

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK CHILDREN'S SPEECH

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative analysis of the sociolinguistic characteristics of English and Uzbek children's speech. It explores the relationship between language and social factors, children's adaptation to social environments, and the impact of social status and gender differences on speech. The study also examines how cultural values, upbringing styles, and social institutions in English and Uzbek society affect children's linguistic development. The research results demonstrate that while there are general patterns of development in both linguistic environments, social and cultural differences result in notable divergences in communication styles.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, children's speech, English language, Uzbek language, social factors, culture, communication.

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that explores the relationship between language and society, studying how language develops and functions within a social context. Investigating children's speech from a sociolinguistic perspective allows us to understand how they adapt to their environment, acquire communicative skills under the influence of family upbringing, social status, gender, and cultural values. Comparative analysis of English and Uzbek children's speech shows that despite the existence of universal psycholinguistic patterns, societal and cultural differences can produce significant variations in linguistic behavior.

The most significant factor in the formation of children's speech is the social environment. The way children learn to communicate is greatly influenced by the attitudes, values, and behaviors they observe and experience in their communities and families. For example, English children are typically encouraged from an early age to express themselves independently and state their needs and wants openly. Parents, teachers, and other adults often prompt children to articulate their feelings and opinions directly, fostering an environment in which confidence in speech is valued. As a result, English-speaking children become accustomed to using clear, assertive language when they need something, want to join an activity, or wish to make their preferences known. Common expressions in their everyday speech include direct requests and commands such as "Give me!", "Let's go!", or "Close the door!". In contrast, Uzbek children are more often raised to show respect for elders, exhibit obedience, and use polite forms of address in their speech. The social expectation is that children avoid being too forward or demanding, instead demonstrating humility and consideration for others. This upbringing shapes their communication style, making it softer, more indirect, and generally more deferential compared to English-speaking peers. In daily interactions, Uzbek children frequently use polite, suggestive forms such as "Menga ham berasanmi?" (Can you give it to me too?), "O'ynaymizmi?" (Shall we play?), or "Yordam qilasizmi?" (Can you help?), which reflect cultural values of respect and harmonious social relations. These differences highlight how children's speech is molded not

just by language itself, but by the deeply rooted norms and practices of their cultural environment.

A key aspect of sociolinguistics is the effect of social status on speech. English children tend to interact with peers on an equal footing, freely expressing demands and requests. This dynamic allows for a more direct and open style of communication, where social hierarchies are less overtly marked in everyday conversation among youngsters. In the Uzbek setting, however, forms of address that convey respect to elders are standard and even obligatory. Respectful language use is deeply embedded in the culture, and children are taught from an early age to employ deferential speech when interacting with older individuals. Phrases such as “Bering, iltimos” (Please give) or “Kechirasiz, yordam qilsangiz” (Excuse me, if you could help) are more than just polite expressions - they reflect social stratification and illustrate how age and hierarchy are encoded in children’s language use. This linguistic distinction highlights cultural values around respect, formality, and social order, further influencing how children perceive and navigate social relationships.

Gender is another sociolinguistic factor influencing children’s speech. In English society, there may not be obvious gender differences in children’s language use, though research suggests girls are somewhat more inclined to use polite expressions. For example, studies have found that girls often employ more indirect requests, show greater use of softeners in conversation, and are encouraged from an early age to demonstrate verbal courtesy. Boys, conversely, are generally found to use more assertive and straightforward language patterns, though these differences can be subtle and are shaped by specific community norms and family upbringing. In Uzbek society, on the other hand, girls are typically taught to be gentle, reserved, and well-mannered, resulting in more frequent use of expressions like “iltimos” (please), “rahmat” (thank you), and “kechirasiz” (sorry). Cultural expectations are often reinforced both at home and in educational settings, where girls’ politeness and restraint in speech are viewed positively. Boys tend to favor more direct forms of address, which reflects broader cultural values associating masculinity with confidence and clarity. These gender distinctions in language use may become especially evident in settings such as the classroom, playground, or family gatherings, highlighting how linguistic behavior is deeply intertwined with cultural roles and expectations assigned to boys and girls in both English and Uzbek societies.

Families and their educational approaches also shape children’s speech. English families often foster children’s independence, value their opinions, and encourage them to speak up, resulting in more frequent use of independent decisions, objections, and suggestions in children’s speech. Parents in English-speaking households are likely to ask for their children’s thoughts on family matters, encourage open discussions at the dinner table, and praise children for expressing their perspectives, whether or not they align with adult views. This environment supports the development of confidence and clear self-expression, leading children to use phrases such as “I think...”, “I suggest...”, or “I disagree because...” regularly in daily interactions. In Uzbek families, deference to elders and avoiding contradiction are instilled as key virtues, which is why expressions such as “xo’p” (okay), “mayli” (all right), “qanday desangiz shunday” (as you say) appear more often in conversation. Children in Uzbek families are taught from an early age that respect for adults and maintaining harmony are paramount. As a result, when interacting with parents, grandparents, or older relatives, children are more likely to listen quietly, agree readily, and use polite, deferential language. Parental guidance often emphasizes patience, obedience,

and cooperation, so children learn to communicate in a way that preserves family unity and conveys respect. This leads them to adopt phrases that signal agreement and acceptance, even if they have their own opinions, reinforcing a harmonious family atmosphere and traditional values. Language and culture are inseparable. English children acquire etiquette expressions such as “please”, “thank you”, and “sorry” from a very young age as an integral part of polite conversation. These words are not limited to a formal context but are deeply embedded in daily interactions, from asking for help to expressing gratitude even for small favors. Over time, English-speaking children internalize these expressions so thoroughly that their use appears almost instinctive, serving as social lubricants in various situations, from the household to the school environment. Uzbek children likewise use equivalents - “rahmat”, “iltimos”, and “kechirasiz” - but often under adult supervision or with prompting, for instance, when parents or educators remind them, “Say thank you!” In the Uzbek context, while these etiquette terms are recognized as important, their usage is often more consciously taught and reinforced by adults, reflecting a form of pragmatic skill acquisition shaped by explicit social guidance. Parents and teachers might carefully instruct children about when and how to use these words, sometimes turning it into a ritualized practice at home, in class, or during public interactions. This signals that pragmatic skills tend to develop under social control in Uzbek culture, where adherence to etiquette is closely monitored and gradually becomes habitual through repeated reminders and encouragement from elders and authority figures.

Peer interaction also clearly displays sociolinguistic features in children’s speech. English children communicate with their peers more freely and openly, using direct expressions like “Come here!” or “Play with me!” These direct verbal requests reflect not only the informal environment in which children interact but also the cultural value placed on assertiveness and clarity in communication among English-speaking children. Such interactions are often characterized by straightforward language and a willingness to express personal desires or intentions without reservation, demonstrating a certain autonomy and comfort within their peer group. Uzbek children, by contrast, tend to use softer forms even among friends, saying things like “Kelasizmi?” (Will you come?) or “Birga o’ynaymizmi?” (Shall we play together?). These expressions are intentionally more tentative and polite, inviting participation rather than demanding it, and showing respect for the other child’s choice. This reflects the tradition of teaching politeness and gentleness from an early age in Uzbek society, where indirectness and courteous language are seen as important social skills. Such patterns of speech help maintain harmonious relationships and demonstrate cultural expectations regarding respect and humility, even within the informal context of childhood play.

The education system also plays a significant role in shaping children’s speech. Schools in England encourage students to be active, ask questions, and express their opinions openly. Thus, initiative, participation in dialogue, and direct self-expression are common in English children’s language use. In Uzbek schools, greater emphasis is placed on listening and obedience, which contributes to the prevalence of modest expressions and attentive listening strategies.

Overall, sociolinguistic research into English and Uzbek children’s speech demonstrates that, while universal developmental patterns exist, social environment, family, gender, culture, and educational system deeply impact language acquisition and communicative style. English children tend to communicate more openly, independently, and assertively, while Uzbek children often use politer, culturally sensitive, and socially conditioned expressions. This underscores the

inseparable connection between language and society, making sociolinguistic research into children's speech highly relevant for linguistics, pedagogy, and psychology.

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