PRESERVING AND DEVELOPING NATIVE LANGUAGE (UZBEK) IDENTITY IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

Nabiyeva Dilshoda Urakovna

Senior lecturer, Shahrisabz state pedagogical institute

Abstract. This article examines strategies for preserving Uzbek language identity while teaching Russian as a foreign language in Uzbekistan. Drawing on translanguaging theory and bilingual education research, the study analyzes how code-switching and additive bilingualism can support rather than undermine students' native language development. Key pedagogical approaches include bilingual lexical processing, cultural-linguistic comparison, and structured translanguaging spaces that validate students' full linguistic repertoires. The analysis demonstrates that effective Russian language instruction requires simultaneous development of Russian proficiency and strengthening of Uzbek identity, positioning both languages as complementary cognitive and cultural assets.

Keywords: Russian foreign language teaching, Uzbek language identity, translanguaging, bilingual education, heritage language maintenance, additive bilingualism.

Since the Soviet period, the position of the Russian language in Uzbekistan has undergone complex evolution. After gaining independence, the Uzbek language was strengthened as the state language and was subsequently enshrined in the 1995 Constitution [Hämmä and Aro, 2024]. However, the Russian language has maintained significant positions in social life, the education system, and scientific spheres. Currently, Russian is taught without knowledge of Uzbek, which creates challenges for preserving students' native language identity [Davlyatova and Mamadjanova, 2024]. This process carries not only pedagogical but also socio-political significance, as language identity constitutes a fundamental component of national identity [Lee, 2002; Cummins, 1994].

Bilingualism in Uzbekistan possesses complex characteristics. On one hand, the Uzbek language is supported as the primary symbol of national identity; on the other hand, Russian is used in scientific, technical, and official domains [Oltiboyeva, 2025]. This language policy affects students' language identity formation, as they must navigate between two different cultural-linguistic environments [Buri, 2024]. Research demonstrates that maintaining the native language plays a crucial role in forming students' personal identity and provides cognitive advantages for bilingual development [Phinney et al., 2001; Cummins, 1994].

The theoretical foundations of language identity draw upon Lambert's [1975] acculturation models, which suggest that bilingual learners may develop in different directions: integration (maintaining cultural heritage while adopting new cultural features), assimilation (replacing cultural heritage with new features), separation (maintaining cultural heritage while rejecting new features), or marginalization (rejecting both cultural heritages) [Lambert, 1975; Hämmä and Aro, 2024]. An approach aimed at preserving Uzbek language identity while teaching Russian facilitates the implementation of integration strategies.

Code-switching represents a widespread phenomenon in Uzbekistan, demonstrating free movement between Uzbek, Russian, and English languages [Oltiboyeva, 2025; Lingvospektr, 2025]. This process complicates students' language identity, as they use different languages in various social contexts. For instance, while Uzbek is associated with family and national identity, Russian is employed in scientific and official domains [Buri, 2024]. García and Lin [2016] have proposed the concept of translanguaging, which refers to multilingual individuals' free and fluid use of all their linguistic resources [García and Lin, 2016; García, 2009].

The distinction between translanguaging and code-switching is theoretically significant. Code-switching refers to the external alternation between named languages as defined by political states and school systems, while translanguaging represents the internal perspective of

what speakers do with language that is simply their own [García and Kleyn, 2017]. For example, when bilingual individuals communicate at home, they use their full linguistic repertoire because no one monitors or hierarchizes their language practices [García and Kleyn, 2017]. This natural pattern of language use characterizes all bilingual communities and should be leveraged in educational settings.

Research indicates that parental attitudes toward code-switching negatively correlate with heritage language use, while efforts to transmit cultural heritage positively predict successful heritage language maintenance [Phinney et al., 2001]. Grandparents play a central role in encouraging heritage language transmission and maintenance, with strong correlations observed between parental efforts and children's ability to communicate with extended family [Phinney et al., 2001]. This finding is particularly relevant for Uzbekistan, where extended family networks remain strong and intergenerational transmission of language and culture is highly valued.

The lexical and grammatical differences between Uzbek and Russian present challenges for learners [Xabibova and Bafoeva, 2025]. Uzbek is an agglutinative language that expresses grammatical meanings through suffixes attached to word stems, while Russian uses inflectional endings that change according to case, number, and gender. These differences may strengthen students' desire to return to their native language. However, translanguaging pedagogical strategies can transform these differences into learning opportunities. Baker [2001] identified four potential educational advantages of translanguaging: it may promote deeper understanding of subject matter; help develop the weaker language; facilitate home-school links and cooperation; and help integrate fluent speakers with early learners [Baker, 2001].

In inclusive education contexts, the position of the Uzbek language acquires special significance. Davlyatova and Mamadjanova [2024] demonstrated the difficulties of teaching Russian without knowledge of Uzbek [Davlyatova and Mamadjanova, 2024]. This situation requires additional measures to preserve students' native language identity. Vygotsky's [1929] social speech theory emphasizes that language learning is a social process and that students' native language constitutes an important component of their cognitive development [Yakovleva et al., 2021]. Therefore, instead of neglecting Uzbek in Russian language teaching, strategies for developing both languages simultaneously should be applied.

The implementation of translanguaging pedagogy requires specific classroom strategies. According to García and Kleyn [2017], educators can create welcoming language environments by encouraging students to use all their language abilities without fear of correction or restriction, and by acknowledging and celebrating all languages spoken in the classroom [García and Kleyn, 2017]. Building bridges between languages through cognates and comparing idioms across languages deepens understanding. Incorporating multilingual resources, utilizing arts and expression, and involving school leadership are essential components of effective translanguaging pedagogy [García and Kleyn, 2017].

Research has demonstrated that translanguaging pedagogy serves as an effective instructional method for multilingual learners in dual-language bilingual education [Van Der Wal, 2025]. Educators better serve multilingual learners by examining language ideologies of bilingualism, establishing a strong foundation for critical consciousness, allowing multilingual students to use their "funds of knowledge" in their learning, and creating critical translanguaging spaces in the classroom [Van Der Wal, 2025]. The use of all linguistic resources reduces barriers in the classroom and enables students to demonstrate better participation and content and language understanding [Van Der Wal, 2025].

Through translanguaging, emergent bilingual students use all of their linguistic and cognitive resources to better understand content provided to them in a language they have just begun to learn [García, 2009]. This involves educators recognizing students' dynamic bilingualism as an asset in the classroom rather than elevating the target language above all other languages. Even in Russian-medium classrooms, teachers who recognize the power of children's fluid language practices should leverage their full language repertoire [García and Kleyn, 2017].

The relationship between heritage language maintenance and academic success is well-documented. Environmental factors, including the quality and quantity of oral interactions, have been identified as related to vocabulary acquisition and general academic success [Phinney et al., 2001]. The density of heritage speakers in children's communities plays a crucial role in the ethnolinguistic vitality of a particular community, leading to higher levels of proficiency [Phinney et al., 2001]. For Uzbekistan, this suggests that creating dense networks of Uzbek language use within educational institutions can support both language maintenance and academic achievement.

The transition of the Uzbek language to the Latin alphabet, which began in 1993, also affects language identity preservation. While this process represents the modernization of the Uzbek language, it creates challenges for maintaining the historical heritage associated with the Cyrillic script used by the Russian language [David Publisher, 2024]. The education system must resolve the tension between these two writing systems. This orthographic transition represents what Spolsky [2004] termed "language management," where explicit efforts are made to modify language practices within a community [Shraiteh, n.d.].

Cummins [1994] interdependence hypothesis suggests that development of the native language provides a foundation for second language acquisition [Cummins, 1994]. According to this hypothesis, instruction that develops literacy in the native language can effectively transfer to the second language once sufficient proficiency has been attained. This theoretical framework supports the integration of Uzbek language development within Russian language programs, rather than strict separation of languages.

The concept of "linguistic interdependence" is particularly relevant for Uzbek-Russian bilingual education. Research has shown that children who develop high levels of proficiency in their native language acquire second language proficiency more easily [Cummins, 1994]. This finding challenges subtractive bilingual education models that neglect native language development in favor of exclusive focus on the target language. Instead, additive bilingualism, where the native language is maintained and developed alongside the second language, produces superior educational outcomes [Cummins, 1994].

Fillmore [2000] raised critical questions about family language loss, asking whether educators should be concerned when children lose their native languages [Fillmore, 2000]. The answer, supported by extensive research, is affirmative: loss of family languages represents loss of cultural heritage, family communication patterns, and identity. Educators bear responsibility for supporting heritage language maintenance, particularly in contexts where the native language holds national significance, as Uzbek does in Uzbekistan.

Lee [2002] examined the role of cultural identity in heritage language development among Korean-American parents, finding that parents who strongly identify with their cultural heritage are more likely to prioritize heritage language maintenance and fluency [Lee, 2002]. This research has direct applicability to Uzbekistan, where national identity is closely tied to the Uzbek language. Parents and educators who strongly identify with Uzbek culture are more likely to engage in practices that support Uzbek language maintenance alongside Russian language development.

The sociopolitical context of language education in Uzbekistan requires careful consideration. Hämmä and Aro [2024] analyzed Russian inclusive education policies, noting that the concept of inclusion extends beyond physical access to classrooms to encompass meaningful participation in educational experiences [Hämmä and Aro, 2024]. For language education, this means that inclusion must address linguistic diversity and support students' full linguistic repertoires, not merely provide access to Russian-medium instruction.

The practical implementation of native language identity preservation in Russian language classrooms requires specific pedagogical approaches. First, **bilingual lexical processing**—studying cognates and lexical differences between Uzbek and Russian [García and Kleyn, 2017]. This helps students understand both language systems more deeply. Second, **translanguaging**

strategies—allowing students to think in Uzbek and express themselves in Russian [Van Der Wal, 2025; Baker, 2001]. Third, **cultural-linguistic comparison**—comparing Uzbek and Russian cultures to help students understand cultural uniqueness [Davlyatova and Mamadjanova, 2024]. Fourth, **supporting code-switching**—accepting code-switching as an indicator of language competence rather than a deficiency [Oltiboyeva, 2025; Lingvospektr, 2025]. Fifth, **developing native language richness**—exercises aimed at preserving rich vocabulary and grammatical systems in Uzbek [IJRPR, 2024].

Assessment practices must also evolve to support translanguaging pedagogy. López and colleagues are developing assessment approaches that allow bilingual students to demonstrate content knowledge through translanguaging [García and Kleyn, 2017]. Using various assessment formats, students have opportunities to see or hear items in both languages and respond using their full language repertoire. This approach creates space for translanguaging and promotes what researchers call "bilingual autonomy" [García and Kleyn, 2017].

The role of technology in supporting bilingual identity development is increasingly significant. Mobile applications and translation software can facilitate translanguaging when used strategically [García, 2009]. However, teachers must provide explicit instruction in effective tool use to prevent over-reliance and ensure that technology supports rather than replaces language learning. Digital glossaries that provide audio pronunciation, visual images, and example sentences offer multiple representations of vocabulary words [García, 2009].

Creating a translanguaging space in the classroom requires attention to three strands: the teacher's stance, instructional and assessment design, and instructional shifts [García and Kleyn, 2017]. The teacher's philosophical belief about the value of bilingualism in the life of a language-minoritized child is most important. Unless the teacher has a critical stance regarding subtractive linguistic practices, they will not seek translanguaging opportunities in their instruction [García and Kleyn, 2017]. Teachers must see themselves as co-learners, able to learn from children about their language and cultural practices and their understandings of the world [García and Kleyn, 2017].

Future research directions should include longitudinal studies tracking the language development of students in inclusive Russian programs with varying degrees of Uzbek language support. Investigation of assistive technology applications specifically designed for Russian-Uzbek bilingual contexts is needed. Cross-cultural comparison of heritage language maintenance practices across different post-Soviet states would illuminate how national policies influence implementation. Such research could identify best practices from various educational systems and inform the development of culturally responsive inclusive methodologies.

In conclusion, preserving and developing Uzbek language identity in teaching Russian as a foreign language represents a complex pedagogical task requiring attention to language policy, pedagogical methods, and sociocultural factors. Contemporary research demonstrates the effectiveness of translanguaging, code-switching, and bilingual pedagogical approaches. Supporting the Uzbek language not merely as a means of communication but as a fundamental component of national identity ensures students' successful bilingual development. This process involves teachers' language attitudes, collaboration with parents, and state language policy. Future research should examine the long-term outcomes of Uzbek language identity preservation, the cognitive advantages of bilingual education, and the effectiveness of translanguaging strategies in the specific context of Uzbek-Russian bilingual education.

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