

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UZBEK STUDENTS IN ENGLISH TENSES

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Abstract: This research investigates the main issues faced by Uzbek learners in correctly using English tenses. The findings suggest that most students tend to confuse certain tense forms such as the Present Perfect and Past Simple or use continuous forms instead of simple or perfect ones. The causes of these problems are related to the influence of the mother tongue, lack of communicative practice, and the widespread application of the Grammar Translation Method in Uzbek schools. Teachers focus mainly on grammatical rules rather than practical use, leading to limited communicative competence. The research suggests that effective learning of English tenses can be achieved through contextualized pedagogical approaches, continuous practice, and teacher training that integrates grammar and communication.

Keywords: English tenses; grammar translation method; tense issues; Uzbek students; language interference; communicative approach; contextual learning.


Annotatsiya: Mazkur tadqiqotda o'zbek o'quvchilarining ingliz tilidagi zamonlarni to'g'ri qo'llashda duch keladigan asosiy muammolari o'rganildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, ko'pchilik o'quvchilar Present Perfect va Past Simple zamonlarini aralashtirib yuboradilar yoki simple va perfect o'rnida continuous shakllardan foydalanadilar. Ushbu xatolarning sabablari ona tili ta'siri, amaliy muloqot muhitining yo'qligi hamda maktablarda keng qo'llaniladigan Grammar Translation Method bilan bog'liq. O'qituvchilar grammatik qoidalarga ko'proq e'tibor beradilar, ammo ularni amaliy nutqda qo'llashga kam vaqt ajratadilar. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, ingliz zamonlarini samarali o'rganish uchun ularni kontekstda o'rgatish, muntazam mashq qilish va o'qituvchilarni zamonaviy yondashuvlar asosida tayyorlash zarur.

Kalit so'zlar: Ingliz zamonlari; grammatik tarjima usuli; zamonlarda qiyinchiliklar; o'zbek o'quvchilar; til aralashuvi; kommunikativ yondashuv; kontekstual o'qitish.

The most significant yet challenging aspect of learning English for Uzbek learners is mastering English tenses. Although students tend to memorize grammar rules, most of them still fail to apply these rules in communicative contexts. This difficulty arises from the structural and functional gap between the Uzbek and English tense systems.

Unlike English, which has twelve tense forms with compound aspects, Uzbek expresses time relationships largely through context and auxiliary words rather than verb inflections.





Consequently, learners transfer patterns from their mother tongue into English, causing confusion and misapplication of tense forms (Ahmad & Rao, 2012). In most Uzbek schools, English is taught through the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which focuses on memorizing rules and translating isolated sentences rather than developing communicative competence.

This traditional approach helps students succeed in grammar-based examinations but fails to prepare them for real-life communication. Therefore, students often make errors such as using the Present Continuous instead of the Simple Present, or the Future Indefinite instead of the Present Continuous when expressing planned actions (Behlol & Anwar, 2011).

Another key factor is the lack of English-speaking context both inside and outside the classroom. Most students think in Uzbek first and then translate into English, disrupting their fluency and accuracy. Moreover, insufficient teacher training and inadequate use of communicative methods contribute to persistent grammatical errors.

Awareness of these issues is essential for improving English language teaching in Uzbekistan (Cakir, 2015). This study aims to explore the main challenges Uzbek learners face in using English tenses and identify the linguistic and pedagogical causes behind them. It also seeks to provide practical recommendations for teachers to help students develop deeper understanding and more accurate usage of English tenses in speech and writing.

This study employed descriptive and analytical methods to determine the main challenges encountered by Uzbek students in applying English tenses and to investigate the reasons behind them. The research involved undergraduate English philology students from various universities in Uzbekistan who had studied English grammar for over two years. Sixty participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that all respondents had sufficient background knowledge of English tenses (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Data Collection Instruments


Two primary instruments were used for data collection: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions designed to test students' understanding and use of English tense forms in both written and oral contexts. The interviews aimed to gather detailed insights into students' attitudes, learning processes, and difficulties regarding tense usage (Durrani, 2016).

Procedure

Data collection was conducted in three stages:

Distribution of the questionnaire: students were asked to complete the questionnaire with short examples demonstrating proper tense recognition and application.





Interviews: ten students were randomly selected for in-depth interviews to elaborate on their challenges and learning strategies.

Teacher feedback: five English teachers were interviewed to cross-check whether classroom observations matched students' reported difficulties.

The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics. Questionnaire responses were quantified to determine the most frequent types of tense errors, while interview data were coded into themes such as lack of practice, teaching methods, and mother tongue interference.

The mixed-method approach allowed for both numerical and interpretive insights into the phenomenon (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their responses were kept anonymous. Participation was voluntary, and students were free to withdraw at any time.


This methodological approach provided a solid foundation for identifying common patterns of tense misuse among Uzbek learners and clarifying the pedagogical reasons behind them.

The results revealed clear patterns in the use of English tenses by Uzbek students. Most students struggled to distinguish between closely related tense forms, particularly the Present Perfect, Past Simple, and Present Continuous. About 75% of respondents reported confusion when choosing between the Past Simple and Present Perfect, often using the former where the latter was required—for example, saying “I have seen him yesterday” instead of “I saw him yesterday.” (Shamim, 2011). Another frequent error was the misuse of continuous forms.

Around 68% of respondents used the Present Continuous instead of the Simple Present for habitual or permanent actions, such as “I am living in Samarkand” instead of “I live in Samarkand.” Many learners also used the Future Indefinite (will + verb) to describe planned or scheduled actions that should use the Present Continuous or Simple Present—for instance, “I will go to school tomorrow at 8” instead of “I am going to school tomorrow at 8.” Interview data further clarified these findings (Swan, 2016). Most students admitted translating directly from Uzbek to English, leading to mother tongue interference. They also indicated that grammar lessons in schools focused more on rule memorization than on practical application.

Teachers supported this observation, noting that limited class hours and exam-oriented instruction hinder communicative practice of tenses. Overall, the findings demonstrate that tense-related errors among Uzbek learners are not mere grammatical mistakes but stem from deeper linguistic and pedagogical issues such as mother tongue interference, lack of communicative context, and traditional teaching methods.





The study shows that the difficulties Uzbek learners face in mastering English tenses are both linguistic and pedagogical. Linguistically, these problems arise from interference from the Uzbek language, which lacks tense inflections similar to English. Consequently, learners rely on contextual cues or time adverbials, leading to incorrect tense choices. For example, Uzbek uses the same temporal cues for both Past Simple and Present Perfect, causing confusion. Pedagogically, the dominance of the Grammar Translation Method in Uzbek schools limits students' communicative practice.

This method emphasizes rule learning and sentence translation, allowing students to recognize grammatical forms but not to use them in real-life communication (Thornbury, 1999). The lack of speaking and listening practice prevents learners from internalizing correct tense use. Additionally, large class sizes and time constraints make it difficult for teachers to implement interactive, communicative approaches.

Another significant factor is insufficient teacher training. Many instructors continue using traditional methods due to limited access to modern professional development. Continuous teacher education focused on contextual grammar teaching and interactive classroom techniques could greatly reduce tense-related errors (Bekturdiyeva & Bekimbetova, 2025). In summary, enhancing Uzbek students' mastery of English tenses requires a shift from rule-based teaching to communicative, contextual, and learner-centered instruction. Teachers should integrate grammar into meaningful communication, encourage active speaking, and foster direct thinking in English instead of translation from Uzbek.

This study examined the challenges Uzbek students face in using English tenses and identified linguistic and pedagogical factors behind them. The findings confirmed that most students struggle to differentiate between similar tense forms such as the Present Perfect, Past Simple, and Present Continuous, mainly due to mother tongue interference and insufficient communicative practice. Traditional methods like the Grammar Translation Method overly emphasize memorization and rule-based learning, preventing students from applying grammar in real contexts.

Moreover, the lack of English-speaking environments and inadequate teacher training further hinder fluency and accuracy. To overcome these challenges, English teaching in Uzbekistan should shift toward contextualized and communicative approaches that integrate grammar with real use.

Teachers should promote active communication, maintain an English-rich classroom, and undergo regular professional development to modernize teaching methods. Ultimately, improving Uzbek learners' understanding of English tenses requires not just better grammar instruction but a pedagogical transformation—from learning the language to using the language.





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