

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING. A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF EFL STUDENTS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: Language learning is affected not only by grammar and vocabulary but also by learners' social and cultural backgrounds. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, family income, and place of living can influence students' confidence, motivation, and opportunities to practice English. This article describes the sociolinguistic profile of first-year English-major students at Uzbekistan State World Languages University. It explains how these sociolinguistic factors affect students' participation and English language learning. The article also discusses several teaching strategies that can help create a fair and supportive classroom for all learners.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, EFL, learner identity, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, classroom participation, English language teaching, Uzbekistan

Introduction

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. It explains how social factors such as gender, ethnicity, family background, and place of living influence the way people use and learn language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014). These factors also affect learners' confidence, motivation, classroom participation, and access to educational opportunities. In Uzbekistan, many students study English because it is important for higher education, future careers, and international communication. However, not all students have the same learning experience before entering university. Some students have studied in private language centers and had many opportunities to practice English, while others have learned only in public schools with fewer resources. As a result, students may have different levels of confidence and different language learning needs. This article presents a sociolinguistic profile of first-year English-major students at Uzbekistan State World Languages University. It examines how gender, ethnicity, family background, and place of origin influence students' English language learning and classroom participation. Finally, it discusses the teaching implications of these differences and suggests ways to create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Sociolinguistic Profile

My group consist of 15, students of Uzbekistan State World Languages University. Their major is English as a foreign language and its literature. They are mostly 18- 20 years

old, their first language is Russian and Uzbek. Their English level varies from 5.5 to 6.5 IELTS band score and some of them have B2 from CEFR. They are all good at reading and listening, however, most of them hesitates to talk and participate in group activities. But they all want to improve their English level, they are eager to learn, some already wants to start teaching in educational centers. Main aim is to be the best teacher and continue in further education (Masters. PHD and etc.)

There are two main subgroups inside the class. The first group is about where they come from. Some students are from the capital city Tashkent. They had the best opportunities to learn English in private schools and education centers with better teachers and technology. Others are from districts and small towns. They learnt English only in school or someone's house (in rural areas some teachers teach at home), so they had less practice. The second subgroup is about family finance. Rich family students did or can attend for extra classes or even travel abroad. However, students from families who have financial problems only study English here, at university. So these differences change how much practice and confidence that they have in English.

Gender is also important. Usually female students participate more in questionnaires and talk more in group activities while male students are a little bit quiet and sometimes they are even less motivated and confident. However, all students want to improve and they all help each other. Students do not practice more outside of class, they mostly use Uzbek or Russian. They use and hear English only in my classroom. Family and friends also have a role in their life, students from rich families are motivated, whereas other feel less supported.

Ethnicity is less visible in my group because most students are Uzbek and Russian, but it has influence in identity. I mean, some students speak Russian and Uzbek in class and it shows how their linguistic repertoires and speeches connect to their background. Also, as English is prestige language, all students try to use it, but sometimes when they feel shy or uncomfortable they shift it to Uzbek or Russian, especially weaker students.

Overall, my student's gender family background, ethnicity and place where they came from influence to their confidence, participation, practice and even speech. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) explain, identity is built in interaction, and students show their identity in how they use language.

Pedagogical Implications

The differences I mentioned are important for future classes. Firstly, students from districts need more speaking and listening practice, since they learnt only theoretical, did not have enough real life situations. For them, I will use CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), then students talk and use English more in classroom. Female students often speak more, so I will create activities that involve boys more. I will plan groups very carefully. So, to help them, I will use peer learning, when strong students work with weaker

ones. By this, stronger students use their knowledge to help other, then all students have fair environment to learn better. But if I use this in speaking activities strong students may dominate the conversation and weaker ones feel less motivated. So I will group weak students with weak, strong to strong ones in speaking, when they have same level they feel equal and speak more.

Additionally, according to the Krashen's Input Hypothesis, if the students have enough comprehensible input, they learn and participate better. So I will start preparing materials that slightly above from their level. Since city and rich family students can have more input from courses and travel, other students can only get in classroom. I will suggest free online tools (BBC), apps (Duolingo) and courses (Coursera). I will be a guide to them not just a teacher or main speaker, most activities will be role plays, pair works, discussions and games.

Knowledge of gender, ethnicity, and race also helps me design fair assessment. For example, if male students are less confident to speak in large groups, I will use pair or small group speaking tasks for them to assess. If poor students do not have films or books in English to use outside the classroom, I will test them on what they learned inside the class, not outside. This makes the assessment more fair for everyone.

Conclusion

The sociolinguistic profile shows that students' language learning is influenced by many social factors, including gender, family background, ethnicity, and place of living. These factors affect students' confidence, participation in class, and opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. Understanding students' sociolinguistic backgrounds helps teachers choose more suitable teaching methods and create a fair learning environment. Activities such as pair work, group discussions, peer learning, and communicative tasks can encourage all students to participate and improve their English skills. Teachers should also consider students' different learning opportunities when planning lessons and assessments. In conclusion, knowing students' sociolinguistic backgrounds allows teachers to better meet learners' needs and support their language development. This can help create a more inclusive classroom where every student has the opportunity to learn and succeed.

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