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An In-Depth Analysis of Difficulties Faced by Uzbek Learners in Multilevel Writing and Speaking Examinations

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Abstract. This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the major difficulties encountered by Uzbek learners in the writing and speaking components of multilevel English proficiency examinations. Although many learners demonstrate satisfactory performance in receptive skills such as reading and listening, their productive skills often remain underdeveloped. The study explores linguistic, cognitive, and psychological challenges affecting learners' performance, including grammatical inaccuracies, limited vocabulary range, lack of coherence, fluency issues, and exam-related anxiety. Furthermore, the article examines the educational and methodological factors contributing to these difficulties and offers pedagogical recommendations aimed at improving learners' writing and speaking competence in multilevel assessment contexts.

Keywords: multilevel examinations, writing skills, speaking skills, Uzbek learners, English language education, communicative competence

Introduction. In the context of globalization and international academic mobility, English language proficiency has become a crucial requirement for students and professionals in Uzbekistan. As a result, multilevel English proficiency examinations are increasingly used to assess learners' language abilities for educational, professional, and certification purposes. These exams aim to measure a wide range of competencies across different proficiency levels, often aligned with international standards such as the CEFR.

Despite the growing emphasis on English language education, many Uzbek learners experience significant difficulties in the writing and speaking sections of multilevel exams. These sections are particularly challenging because they require learners not only to demonstrate grammatical knowledge but also to express ideas clearly, coherently, and confidently. This gap between learners' receptive and productive skills has become a recurring issue in examination outcomes, raising concerns among educators and policymakers.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the underlying causes of these difficulties and to provide a detailed discussion of the challenges Uzbek learners face in writing and speaking tasks. By examining linguistic, psychological, and instructional factors, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of learner performance in multilevel assessments.





2. Overview of Multilevel Writing and Speaking Assessments

Multilevel examinations are designed to evaluate learners with varying levels of proficiency within a single assessment framework. Writing tasks typically require candidates to produce structured texts such as essays, reports, letters, or opinion-based responses. These tasks assess grammatical accuracy, lexical range, coherence, cohesion, and task achievement.

Speaking sections usually consist of several parts, including personal questions, extended monologues, and interactive discussions. Candidates are evaluated based on fluency, pronunciation, grammatical range, lexical resource, and communicative effectiveness. Unlike written tasks, speaking assessments demand spontaneous language production under time pressure, which can significantly affect learner performance.

For Uzbek learners, these assessment formats often differ from traditional classroom practices, where grammar-based exercises and written tests dominate instruction. As a result, many learners are insufficiently prepared for the communicative and analytical demands of multilevel writing and speaking tasks.

3. Writing Skill Difficulties Among Uzbek Learners

3.1 Grammatical Challenges

One of the most persistent difficulties in writing is grammatical accuracy. Uzbek learners frequently struggle with English tense systems, particularly perfect and continuous forms, which do not have direct equivalents in their native language. Article usage (a, an, the) also poses a major challenge, as Uzbek does not use articles. These structural differences often lead to fossilized errors in learners' written output.

Additionally, sentence structure problems are common. Learners tend to produce overly simple sentences or, conversely, attempt complex structures that result in syntactic errors. Such inaccuracies negatively affect clarity and reduce overall writing quality in exam settings.

3.2 Limited Lexical Range

Vocabulary limitation is another significant issue. Many learners rely on a narrow range of frequently used words and expressions, which restricts their ability to express ideas precisely. This limitation often results in repetition, vague statements, and lack of depth in written responses.

In academic writing tasks, the absence of appropriate linking words, topic-specific vocabulary, and formal expressions further weakens learners' performance. As a result, even well-developed ideas may fail to meet assessment criteria due to inadequate lexical resource.

3.3 Coherence and Organization Problems

A common weakness observed in multilevel writing exams is poor organization. Learners often struggle to structure their essays logically, produce clear introductions and conclusions, and maintain paragraph unity.





In many cases, ideas are presented randomly without clear progression or logical connection.

This problem is frequently linked to limited exposure to academic writing conventions and insufficient practice in planning and revising written work. Instead of developing arguments, learners may memorize templates, which leads to mechanical and unnatural writing.

4. Speaking Skill Difficulties in Multilevel Exams

4.1 Fluency and Hesitation. Fluency-related issues are among the most noticeable problems in speaking assessments. Uzbek learners often pause excessively, repeat words, or use fillers due to limited vocabulary or uncertainty about grammatical accuracy. These pauses disrupt communication and negatively impact fluency scores.

Learners may also struggle to extend their responses, particularly in tasks requiring explanation or opinion. This difficulty is often caused by a lack of experience in expressing personal viewpoints in English.

4.2 Pronunciation and Intelligibility. Pronunciation remains a challenging area for many learners. Difficulties with word stress, sentence stress, and intonation patterns can reduce intelligibility, even when grammatical structures are accurate. The influence of the native language phonological system often leads to mispronunciation of certain sounds and incorrect stress placement.

In multilevel exams, pronunciation issues may not completely prevent communication but can significantly lower overall speaking band scores.

4.3 Psychological Factors in Speaking

Psychological barriers play a crucial role in speaking performance. Anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence often prevent learners from demonstrating their true language ability. The presence of an examiner, time pressure, and unfamiliar question formats can intensify stress levels.

Many learners report that they understand the questions but struggle to respond effectively due to nervousness. This suggests that speaking difficulties are not solely linguistic but also affective in nature.

5. Underlying Causes of Writing and Speaking Difficulties

Several educational and contextual factors contribute to the challenges faced by Uzbek learners. One major factor is the dominance of teacher-centered instruction, where learners have limited opportunities for active language use. Writing and speaking activities are often secondary to grammar explanations and test-based exercises.

Another contributing factor is limited exposure to authentic English. Outside the classroom, learners may have few opportunities to interact in English or engage with real-life communicative contexts. This lack of exposure reduces learners' ability to use language spontaneously and appropriately.





Furthermore, an exam-oriented learning culture encourages memorization rather than skill development. Learners may focus on passing tests instead of building communicative competence, which negatively affects their performance in productive skills.

6. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

To address these challenges, a shift towards communicative and learner-centered teaching approaches is necessary. Writing instruction should emphasize idea development, organization, and revision rather than memorization of fixed structures. Regular feedback and peer review can help learners identify and correct recurring errors.

For speaking skills, increased opportunities for interaction, discussion, and presentation are essential. Task-based activities, role-plays, and collaborative speaking tasks can help learners build fluency and confidence. Creating a supportive classroom environment where mistakes are viewed as part of learning can also reduce anxiety.

Teacher training programs should focus on assessment literacy, helping educators align classroom instruction with multilevel exam requirements. Integrating authentic materials and real-world tasks may further enhance learners' communicative competence.

7. Conclusion. In conclusion, Uzbek learners face a range of interconnected linguistic and psychological difficulties in the writing and speaking sections of multilevel English proficiency examinations. These challenges stem from grammatical limitations, restricted vocabulary, organizational weaknesses, and affective factors such as anxiety and lack of confidence. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive instructional approach that prioritizes productive skills, communicative practice, and learner autonomy. By adopting effective pedagogical strategies, educators can help learners improve their performance in multilevel assessments and develop sustainable English language proficiency.

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