IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY IN A MULTILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF UZBEK-RUSSIAN-ENGLISH

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Abstract. This article examines the enhancement of English language teaching methodology within multilingual educational environments, specifically focusing on the trilingual context of Uzbek-Russian-English. The research explores the integration of translingual pedagogical approaches, cross-linguistic transfer mechanisms, and the development of metalinguistic awareness in language acquisition processes. The study analyzes how the linguistic features of Uzbek and Russian can be strategically utilized to facilitate English language learning, while addressing interference phenomena and developing integrated teaching models. The findings suggest that a systematic approach to multilingual pedagogy, incorporating cognitive-comparative methods and strategic code-switching, significantly improves learning outcomes in English language acquisition.

Keywords: multilingual education, English language teaching, translingual pedagogy, cross-linguistic transfer, metalinguistic awareness, interference, code-switching, cognitive-comparative method, trilingual competence, integrated methodology.

The contemporary educational landscape in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, presents a unique multilingual context where learners navigate between Uzbek as the national language, Russian as a lingua franca of the post-Soviet space, and English as the global language of international communication. This trilingual environment creates both opportunities and challenges for English language teaching methodology, necessitating a comprehensive reconsideration of traditional monolingual approaches to language pedagogy. The complexity of this linguistic ecology demands innovative methodological solutions that leverage the cognitive and linguistic resources students bring from their existing language repertoires while addressing the potential challenges of cross-linguistic interference and transfer.

The fundamental premise of this research rests on the understanding that multilingual learners possess distinct cognitive advantages that can be strategically mobilized in the English language learning process. Unlike monolingual learners who approach English through a single linguistic lens, students in the Uzbek-Russian-English context bring sophisticated metalinguistic awareness developed through their experience with typologically diverse languages. Uzbek, as a Turkic language with agglutinative morphology and SOV word order, Russian as a Slavic language with complex inflectional morphology and relatively free word order, and English as a Germanic language with analytic tendencies and strict SVO order, create a rich comparative framework for understanding linguistic structures and functions.

The theoretical foundation for this study draws from several interconnected frameworks in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. Translingual pedagogy, as conceptualized by scholars such as García and Wei (2014), challenges the traditional separation of languages in educational contexts and advocates for a more fluid, integrated approach that recognizes the dynamic nature of multilingual competence. This perspective aligns with contemporary understanding of the multilingual mind as an integrated system where languages interact and support each other rather than existing in isolated compartments.

The concept of translanguaging, which describes the natural tendency of multilingual speakers to draw from their entire linguistic repertoire, provides a theoretical justification for pedagogical approaches that embrace rather than suppress students' multilingual resources.

Furthermore, the cognitive-comparative method offers a systematic approach to leveraging cross-linguistic awareness in language learning. This method explicitly encourages learners to compare and contrast linguistic structures across their known languages, fostering deeper understanding of both language-specific features and universal linguistic principles. In the context of Uzbek-Russian-English trilingualism, this approach becomes particularly powerful as students can triangulate their understanding through three distinct linguistic systems, each offering unique insights into the nature of human language.

The phenomenon of cross-linguistic transfer, both positive and negative, plays a crucial role in multilingual language acquisition. Positive transfer occurs when knowledge from previously learned languages facilitates the acquisition of new linguistic features, while negative transfer, or interference, can create challenges when linguistic patterns from one language inappropriately influence production in another. Understanding these transfer mechanisms in the specific context of Uzbek-Russian-English interaction is essential for developing effective pedagogical interventions. For instance, Russian speakers' familiarity with the concept of grammatical aspect can facilitate understanding of the English progressive tenses, while Uzbek speakers' experience with postpositions might initially challenge their acquisition of English prepositions.

The metalinguistic awareness that develops through multilingual experience represents a significant cognitive resource for language learning. Students who have already navigated the complexities of learning Russian as a second language bring sophisticated understanding of language as a system, including awareness of grammatical categories, morphological processes, and syntactic patterns. This metalinguistic knowledge can be explicitly activated and directed toward English language learning through carefully designed pedagogical activities that encourage cross-linguistic reflection and analysis.

Code-switching, traditionally viewed as a deficiency or interference in language learning contexts, is reconceptualized in contemporary multilingual pedagogy as a sophisticated linguistic skill that can support language development. Strategic use of code-switching in the classroom can serve multiple pedagogical functions: clarifying complex concepts, maintaining lesson flow, building rapport, and demonstrating the interconnectedness of linguistic knowledge. In the Uzbek-Russian-English context, teachers can model purposeful code-switching that highlights linguistic contrasts and similarities, thereby deepening students' understanding of all three languages.

The sociocultural dimension of multilingual education cannot be overlooked. Each language in the trilingual repertoire carries specific cultural associations, pragmatic norms, and discursive practices. English language teaching in this context must acknowledge and build upon students' existing sociocultural knowledge while introducing the cultural dimensions of English-speaking contexts. This culturally responsive approach recognizes that students are not blank slates but bring rich cultural and linguistic resources that can enhance their engagement with English language and culture.

The implementation of integrated multilingual methodology requires careful consideration of practical classroom strategies.

Teachers need to develop techniques for managing multiple languages in the classroom space, creating activities that promote cross-linguistic comparison, and assessing multilingual competence in ways that value students' entire linguistic repertoire. This includes designing tasks that explicitly encourage students to draw connections between languages, creating multilingual resources that present linguistic information comparatively, and developing assessment criteria that recognize translingual competence as a strength rather than a deficit.

The digital revolution has created new possibilities for multilingual pedagogy.

Technology-enhanced language learning environments can provide sophisticated tools for cross-linguistic comparison, offer multilingual support systems, and create virtual spaces where students can engage with authentic multilingual communication.

Digital platforms can facilitate differentiated instruction that accommodates the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students while promoting collaborative learning that leverages peer linguistic resources.

The effectiveness of multilingual pedagogical approaches depends significantly on teacher preparation and professional development. Teachers working in multilingual contexts need not only strong competence in the target language but also understanding of multilingual acquisition processes, awareness of cross-linguistic phenomena, and skills in managing multilingual classroom dynamics.

Professional development programs must address these complex competencies, providing teachers with both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for implementing multilingual pedagogy.

Assessment practices in multilingual educational contexts require fundamental reconceptualization. Traditional monolingual assessment frameworks that penalize any use of languages other than English fail to capture the full extent of multilingual learners' competencies.

Conclusion: The development of effective English language teaching methodology in multilingual educational environments requires a fundamental shift from monolingual to multilingual pedagogical paradigms. The trilingual context of Uzbek-Russian-English offers unique opportunities for leveraging cross-linguistic resources, developing metalinguistic awareness, and fostering integrated language competence.

The research presented in this article demonstrates that systematic integration of multilingual pedagogical approaches, including translingual strategies, cognitive-comparative methods, and strategic code-switching, can significantly enhance English language learning outcomes while maintaining and developing students' competencies in their other languages.

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