

# UNDERSTANDING LEARNERS: SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILES AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Muminov Elyor Turayevich

Navoi State University Uzbekistan, Navoi Region

Email address: muminov.elyor.nsu@gmail.com

Phone: +998906186469

## Abstract

This paper explores the sociolinguistic and sociocultural profiles of a group of bilingual learners in a rural public-school context, emphasizing the implications for effective language teaching and assessment. The study group comprises eighteen 13- to 14-year-old students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, primarily from transplant communities where Uzbek is spoken as a high-variety native language and Tajik is understood receptively. The learners also possess varying degrees of proficiency in Russian. The analysis distinguishes two learner subgroups based on their future use of English and motivational factors: one motivated by travel and career aspirations abroad, and another with more local or instrumental goals. Pedagogical implications focus on addressing learners' sociolinguistic needs through exposure to different varieties of English and adapting teaching practices to reflect authentic language use. Additionally, the paper discusses how assessment practices should consider students' linguistic backgrounds and communicative goals. This research highlights the importance of learner profiling in developing inclusive, context-sensitive language instruction that aligns with students' sociocultural realities and aspirations.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistic profile, sociocultural factors, bilingual learners, rural education, language teaching, learner motivation, English varieties, pedagogical implications, assessment, multilingualism. Introduction.

## Introduction

The sociocultural profile of students is one of the crucial aspects of teaching, and instructors must take these factors into account in order to create an equal and safe environment for every student. In this research paper, I discuss the following: First, it will demonstrate the sociolinguistic profile of a group of learners, dividing them into two subgroups with additional information on their learning context and the context in which they will use English. Next, the paper illustrates the proper pedagogical implications to be used in order to meet the learners' sociolinguistic needs. The following part will discuss **assessment implications**, which are another important factor in the teaching context.

## Sociolinguistic Profile of a Group of Learners

The target group of learners are diverse rural public-school pupils. The group consists of eighteen 13- to 14-year-old pupils who come from different social and cultural classes. Almost all learners are bilingual; according to Nuessel (2010), it is an act of using two languages alternatively, and students have different native languages. However, all of them are fluent in Uzbek, as it is their first or second language, so this language is chosen as the main language to give instruction in the class. As to the students' English language level, the majority of the students are at the pre-intermediate level, and they can produce simple, basic language. According to factors such as gender, ethnicity, region, socioeconomic status, and language, the group is divided into two subgroups.

### Subgroup 1

Students in this group are from transplant communities who moved from urban environments, and their native language is Uzbek, which is a high-variety language for local people as their heritage language is Tadjik. Communication in Tajik by this group's students can be considered according to Deumetr (2011), receptive multilingualism with productive monolingualism, as students comprehend speech in this language but cannot produce one, apart from this they know Russian language. It should be noted that students do not often show willingness to use Tadjik language. Students come from upper- and lower-middle-class families, and parents are educated, show educational support to the child, and are willing to cooperate with teachers. Students who belong to this group have a higher English language level than their counterparts and have access to authentic materials. Because of this, they always try to mimic an American accent while speaking English according to Bucholtz (2005) people do so in order to index themselves as fluent English speakers.

### Subgroup 2

Even though students' nationality is Uzbek, their heritage language is Tadjik, and Students and their families use Uzbek as a high-variety language as according to Deumert (2011) people learn a language as a second language and try to use it in formal domains. Students in this group sometimes prefer to use Tadjik during the classes, even though there is a formulated policy by the government to consider educational settings as a domain where Uzbek language should be used. By doing this, students try to show their positionality that they belong to a local group of people. Students have a lower level of English language knowledge and limited access to authentic materials, which causes them to feel shy in front of their counterparts. Students in this group are sometimes not willing to work with students from group 1 because they do not have the same native language and they do not consider them part of the dominant ethnic and cultural group within that rural area.

### Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality are not topics we are allowed to discuss in my instructional context according to the curriculum and governmental rules, so I cannot discuss the topic of sexuality. However, during the lessons, male and female gender-related problems occur. One of them is gender and politeness. People have certain gender stereotypes, such as women should speak



more politely and indirectly, which is apposite for men, who are seen as more direct and aggressive. According to Mesthrie et al. (2009), people can limit their options in their speech because of this stereotype. Which can make others believe certain things that are not true.

### **Race and Ethnicity**

In this described group of learners, there are not any issues related to race according to Calder (2020), a person's race is in general defined more by their physical appearance than by their language or regional differences, and because of my students' nationality, they do not see any difference among themselves. Nevertheless, problems concerning ethnicity do occur. For example, students in subgroup one mainly use Uzbek and English in communication during the class, while students in subgroup two use Tadjik in order to prioritize and position themselves as local people, and they always consider students in subgroup one as outsiders who do not fully belong to local ethnic and cultural groups. Because of this, they do not show a willingness to work with students from group number one.

### **Sociolinguistic Profile of the Learning Context**

Lessons are conducted according to the curriculum, which is set by the educational system, and teachers have the right to change up to 15% of the curriculum depending on the needs of the students. The main focus is given to use original materials during lesson as according to Labov (1972), using authentic materials is vital in learning process, so the task book (Guess What) is used during the class to improve reading, listening, writing, speaking, and grammar by using authentic materials and additional video contents are used to show people different varieties of English. The class is equipped with a wide display and white board. Different methods and approaches are used during the class according to the topic of the lesson. Both formative and summative assessments are used throughout the year to assess students' knowledge and development.

When it comes to the description of learning context from the point of view of sociolinguistics, several factors can be mentioned: during the lessons, several languages are used as students are multilingual, and Uzbek, Tadjik, and Russian languages can be used by students to explain their point of view when they struggle to use English. Also, as to the students' ethnic demographics, they use a variety of languages, such as different dialects of the Uzbek or Tadjik languages. However, students come from neighboring places where, according to Deumert (2011), adjacent varieties of a language are used; they have structural similarity and mutual intelligibility. Because of this, students have mutual understanding with each other while they use their L1.

Technology in the class gives students the opportunity to access materials in English. As students come from families with different socioeconomic statuses, they may not have access to the internet at home. Moreover, Uzbekistan belongs to the expanding circle of three concentric circles, and according to Bayley (2018), countries that belong to this circle contain less proficient or non-proficient English speakers. If so, there is a high probability that the parents of students are not proficient English speakers, and students cannot get any help from

their parents to practice English at home or get instruction on how to translate certain words to English.

### **Sociolinguistic Profile of the Context where English will be Used**

Students' future goals may differ because of the English they will be required to use. According to these factors, they can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of students who have intrinsic motivation to learn English and want to travel to English-speaking countries and students who want to seek job opportunities in English-speaking countries. In both cases, students need to know different varieties of English through video and audio materials, as according to Wardhaugh (2014), grammar books describe prescriptive language and how it differs from how people actually speak English in real-life situations. Most of the students in the subgroup belong to this group.

The second group of students have extrinsic motivation, and their goal is to enter higher education. English is needed to pass the entrance exams. In this domain, they mostly use standard language, as Nuessel (2010) describes it as a correct and official way of using a language. Students' grammar will be checked in the entrance exams, and standard language includes this criterion as well. Majority of the student from subgroup two belong to this group.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

I put my sociolinguistic lens on to analyze learners and the context, and I gather valuable information for instructional decisions, including the selection of appropriate language features, methodologies, language texts, approaches, and classroom practices. These features should be taken into account no matter what level of English a student has, as Bayley (2018) notes that every student comes to class with at least some attitudes towards English and they need individual attention.

Considering these features, I provide several pedagogical implications to meet the needs of my students. Even though these pedagogical implications were created according to a certain group of learners sociolinguistic' characteristics, this can be used for different groups of students, as according to Canagarajah (1999), certain learning styles can be considered relevant to different groups of learners as cognitive strategies are universal. However, the sociolinguistic features of every group should be analyzed first.

- **Allowing code-switching**

Considering code-switching as a positive action in speech has vital implications for language teaching. According to Nuessel (2010), code-switching is the act of using two languages sophisticatedly by obeying strict rules of language. By allowing my code-switching, I can give them the opportunity to fully express their ideas when they struggle to find appropriate words in the target language. It makes the process of gaining knowledge more comprehensible.

- **Valuing linguistic diversity**

Fought, C. (2011), noted a quote from Gloria Anzaldua: "I am my language." I should teach my students to respect their and others languages. In order to do that, I must explain how



important linguistic diversity is and how great it is that they speak more than one language, encourage them to use their local languages, like Uzbek and Tadjik, and be proud of them.

- **Cultural exchange and appreciation**

In order to prevent issues related to the ethnicity in my teaching context, I should create a respectful learning environment. For example, by promoting cultural exchange and appreciation, opening an opportunity for group discussion, and encouraging students to collaborate, by using these strategies teachers can build a bridge between them.

- **Gender awareness**

To meet gender related issues, I can promote awareness about gender. As mentioned, in learning context 15% of curriculum can be modified by teacher so in this part discussion and readings about gender stereotypes can be assigned to inform students about language use and improve their critical thinking on social expectations.

- **Preventing linguistic profiling**

As my students have different accents and varieties of languages, I prevent linguistic profiling in my teaching context. According to Baugh (2005), linguistic profiling is an auditory version of racial profiling, and it is a devastating condition for those who have accents.

- **Adopting a critical perspective on pedagogy**

Adopting a critical perspective on pedagogy is important because it challenges power structures, fosters critical thinking skills, and promotes social justice in education while also valuing students' lived experiences, cultures, and identities, empowering them to become agents of change in their communities. According to Canagarajah (1999), instructors must know about the hidden curricula of their courses by analyzing them critically.

- **Classroom Instruction and Methodologies**

According to learners' sociolinguistic profiles, instruction and methodology should be modified so they meet the needs of students. To be clear, if my students value practicing standard language, I have to work with more formal sources like books or newspapers, but if they want to practice non-standard versions of English, like my subgroup 1, I need to present them with materials where people use vernacular language. Moreover, integrating elements of sociolinguistic data in the classroom, such as exploring language attitudes or language variation in society, can foster critical thinking and a deeper understanding of language as a social construct.

By taking sociolinguistic factors into account when making decisions about how to teach, teachers can make the classroom a more welcoming and productive place where all students' sociolinguistic experiences and goals are respected. This method can give students more power, help them understand other cultures, and help them learn and improve their language skills.





### Assessment Implications

- In speaking assessment do not consider code switching as a mistake as according to Nuessel (2010) multilingual people sometimes use code-switching, crossing as a natural process when they struggle to explain their idea in a target language.
- Creating assessment which is available for every student as students in subgroup two have limited access to authentic materials so requirement of the assessment should not ask students to use internet or further work which requires financial effort.
- Understand the influence of Uzbek and Tadjik language in pronunciation of English words and do not consider words which are pronounced wrongly because of this factor.
- In oral assessment pay attention to allow students to demonstrate their skill in different sociolinguistic contexts. Context such as role playing, interview, discussion can help students feel free and consider themselves in a real English-speaking environment.
- Pay attention to waiting to for response students need to get enough time to think as every people think differently and span can be ether short or long.
- I ensure that I avoid bias towards individual students and create equal condition for every student.

### Conclusion

Sociolinguistics is a basic part of the learning and teaching process, as according to Wardhaugh (2014), it is our everyday life. As we always use language to communicate with others in different ways, such as orally or in writing, we come across sociolinguistic factors every day. Because of this, instructors must emphasize the importance of sociolinguistics in the teaching process. By doing so, they can create a supportive learning environment and value linguistic diversity, which helps build equality and respect among their students. Moreover, by understanding the sociolinguistic profile of learners, including factors such as language background, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status, instructors can tailor their instruction to meet the specific needs of subgroups within the classroom.

As an advocacy for specific learners, I understand that every learner brings with them their own linguistic assets and I respect their heritage language and allow for code-switching when needed. Moreover, I can challenge stereotypes and explain to the students that everybody is equal and they do not limit themselves while using a language because of these stereotypes about gender, social factors, or other sociolinguistic factors.

In conclusion, language teachers have a special chance to speak up for certain students and support linguistic diversity, respect, and freedom. By taking on this role, teachers can have a huge effect on their students' language learning, being familiar with other cultures, and building their confidence as language users.

### References

1. Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach.



2. Baugh, J. (2005). Linguistic Profiling Actions. In S. Makoni, G. Smitherman, A. F. Ball, & A. K. Spears (Eds.), *Black linguistics: Language, society, and politics in Africa and the Americas* (pp. 155–168). Routledge.
3. Bayley, R., & Villarreal, D. (2018). Cultural attitudes toward language variation and dialects Actions in J. I. Lontas (Ed.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching*.
4. Calder, J. (2021). Language, gender and sexuality in 2019: Interrogating normativities in the field Actions. *Gender and Language*, 14(4), 429–454.
5. Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching* Actions. Oxford University Press.
6. Deumert, A. (2011). Multilingualism. In R. Mesthrie & W. Wolfram (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociolinguistics* Actions (pp. 262–282). *Cambridge University Press*.
7. Fought, C. (2011). Language and ethnicity Actions. In R. Mesthrie & W. Wolfram (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 238–257). *Cambridge University Press*.
8. Labov, W. (1968). The social stratification of (r) English in New York City Actions. In *Sociolinguistic patterns* (pp. 49–59). University of Pennsylvania Press.
9. Mesthrie, R., Swann, J., Deumert, A., & Leap, W. L. (2009). *Introducing sociolinguistics* Actions. Edinburgh University Press. [only pages 74–94 of Chapter 3.
10. Nuessel, F. (2010). Succinct history and overview of U.S. sociolinguistics. In E. T. Spencer (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 119–136). Nova Science Publishers.
11. Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2014). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

