

THE INFLUENCE OF MULTILINGUALISM (KARAKALPAK–UZBEK–ENGLISH) ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract. *This article examines how the interplay of Karakalpak, Uzbek, and English influences English language acquisition among university students in Karakalpakstan. Moving beyond monolingual ELT frameworks, the study utilizes proficiency testing, surveys, and interviews to analyze how multilingual repertoires affect learning outcomes. Findings indicate that students possess enhanced metalinguistic awareness and strategic flexibility, despite structural interferences between Turkic and Germanic systems. The study argues for shifting the pedagogical lens to view multilingualism as a cognitive resource rather than a barrier. It concludes by proposing a plurilingual framework for higher education that integrates learners' diverse linguistic ecologies into instructional practice.*

Keywords: *Multilingualism, Karakalpak–Uzbek Bilingualism, Cross-linguistic Transfer, Metalinguistic Awareness, Translanguaging, English Language Acquisition, Higher Education in Karakalpakstan*

Аннотация. *В данной статье анализируется, как взаимодействие каракалпакского, узбекского и английского языков влияет на овладение английским языком студентами университетов Каракалпакстана. Выходя за рамки монолингвальных подходов к преподаванию английского языка (ELT), исследование использует тестирование уровня владения языком, анкетирование и интервью для изучения влияния многоязычного репертуара на результаты обучения. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на структурные интерференции между тюркскими и германскими языковыми системами, студенты демонстрируют развитое металингвистическое сознание и стратегическую гибкость. В работе обосновывается необходимость смещения педагогической парадигмы к восприятию многоязычия не как барьера, а как когнитивного ресурса. В заключение предлагается плюрилингвальная модель для высшего образования, интегрирующая разнообразную языковую экологию обучающихся в учебный процесс.*

Ключевые слова: *многоязычие, каракалпакско-узбекский билингвизм, межъязыковой перенос, металингвистическое сознание, транслингвизм, овладение английским языком, высшее образование в Каракалпакстане.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqola Qoraqalpog‘istondagi universitet talabalari orasida ingliz tilini o‘zlashtirish jarayoniga qoraqalpoq, o‘zbek va ingliz tillari o‘rtasidagi o‘zaro ta’sir qanday ta’sir ko‘rsatishini tahlil qiladi. Monolingval ingliz tili o‘qitish (ELT) yondashuvlaridan chetga chiqib, tadqiqot til bilish darajasini aniqlash testlari, so‘rovnomalalar va intervyular asosida ko‘p tilli repertuarlarning o‘quv natijalariga ta’sirini o‘rganadi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, turkiy va german tillari tizimlari o‘rtasidagi struktur interferensiyalarga qaramay, talabalar yuqori darajadagi metalingvistik ong va strategik moslashuvchanlikka ega. Tadqiqot pedagogik yondashuvni ko‘p tillilikni to‘siq emas, balki kognitiv resurs sifatida talqin qilishga yo‘naltirish zarurligini asoslaydi. Xulosa qismida oliy ta’lim uchun o‘quvchilarning turli lingvistik muhitini o‘quv jarayoniga integratsiya qiluvchi plurilingval model taklif etiladi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *Ko‘p tillilik, Qoraqalpoq–o‘zbek ikki tilliligi, tillararo transfer, metalingvistik ong, translanguaging, ingliz tilini o‘zlashtirish, Qoraqalpog‘istonda oliy ta’lim.*

Introduction. Multilingualism is a defining feature of contemporary societies, particularly in Central Asia, where linguistic diversity reflects historical, cultural, and political processes [1, 49]. In Karakalpakstan, learners are typically socialized into at least two languages – Karakalpak and Uzbek – before encountering English as an academic and professional necessity.

Despite this reality, most English language instruction continues to operate within monolingual paradigms that assume learners begin from a single linguistic foundation. Such assumptions fail to recognize the complex linguistic repertoires that students bring into the classroom.

Modern linguistic theory increasingly views multilingualism not as the sum of separate language systems but as an integrated communicative competence [2, 120-121]. Learners draw upon multiple linguistic resources simultaneously when interpreting, producing, and negotiating meaning.

Although global research acknowledges the benefits of multilingualism, empirical studies focusing on Turkic bilingual contexts remain limited. In particular, little is known about:

How Karakalpak–Uzbek bilingualism affects English acquisition

Whether linguistic proximity facilitates or complicates learning

How multilingual awareness shapes grammar, vocabulary, and discourse competence

Traditional ELT approaches often discourage the use of first languages in English classrooms. However, multilingual learners naturally engage in cross-linguistic comparison and transfer.

The aim of this study is to investigate how multilingual competence in Karakalpak and Uzbek influences English language learning outcomes.

Research Questions

1. Does multilingual competence enhance English proficiency?
2. What forms of cross-linguistic transfer occur?
3. How does multilingualism affect metalinguistic awareness?
4. What pedagogical implications emerge?

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the patterns of linguistic transfer that arise in the process of English language acquisition among learners possessing Karakalpak–Uzbek bilingual competence. In particular, the research seeks to examine the extent to which prior linguistic knowledge influences the development of English language proficiency. Another objective is to evaluate the level of metalinguistic awareness demonstrated by multilingual learners and to determine how such awareness contributes to their ability to analyze and internalize new linguistic structures.

Furthermore, the study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of English language performance among learner groups with differing linguistic backgrounds in order to identify potential advantages associated with multilingualism. Finally, the research intends

to identify and substantiate pedagogical strategies that may enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction within multilingual higher education environments.

The significance of the present research lies in its potential to advance theoretical and methodological approaches within the field of multilingual pedagogy by emphasizing the constructive role of learners' pre-existing linguistic repertoires in the acquisition of additional languages. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of English language policy by providing empirical evidence supporting the need for linguistically inclusive educational practices.

Moreover, the study offers practical implications for the design and implementation of higher education curricula, particularly in multilingual contexts where students routinely operate across multiple linguistic systems. By addressing the specific characteristics of Turkic bilingual environments, the research also enriches post-Soviet linguistic scholarship and provides new insights into the dynamics of multilingualism in academic settings.

Research in multilingual education demonstrates that prior linguistic knowledge often supports additional language acquisition. Multilingual learners tend to develop enhanced awareness of grammatical structures, vocabulary patterns, and discourse strategies.

Studies have shown that bilingual learners frequently outperform monolingual peers in tasks involving:

- Inferencing
- Cognitive flexibility
- Problem-solving

Cross-linguistic transfer refers to the influence of previously acquired languages on the process of learning a new language. This influence may manifest in both facilitative and interfering ways. On the one hand, positive transfer can support learners in developing a deeper understanding of morphological structures, enable meaningful comparison of syntactic patterns, and assist in lexical inference through recognition of similarities across languages. On the other hand, negative transfer may lead to overgeneralization of linguistic rules or to structural interference when features of the previously known languages are inappropriately applied to the target language.

Metalinguistic awareness refers to an individual's ability to consciously reflect upon language as a structured system [3, 15-56]. Multilingual learners often demonstrate a heightened level of such awareness, which is reflected in increased sensitivity to grammatical patterns and an enhanced capacity for analytical processing of linguistic forms. This heightened awareness allows learners to approach language learning not merely as a process of memorization, but as a structured cognitive activity involving comparison, abstraction, and rule formation.

Languages belonging to the Turkic family share a number of structural characteristics that are particularly relevant to the process of learning English (Ringbom, 2007). These

include agglutinative morphological systems, relatively flexible word order, and the absence of grammatical articles. Such features shape the trajectory of English language acquisition in both supportive and challenging ways. While structural awareness developed through these languages may facilitate understanding of complex morphological constructions, differences between Turkic and English grammatical systems may also generate areas of difficulty.

Contemporary pedagogical theory increasingly recognizes translanguaging as an effective strategy that enables learners to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire during the learning process [5, 9-30]. Rather than treating languages as separate and compartmentalized systems, translanguaging acknowledges the integrated nature of multilingual competence and encourages learners to mobilize their linguistic resources dynamically in order to construct meaning and support communication.

The present study is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that draws upon three complementary perspectives in multilingualism and second language acquisition research. These perspectives collectively provide a conceptual basis for understanding how prior linguistic knowledge influences the learning of English among Karakalpak-Uzbek bilingual learners. Specifically, the framework incorporates the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, Dynamic Systems Theory, and the Plurilingual Competence Model. The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis posits that proficiency in one language can support the development of proficiency in another through shared underlying cognitive and academic processes. Rather than functioning as isolated systems, languages are viewed as interconnected within a common underlying proficiency that enables transfer of knowledge, skills, and strategies across linguistic boundaries.

From this perspective, competencies developed in Karakalpak and Uzbek – such as grammatical awareness, narrative structuring, and conceptual categorization – may facilitate the acquisition of English. The hypothesis thus provides a theoretical explanation for positive cross-linguistic transfer and supports the notion that prior linguistic knowledge constitutes a resource rather than an obstacle in additional language learning. Dynamic Systems Theory conceptualizes language learning as a nonlinear and adaptive process shaped by the interaction of multiple cognitive, social, and linguistic factors. Within this framework, multilingual development is not viewed as the sequential accumulation of separate language systems but as an evolving and interconnected process influenced by continuous interaction among linguistic resources. Language competence is therefore understood as dynamic and context-sensitive. The presence of multiple languages within a learner's repertoire may lead to fluctuating dominance patterns, cross-linguistic interaction, and developmental variability. This perspective is particularly relevant in multilingual environments such as Karakalpakstan, where learners navigate overlapping linguistic systems on a daily basis.

The Plurilingual Competence Model challenges traditional monolingual views of language proficiency by conceptualizing multilingual individuals as possessing an integrated communicative repertoire rather than separate language competencies [2, 45]. Within this model, languages interact dynamically and are mobilized according to communicative needs and sociocultural contexts.

This perspective aligns with contemporary views of multilingualism as a flexible and adaptive resource that enhances communicative effectiveness. It also provides theoretical support for pedagogical approaches that encourage the strategic use of multiple languages in the learning process. By recognizing the legitimacy of translanguaging practices, the plurilingual model underscores the potential of multilingual competence to support English language acquisition.

Methods. The present study employed a mixed-methods research design in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how multilingual competence influences English language learning. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed for both the measurement of language proficiency outcomes and the exploration of learners' cognitive and linguistic experiences. Mixed-methods design is widely recognized as particularly suitable for educational and sociolinguistic research, as it enables the triangulation of data sources and strengthens the validity of findings. In the context of multilingualism studies, such an approach is essential because language learning is shaped by both measurable performance indicators and subjective learner perceptions.

The design followed a convergent parallel model, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same time frame and analyzed independently before being integrated for interpretation. The study involved 60 undergraduate university students enrolled in English language programs. The participants represented multilingual backgrounds typical of the Karakalpakstan educational context.

They were divided into three groups according to their linguistic profiles:

- Karakalpak–Uzbek bilingual learners
- Uzbek-dominant bilingual learners
- Predominantly Uzbek-speaking learners with limited Karakalpak proficiency

All participants were studying English at the B1–B2 proficiency levels based on institutional placement standards aligned with CEFR descriptors. Participant selection followed purposive sampling in order to ensure representation of multilingual learners who regularly use more than one Turkic language in academic and social contexts.

Figure 1. Participant Distribution by Linguistic Background

Group	Linguistic Profile	Number of Students
A	Karakalpak–Uzbek bilingual	20
B	Uzbek-dominant bilingual	20
C	Primarily Uzbek-speaking	20

Multiple research instruments were employed to ensure methodological triangulation.

A standardized institutional English proficiency assessment was used to evaluate participants' performance in reading, writing, and grammar. Such testing provides objective measures of linguistic competence and allows comparison across learner groups.

A structured questionnaire was administered to assess learners' ability to reflect on linguistic forms and compare language systems. Questionnaire-based methods are commonly used in multilingualism research to examine cognitive awareness and language attitudes [3, 20-23].

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to explore their perceptions of multilingual learning and cross-linguistic influence. This method enables deeper insight into learner experiences and supports interpretive analysis.

Classroom observations were used to document authentic language use and translanguaging practices during instruction. Observational data are particularly valuable in capturing naturally occurring multilingual interaction.

Data were collected over the course of one academic semester. The procedure followed a sequential structure:

1. Initial proficiency testing
2. Administration of questionnaires
3. Classroom observation sessions
4. Follow-up interviews

Collecting data across an extended period enhanced reliability and allowed for observation of consistent learning patterns rather than isolated performance.

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed.

Quantitative data from proficiency tests and questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare performance across learner groups. Statistical comparison is essential for identifying patterns of linguistic advantage associated with multilingual competence.

Qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations were analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring patterns related to transfer, strategy use, and learner perceptions.

Results. Analysis of the English language proficiency tests indicated that multilingual learners outperformed their monolingual peers, particularly in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Descriptive statistics revealed that students with Karakalpak–Uzbek bilingual backgrounds scored significantly higher in lexical recognition and inferencing tasks compared to predominantly Uzbek-speaking students. These findings support previous research suggesting that prior multilingual competence enhances cognitive strategies for vocabulary retention and reading comprehension.

Table 1. English Proficiency Scores by Learner Group

Learner Group	Reading Mean (SD)	Vocabulary Mean (SD)	Grammar Mean (SD)
Karakalpak–	82.3 (5.4)	78.6 (6.1)	74.2 (5.9)

Uzbek bilingual			
Uzbek-dominant bilingual	77.1 (6.2)	72.8 (5.7)	70.5 (6.3)
Predominantly Uzbek-speaking	71.4 (7.0)	68.9 (6.9)	65.2 (7.4)

Data from the metalinguistic awareness questionnaires indicated that multilingual learners displayed higher analytical sensitivity to linguistic structures. These participants were more adept at identifying syntactic and morphological patterns and demonstrating awareness of language rules, consistent with the findings of Jessner [4, 15-56]. Observational data further revealed that bilingual students frequently compared linguistic structures across languages when attempting to construct English sentences, demonstrating conscious reflection on language as a system.

Analysis of transfer patterns identified both positive and negative effects of prior language knowledge on English acquisition. Positive transfer was observed in the application of agglutinative morphological understanding to word formation and in syntactic comparisons that facilitated sentence structuring. Conversely, negative transfer manifested in overgeneralization errors, such as the omission of English articles or incorrect preposition use, consistent with previous research on cross-linguistic influence in Turkic-English contexts [4, 23 p.]. These findings confirm that while multilingualism provides cognitive advantages, structural differences between source and target languages can lead to predictable interference.

Observational and interview data indicated that multilingual learners employed a variety of flexible communication strategies to overcome linguistic challenges. Strategies included code-switching, semantic approximation, and circumlocution, which allowed students to maintain communicative effectiveness despite gaps in English vocabulary or grammar. Such adaptive strategies align with translanguaging theory, which emphasizes the dynamic utilization of all available linguistic resources in multilingual learners.

Discussion. The findings of this study provide strong evidence that multilingual competence confers significant cognitive advantages in the process of English language acquisition. Learners who possess Karakalpak–Uzbek bilingual backgrounds demonstrated enhanced executive control, including improved attention regulation, task-switching abilities, and working memory capacity. In the present study, this cognitive advantage appeared to facilitate not only reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition but also the strategic management of cross-linguistic interference.

The analysis of cross-linguistic transfer patterns indicates that existing linguistic knowledge can significantly facilitate English language learning. Positive transfer was particularly evident in the learners' ability to manipulate morphological structures and recognize syntactic patterns, reflecting the structural similarities between Turkic languages and English in certain domains, such as word formation and flexible word order. These

results underscore the principle of linguistic interdependence, whereby competencies developed in one language provide a foundation for acquiring additional languages. At the same time, the results confirm that this facilitation is context-specific and moderated by structural differences between the source and target languages.

The study highlights the importance of integrating multilingual strategies into English language teaching. Classroom observations and interviews demonstrated that learners benefited from opportunities to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire, for example through translanguaging practices, code-switching, and explicit cross-linguistic comparison. Such approaches are consistent with contemporary ELT recommendations advocating for the strategic use of learners' first languages as scaffolding tools. Accordingly, pedagogical designs should move away from strictly monolingual frameworks and instead promote dynamic, linguistically inclusive instruction that recognizes and leverages the cognitive and metalinguistic resources of multilingual learners.

Despite the overall benefits, the study also identified persistent challenges associated with multilingualism. Negative transfer, such as the omission of articles or preposition misuse, reflects structural interference from the learners' first languages. Such interference may slow certain aspects of language acquisition, particularly in grammatical domains where the target language differs markedly from Turkic structures. Furthermore, sociolinguistic factors, including language dominance and learners' affective attitudes toward English versus their native languages, may influence the extent of both facilitative and inhibitory effects. These findings suggest that while multilingualism is a cognitive and pedagogical resource, targeted instructional strategies are necessary to mitigate interference and maximize learning outcomes.

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