

## SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE RESERCH PAPER: COMPUTER PROGRAMMING STUDENTS AT TASHKENT PEDAGOGICAL TECHNICAL.

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**Annotation:** This paper presents a sociolinguistic profile of Group 102, a class of 14 first-year Computer Programming students at Tashkent Pedagogical Technical (TPT) in Uzbekistan. The profile examines learner backgrounds across three dimensions — regional origin, gender, and ethnic and linguistic identity — and situates these within the multilingual context of Tashkent and the English-using futures for which students are being prepared. Drawing on frameworks from World Englishes, Global Englishes, raciolinguistic theory, standard language ideology, and translanguaging, the paper identifies two overlapping subgroups whose differential access to English creates meaningful instructional challenges. Pedagogical implications address differentiated instruction, the strategic use of translanguaging, and the disruption of standard language ideologies that disadvantage regional, multilingual, and female learners. Assessment implications focus on analytic rubric design, the risks of raciolinguistic bias in evaluation, and advocacy for contextually appropriate assessment in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings.

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics · English for Specific Purposes · language ideology · Global Englishes · translanguaging · raciolinguistic ideologies · EFL · Uzbekistan

### Introduction

Fought (2011) opens her chapter on language and ethnicity with a quote from poet Gloria Anzaldúa: “So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language” (p. 238). This statement resonates deeply in my classroom. I teach English to first-year Computer Programming students at Tashkent Pedagogical Technical (TPT) in Uzbekistan — a group of 17-year-old learners who bring with them not only different levels of English proficiency, but also different regional dialects, home languages, ethnic identities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In a country where English is a foreign language with no official role, and where access to English outside the classroom is deeply unequal, the question of how I teach is inseparable from the question of who my students are.

Sociolinguistics provides essential tools for answering this question. As Lippi-Green (2004) reminds us, language attitudes — the beliefs people hold about which language varieties are correct, beautiful, or legitimate — are not neutral. They reflect power relations in society and have real consequences for learners in educational settings. Similarly, Bayley and Villarreal (2018) argue that attitudes toward varieties reflect attitudes toward the people who speak them (p. 1). Tirvassen (2018) cautions that traditional sociolinguistic frameworks, by correlating linguistic behavior with fixed social categories such as ethnicity or region, can inadvertently essentialize learner identities rather than recognizing the dynamic and individual nature of language use. This reminder is especially relevant in a classroom like mine, where students' linguistic backgrounds are diverse and do not map neatly onto single ethnic or regional categories.

This paper presents a sociolinguistic profile of Group 102 at TPT, describing the learners themselves, the context in which they learn, and the future English-using contexts for which they are being prepared. It then draws out the pedagogical and assessment implications of this profile, with particular attention to issues of language variation, identity, and access to language learning. The paper concludes with a statement of advocacy for the learners who are most at risk of being underserved by traditional approaches to English language teaching.

## **Sociolinguistic Profile of the Group**

### **The Group as a Whole**

Group 102 consists of 14 students enrolled in the first year of the Computer Programming program at TPT. All 14 students are 17 years old and attended public schools where Uzbek was the primary language of instruction. English is a foreign language (EFL) for all of them — they have studied it as a school subject but have had limited opportunities to use it outside of class. Their current proficiency level is approximately A1–A2 on the CEFR scale. As Computer Programming students, they share a specific instrumental motivation: they need English to access programming documentation, software interfaces, and technical resources that are predominantly produced in English. This makes their context a clear case of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Despite these shared characteristics, the group is far from homogeneous. Five of the 14 students are male and nine are female. The students come from two distinct social and geographic backgrounds that create meaningful differences in their prior exposure to English, their confidence in using it, and the linguistic resources they bring to the classroom. These differences are significant enough that, for the purposes of this profile, the group is best understood as two overlapping subgroups.

### **Subgroup One: Urban Students**

Six students come from Tashkent or other urban areas and have grown up in more privileged socioeconomic conditions. Several of these students speak Russian in addition to Uzbek at home, reflecting the historical presence of Russian as a prestige language in urban Uzbekistan. Most own modern smartphones and have informal daily contact with English through social media, YouTube, and online gaming. This aligns with what Selvi (2019) describes as the role of digital globalization in expanding access to English in Expanding Circle contexts. Because of this informal exposure, urban students tend to enter the classroom with higher English confidence, a broader passive vocabulary, and greater familiarity with authentic English input.

### **Subgroup Two: Regional Students**

Eight students come from outside Tashkent, from regions such as Surkhandarya, Namangan, Kashkadarya, and smaller towns near Tashkent such as Zangiota and Chirchiq. Several of these students live in the technical dormitory because of the distance from their hometowns. Their access to English outside the classroom has been significantly more limited: many attended under-resourced schools where English instruction was irregular or of lower quality, and fewer have regular access to English-language digital content.

The linguistic backgrounds of regional students are also more diverse. Two students — Muhammadi and Abror — speak Tajik at home. One student, Javokhir, uses Kazakh in his immediate neighborhood. Several others speak regional dialects of Uzbek that differ meaningfully from the Tashkent dialect, which functions as the de facto standard in urban Uzbekistan. Fought (2011) notes that language is not only a tool for communication but a central element of ethnic and regional identity, and that speakers whose home language is stigmatized can experience this as a personal attack on who they are. This observation has direct implications for how regional students experience the language classroom.

### **Gender**

The gender composition of the group — nine female and five male students — is noteworthy given the subject matter. Computer programming is widely perceived as a male-dominated field, and this social expectation can affect how female students experience the classroom. Calder (2020) explains that gender is “not only about male and female” but about “how people understand and show gender in different contexts including education.” In Uzbekistan, traditional gender norms remain strong and can reduce female students’ willingness to speak in class, take on leadership roles, or present ideas publicly. I have observed this pattern in my own class: several female students, particularly those from regional backgrounds, are hesitant to volunteer answers and default to listening roles in group work.

### **Race, Ethnicity, and Language**

Rosa and Flores (2017) introduce the concept of raciolinguistic ideologies — the ways in which judgments about language are intertwined with perceptions of the speaker’s ethnic or racial identity. Although Uzbekistan does not have the same racial dynamics as the United States, the underlying mechanism is relevant: students who speak non-Tashkent dialects, Tajik, or Kazakh may be perceived by classmates and teachers as linguistically inferior, not because of any actual deficit, but because their speech indexes a regional or ethnic identity that carries lower social prestige. As Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014) explain, the distinction between a “language” and a “dialect” is fundamentally sociopolitical rather than purely linguistic: the defining factor in how varieties are classified is not structural difference but which group holds social and political power (p. 32). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that “identity is not fixed” but is “created and recreated through interaction” (p. 587), meaning the classroom itself is a site where identities — and the hierarchies attached to them — are actively constructed.

### **Sociolinguistic Profile of the Learning Context**

TPT is a small vocational technical in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. It offers programs in cooking, design, and computer programming. English is taught as a compulsory foreign language subject across all programs. The technical previously operated as Tashkent Pedagogical Technical and was recently reclassified as a technical institution. The physical environment is modest: most classrooms have blackboards, desks, and chairs. Some rooms are equipped with smartboards, televisions, and air conditioning, and the technical has free Wi-Fi throughout the building. There are computer labs, though the number of computers is insufficient for all students to have individual access.

A distinctive feature of the learning context is the absence of a textbook. The technical provides teachers with a semester topic calendar that lists weekly themes but does not specify materials, activities, or assessment tools. I am responsible for creating all instructional materials myself: finding readings, writing exercises, designing tasks, and preparing assessments. This places a significant creative and logistical burden on the teacher but also grants considerable flexibility to adapt instruction to learners’ actual needs.

The sociolinguistic context of Tashkent is multilingual. Uzbek is the official national language, but Russian retains significant prestige in urban professional and educational settings. Tajik, Kazakh, and other regional languages are spoken in various communities. Among younger generations, there is growing contact with English through digital media, entertainment, and the global tech industry. Kachru (1990) classifies Uzbekistan as part of the Expanding Circle — a country where English has

no historical or official role but is increasingly used for international and professional purposes.

The classroom also reflects broader Uzbek social hierarchies. Lippi-Green (2004) defines standard language ideology as “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, non-varying spoken language” that is “imposed and maintained by dominant institutions” (p. 293). This ideology operates at multiple levels in my context: through the assumption that standard Uzbek is more correct than regional dialects, and through the assumption that Inner Circle English is more correct than the Uzbek-accented English that my students will realistically produce. Both assumptions can undermine learners’ confidence and their willingness to engage with English.

### **Sociolinguistic Profile of the Context Where English Will Be Used**

My students are being prepared for immediate and future contexts where English is functionally necessary. In the short term, the primary English-using context is the field of computer programming itself. Programming languages, documentation, error messages, developer forums (such as Stack Overflow), and most major software interfaces are in English. A programmer who cannot navigate English-language technical content is significantly disadvantaged, regardless of their coding skills. The English my students need for this context is not conversational or literary but highly specialized: they need to read accurately, understand technical vocabulary, and follow sequential instructions.

In the medium term, many students aspire to work in the Uzbek IT sector, which is growing rapidly and has significant ties to international companies and development platforms. Some students may pursue further education at universities in Uzbekistan or abroad, where English is increasingly the medium of instruction in technical fields. As Selvi (2019) notes, “more than 80% of interactions in English take place between non-native speakers” (p. 86). The English that matters in these contexts is intelligible and functionally effective, not necessarily accent-free or grammatically identical to Inner Circle norms.

Bayley and Villarreal (2018) point out that attitudes toward non-Inner-Circle varieties of English often position them as subordinate or less legitimate. If students internalize the belief that their English is inherently inferior because of their accent or grammatical patterns, they may be less willing to use English in professional settings even when they are fully capable of communicating effectively. Preparing students for the contexts where they will actually use English means helping them develop confidence in their own voices as legitimate English speakers.

For regional students specifically, there may be an additional transition: from their home region to Tashkent, and potentially beyond. Fought (2011) notes that language and ethnic identity are deeply intertwined, and that speakers who cross

linguistic boundaries — for example, a Tajik-speaking student who must use Uzbek at school and English at work — are managing multiple identity positions simultaneously. Recognizing this complexity is essential for understanding what these students need from English language instruction.

## **Pedagogical Implications**

### **Language Selection and Texts**

The ESP context of my class means that language selection must be driven by the specific communicative demands of computer programming. Technical vocabulary (function, loop, debug, output, variable) and the grammatical structures used in documentation (imperative sentences, passive constructions, conditional statements) are the most relevant language targets. These structures are also learnable at A1–A2 level when scaffolded appropriately. Beyond vocabulary, students also need to develop the ability to read sequentially, follow instructions, and extract key information from dense technical text — discourse-level skills that go beyond word knowledge.

Bayley and Villarreal (2018) caution that overexposure to overly formal classroom language can disconnect learners from the more varied English they will encounter in real settings. For this reason, I select a range of text types: formal documentation, informal tutorials, developer blog posts, and video captions. Selvi (2019) argues that pedagogical decisions about “target culture,” “standards,” and “norms” should be made “in reference to students’ contextualized language needs and socioeducational factors” (p. 91). For my students, this means I should not treat British or American English as the only correct model.

### **Classroom Instruction and Methodology (TESOL Standard 3)**

The sociolinguistic diversity of my class requires differentiated instruction. Urban and regional students share the same learning goals but need different levels of scaffolding. Urban students can engage with slightly more complex authentic materials and more independent tasks. Regional students benefit from word banks, sentence starters, guided reading frames, and peer support. Differentiation does not mean lower expectations; it means adjusting the pathway to the same destination.

I deliberately mix urban and regional students in group tasks to counter the social clique behavior I have observed, where Tashkent students consistently group together and resist integration. For female students, I use rotating leadership roles in group tasks — presenter, recorder, discussion leader — to ensure that gender does not silently determine who speaks and who listens. Calder (2020) notes that in traditionally male-dominated fields, female students may feel additional pressure to prove themselves or may withdraw from visible roles. Structured task roles interrupt this dynamic without singling out individual students.

Lippi-Green (2004) argues that teachers can either reinforce or challenge standard language ideology. I try to challenge it by responding to what students communicate, not to how standard their accent or dialect is. Selvi (2019) supports the use of translanguaging — allowing students to draw on their full multilingual repertoire, including Uzbek, Russian, and Tajik — as a legitimate cognitive strategy that supports comprehension and reduces anxiety, particularly at A1–A2 levels (p. 95). For students like Muhammadi and Abror, whose home language is Tajik, allowing L1 use strategically signals that their full linguistic identity is respected in the classroom.

### **Assessment Implications**

Assessment is where sociolinguistic inequities most visibly enter the language classroom. The assessments my students face — both the informal classroom assessments I design and the formal institutional assessments they may encounter — carry significant risks of bias if they are not designed with the learner profile in mind.

For classroom assessments, the most important principle is that rubrics should evaluate communicative success and technical accuracy, not dialect conformity or accent proximity to an Inner Circle standard. Bayley and Villarreal (2018) demonstrate that language attitudes can silently distort evaluation: “the intelligibility of a certain speaker is mediated by the listener’s language attitudes, with negative attitudes impeding intelligibility” (p. 5). Using detailed analytic rubrics that break performance into specific components — task completion, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, and communicative effectiveness — helps reduce the influence of accent-based bias in scoring.

Rosa and Flores (2017) argue that assessments often encode raciolinguistic ideologies, privileging speakers whose language aligns with the standard variety and penalizing those whose language indexes a non-dominant ethnic or regional background. Low-stakes formative assessments — short oral check-ins, peer tasks, or written reflections — give regional students more opportunities to demonstrate what they know without the anxiety of a formal evaluation setting.

At the institutional level, students at TPT are subject to national assessment requirements that typically emphasize standard written English and decontextualized grammar knowledge. Selvi (2019) argues that in a Global Englishes framework, assessment norms should be determined by “students’ contextualized language needs and socioeducational factors” (p. 91), not by fixed standards imported from Inner Circle contexts. Advocating for more contextually appropriate assessment is part of my professional responsibility as their teacher.

### **Conclusion**

The students in Group 102 at TPT are not simply learners with different English proficiency levels. They are young people navigating complex intersections of

language, identity, region, gender, and socioeconomic circumstance. Some of them speak Tajik or Kazakh at home. Some come from regions where English instruction was minimal. Some are female students in a male-dominated field. Some have internalized the belief that their English — because it carries an accent, or uses regional features, or was learned without a textbook — is somehow not real or not good enough. This belief is not just incorrect. It is harmful, and it is produced and maintained by institutions, including schools and classrooms like mine.

Lippi-Green (2004) writes that standard language ideology is “introduced by the schools, vigorously promoted by the media, and further institutionalized by the corporate sector” (p. 302). As a teacher, I am positioned within this system, but I am not powerless within it. Every instructional decision I make — what texts I choose, how I respond to student speech, how I design rubrics, how I structure groups — either reinforces or challenges the hierarchies that disadvantage my regional students, my female students, and my multilingual students.

Fought (2011) reminds us that “ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity” (p. 238). When I tell Muhammadi that his Tajik-inflected English is a resource, not a deficit, I am not just making a pedagogical choice. I am making a statement about whose knowledge counts, whose voice belongs in the classroom, and what kind of English teacher I want to be. The most important advocacy I can offer my students is a classroom where their full linguistic and cultural selves are recognized as assets. As Selvi (2019) writes, the goal of Global Englishes pedagogy is to help learners “shuttle between communities in contextually relevant ways” (p. 93). My job is to make sure every student in Group 102 has the tools, the confidence, and the legitimacy to do exactly that.

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