated system. Effective instruction, supported by contrastive analysis and empirical phonetic methods, can substantially reduce interference, allowing learners to achieve more native-like English prosody.

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