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**FROM “NON” TO “BREAD”: CULTURALLY RELEVANT ENGLISH FOR
UZBEK LEARNER**

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Learning English at the beginner level can be a life-changing journey, especially for students in Uzbekistan where English is increasingly becoming a necessity in education, employment, and international communication. For many Uzbek learners, English is not only a foreign language but also a gateway to global opportunities. Given the structure of the Uzbek language and the education system, it is crucial to develop tailored methods to teach English that suit local needs. A combination of visual aids, structured repetition, cultural context, and consistent practice can make the process smoother and more effective. In Uzbekistan, English language education has taken a prominent place in the national development agenda. With globalization, economic partnerships, and digital transformation accelerating, mastering English has become more than an academic skill; it is now a professional necessity. Especially for beginners, the journey of learning English can seem overwhelming without structured support. However, with a tailored approach and context-sensitive methods, even the most basic learners can develop proficiency over time [1].

One of the most effective strategies for teaching English to beginners in Uzbekistan involves the use of bilingual scaffolding. Teachers often switch between Uzbek or Russian and English to build foundational understanding. This is not a sign of weakness but rather a pedagogical method that enables students to connect new concepts with existing knowledge. For instance, when teaching simple sentences like “I have a book,” instructors often translate and compare it with the Uzbek equivalent “Menda kitob bor.” This method helps students notice the syntactic structure of English and gradually internalize the pattern. The focus for beginner learners must be on the four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, listening and speaking require the most attention in the early stages, especially in a country where exposure to English is still relatively low outside formal education. Audio materials, real-life dialogues, and simple English songs with subtitles can significantly enhance listening skills. Teachers in Andijan, Tashkent, and Samarkand often rely on audio-visual aids such as BBC Learning English videos, children’s cartoons, or TED-Ed videos tailored for low-level learners.

Pronunciation is another crucial component. Uzbek students tend to face specific pronunciation difficulties due to phonological differences between Uzbek and English. For example, the English “th” sound does not exist in Uzbek, so words like “think” or “that” are often mispronounced as “sink” or “dat.” To address this, pronunciation drills using IPA symbols and visual aids can be introduced. Teachers might use mirrors to help students see



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tongue placement or engage them in tongue twisters and repetition-based games. For beginner learners, the first challenge is usually the unfamiliar alphabet and pronunciation. Since Uzbek is written in Latin script, learners have an easier transition compared to learners from countries with Cyrillic or Arabic scripts. However, English pronunciation rules are irregular and often inconsistent. For example, the word “read” is pronounced differently in past and present tense, which can be confusing. Therefore, teachers should implement phonics-based instruction where each sound is introduced with its corresponding spelling patterns. Using flashcards with pictures of common items, like “book”, “pen”, or “apple”, can help students associate the word with both meaning and pronunciation [2].

Vocabulary acquisition should be prioritized in the early stages. Students should start with the 500 most common English words used in daily life. This includes family terms, basic verbs, colors, numbers, food items, and classroom objects. Teachers in Uzbekistan can localize these words by using examples from their environment. For instance, instead of teaching the word “bread” in isolation, it can be connected to “non” – a common type of bread in Uzbek households. Likewise, the word “rice” can be explained through the context of “osh”, which is a national dish. Such associations make learning more relevant and help students retain words longer. Beginners can start with high-frequency word groups such as family members, colors, numbers, days of the week, and basic verbs. Incorporating these words into flashcards, songs, or mini-dialogues ensures both memorization and practical usage. Many schools in Uzbekistan now integrate digital platforms like Quizlet and Memrise to help students practice vocabulary interactively.

Below is a basic thematic vocabulary table that is commonly introduced in the first month of instruction in beginner-level English classes in Uzbekistan:

Theme	Uzbek Equivalent	English Vocabulary
Days of Week	Haftaning kunlari	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
Numbers	Sonlar	One, Two, Three, Four
Colors	Ranglar	Red, Blue, Green, Yellow
Family	Oila	Mother, Father, Sister, Brother
Common Verbs	Eng ko‘p ishlatiladigan fe‘llar	Go, Come, Eat, Drink, Sleep

Grammar should not be taught in isolation but rather through usage. For instance, teaching the present simple tense becomes more meaningful when students use it in daily routines: “I go to school at 8 a.m.” vs. “Men soat 8 da maktabga boraman.” Activities like “My Day” journaling or daily routine mapping can be employed to reinforce grammatical structures within real-life contexts. The grammar instruction at the beginner level must be simple and focused on functional use rather than theoretical explanation. Students should learn sentence structures like “I am”, “You are”, “This is”, and “There is/are” through

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practice rather than grammar charts. Role-playing activities are highly effective. For example, students can pretend to be at a market buying fruit: “I want apples”, “How much?”, “It is two thousand soms.” This not only reinforces sentence patterns but also integrates useful vocabulary and cultural context [3].

An important consideration in Uzbekistan is the use of mother tongue as a bridge. A key pedagogical strategy includes contrastive grammar charts where learners visually compare English rules with Uzbek ones. For example:

Grammar Topic	English Example	Uzbek Equivalent
Present Simple	I work every day.	Men har kuni ishlayman.
Negative Sentences	I do not work on Sunday.	Men yakshanba kuni ishlamayman.

Teachers in beginner classrooms should also implement communicative activities. Role-playing scenarios such as “At the market,” “At the doctor,” or “Introducing yourself” are highly effective in both language acquisition and boosting students’ confidence. For example, students could be tasked with simulating a shopping dialogue:

Student A: Hello, I want to buy apples.

Student B: How many apples do you want?

Student A: I want five apples, please.

Student B: Here you are.

This role-play can be modeled in Uzbek first, then practiced in English until students gain fluency. Creating a safe, low-pressure environment is key, especially for students from rural areas who may have never interacted with a foreigner or spoken English aloud before.

One innovative method being increasingly used in Uzbekistan is Total Physical Response (TPR), which involves using physical movement to react to verbal input. When teachers say “Stand up” or “Open your book,” students physically perform the actions. This approach helps in better retention and makes the class lively and interactive, especially for young learners. To support students outside the classroom, it is crucial to encourage English exposure through informal means. Schools and language centers are advised to form English Clubs where students can watch movies, participate in speaking contests, or play educational games. In cities like Namangan and Bukhara, community-driven English speaking clubs have been very effective in helping students gain fluency [4].

Another powerful tools for beginner English learners is the translation method, especially when moving from known (Uzbek) to unknown (English). However, this should be used with caution. Translating every sentence can become a crutch. Instead, translation should be used selectively to clarify difficult concepts and reduce anxiety. For instance, explaining the difference between “I have” and “I am” using Uzbek equivalents helps students avoid common mistakes: “Men bor” (I have) vs “Menman” (I am). The practical



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method is integrating local context into teaching materials. Instead of generic foreign names and stories, teachers are encouraged to use Uzbek names and culturally relevant scenarios. For example, instead of teaching a story about “John in New York,” it is more engaging to read about “Sardor in Tashkent.” This not only fosters relatability but also keeps learners interested and emotionally connected to the content.

Teachers should use both deductive and inductive approaches. While some grammar points can be explained directly (deductively), others should be learned through examples and discovery (inductively). In Uzbekistan, where teacher-centered instruction is still dominant, encouraging students to find patterns through group work and speaking activities helps shift towards a more learner-centered model. Repetition is key for retention. Teachers can use chants, songs, and rhymes to reinforce grammar and vocabulary. For instance, simple English songs with repeated structures like “Head, shoulders, knees and toes” or “What’s your name?” can build both confidence and memory.

Below is a sample table of essential vocabulary for beginner learners in Uzbekistan, paired with Uzbek examples to build relevance:

English Word	Uzbek Translation	Example Sentence (English)	Example Sentence (Uzbek)
Apple	Olma	I eat an apple.	Men olma yeyapman.
School	Maktab	This is my school.	Bu mening maktabim.
Book	Kitob	I have a book.	Menda kitob bor.
Pen	Ruchka	Give me a pen, please.	Iltimos, menga ruchka bering.
Water	Suv	I drink water every day.	Men har kuni suv ichaman.
Chair	Stul	Sit on the chair.	Stulga o‘tiring.
Teacher	O‘qituvchi	My teacher is kind.	Mening o‘qituvchim mehribon.
Rice	Guruch / Osh	I like rice.	Men oshni yaxshi ko‘raman.
House	Uy	My house is big.	Mening uyim katta.
Mother	Ona	My mother is at home.	Mening onam uyda.

These examples show how vocabulary can be learned in context using sentences that reflect everyday Uzbek realities. Including visual support such as flashcards, real objects, and drawings makes the connection even stronger.

Moreover, technology can be a powerful ally. In schools equipped with computer labs, teachers can introduce beginner-level software like Duolingo or British Council’s LearnEnglish Kids. These apps allow for gamified learning that resonates with Generation Z learners, who are highly visual and responsive to interactive content. For those without access to technology, printable worksheets and board games serve as excellent substitutes. Parents’ involvement also plays a significant role. In Uzbekistan, where family structures are tight-knit, informing parents of the importance of English and how they can assist



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(even if they don't speak it) is essential. Teachers can provide simple home-based tasks such as asking students to label household items in English or read a short English prayer before sleep.

Reading and listening skills must also be developed gradually. Beginner students should start with short, simple texts with high-frequency words. Teachers can create storybooks based on local stories or modify famous tales to match their students' level. For instance, the story of "The Clever Rabbit" or "The Greedy Fox" from Uzbek folklore can be adapted to use only basic English structures. This not only makes the content interesting but also preserves cultural identity while promoting language learning. Listening exercises should include slow and clear English, ideally spoken by native or fluent speakers. Teachers can record their own audio or use platforms like YouTube Kids, British Council Learn English Kids, or ESL video sites that offer beginner-level content. After listening, students can answer yes/no questions, complete gap-fill activities, or act out what they heard. This engages multiple skills at once. Speaking is often the most feared skill among Uzbek students due to lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. Teachers should normalize errors and praise attempts at communication. Classroom phrases like "Can I go out?", "May I come in?", "What is this?" should be repeated daily until they become automatic. Pair work and group discussions using pre-taught phrases help students use English in real conversations. Teachers can assign speaking tasks such as "Describe your family", "Talk about your day", or "What do you eat for breakfast?" Writing practice should begin with copying words and phrases, then gradually move to sentence formation. Guided writing tasks where students fill in blanks, reorder jumbled words, or complete sentence starters build confidence. For example:

1. My name is _____.
2. I am _____ years old.
3. I live in _____.
4. My favorite food is _____.

As students progress, they can write short paragraphs. Topics can be personal and familiar – "My Village", "My Friend", "My School", or "My Pet". Teachers should provide models and sentence patterns to scaffold learning [5].

Assessment at the beginner level should focus more on participation and effort rather than accuracy. Rubrics should be developed to grade students based on their willingness to speak, ability to memorize core vocabulary, and improvement in listening comprehension. Feedback must be encouraging and constructive, avoiding any punitive tone that might discourage shy learners. Lastly, teacher training is the backbone of quality education. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs must be conducted regularly. In Uzbekistan, initiatives by the British Council and American Corners have been instrumental in organizing workshops and seminars for local English teachers. These platforms enable instructors to share best practices, learn new methodologies, and stay updated with modern teaching trends.



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To conclude, teaching English to beginners in Uzbekistan demands a localized, empathetic, and resourceful approach. While challenges such as limited exposure, lack of materials, and varied student backgrounds exist, they are not insurmountable. With creative strategies, community involvement, and a commitment to student-centered instruction, even the most foundational learners can achieve significant progress in their English language journey. In Uzbekistan, where multilingualism is common (Uzbek, Russian, regional languages), code-switching can be used strategically to bridge English understanding. In bilingual classrooms, a teacher might explain in Uzbek and practice in English. This scaffolding approach lowers the affective filter and promotes participation. Teachers must build a strong foundation using vocabulary relevant to Uzbek life, provide ample speaking opportunities, and use repetition and visuals to reinforce learning. Incorporating Uzbek context, folklore, food, and everyday routines makes English more accessible and memorable for young learners.

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