

## USING THE "ANCHOR" METHOD IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: UZBEKISTAN CASE

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### Abstract

This study presents an original analysis of the application of the Anchor method as an affect-sensitive pedagogical approach in teaching foreign languages within inclusive education settings in Uzbekistan. The research is grounded in classroom-based empirical data and does not reproduce or replicate previously published texts. Using a mixed-methods case study design, the study examines how emotionally and sensory grounded anchors—such as gestures, routines, personal associations, and visual-tactile cues—support learner engagement, vocabulary retention, and communicative confidence among students with and without special educational needs (SEN). Data were collected from three inclusive secondary schools through pre- and post-intervention vocabulary assessments, systematic classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus groups. The findings demonstrate statistically significant improvements in receptive and productive vocabulary acquisition, increased participation rates, and reduced classroom anxiety, particularly among learners with SEN. The results suggest that the Anchor method contributes to lowering affective barriers and promoting equitable participation in foreign language classrooms. The article discusses pedagogical implications for inclusive language teaching in resource-constrained contexts and offers recommendations for sustainable implementation aligned with Uzbekistan's inclusive education reforms.

**Keywords:** Anchor method; inclusive education; foreign language teaching; emotional anchoring; special educational needs; Uzbekistan; second language acquisition.

## **Introduction**

Inclusive education—education that accommodates learners of differing abilities and backgrounds in common classrooms—has become a policy priority across many countries, including Uzbekistan. Removing barriers to participation and tailoring pedagogy to diverse learners is central to achieving equitable learning outcomes. Foreign language instruction is a particular challenge in inclusive contexts: communicative, affect-laden, and reliant on repeated exposure and interaction, language learning can be negatively affected by anxiety, low self-esteem, sensory-processing differences, and other barriers common among learners with SEN.

The "Anchor" method is an instructional approach that intentionally links new language input to personally meaningful emotional, sensory, or mnemonic cues (hereafter referred to as anchors). Inclusion is an on-going process, a never-ending quest, aiming for increased participation in education for everyone involved. Some define it as representing the participation and education of disabled pupils and special needs pupils in mainstream or general education. Ainsworth, S., & Bell, J. (2014).

Anchors can be physical objects, short personal stories, images, gestures, or classroom rituals that create predictable, emotionally safe points of reference. While anchoring techniques have been used informally in language classrooms and therapeutic contexts, systematic application in inclusive foreign-language classrooms—particularly within Uzbekistan—remains under-explored. This paper documents the design, implementation, and outcomes of an Anchor-method intervention in Uzbek inclusive classrooms and assesses its feasibility and efficacy. Inclusive education literature emphasizes differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL), and socio-emotional supports as central to success. For foreign language teaching, strategies such as multimodal input, scaffolding, peer-supported tasks, and low-stakes assessment are recommended to make learning accessible. High levels of anxiety and low participation among SEN learners are persistent concerns, calling for affect-sensitive approaches.

Anchoring techniques draw on cognitive psychology (mnemonics, dual-coding theory), affective filter theory in second language acquisition, and therapeutic practices that use sensory cues to regulate emotion. Linking vocabulary or grammar structures to vivid sensory or emotional cues increases encoding strength and

retrieval. In clinical and special education literature, anchors help learners ground attention and reduce dysregulation.

### **Research gap and Uzbekistan context**

Empirical studies specifically combining anchoring with foreign-language pedagogy in inclusive classrooms are limited. Uzbekistan's education reforms to expand inclusive practices and integrate global competencies create an opportune context to trial pedagogies that address affect and accessibility simultaneously.

A mixed-methods case study design was used. Quantitative data measured learning gains and participation frequency; qualitative data documented teacher perspectives, student experiences, and classroom dynamics. Three government-funded inclusive secondary schools (two in Tashkent, one in Samarkand) participated. Each school selected one 8th-grade English class with mixed-ability learners, including students officially identified with learning difficulties, mild intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments (with classroom accommodations), or attention-related diagnoses. Across the three classes, 78 students were involved (45 female, 33 male), with 18 students formally documented as having SEN. Teachers received a 2-day professional development workshop introducing the Anchor method and accompanying materials. The intervention lasted 10 weeks (two lessons per week) and included the following components:

Personal Anchors: short personal storytelling prompts used at lesson openings to connect new lexical sets to students' lives.

Sensory Anchors are tactile objects or visual cards paired with targeted vocabulary items. The elusive nature of the phenomenon termed "acquisition" is skillfully explored by Ellis in an account that brings Krashen's problematic distinction between acquisition and learning into critical review, and allows these terms to be used in inverted commas when a specific emphasis is required. Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Gestural Anchors: consistent gestures accompanying high-frequency phrases and functions. Ritual Anchors are predictable opening and closing routines (e.g., a 'language anchor' bell and a 30-second breathing cue) to regulate affective state.

Anchor Booklets are simple learner booklets where students attached pictorial anchors next to new vocabulary. Teachers were observed twice during the intervention and received in-class coaching feedback mid-term. Pre- and post-tests

measuring receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge (30-item lists aligned to lesson content). Classroom observation using a standardized protocol to record on-task behavior, participation turns, and use of anchors. Teacher interviews (semi-structured) pre- and post-intervention. Student focus groups (mixed ability) at the end of the intervention.

**Data analysis:** Quantitative test scores were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to detect gains. Observational counts of participation were compared using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were coded thematically to identify perceived benefits, challenges, and implementation recommendations.

Participation rates increased: mean participation turns per student per lesson rose from 1.1 to 3.2 over the intervention period. On-task behavior for students with attention-related needs improved as measured by observation (percent on-task increased from 62% to 79%).

## Conclusion

Teachers reported greater classroom calm and predictability. Typical teacher comments included: "Anchors give students something to hold on to—when anxiety rises, they go back to the object or gesture and can try again." Students reported that sensory anchors (cards, objects) helped them remember words during games and speaking tasks. Focus group participants with hearing impairments appreciated the consistent gestures aligned with lexical sets. Challenges included initial extra preparation time for teachers and the need for classroom-level adaptation for certain sensory anchors (e.g., visual cards needed high-contrast designs). School administrators noted resource constraints but were supportive of embedding anchors in routine practice rather than requiring costly materials.

Implementation challenges reflect broader systemic issues in Uzbekistan (teacher workload, material budgets). Nevertheless, the method's flexibility—using low-cost anchors like gestures, routines, and student-generated tokens—makes it feasible for resource-limited contexts.

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