

Improving The Teaching Of Phonetics In General Education Schools

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Abstract

This article analyzes current pedagogical issues regarding the teaching of the phonetics section of the native language curriculum in general education schools. Phonetics plays a crucial role in fostering students' skills in correct pronunciation, speech culture, intonation, and the use of phonemes. However, issues such as incorrect pronunciation habits, mispronunciation of words, and intonational deficiencies are linked to methodological shortcomings. Traditional methods fail to sufficiently stimulate verbal engagement; the use of ICT is limited, individualized approaches are underdeveloped, and teacher qualifications are often inadequate. Drawing on the perspectives of scholars such as Chomsky, Lado, Mayer, Tomlinson, and Medley, the author substantiates the need for interactive methods, audio-visual materials, interactive software, and individualized approaches. The article further demonstrates that the effectiveness of phonetics instruction—and the subsequent development of speech skills and achievement of desired outcomes—can be enhanced by improving teacher qualifications and refining teaching methodologies. Interactive methods, information and communication technologies (ICT), individualized approaches, and professional development are recommended as key solutions for teaching phonetics. Consequently, updating teaching methodology is of vital importance.

Keywords: Phonetics, educational materials, methodological support, standard pronunciation, phonological competence, system of exercises, international and Uzbek linguists and methodologists

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Phonetics holds particular importance in native language lessons, as it fosters skills in correct pronunciation, speech culture, intonation, and the proper use of phonemes among students. However, incorrect pronunciation habits, mispronunciations, and flaws in intonation are currently common among students. This is linked to certain issues in the methodology of teaching phonetics.

1. Since traditional methods are primarily based on listening and repetition, they do not sufficiently encourage students' active speaking. Therefore, interactive methods—such as role-playing, intonation exercises, and tasks designed to develop pace and rhythm—should be widely used in lessons.
2. The use of ICT alone is insufficient. Performing phonetic exercises based on audio-video materials and interactive programs develops students' listening and pronunciation skills. This boosts engagement and provides the opportunity to hear various patterns of intonation, stress, and pronunciation.
3. The individual approach is weak. Each student's pronunciation, listening ability, and errors differ. Therefore, methodological materials and exercises need to be adapted to the students' specific characteristics.

Phonetics holds particular importance in native language lessons, as it fosters students' skills in correct pronunciation, speech culture, intonation, and the proper use of phonemes. However, incorrect pronunciation habits, mispronunciation of words, and flaws in intonation are currently common among students. This situation is linked to certain issues in the methodology of teaching phonetics.

Firstly, since traditional methods rely primarily on listening and repetition, students' active speaking is not sufficiently encouraged. Therefore, it is advisable to make greater use of interactive methods—such as role-playing, intonation exercises, and tasks designed to develop pace and rhythm—during the lesson.

Secondly, modern information and communication technologies are not being utilized sufficiently. Organizing phonetic exercises based on audio and video materials and interactive programs helps improve students' listening and pronunciation skills. Such methods not only boost engagement but also allow students to hear various intonations, stresses, and pronunciation patterns.

Thirdly, the individual approach to teaching phonetics is not sufficiently developed. Each student has a different level of pronunciation, auditory ability, and pattern of speech errors. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt methodological materials and exercises to the individual characteristics of the students.

The methodological foundations for teaching phonetics have been advanced through research in the fields of linguistics and pedagogy. Phonetics plays a crucial role in shaping a student's speech culture, pronunciation, and intonation. Furthermore, Chomsky's theory of generative linguistics serves as a scientific basis for understanding the stable structure of the speech system and for the conscious acquisition of pronunciation.

Scientific research has confirmed that the frequent occurrence of pronunciation and intonation errors among students is linked to shortcomings in the methodological process. For instance, as Lado noted, simply combining listening, repetition, and oral exercises is insufficient for teaching the phonetics of a target language; the use of interactive and contextual methods is essential. This approach enhances students' verbal engagement and reduces pronunciation errors.

The use of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) enhances the effectiveness of teaching phonetics. According to Mayer's multimedia learning theory, conveying information through visual and auditory channels improves a learner's listening and pronunciation skills. Furthermore, ICT tools allow learners to listen to and repeat various intonations, stress patterns, and pronunciation variants, thereby increasing the practical effectiveness of the learning process. It is also essential to enrich phonetic teaching methodology with an individualized approach. Research by Tomlinson and Medley indicates that, given the differences in individual pronunciation and listening abilities, tailoring instructional materials to these specific characteristics makes the pedagogical process more effective.

Currently, the teaching of the phonetics section of the native language curriculum in general education schools presents a pressing pedagogical challenge. This issue stems from several factors: traditional methods fail to sufficiently stimulate students' active participation in speaking; modern information and communication technologies are underutilized; and there are limitations regarding teachers' methodological preparedness and their ability to apply individualized approaches.

Firstly, traditional teaching methods often rely on listening and repetition. Consequently, students struggle to correctly master pronunciation, stress, and intonation. This leads to poor learning outcomes in phonetics and hinders the development of a proper culture of speech..

Secondly, limited use of information and communication technologies reduces the effectiveness of the pedagogical process. Through audio and video materials, interactive programs, and virtual exercises, students can listen to and repeat various pronunciation and intonation patterns. However, these tools are not sufficiently utilized in many schools.

Thirdly, the individual approach is insufficiently developed. Since each student possesses different pronunciation, listening, and intonation skills, adapting methodological materials to the student's individual characteristics is a crucial pedagogical requirement. Furthermore, teachers' proficiency in phonetics presents a challenge; a lack of in-depth knowledge regarding intonation, stress, phonemes, and pronunciation hinders the effective organization of the learning process. Consequently, there is a need to improve pedagogical methodology and enhance the professional training of teachers.

To improve the teaching of phonetics in general education schools, it is necessary to widely employ interactive methods, introduce information and communication technologies, foster an individual approach, and enhance teacher qualifications. This serves to improve students' speech skills and achieve the desired outcomes in phonetics.

Consequently, improving the teaching of phonetics in general education schools is viewed as a pedagogical challenge, and addressing this issue can be pursued through several avenues: the widespread use of interactive methods, the integration of information and communication technologies, the development of an individualized approach, and the enhancement of teacher qualifications. This approach ensures the

improvement of students' speech skills and the achievement of desired outcomes in the study of phonetics.

1.1- table

Pedagogical problem	Causes	Areas for improvement	Expected result
Students' pronunciation and intonation errors	Traditional methods (listen-and-repeat) do not generate sufficient engagement.	Use of interactive methods (role-playing, problem situations, speed and rhythm exercises)	Developing speaking skills, reducing pronunciation errors
Limited use of modern information and communication tools	Multimedia, audio, and video materials are not sufficiently utilized.	Implementation of ICT tools: interactive programs, audio-video exercises, virtual simulations.	Students practice by listening to and repeating various pronunciation and intonation patterns, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of learning.
Lack of an individual approach	Each student's pronunciation and listening abilities are different.	Adapting methodological materials and exercises to the student's characteristics.	The student's personal development is taken into account, and the results are sustainable.
Low qualification level of teachers	Lack of in-depth knowledge of intonation,	Professional development courses and methodological	Improving the quality of phonetics instruction and enhancing the

	stress, and phonemes	seminars for teachers	effectiveness of the educational process.
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The question of the content of education is considered one of the oldest and, at the same time, most pressing issues in human history. This is, of course, natural, for throughout the history of human development, humanity has sought—and continues to seek—an answer to the question: "What should be taught, and how?".

Granting the Uzbek language the status of state language fundamentally changed the attitude toward the mother tongue. The modernization of the content of mother-tongue education defined the scope of work required in this field. Addressing issues in the education sector, the Republic's first President stated: "To date, no one has fully substantiated—from a scientific perspective—exactly what should be taught at each grade level, whether in primary classes or at subsequent stages of education."¹ .

The concept of educational content is interpreted in various ways in scientific and methodological literature. Notably, Uzbek pedagogical scholars I.Y. Lerner and M.N. Skatkin view educational content as a portion of rich social experience—methodologically structured and selected for study—that is intended for students to master.

It cannot be said that all the elements unique to our language have been fully studied from the perspective of national identity. In particular, the sound system of the Uzbek language has not yet been sufficiently researched from both scientific and methodological standpoints. Naturally, the languages of peoples with distinct lifestyles and customs possess their own unique characteristics. While the teaching of Uzbek vowels has been studied to some extent from a scientific perspective, the theoretical data gathered so far fails to fully elucidate the language's unique nature and national characteristics. Due to historical circumstances, our native language—which was shaped by the frameworks of other languages starting in the 1940s—still exhibits traces of those old models. This is having a negative impact on mother-tongue education, particularly on the teaching of the mother tongue in schools.

³HYPERLINK "<https://doi.org/10.2307/411853>" \t "_blank" <https://doi.org/10.2307/411853>

The content and fundamental direction of the curricula for "Mother Tongue" and "Uzbek Language" in the republic's general education schools took shape in the mid-1950s; despite certain modifications and additions, they have remained in use to this day. Textbooks were developed on this basis and have repeatedly withstood the test of time. On the surface, it appears that efforts in this area have steadily improved and become more refined. However, over the past quarter-century, our society has undergone drastic changes across political, economic, spiritual, and educational spheres; shifts have also been observed in our national worldview and, consequently, in our approach to individual development. The ideology of independence has imposed new demands on every member, sector, and aspect of society. Profound changes have taken place—and continue to occur—within our society. Among these changes, the transformations associated with Uzbek linguistics and its evolution are particularly evident. Notably, a "substantial linguistics" approach has emerged and flourished within the field; it studies language as a system characterized by generality, essence, potential, and causality, while examining speech as a manifestation of particularity, phenomenon, reality, and consequence—achieving significant success in the process.

However, not all of these innovations have been selectively adopted or consistently integrated across the various stages of the education system. In particular, the achievements of traditional linguistics—which served as the foundation for the emergence of the Uzbek "substantial" approach to linguistics—have become intermingled with the findings of this new direction in higher education curricula and textbooks, as well as in the secondary specialized and general school programs. It is also regrettable that mutually contradictory theoretical concepts frequently appear side by side in school textbooks.

If we look around us, we see that in many advanced nations, the content of mother-tongue education has undergone a fundamental overhaul. It has been established that the educational content—specifically the knowledge imparted to students—must meet their social needs and inspire them toward creativity and constructive endeavor².

It became necessary to fundamentally renew the content of native

² Йўлдошева Д. Кадрлар тайёрлаш миллий дастури талаблари асосида таълим мақсадини белгилашнинг дидактик асослари.—Т.: Фан, 2006. — Б.11

language education and adapt instructional materials to modern needs in order to foster creativity and independent thinking skills in students, and to teach them to express their ideas correctly and fluently—both orally and in writing—in a manner appropriate to the communicative context³. Naturally, educational resources play a crucial role in this endeavor. While a number of "Mother Tongue" textbooks have been developed to date, it is worth considering whether all the instructional materials within them truly meet the necessary standards. Professors Hamid Nematov and Asqar G'ulomov provided a well-founded analysis of the current state of mother-tongue education, outlining the steps needed for improvement and identifying the essential content that should be taught to students⁴.

Training qualified personnel capable of competing on a global scale is a pressing task for mother-tongue education; achieving this depends largely on the quality of textbooks—the primary tools of general secondary education—and the educational materials contained within them. It should be noted, however, that the goals of modern mother-tongue education do not dictate that the textbook must be the sole instructional resource used in lessons. Both teachers and students need to frequently consult "information bank" materials—such as dictionaries, reference guides, encyclopedias, and notes—in connection with the subject matter being studied. Unfortunately, although more than twenty years have passed since the content of native language education was updated, the majority of our school teachers still rely solely on textbook materials.

Resolving certain inconsistencies and ambiguities in the theoretical information presented in "Mother Tongue" textbooks, as well as determining the best approach for presenting educational material within them, remains a persistent challenge. Just as they did fifty or sixty years ago, current "Mother Tongue" textbooks focus primarily on the theoretical aspects of a topic, typically presenting between two and five rules for each subject. Consequently, we deemed it essential to examine the history and content of these textbooks to find a solution to this issue. Investigating the origins and rationale behind the inclusion of specific theoretical concepts—and the accompanying reinforcement exercises and tasks—in school textbooks helps clarify the situation.

³ Ғуломов А., Неъматов Х. Она тили таълими мазмуни. –Т.: Ўқитувчи, 1995. – Б. 27.

⁴ Ғуломов А., Неъматов Х. Она тили таълими мазмуни. –Т.: Ўқитувчи, 1995. –Б. 32.

It is evident that the Jadids laid the foundation for today's "Mother Tongue" textbooks. Information regarding the teaching of vowel sounds is included in the works of Abdurauf Fitrat—a scholar who contributed to the creation of "Mother Tongue" textbooks in the 1930s, specifically the earliest "Uzbek Language" textbooks—such as his books "An Experiment on the Rules of the Uzbek Language" and "Morphology" (Sarf). In these texts, Fitrat characterizes speech sounds, classifying them into two groups: vowels and consonants. He identifies nine vowels and twenty-three consonants. He then discusses sound changes—specifically sound elision and sound substitution—explaining that "this phenomenon arises from our language's tendency toward ease of articulation"⁵.

According to his view, as Uzbek is a major branch of the Turkic language family, it naturally possesses characteristics common to all Turkic languages; specifically, like other branches of the Turkic family, Uzbek exhibits the phenomenon of vowel harmony, where sounds—and consequently words—are categorized as either "hard" (back) or "soft" (front). For instance, the word *sin* is classified as "hard," while the word *min* is considered "soft." It is further noted that, although this phenomenon of vowel harmony—present in our classical texts and rural dialects—is absent in urban dialects (which have been altered by the influence of Persian literature), it cannot be said to be non-existent in the Uzbek language.

We observe Professor A. Fitrat's approach to teaching vowels—specifically regarding speech sounds, pronunciation, and harmony—from the perspective of national identity. Indeed, as a defining characteristic of a nation, language always possesses its own unique qualities. The scholar's well-founded views, deeply rooted in this national perspective, were reflected in the "Uzbek Language" textbooks created for schoolchildren during that era; this is particularly evident in the textbook authored by Q. Ramazon and X. Qayyumiy⁶.

Following the approach of A. Fitrat, the textbook authors also paid serious attention to the language's national characteristics. It is worth noting that the majority of the terminology used in the textbook is Uzbek (e.g., speech organs, word structure). Special emphasis is placed on

⁵Фитрат Абдурауф. Танланган асарлар. IV жилд. –Т.: 2006. –Б. 36.

⁶ Ramazan Q., Qajjumij X. Grammatika. Sarf. O'rta maktablar ucun darslik. I qism. –Т.: Oquvpeddavnasr, 1937. –149 b.

teaching vowel sounds, with speech sounds categorized into vowels and sounds (whereas current textbooks use the term consonant, and some textbooks from the 1940s used the term “noisy sounds”). A distinct description is provided for each speech sound—descriptions that differ somewhat from modern phonetic interpretations. The pronunciation and orthography of vowels are explained in detail. Furthermore, the theoretical information regarding syllables differs from modern interpretations; for instance, a syllable is defined as “the part of a word that corresponds to a single burst of air.”⁷

There are points of alignment between the textbooks of the Jadid era and those currently in use; for instance, the theoretical information regarding stress is identical to that found in modern textbooks. It is also worth noting, however, that there is an absence of exercises to reinforce these theoretical concepts.

In our view, studying the history of textbooks plays a crucial role in shaping the future of education. It is well known that any innovation in a given field ensures its viability and practical value only when it is grounded in previously gained experience or results; this approach is equally applicable to the creation of textbooks.

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⁷Ramazan Q., Qajjumij X. Grammatika. Sarf. O'rta maktablar uchun darslik. I qism. —Т.: Oquvpeddavnasr. 1937. — 149 b.

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