

Translanguaging Practices in Kazakh as an L2: Insights from Multilingual Classroom Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

The article examines translanguaging practices in teaching Kazakh to Turkic-speaking students as part of a qualitative study from a psycholinguistic perspective. The relevance of the work lies in the growing interest in translanguaging as an alternative to the monolingual educational model and the insufficient development of its cognitive mechanisms in the context of teaching Kazakh. The purpose of the study is to analyze how translanguistic strategies manifest in the process of oral speech formation and relate to the peculiarities of language processing and affective learning factors. The methodological basis consisted of a qualitative design. The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with students from Turkmenistan who are studying Kazakh. The analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of stable semantic models in descriptions of linguistic experience. Special attention was paid to internal translation strategies, the role of intermediate languages, subjectively perceived cognitive load, and the level of speech anxiety. The results show that at the initial stage of learning, students often form thoughts in their native language, then translate them into Kazakh. Kazakh is used as the medium of instruction as a result of the trinity languages: As the language is mastered, there is a transition to a more direct understanding and formation of an utterance without relying on internal translation, which may indicate a gradual automation of language processing. Using a native or intermediate language is also associated with reduced anxiety and increased confidence in oral communication. Thus, translanguaging is considered a dynamic psycholinguistic process that reflects the peculiarities of students' multilingual cognitive organization.

KEYWORDS

Translanguaging; Kazakh language teaching; Multilingualism; Neuro-linguistics; Cognitive load; Language processing; Affective filter; Thematic analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Research on translanguaging in Kazakhstan investigates how educators and families engage with the nation's official "Trinity of Languages" policy. The state-mandated Trinity of Languages policy in Kazakhstan is an educational strategy that promotes trilingualism nationwide (Abilkassymova et al., 2025; Cabau, 2014; Canilao, 2024). This policy emphasizes three distinct languages: Kazakh, the state language that expresses national identity; Russian, the language of interethnic communication; and English, the global language used for international integration and economic purposes (Gorter et al., 2014). There is a significant body of research that emphasizes "creative subversion," a practice in which educators employ translanguaging, involving fluid transitions between languages, despite official monolingual teaching mandates. In academic discourse, the concept of translanguaging is frequently associated with code-switching (Seals, 2021). Translanguaging is analogous to code-switching in that it entails the seamless transition between languages for multilingual speakers. Speakers modify their language in accordance with the situational context, subject matter, and interlocutors. The term "code-switching" denotes the act of interchanging between various languages, dialects, or communication patterns within a single discourse or context. To conform to specific social contexts, pander to their audience, or more effectively articulate their cultural and personal identities, individuals engage in this behavior (Alonso & Le, 2020; Gorter et al., 2014).

Tajik et al. (2026) emphasize that translanguaging pedagogy enriches the languages used in bilingual education by viewing them as elements of an integrated, horizontal continuum rather than as distinct, hierarchical systems. In linguistics, this refers to bilingual or multilingual speakers who transition fluidly between languages or dialects during discourse. A speaker might say, "I am heading to the store. What do you want to buy?" English interspersed with Malay. In multilingual groups, it frequently arises to elucidate meaning, bridge linguistic divides, or convey common cultural contexts. In addition to language, code-switching refers to the process of modifying one's vocabulary, tone, body language, or manner in accordance with the social context. In professional settings, it is necessary to transition between speaking more formally and using business jargon at a corporate conference, and then switching to casual vernacular when having coffee with a colleague; code-switching is a requirement. As a result of the cultural context, many people who come from marginalized or minority backgrounds modify their speech and conduct in order to avoid bias, obtain acceptance, or make others who come from dominating cultures feel more at ease.

According to Treffers-Daller (2025), code-switching has conventionally been perceived as a transition between two independent linguistic systems with distinctly delineated boundaries. Translanguaging, in contrast, perceives languages not as distinct things but as interconnected elements of a speaker's cohesive linguistic arsenal. From this perspective, linguistic borders are malleable or even eradicated, enabling speakers to utilize all accessible semiotic resources without restriction. Translanguaging is a more holistic approach that highlights the fluid integration of multiple linguistic resources to engage effectively in diverse communicative

contexts. In contrast, code-switching typically involves alternating between distinct language codes, often to adhere to specific cultural or linguistic standards.

Many countries today operate in two or more languages. One of them is Kazakhstan. Most people in the post-Soviet states are fluent in Russian as well as their native language. Kazakhstan is pursuing a trilingual language policy, and English has been taught since elementary school. The coexistence of multiple ethnic groups within a single state is not a new phenomenon. However, different approaches to learning the state's or official language exist in such contexts. A commonly adopted view supports teaching a second language without recourse to other languages. In contrast, another method promotes using the learner's first language as a supportive tool.

Truan (2024) argues that "the ideology of 'one language, one state in an inclusive society' is no longer tenable and monolingualism should not be maintained as the norm." Papastephanou (2012) emphasizes that monolingual learning in different cultural and linguistic environments can lead to misinterpretation of students' communicative competence. In a multilingual society, this is more of an ideological premise than a real empirical context (Gorter et al., 2014; Alonso & Le, 2020; Cabau, 2014; Canilao, 2024). Moreover, in the context of contemporary globalization, migration, and superdiversity, the monolingual model proves inadequate in actual language use (Vogel & García, 2017).

Multilingual cognition has distinct characteristics. Learning through a monolingual model does not reflect the nature of multilingual thinking. Cummins (2007) suggests using the language being studied as the primary focus of instruction and the native language as a cognitive resource to support thinking and comprehension in literacy development. The development of L1 does not impede L2 development but rather enhances it, since the skills of reading, writing, and understanding are transferable across languages. Although the exclusive use of a single language is discouraged, language learners still rely on their native language (Cabau, 2014). Canilao (2024) notes that learners engage in translanguaging naturally. This is because, when learning a second language, it is automatically compared with the native-language version already familiar to them.

The Kazakh people use the term "tildi susbharlau" (often translated as "language contamination") to refer to the mixing of native language with foreign words or elements. This is considered contrary to the purity of the language, a deviation from the norm. However, according to Seals (2021), "Speakers have a complex, intertwined linguistic repertoire that they draw from flexibly as needed", multilingualism may be understood not as a deviation from the norm but as a standard communicative situation. Mazzaferro (2018) describes translanguaging as a "normal" and unmarked form of communication for multilingual people: "for many individuals and communities worldwide, translanguaging represents the unmarked and usual mode of communication as well as the only way to construct meaning." This shows that multilingual cognition has no obvious language boundaries; languages iterate. Studies define translanguaging as an equity-oriented pedagogy, a method, a political position, and an ideology.

Pedagogical translanguageing increases educational fairness. A well-developed translanguageing teaching tool enhances critical thinking and academic achievement in pupils (García et al., 2017).

One language is commonly used to communicate between nations. Kazakhstan uses Russian more than the official language. Uighur, Dungan, Tatar, and other ethnic groups speak Kazakh and Russian in addition to their native language. Language use is not limited to one system. Kazakhstan is the only post-Soviet state with a Russian language ideology. Karabassova and Isidro (2020) explain Kazakhstan's linguistic society. Kazakh is the official language; Russian is the language of international communication; English is the language of global academic and economic mobility; schools are bilingual; and the policy is one-language learning. Teachers use Kazakh and English to teach. Translanguageing is a pedagogical approach, not a norm. Throughout Kazakh language development, comparison and contrast with a second language were important teaching strategies. This article examines the personal and cognitive development of second-language learners without regard to language policy or ideology. In local research, Iskakova (2020) analyzes translanguageing and translanguageing notions using Western research. Abilkassymova and Akzhigitova (2023) examined translanguageing and code switching in relation to the state language from a sociolinguistic perspective.

This study examines how Turkic-speaking Kazakh learners use and learn the language and how their translanguageing strategies affect their language use and learning. Psycholinguistically, the study examines learners' cognitive and affective processes in meaning creation, internal translation techniques, and speech production and comprehension, drawing on diverse linguistic resources. The research aims to understand translanguageing as a natural mechanism of multilingual language processing rather than an efficient instructional tool. Instead of keeping languages separate, translanguageing theory encourages the complex, fluid ways people use language and multimodal resources to build sense, connect, and learn. It also emphasizes social and linguistic fairness in education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Translanguageing

The notion of translanguageing has emerged as a means of fostering a holistic perspective on the language repertoire of multilingual learners and the use of naturally occurring multilingual, multimodal, and multidiscursive activities (García, 2009; Wei, 2011; Wei, 2018). Arguably, translanguageing can make it easier for multilingual students to acquire the target language or academic content when teachers strategically incorporate it into their pedagogy. This is because translanguageing mediates "mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning" (Lewis et al., 2012).

García (2009) marks the start of translanguageing, which has been around for around 15 years. Translanguageing, defined as "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage to comprehend their bilingual environments" (García, 2009, p. 45), has become a prominent concept in multilingualism research, inspiring researchers and educators to study its

educational, linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic aspects. Translanguaging, a skill set and a school culture that values multiple languages, has been the subject of years of research into the best ways to teach English. Translanguaging refers to natural language switching and how teachers encourage it. Najarro (2023:1) states: "Translanguaging is the ability to move fluidly between languages and a pedagogical approach to teaching in which teachers support this ability, so that students can think in multiple languages simultaneously and use their home language to learn academic English". Translanguaging uses dynamic bi/multilingual language to understand the world and the written word as a practice, pedagogy, and philosophy. It is also a strategy to teach and test pupils that maximizes their linguistic capabilities and a bi/multilingualism perspective that prioritizes speakers above languages. Translanguaging challenges monoglossic language education methods that consider bilingual learners' languages as independent systems (Lin & He, 2017).

Translanguaging, encompassing a range of multilingual behaviors, includes code-switching, translation, borrowing, coinage, and calquing (García & Sylvan, 2011; Nikula & Moore, 2016). The aforementioned definitions are rooted in a monoglossic mindset, implying a transition from one distinct language to another, whereas translanguaging advocates the unmarked, adaptable use of all available linguistic resources. Flexibility, however, does not occur arbitrarily, as translanguaging necessitates both creative and critical language use, which entails a comprehensive understanding of linguistic norms for the meaningful synthesis of expressions and the capacity to analyze and assess language resources for appropriate application (Wei, 2011; 2014). This may indicate that an individual's creativity and critical thinking in language use contribute to the formation of an idiolect. This distinctive linguistic system goes beyond traditional language conventions while maintaining linguistic coherence (Otheguy et al., 2015).

While translanguaging was originally defined as switching between input and output languages, modern researchers have found other uses for the term. There are two interpretations of translanguaging, as stated by García and Lin (2017). One view holds that bilinguals should use all their language skills rather than blend their separate languages. The second view acknowledges the existence of national linguistic boundaries but advocates easing them. For language users to conform to cultural standards, such as using academic or literary languages, it is important to consider the acknowledged limits of language, even though translanguaging theory presents a strong challenge to this. Makalela (2013, p. 121) distinguishes between "external translanguaging"—the act of borrowing words from one language into another—and "internal translanguaging"—"the retention of the common morphological forms on newly borrowed words"—in contrast to the earlier categories.

Williams (1994) coined the term 'translanguaging' to describe the process of making meaning, establishing perceptions, understanding, and gaining information in two languages. Scholars developed and promoted the idea (Baker, 1994; Lewis et al., 2012). Translanguaging and scaffolding strategies are crucial for expanding a bilingual student's linguistic repertoire,

enabling them to make meaning across multiple languages (García & Li Wei, 2014). Using the full language and multimodal repertoire in education improves students' ability to express their understanding and construct new meanings (Feller, 2022). Previous research shows that translanguaging improves knowledge and fosters inclusive, equitable learning environments, especially for emergent bilinguals (Hansen et al., 2020). These tactics help pupils overcome language barriers and approach difficult subjects using their full linguistic ability. Nuanced understandings of bilingual and multilingual development have led to a paradigm shift in language education: translanguaging. Understanding bilingual and multilingual development led to translanguaging research. Bilingual individuals often prefer translanguaging (García, 2009). Although language teaching has grown professionally, many Asian educational contexts still view the target language as a separate entity to prevent interference (García & Li Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging is more than just translating words; it is also a way for students to learn how language works. Translanguaging can be achieved through translation efforts, but not through word-for-word translation. People use the words and ideas they know in their first language to help them understand English and answer in English. All students can benefit from a classroom that is welcoming to translanguaging because few use academic English at home, regardless of their home language. Translanguaging allows pupils to think in multiple languages at once while learning formal English in their first language. A student might be reading an English text about the solar system while also thinking and drawing connections in Kazakh. Educators can participate in many activities that intentionally promote translanguaging, including offering vocabulary in other languages and facilitating collaborative translation opportunities. The objective is to facilitate students' translanguaging as a strategy that can enhance literacy outcomes, engagement, and other academic pursuits.

Cenoz and Gorter (2020) divide translanguaging into two types: spontaneous translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging. Spontaneous translanguaging is the practice of natural language use outside the classroom, while pedagogical translanguaging is a consciously planned strategy incorporated into the learning process. This approach supports not only cross-linguistic exchange but also deeper conceptual understanding and equal learning in multilingual classrooms. Lewis et al. (2012) note that educational systems continue to operate within the framework of monolingual education in systems that have declared multilingualism and bilingualism. Traditional bilingual education, which tends to isolate languages from one another, offers translanguaging instead of the "two independent languages" model. That is, languages perform a complementary function rather than competing with each other. However, while other works emphasize the weaknesses of monolingualism, Lewis et al. (2012) identify shortcomings in both bilingual and monolingual approaches. Because in bilingual education, one language necessarily prevails over the other. One of the languages is artificially separated from the other and stands out. This prevents the language learner from fully developing their language abilities.

Pedagogical Translanguaging

In many works, translanguaging is considered not just a method but a distinct pedagogical stance. For example, from the conclusions of Heltai and Tarsoly (2023), “bi- and multilingual speakers do not have multiple linguistic systems, but one unitary repertoire”, this indicates semantically and cognitively that a “unitary repertoire” does exist. For example, lexical and grammatical structures, as well as discursive strategies, are not stored separately for each language. When a multilingual person speaks one language, then switches to a second, and then to a third, code-switching occurs. Thinking is not tied to a specific language (Tian & Li, 2024); language is a tool that expresses thoughts.

According to Francis (2020), the areas involved in representing and processing a bilingual's two languages are the same, suggesting a unified linguistic repertoire. The monolingual model, grounded in a one-language norm, is unable to capture the nature of multilingual cognition (Francis, 2020). This is because translanguaging requires flexible control of language switching and attention. For this reason, translanguaging has become a focus of neurocognitive research, rather than just a political or social problem.

Previous studies note that language learners consciously compare the target language with their native language. When translating a certain word into one's native language, you need to work not only between codes but also with cognitive and cultural systems. This contributes to the formation of a unified cognitive conceptual system (Abdurosul et al., 2021). That is, the deeper a person's personal experience is and the better they know the history, culture, traditions, and customs of the language they speak, the more effective the translation process becomes. This method is also widely used in language teaching. For example, the culture of the language being studied, historical figures of this country, its cities, and national heritage have long been used in textbook content. However, a drawback of this approach is that it is one-sided and limited to a single language. Translanguaging involves drawing on all available linguistic resources.

Translinguistic experience strengthens students' personal identity and positively affects their motivation to learn. Participants associate this experience with a sense of freedom and the activation of creative thinking, allowing them to use their full language repertoire and creating a productive environment, both cognitively and affectively. On the contrary, monolingual models, especially in complex multilingual societies, create cognitive and emotional barriers for students. Artificial restrictions on linguistic resources not only slow down understanding but also reduce motivation, thereby contradicting natural cognitive mechanisms in learning. These data show that the monolingual paradigm is limited not only theoretically but also in practice. Recent empirical evidence from higher education similarly suggests that translanguaging can facilitate conceptual understanding, classroom participation, and learner confidence by allowing students to draw on familiar linguistic resources (Mpofu & Ndebele, 2025).

METHODS

Research design

A phenomenological case study design, a qualitative research method, was used to investigate a specific, bounded case (e.g., a person, event, or group) and understand participants' subjective "lived experiences" and meanings of a phenomenon (Moran, 2000). Phenomenology is the study of conscious, first-person experience that investigates how things appear to us in our daily lives and the significance and essence of those lived experiences, prior to any scientific or theoretical assumptions. This study seeks the "essence" of how Turkic-speaking pupils experience translanguaging while studying Kazakh as a second language. A phenomenological approach was used since the research focuses on learners' subjective linguistic experiences, cognitive processing processes, and emotional responses during multilingual conversation rather than instructional outcomes (Moran, 2000). Instead of objectively measuring an experience like sadness, color, or time, lived experience focuses on how it feels.

Additionally, intentionality holds that all conscious experiences are "about" or focused on something. Not only angry, but also angry about a problem. Translanguaging in this study refers to the use of learners' full language repertoire—Turkmen, Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh—for meaning-making, comprehension, and speech output. Translanguaging is a natural process of multilingual language processing that involves internal translation, cross-linguistic activation, and cognitive regulation, according to psycholinguistics. The study seeks to investigate how learners perceive and cognitively experience translanguaging in practical educational environments (Clark, 2013).

Participants

The participants consisted of five Turkmen students enrolled at a university in Kazakhstan during the 2025-2026 academic year. All participants had completed the elementary level of Kazakh and had recently progressed to the A2 level. Participants were selected through purposive sampling following an initial institutional survey conducted among more than 40 incoming international students. Students who demonstrated a willingness to reflect on their language-learning experience and possessed sufficient communicative ability in Kazakh were invited to participate. Two participants were 22-year-old males, and three were 21-year-old females, indicating mature levels of language learning.

Tools of data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews, which enabled participants to describe their language learning experiences freely while remaining aligned with the research objectives. Questions were formulated to elicit experiential narratives rather than measurable comparisons. The interview protocol consisted of five open-ended questions grouped into thematic blocks to explore students' repertoire (Table 2).

Data collection

Since the purpose of this study is to explore the process of determining the translanguaging method in the study of the Kazakh language by Turkic-speaking students, data collection requires

an in-depth description of language learners' experiences in the educational process, language choice, and the cognitive processes that emerge through the parallel use of languages. Such phenomena cannot be fully captured using quantitative data alone, since translanguaging is based on the dynamic, context-dependent, and experimental nature of linguistic activity. This study does not involve neuroimaging or experimental measurement.

Individual ZOOM interviews were conducted in January 2026, utilizing a secure link. Each interview lasted 15–40 minutes. Students were informed about voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw or decline any inquiry before participating. With consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participants were asked about their Kazakh language experiences before coming to Kazakhstan to provide context. Themes on internal translation techniques, multilingual cognitive processing, perceived cognitive load, affective aspects such as anxiety reduction, and the shift from mediated to direct language comprehension were highlighted. Each interview is recorded. Fully transcribed, coded, and analyzed interview texts. The analysis examined students' translanguaging experiences when learning Kazakh, their language preferences, and how this affected learning.

Turkmen students began attending universities in Kazakhstan in mid-September 2025. Five Kazakh-speaking pupils were interviewed. Individual interviews were performed via ZOOM via a closed link. After completing elementary Kazakh, the students moved on to A2. The number of questions was limited. The “lived-experience” of translanguaging individuals is explored using seven questions. This allowed students to freely share and express their experiences to identify their learning and translanguaging, and to evaluate translanguaging and related cognitive aspects. During the interview, everyone could decline without answering and keep their personal information private.

Data analysis

In accordance with the principles of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis was based on topics arising from the data itself, rather than on strictly predefined categories. This flexible approach creates the conditions for describing translanguaging from students' real linguistic experience.

During the analysis, special attention was paid to aspects such as the cognitive ease or difficulty students experience when using multiple languages simultaneously, speech accuracy, strategies for addressing language barriers, and the impact of transitions between languages on Kazakh learning. These topics were identified based on semantic patterns recurring in the students' responses.

The interview data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), a “reflexive” approach in which themes are actively produced by the researcher rather than merely “emerging,” requiring awareness of the researcher's subjectivity. The method follows an iterative six-phase process. The analysis interprets translanguaging as a manifestation of multilingual cognitive organization through six steps:

- Transcription and familiarization with data (immersing oneself in the data, e.g., transcribing, reading)
- Initial coding (systematically tagging interesting features across the dataset)
- Identification of recurring semantic patterns (clustering codes into potential themes)
- Development of thematic categories (checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset)
- Interpretation of themes in relation to psycholinguistic concepts (final analysis and selection of vivid examples)

Trustworthiness of data

Data trustworthiness refers to the extent to which data is dependable, precise, and appropriate for its designated use. It guarantees that consumers can rely on data for decision-making, ensuring quality, consistency, provenance, and security. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility (assurance in the veracity of the results), transferability (the applicability of findings to alternative contexts), dependability (the consistency and reproducibility of the research methodologies), and confirmability (the extent to which findings are influenced by participants rather than researcher bias) demonstrate the integrity of naturalistic inquiry, shifting the focus from proving objectivity to establishing the trustworthiness of the study. The trustworthiness process in this study is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Trustworthiness of this study

Steps	Definition	Actions to take
1. Credibility (truth value)	Accuracy in the findings' "truth" and their ability to accurately represent the participants' actuality	Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member verification
2. Transferability (applicability)	The ability to apply findings to other contexts or settings.	thick and detailed descriptions of the research context to assess similarity
3. Dependability (Consistency)	The findings are consistent and could be repeated, accounting for changing conditions in the setting.	Audit trails or auditing the research process
4. Confirmability (Neutrality)	Ensuring the findings are based on the data, not the researcher's biases or motivations	Creating an audit trail to document the research steps

RESULTS

RQ 1: General description of students' competence in Kazakh

Five respondents of this study speak Turkmen at home daily. They speak Turkmen at home and at university. Depending on their arrival period in Kazakhstan—September or later—they study at the A1 level from October to December, until the winter exam. When they do not know Russian or Kazakh, they speak Turkmen, their native language. Like many international students, they use Russian to explain their ideas, such as when a teacher struggles to translate a Turkmen word into Kazakh. Turkmen is their language. Only when speaking or writing do they use other languages. The institution divides teaching and learning into Kazakh- and Russian-medium sections by primary language. Turkmen students must learn Kazakh, not Russian. As Kazakh experts, we speak Kazakh. In translanguaging, we sometimes use Russian and Turkish to clarify details. The evaluation measures "tildi susbharlau," or language contamination, to assess the speaker's fluency and the extent to which they employ non-English terminology in communication.

The first section of the study results indicates the language background other than Kazakh. Two of the students invited to the interview were male; the other three were female. During the conversation, it was clear they answered openly and without hesitation. (Table 4).

Table 4.

Background of the language of the participants

No	Participants	Language background
1	Male (aged 21)	Parents, both of whom had been born and grown in Kazakhstan and obtained master's degrees. Currently attending a university has a significant interest in literature and philosophy. He is now fluent in both Kazakh, Russian and English.
2	Male (aged 21)	The family consists of a 46-year-old mother and a 54-year-old father, both born and raised in Kazakhstan. His interest in language. Fluent in Kazakh, Russian and English
3	Female (aged 22)	The parents were both born and raised in Kazakhstan. She speaks Kazakh, Russian and English for daily lives at home. Attending a university with interest in humanities. Fluent in Kazakh, Russian and English
4	Female (aged 22)	Due to five years spent in London, she primarily thinks in English, but is fluent in Kazakh, English, Russian, and Turkish.
5	Female (aged 22)	The parents were both born and raised in Kazakhstan, speak English and Kazakh fluently but not so fluent in Russian. Her interest is in music

More elaboration is provided on students' perceptions of translinguaging strategies in the classroom setting and their awareness of using "trilogy language". Our research explores the following themes:

- Students feel more comfortable receiving instructional explanations or comments in Kazakh or Russian.
- In daily classroom conversations or in their on-campus activities, they speak Kazakh or Russian with my peers to complete group assignments.
- They have trouble translating novel lexicon, so code-switching consists mainly of Russian and English words translated into Kazakh.
- For academic needs, for example, to write an essay or a classroom presentation, they utilize non-English language resources.
- All participants try hard to achieve "*tildi susbharlau*," or language contamination, to determine how fluent the speaker is and how well they use vocabulary taken from languages other than English when conveying ideas or speaking with others.
- Translinguaging is a natural behavior rather than a strategy.

Language competence, as indicated in the themes, supports students' language background at home and their academic exposure, emphasizing students' awareness of having high competence in the trilogy Kazakh, Russian, and English at the minimum level "*tildi susbharlau*".

Viewed from the interview questions, students' responses are as follows:

First, to reveal the linguistic and educational context of the students, participants were asked, "To what extent did you speak Kazakh before coming to Kazakhstan?" One student is fluent, showing no interference in grammar, vocabulary, or topics presented. The student performs at the full proficiency of the A1 level.

The first student replied,

"I only understood simple words like daily greetings, goodbyes". I know the vocabulary, so I can express Kazakh and Turkmen words into English as I expect for any topic I want to say"

The first student indicates the profile of a multilingual speaker who has no obstacles in the language process of translation at the levels of vocabulary, word choice, and sentence. She said that more practice with code-switching between different languages in different settings is why she succeeds in her daily life at home and in her community.

The second student added:

"I like listening to bloggers. I learned through YouTube. When I came to Kazakhstan, I understood speech, but I could not speak."

The remaining three respondents stated that they learned Kazakh only upon arriving here. Everyone noted that Kazakh is a related language to Turkmen, especially in grammar and pronunciation. The student confirms that grammatical issues are the main obstacles to expressing ideas fluently. He can understand others when they speak to him, but he has trouble reproducing messages when he should reply in the conversation.

To the question, “Do you use other languages (Turkmen, Russian, Turkish, etc.) when learning Kazakh?” everyone replied, “Yes, I do.” All participants reported using Russian, with partial Turkish and Uzbek. “Do you feel more relaxed mixing languages while communicating in class?” All participants responded affirmatively.

Though all appear fluent in mixing multiple languages and affirm fluency, a discrepancy exists between the first female student and the second male student. The first female student has a minor problem with Russian because she does not speak it consistently at school and at home. However, she understands clearly any Russian vocabulary. She tends to learn receptive skills more readily than productive skills in Russian.

The third student looks very confident in three languages: Turkmen, Russian, and Turkish. He participates in informal sessions in his youth community, and he listens to music and watches movies on YouTube. He also practices through the Google application in these three languages.

When the interviewer asked, “What is the first thing you think about when you speak Kazakh? Do you formulate what you said in Turkmen first, and then translate it into Kazakh? Or do you understand right away?”, two respondents misunderstood the question. The interviewer repeated and clarified the questions.

One of the respondents replied as follows:

“At first, I was mentally translating into Turkmen, then I answered in Kazakh. But after I learned Kazakh, I began to perceive what was said in Kazakh and respond in this language”.

The next respondent said: “- Ija, buryn yesitpegen kazaksha sozderdi estip alsam, orysshaga audaryp alamyn ozim. Nemdi aralap koremin, kandai magynasy bar yeken dep sonday. Sosyn turkimen tilimen salystyryp koremin, oylap koremin, sosyn audaryp esimizde saktap kalam”.

(“Yes, if I hear Kazakh words that I have not heard before, I translate them into Russian. I am bypassing that, which makes sense. Then I compare it with the Turkmen language, I think. I translate and memorize it.” Although the response was meaningful, the student used the unclear expression “nemdi aralap koremin” (“I get around this”) instead of some words. In addition, he made grammatical and stylistic mistakes.

To the question “Does knowing several languages make your thinking easier? Or is it confusing?” everyone replied that it “makes it easier”, and also simultaneously replied that it was “confusing”.

When asked in which cases this happens, one respondent replied: “When I answer in Russian, I mix Kazakh and Turkmen. I am confusing a lot of words because of this.” In response to the question “During the lesson, the teacher uses Russian, Turkmen, Turkish, or another language in addition to the Kazakh language. How does this affect your ability to speak Kazakh?”, all the students replied that the teacher uses Russian only occasionally. If the teacher does not understand some Turkmen words, he uses Russian. Moreover, I did not use English as a global language at all. One of the students said that he speaks English at a basic level, while the rest speak only Russian, Kazakh, Turkish, and Uzbek.

Using the last question, “What would you recommend to other Turkmen students studying Kazakh?” as a reflection, all the students answered that they should watch more films in Kazakh, listen to songs, find a Kazakh-speaking environment, read books, but one of the students' answer also contained psychological advice: “There is no need to be afraid to speak, to use the Kazakh language more in everyday life, to communicate with people, to study. You also need to stay calm. It is very important”.

Research question 2 on Themes on Translanguaging

The results are presented according to the thematic patterns identified through thematic analysis of the interview data. The analysis aimed to explore how Turkic-speaking students experience translanguaging while learning Kazakh and how multilingual resources contribute to their language processing.

Theme 1. Initial reliance on prior linguistic repertoire

Participants reported little exposure to Kazakh before arriving in Kazakhstan. Students reported familiarity with ordinary language or receptive knowledge derived from exposure to informal media rather than their competency levels. All participants noted grammar and phonetic similarities between Kazakh and Turkmen. This imagined linguistic proximity helped Kazakh language learning start.

Theme 2. Translanguaging as a natural learning strategy

While learning, all participants used Turkmen, Russian, and occasionally Turkish or Uzbek. For comprehension and meaning production, multilingualism was defined as spontaneous. Students said that mixing languages in class reduced communicative strain and allowed for engagement even with a limited Kazakh lexicon. Thus, translanguaging supported communication rather than stopping it.

Theme 3. Internal translation and gradual cognitive shift

Internal translation was a common topic in interviews. Several individuals said they first thought in Turkmen before speaking Kazakh. However, participants noticed a gradual change. Understanding and responding in Kazakh without using the local language became possible with linguistic experience. Russian was often used to interpret foreign languages before comparing them to Turkmen for semantic clarity and memorization. This shift is from mediated multilingual processing to automated language processing.

Theme 4. Cognitive facilitation and interference in multilingual processing

Participants simultaneously described multilingualism as both cognitively supportive and occasionally confusing. Knowing several languages was perceived to accelerate understanding and vocabulary acquisition; however, learners also reported lexical interference, particularly when producing speech in Russian or Kazakh, where elements of Turkmen appeared unintentionally. These accounts demonstrate the dynamic nature of multilingual cognitive processing, in which facilitation and interference coexist during language production.

Theme 5. Affective dimension of translanguaging

Students regularly noted that adopting familiar languages during Kazakh training lessened anxiety. When an explanation was needed, the instructors' limited use of Russian was helpful. In introspective comments, individuals stressed confidence, emotional tranquility, and reduced fear as crucial to successful communication. Frequent experiences encouraged speaking without fear. Translanguaging helps learners regulate understanding, cognitive load, and communicative engagement while learning Kazakh, according to thematic analysis.

For further analysis, we refer to the interview protocol and draw two main conclusions from our experience with Kazakh-speaking participants: Kazakh remains a living language and a national identity. Translanguaging was used in the classroom beyond teacher educators' language practices. In instructions, group discussions, and when students struggle to retain words in a language, participants intentionally use student translanguaging. Faculty members justified translanguaging; the decision was not arbitrary. When tasks need clarification, students translate. When used to achieve certain objectives, translanguaging helped both teachers and pupils.

Lived experience. The lived experiences of the Kazakh language exemplify remarkable bilingual practices. The Kazakh, professional, and urban experience in Russia results in a unique cultural amalgamation in daily life. Students express national identification through the "dual reality," which signifies a common code-switching phenomenon, commencing a word in Kazakh and concluding it in Russian, and vice versa. Unlike the previous dominance of Russian in professional, academic, and commercial domains, Kazakh is becoming prevalent in governmental administration and emerging digital contexts. The Kazakh language functions as a "living language," intricately linked to the traditions, poetry, and history of the Kazakh people, and encompasses *bata*, or blessings. The Kazakh language evokes a profound sense of comfort, belonging, and originality. In familial contexts, particularly when addressing an infant, the language employs vivid, emotive terminology to convey profound attachment. The Kazakh language, as a practical and innovative medium, is progressively being integrated into contemporary technology, voice assistants, and artificial intelligence.

Bounded case in Trinity. In Kazakh, there is no "bounded case." Grammatical cases specify noun functions in phrases. Your idea may be related to "boundedness" in linguistics. Grammar rules, such as verbs with endpoints, are difficult for pupils to apply without considering noun cases. AI helps them solve problems more. The Trinity of Languages strategy promotes trilingualism throughout Kazakhstan by emphasizing Kazakh, the language of national identity, Russian, the language of interethnic connection, and English, the language of global communication and economics.

Language choice. The language selection in Kazakhstan is influenced by a multilingual environment, where Kazakh, Russian, and increasingly prevalent English coexist. Communication methods vary according to place, context, and generation, highlighting the importance of cultural continuity and practical mobility.

Core Language Roles. Kazakh is primarily used in home contexts but is increasingly spreading in government and early education. Russian is widely used in everyday communication and is a key language in business, higher education, and general media consumption. English (worldwide Integration) is widely used among young people, in higher education, and in industry to demonstrate worldwide prominence and professional success. In ordinary interactions, bilingual speakers commonly combine Kazakh and Russian (translanguaging). This code-switching is a common communication method among friends and colleagues, particularly in urban areas. Kazakh communication places a high importance on expressive greetings, well-wishes, and emotional warmth, with native languages often having a stronger emotional resonance than secondary languages.

Internal translation processes in trinity languages. The "Trinity of Languages"—Kazakh, Russian, and English—is a strategic language policy for global and national integration. This notion views translation as a complex, multilevel system that links cultural and semantic reality. This trilingual approach employs multiple rounds of internal translation to preserve meaning while adhering to linguistic and cultural traditions. Translators understand the original material and assess how source concepts (e.g., Kazakh cultural realia or English scientific terminology) match the destination language. Translators avoid word-for-word translation to protect Kazakh culture and nationalism. This requires understanding similar idioms, cultural references, and concepts. The translator uses Russian indirect translation to explain Kazakh cultural lexemes in English, and vice versa. Translators carefully develop new loanwords from Russian or English, checking phonetic, grammatical, and contextual congruence. Internal translation processes in Kazakh educational institutions, such as secondary schools and universities, require educators and curriculum developers to use all three languages simultaneously, requiring specialized linguistic competence. In Kazakhstan's trilingual schools, literature and local geography are taught in Kazakh, but physics, chemistry, and biology are taught in English. Translation and teaching often include specialist jargon. Historical Kazakh-Russian bilingualism is being replaced by trilingualism, with English as the main tool for global integration.

Cognitive ease or difficulty in multilingual contexts. Using more than one language at a time demands more mental energy up front, but it strengthens the brain in the long run. The brain works hard to multitask and switch between languages, but the effort pays off in the end by making it more flexible and better able to govern its own behavior. The process of understanding a language is always contextual. An active ecology of competing language rules is present in the brain of a multilingual reader or speaker. Because every language in the world is used to some extent at the same time, for the brain to concentrate on one language, it has to shut out other languages that are not important. It takes a lot of processing power to switch languages or translate ideas as you go. Occasionally, this can create excessive cognitive load, leading to "tip-of-the-tongue" moments or delayed lexical retrieval.

Our results show that Kazakh/Russian-English conversation addresses English-language complexity and code-switching as expressions of multilingualism. Their speech rarely code-

switches. They are unfamiliar with code-switching as a sign of multilingualism and its widespread use in speech. Multilingualism affects language status; hence, Kazakh/Russian and English are used in English-language improvement discussions. Most multilingual students believe that mixing Kazakh or Russian with English boosts English's status. However, it is unclear how much linguistic mixing may hurt Russian or Kazakh. The linguistic merger does not harm Russian or Kazakh. Students from varied language backgrounds should learn English and Kazakh/Russian to develop linguistic awareness and a positive attitude toward multilingualism.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study allow translanguaging to be interpreted not merely as a classroom communication strategy but as a psycholinguistic process emerging from multilingual language processing. Rather than functioning as random code-mixing, translanguaging appears to reflect learners' attempts to regulate comprehension, manage cognitive effort, and maintain communicative continuity while acquiring Kazakh.

García (2009) and Wei (2011) suggest that translanguaging is a natural compilation of multilingual activities present in Kazakhstan. The teacher educators involved in my study, like others, possessed a multilingual repertoire that included Kazakh, Russian, English, Turkish, Uzbek, and additional languages (Simons & Fennig, 2018). They were conversing in languages akin to those of their compatriots. According to the testimony of those who were interviewed, one form of translanguaging was the mixing of languages. A perfect example of translanguaging was this. Such activities might be considered *Shala Kazakh* (Akanova, 2017). *Shala Kazakh* is a term for a language widely spoken in Kazakhstan that incorporates elements of both Kazakh and Russian. Teacher educators did not object to the way their trainees used translanguaging as a standard communication strategy. This was because they themselves were multilingual and used translanguaging in their everyday lives. Because they were multilingual and actively engaged in translanguaging, including *Shala Kazakh*, the teacher educators considered translanguaging an extremely beneficial resource.

It is possible to claim that a translanguaging space (Wei, 2011) existed in which both teacher educators and pre-service teachers freely engaged in translanguaging. Most of the time, this was done to build rapport and to speak outside the classroom context. To make sense of the environment at this particular place, a form of translanguaging known as spontaneous translanguaging was employed. This type of translanguaging is separate from pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz, 2017). Teacher educators and pre-service teachers have the opportunity to deepen their relationships with one another and increase their capacity to communicate through this student-controlled, spontaneous form of translanguaging. Consistent with the thesis proposed by de Meijía and Hélot (2015), instructors are also involved in the process.

One of the central findings concerns the role of Russian as an intermediary linguistic resource. In the post-Soviet educational space, Russian continues to occupy a mediating position

in multilingual communication (Karabassova & Isidro, 2020). The participants' reliance on Russian during meaning negotiation suggests that translanguaging practices are shaped not only by linguistic similarity but also by sociolinguistic experience accumulated prior to arrival in Kazakhstan. From a psycholinguistic perspective, such mediation may indicate simultaneous activation of multiple linguistic systems rather than interference between them.

Importantly, students' narratives revealed a developmental shift from internal translation toward direct comprehension in Kazakh. This transition can be interpreted as a movement from controlled processing to more automated language processing. In this study, translanguaging appears to support this regulation by allowing temporary reliance on accessible linguistic resources until stable processing in the target language emerges.

The coexistence of facilitation and confusion reported by participants further demonstrates the dynamic nature of multilingual cognition. While multiple languages accelerate lexical access and comprehension, they may also increase processing demands during speech production. Rather than contradicting each other, these experiences illustrate the adaptive restructuring of multilingual processing systems during language acquisition. This dual effect also resonates with Mpofu and Ndebele (2025), who reported broadly positive perceptions of translanguaging while noting that linguistic diversity may create difficulties when participants do not share the same additional languages. This suggests that the benefits of translanguaging are context-dependent rather than automatic.

Another important interpretive dimension concerns affective factors. Reduced anxiety reported by participants when intermediate languages were permitted supports psycholinguistic models that link emotional regulation to language production. The possibility of drawing on familiar linguistic resources appears to lower the affective filter, enabling more active participation and sustained communication. In this sense, translanguaging contributes not only to comprehension but also to psychological readiness for speech.

Taken together, the findings suggest that translanguaging should be understood as an adaptive multilingual processing strategy grounded in learners' cognitive and affective regulation mechanisms. Within the context of Kazakh language teaching, translanguaging reflects the natural organization of multilingual cognition rather than deviation from pedagogical norms. These results challenge strictly monolingual instructional models and highlight the importance of recognizing learners' full linguistic repertoires in language education.

The findings also contribute to translanguaging theory by extending its empirical grounding to the Kazakh educational context, which remains underrepresented in multilingualism research. Unlike in widely studied global language settings, translanguaging in the Kazakh context occurs within closely related Turkic languages, shaped by shared linguistic structures and a post-Soviet sociolinguistic experience. This suggests that translanguaging practices are influenced not only by linguistic diversity but also by typological proximity and historical language hierarchies, thereby broadening current theoretical understandings of multilingual language processing.

In Turkmenistan, as in Kazakhstan, students studied Russian as a second language. Russian continues to be taught as a second language in all post-Soviet countries; it is used as an official language, plays a dominant role in society, and is spoken by students, even when instruction is in Kazakh (Karabassova & Isidro, 2020). Russian has been taught as a second language in Turkmenistan for 11 years; therefore, it may function as an intermediary language. During the interview, the respondents spoke mixing Russian words: “already”, “answer”, “for example”, “by the way”, “you should answer me right now”, etc. They also added Turkmen words such as “leikin” and “maslikhat beremin” (“I will give advice”). Since it is known that the student did not intentionally mix words during the interview, this is explained by the speaker's long-term use of the same language (Pliatsikas et al., 2019) and by the level of activity of language monitoring processes (Giovannoli et al., 2020). Limitations in cognitive control are evident in respondents' reports of confusion when using several languages simultaneously.

During class, the teacher did not insist on speaking only Kazakh, so there was no stress and anxiety. These opinions are described not as factors that weaken speech and communication, but rather as resources that facilitate lexical search and enable faster meaning construction. Neuro-linguistically, this phenomenon indicates that languages operate within a shared repertoire in the speaker's brain. In addition, opinions on reducing anxiety when using intermediate languages shape the affective-cognitive relationship in translanguaging. In the case of incomplete activation of linguistic resources, inhibition would be engaged, making speech more difficult and increasing cognitive load. In the case of translanguaging activation, when working memory's ability to construct meaning increases and cognitive load decreases, there is also no nervousness.

The answers related to affective factors indicate that, in students' process of mastering the Kazakh language, language processing undergoes dynamic change. At the initial stage of the study, some students first formed an idea in the Turkmen language, and then used a translation strategy into Kazakh. This indicates a stage of language production based on translation and may be associated with a higher cognitive load, since the dual processing of thought – first formulated in the source language and then transferred to the target language – places an additional load on working memory.

Over time, some students switched to direct understanding and thinking in Kazakh. This change can be explained by the automation of language processing and the ability to activate semantic networks in the target language directly. It was also noted that in some cases, Russian was used as an intermediary language. This phenomenon reflects the flexible interaction of language systems in a multilingual environment.

From an affective perspective, the transition from the translation stage to direct understanding can be accompanied by increased verbal confidence. Language-processing automation reduces the affective filter, lowering internal barriers to speech production. Translanguaging can be viewed not as linguistic confusion but as a process of transition to a stable multilingual processing model through reorganization.

Our finding confirms the study by García and Wei (2014), which states that translanguaging contrasts with code-switching, as it encompasses not merely a transition but the speakers' creation and use of intricate, interconnected discursive activities that constitute their entire linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging encompasses more than merely alternating between two languages or possessing two separate languages within our cognitive framework. It involves employing our linguistic knowledge at a particular moment by amalgamating and generating language appropriate to the context. Multilingual individuals communicate instinctively, use a comprehensive array of expressions to sustain connections, and convey their identities.

Our findings suggest that translanguaging, as a pedagogical approach in classroom language teaching, empowers more than bilingual or multilingual approaches, implying that teaching language through translanguaging pedagogy suffices for multicultural and multimodal language methods. School and university students in any region can apply translanguaging to facilitate the transfer of learning across various media. We pretend that our research originality lies in how translanguaging methods in language teaching align with insights from multilingual teaching. We are aware, however, that our research has limitations in depth data exploration due to the limited number of participants. Future research is directed toward recruiting more research participants, allowing investigation into classroom practices involving translanguaging methods, or as the foundation of the extended research.

CONCLUSION

Moving beyond monolingual teaching paradigms, the translingual method has demonstrated pedagogical effectiveness. This method helps reveal the individual capabilities of language learners and the full use of their academic competence in Kazakh. The study was based on Turkmen students' experience learning Kazakh. This can be explained by the fact that the Turkic languages are not only languages that are close in phonetic, lexical, and grammatical features, but also communities with shared cultural and historical ties, so the use of lexical similarities in their native language, even if they speak Kazakh, did not result in conflict between the first and second languages. It was observed that learners recognize similarities between their languages, compare them, and even quickly learn a language through similar words. The use of intermediate languages semantically helps to retrieve lexical items more efficiently, increasing confidence in speech and contributing to a decrease in the affective filter. This study also explains that translanguaging not only contributes to learning outcomes but also to the logic of cognitive processing. This approach indicates the need to transform methodological positions regarding teaching the Kazakh language in a multilingual environment. We recommend that translanguaging has the potential to transform language teaching beyond multicultural and plurilingualism, which are recommended to apply.

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APPENDIX

Table 2.

Interview Guide

No	Aspects	Purposes
1	Lived experience in using the language	capturing the "what" and "how" of a human experience, such as coping with an illness, navigating a career change, or participating in a specific educational program
2	Bounded Case	Restricted to a specific group, context, or instance, two males and three females whose individual experiences are specific
3	previous language learning background	a learner's cumulative experience with language acquisition, including prior knowledge of a first language (L1), exposure to additional languages (L2, L3), and personal learning history. It encompasses past experiences, motivations, strategies, and teacher influences that shape how a person acquires new languages.
4	language choice during communication	a strategic, context-dependent, and social act, heavily influenced by topic, setting, and the speaker's language attitudes. It involves selecting words, varieties, or languages (e.g., local vernacular for intimacy, formal languages for work/admin) to optimize understanding and ensure precise, appropriate communication.
5	internal translation processes	a structured brain thinking process to move content from a source to a target language to show whether human-driven or automated prioritize accuracy, context, and cultural adaptation how a prose is exposed in communication
6	cognitive ease or difficulty in multilingual use	Multilingualism improves cognitive flexibility, executive function, and problem-solving by training the brain to manage several language systems. It improves long-term mental agility but can cause short-term cognitive problems and tiredness, especially when switching languages or handling interruptions.
7	emotional experiences related to speaking Kazakh	Speaking evokes complex emotional experiences, ranging from high-stakes anxiety to confidence and joy, significantly impacting performance and communication