



Developing Students' Sociocultural Competence through Plurilingualism in the Uzbek Russian English Higher Education Environment

Mukhiddinova Khadicha Sobirovna^{1*} and Omanov Pulatjon Khabitovich²

^{1,2}Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Uzbekistan

* muxitdinovaxadichas@gmail.com

Abstract

This thesis examines the development of students' sociocultural competence through plurilingualism in the Uzbek-Russian-English higher education environment. It integrates local Uzbek research on bilingualism, plurilingual competence and sociolinguistic competence with CEFR-based mediation-oriented language education.

Key words: plurilingualism, sociocultural competence, sociolinguistic competence, mediation, higher education.

Introduction

The Uzbek-Russian-English linguistic situation in higher education creates a specific pedagogical context. Students do not encounter languages as isolated systems. They use Uzbek as a language of national and cultural identity, Russian as a historically established academic and social resource, and English as an international language of professional and intercultural communication. However, the mere presence of several languages in education does not automatically produce plurilingual competence. It requires systematic pedagogical design. In contemporary language education, plurilingualism is understood as the learner's ability to use the whole linguistic and cultural repertoire purposefully. The CEFR Companion Volume describes learners as social agents who mobilize different linguistic and cultural resources in communication (Rashidova, 2025). This position is highly relevant for Uzbekistan, where students often move between languages, but this movement is not always methodically organized.

Uzbek scholars have already studied related issues. Makhkamova notes that in Uzbekistan "bilingualism and multilingualism organically coexist" (Makhkamova, 2017). Isanova's dissertation research focuses directly on improving philology students' plurilingual competence and emphasizes reliance on students' "plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire" (Isanova, 2025). Daniyarova connects bilingual education with students' ability to understand cultural characteristics and use English in professional contexts Daniyarova (2026). Ziyaeva identifies sociolinguistic competence as necessary for communication in a multilingual and multicultural society Ziyaeva, 2023). Ermirzayev develops the problem further by linking sociolinguistic competence with authentic materials and contextual appropriateness (Ermirzayev, 2025).

The aim of this thesis is to clarify how students' sociocultural competence can be developed through plurilingualism in the Uzbek–Russian–English higher education environment. The main tasks are to analyze relevant local research, identify the methodological link between sociocultural competence and plurilingualism, and propose practical directions for social–humanitarian disciplines.

The first important point is that Uzbek research has already created a foundation for the study of multilingual education. Makhkamova's work is significant because it places bilingualism and multilingualism within the professional training of future English language specialists. She argues that English may function as a mediating language in the learning of other foreign languages and that students need strategies for switching from one linguocultural code to another (Makhkamova, 2017). This idea directly supports the methodological logic of plurilingual education: languages should not be blocked from each other artificially; they should be used as resources for comparison, interpretation and transfer.

Isanova's research is even closer to the present topic because it deals with plurilingual competence in philological education. Her dissertation abstract states that the didactic and methodological support for developing plurilingual competence is connected with CEFR, metalinguistic skills, transversal competences and cultural context (Isanova, 2025). This is important because plurilingual competence cannot be reduced to the number of languages a student knows. It includes the ability to compare linguistic systems, notice cultural meanings, evaluate communicative choices and use previous language experience consciously.

Daniyarova's research on bilingual education also enriches the discussion. Although her work is not directly centred on plurilingualism, it shows that bilingual education helps students understand the cultural features of the language being learned, develop social mobility and apply language skills in professional contexts (Daniyarova, 2026). This finding is relevant for social–humanitarian disciplines because students in these fields work with values, social meanings, cultural concepts and public discourse. Therefore, bilingual and plurilingual resources may serve not only language learning, but also deeper academic understanding.

The sociocultural dimension of the problem becomes clearer in the works of Ziyaeva and Ermirzayev. Ziyaeva formulates indicators for assessing sociolinguistic competence and highlights students' ability to "apply sociolinguistic knowledge in real situations of communication" (Ziyaeva, 2023). This idea is directly connected with sociocultural competence because real communication always includes social roles, politeness norms, cultural expectations, register, context and audience. A student may know grammar but still fail to communicate appropriately if these sociocultural factors are ignored.

Ermirzayev's work gives another useful methodological direction. He argues that authentic materials such as podcast transcripts, blog posts, newspaper and magazine articles can support the development of sociolinguistic competence when they are selected according to "naturalness, contextuality, complexity, usefulness" (Ermirzayev, 2025). This is highly applicable to plurilingual teaching. Authentic texts allow students to see how language functions in real social and cultural contexts. They also make it possible to compare Uzbek, Russian and English texts on the same topic and identify differences in tone, argumentation, cultural reference and communicative intention.

On this basis, sociocultural competence and plurilingualism should be developed in parallel. Sociocultural competence gives students the ability to understand social and cultural meaning. Plurilingualism gives them the ability to move between languages and cultural frames. When these two components are separated, language education becomes incomplete. If only plurilingual ability is developed, students may switch between languages without understanding deeper cultural meanings. If only sociocultural competence is developed, students may understand cultural differences but lack the linguistic flexibility needed for multilingual academic communication.

For social–humanitarian disciplines, the most effective methodological link between these two components is mediation. Mediation includes explaining, reformulating, summarizing, comparing and adapting meaning for another person or audience. In the Uzbek–Russian–English context, mediation may appear when students summarize an English academic text in Uzbek, compare Russian and Uzbek explanations of a social concept, present a local cultural phenomenon in English, or adapt an academic idea for a non–specialist audience. Such tasks activate both sociocultural awareness and plurilingual resources.

Practical implementation requires a structured model. The first stage should be diagnostic. Teachers need to identify students' actual language repertoire, their experience of using Uzbek, Russian and English, and their awareness of sociocultural norms. The second stage should be preparatory. At this stage, students learn key concepts such as register, audience, cultural reference, communicative norm, mediation and contextual appropriateness. The third stage should be practical. Students work with multilingual texts, compare cultural meanings, perform mediation tasks, prepare bilingual or trilingual presentations and discuss social–humanitarian problems through different linguistic resources. The fourth stage should be reflective. Students analyze their own communicative choices and explain why a certain language, style or cultural frame was appropriate in a particular situation.

Assessment should also be revised. Traditional language assessment often focuses mainly on accuracy, vocabulary and fluency. These criteria remain important, but they are not enough for plurilingual and sociocultural development. Assessment should also include the ability to compare meanings across languages, explain cultural references, mediate information, adapt speech to audience and use multilingual resources purposefully. Isanova's emphasis on

CEFR-based assessment and Ermirzayev's use of cognitive, operational and affective components show that local research already moves toward more integrated evaluation (Isanova, 2025; Ermirzayev, 2025).

The main research gap is therefore clear. Existing Uzbek studies have examined bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingual competence, bilingual education and sociolinguistic competence. However, the parallel development of sociocultural competence and plurilingualism in the Uzbek–Russian–English higher education environment, especially within social-humanitarian disciplines, still requires a more integrated methodological interpretation. The present approach addresses this gap by treating multilingual resources, sociocultural awareness and mediation tasks as parts of one pedagogical system.

Conclusion

The Uzbek–Russian–English higher education environment offers strong potential for developing students' plurilingual competence. Yet this potential becomes pedagogically productive only when it is organized through clear methodological principles. Local Uzbek research provides an important foundation: Makhkamova clarifies the role of bilingualism and multilingualism in the training of future English specialists; Isanova develops the issue of plurilingual competence; Daniyarova examines bilingual English teaching; Ziyaeva and Ermirzayev deepen the sociolinguistic and sociocultural dimensions of language education.

The analysis shows that sociocultural competence and plurilingualism should not be taught as separate outcomes. They should be developed together through mediation, comparative cultural analysis, authentic materials, multilingual academic tasks and reflective assessment. This approach is especially important for social-humanitarian disciplines because these disciplines require students to interpret cultural meanings, compare social concepts and communicate academic ideas across languages.

The practical recommendation is to include mediation-based multilingual tasks in higher education programmes. Such tasks should help students use Uzbek, Russian and English not randomly, but consciously and purposefully. As a result, students may develop not only language proficiency, but also sociocultural sensitivity, academic flexibility and professional readiness for multilingual communication.

Bibliography

- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume*. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Daniyarova, S. Q. (2026). *Oliy ta'lim muassasalarida bilingval ta'lim asosida ingliz tilini o'qitish metodikasini takomillashtirish*. O'zbekiston Milliy Pedagogika Universiteti.
- Ermirzayev, A. V. (2025). *Bo'lajak ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining sotsiolingvistik kompetensiyasini autentik materiallar vositasida takomillashtirish nazariyasi va amaliyoti*. Is'hoqxon Ibrat nomidagi Namangan Davlat Chet Tillari Instituti.
- Isanova, Z. Sh. (2025). *Filologiya yo'nalishi talabalarining plurilingval kompetensiyasini takomillashtirish* [PhD dissertation abstract]. Uzbekistan State World Languages University.
- Makhkamova, G. (2017). *Issues of Bilingualism and Multilingualism in Training of the Future Specialists of the English Language*. *O'zbekistonda Xorijiy Tillar*, 3(17), 111–117.
- Ziyaeva, S. A. (2023). *Formation of Sociolinguistic Competence of Students Studying German Language: Factors and Conditions*. *O'zbekistonda Xorijiy Tillar*, 4(51), 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.36078/1692621437>