

## PROBLEMS IN LEARNING ENGLISH FACED BY ELEMENTARY LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** Considering the importance of learning English since early ages, some elementary students in Uzbekistan to administer English as one of the local contents. However, based on the preliminary observation, many students encountered a number of problems in learning English that needs further exploration. This study aims at finding out problems faced by the elementary students in learning English. The data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were distributed to the students through Google form, and the interviews were conducted to teachers. The data were analyzed quantitatively. The results show that the problems faced by the students are: lack of vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, unexpected learning atmosphere and less motivation. The findings suggest the need of more creative teachers who are technologically literate and easily adaptable to the students' problems in learning English.

**Key words:** lack of vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, unexpected learning atmosphere

**Introduction:** Due to the important role of English in global business, technology, science, education and media, a number of countries in the world, including Uzbekistan, make efforts to build their citizens' English proficiency. One of the tangible efforts is providing English education as early as possible. In Central and Eastern European countries, for example, English is formally taught to students at all levels of education: at elementary schools, high schools, and universities. In Japan, Korea, and most of countries in Asia, learning English in formal education starts at the fourth- grade of elementary school. However, in Uzbekistan, English that used to be taught at all levels of education is no longer listed as one of the required subjects in the latest national curriculum for elementary school. This certainly leads to pros and cons among educators throughout Uzbekistan. The reason of Uzbekistan language maintenance communicated by the policy makers is firmly criticized by public. Therefore, learning English should not hinder elementary school students from learning other elementary subjects. According to critical period hypothesis theory, the children's brain elasticity is so biologically high that it is very easy for them to master any language exposed to them. According to affective theory, children have good

affective condition, so they will be less anxious, less nervous, and less stressful in learning a foreign language. The three theories mentioned above strengthen the necessity of learning English in elementary school level. Therefore, despite being eliminated from the national curriculum for elementary school, English continues to be administered as one of the subjects in several elementary schools in Uzbekistan. However, English teachers should work much harder to design the learning materials provided to the students because the consequence of being unlisted in the national curriculum is the absence of nationally standardized curriculum for English subject according to resolution “On the measures of effective organization the popularization of learning foreign language” by Sh. Mirziyoyev<sup>1</sup>. The policy is considered illogical because of two perspectives. From practical perspective, English is a language of global science and technology, so English mastery is one of the requirements to compete in science and technology development. From theoretical perspective, a number of studies have proved that the best time for learning a foreign language is since early ages<sup>2</sup>. There are at least three theories underlying the need of learning English at early ages: language acquisition device theory, critical period hypothesis theory, and affective theory. According to language acquisition device (LAD) theory, the LAD, naturally possessed by everyone since their birth, help them learn any language at any time without encountering difficulties.

**Procedure.** This study used a descriptive method, conducted in schools, the capital of Tashkent, Uzbekistan. They were selected because they were the elementary schools in Tashkent that administer English as one of the school subjects. The data were the results of interviews and the questionnaires. The participants were 14 teachers and 163 fifth- and sixth grade students at the private elementary schools in Tashkent. The participants were selected using a total sampling technique. The data were collected using interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were carried to teachers, while the questionnaires were distributed to students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the questionnaires were distributed online using Google form.

**Conclusion.** The decision to keep teaching English in elementary schools certainly bears some consequences, one of which is a commitment to make the students have English proficiency. Various problems arise, but the problems should not become the barrier to continue teaching English in elementary schools. The results of this study find four main problems encountered by elementary school students in learning English: lack of vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, unexpected learning atmosphere, and less motivation. These problems should not be regarded as the

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<sup>1</sup> Sh. Mirziyoyev<sup>1</sup>. On the measures of effective organization, the popularization of learning foreign language”

<sup>2</sup> R. A. Foyewa, “English: The international language of science and technology,” *Int. J. English Lang. Linguist. Res.*, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 34– 41, 2015

obstacle of teaching English to elementary school students, but they should be considered as the challenge to make the teachers more creative and skilled in English teaching. Based on the results of the study it is suggested that English learning should be packaged in such an interesting way that makes the students more motivated in learning English. The teachers should always develop themselves by learning and learning to always make the English learning atmosphere more interesting and more enjoyable. Although this is not an easy task, good teachers will certainly find the most applicable and desirable way of teaching.

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