

Known but Unseen: Linguistically Mediated Testimonial Injustice and Academic Recognition in Russian-Medium Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Turkish students in Russian-medium higher education experience the recognition and misrecognition of academic competence. Drawing on secondary qualitative analysis of 15 interviews, it develops the concept of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice to explain how linguistic performance shapes credibility judgments in classroom participation and oral assessment. Three interrelated dynamics emerged: epistemic distortion in evaluation, anticipatory silencing, and strategic recognition through written contribution and alternative academic spaces. The study argues that language barriers function not only as communication problems but as institutional conditions determining whose knowledge becomes academically visible. The article contributes to research on epistemic injustice and non-Anglophone higher education by showing how academic recognition depends on assessment practices, classroom tempo, and the institutional value assigned to academic Russian.

Keywords: academic recognition, academic Russian, classroom participation, international students, linguistic capital, Russian-medium higher education; testimonial injustice, Turkish students

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INTRODUCTION

International student mobility has expanded dramatically over the past two decades, with nearly 6.9 million students studying outside their home countries as of 2025 (UNESCO, 2025). Alongside this growth, scholarly attention has increasingly turned to the conditions under which international students are recognized as legitimate academic participants — not merely enrolled, but heard, credited, and academically visible within their host institutions (Andrade, 2006; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). In this study, "international student" refers to learners who pursue a degree in a country where they are not citizens and where the primary language of instruction differs from their first language.

A substantial body of research documents how language proficiency shapes international students' academic performance, classroom participation, and sense of belonging (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Orduna-

Nocito & Sánchez-García, 2022). Research has further shown that international students face multi-layered communication challenges in the classroom, often exacerbated by a misalignment between students' linguistic resources and faculty expectations (Yu & Peters, 2019). Emerging scholarship has also demonstrated that linguistic difficulty can produce epistemic marginalization that persists even when students possess strong disciplinary knowledge (Gao, 2026; Orduna-Nocito & Sánchez-García, 2022). Yet the relationship between linguistic constraint and academic recognition remains undertheorized. This gap matters because treating language barriers as communication problems leads to institutional responses — language courses, tutoring, translation support — that address expression without addressing the structural conditions under which students' competence is evaluated and institutionally recognized. Rather than obstacles to expression, language barriers may function as conditions that structurally undermine how students' competence is perceived and credited by instructors and peers (Norton, 2000; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). A student may possess substantial disciplinary knowledge yet remain academically invisible because the conditions of their classroom do not allow that knowledge to be seen.

This gap is particularly pronounced in non-Anglophone higher education contexts, where the dominant focus on English-medium instruction (EMI) has left Russian-medium instruction (RMI) and similar systems largely underexamined (Beregovaya & Kudashov, 2019; Volkova & Kolesov, 2022). Prior work has documented adjustment challenges in Russian-medium contexts (Volkova & Kolesov, 2022), yet the specific mechanisms through which linguistic constraint shapes academic recognition have received limited attention. Russia currently hosts more than 414,000 international students from 184 countries and has set a policy target of reaching 500,000 international students by 2030 (Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, 2025; President of the Russian Federation, 2024). Within this expanding system, Turkish students occupy a strategically informative position: their cultural and geographic proximity to Russia combines with substantial linguistic distance from Russian, making them particularly sensitive to how academic Russian proficiency, classroom norms, and recognition dynamics interact.

The Russian-medium higher education contexts examined in this study are marked by formal academic register, instructor-centered classroom interaction, and the continued importance of the устный экзамен — the oral examination that functions as a primary site of knowledge evaluation. In this context, the ability to articulate disciplinary knowledge in formal academic Russian is not merely a communicative requirement but a performative one: students are expected to demonstrate mastery through sustained oral exposition before an examining instructor, with limited opportunity for preparation or reformulation. This assessment culture creates particularly acute conditions for the epistemic distortion in evaluation documented in this study, as it foregrounds real-time linguistic fluency as the primary medium through which academic competence is made visible and evaluated.

Drawing on phenomenologically informed, semi-structured interviews with 15 Turkish students enrolled in Russian-medium degree programs at three universities in Moscow, this study examines how students experience the recognition — or misrecognition — of their academic competence in classroom settings. The study draws on a secondary analysis of an existing interview corpus, applying theoretical frameworks not employed in the original analysis to address a research question distinct from the original study's focus.

The overarching research question guiding the analysis is:

How do Turkish students in Russian-medium higher education experience the recognition of their academic competence in classroom settings?

This article argues that in Russian-medium higher education, linguistic constraint does not merely limit communication; it can mediate testimonial injustice by making students' academic competence less recognizable within institutionally valued forms of speech, participation, and assessment. The central problem examined here is therefore not whether international students possess sufficient knowledge,

motivation, or engagement, but how institutional conditions determine whether their knowledge becomes academically visible.

To address this question, the study draws on Fricker's (2007) concept of testimonial injustice, Goffman's (1959) theory of performative identity, and Norton's (2000) investment framework. These perspectives illuminate how linguistic performance, credibility judgment, and academic recognition interact in classroom settings where students are required to demonstrate knowledge through institutionally valued forms of academic Russian.

The study makes three interrelated contributions. First, it introduces the concept of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice to explain how students' credibility may be deflated when linguistic performance is treated as evidence of intellectual capacity. This concept differs from general accounts of language barriers because it focuses not only on communication difficulty, but on the under-recognition of knowledge. It also differs from broader concepts such as linguistic discrimination, language ideology, and epistemic marginalization by specifying a particular mechanism: the transformation of non-native academic language performance into diminished academic credibility. Second, the study reframes classroom silence not as a deficit of engagement or motivation, but as a rational response to epistemic risk in classroom environments where speaking may expose students to misrecognition. In doing so, it builds on prior work on silencing and disinvestment rather than claiming that strategic silence is an entirely new phenomenon. Third, the study demonstrates the generative potential of qualitative secondary analysis by showing how a previously collected corpus can yield theoretically distinct insights when reanalyzed through a new conceptual lens.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses testimonial injustice, performative self-presentation, and investment as complementary lenses for analyzing how linguistic constraint shapes academic recognition in Russian-medium higher education. The purpose of the framework is not to provide a full intellectual genealogy of these theories, but to identify the conceptual tools needed to interpret how students' knowledge becomes recognized, discounted, or strategically redirected in classroom interaction.

Testimonial Injustice and Linguistically Mediated Credibility Deflation

Fricker's (2007) concept of testimonial injustice refers to a form of epistemic harm in which a speaker's credibility is unjustly deflated because of prejudice attached to social identity. In higher education, this framework is useful because academic participation depends not only on what students know, but on whether their knowledge claims are treated as credible by instructors and peers.

This article extends Fricker's framework by examining cases in which credibility deflation is mediated through linguistic performance. In Russian-medium classrooms, accent, grammatical accuracy, lexical precision, response speed, and command of academic genre may be interpreted not merely as features of language use, but as signs of intellectual competence. Linguistically mediated testimonial injustice is therefore defined here as a form of epistemic harm in which a student's academic credibility is reduced when non-native or non-standard linguistic performance is treated as evidence of limited disciplinary understanding.

This concept differs from several related terms. It is narrower than linguistic discrimination, because it focuses specifically on the under-crediting of knowledge rather than on all forms of unequal treatment based on language. It is related to language ideology, but it does not primarily analyze beliefs about language in general; instead, it examines how institutionally valued language norms shape credibility judgments in concrete academic interactions. It is also more specific than epistemic marginalization, which names broader patterns of exclusion from knowledge practices. Finally, it differs from Fricker's original account by identifying linguistic performance as the mediating mechanism through which credibility is

reduced. The concept is analytically useful only when three conditions coincide: the student possesses relevant disciplinary understanding; linguistic performance deviates from institutional expectations; and this deviation leads to reduced credibility, weaker evaluation, or constrained participation.

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital clarifies why such credibility deflation is not simply an individual communicative problem. In Russian-medium higher education, academic Russian operates as a form of legitimate linguistic capital: it is the medium through which students display competence, claim authority, and become recognizable as serious academic participants. Turkish students may possess disciplinary knowledge, but when they cannot display that knowledge through institutionally valued forms of Russian academic speech, their competence becomes less visible. Bourdieu is therefore used here not as a separate theoretical framework, but as a way to specify the institutional conditions under which some forms of speech become more credible than others. This institutional dimension is consistent with recent work showing that language in higher education can shape not only communication but also how academic knowledge is constructed, validated, and attributed epistemic authority (Chen & Du, 2026).

Performative Self-Presentation and Academic Legibility

Goffman's (1959) account of self-presentation helps explain how credibility is produced interactionally. Academic competence is not only possessed; it must be performed in recognizable ways. In classroom discussions, oral examinations, presentations, and seminars, students are expected to display knowledge through fluent, timely, and genre-appropriate speech. For international students, linguistic hesitation, simplified expression, or difficulty finding technical vocabulary can disrupt this performance and make competence appear less secure than it is.

This performative dimension is especially relevant in Russian-medium settings where oral examination and instructor-centered interaction remain important sites of evaluation. A pause, grammatical error, or simplified formulation may be read as a lack of preparation or depth, even when it reflects the difficulty of translating disciplinary knowledge into academic Russian in real time. Goffman's framework therefore helps interpret the classroom as a site of academic legibility, where students must manage not only what they know but how convincingly that knowledge is displayed.

Investment, Silencing, and Strategic Recognition

Norton's (2000) investment framework links recognition to participation. Students invest in language and academic participation when they believe that such investment will provide access to symbolic and material resources, including legitimacy, credibility, and membership in a discourse community. When participation repeatedly fails to produce recognition, students may strategically withdraw from speaking, not because they lack motivation, but because participation has become epistemically costly.

This point connects with Dotson's (2011) concept of testimonial smothering, in which speakers limit or withhold their contributions in anticipation of misunderstanding or dismissal. In the present study, anticipatory silence is not treated as an entirely new phenomenon; rather, the analysis shows how such silence emerges in Russian-medium classrooms through the combined pressure of linguistic constraint, evaluative tempo, and credibility risk. Medina's (2013) work on the structural dimensions of epistemic injustice further supports this interpretation by showing that epistemic harm is sustained not only by individual hearers but by institutional arrangements that repeatedly position some speakers as less credible.

Together, these perspectives guide the analysis at three levels. Fricker's framework identifies credibility deflation as epistemic harm; Goffman explains how this harm is produced through fragile academic performance; and Norton helps interpret students' withdrawal, redirection, and repair strategies when recognition is unevenly available. The framework therefore directs attention away from language

proficiency as an individual deficit and toward the institutional and interactional conditions under which students' knowledge becomes visible, discounted, or strategically re-presented.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a phenomenologically informed qualitative design to examine how Turkish students experience academic recognition in Russian-medium higher education. The epistemological orientation is interpretive: the aim is not to measure the prevalence of recognition problems but to understand how students make sense of their experiences of being seen, heard, and credited — or not — within Russian-medium classrooms. Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used as the analytic method, following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) approach to generating patterned meanings from rich qualitative data.

Secondary Analysis and Ethical Transparency

The dataset analyzed in this study was originally collected as part of a broader phenomenological inquiry into Turkish students' academic adjustment in Russian-medium higher education (Ülgen, 2026). That earlier study examined adjustment more broadly, including linguistic access, bureaucratic load, social support, and coping strategies, through a study-specific 4A framework (Access, Amplification, Authentication, Awareness). The present article is analytically distinct in three respects: it addresses a different research question focused specifically on academic recognition in classroom settings; it applies a different theoretical framework centered on testimonial injustice, performative identity, and investment; and it develops a separate line of argument concerning epistemic visibility, misrecognition, and participation under linguistic constraint.

Secondary analysis of qualitative data is a recognized and methodologically defensible practice that enables new theoretical engagement with rich datasets (Heaton, 2004; Irwin & Winterton, 2011; Ruggiano & Perry, 2019). Its value lies not only in revisiting previously collected material, but in asking different analytical questions of that material and bringing alternative conceptual tools to bear on patterns that were not the primary focus of the original study.

The decision to conduct a secondary analysis rather than collect new data was methodologically motivated: the original corpus was exceptionally well-suited to the present research question precisely because it captured classroom participation, evaluative interactions, and epistemic risk in naturalistic detail. New data collection would have replicated rather than extended this corpus without the analytical advantage of a distinct theoretical lens.

Ethical approval for the original data collection was obtained from the institutional review board of the author's university. Details have been removed from the blinded manuscript and will be restored after peer review. All participants provided written informed consent, were assigned anonymized codes (S1–S15), and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. The secondary analysis was conducted in accordance with the original ethical approval and the consent terms under which participants contributed their accounts.

Participants and Sampling

Fifteen Turkish students enrolled in Russian-medium degree programs at three major state universities in Moscow — the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN), and Lomonosov Moscow State University (MGU) — participated in the study during the 2024–2025 academic year. Purposive sampling was used to recruit

information-rich cases with diverse experiences of academic adjustment (Patton, 2002). Inclusion criteria were: (1) Turkish citizenship, (2) enrollment in an undergraduate or graduate degree program conducted primarily in Russian, and (3) completion of at least one full academic year in Russia.

The sample included variation across age (19–33), gender (8 male, 7 female), level of study (undergraduate and graduate), academic field (Social Sciences, Economics, Engineering, Medicine, Law, Journalism, International Relations, Sports Sciences), and duration of residence in Russia (2–3 years). This variation supported the transferability of the analysis by capturing diverse experiences within Russian-medium higher education. However, the study did not aim to produce systematic subgroup comparisons by gender, discipline, level of study, or years in Russia. These forms of variation were used to identify recurring mechanisms of academic recognition and misrecognition rather than to make comparative claims across participant groups. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of participants.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (S1–S15)

Participant	Gender	Age	Level	Field	Years in Russia
S1	Female	21	Undergraduate	Social Sciences	2
S2	Female	20	Undergraduate	Economics	2
S3	Male	22	Undergraduate	Engineering	2
S4	Male	24	Undergraduate	Medicine	3
S5	Female	23	Master's	International Relations	2
S6	Male	22	Undergraduate	Sports Sciences	2
S7	Female	21	Undergraduate	Engineering	2
S8	Male	26	Master's	Social Sciences	2
S9	Male	25	Undergraduate	Law	3
S10	Female	25	Master's	Economics	2
S11	Male	25	Master's	Journalism	2
S12	Male	23	Undergraduate	Law	2
S13	Female	19	Undergraduate	Social Sciences	2
S14	Female	22	Undergraduate	Engineering	2
S15	Male	33	Master's	Social Sciences	3

Note. Years in Russia indicate total academic years completed at the time of interview. Participant-level institutional affiliations are omitted to preserve anonymity.

Data Collection

Data were collected in summer 2025 through semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face and via video call (Zoom, WhatsApp, Telegram). Interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and were transcribed verbatim. All interviews were conducted in Turkish to preserve expressive nuance and enable participants to articulate complex experiences in their first language. Quotations were translated into English by the researcher using a meaning-based approach, with selected excerpts verified against original Turkish transcripts and, where feasible, shared with participants to confirm interpretive accuracy.

The original interview protocol addressed five thematic areas: academic adjustment, language and communication, cultural differences and daily life, social support, and coping strategies. For the present secondary analysis, segments pertaining to classroom participation, evaluative interactions, and epistemic risk were systematically retrieved for focused re-analysis.

Analytic Procedure

The secondary analysis followed a three-stage procedure. In the first stage, all data segments relevant to academic recognition were retrieved from the full dataset using the original NVivo 15 coding structure as a retrieval scaffold. These included segments in which participants described being evaluated, ignored, interrupted, corrected, underestimated, or strategically shifting to alternative modes of participation. This stage generated a focused sub-corpus of recognition-relevant data across all fifteen participants.

In the second stage, this sub-corpus was subjected to independent re-analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis approach. Line-by-line coding was conducted in the original Turkish transcripts to preserve participants' meanings, with theme labels and analytic narrative developed in English. The researcher engaged in iterative memoing throughout this stage, attending explicitly to the theoretical frameworks of Fricker (2007), Goffman (1959), and Norton (2000) as sensitizing concepts — used to illuminate and interpret inductively generated patterns rather than as *a priori* coding categories.

In the third stage, candidate themes were reviewed across the full sub-corpus, refined through attention to variation and counterpatterns, and mapped onto the three theoretical frameworks. Three overarching themes emerged from this process, each capturing a distinct dimension of how academic recognition is experienced, disrupted, and strategically navigated in Russian-medium classrooms. These themes are presented and analyzed in the findings section that follows.

Table 2 presents the analytic mapping from data-led codes to themes, participant distribution, analytic interpretation, and theoretical lenses. The table is intended to make the interpretive movement of the secondary analysis transparent: it shows how recurring empirical patterns were first identified in participants' accounts and then connected to the conceptual framework through reflexive thematic analysis. The mapping should not be read as a mechanical or linear coding scheme, but as an audit-oriented summary of the analytic decisions that linked the Turkish interview data to the article's three thematic claims.

Table 2
Mapping of Example Codes, Themes, and Theoretical Frameworks

Theme	Data-led codes	Participants	Analytic interpretation	Theoretical lens	Illustrative excerpt
Theme 1: Epistemic Distortion in Evaluation	Knowledge-language gap; de facto language test; feedback as credibility judgment; cognitive redistribution; epistemic gatekeeping	S1, S2, S4, S5, S9, S10	Students described a mismatch between disciplinary understanding and how that understanding was evaluated when expressed through academic Russian. Assessment practices often made linguistic form operate as a filter through which knowledge became more or less recognizable.	Fricker (2007); Norton (2000); Bourdieu (1991)	<i>S1: "My grade measures not what I know but how well I can express it — and that is not the same thing."</i>
Theme 2: Anticipatory Silencing and the Risk of Speaking	Strategic silence; fear of misrecognition; instructor impatience; temporal misalignment; epistemic-audibility decoupling; humiliation of silence	S1, S3, S8, S11, S13, S15	Students often withdrew from participation despite having relevant knowledge because speaking exposed them to credibility risk. Silence functioned as a protective response to anticipated misrecognition rather than as evidence of disengagement.	Fricker (2007); Goffman (1959); Dotson (2011)	<i>S13: "I froze. I could barely continue. After that day I became even more afraid to speak in front of the class."</i>

Theme	Data-led codes	Participants	Analytic interpretation	Theoretical lens	Illustrative excerpt
Theme 3: Strategic Recognition and Epistemic Repair	Written contribution shift; compensatory specialization; alternative context leverage; testimonial justice moment; strategic timing; epistemic labor redistribution	S5, S7, S10, S12, S14, S15	Students developed alternative pathways for making competence visible when oral classroom participation was risky or insufficient. These strategies partially interrupted misrecognition by redirecting epistemic labor toward written, technical, extracurricular, or relationally safer contexts.	Norton (2000); Goffman (1959); Medina (2013); Granovetter (1973) as emergent analytical lens	<i>S14: "Even though I stayed quiet, I could still demonstrate my contribution."</i>

Note. Data-led codes are illustrative and were generated through reflexive thematic analysis of Turkish interview transcripts. Theoretical lenses were used as sensitizing concepts during interpretation, not as a priori coding categories. Granovetter (1973) was not used as a primary theoretical framework but was applied at the interpretive stage to describe partial recognition networks identified in Theme 3.

Positionality and Reflexivity

The researcher shares participants' linguistic and cultural background and conducted all interviews in Turkish. This insider position supported rapport and interpretive sensitivity, but also required active reflexivity to avoid over-identification with participants' accounts. Reflexive memoing documented interpretive decisions, potential biases, and analytic uncertainty throughout the analysis, with sustained attention to counterpatterns and disconfirming cases.

Trustworthiness

Analytical rigor was addressed through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported through iterative engagement with transcripts, member checking of selected translated excerpts with three participants who confirmed the accuracy of the English renderings, peer debriefing to challenge emerging interpretations, and the use of verbatim quotations from the original Turkish. Dependability was strengthened through a documented audit trail of analytic decisions across both the original and secondary analyses. Transferability was enhanced through thick description of the institutional context, participant characteristics, and analytic procedure. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive memoing and sustained attention to disconfirming cases during theme development.

FINDINGS

The secondary analysis of participants' accounts generated three interrelated themes capturing how academic recognition is experienced, disrupted, and strategically navigated in Russian-medium classrooms. These themes are presented in data-led terms; the theoretical frameworks of Fricker (2007), Goffman (1959), and Norton (2000) serve as interpretive sensitizing concepts rather than predetermined analytical categories.

Theme 1: Epistemic Distortion in Evaluation — When Knowing Is Misread as Not Knowing

Across participants' accounts, the most pervasive pattern was not an absence of disciplinary understanding, but a systematic distortion in how that understanding was evaluated and recognized in Russian-medium academic settings. Students repeatedly emphasized that they were able to comprehend course material — sometimes at a high level — yet were unable to demonstrate this knowledge in ways

that were legible within the linguistic and evaluative norms of their institutions. This mismatch did not merely constrain expression; it transformed how their competence was perceived and assessed.

Participants consistently described a gap between what they knew and what their grades reflected, experienced not as a neutral limitation of language but as a form of misrecognition embedded in evaluative practices that privileged linguistic form as a proxy for intellectual capacity. As S1 explained: "My grade measures not what I know but how well I can express it — and that is not the same thing." In this formulation, evaluation does not simply capture knowledge imperfectly; it actively redefines what counts as knowledge by filtering it through linguistic performance.

This distortion was particularly visible in assessment formats requiring extended explanation or argumentation. S2, an economics undergraduate, noted that while multiple-choice questions allowed her to demonstrate understanding, open-ended questions functioned as *de facto* language tests: she could identify correct answers but struggled to articulate the underlying reasoning in academic Russian. Tasks ostensibly designed to assess conceptual understanding became sites where linguistic competence determined epistemic visibility.

The mechanism was equally evident in high-stakes professional contexts. S4, a medical student, described arriving at correct diagnoses but losing points for inability to produce linguistically precise verbal justifications under exam conditions — pointing to a systematic privileging of articulate performance over demonstrable clinical knowledge. The pattern intensified in disciplines where argument was the primary medium of evaluation. S5, a master's student in International Relations, described being compelled to simplify her theoretical arguments to the point where instructors perceived her as insufficiently analytical: "When I couldn't express a complex argument in Russian, they thought I wasn't thinking deeply enough — but I was."

Feedback practices further reinforced this conflation. S9, a law student, described being compelled to produce fifteen Russian sentences to communicate what he could resolve in five in Turkish: "An event I could solve in five sentences in Turkish required fifteen in Russian." The structural consequence was not a failure of understanding but a forced redistribution of cognitive effort away from disciplinary reasoning toward linguistic production. Similarly, S10, a graduate student in economics, noted that even conceptually strong arguments lost their impact when expressed in simplified language, leading instructors to undervalue her contribution.

Across these accounts, a consistent mechanism emerges: linguistic performance operates as a gatekeeping filter through which disciplinary knowledge must pass in order to be recognized. This pattern can be conceptualized as epistemic distortion in evaluation — a structural condition in which assessment criteria are calibrated to forms of expression unevenly accessible to international students. What is evaluated is not knowledge alone but knowledge-in-language. Crucially, this distortion is not reducible to language deficiency *per se*: students often demonstrated strong comprehension when given sufficient time or alternative modes of expression. The problem lies not solely in students' linguistic limitations but in institutional practices that equate fluent performance with intellectual authority.

Theme 2: Anticipatory Silencing and the Risk of Speaking — Withdrawing Before Being Misrecognized

A second pattern concerns how the experiences documented in Theme 1 reshaped classroom participation. Silence did not emerge as a simple consequence of limited language proficiency but as a deliberate withdrawal from contexts where speaking was experienced as epistemically risky.

Participants repeatedly described moments in which they chose not to speak despite having relevant knowledge. As S3 explained, the fear of using an incorrect technical term led him to remain silent precisely at moments when he had something to say. When prompted by instructors to explain his lack of participation, he found himself compelled to attribute his silence to insufficient language ability: "When

they asked why I wasn't speaking, I had to say my language wasn't good enough — but that wasn't the real reason. The real reason was fear. And having to say that was its own kind of humiliation."

This anticipatory withdrawal was further reinforced by interactional dynamics. S8 noted that when he paused to search for words, instructors would often move on to another student — moments he experienced as public markers of diminished epistemic standing: "You feel like a second-class participant. Not because anyone says it, but because the room moves on without you."

Participants emphasized that even the anticipation of such moments was sufficient to regulate participation. S13 described a pattern in which she frequently knew the answer but felt compelled to say she did not know: "Sometimes the teacher asked me directly and I knew the answer — but I couldn't find the words fast enough. So, I said I didn't know. That was very shameful." S1 described how temporal misalignment between thought and expression led to habitual silence. S11 articulated this with precision: "By the time I had formulated my idea, the topic had already changed ten times."

This pattern culminated most acutely for S15, whose instructor explicitly acknowledged the gap between his documented profile and his classroom invisibility: "My professor told me, 'Your profile is very strong, but you never speak in class.' That moment was when I understood how completely the language barrier had made me invisible." Epistemic visibility and epistemic audibility had become fully decoupled.

Across these accounts, silence is best understood not as a passive absence but as an anticipatory practice — students actively regulate their participation based on assessments of epistemic risk. This aligns with what Dotson (2011) conceptualizes as testimonial smothering. However, in the present context, this dynamic is driven not solely by identity-based prejudice but by the interaction between linguistic constraint and evaluative norms that equate fluent expression with intellectual authority. Silence became a rational adaptation to structurally unsafe epistemic conditions.

Theme 3: Strategic Recognition and Epistemic Repair — Reclaiming Visibility Under Constraint

While Themes 1 and 2 show how students' knowledge can be distorted and how participation can become epistemically risky, participants' accounts also reveal moments in which misrecognition was partially interrupted. These cases are important because they complicate a one-directional account of linguistic marginalization. Students were not simply silenced by Russian-medium classrooms; they also developed strategies for redirecting their epistemic labor toward contexts where their competence could become more visible.

The most common repair strategy involved shifting from immediate oral participation to written or delayed forms of contribution. S10 described this shift as a conscious response to the limits of spoken classroom interaction: "When I realized I couldn't compete in the spoken discussion, I focused on written contribution. This gave me the chance to control my language and ensured that instructors could see my contribution." This strategy did not eliminate the hierarchy between oral and written participation, but it created a more accessible channel through which academic competence could be recognized. S15 described a similar movement after an instructor explicitly noted the gap between his strong academic profile and his classroom silence. Rather than attempting to perform fluency under pressure, he began sending his contributions in writing after class. In both accounts, written contribution functioned as a form of epistemic repair: it allowed students to re-present knowledge that had remained inaudible in real-time interaction.

A second strategy involved compensatory specialization. S14 explained that she was often directed toward tasks requiring less speech, such as calculations and drawings, which sometimes reduced her to the role of the group's "technical worker" even though she also had design ideas. Rather than simply accepting this narrowed role, she turned it into a strategic route to recognition: "I thought: if I become very good at the calculations, I will become indispensable to the group, and through that I can earn the right to speak on other matters. And that is exactly what happened." This account is analytically important because it shows both constraint and agency. S14's recognition was not freely given; it had to be earned through a form of

labor that was initially assigned because it required less speaking. Yet by becoming indispensable, she partially transformed a marginal role into a source of epistemic leverage.

Other participants described recognition becoming possible in contexts where interactional norms differed from the ordinary classroom. S5, for example, described a university Model United Nations setting in which structured turn-taking and role-based participation created a more predictable environment for speaking. Unlike fast-paced seminar discussion, this setting allowed preparation, sequencing, and clearer expectations about when and how to contribute. Her competence therefore became more visible in an extracurricular academic space than in standard classroom interaction. Similarly, S7 described a supportive instructor who explicitly acknowledged the value of her ideas while separating them from her linguistic limitations. This kind of interaction did not simply provide emotional encouragement; it altered the credibility conditions of the classroom by making it possible for disciplinary insight to be recognized despite imperfect linguistic form.

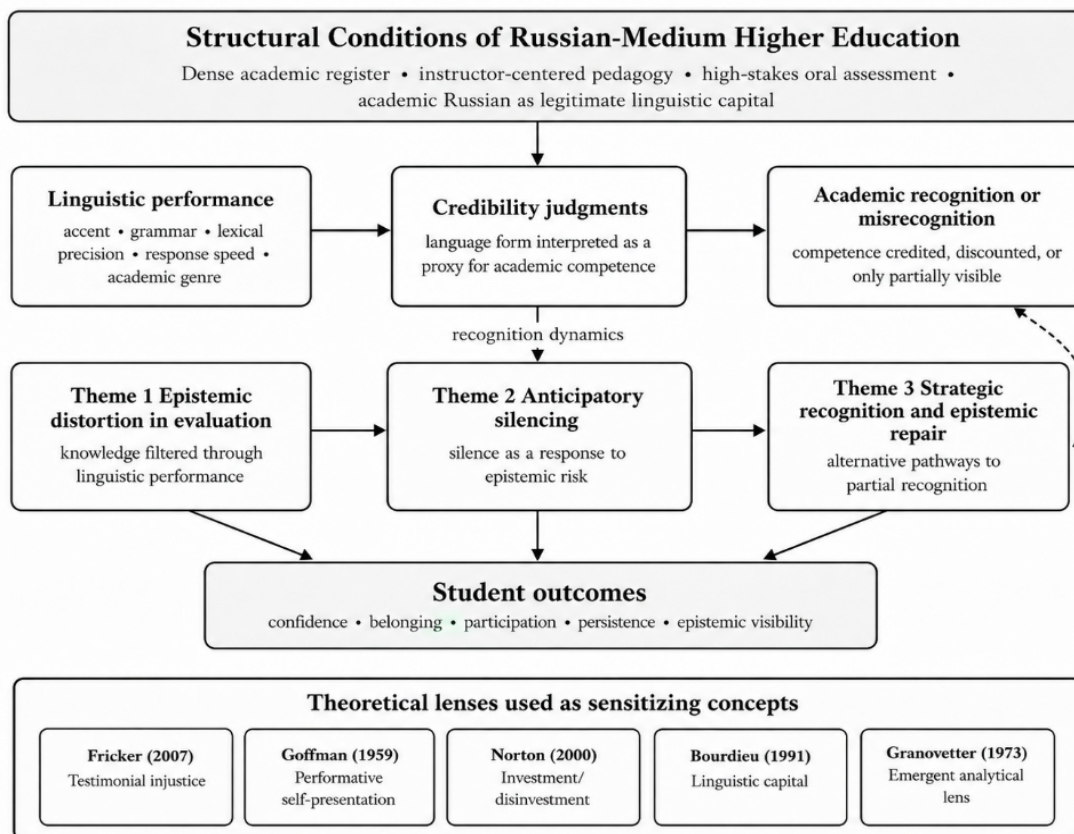
Strategic recognition was also temporal. S12 described learning to choose when to speak and when to remain silent, participating only when the interactional conditions felt sufficiently safe. This selective participation should not be understood as disengagement. Rather, it reflects a careful assessment of epistemic risk: students learned to identify moments when their contribution was likely to be heard as knowledge rather than judged through linguistic deficiency. Across these accounts, recognition depended not only on students' language proficiency but on the availability of safer formats, supportive listeners, delayed channels, and alternative participation structures.

These counter-cases do not negate the patterns of epistemic distortion and anticipatory silencing described in Themes 1 and 2. Instead, they show when and how the cycle of misrecognition can be partially interrupted. Epistemic repair was uneven, fragile, and often dependent on additional labor from students themselves. It involved writing after class, becoming technically indispensable, seeking extracurricular spaces, relying on supportive instructors, or carefully timing participation. These practices created partial pathways to visibility, but they also reveal a structural inequity: students whose linguistic performance is treated as a credibility marker must do extra work to make their competence recognizable. Visibility, in this context, is not simply granted by participation; it has to be strategically produced.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that Turkish students' academic competence in Russian-medium higher education is not simply constrained by language, but made more or less recognizable through institutional and interactional conditions. Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual model developed from the analysis. The model shows how linguistic performance shapes credibility judgments, how these judgments affect academic recognition or misrecognition, and how recognition dynamics influence participation, anticipatory silencing, and attempts at epistemic repair. Across the three themes, linguistic performance therefore operates not only as a medium of communication but also as a credibility filter through which students' disciplinary knowledge becomes visible, discounted, or strategically re-presented. The central contribution of the study is to shift the discussion of "language barriers" from communication difficulty to epistemic recognizability, extending research that has traditionally emphasized adjustment, participation, and belonging among international students (Andrade, 2006; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Figure 1
Conceptual Model of Epistemic Recognition Dynamics in Russian-Medium Higher Education



Note. The model illustrates the recursive relationship among linguistic performance, credibility judgments, academic recognition or misrecognition, anticipatory silencing, and strategic recognition or epistemic repair in Russian-medium higher education. Student outcomes reflect the cumulative effects of these recognition dynamics on confidence, belonging, participation, persistence, and epistemic visibility. Theoretical lenses are shown as sensitizing concepts; Granovetter (1973) is included as an emergent analytical lens rather than a primary theoretical framework.

From Language Barriers to Epistemic Recognizability

International student research has often treated language difficulty as a barrier to comprehension, participation, confidence, or adjustment (Andrade, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yeh & Inose, 2003). More recent work has begun to show that linguistic difficulty may also shape students' epistemic positioning within academic environments, particularly when students possess disciplinary knowledge but struggle to have that knowledge recognized through the dominant language of instruction (Gao, 2026; Orduna-Nocito & Sánchez-García, 2022). The present findings extend this line of work by showing that the problem is not only restricted expression — it is the institutional reclassification of competence through the form of expression available to students.

This is why linguistically mediated testimonial injustice is analytically useful as an extension of testimonial injustice theory (Fricker, 2007). The problem is not merely that students struggle to communicate, nor that instructors intentionally discriminate against them. Rather, academic credibility can be reduced when institutionally valued forms of Russian academic speech become the primary medium through which competence is recognized. In such cases, linguistic performance functions as a credibility

filter. Students may know the content, but if they cannot display that knowledge in a form recognized as academically authoritative, their competence becomes partially invisible.

This mechanism is related to, but distinct from, linguistic discrimination, language ideology, and broader epistemic marginalization. Linguistic discrimination names unequal treatment based on language, accent, or proficiency, but it does not necessarily specify how disciplinary knowledge becomes under-credited in academic evaluation. Language ideology explains how particular forms of speech are socially valued, but the present study focuses more narrowly on how those valuations enter classroom credibility judgments. Epistemic marginalization captures broader exclusion from knowledge practices, whereas linguistically mediated testimonial injustice identifies a specific mechanism: the transformation of non-native or non-standard academic language performance into diminished academic credibility. In this sense, the concept links language, assessment, and recognition in a way that general “language barrier” accounts often leave undertheorized.

At the same time, the concept must be used with caution. Not every language-related difficulty constitutes testimonial injustice. The concept is most appropriate when three conditions coincide: the student possesses relevant disciplinary understanding; linguistic performance deviates from institutional expectations; and this deviation leads to reduced credibility, weaker evaluation, or constrained participation. This boundary is important because it prevents the argument from collapsing all second-language difficulty into epistemic injustice. The issue is not language learning itself, but the institutional interpretation of linguistic performance as evidence of intellectual capacity.

The Recursive Cycle of Credibility Deflation

The three themes also show that misrecognition does not occur only in isolated moments. It can become recursive. Epistemic distortion in evaluation can undermine students’ confidence and sense of legitimacy. This, in turn, may lead students to reduce participation in seminars, oral examinations, or group discussions. Reduced participation can then be interpreted by instructors or peers as further evidence of limited competence, weak preparation, or lack of engagement. The original credibility deficit is therefore reinforced by the very silence it helps produce.

This recursive cycle is especially visible in participants’ accounts of classroom tempo. Students often needed additional time to formulate ideas in Russian, but the pace of seminar interaction did not always allow this. When the discussion moved on before they could speak, students experienced not only communicative frustration but epistemic displacement: the classroom proceeded as though their knowledge was absent. Over time, this displacement made silence more likely. Silence was therefore not a stable personality trait or cultural habit; it was an interactional adaptation to repeated credibility risk.

This finding qualifies deficit-oriented interpretations of international students’ classroom silence and aligns with work that understands silence, withdrawal, or disinvestment as socially situated rather than merely individual (Alhetah & Alharbi, 2026; Dotson, 2011; Norton, 2000). Students’ withdrawal from speaking should not be read automatically as lack of motivation, preparation, or academic engagement. Recent scholarship has further shown that this withdrawal can become self-reinforcing: students may internalize dominant language ideologies to the point of policing their own epistemic contributions, producing what Melo-Pfeifer and Tavares (2026) describe as auto-inflicted epistemic exclusion — a condition in which linguistic marginalization is sustained not only by institutional norms but also by students’ own anticipatory self-censorship. In the present study, silence often appeared after students had learned that speaking could expose them to public correction, impatience, embarrassment, or misrecognition. Under these conditions, silence became a rational strategy for avoiding further credibility loss.

The Russian-medium context intensifies this cycle because academic Russian operates as a form of legitimate linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Students are not only expected to understand disciplinary content; they are expected to display that understanding through forms of speech that carry institutional

authority. When academic credibility is attached to the speed, fluency, and genre-appropriateness of Russian-language performance, students whose disciplinary knowledge exceeds their real-time expressive capacity may become structurally vulnerable to credibility deflation. This does not mean that academic language standards are illegitimate. Rather, it shows that when such standards are treated as transparent indicators of intellectual capacity, they may obscure the difference between knowing and being able to perform knowledge in the institutionally preferred form.

When Recognition Becomes Possible: Counter-Cases and Partial Repair

The findings also show that the cycle of misrecognition is not total. Theme 3 identified counter-cases in which students were able to recover partial recognition despite linguistic constraints. These cases are important because they prevent the analysis from presenting Turkish students only as victims of linguistic marginalization. Students also acted strategically, redirecting their epistemic labor toward contexts where their competence could become more visible.

Written contribution was one such pathway. For some students, delayed written communication allowed more time for linguistic control, organization, and precision. This did not fully replace oral participation, especially in classrooms where speech remained the dominant sign of engagement, but it created a secondary channel through which instructors could recognize students' ideas. Similarly, compensatory specialization allowed some students to gain credibility through technical, quantitative, or task-specific expertise. In these cases, recognition was not freely given; it had to be produced through additional labor.

Supportive instructors and extracurricular spaces also played an important role. When an instructor separated the value of a student's idea from the student's linguistic form, the credibility conditions of the classroom changed. Such moments can be understood as partial instances of testimonial justice: the student's contribution was evaluated in relation to its intellectual content rather than being reduced to linguistic imperfection. Such moments matter not only individually but structurally. This finding resonates with recent work on epistemic exclusion in higher education, which emphasizes that recognition problems cannot be addressed only through individual adaptation but also require attention to institutional practices (Chowdhury et al., 2026). Likewise, structured extracurricular contexts such as Model United Nations created more predictable participation norms than ordinary seminar discussion. These examples show that recognition depends not only on students' language proficiency but also on interactional design, assessment format, and listener responsiveness.

Granovetter's (1973) concept of weak ties is useful here as an emergent analytical lens rather than as part of the primary theoretical framework. The data suggest that recognition sometimes became possible through relationships and spaces outside students' immediate classroom or co-national networks: supportive instructors, mixed academic groups, extracurricular activities, and written communication channels. These did not constitute a complete alternative recognition system. They were partial, uneven, and fragile recognition networks. Still, they helped some students interrupt the cycle of invisibility by creating additional routes through which competence could be acknowledged.

This point extends Norton's (2000) investment framework. Students did not simply invest or disinvest from language learning in a general sense. They redistributed their participation toward contexts where recognition seemed more attainable. Written follow-up, technical specialization, strategic timing, and selective participation were not merely coping strategies; they were attempts to reconstruct the conditions under which knowledge could become visible. Yet the need for such strategies also reveals a structural inequity. Students whose linguistic performance is treated as a credibility marker must do extra epistemic labor to have their competence recognized.

Transferability Beyond Russian-Medium Higher Education

The Russian-medium context intensifies the dynamics identified in this study, but the underlying mechanism is not necessarily unique to Russia. The central mechanism — the use of institutionally valued language performance as a proxy for academic credibility — may appear in other non-Anglophone and multilingual higher education systems where students are required to demonstrate disciplinary knowledge through a language they are still acquiring.

What appears especially context-specific in the Russian case is the combination of formal academic register, instructor-centered classroom norms, and the continued importance of oral examination, consistent with prior work on linguistic and academic adaptation in Russian higher education (Beregovaya & Kudashov, 2019; Tikhonova et al., 2021; Volkova & Kolesov, 2022). The устный экзамен places students in a high-stakes setting where real-time speech becomes the main evidence of knowledge. In such a context, hesitation, simplification, or lexical imprecision may carry greater evaluative consequences than in systems where assessment is more written, modular, or asynchronous. Russian-medium higher education therefore provides a particularly sharp case for observing how linguistic performance and academic credibility become intertwined.

At the same time, the findings may be transferable to other contexts where academic recognition depends heavily on oral participation, disciplinary register, and rapid classroom interaction. This includes not only other non-Anglophone systems but also multilingual classrooms in English-medium institutions, where students may possess disciplinary knowledge yet struggle to display it through institutionally privileged academic speech. The transferability of the concept therefore lies not in claiming that all contexts reproduce the same pattern, but in identifying conditions under which linguistic performance becomes a credibility marker.

This distinction between context-specific and transferable elements is important. The specific institutional configuration examined here — Russian-medium instruction, formal academic Russian, and high-stakes oral assessment — may not appear in identical form elsewhere. However, the broader mechanism may travel: when academic systems treat dominant-language performance as the primary evidence of competence, students' knowledge can become unevenly recognizable. The concept of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice therefore offers a portable but bounded analytic lens for examining recognition in linguistically diverse higher education settings.

Gender, Variation, and the Limits of the Present Analysis

The study also points to possible variation across gender, discipline, level of study, and time in Russia. However, the present dataset does not support systematic subgroup comparison. For this reason, the analysis does not claim that linguistically mediated testimonial injustice operates identically across all students or that gendered patterns are fully demonstrated. S10's account suggests that linguistic credibility deficits may intersect with gendered expectations of self-expression, making some students feel doubly invisible. Yet this remains an important direction for future research rather than a cross-cutting finding established by the present study.

Disciplinary variation also requires further investigation. Fields that rely heavily on oral argument, legal reasoning, medical explanation, or seminar debate may create different risks from fields where written, technical, or quantitative outputs are more central. Similarly, recognition may change over time as students learn not only the language but also the interactional rules of the institution. These variations do not weaken the central argument; rather, they clarify its scope. The study identifies a mechanism of misrecognition, not a universal pattern applying equally to every student or classroom.

This limitation is also methodologically important. The study's sample was designed to generate an interpretive account of recognition dynamics, not to test differences across gender, discipline, or academic level. The findings therefore should be read as identifying patterned mechanisms through which

linguistic performance may mediate academic credibility, rather than as establishing subgroup-specific effects. Future research should examine these variations more systematically through comparative designs, longitudinal data, and classroom observation.

Institutional Responsibility for Academic Recognition

The findings have direct implications for how institutions understand responsibility in international student education. If language barriers are treated only as individual deficits, institutional responses will focus narrowly on language courses, tutoring, or student adaptation. These supports are important, but they do not address the evaluative and interactional practices through which competence becomes visible or invisible in the classroom.

A recognition-oriented approach requires institutions to examine how credibility is assigned. Instructors need tools for distinguishing linguistic form from intellectual content, especially in oral participation and assessment. Assessment systems should avoid making fast, fluent speech the only legitimate pathway for demonstrating competence. Classroom interaction should allow sufficient wait time, clarification, and alternative channels for contribution. These changes do not require lowering academic standards. They require making the standards more precise by separating disciplinary understanding from native-like linguistic display.

The broader implication is that academic belonging is not only social or emotional, as emphasized in prior work on international student belonging and academic integration, but also epistemic (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Tinto, 1993). Students belong academically when they are treated as credible contributors to knowledge. Turkish students in this study were formally enrolled and often academically capable, yet their competence was not always recognizable under the linguistic and interactional conditions of Russian-medium classrooms. The question, in other words, is not only how students can improve their language, but how institutions can redesign their evaluative practices to recognize knowledge in more than one linguistic form.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how Turkish students in Russian-medium higher education experience the recognition and misrecognition of their academic competence in classroom settings. The findings show that language does not function only as a medium through which students communicate knowledge; it can also become a condition through which that knowledge is evaluated, credited, or rendered less visible. When disciplinary understanding must be performed through institutionally valued forms of academic Russian, students' competence may be filtered through linguistic features such as fluency, speed, precision, and genre control.

The article's central contribution is to conceptualize this process as linguistically mediated testimonial injustice. This concept helps explain how students may possess relevant academic knowledge while still being treated as less credible knowers when their linguistic performance does not conform to institutional expectations. The problem is therefore not simply that international students need stronger language skills, although language development remains important. The deeper issue is that institutions often treat linguistic performance as if it transparently reflects intellectual capacity.

The study also reframes classroom silence. Rather than interpreting silence as a simple deficit of motivation, confidence, or cultural participation, the findings show that silence may emerge as a rational response to epistemic risk. Students learned that speaking in Russian-medium classrooms could expose them to correction, impatience, embarrassment, or the downgrading of their ideas. Under these conditions, withdrawal from oral participation became a strategy for avoiding further credibility loss.

At the same time, the study shows that students were not only misrecognized or silenced. They also developed strategies of epistemic repair: writing after class, choosing safer moments to speak, becoming technically indispensable, seeking supportive instructors, and using extracurricular or alternative academic

spaces to make their competence visible. These practices partially interrupted misrecognition, but they also reveal an inequity. Students whose linguistic performance is treated as a credibility marker must often do additional work to be recognized as competent.

Taken together, the findings suggest that academic recognition should be understood as an institutional condition, not merely an individual achievement. International students do not become academically visible only by improving their language; they also become visible when classrooms, assessments, and institutional practices are designed to recognize knowledge in more than one linguistic form. The problem is therefore not only whether international students can speak better. It is whether higher education institutions can recognize knowledge without reducing it to native-like or immediately fluent linguistic performance. The concept of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice therefore invites institutions not only to improve language support, but to examine the epistemic assumptions embedded in their assessment cultures — assumptions that may render entire categories of knowledge invisible before they are ever evaluated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

The findings suggest that improving international students' academic recognition requires more than additional language support. Language courses, tutoring, and academic writing support remain important, but they do not by themselves address the evaluative and interactional practices through which students' competence becomes visible or invisible. A recognition-oriented approach requires changes at four levels: faculty development, assessment design, oral examination practice, and institutional policy.

Faculty Development

Faculty development should help instructors distinguish between linguistic form and disciplinary understanding. Instructors working in Russian-medium programs may reasonably expect students to develop academic Russian, but they also need strategies for avoiding the automatic interpretation of hesitation, simplified expression, accent, or grammatical error as evidence of weak comprehension. Training sessions could focus on credibility bias in classroom interaction, especially in seminars, presentations, and oral examinations where real-time language performance strongly shapes impressions of competence.

Such training should not ask instructors to lower academic standards. Rather, it should help them make standards more precise. Faculty should be encouraged to ask: Is this student's answer conceptually weak, or is the concept present but linguistically underdeveloped? Is the problem disciplinary misunderstanding, or difficulty performing knowledge through academic Russian in real time? These questions can help instructors evaluate content more carefully while still supporting students' development of academic language.

Assessment Redesign

The findings also point to the need for assessment formats that do not make fast, fluent oral performance the only pathway to demonstrating knowledge. In programs where assessment relies heavily on oral explanation, students who possess disciplinary understanding may still be disadvantaged if they cannot display that understanding quickly and confidently in academic Russian. Assessment design should therefore include multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate competence.

Possible approaches include combining oral assessment with short written supplements, allowing students to submit brief post-exam clarifications, using portfolio-based assessment, incorporating staged assignments, and separating content knowledge from language accuracy in rubrics. Rubrics can explicitly distinguish conceptual understanding, disciplinary reasoning, use of evidence, terminology, and linguistic

accuracy. This would not remove language from assessment, but it would prevent language from silently absorbing all other criteria.

Oral Examination Practices

Because oral examination is especially consequential in Russian-medium higher education, small changes in oral exam practice may have significant effects on academic recognition. Instructors can provide short preparation time before extended responses, allow clarification questions, and give students a chance to reformulate an answer when the initial response is linguistically incomplete but conceptually promising. Where appropriate, students could also be allowed to outline their answer briefly in writing before speaking.

Another important practice is wait time. Participants' accounts suggest that the pace of classroom and examination interaction can determine whether knowledge becomes audible at all. Allowing several additional seconds after a question, resisting the urge to move quickly to another student, and explicitly inviting students to continue after pauses may reduce epistemic risk. These practices are simple, but they directly address one of the mechanisms identified in the study: the misreading of delayed linguistic production as absence of knowledge.

Institutional Policy

At the institutional level, internationalization policy should move beyond recruitment and language preparation alone. Institutions that enroll international students in Russian-medium programs should also examine whether classroom, assessment, and advising practices create equitable conditions for academic recognition after students arrive. This includes developing guidelines for linguistically responsive assessment, offering discipline-specific academic Russian support, and creating low-stakes spaces where students can rehearse oral academic participation before high-stakes evaluation.

Institutions may also benefit from mentoring structures that connect international students with faculty, advanced students, and mixed academic networks rather than relying only on co-national peer support. Recent research confirms that targeted institutional interventions — including multicultural resource centers and improved communication strategies — remain essential for supporting international students' academic integration across diverse higher education contexts (Ihuoma & Bista, 2025). The findings suggest that recognition often becomes possible through supportive instructors, written follow-up, extracurricular participation, and alternative academic spaces. Policy should therefore support not only language acquisition but also the creation of multiple pathways through which students can become visible as credible academic participants.

Overall, the practical implication of the study is not that academic standards should be relaxed for international students. The implication is that institutions should design pedagogical and assessment practices that recognize disciplinary competence without reducing it to native-like or immediately fluent linguistic performance. A fairer system is not one that ignores language, but one that evaluates language and knowledge as related yet analytically distinct dimensions of academic performance.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study is based on a small, context-specific sample of 15 Turkish students enrolled in Russian-medium degree programs at three universities in Moscow. The aim was not statistical generalization, but interpretive depth and conceptual development. The findings should therefore be read as identifying patterned mechanisms of academic recognition and misrecognition rather than as representing all Turkish students, all international students in Russia, or all Russian-medium classrooms.

Second, although the sample included variation across gender, academic discipline, level of study, and years in Russia, the analysis did not aim to produce systematic subgroup comparisons. These forms of variation supported transferability by bringing different student experiences into the analysis, but they do not allow claims about whether linguistically mediated testimonial injustice operates differently across gender groups, disciplines, or levels of study. This limitation is especially important for the gender dimension. S10's account suggests that linguistic credibility deficits may intersect with gendered expectations of self-expression, but the present dataset does not provide sufficient evidence to treat gender as a fully developed cross-cutting finding.

Third, the study relies on students' retrospective accounts of classroom interaction, assessment, and participation. These accounts are valuable because they show how students interpreted and made sense of their experiences of recognition and misrecognition. However, they do not provide direct observation of classroom interaction or assessment practices. Instructor and peer perspectives were not included, and these would be necessary to understand more fully how credibility judgments are formed, enacted, and negotiated in real time.

Fourth, as a secondary analysis, the study is shaped by the scope of interviews originally conducted for a broader inquiry into academic adjustment. Although the corpus contained rich material directly relevant to classroom recognition, participation, and epistemic risk, the interviews were not originally designed exclusively around testimonial injustice. This means that some potentially important dimensions — including gender, disciplinary assessment cultures, and changes over time — could not be pursued as systematically as they might be in a purpose-designed study.

Finally, the study does not claim that all language-related difficulty constitutes testimonial injustice. The concept of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice is intended as a bounded analytic tool. It is most useful when students possess relevant disciplinary understanding, when linguistic performance deviates from institutional expectations, and when this deviation leads to reduced credibility, weaker evaluation, or constrained participation. Future research should continue testing, refining, and limiting this concept across different institutional and linguistic contexts.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should examine academic recognition across a wider range of non-Anglophone and multilingual higher education contexts. Comparative studies would be particularly useful for clarifying which aspects of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice are specific to Russian-medium higher education and which may appear in other systems where students must demonstrate disciplinary knowledge through a language they are still acquiring. Such studies could compare Russian-medium, Turkish-medium, German-medium, French-medium, Arabic-medium, or English-medium multilingual classrooms to identify how assessment culture, classroom tempo, disciplinary register, and language ideology shape credibility judgments.

Longitudinal research is also needed. Many participants described recognition as something that changed over time, not only as their Russian proficiency developed, but also as they learned when, where, and how their competence could be made visible. Following students across multiple semesters would help show how credibility loss, anticipatory silence, and epistemic repair accumulate or change. Such research could also examine when the recursive cycle of misrecognition breaks, and what institutional practices help students move from marginal participation toward fuller academic recognition.

Future studies should also investigate gender and disciplinary variation more systematically. Gender should be examined not as an isolated variable, but in relation to linguistic credibility, classroom authority, and expectations of participation. Similarly, disciplines that rely heavily on oral argument, clinical explanation, seminar debate, or legal reasoning may produce different recognition risks from fields where written, technical, or quantitative outputs are more central. Comparative disciplinary studies would help clarify how assessment format mediates the relationship between language and credibility.

Finally, future research should incorporate instructor perspectives, peer perspectives, classroom observation, and analysis of assessment practices. Interview data can reveal how students experience recognition and misrecognition, but observational and interactional data would provide a fuller account of how credibility judgments are produced in classroom discourse. Such work could examine how instructors respond to hesitation, accent, simplified language, or delayed answers, and whether assessment rubrics explicitly distinguish disciplinary understanding from linguistic accuracy. This would allow the concept of linguistically mediated testimonial injustice to be further developed, challenged, and operationalized in empirically grounded ways.

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