



LINGUISTIC INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN SOCIAL PROTECTION DISCOURSE EVIDENCE FROM ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Annoation: The present study examines linguistic inequality and social inclusion as two interconnected sociolinguistic dimensions of social protection discourse in English and Uzbek. Social protection is traditionally investigated from legal, economic and institutional perspectives; however, the linguistic mechanisms through which citizens are categorized, addressed and informed about social rights also have considerable social significance. The study employs comparative, descriptive, sociolinguistic and discourse-analytical methods to investigate institutional terminology, nomination strategies, bureaucratic register, person-oriented language and communicative accessibility. The analysis demonstrates that both linguistic systems contain conventional institutional expressions necessary for professional communication, but they differ in terminological transparency, lexical inclusiveness and adaptation of administrative information to ordinary citizens. Particular attention is given to such units as vulnerable groups, persons with disabilities, low-income families, social assistance, beneficiary and eligibility and their Uzbek counterparts *ehtiyojmand aholi qatamlari*, *nogironligi bo'lgan shaxslar*, *kam ta'minlangan oilalar*, *ijtimoiy yordam*, *nafaqa oluvchi* and *yordam olish huquqi*.

Keywords: social protection discourse, sociolinguistics, linguistic inequality, social inclusion, institutional discourse, vulnerable groups.

Social protection is not limited to the provision of financial benefits, social services or institutional assistance. It is also a communicative process in which institutions define social problems, classify beneficiaries, explain rights and obligations, and establish relationships with citizens. Consequently, the effectiveness of social protection depends partly on the linguistic forms through which information is produced and transmitted.

In contemporary sociolinguistics, inequality is increasingly understood not only in economic or political terms but also as a phenomenon reproduced through language. Individuals may experience unequal access to institutions



because of differences in education, literacy, linguistic competence, social status, age, disability or familiarity with administrative terminology. A citizen who cannot understand the wording of an application form, eligibility requirement or institutional notification may formally possess a social right but encounter difficulty in exercising that right.

This problem is especially important in social protection discourse because its primary addressees frequently include groups already exposed to socioeconomic vulnerability: low-income families, elderly people, persons with disabilities, unemployed people, children without adequate parental care, survivors of violence and other citizens requiring state support. Therefore, complicated, stigmatizing or excessively bureaucratic language may indirectly intensify an already existing social disadvantage.

The development of the social protection system in Uzbekistan creates a need to investigate its communicative dimension. The national Social Protection Strategy places particular emphasis on systematic social services and improved support mechanisms for groups requiring assistance [1]. From a sociolinguistic perspective, institutional transformation inevitably brings changes in terminology, forms of address, nomination practices and communication between institutions and citizens.

In this study, linguistic inequality refers to unequal opportunities to understand, interpret and use institutionally significant information because of linguistic factors. It may appear when professional terminology is inaccessible to ordinary citizens, when certain communicative practices are institutionally privileged, or when social groups are described through labels carrying negative or paternalistic implications.

Social inclusion, by contrast, is understood as communicative participation that enables individuals to access information, express their needs, preserve their dignity and interact effectively with social institutions. Piller and Takahashi note that language and language ideology can materially affect participation in society and that social inclusion policies may overlook these linguistic dimensions [4]. This observation is directly relevant to social protection communication.

The purpose of this article is to identify the major manifestations of linguistic inequality and the mechanisms of social inclusion in English and Uzbek social protection discourse. The study focuses on four questions: how institutional terminology affects accessibility; how vulnerable social groups are named; how institutional authority is linguistically represented; and which language practices can reduce communicative inequality.

The study is based on a qualitative comparative analysis of English and Uzbek social protection discourse. The material includes institutional



terminology, policy-related expressions and recurrent nomination models associated with welfare services, social assistance, disability, poverty, vulnerability and eligibility.

The Uzbek component draws on terminology used in national social protection policy and institutional communication. The establishment of the National Agency for Social Protection and the development of “Inson” social service centers under Presidential Decree PF-82 expanded the institutional vocabulary connected with professional social services, individualized assistance and interaction with citizens [2].

The English component includes conventional terms and expressions used in welfare communication, including social protection, social inclusion, vulnerable groups, beneficiary, claimant, eligibility, social assistance, persons with disabilities and access to services.

Four methods were employed: comparative analysis to establish semantic correspondences and differences between English and Uzbek units; sociolinguistic analysis to determine how lexical choices reflect social status and inclusion; discourse analysis to examine the relationship between institutional language and citizens; and componential-semantic analysis to identify evaluative, administrative and socially sensitive semantic features.

The analysis was organized according to four parameters: linguistic accessibility, nomination of social groups, institutional distance, and inclusive or person-oriented language. The study does not claim quantitative frequency results; instead, it identifies recurring qualitative tendencies that can serve as a methodological basis for a larger corpus-based DSc investigation.

The first major finding concerns the relationship between institutional language and access to social services. Social protection documents necessarily contain legal and professional terminology; nevertheless, an excessive concentration of specialized vocabulary may create a communicative gap between the institution and its addressee.

English social protection discourse commonly uses expressions such as eligibility criteria, means-tested benefit, income assessment, benefit entitlement, social care assessment and claimant commitment. These expressions are precise in professional contexts, yet their meanings may not always be transparent to individuals unfamiliar with welfare administration.

Comparable Uzbek expressions include nafaqa tayinlash mezonlari, kam ta'minlangan oila, ehtiyojmand fuqaro, ijtimoiy xizmat ko'rsatish, moddiy yordam tayinlash and ijtimoiy himoyaga muhtoj shaxs. Uzbek institutional terminology frequently combines established social-policy concepts with administrative collocations based on verbs such as ko'rsatmoq, tayinlamoq, ta'minlamoq and murojaat qilmoq.



Communicative inequality may arise when citizens are required to decode a series of legal and bureaucratic expressions before understanding whether they are entitled to a service. Linguistic accessibility therefore involves more than translation from one language into another: it requires plain-language reformulation, logical information structure and explanation of specialized concepts.

A second important sociolinguistic issue is the naming of people who receive social support. Nomination is not fully neutral: the lexical unit selected by an institution may emphasize socioeconomic condition, medical status, dependency or social identity.

The transformation of disability-related terminology is particularly significant. The Uzbek expression *nogironligi bo'lgan shaxs* structurally preserves the human referent *shaxs* instead of reducing the individual entirely to a medical characteristic. Such person-oriented patterns can contribute to discursive inclusion because the individual is represented as a person possessing a condition rather than as the condition itself.

The institutional reforms that followed the creation of the National Social Protection Agency reinforced individualized and integrated forms of social service provision, thereby increasing the importance of respectful and precise terminology [3]. English shows comparable developments through expressions such as *person with a disability*, *person experiencing homelessness* and *person in need of support*.

Inclusive terminology should not be reduced to word replacement. Genuine sociolinguistic inclusion requires attention to how people are represented, whether labels unnecessarily stigmatize them, and whether institutional categories preserve or weaken their agency.

The analysis also reveals an asymmetrical relationship between the institution and the citizen. The institution possesses the authority to define categories, evaluate eligibility and make decisions. This asymmetry is often reflected in passive and impersonal forms such as *the applicant is required to provide*, *eligibility will be determined*, or *assistance may be terminated*. Uzbek equivalents include *ariza beruvchi taqdim etishi lozim*, *fuqaroning ehtiyojmandlik darajasi aniqlanadi* and *nafaqa belgilangan tartibda tayinlanadi*.

These constructions have legitimate legal functions because they foreground procedures. However, repeated use can create communicative distance and position the citizen primarily as the recipient of an institutional decision. Musgrave and Bradshaw argue that communication is central to social inclusion, particularly where institutions interact with diverse populations [5].

A more inclusive communication model may therefore supplement formal administrative formulas with citizen-oriented explanations, for example You



may be eligible for assistance if... or Siz ushbu yordamni olish uchun quyidagi hujjatlarni taqdim etishingiz mumkin. The controlled use of direct address can reduce institutional distance without sacrificing legal accuracy.

Social protection institutions must classify applicants and establish eligibility. Linguistically, however, classification can create symbolic boundaries between those considered entitled to support and those positioned outside the relevant category.

English oppositions such as eligible/ineligible, vulnerable/non-vulnerable and beneficiary/non-beneficiary have Uzbek parallels such as ehtiyojmand/ehtiyojmand bo'lmagan, nafaqa olish huquqiga ega/ega emas and yordam oluvchi/yordam oluvchi toifaga kirmaydigan shaxs. These categories are administratively necessary, but their interpretation has direct social consequences.

Linguistic inequality becomes particularly visible when individuals cannot understand why they have been assigned to a category or how they can challenge an institutional decision. Equal access therefore requires not only publication of eligibility rules but also accessible explanation of classification criteria.

Person-centered language is one of the most productive mechanisms of linguistic inclusion. It seeks to preserve dignity, avoid unnecessary stigma, recognize the agency of service users, explain institutional decisions transparently and enable citizens to participate in communication.

In English, a shift from labels toward person-oriented formulations can be observed in pairs such as the homeless → people experiencing homelessness; the disabled → persons with disabilities; and the poor → people living in poverty or low-income households. Uzbek demonstrates comparable tendencies: nogironlar → nogironligi bo'lgan shaxslar; muhtojlar → ijtimoiy himoyaga muhtoj shaxslar; kambag'allar → kam ta'minlangan oilalar or daromadi past oilalar.

Recent work on welfare societies treats linguistic disadvantage as a form of structural and institutional disadvantage because access to social rights may depend on language practices, policies and communicative resources [6]. This principle is relevant to both English-speaking welfare contexts and the developing Uzbek social protection system.

Comparative analysis shows that seemingly equivalent English and Uzbek social protection terms do not always carry identical pragmatic meanings. The English term vulnerable may correspond to Uzbek ehtiyojmand, himoyaga muhtoj, zaif or ijtimoiy xavf guruhiga mansub depending on context. A mechanically selected equivalent can alter the evaluative tone of the expression.



For instance, vulnerable person should not automatically be translated as zaif shaxs. In many social-policy contexts, ijtimoiy himoyaga muhtoj shaxs or alohida ko'makka ehtiyoji bo'lgan shaxs may be pragmatically more appropriate. Likewise, beneficiary may correspond to nafaqa oluvchi, yordam oluvchi, ijtimoiy xizmat oluvchi or dastur ishtirokchisi depending on institutional context.

This lexical variability demonstrates that translation in social protection discourse is not merely terminological substitution. It is also the transfer of social meanings, institutional relationships and attitudes toward the groups being represented. The findings demonstrate that linguistic inequality in social

English term	Uzbek equivalent	Sociolinguistic feature
vulnerable groups	ehtiyojmand / ijtimoiy himoyaga muhtoj aholi qatlamlari	need or vulnerability
persons with disabilities	nogironligi bo'lgan shaxslar	person-oriented nomination
low-income families	kam ta'minlangan oilalar	socioeconomic categorization
beneficiary	nafaqa oluvchi / yordam oluvchi	institutional status
social service user	ijtimoiy xizmat oluvchi shaxs	service-based identity
social inclusion	ijtimoiy inklyuziya / jamiyatga faol qo'shilish	participation-oriented concept

protection discourse functions at several interconnected levels. At the lexical level, inequality may emerge through stigmatizing, vague or overly technical terminology. At the grammatical level, excessive use of passive and impersonal constructions may increase institutional distance. At the pragmatic level, unclear explanations of rights and obligations may restrict effective participation. At the discursive level, repeated categorization of individuals according to vulnerability, poverty, disability or dependency may influence their symbolic position in society.

Accordingly, sociolinguistic analysis expands the traditional understanding of social protection. A welfare system may be institutionally developed while some users continue to encounter linguistic barriers. Three dimensions of equality can therefore be distinguished: formal linguistic equality, or the existence of officially available information; communicative



equality, or the ability of different groups to understand that information; and participatory linguistic equality, or the ability of service users to ask questions, express needs, challenge decisions and take part in institutional communication.

The comparative evidence suggests that English and Uzbek social protection discourse share a tendency toward professional standardization. English welfare discourse has a relatively developed vocabulary associated with rights, eligibility, inclusion and service-user participation. Uzbek social protection discourse is undergoing intensive terminological development in connection with institutional reform, digitalization and the expansion of professional social services.

This creates an important sociolinguistic task: new terminology should be simultaneously precise for specialists and comprehensible for citizens. Terms such as case management, social inclusion, rehabilitation, vulnerability and individual support plan require not only terminological equivalents but also explanatory adaptation when introduced into Uzbek public discourse.

The sociolinguistic effectiveness of a social protection term can therefore be evaluated according to five criteria: semantic accuracy, social neutrality, comprehensibility, cultural appropriateness and capacity to preserve human dignity. These criteria may serve as a basis for further corpus-based analysis within a broader DSc study.

Conclusion

The study confirms that linguistic inequality and social inclusion constitute important sociolinguistic dimensions of social protection discourse. Language performs more than an informative function in the welfare sphere: it determines how social groups are categorized, how institutional authority is expressed, how citizens understand their rights and how socially vulnerable individuals are represented.

The comparison of English and Uzbek material reveals several tendencies. Professional social protection terminology ensures institutional precision but may produce communicative barriers when it is not adapted to ordinary citizens. The nomination of vulnerable groups has considerable pragmatic significance, and person-oriented expressions contribute to more respectful social representation. Bureaucratic and impersonal constructions may strengthen the distance between institution and citizen, while accessible explanatory language can improve communicative inclusion.

Linguistic inequality is directly connected with access to social rights. If citizens cannot understand eligibility conditions, administrative procedures or institutional decisions, the formal availability of social protection does not automatically guarantee equal participation. Comparative sociolinguistic



research should therefore focus not only on terminological equivalence but also on the social and pragmatic meanings carried by institutional vocabulary.

The findings support a broader research framework in which social protection discourse may be examined through linguistic accessibility, institutional power, social identity, vulnerability, inclusion and communicative equality. Such an approach can contribute both to sociolinguistic theory and to the development of human-centered institutional communication.

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