

TRANSLANGUAGING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS IN UZBEKISTAN: UZBEK, RUSSIAN, AND ENGLISH AS PEDAGOGICAL RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT. Uzbekistan's educational environment is multilingual: learners may use Uzbek, Russian, and English across academic and everyday contexts. Nevertheless, English language teaching has often been influenced by monolingual assumptions that treat the use of learners' other languages as interference. This conceptual paper examines translanguaging as a planned pedagogical approach that draws on students' complete linguistic repertoires while retaining English as the primary target language. The analysis synthesizes foundational scholarship on multilingual pedagogy, official and institutional sources concerning language education in Uzbekistan, and a bounded reflective vignette based on the author's educational experience in Andijan and Tashkent. The paper identifies five principal functions of pedagogical translanguaging: clarifying complex concepts, developing metalinguistic awareness, reducing language-related anxiety, supporting classroom participation, and strengthening academic literacy. It also discusses practical strategies for vocabulary instruction, grammar comparison, collaborative discussion, reading, and academic writing. The analysis emphasizes that translanguaging is most effective when it is purposeful, limited, inclusive, and followed by meaningful English-language production. The paper concludes that teacher education and curriculum development in Uzbekistan should equip teachers to make principled decisions about when multilingual support facilitates learning and when learners need sustained interaction in English.

Keywords: translanguaging; English language teaching; multilingual education; Uzbek; Russian; English; pedagogical scaffolding.

АННОТАЦИЯ. Образовательная среда Узбекистана носит многоязычный характер: учащиеся используют узбекский, русский и английский языки в учебном и повседневном общении. Вместе с тем преподавание английского языка нередко основывается на монолингвальной установке, согласно которой обращение к другим языкам обучающихся

рассматривается как помеха. В статье анализируется транслингвальный подход как целенаправленная педагогическая стратегия, позволяющая использовать совокупный языковой репертуар студентов при сохранении английского языка в качестве основного целевого языка обучения. Исследование имеет концептуально-аналитический характер и опирается на труды по многоязычной педагогике, официальные и институциональные материалы о языковом образовании в Узбекистане, а также на ограниченный рефлексивный пример из образовательного опыта автора в Андижанской области и Ташкенте. Выделены основные функции педагогического транслингвального подхода: объяснение сложных понятий, развитие метаязыковой осведомлённости, снижение языковой тревожности, активизация участия в занятиях и поддержка академической грамотности. Показано, что такой подход эффективен при условии его осознанного, дозированного и инклюзивного применения с обязательным переходом к содержательной речевой деятельности на английском языке.

Ключевые слова: транслингвальный подход; преподавание английского языка; многоязычное образование; узбекский язык; русский язык; английский язык; педагогическая поддержка.

ANNOTATSIYA. O‘zbekiston ta’lim muhiti ko‘p tilli xususiyatga ega bo‘lib, o‘quvchilar akademik va kundalik muloqotda o‘zbek, rus va ingliz tillaridan foydalanadilar. Shunga qaramay, ingliz tilini o‘qitish amaliyotida o‘quvchilarning boshqa tillariga murojaat qilishni xalaqit sifatida talqin etuvchi bir tillilik tamoyili hanuz uchrab turadi. Ushbu konseptual-tahliliy maqolada translanguaging o‘quvchilarning mavjud til repertuaridan maqsadli foydalanishga asoslangan pedagogik yondashuv sifatida ko‘rib chiqiladi; bunda ingliz tili asosiy maqsadli til bo‘lib qoladi. Tahlil ko‘p tilli pedagogikaga oid fundamental tadqiqotlar, O‘zbekistondagi til ta’limiga doir rasmiy va institutsional manbalar hamda muallifning Andijon viloyati va Toshkentdagi ta’lim tajribasiga asoslangan cheklangan refleksiv misolni birlashtiradi. Translanguagingning besh asosiy vazifasi aniqlanadi: murakkab tushunchalarni izohlash, metatil ongini rivojlantirish, til bilan bog‘liq xavotirni kamaytirish, darsdagi faollikni oshirish va akademik savodxonlikni qo‘llab-quvvatlash. Yondashuv maqsadli, me‘yorlangan va inklyuziv tarzda qo‘llanib, undan keyin ingliz tilida mazmunli nutqiy faoliyat tashkil etilgandagina samarali bo‘lishi ta’kidlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: translanguaging; ingliz tilini o‘qitish; ko‘p tilli ta’lim; o‘zbek tili; rus tili; ingliz tili; pedagogik tayanch.

1. INTRODUCTION

For much of the twentieth century, English language teaching was shaped by a monolingual principle: the target language was expected to be the only legitimate language of classroom interaction. This position was associated with the belief that first-language use would cause interference, reduce exposure to English, and delay the development of communicative competence. Although sustained exposure to the target language remains essential, research in bilingual and multilingual education has challenged the assumption that previously acquired languages must be excluded from learning. Learners do not enter an English classroom without knowledge. They bring conceptual understanding, literacy practices, academic vocabulary, and learning strategies developed through the languages they already use (Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2007).

This issue is particularly relevant in Uzbekistan, where the educational landscape includes several languages of instruction and where Uzbek, Russian, and English may perform different but overlapping functions. Uzbek is the state language, Russian remains widely used in many urban, academic, and professional settings, and English has become increasingly important for international education, research, employment, and mobility. Official initiatives have also placed considerable emphasis on improving foreign-language teaching and teacher preparation (British Council Uzbekistan, n.d.-a; President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021; UNESCO, 2025). Consequently, many students encounter English after developing academic knowledge through Uzbek, Russian, or both.

Translanguaging offers a framework for understanding how multilingual learners use their linguistic resources to construct meaning. It does not simply refer to casual translation or random switching between named languages. In pedagogical terms, it involves planned decisions that allow learners to draw on their full repertoires in order to understand content, notice linguistic patterns, collaborate, and prepare for production in the target language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; García & Li, 2014). The central question is therefore not whether Uzbek and Russian should replace English, but under what conditions they can serve as temporary and purposeful resources for learning English.

Despite growing international interest in translanguaging, its pedagogical implications for English classrooms in Uzbekistan require more context-sensitive discussion. General arguments in favor of multilingualism are insufficient unless they are translated into classroom procedures, boundaries, and teacher decision-making criteria. An approach that permits unrestricted translation may reduce meaningful English interaction, whereas a rigid English-only policy may prevent

learners from using relevant prior knowledge. A balanced model must therefore identify both the functions and the limits of multilingual support.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how planned translanguaging can support English language learning in Uzbekistan and to propose practical principles for its responsible use. The paper addresses three questions: (1) What pedagogical functions can translanguaging serve in English classrooms? (2) What risks and limitations should teachers consider? and (3) What implications does the approach have for teacher education and curriculum development in Uzbekistan?

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. From monolingual instruction to multilingual pedagogy

The monolingual principle treats languages as separate systems and often assumes that effective learning requires strict boundaries between them. This view has influenced language policies, teacher beliefs, and classroom routines. However, multilingual learners frequently connect new linguistic forms with concepts and patterns already available in other languages. Cummins (2007) argues that knowledge and academic abilities developed through one language can support learning through another. From this perspective, previous languages are not merely sources of interference; they can also provide cognitive and metalinguistic resources.

Translanguaging theory extends this argument by focusing on the integrated repertoires of multilingual speakers. García and Li (2014) describe multilingual meaning-making as a dynamic process that cannot always be explained by treating languages as completely independent codes. Li (2018) further presents translanguaging as a practical theory of language that reflects the fluid communicative practices of contemporary multilingual speakers. The relevance of this perspective to education lies in its recognition that learners may think, interpret, compare, and plan across languages even when the final communicative product is expected in English.

At the same time, the theoretical concept should not be converted into a simplistic permission to use any language at any time. MacSwan (2017) cautions against treating all multilingual behavior as evidence of a single undifferentiated linguistic system. For classroom practice, this debate reinforces the need for precision: teachers must identify the specific learning objective, the function of multilingual support, and the expected English-language outcome.

2.2. Pedagogical translanguaging as planned scaffolding

A useful distinction can be made between spontaneous translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging. Spontaneous translanguaging occurs naturally when multilingual speakers use available linguistic resources to communicate. Pedagogical translanguaging, by contrast, consists of planned instructional activities

that activate two or more languages to improve language or content learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). This distinction is important because the educational value of translanguaging depends not only on the presence of multiple languages, but also on how their use is structured.

In this paper, pedagogical translanguaging is understood as a form of scaffolding. Scaffolding provides temporary support that enables learners to perform tasks they could not yet complete independently. In an English lesson, a brief explanation in Uzbek or Russian, a contrastive grammar task, or multilingual brainstorming may reduce the cognitive burden of a difficult activity. The support should then be gradually withdrawn as learners become able to understand and produce meaning in English. Thus, the sequence is not “other language instead of English,” but “existing knowledge as a bridge toward English.”

This approach is compatible with the principle that learners need substantial and meaningful exposure to English. The amount of multilingual support should vary according to proficiency, task complexity, age, and the purpose of instruction. Beginner learners may require more explicit support, while advanced learners may benefit mainly from brief conceptual clarification or cross-linguistic analysis. In all cases, the teacher should make the purpose of the language choice transparent.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND SCOPE

This article is a conceptual and analytical paper rather than an empirical study. It uses an integrative review approach to synthesize foundational scholarship on translanguaging, multilingual education, bilingual pedagogy, and academic literacy. The sources were selected because they establish key theoretical concepts or provide directly relevant pedagogical principles. The review is not presented as a systematic review, and it does not claim exhaustive coverage of the international literature.

To situate the discussion in Uzbekistan, the paper also considers official and institutional materials relating to multilingual education and foreign-language reform. These sources are used to describe the policy and educational context rather than to measure classroom outcomes. The analytical discussion is organized around five categories that recur across the literature: comprehension, metalinguistic awareness, participation and anxiety, academic literacy, and teacher mediation.

A short reflective vignette based on the author’s educational experience is included as an illustrative example. The author completed secondary education in a Russian-medium school in a rural area of the Andijan region and later continued higher education in multilingual Tashkent. This reflection is used to connect theoretical concepts with a recognizable educational trajectory. It is not treated as representative evidence, and no claims are made about the experiences of all students

in Uzbekistan. Because the paper does not collect participant data, it does not report statistical findings or causal effects.

4. THE MULTILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan provides a significant setting for multilingual education. Schooling is available through several languages, reflecting the country's linguistic diversity (UNESCO, 2025). Within this broader environment, Uzbek, Russian, and English often occupy different positions. Uzbek is central to national public life and education; Russian continues to be used in a range of educational, scientific, professional, and interpersonal contexts; and English is increasingly connected with international academic communication and access to global knowledge.

National and international initiatives have sought to improve English curricula, teacher preparation, proficiency standards, and classroom practice in Uzbekistan (British Council Uzbekistan, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). These reforms increase the need for effective English instruction, but they do not eliminate the multilingual knowledge that students bring to class. A learner who has studied science, history, or literature through Uzbek or Russian already possesses concepts and academic practices that can support English learning. Treating those resources as irrelevant may increase cognitive load and create unnecessary barriers.

The multilingual character of Tashkent is especially visible in universities and other educational institutions that bring together students from different regions and language backgrounds. Students may read English sources, discuss an assignment in Uzbek or Russian, and then prepare a presentation or written submission in English. Such movement across languages should not automatically be interpreted as insufficient motivation or competence. In many cases, it is a practical way of organizing knowledge before target-language production.

Nevertheless, context matters. Not every student knows Uzbek and Russian to the same degree, and teachers may not share all of their learners' languages. A responsible translanguaging approach must therefore avoid turning one additional language into a new compulsory norm. Multilingual support should be flexible and inclusive: learners may use the language in which they can think most effectively, while shared classroom outcomes remain accessible to the entire group.

5. PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTIONS AND CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

5.1. Clarifying vocabulary and complex concepts

Vocabulary learning is often most difficult when a word represents an abstract, technical, or culturally unfamiliar concept. An English-only explanation may be appropriate when the surrounding context is sufficient, but it may also consume substantial lesson time without ensuring understanding. In such cases, a brief Uzbek

or Russian equivalent, definition, or example can establish the core concept. The teacher should then return immediately to English through examples, collocations, sentence construction, or discussion.

The pedagogical value lies in separating conceptual difficulty from linguistic practice. Once learners understand what a term means, they can devote more attention to pronunciation, grammatical behavior, register, and use. Multilingual glossaries can also support this process, particularly when students create them collaboratively and include definitions rather than one-word translations. The final task should require learners to use the target vocabulary in English.

5.2. Developing metalinguistic awareness through comparison

Uzbek, Russian, and English differ in word order, morphology, articles, tense and aspect, prepositions, and other grammatical features. These differences can cause errors, but they also create opportunities for contrastive noticing. For example, comparing the Uzbek sentence “Men ingliz tilini yoqtiraman” with “I like English” can help learners notice the different position of the verb. Russian may provide a useful comparison for categories such as grammatical gender or aspect, while English may introduce structures that do not have direct equivalents.

Contrastive tasks should focus on patterns rather than on literal translation. Learners can underline corresponding elements, identify what is absent or added, explain why a direct translation sounds unnatural, and then produce new English examples. This process develops metalinguistic awareness and encourages learners to see grammar as an organized system rather than a list of isolated rules.

5.3. Supporting participation and reducing language-related anxiety

Students may remain silent during English discussions even when they understand the topic. The difficulty may arise from the simultaneous demands of generating ideas, organizing an argument, selecting vocabulary, and monitoring grammar. A short multilingual planning stage can reduce this burden. Learners may brainstorm in Uzbek or Russian, compare ideas with a partner, and identify the English expressions they need before reporting to the class.

This procedure changes the function of the additional language: it becomes preparation for English communication rather than an alternative to it. The teacher can set a clear time limit and define the English output in advance. For example, pairs may have three minutes to organize ideas in any language, after which each student must present one point in English. Such structured support can increase participation without allowing the lesson to lose its target-language focus (Lewis et al., 2012).

5.4. Reading and academic writing

University students are often expected to read research literature and produce academic texts in English before they can process complex ideas fluently in that language. Translanguaging can support the planning and comprehension stages of academic literacy. Students may annotate a difficult text in Uzbek or Russian, discuss the argument in a familiar language, or prepare a multilingual concept map. They can then write an English summary that demonstrates understanding of the original source.

In writing, multilingual resources are particularly useful during idea generation and organization. A student may create an outline in Uzbek, discuss a research concept in Russian, and draft the final paper in English. Canagarajah (2011) notes that multilingual writers often draw on their complete repertoires during composing. The educational objective should not be to prohibit this internal process, but to teach students how to revise the final English text for clarity, coherence, accuracy, and disciplinary conventions.

Teachers should distinguish between support for composing and the requirements of the final product. When the learning outcome is English academic writing, the submitted text should normally be in English. When the objective is subject knowledge rather than language proficiency, assessment policies may permit broader multilingual resources. Clear criteria prevent confusion and help learners understand why different tasks have different language requirements.

5.5. A practical decision framework

Table 1 summarizes classroom applications of pedagogical translanguaging and the safeguards needed to maintain English-language development.

Learnin g challenge	Planned multilingual support	Requir ed English outcome	Intended benefit	Safegua rd
Abstract or technical vocabulary	Brief explanation, example, or multilingual glossary	Use the term in an English sentence or discussion	Faster conceptual access	Return immediately to English practice
Unfamil iar grammar	Contrasti ve comparison across Uzbek,	Produc e new English examples	Metalinguis tic awareness	Avoid word-for- word

Learnin g challenge	Planned multilingual support	Requir ed English outcome	Intended benefit	Safegua rd
	Russian, and English			translation as the final goal
Silence during discussion	Time- limited brainstorming in a familiar language	English report-out or presentation	Reduced anxiety and improved participation	Specify time limit and output before the task
Dense academic reading	Annotatio ns or peer explanation in another language	English summary, response, or critique	Deeper comprehension	Check understanding through English evidence
Academ ic writing	Multiling ual outlining and idea development	Revised final text in English	Improved organization and argumentation	Assess English conventions separately
Mixed- proficiency group work	Peer mediation using available languages	Shared English product	Inclusive collaboration	Do not privilege one additional language over others

6. REFLECTIVE VIGNETTE: FROM RURAL ANDIJAN TO MULTILINGUAL TASHKENT

The author's educational trajectory illustrates how official language arrangements and everyday classroom practice may differ. Secondary education was completed in a Russian-medium school in a rural area of the Andijan region. Although textbooks, formal tasks, and assessment were primarily in Russian, Uzbek was frequently used by teachers and students to clarify difficult concepts, solve communication problems, and maintain interaction. Academic knowledge was therefore developed through more than one linguistic resource.

After entering university in Tashkent, the author encountered a setting in which Russian was used more actively in academic and social communication, while English became increasingly important for reading international literature, completing assignments, and developing professional competence. This transition made visible the complementary roles of the three languages. Uzbek supported familiar conceptual understanding and identity, Russian enabled access to particular academic and interpersonal networks, and English opened access to wider scholarly and professional communication.

This vignette should not be generalized to all learners. Its value is analytical: it shows that multilingual students do not begin English learning from zero and do not necessarily experience their languages as separate compartments. Classroom pedagogy can either recognize this accumulated knowledge or require students to suppress it. A translanguaging perspective favors recognition, but it also requires teachers to channel multilingual resources toward clearly defined English-learning outcomes.

7. CONDITIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RISKS

Translanguaging is not automatically effective. Its benefits depend on the quality of teacher planning, the linguistic composition of the group, the learning objective, and the amount of target-language practice that follows. Several limitations require particular attention.

- Overdependence on translation. If every English explanation is immediately repeated in Uzbek or Russian, learners may wait for translation and reduce their effort to process English. Multilingual support should be selective rather than routine.
- Reduced English interaction. A lesson can become dominated by a familiar language when the teacher does not define an English-language product. Each multilingual stage should lead to a specific English task.
- Unequal inclusion. Some students may know Uzbek but not Russian, or Russian but not Uzbek. Teachers should permit flexible language choices and avoid creating a new hierarchy in which one additional language becomes compulsory.
- Teacher competence. A teacher may not be able to verify explanations provided in every language used by students. Peer support, visual resources, bilingual dictionaries, and learner-generated glossaries can reduce this problem, but the teacher must still monitor the accuracy of the final English output.
- Assessment validity. Language choices must reflect what is being assessed. An English proficiency test requires English performance, whereas a

content-learning task may allow multilingual planning. These expectations should be explicit.

- Lack of empirical evidence in the local context. The present article offers a conceptual analysis and an illustrative reflection; it does not establish causal effects in Uzbekistan. Classroom observation, learner interviews, teacher studies, and comparative intervention research are needed.

A practical principle follows from these limitations: pedagogical translanguaging should be purposeful, brief, inclusive, transparent, and connected to English output. Teachers should be able to explain why another language is being used, how long the support will continue, and what learners must subsequently accomplish in English.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Teacher education in Uzbekistan should move beyond the simple opposition between “English only” and “free translation.” Future teachers need criteria for deciding when multilingual support is pedagogically justified. Training can include lesson-planning tasks in which teachers identify the objective, anticipate the linguistic difficulty, select a limited translanguaging strategy, and define the final English outcome. Microteaching and observation can then evaluate whether the support increased participation and understanding without reducing target-language engagement.

Teacher preparation should also develop contrastive linguistic awareness. English teachers do not need to become formal linguists in all of their students’ languages, but they should understand frequent cross-linguistic differences that influence learning. Knowledge of common Uzbek-English and Russian-English contrasts can help teachers anticipate errors and design noticing activities. At the same time, teachers should learn inclusive practices for classes in which students have different linguistic repertoires.

Curriculum documents can recognize English as the principal language of instruction while explicitly allowing strategic multilingual scaffolding. Such guidance would reduce inconsistency between teachers who prohibit all other languages and those who rely on continuous translation. Textbooks and digital materials can include multilingual concept maps, contrastive grammar prompts, glossary-building tasks, and stages that move from multilingual comprehension to English production.

Assessment policies should distinguish learning processes from assessed products. Students may use multiple languages while planning, discussing, or researching, but the final language of performance should correspond to the learning

outcome. Transparent criteria will help learners understand that translanguaging is a resource for developing English competence, not a way to avoid it.

Finally, local research should examine how translanguaging functions across regions, school types, age groups, and proficiency levels. Particular attention should be given to student perceptions, teacher beliefs, the balance of Uzbek and Russian in mixed groups, and measurable effects on vocabulary, participation, and academic writing. Such evidence would allow Uzbekistan-specific recommendations to develop beyond conceptual arguments.

9. CONCLUSION

The multilingual realities of Uzbekistan challenge the assumption that English learning must be separated completely from the languages students already know. Uzbek and Russian can support English development when they are used as temporary pedagogical resources for comprehension, comparison, planning, and collaboration. Their value lies not in replacing English, but in connecting new learning with established knowledge.

This paper has identified five central functions of pedagogical translanguaging: conceptual clarification, metalinguistic awareness, participation and anxiety reduction, academic literacy support, and teacher-mediated scaffolding. It has also emphasized the limits of the approach. Unplanned translation, excessive reliance on familiar languages, unequal inclusion, and unclear assessment criteria can weaken English learning. Effective practice therefore requires purposeful design and an explicit transition to English-language production.

For Uzbekistan, the most productive direction is neither a rigid English-only policy nor unrestricted language switching. It is a principled multilingual pedagogy in which teachers understand when, why, and how learners' linguistic repertoires can advance English proficiency. Incorporating these principles into teacher education, curriculum guidance, and classroom research can contribute to more inclusive, realistic, and effective English language teaching.

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