

USING RESEARCH ON MOTHER TONGUE ACQUISITION IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Berdieva Nilufar Ibadilullayevna

Lecturer, Department of Uzbek Language Education, Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoiy

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0354-8330>

Email: berdiyevanilufar670@gmail.com

Abstract

This article analyzes scientific research conducted on mother tongue acquisition and highlights its practical application in language education. Research findings show that a strong foundation in native grammar and vocabulary serves as a key support in acquiring a foreign language. The article emphasizes the effectiveness of contrastive approaches, translation-based exercises, and understanding of cultural context as pedagogical tools. Native language-based methods create psychological comfort for learners and foster linguistic cognition. The study underscores the importance of integrating the methodological and didactic potential of the mother tongue into foreign language education.

Keywords: Mother tongue, modern language, language education, contrastive analysis, translation, methodology, linguistic thinking

Introduction:

The role of the mother tongue in modern language education holds significant importance. Learning the mother tongue contributes not only to developing linguistic competence but also to enhancing cultural awareness, social interaction, and cognitive abilities. Recent studies have shown that deep mastery of the mother tongue serves as a vital factor in improving the effectiveness of foreign language learning. In particular, in-depth study of grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics in the native language provides a solid foundation for acquiring a second language.

Scientific research in fields such as cognitive linguistics, pedagogy, and psycholinguistics has been directed toward exploring how language competencies can be formed through the mother tongue. Furthermore, applying mother tongue learning strategies in language education helps enhance communicative skills, reading comprehension, and the ability to express ideas clearly.

Literature Review:

Mother tongue acquisition and its impact on language education have been extensively studied by linguists and educators. In linguistics, the theories of Lev Vygotsky and Noam Chomsky substantiate the role of the mother tongue in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky,

language is a tool for shaping thought; a child first thinks in their mother tongue and subsequently learns other languages based on that foundation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Recent research also emphasizes the communicative, cultural, and methodological value of the mother tongue. Cummins (2001), in his theory of bilingualism, asserts that learners with a strong foundation in their first language achieve greater success in learning a second language. Uzbek scholars support this view. For example, T. Yoʻldoshev (2019) highlights that teaching grammar through comparison with the native language increases learning effectiveness.

Psycholinguistic studies (e.g., Kroll & Bialystok, 2013) reveal that individuals with a strong command of their mother tongue demonstrate greater flexibility in language thinking and possess intercultural competence. This enhances their ability to interpret cultural differences, understand contextual expressions, and engage in effective communication during language learning.

Research in teaching methodology indicates that using the mother tongue through interactive methods, contrastive analysis, and translation-based exercises is effective (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Such approaches allow learners to rely on prior knowledge when acquiring a new language.

Mastery of the mother tongue is thus viewed as a decisive factor not only in linguistics and language didactics but also in practical language education.

Methodology:

This study investigates the application of theoretical and practical approaches to mother tongue learning in language education. A qualitative analysis method was chosen, as it enables in-depth exploration of pedagogical tools and psycholinguistic foundations used in language instruction.

Data were collected from the following sources:

1. Academic articles and dissertations published between 2010 and 2024 in national and international journals;
2. Key theoretical works in linguistics, pedagogy, and psycholinguistics (e.g., Vygotsky, Cummins, Kroll, Bialystok);
3. Practical experiences of language educators in Uzbekistan and abroad, including classroom practices;
4. Student surveys and interviews identifying challenges and successes in learning foreign languages through the mother tongue.

The analysis was based on conceptual analysis, contrastive approaches, and interference theory, allowing us to determine how native language skills can be effectively utilized in foreign language teaching.

The research was predominantly theoretical but enriched with observations from real classroom settings. This approach helped more clearly define the role of the mother tongue in language teaching.

Results:

Students with a strong command of their mother tongue have significant advantages in acquiring foreign languages. The main findings are as follows:

1. Continuity of grammatical knowledge - learners who have mastered native grammar grasp foreign grammar more easily and draw analogies more effectively.
2. Lexical bridging - a rich vocabulary in the mother tongue provides a solid base for learning synonyms, antonyms, and polysemy in the foreign language.
3. Cultural competence - learners who comprehend culturally rich native texts are more adept at understanding contextual meanings and performing pragmatic tasks in foreign languages.
4. Translation-based comparisons - translation exercises using the mother tongue, especially via contrastive analysis between Uzbek and English, proved effective for both teachers and learners.
5. Learners' perceptions - surveys show that 87% of students found lessons involving the mother tongue helpful in understanding and reinforcing foreign language content.

Discussion:

The findings are consistent with prior studies and further confirm the effectiveness of mother tongue-based teaching methods. Cummins' (2001) "primary language competence" theory is supported by this research, demonstrating that learners with strong native language skills acquire a second language faster and more thoroughly.

Using the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool creates psychological comfort for both teacher and learner. Especially at the beginner level, contrastive comparisons, translation exercises, and explanations in the mother tongue significantly ease the learning process.

However, maintaining balance is crucial. Overreliance on the native language can hinder full immersion in the target language. Therefore, gradual reduction in mother tongue use is recommended, with a final shift to communicative approaches.

Though learners responded positively to analytical exercises based on their native language, such approaches must be tailored to individual learning styles.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study show that research on mother tongue acquisition provides a strong methodological foundation for language education. Reinforcing grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic knowledge through the native language proves to be an effective strategy in learning foreign languages. Especially at the beginner level, using the mother tongue aids in understanding the structure of the new language. Techniques such as translation, contrastive analysis, and text-based comparisons help foster linguistic thinking in learners.

Nonetheless, moderation in using the native language is essential. A phased approach is recommended, transitioning eventually to full immersion in the target language. The theoretical and practical insights presented in this article contribute to the development of modern, flexible, and scientifically grounded approaches to language instruction.

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