

THE ROLE OF GENDER, AGE AND SOCIAL FACTORS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Raxmonova Gulmira Baxrom qizi

Urgench RANCH technology university

Abstract: Language learning is considered to be a complex and long process influenced by many sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, motivation, and social class. These factors play an important role in shaping learners’ linguistic development and educational outcomes. Understanding sociolinguistic dynamics is essential in educational settings where students demonstrate diverse language proficiency levels and learning strategies. Sociolinguistic background, particularly ethnicity and social identity, significantly affects language use and learning behavior [5: 240]. This research paper discusses the sociolinguistic profiles of English language learners focusing on the impact of gender, age, and social factors on language learning by comparing two distinct subgroups and suggesting pedagogical implications.

Key words: social factors, language learners, gender, age, language proficiency, learner identity, motivation.

Introduction

The first subgroup consists of Russian–Uzbek bilingual students with relatively high social status, while the second subgroup includes Uzbek-speaking students from rural areas representing middle and low socio-economic backgrounds. These subgroups differ in socio-economic status, cultural exposure, access to educational resources, and opportunities for language practice, which influence their language learning processes and outcomes.

Description of learners as a group

The participants are students learning English at a language centre in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The group consists of 15 learners whose proficiency ranges between B1 and B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Students are aged between 18 and 20 and come from Uzbek and Russian linguistic backgrounds.

All learners attend an Academic English course aimed at improving listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills for academic purposes. Differences in starting age of language learning contribute to variation in proficiency levels among students.

Two subgroups based on social factors

Subgroup 1: Urban Russian–Uzbek-speaking students

These students live in urban areas and actively use both Russian and Uzbek in daily communication. Their urban environment provides access to educational resources, media exposure, and technological tools supporting language learning.

Ethnicity plays an important role in shaping language behavior and identity. Ethnically diverse communities often demonstrate multilingual practices such as code-switching, allowing learners to negotiate meaning using multiple linguistic resources [5: 245]. Code-switching enables students to clarify complex concepts and maintain communication fluency during interaction. Urban multilingual communities frequently employ what is described as a “borrowed variety,” where linguistic elements from several languages coexist in communication practices [5: 250].

Regarding gender identity, students in this subgroup demonstrate fewer gender-based linguistic restrictions. Their confidence and communicative openness contribute positively to speaking development. However, despite strong exposure to English, some learners demonstrate reduced intrinsic motivation, which is considered a crucial factor influencing second language achievement [2: 15].

Subgroup 2: Rural Uzbek-speaking students

This subgroup consists of learners whose first language is Uzbek and who originate from rural regions with limited access to educational resources and technological support. Their linguistic behavior reflects social stratification, as language variation often correlates with social class and regional background [6: 60]. Dialect differences sometimes lead to reduced confidence during communication, particularly when interacting with urban peers.

Gender distinctions are more noticeable in this group, influencing topic participation and interaction patterns. Social norms shape communicative participation, occasionally limiting collaborative classroom interaction. Despite limited exposure to English outside the classroom, these learners demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation and consistency in completing academic tasks.

Learning context

Instruction takes place in a learning centre offering classes three times per week using blended instruction combining face-to-face lessons and online assignments. Students are primarily preparing for the IELTS examination. Instruction is mainly conducted in English; however, Uzbek and Russian are occasionally used for clarification purposes. Multilingual classroom interaction reflects modern multilingual pedagogical practices supporting comprehension and participation [1: 270]. Students from Subgroup 1 benefit from additional exposure through English-speaking family members, while Subgroup 2 learners rely mostly on classroom materials and textbooks.

Pedagogical implications for language instruction and acquisition

Selection of methods and approaches

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) promotes communicative competence through interaction-based activities such as discussions, role plays, and collaborative tasks [7: 262]. Since students aim to achieve IELTS proficiency, CLT effectively supports real-life language use.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) enables learners to apply language in meaningful contexts and authentic problem-solving situations [3: 35]. This approach is particularly effective for technologically exposed learners, although rural students require additional scaffolding.

Code-switching and translanguaging practices help learners construct meaning through flexible language use and learner-centered interaction [4: 288]. Multilingual interaction further supports sociolinguistic competence development [1: 275]. Urban learners benefit from higher-order cognitive tasks encouraging autonomy, while rural learners require collaborative learning and structured linguistic support.

Modification of materials

Instructional materials should include authentic multimodal resources such as videos, audio materials, and visual aids. Differentiated instruction and peer collaboration between subgroups promote inclusive classroom interaction.

Offline learning materials are recommended for students with limited technological access. Respecting linguistic diversity within classroom discussions enhances participation and equality among learners.

Conclusion

Language teaching extends beyond knowledge transmission and requires consideration of learners’ sociolinguistic backgrounds. Teachers should utilize bilingual advantages of urban learners while providing scaffolded instruction to rural students to develop communicative and sociolinguistic competence [8]. Creating an inclusive classroom environment helps learners overcome linguistic insecurity and promotes equitable participation among students from diverse social backgrounds [5: 255].

References:

1. Deumert, A. (2011). *Multilingualism*. In R. Mesthrie (Ed.), **The Cambridge handbook of sociolinguistics** (pp. 262–282). Cambridge University Press.
2. Dornyei, Z. (1998). *Motivation in second and foreign language learning*. Thames Valley University, London.
3. Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.
4. Wong, C. (2024). Centring on students’ needs by engaging in translanguaging shifts. *ELT Journal*, 78(3), 284–296.

5. Fought, C. (2011). *Language and ethnicity*. In R. Mesthrie (Ed.), **The Cambridge handbook of sociolinguistics** (pp. 238–257). Cambridge University Press.
6. Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
7. Savignon, J. S. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2).
8. Van Booven, C. (2018). Developing sociolinguistic competence. *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.