



**Preface to the special issue “Exploring the intersection of Sociolinguistics & English language teaching (ELT): Navigating diversity, dynamics, and discourse”**

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Dear *Focus on ELT Journal* Readers,

In today’s globalized world, English Language Teaching (ELT) is no longer confined to traditional linguistic instruction but is deeply interwoven with sociolinguistic complexities that shape learners’ identities, classroom dynamics, and instructional strategies. This special issue, *Sociolinguistic Dimensions in English Language Teaching*, seeks to bring attention to the multifaceted intersections between sociolinguistic factors and ELT. It invites scholarly exploration of how cultural diversity, social contexts, and linguistic variation shape language learning environments and contribute to more inclusive, culturally attuned pedagogies. Our goal in assembling this collection has been to provide a platform for innovative research and practical insights that empower educators and researchers alike. This issue offers a comprehensive look at the critical intersections of sociolinguistic awareness, policy adaptation, and cultural sensitivity in ELT, presenting new perspectives for effective, inclusive teaching.

The articles in this issue are organized into three main categories. The first category (Aslan & Nazlı, 2024; Brown, 2024; Hauber-Özer, 2024) emphasizes the value of sociolinguistic awareness through engaging tools, reflective practices, and supportive frameworks that enable learners to navigate social and cultural landscapes. The second category (Correia, 2024; Fidan et al., 2024; Abi & Gürbüz, 2024) discusses policy and pedagogical adjustments necessary to meet the realities of multilingual contexts, advocating for practices that prioritize intelligibility and intercultural skills. The final category (Demirkol Orak, 2024; Przymus & Mendoza, 2024) addresses how cultural dimensions and individual differences shape language learning experiences, underscoring the role of cultural awareness in fostering equitable and supportive classroom environments. Together, these articles provide a multidimensional view of ELT, offering educators and policymakers insights for supporting linguistically and culturally diverse learners in today’s globalized world.

The first group of articles illustrate the profound role that sociolinguistic awareness plays in language learning, emphasizing how it can be cultivated through engaging educational tools, reflective practices, and supportive learning frameworks. **Aslan and Nazlı (2024)** show that using familiar cartoons like SpongeBob SquarePants helps young learners understand how language varies with social contexts and relationships. By engaging with scenes that reflect everyday situations, primary school students recognized how context affects tone, formality, and non-verbal cues like gestures. This approach fosters an intuitive grasp of sociolinguistic nuances, highlighting the effectiveness of age-appropriate, culturally relevant content in teaching sociolinguistic competence in EFL classrooms. **Brown's (2024)** study demonstrates how reflective journaling fosters metacognitive awareness among university English learners. Through journaling, students analyzed interactions, becoming more mindful of sociolinguistic factors like cultural norms and politeness strategies that often cause misunderstandings. Reflecting on both successful and challenging interactions helped students develop adaptive strategies, such as adjusting tone and employing non-verbal cues, thus promoting autonomy and adaptability in diverse linguistic settings. The next article by **Hauber-Özer (2024)** shows how English proficiency serves as a bridge to social mobility, academic integration, and identity development for Syrian refugees. For these students, English is a form of cultural and linguistic capital, enabling access to education, networking, and resilience in complex social settings. Their experiences underscore language's transformative role in overcoming barriers and fostering personal and social growth, suggesting that sociolinguistic awareness extends beyond language skills to broader empowerment. These studies demonstrate the transformative impact of sociolinguistic awareness in ELT, equipping learners with adaptability, confidence, and cultural competence through context-rich media, reflection, and language as cultural capital, promoting inclusive, globally responsive learning.

The second group of articles advocate for policy and pedagogical adjustments that align with the realities of English as a global lingua franca, emphasizing the need to prioritize intelligibility, intercultural competence, and inclusivity for multilingual learners. **Correia's (2024)** critique of Portuguese EFL policies reveals that current frameworks, largely based on the CEFR's native-speaker standards, often overlook the global and intercultural demands of English use today. He recommends shifting from native proficiency goals toward developing learners' practical communication skills and intercultural awareness to better prepare them for diverse ELF interactions. The study conducted by **Fidan et al. (2024)** supports this by examining how a World Englishes-informed pedagogy can foster greater acceptance of linguistic diversity. Through coursework on World Englishes, teacher candidates came to value diverse English varieties, designing inclusive classroom activities that incorporate accents and cultural contexts beyond inner-circle norms. Their findings suggest that a WE-informed approach can cultivate future educators who value and promote linguistic diversity, positioning English as a global, culturally adaptable language. **Abi and Gürbüz (2024)** extend this discussion by evaluating different mediums of instruction—English Medium Instruction (EMI), Partial EMI, and Turkish Medium Instruction (TMI)—and their effects on students' intercultural competence. Their findings indicate that a balanced, bilingual approach (Partial EMI) enriches intercultural skills and fosters a more inclusive learning environment. Additionally, the study links an incremental language learning mindset with greater

adaptability, suggesting that students exposed to dual-language models benefit from increased openness and competence in intercultural interactions. Together, these articles make a strong case for adaptive policies and pedagogies that embrace sociolinguistic diversity, preparing students to navigate multilingual and multicultural interactions with confidence, flexibility, and cultural sensitivity.

The final group of studies examines the influence of cultural dimensions and individual linguistic differences on language acquisition and classroom interactions, highlighting the importance of cultural awareness in second language acquisition (SLA). **Demirkol Orak (2024)** applies Hofstede's cultural dimensions—such as power distance and individualism—to understand how cultural context shapes learning preferences and behaviors. Orak also shows how these cultural dimensions impact sociopragmatic competencies, where cultural expectations around formality and respect can affect how students navigate informal or formal settings in English-speaking contexts. By integrating culturally responsive practices that align with students' cultural backgrounds, educators can better support linguistic and cultural adaptability. In their article, **Przymus and Mendoza (2024)** explore sociolinguistic relativity, examining specific linguistic divergences—such as the use of passive voice, the term “barely,” and forms of address—that create misunderstandings between Spanish-speaking learners and their English-speaking teachers in the Southwestern United States. These cultural-linguistic differences can impact students' perceived engagement and understanding in the classroom, as seen when passive voice or culturally specific uses of language are misinterpreted by monolingual teachers. The study underscores the need for sociolinguistic awareness among educators to avoid misjudgments and to address implicit biases arising from differing norms. Collectively, these articles show how cultural and linguistic differences shape SLA, emphasizing the importance of cultural responsiveness in teaching. Adapting to cultural dimensions and linguistic practices enables educators to foster more equitable, engaging, and effective learning, especially in multilingual and multicultural settings.

We are immensely grateful to the authors for their insightful contributions, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to the reviewers whose constructive feedback has enriched this special issue. We also wish to express our gratitude to the Focus on ELT editorial team for their support and collaboration throughout this process. We hope that the articles in this issue inspire readers to reflect on the role of sociolinguistics in ELT and to explore new pathways for enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of language instruction in diverse learning environments.

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