

SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING.

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic factors play an important role in how students learn and use English. This article describes the sociolinguistic profile of first-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at a university in Uzbekistan. It examines learners' language backgrounds, identities, learning experiences, and the contexts in which they use English. The article discusses how factors such as gender, ethnicity, social class, family support, and access to learning resources influence students' motivation, participation, and language development. It also explores the sociolinguistic profile of the learning context and the future contexts where students are expected to use English. Based on this analysis, the article presents pedagogical and assessment implications, suggesting practical strategies for creating more inclusive, communicative, and fair English language classrooms. Understanding students' sociolinguistic backgrounds can help teachers better meet learners' needs and support their language learning.

Keywords: *sociolinguistics, sociolinguistic profile, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), learner identity, English language teaching, classroom context, assessment, higher education, Uzbekistan.*

Introduction

This paper is about how social factors like gender, ethnicity, and class influence how students learn English. It also shows how the teacher can use this information to plan better lessons and fair assessment. Sociolinguistics helps us understand how language and society are connected. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) say that “identity is the social positioning of self and other” (p. 586). This means that the way people speak shows who they are and how others see them. In an English classroom, students bring their language background, culture, and goals. These things influence how they learn and use English. This paper studies a group of first year university students who speak Russian and Uzbek as their first language and learn English as a foreign language (EFL). It will describe their language background, classroom context, and future goals. It will also explain how sociolinguistic ideas like speech community, code-switching, and language ideology will help me understand their needs. Finally, it will show how teaching and assessment can be fair for all students.

Sociolinguistic profile of learners

The class is first year students from a university in Uzbekistan. Most of them speak Russian and Uzbek at home. Their English level is between IELTS 5.5 and 6.0, CEFR B2 which means they can communicate but sometimes make grammar or pronunciation mistakes. There are two main subgroups in this class. The first group studied English at school before university. They feel more confident in reading and listening. The second group started learning English only at college and lyceum. They are weaker in speaking and writing. I have to support both groups and help them work together. According to Mesthrie et al. (2009), people who share the same way of speaking are part of a “speech community”. In this class, the main speech community is Uzbek speaking. Students often use Uzbek to explain tasks to each other or to translate new words. This helps them understand but also limits their English use. There are both male and female students in the class. Boys often volunteer answers more quickly, while girls wait until the teacher calls on them. Gender roles and confidence can affect how students act in class. In many classrooms before, girls are taught to be quiet and polite, while boys are encouraged to speak freely. As a result, girls sometimes hesitate to interrupt or give opinions in discussions. I can make small changes to help, for example, by creating mixed gender pairs or giving every student time to speak. This makes participation more equal.

Most students are Russian or Uzbek. Culture can affect how people use language and how they are understood (Fought, 2011). Uzbek students sometimes feel shy because their families do not use English much at home. Russian speaking students may have more contact with English through movies or online games. I can include cultural topics that connect to both groups, for example, comparing Uzbek and Russian traditions in English so all students feel included. Students study English for different reasons. Some want to travel or study abroad. Others need English for better work or communication with foreigners. Darwin and Norton (2017) use the word “investment” to describe how learners give time and energy to learning when they see personal value in it. To keep motivation, the teacher can ask students to write small goals like “I want to understand English songs” or “I want to speak with tourists.” This helps students see English as useful and personal.

Outside the classroom, students mostly use Russian or Uzbek. They rarely hear English in daily life. People learn best when they get comprehensible input, language that they can understand easily. Because students have little English exposure, in that case I should bring real materials into class, like short videos, songs, or easy news texts. This helps students hear natural English and improve listening skills. Students often mix Russian and Uzbek with English during group work. This is called code-switching, it means the change between two languages. This is normal and can help students express ideas. For example, a student may

say, “I think it’s nima edi/как сказать interesting”. I will use this moment to teach new words. The mix of languages is part of students’ linguistic repertoire, or all the ways they can communicate.

Some students live in cities and have access to private tutors or education centers. Others live in small towns and can only use university materials. This difference shows social stratification, where class and resources affect learning. To be fair, I should share the same materials with everyone and use free or simple tools. Families support learning in different ways. Some parents talk about the importance of English and help students study. Others do not speak English at all. Friends also influence motivation. Students who watch English movies or listen to English music with friends feel more excited about learning. Language and identity are connected (Rosa and Flores 2017), when students see English as part of their future, they learn more confidently.

Sociolinguistic profile of the learning context

The students study English at a university in Uzbekistan. Most of them speak Russian or Uzbek in daily life. English is used only in the classroom, in books, or on the internet. A speech community means people who share the same way of speaking. In this school, most people belong to Uzbek speaking community, so English is not a main language for real communication. Students can speak more than one language, Uzbek, Russian and sometimes English. Deumert (2011) says that today, because of globalization, people use many languages together. This helps students compare languages and learn faster. But sometimes it also makes them confused about which English is correct. I can help by showing that there are many kinds of English around the world.

Boys and girls sometimes act differently in class. Boys often answer faster, and girls wait longer. Culture affects how people take part in communication. Students from Russian families often feel more confident because they watched English movies a lot. Uzbek speaking students may feel shy because they did not have many chances to practice. I can change group leaders often, so everyone can speak and take part. Students from cities and small towns are different. City students learned English in education centers or with tutors. Village students used old books at school or at home. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014) call this “social stratification”, which means how class affects language learning. I will mix strong and weak students to help each other and make the class more equal. Almost all students use phones to learn English. Some have fast internet, others only have dormitory Wi-Fi. Teachers must understand students’ different backgrounds. To help, I will share downloaded videos or reading files, so everyone has the same chance to learn. Some students believe that only British or American English is correct. This idea makes standard English seem better than local English. But the goal is communication, not accent.

Sociolinguistic profile of the context where English will be used

After university, students will use English in different ways. Some want to study abroad, and some want better jobs here or in international companies or online. This means they will need English for education, work, and travel. Globalization connects people who speak many kinds of English. Alim (2016) also says "...raciolinguistics that is dedicated to bringing to bear the diverse methods of linguistic analysis to ask and answer critical questions about the relations between language, race, and power across diverse ethnoracial contexts and societies" (p. 3). This explains how race and language are connected in how people talk. Students must learn that there are many types of English, not only British or American. They will meet or hear people from India, Canada, Nigeria, or the Philippines. This will help them listen better and respect other cultures. In universities, students need to write essays, reports, and give presentations. In jobs, they must write emails and talk with partners. Identity is shown in how we talk. If students speak clearly and politely, they look confident. I give practice with real situations, for example, role-playing meetings or presentations. With time, students learn many kinds of English, for education, work, and social life. This is called investment, it means when students give time and energy to language learning because it helps them reach goals. I will guide students by helping them join English clubs, watch English media, or write online with foreign friends.

Pedagogical implications

Good teaching starts with understanding students. The teacher must know who the learners are, how they speak, and what they need. This group has students who studied English before and others who started later. They learn better when they help each other and when lessons match their real life. Savignon (1991) explains that Communicative Language Teaching helps students use English for real communication. It is not only grammar and tests. I can make activities like pair work, interviews, and group projects. For example, students can plan a small trip together. They must use English to talk, ask for prices, and write a short plan. This helps them speak naturally and learn teamwork. It also builds their linguistic repertoire, all the ways they can use English in daily life.

Krashen (1985) says that people learn a language when they hear or read things they understand a little above their level. This is called comprehensible input. I use short videos or easy stories. For example, students can watch a video about some workers life or studying abroad. After watching, they answer questions and share opinions. Then I explain new words and give more examples. This makes input easy and interesting, and students feel less stress. Students can learn a lot from each other. Identity is created in interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). When students talk together, they build confidence and feel part of a speech community. I make mixed groups so strong students help weaker ones. For example, one

student can read the text, another can explain it in simple English, and another can summarize it. This way, everyone practices speaking and listening.

When students mix Russian or Uzbek with English, code-switching, it is normal in multilingual classrooms. I will not say it is wrong. Instead, it can be part of the lesson. For example, students can translate short sentences from Russian to English and talk about meaning. This helps them understand grammar and vocabulary better. It also respects their linguistic repertoire and shows that knowing more languages is a strength. Investment happens when students put time and energy into learning because it helps them reach goals. The teacher can support motivation by asking students to write simple goals like “I want to understand English songs” or “I want to talk with foreigners.” Students can share these goals in small groups and plan how to reach them. When students see progress, they stay more motivated.

“Educators should focus on explicitly modeling linguistic aspects of Standardized American English (SAE) in contrast to AAE using a priority based system related to students’ age and linguistic ability so that students are encouraged to be flexible and multilingual and come to understand the systematic natures of both varieties.” (Hudley 2018). It explains that teachers must understand students’ different backgrounds and access to resources. Some students may have internet and modern devices, but others do not. To help, I bring printed materials, videos, or saved audio files. This gives everyone the same chance to learn. Baugh (2005) reminds us that teachers must be careful not to favor students with better resources. Fair access makes learning more equal.

Assessment implications

Assessment means checking how much students learn. It helps teachers understand what students can do and what they still need to learn. But tests must be fair for everyone. Baugh (2005) explains that people can be judged by their accent or way of speaking, not by their ideas. This is called “linguistic profiling” (p. 155). Teachers must make sure this does not happen in class. In my opinion, every student’s effort and progress should be valued. Language and social class are connected. Some students had more chances to learn English before university, while others did not. Because of this, the teacher should not use only one big test. Instead, it is better to use small steps. For example, I make simple rubrics to check communication, ideas, and teamwork, not only grammar. When grading, I look at “uses new words,” “speaks clearly,” and “works well in group.” This way, all students can show progress. Students learn best when they use language to communicate. I can use peer assessment, where students give feedback to each other. For example, after a group task, they can check boxes like “My partner spoke English,” or “My partner listened and helped.” Students can also use self-assessment after writing. They can write a short note like, “I used

new words” or “I need to practice grammar.” This helps students think about their learning and become more responsible.

Learning takes time and students need low-stress situations. I can use formative assessments, such as short quizzes, journals, or small presentations, to see progress often. At the end, there can be a summative task, such as a short oral presentation about family, hobbies, or culture. This shows language skills and connects to identity. Some students may sound “less fluent” because they use nonstandard English. Teachers should remind students that all kinds of English are valuable. Globalization creates many Englishes (Deumart 2011). For example, students can listen to English speakers from India or Africa. They can learn that communication is more important than accent. This makes students feel proud and accepted.

Conclusion

Teaching English is not only about grammar or vocabulary, it is also about people. Every student has a story, language, and culture. Identity comes from interaction. When teachers understand their students’ backgrounds, they can plan lessons that make learning more meaningful. This paper showed how gender, ethnicity, and social class affect English learning. It also explained how teachers can use communicative tasks, peer learning, and fair assessments to help all students. Savignon (1991) and Krashen (1985) show that language grows through real communication and input. If I use these ideas, students learn with more confidence and joy. Finally, teachers must support and advocate for their learners. Hudley (2018) says that teachers should understand students’ culture to help them succeed. When teachers respect students’ speech community and linguistic repertoire, the classroom becomes a place where all voices matter. English learning becomes a tool for understanding, opportunity, and respect between people.

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