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Sociolinguistic Competence and Malaysian Students' English Language Proficiency

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Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the importance of teaching sociolinguistic competence to ESL learners in Malaysian schools. Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of socio cultural rules of language and of discourse. This type of competence requires an understanding of the socio context in which language is used. It is proposed that carefully designed language activities be carried out by instructors in order to impart sociolinguistic skills to learners. The importance of universal intelligibility should be stressed, as opposed to native accent. Furthermore students should also be taught proper contextual use of English, in accordance to cultural reference and cultural appropriacy should be part of the learners' core sociolinguistic competence.

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