



LANGUAGE ECOLOGY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF
KARAKALPAKSTAN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Ism, Familiya, Otchestvo: Reipnazarova Gulayim Jumanazar qizi

*O'qish/ish joyi, darajasi: New Uzbekistan Universityda talaba,
magistrant*

Email: gulayimreypnazarova840@gmail.com

Telefon: +99833 095 99 10

Annotation

This paper examines the language ecology of secondary schools in Karakalpakstan and its implications for English language teaching (ELT). Karakalpakstan is a multilingual autonomous republic within Karakalpak, Uzbek, Russian, and English are used across different educational, social, and family contexts. The coexistence of these languages creates a complex linguistic environment for English language education, which may not be fully addressed by national approaches to ELT. The study adopts a mixed- methods design. combining a questionnaire on language use among secondary school students, semi-structured interviews with English teachers, and classroom observations in urban and rural schools across Karakalpakstan. Quantitative questionnaire data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from the interviews and classroom observations are analyzed thematically. The study focuses on challenges such as the limited availability of Karakalpak-medium learning materials, teachers' reliance on translation, and differences in students' linguistic and English proficiency. It also examines opportunities associated with students' cross-linguistic awareness and teachers' use of informal translanguaging practices. The paper argues that ELT in



Karakalpakstan should take the republic's multilingual language ecology into account when developing teaching practices and educational policies. A more context-sensitive approach may help align English language education with the linguistic realities of secondary school students in Karakalpakstan.

Key words: language ecology, English language teaching, multilingualism, Karakalpakstan, secondary education, translanguaging

Introduction

The Republic of Karakalpakstan is a multilingual autonomous republic within Uzbekistan where Karakalpak, Uzbek, Russian, and English have different roles in education and everyday communication. Karakalpak is widely in family and community contexts, while Uzbek and Russian are also used in educational, social, and professional settings. English is primarily taught as a foreign language in secondary schools. The coexistence of these languages creates a specific linguistic environment that can influence how English is taught and learned.

The concept of language ecology provides a useful framework for examining this environment. Language ecology focuses on the relationships between languages and the social, cultural, and educational contexts in which they are used (Van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2002). From this perspective, English language teaching should be considered in relation to the other languages that students and teachers already use. In multilingual classrooms, these languages may influence learning processes, classroom interaction, and teachers' instructional choices (Hult, 2010).

Although multilingualism and English language education in Uzbekistan have received increasing academic attention, the specific linguistic context of Karakalpakstan remains relatively under-researched. Existing research often addresses English language education at the national level, while fewer studies focus specifically on how the multilingual environment of the Republic of

Karakalpakstan shapes ELT in secondary schools. This creates a need for research that considers the local linguistic context and the experiences of teachers and students within it.

This paper examines the language ecology of secondary schools in Karakalpakstan and considers its implications for English language teaching. It addresses two main questions: (1) What challenges does the multilingual language ecology of Karakalpakstan create for English language teaching in secondary schools? and (2) What opportunities does this language ecology provide for English language teaching and learning? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to a more context-sensitive understanding of ELT in multilingual educational settings in Uzbekistan.

The Language Ecology of Karakalpakstan Schools

Karakalpakstan is characterized by a complex multilingual language ecology in which several languages perform distinct social and educational functions. Karakalpak is widely used in local communities and in certain educational contexts, while Uzbek functions as the state language and is prevalent across institutional and social domains. Russian continues to serve as a language of wider communication, particularly in urban settings, and English is introduced as a foreign language within the formal education system from the primary level (Fierman, 2009). Research on multilingualism in the Republic of Karakalpakstan also indicates the coexistence of bilingual and multilingual practices involving Karakalpak, Uzbek, and Russian (Kurbaniyazov, 2019).

This multilingual environment is also relevant to English language education. Recent research on English language education in Uzbekistan has highlighted the influence of multilingualism and language ideologies on English teaching practices (Hasanova & Vokhidova, 2025). In Karakalpakstan, emerging research has similarly examined multilingual classroom contexts and

the relationship between Karakalpak, Uzbek, and English in English language learning (Madaminova,2025; Mamirbaeva & Payzullaeva, 2026).

Many students grow up using two or more languages before they encounter English. As a result, English is not learned in isolation but alongside other languages that are already part of students' linguistic repertoires. Teachers may move between languages during lessons to explain concepts, clarify instructions, or support comprehension. Such flexible language practices can be understood through the concept of translanguaging, which recognizes multilingual speakers' use of their full linguistic repertoires in communication and learning (García & Wei, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

From a language ecology perspective, languages exist in dynamic relationships with their social, cultural, and educational environments (Van Lier, 2004; Kramsch,2002). Therefore, English language teaching in Karakalpakstan needs to be considered in relation to the other languages that students and teachers use in their everyday lives and educational settings.

2. Research design and Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a fuller understanding of the language ecology of secondary school English classrooms (Dörnyei,2007).The study includes 150 secondary school students and 12 English teachers from six schools in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Three schools are located in Nukus, while three are located in rural districts. This sampling allows comparison between urban and rural educational contexts.

Three instruments are used for data collection. First, a language-use questionnaire examines how frequently students use Karakalpak, Uzbek, Russian, and English and in which contexts these languages are used. Second, semi-structured interviews with English teachers explore their classroom

language choices, instructional practices, and experiences of teaching in multilingual classrooms. Third, classroom observations document actual instances of language use and language switching during English lessons.

Quantitative questionnaire data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. Interview and classroom-observation data are analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. The findings from different data sources are compared to identify patterns and strengthen the credibility of the analysis.

Ethical procedures are followed throughout the study. Permission is obtained from the participating schools before data collection. Informed consent is obtained from teachers and students, and all participants' identities are anonymized.

Ethical procedures were followed throughout. Schools gave permission before data collection. Students and teachers gave informed consent. All names in this paper are anonymized.

3. Challenges for ELT

The multilingual language ecology of Karakalpakstan presents several challenges for English language teaching. One important challenge concerns the availability of teaching and learning materials. English language materials are commonly developed through Uzbek- or Russian – medium educational contexts, while resources that directly reflect Karakalpak- medium learners and their linguistic experiences remain limited. This issue is particularly relevant in multilingual educational systems where the language of instruction and students' home languages may differ (Fierman, 2006).

Another challenge is teachers' reliance on translation. In multilingual classrooms, teachers may need to explain instructions, vocabulary, or complex concepts through more than one language. Although such practices can support

comprehension, frequent translation may reduce the amount of classroom time available for meaningful English-language interaction.

A further challenge is the variation in students' linguistic backgrounds. Students may differ in their levels of proficiency in Karakalpak, Uzbek, Russian, and English. Such differences can make lesson planning and classroom interaction more demanding for teachers. Research on multilingual education emphasizes the importance of recognizing these differences rather than treating learners as linguistically homogeneous (Menken & García, 2010).

The issue is also connected to teacher preparation. Teachers working in multilingual classrooms need strategies for managing linguistic diversity and using students' existing linguistic resources effectively. However, multilingual classroom practices are not always sufficiently addressed in teacher education and professional development programs (Ferguson, 2006). Research on English teaching in Uzbekistan similarly suggests the importance of considering the local linguistic and educational context when developing English language teaching practices (Satullaeva & Kurbanbaeva, 2020; Hasanova & Vokhidova, 2025).

4. Opportunities for ELT

At the same time, the multilingual ecology of Karakalpakstan provides important opportunities for English language teaching. Students who regularly use more than one language may already have experience in comparing languages, shifting between linguistic systems, and interpreting meaning across languages. Such abilities can support additional language learning and the transfer of linguistic knowledge (Cummins, 2008; Baker, 2011).

Recent research in Karakalpakstan has also drawn attention to the relationship between multilingualism and English language learning, particularly among learners using Karakalpak and Uzbek alongside English (Mamirbaeva & Payzullaeva, 2026). This suggests that students' existing

linguistic resources can be considered a potential support for English learning rather than simply a source of interference.

Translanguaging pedagogy provides one possible way of using these resources in the classroom. For example, teachers may allow students to discuss a difficult concept in Karakalpak or Uzbek before asking them to express the same idea in Karakalpak or Uzbek before asking them to express the same idea in English. This approach can support comprehension while creating opportunities for students to use their complete linguistic repertoires during learning (Canagarajah, 2013). It can also recognize and value students' linguistic identities, which is consistent with ecological to education (Hornberger, 2002).

The multilingual context of Karakalpakstan can therefore be understood as a potential resource for English language learning. Rather than treating the presence of several languages as an obstacle to English acquisition, teachers can use students' existing linguistic knowledge to support comprehension, participation, and language development. This perspective is consistent with broader research on multilingualism and English as a global language (Kachru & Nelson, 2006; Wright, 2016).

Conclusion

The language ecology of the Republic of Karakalpakstan shapes English language teaching in several important ways. The coexistence of Karakalpak, Uzbek, Russian, and English creates challenges related to teaching materials, translation demands, differences in students' linguistic backgrounds, and teacher preparation. At the same time, this multilingual environment provides opportunities for English language learning by giving students existing linguistic knowledge and experience in the English classroom.

The study recommends three main steps. First, teacher education and professional development should include practical strategies for multilingual

and translanguaging classrooms. Second, English language teaching materials should better reflect the linguistic and educational context of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Third, further empirical research is needed to examine how multilingual classroom practices influence English language learning in different educational settings across Karakalpakstan.

Recognizing the multilingual reality of Karakalpakstan can contribute to a more context-sensitive approach to English language teaching in Uzbekistan. Further research in this area can also help connect national developments in English language education with the linguistic experiences of students and teachers in multilingual educational contexts.

REFERENCE LIST:

Baker, C. (2011). Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism (5th ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Blommaert, J. (2010). The sociolinguistics of globalization. Cambridge University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Canagarajah, S. (2013). Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations. Routledge.

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual



classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (2008). Teaching for transfer: Challenging the two solitudes assumption in bilingual education. In N. H. Hornberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (2nd ed., pp. 65–75). Springer.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.

Ferguson, G. (2006). *Language planning and education*. Edinburgh University Press.

Fierman, W. (2006). Language and education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-medium instruction in urban schools. *The Russian Review*, 65(1), 98–116. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2005.00388.x>

Fierman, W. (2009). Identity, symbolism, and the politics of language in Central Asia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61(7), 1207–1228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130903068731>

García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.





García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hasanova, D., & Vokhidova, N. (2025). English in Uzbekistan: Language ideologies and teaching practices. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2025(294), 11–30. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2024-0117>

Hornberger, N. H. (2002). Multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy: An ecological approach. *Language Policy*, 1(1), 27–51.

Hult, F. M. (2010). Analysis of language policy discourses across the scales of space and time. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2010(202), 7–24.

Kachru, Y., & Nelson, C. L. (2006). *World Englishes in Asian contexts*. Hong Kong University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2002). *Language acquisition and language socialization: Ecological perspectives*. Continuum.

Kurbaniyazov, G. A. (2019). Bilingualism and polylingualism in the case of the languages in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. *Anglisticum: Journal of the Association-Institute for English Language and American Studies*, 8(9), 32–41.

Madaminova, N. G. (2025). Sociolinguistic diversity in English language education: Insights from a multilingual classroom in Karakalpakstan. *Журнал иностранных языков и лингвистики*, 4(1).





Mamirbaeva, D., & Payzullaeva, I. (2026). The influence of multilingualism (Karakalpak–Uzbek–English) on English language learning. *Science Time*, 4(2), 363–370. <https://doi.org/10.66345/stj.v4i2.5047>

Menken, K., & García, O. (Eds.). (2010). *Negotiating language policies in schools: Educators as policymakers*. Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as a local practice*. Routledge.

Satullaeva, N., & Kurbanbaeva, G. (2020). Teaching English as a second foreign language. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations*, 2(8), 351–357. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume02Issue08-59>

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.

Spolsky, B. (2009). *Language management*. Cambridge University Press.

UNESCO. (2003). *Education in a multilingual world*. UNESCO.

Van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Wright, S. (2016). *Language policy and language planning: From nationalism to globalisation* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

