

**SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN
UZBEK ACADEMIC LYCEUMS**

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Abstract

This article examines the sociolinguistic factors influencing English language learning among students in Uzbek academic lyceums. The study focuses on learners from different regional and linguistic backgrounds and explores how dialect diversity, language ideology, multilingualism, and classroom interaction shape English learning experiences. In many Uzbek educational contexts, students simultaneously navigate regional Uzbek varieties, Standard Uzbek, and English, creating a complex multilingual environment. The article argues that regional dialects should not be viewed as deficiencies, but rather as natural linguistic systems that influence second language acquisition. A qualitative sociolinguistic approach was used through classroom observation and contextual analysis of learners aged 16–17 in an academic lyceum setting. The findings indicate that language attitudes, fear of making mistakes, and institutional preference for standard language forms strongly affect learner confidence and classroom participation. The study also demonstrates that multilingual learners possess valuable communicative resources that can support English language development when appropriately recognized in teaching practice. The article concludes that inclusive, dialect-aware, and communicative teaching approaches can improve both learner confidence and academic performance in English classrooms.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, multilingualism, English language learning, Uzbek dialects, language ideology, EFL learners, academic lyceum, classroom interaction

Introduction

Language learning is not only a linguistic process but also a social and cultural phenomenon shaped by identity, community, and educational context. In multilingual societies such as Uzbekistan, students enter educational institutions with diverse linguistic backgrounds that significantly influence their language learning experiences. Learners from regions such as the Fergana Valley, Khorezm, Karakalpakstan, Surkhandarya, and Kashkadarya bring different regional varieties of Uzbek into the classroom, each reflecting unique phonological, lexical, and social characteristics.

In academic lyceums, however, students are expected to use Standard Uzbek in formal education while simultaneously learning English as a foreign language. This creates a layered linguistic situation in which learners constantly navigate between home dialects, institutional language norms, and English language requirements. As a result, English language learning becomes closely connected to sociolinguistic factors such as language ideology, dialect attitudes, multilingual practices, and social evaluation.

Many learners begin to associate their regional speech with lower academic status because educational systems often privilege standard language forms. Similarly, students frequently perceive “standard English” as the only acceptable variety in academic settings. These attitudes may negatively affect classroom participation, confidence, and willingness to communicate.

According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), language variation is a universal characteristic of all speech communities and should be understood as a natural part of communication rather than deviation from correctness. From this perspective, regional dialects and multilingual practices should not be considered obstacles in English language learning but important sociolinguistic resources.

This article aims to examine how sociolinguistic factors influence English language learning among students in Uzbek academic lyceums and how inclusive pedagogical approaches can support multilingual learners more effectively.

Literature Review

Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society, focusing on how social variables influence language use and communication.

Ирода Ал: Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) emphasize that language cannot be separated from social context because linguistic practices are shaped by identity, community, and interaction.

One of the central concepts in sociolinguistics is language variation. Labov (1972) argues that variation exists systematically across all speech communities and reflects social structures rather than linguistic deficiency. Regional dialects differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, but these differences do not indicate incorrect language use.

Research on language ideology also demonstrates that educational institutions often privilege standard language forms while marginalizing regional or non-standard varieties. Lippi-Green (1997) explains that standard language ideology can create linguistic discrimination and psychological pressure among speakers of non-standard varieties. In classroom environments, students may become overly focused on correctness and avoid active participation due to fear of making mistakes.

Multilingualism is another important factor influencing language learning. Mesthrie et al. (2009) note that multilingual speakers constantly use multiple linguistic systems in communication, and this flexibility can positively contribute to second language acquisition. Learners often transfer phonological, lexical, and syntactic features from their first languages into English. From a sociolinguistic perspective, such transfer is a natural part of language development rather than evidence of failure.

Previous studies also highlight the importance of communicative and inclusive pedagogy in multilingual classrooms. When learners' linguistic identities are respected, they are more likely to participate actively and develop stronger communicative competence.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative sociolinguistic approach to examine the relationship between linguistic background and English language learning in Uzbek academic lyceums. The research is based on classroom observation, contextual analysis, and sociolinguistic interpretation of learner interaction patterns.

The participants include first-year academic lyceum students aged between 16 and 17. The learners come from different regions of Uzbekistan, including the Fergana Valley, Khorezm, Karakalpakstan, Surkhandarya, and Kashkadarya. Most participants use regional varieties of Uzbek in everyday communication, while some students also use Russian or Tajik in multilingual environments.

The study focuses on several sociolinguistic variables:

regional dialect use,

language attitudes,

classroom participation,

communicative confidence,

multilingual practices,

and perceptions of standard language norms.

Classroom speaking activities, pair discussions, and teacher-student interactions were analyzed

to identify patterns related to language anxiety, code-switching, and communicative behavior.

Findings and Discussion

Regional Dialects and English Learning

The findings show that regional dialects significantly influence students' English pronunciation, stress patterns, and speaking confidence. Learners from the Fergana Valley often transfer phonological features from their local dialects into English speech. Similarly, students from Khorezm and Karakalpakstan demonstrate multilingual transfer influenced by Uzbek, Karakalpak, and sometimes Russian language systems.

These linguistic features are frequently interpreted by learners as "errors," especially in formal classroom settings. As a result, many students become highly self-conscious during speaking activities and focus more on avoiding mistakes than expressing ideas fluently.

Labov (1972) explains that speakers tend to monitor their language more carefully in formal situations due to social evaluation pressure. This phenomenon was also observed in the classroom context, where students produced shorter and less spontaneous responses during oral assessment activities.

Language Ideology and Learner Confidence

Another important finding relates to language ideology and learner identity. Many students associate standard language forms with intelligence, education, and academic success, while regional speech is often viewed as less formal or less correct.

This belief contributes to linguistic insecurity. Students who fear judgment from teachers or classmates may avoid participation even when they possess sufficient vocabulary and ideas. Anxiety becomes particularly visible during speaking tasks and presentations.

At the same time, students demonstrate strong emotional attachment to their regional language varieties outside the classroom because these dialects represent identity, belonging, and cultural connection. This creates tension between institutional language expectations and personal linguistic identity.

Multilingualism as a Learning Resource

The study also indicates that multilingual learners possess important communicative advantages. Students who regularly switch between Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, or Karakalpak often demonstrate greater flexibility in meaning negotiation and interaction management.

Code-switching was commonly observed during pair and group activities. Rather than hindering communication, this practice often helped learners maintain interaction and develop ideas before expressing them in English.

These findings support the sociolinguistic argument that multilingualism should be recognized as a pedagogical resource rather than a classroom problem.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that English language teaching in Uzbek academic lyceums should adopt more inclusive and dialect-aware approaches. Teachers should recognize that regional language variation is a normal feature of communication and not evidence of linguistic deficiency.

First, classroom environments should prioritize communicative confidence rather than excessive grammatical correction. Pair work, group discussion, and low-pressure speaking activities can reduce anxiety and encourage active participation.

Second, multilingual practices such as code-switching can be used strategically to support

learning. Allowing learners to connect ideas through their first languages before producing English output can improve comprehension and participation.

Third, assessment systems should focus more on communicative effectiveness than native-like pronunciation. Students should not be penalized for regional accents or first-language influence if communication remains clear and meaningful.

Finally, teachers should actively challenge harmful language ideologies by introducing students to the concept of World Englishes and explaining that variation exists naturally in all languages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, English language learning in Uzbek academic lyceums is strongly influenced by sociolinguistic factors such as regional dialects, multilingualism, language ideology, and classroom interaction patterns. Students' linguistic backgrounds shape not only pronunciation and grammar but also confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate.

The study demonstrates that regional language variation should not be viewed as a weakness. Instead, multilingual learners possess valuable communicative resources that can support second language development when appropriately recognized in educational practice.

Creating supportive, inclusive, and communicative classrooms is essential for improving learner confidence and academic achievement. Teachers and educational institutions should move beyond narrow definitions of "correct language" and adopt approaches that value linguistic diversity as an important part of language learning.

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