

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF EFL LEARNERS IN UZBEKISTAN: INVESTIGATING THE INTERSECTION OF ETHNICITY, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, AND CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY AT KOKAND UNIVERSITY

Haydarova Charos Jahongir qizi,

Kokand University.

ch.haydarova@kumail.uz

Abstract. *This study examines how diverse socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds influence English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, proficiency, and fluency. Focusing on a specific case study of a first-year multilingual student group (XTR 1-23) majoring in Foreign Language and Literature at Kokand University, the paper explores the distinct learning behaviors and linguistic variations present within an educational framework predominantly instructed via the Russian language.*

The group's profile reveals two primary axes of stratification: ethnicity (the contrasting linguistic hurdles of Uzbek students facing grammatical challenges versus Russian students navigating phonetic/pronunciation barriers) and socioeconomic status (high-income students benefiting from extra-curricular tutoring and tech-centric vocabulary versus middle-income students relying on self-study and generalized lexicon).

Drawing upon established sociolinguistic frameworks, the study evaluates the pedagogical implications of these divides, advocating for the strategic use of translanguaging, lexical borrowing, and task-based cooperative learning. Furthermore, it details equitable assessment protocols that actively resist linguistic profiling, promote gender-conscious styling instruction, and eliminate accent bias. Ultimately, this research underscores the necessity of designing culturally responsive, inclusive university environments that leverage students' multilingual repertoires for collective academic success.

Key words: *Sociolinguistics, EFL, Multilingualism, Higher Education in Uzbekistan, Socioeconomic Stratification, Code-Switching (Translanguaging), Linguistic Profiling, Accent Bias, Task-Based Learning.*

Аннотация. *В данном исследовании рассматривается, как различное социально-экономическое, этническое и культурное происхождение влияет на изучение, уровень владения и беглость английского языка как иностранного (EFL). На основе конкретного кейс-исследования первой группы многоязычных студентов (XTR 1-23), обучающихся по направлению «Иностранный язык и литература» в Кокандском университете, анализируются особенности учебного поведения и языковых вариаций в образовательной среде, где преподавание преимущественно осуществляется на русском языке.*

Профиль группы выявляет два основных измерения стратификации: этничность (различные языковые трудности: узбекские студенты сталкиваются с грамматическими проблемами, тогда как русскоязычные студенты — с фонетическими и произносительными трудностями) и социально-экономический статус (студенты с высоким доходом получают преимущество за счёт дополнительных занятий и расширенного технологического словаря, тогда как студенты со средним доходом опираются на самостоятельное обучение и общий лексический запас).

Опираясь на социолингвистические теории, исследование оценивает педагогические последствия этих различий, предлагая стратегическое использование транслингвальности, лексических заимствований и кооперативного обучения на основе задач. Также рассматриваются справедливые модели оценивания, направленные на предотвращение языковой дискриминации, преодоление акцентного смещения и развитие гендерно-нейтрального подхода в обучении. В целом исследование подчеркивает необходимость создания инклюзивной университетской среды, учитывающей многоязычные ресурсы студентов для достижения академического успеха.

Ключевые слова: *социолингвистика, EFL, многоязычие, высшее образование в Узбекистане, социально-экономическая стратификация, транслингвальность, языковое профилирование, акцентная предвзятость, обучение на основе задач.*

Introduction. The goal of this study is to better understand how people of different social groups approach language learning and fluency. Specifically, it focuses on how these distinct learners approach learning. The socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds of students directly affect how proficient they are in the language. This study specifically looks at the variations in language preferences, communication styles, and language acquisition practices among speakers from various socioeconomic backgrounds. This study also closely examines students who have distinct dialects or accents, as well as those who are bilingual or multilingual. It clarifies the causes of their linguistic barriers and offers practical solutions for effectively addressing them. This study recognizes the importance of intercultural competency and emphasizes the need of fostering cultural awareness among students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural backgrounds. Students that possess sociocultural competence are better able to communicate in a range of social contexts without misunderstandings or errors in cue interpretation.

Literature Review. Sociolinguistic research shows that language learning is strongly influenced by social factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and classroom environment. William Labov highlights that language variation reflects social class differences, especially in pronunciation and vocabulary. Likewise, Carmen Fought emphasizes the role of ethnicity in shaping linguistic behavior in multilingual settings.

Studies on multilingualism by Aneta Pavlenko show that learners flexibly switch between languages depending on context, while Suresh Canagarajah supports translanguaging as an effective pedagogical strategy in EFL classrooms.

Research also indicates that socioeconomic status affects access to learning resources, which leads to differences in vocabulary range and fluency. In addition, communicative and task-based teaching methods are widely recognized as effective for improving language skills in multilingual classrooms.

Research Methodology. This study uses a qualitative case study approach to analyze EFL learners at Kokand University (group XTR 1-23). Data were collected through classroom observation, informal interviews, and analysis of students' spoken and written English.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language learning behavior. The study is guided by sociolinguistic theories of language variation and multilingualism.

Pedagogical approaches such as communicative language teaching, translanguaging, and task-based learning were also examined to evaluate their effectiveness. Student anonymity was maintained throughout the research.

Analysis and Results. Additionally, this study provides guidance on how educators should adapt their teaching and assessment strategies to meet the unique needs and characteristics of specific students or student groups. It emphasizes how crucial it is

for teachers to consider how language influences their students' language outputs and implores them to refrain from drawing unfair conclusions about their students based just on their dialects or accents.

The study also highlights the tight relationship between culture and language, showing how they influence and enrich one another. Establishing an inclusive classroom environment that values diversity and promotes individuality is crucial when working with students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Students who are multilingual in particular can contribute to group learning by talking and sharing ideas about their many languages and cultures.

In summary, this study sheds light on the distinctive learning characteristics of students from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers who are aware of the unique needs and challenges that these students face can create inclusive and effective language learning environments that promote intercultural awareness and reciprocal understanding.

Sociolinguistic Profile of a Group of Learners. Group consists of 24 students. They study at the Kokand University at first grade. The group is XTR 1-23. Their major is Foreign Language and Literature, mainly English Language and Literature. There are three boys in the group and others are girls. Level of the group is pre-intermediate; according to the demand of University policy at the end of this academic year, they should reach the level of intermediate or upper-intermediate and get certificates of CEFR B1 or B2 levels. The main Language that is used for explanation of the other subjects for this group is Russian Language, as all of these students finished the school with the education in Russian Language.

These pupils have strong inner as well as external motivation to advance their studies and research more. Their primary goal is to acquire the language so they may apply to local universities, while some students also wish to study overseas in order to become native English speakers and land jobs at multinational corporations.

Deumart (2011) emphasizes that there are significant differences in the English language proficiency of these students, particularly with written assignments, oral assignments, and listening skills.

Two Different Subgroups:

First subgroup: Race. The group mainly consists of Uzbek students; however, there are three Russian students: Alina, Katya and Nikita. Even though they are all Russian, they easily understand the Uzbek language and can communicate on it fluently too. English however, somehow difficult for them in terms of pronunciation. While Coulmas (1999) is cited by Wardhaugh & Fuller[9] as emphasizing the connection between language and ethnicity, this may not apply to these children. As all of the students of this group are considered as a multilingual students.

Multilingual individuals attribute different languages to different settings (Deumart, 2011). For instance, they could speak Russian in public places and Uzbek with friends and

family, but in the classroom, they speak English. From the history, Race and Language are co-naturalized as a part of the colonial formation of modernity.[8] This notion always lead to construction and naturalization of languages as bounded and separate objects that are usually associated with particular groups.

As it was mentioned above, several students represent two main ethnic groups in the group. They are representatives of Uzbek and Russian nations. Although, they live in one country they have different language backgrounds and cultures. These factors influence greatly on the acceptance of some topics by learners of this group, some will accept one particular topic as a norm, and others will consider it as an inappropriate. They process of language learning is also different, while Uzbek students mostly struggle with the grammar of the English, Russian students always have problems with the pronunciation. As it was mentioned in the article by Fought [4] the dialect and accent of the L1 has a great influence on the L2.

In spite of these differences, I have never point on Race and Ethnicities during my lessons, and I think that it is not important to think about these differences when your goal is language acquisition. As pointing on the topic, acceptance or pronunciation can lead to some conflict situations during the lesson that will definitely lead to separation of group into small subgroups, which will badly effect overall process of learning.

Second subgroup: Socioeconomic status. According to the socioeconomic status, students are divided into two main groups: high and middle. Ten of the students come from the families with the high socioeconomic level, others from the middle. Students from high level have an opportunity to attend extra tutorial classes in order to improve their English, while students from the middle level are busier with self-studying due to their financial position. Due to this fact, students with the high socioeconomic status have more developed language skills, rather than students with the middle socioeconomic status. And, vocabulary that they use are different as well.

Sociolinguistic Profile of the Learning Context

The study setting is located in a University in Kokand, where these students are currently enrolled in the tenth first course. They receive five eighty-minute English classes every week. To increase their academic language ability for impending assignments is their main reason for studying English. The students in this University have access to a range of teaching methods and activities that emphasize language.

For instance, when Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is applied, students can actively participate in relevant and captivating language exercises. This approach helps students improve their receptive (listening and reading) as well as productive (speaking and writing) language abilities by emphasizing real-world communication and encouraging the use of English in authentic situations. Furthermore, the teaching methods employed by teachers of this educational place have a strong emphasis on direct education, ensuring that students receive unambiguous monitoring and language instruction. This

simple strategy, with its well-organized practice adjustments, clear explanations, and examples, enhances their language learning experience. It helps the students build a solid foundation in linguistic fluency in English, which will benefit them in their upcoming courses.

In comparison to their counterparts attending public schools, these students enjoy more access to resources within the classroom. A University setting offers additional support and resources, such as multimedia technologies, language labs, and an extensive library of instructional materials. These resources enhance a comprehensive language-learning program while assisting students in developing their English language proficiency.

Sociolinguistic Profile of the Context where English will be used

English will be used for most communications in both professional and educational settings. The learners in this instance are Uzbek citizens, and their primary motivation for studying English is to secure jobs in professions that require fluency in the language. Because they want to use standard English in formal educational and professional settings, they are concentrating on learning the language and usage of the language. The students are not multicultural in the conventional sense since they are native Uzbeks and do not originate from a variety of cultural backgrounds. More often than not, English is seen as a tool for scholastic and career success than as a means of facilitating cross-cultural dialogue or cultural absorption.

While the majority of students focus on mastering the language, some choose to study overseas, namely in Korea or the United Arab Emirates. According to Kachru's definition of English usage, these nations are part of the "expanding circle" where English is used as a common language for interlanguage communication. Students who relocate to nations that are part of the expanding circle may find that being able to speak in standard English is helpful in these situations. They might not need to learn the regional dialects or variations of English spoken in those nations if they can communicate well in the standard language they have learned.

Pedagogical Implications:

Taking into account notes about the group above some implications are considered regarding this group. Even though the language that is used for studying in the group is the same, it is different in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation due to the fact of presence of several students for whom this language is native one (Three Russian Students).

As Deumert said that nationhood as well as speakers' attitudes could influence on language forms that are used by them stated it, which means similar forms of speech can be classified as different because of nationality of people who use the language.[3] These three students use the language full of synonyms with perfect pronunciation, while others have difficulties with the fluency and pronunciation.

Relating to the multilingualism of the students: First, because the students are bilingual, code switching can be used during explanations to help with comprehension.

Additionally, students speaking different dialects might clarify their ideas by alternating between the common language, Russian, and English. Deumart (2011) states that kids with limited bilingualism or multilingualism might also be allowed to take vocabulary from other languages. In a school where students speak Uzbek and Russian as second languages, code switching is observed during discussions of challenging issues in English. Students can utilize code switching to ensure that their peers are communicating in the same language, which can help with comprehension and help them organize their thoughts more clearly. Teachers may identify and approve of code switching if they use it as a legitimate linguistic tool in the classroom.[2]

In order to promote a pleasant language learning environment, it is imperative to remove any prejudices students may have against various English dialects. It would be easier for me to act as a linguistic authority and try to change any negative impressions if I taught them about the many forms of English and how they should be used in a variety of contexts.[1] Since my multilingual students may speak different dialects, I can also help them express themselves by letting them switch between Russian and English as needed.

This approach facilitates clearer communication by accounting for their linguistic backgrounds. In addition, I can permit lexical borrowing—word selection based on context—for kids whose bilingualism or multilingualism is limited in order to support their language development (Deumart, 2011). Cooperative learning and task-based learning are effective strategies for addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils and promoting interethnic dialogue. Teachers can assist students in collaborating and overcoming social barriers by placing them in small groups and assigning cooperative projects.

Task-based approaches allow students to explore a range of topics by learning rules and comprehending them independently through the use of scaffolding (Deumart, 2011).

Although, there is no influence of social status on pronunciation as it was mentioned in Labovs [6] and Mesthrie et.al.,[7] the influence is seen in terms of vocabulary that is used among mentioned two social classes (High and Middle). Students from the High Socio-economical Level use the terms and vocabulary that are related to technology, new devices, modern media terms and even financial terms during their discussions, while students from the Middle Level can recognize these terms but not sure about the real usage of mentioned things. Middle Level students use more simplified vocabulary that is related to the general things. So during the lessons one should pay attention not to allow some misunderstandings while the usage of words and terms from among these two levels.

Language Assessment

It is vital for the instructor not to discriminate the students in terms of Race or Socio-Economic position while assessing the process of learning the language. During the process of assessment language, abilities and skills as well as the knowledge of the students should be only taken into account. When they acquire untaught training and

finish extra assignments like writing and reading books, it is expected that my students would perform better than those who do not follow this instruction (Deumart, 2011). Therefore, evaluations must take into account the time and effort put into independent learning tasks in order to provide a fair assessment of their language competency.

It's also important to talk about how linguistic styles are applied in exams. Male students who have a tendency to talk casually in class should be encouraged to utilize formal, standard language for both written and spoken assignments. Independent evaluations of formal language skills should be conducted in order to give students the chance to demonstrate their competency in the required style and maybe earn higher grades (Wardhaugh, 2015).

Test results shouldn't be negatively impacted by accents. Since it is unlikely that someone can speak English without an accent, it is important to acknowledge that everyone has an accent (Wardhaugh, 2015).

Therefore, rather than penalizing students for their accents, assessments should focus on assessing overall language ability in order to create a fair and impartial evaluation process. By considering these assessment consequences, I can ensure that the evaluation process is unbiased, equitable, and supportive of each student's particular needs and circumstances. Evaluations must recognize the effort that goes into independent study, encourage the use of appropriate language styles, avoid penalizing accents, and provide each student the opportunity to participate actively and demonstrate their learning.

Conclusion. To sum up, sociolinguistic theories validate the importance of the language-culture interaction. Students must be exposed to a variety of cultural challenges in order to improve their intercultural proficiency. It is crucial to recognize that students' multifaceted identities include impacts from their racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic class, geography, and age on their language preferences and attitudes.[4] To prevent social prejudice among students, educators need to be conscious of these challenges and work to create a polite, welcoming environment in the classroom.

Teachers can create an environment that promotes tolerance and cultural understanding by actively involving their students in the creation of information about particular subjects.

In order to meet the various needs of the students in the classroom, teachers play a vital role. They ought to make an effort to provide a welcoming, tolerant, and student-centered atmosphere that upholds the freedom of expression of students.

Teachers may create a rich and inclusive learning environment in the classroom that benefits all of their students by accepting and promoting the diversity of language and culture among their students.

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