

# Navigating Sociolinguistic Landscapes: Code-Switching and Socioeconomic Factors in EFL Education in Uzbekistan

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## Abstract:

This study investigates the language learning dynamics among two distinct groups of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Navoi, Uzbekistan. The first group comprises five Uzbek EFL teachers who predominantly use Uzbek with significant code-switching into Russian, reflecting their higher socio-economic status and linguistic positioning. The second group includes six Tajik EFL teachers from rural villages with intermediate language proficiency and lower socio-economic status. The study explores how sociolinguistic factors such as language background, gender dynamics, and socio-economic status affect teaching practices, accent perceptions, and inter-group interactions. Findings reveal significant differences in language use and social positioning between the groups, highlighting the influence of socio-economic and linguistic factors on educational practices and learner identities.

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, EFL teachers, code-switching, socioeconomic status, linguistic identity, pronunciation and accent, dialectal variation, intercultural communication, educational practices.

Language instruction is a multifaceted process that is influenced by a variety of sociolinguistic factors. This study paper examines the complex process of language learning within the setting of two unique subgroups of teachers in Navoi, Uzbekistan. The research paper examines the influence of sociolinguistic factors on classroom practices and assessments, as well as the linguistic backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and ethnic identities of two subgroups.

The target learners for my study were eleven learners who are members of two distinct subgroups and have a variety of sociolinguistic factors.

The first subpopulation consists of five Uzbek EFL teachers from Navoi city schools in Uzbekistan. Their first language is Uzbek. The Uzbek instructors communicate in a standardized form of Uzbek, which involves the use of a significant amount of code-switching in Russian. "Code-switching" occurs for a variety of reasons, and these target learners use it to easily explain their points of view.<sup>1</sup> The practice of code-switching in Russian is an example of the principle of positionality, as it elevates them to a "higher position" within the group, as Russian has been the primary foreign language in Uzbekistan for an extended period. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), the principle of positionality in sociolinguistics refers to an individual's position, which is determined by various social factors. They are between the ages of thirty and fifty. Three of the students are female, and two are male. The level of their language proficiency is upper-intermediate. Their socioeconomic status is intermediate to high.

Student A, who is thirty-five years old, is employed as a teacher at the school located in the city. He is Uzbek, but he employs a significant number of Russian words when conversing. He attempts to mimic British accents and has a linguistic adoration for British speakers.

Student B is thirty years old and has Uzbek nationality. She speaks too slowly and has an indirect style of communication. In addition, she does not want to speak in front of the class because she believes her speech is not "proper" enough and contains errors. Despite her efforts to use less code switching, her English speech contains many Russian and Uzbek words.

The second subgroup consists of six rural Tajik EFL teachers from the mountains of Uzbekistan. Their first language is Tajik (6). These teachers speak dialectal Tajik, which has an impact on their identity, and they are ignorant of the members of the first subgroup. It is suggested that dialects and varieties may occasionally be used to distinguish a particular social group. Five of them are women and one is a man. Their ages range from thirty to fifty. Their language proficiency is intermediate. Their socioeconomic status ranges from lower to middle.

Student A is forty-three years old and works as an EFL teacher in the district's most remote village. The village lacks basic infrastructure, and the school where she works is in poor condition, with only twenty students. She is Tajik by nationality. She makes numerous errors and mistakes while delivering a lengthy speech, and she is embarrassed by her Tajik accent in front of the other group members.

Student B is the group's youngest member, aged twenty-five. He has recently begun his teaching career and wishes to relocate to the United States to further his education. His nationality is Tajik, but he can adapt different accents depending on the situation. He attempts to mimic native pronunciation and communicates with his groupmates in Uzbek rather than Tajik.

#### Language background:

The first subgroup consists of Uzbek people who speak Uzbek as their first language. The influence of power is evident in this target group, as they are members of the indigenous nation in this country. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014) emphasized that the concept of power explains the feeling of importance to the other group. Power dynamics are also expressed through their bilingualism and extensive use of Russian in speech. As Nuessel (2010) stated, bilinguals, or my target learners, use different languages depending on the social context. Furthermore, the principle of indexicality can be observed while speaking English, as members of the first subgroup attempt to use a British accent to identify themselves as fluent English speakers. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), the principle of indexicality refers to the situation in which people use language to assign themselves to different social statuses. Furthermore, their English with a British accent inspires the

second subgroup's "linguistic adoration" for them. According to Baugh (2005), "linguistic adoration" stems from admiration for others' speech and linguistic characteristics that we lack.

All of the members of the second subgroup are Tajiks, and they speak different Tajik dialects because they come from various villages in the same district. However, their speech is mutually intelligible, and their dialects demonstrate the concept of a "dialect continuum". Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014) noted that on the dialect continuum, varieties of a specific language differ depending on geographical location. Furthermore, members of this group are more united because their sense of solidarity drove them to band together in order to resist the first group.

The first group believes that because members of the second group speak English with a Tajik accent, they are on a "lower position." Some learners in this subgroup use "linguistic accommodation" to reduce communication barriers with the first subgroup. This phenomenon can be seen in their use of Uzbek "borrowings" and accent adjustments. However, the majority of them refuse "linguistic accommodation" or "style shifting," because, according to Fought (2011), in some communities, using majority or standard language is viewed as a lack of loyalty or selling "ethnic pride".

status socioeconomic

The socioeconomic status of the first subgroup ranges from middle to high, resulting in disparities in access to resources and extracurricular activities. Despite having the same occupation and income level as members of another group, some women in this group place themselves in a higher social class based on family members (Mesthrie, 2009).

The second group's socioeconomic status ranges from middle to low, limiting their access to resources. For example, some members of this group complained about the cost of using Wi-Fi and avoided doing online tasks at home.

Stereotypes and the Whorfian Hypothesis.

All members of two subgroups commit repetitive errors in the use of third-person singular pronouns, verb aspects, articles, and other related elements. These learners' worldviews were altered as a result of the absence of these grammatical structures in their native language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014). Additionally, some of my students subconsciously employed "she" to refer to both genders.

### **Educational implications**

**Language use** The language of both subgroups and the "code-switching" of the first subgroup should be embraced, as Nuessel (2010) wrote that code-switching does not imply the "reconfiguration" of two separate languages, but rather the sophisticated use of two languages. In order to foster the use of the English language, learners should not be restricted in their code-switching tendencies. It is recommended that language learners in the initial subgroup be encouraged to employ code-switching as a means of transitioning to the study of English. In an effort to foster intercultural communication between two groups, the dialectal differences among Tajik teachers can be employed as an example to teach about linguistic diversity and dialects. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the impact of the target learners' primary language on both groups. The teacher must exercise patience in order to resolve the pattern of repeated L1 interference errors. Learners are discouraged from producing in the target language as a result of overcorrections.

**Pronunciation and Accent** The teacher should be aware that both subgroups have accents when speaking the target language, and the goal for these students should not be to achieve a perfect British or American accent, but rather to be able to hold a coherent conversation. Furthermore, the

teacher should avoid "preferential linguistic profiling" for the first subgroup while using a British accent and "discriminatory linguistic profiling" for the second subgroup when speaking English with a Tajik accent. According to Baugh (2005), linguistic profiling leads to negative practices not only in education but also in a variety of other settings.

Selection of language texts for tasks and activities:

It would be beneficial for my target learners to utilize multimodal resources (audio, video, and etc.) that encompass Global Englishes, varieties, and accents. Language varieties are introduced to provide learners with a repertoire of codes and discourses, as per Selvi (2019). Additionally, the classroom materials should be reflective of cultural diversity in order to foster cross-cultural understanding. Canagarajah (1999) introduces different cultures to demonstrate that there is no dominant community and that knowledge is socially constructed in each culture. Language learners should feel safe and valued, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or linguistic background. Methodologies and techniques used in instruction.

Adopting a "polymodal" approach and providing opportunities for exposure to various Englishes would be beneficial because it exposes learners to different varieties of English rather than just "standard English." According to Selvi (2019), this practice is crucial for my target learners, as it fosters diversity in the classroom. Furthermore, using the "English-within-multilingualism" ideology instead of "English-only" allows my target learners to preserve their "heritage language."

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