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NATIVE LANGUAGE USE IN TURKISH TEACHING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON LANGUAGE TRANSFER INFORMED BY CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Abstract. In the process of foreign language teaching, maximizing learners' linguistic repertoires constitutes one of the key principles of the post-method era. In this regard, rather than restricting learners' first language, its strategic use as a supportive resource in the instructional process has become an increasingly relevant issue. This qualitative study investigates the role of native language use in teaching Turkish as a foreign language and its impact on language transfer in classroom settings. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Kazakh students studying Turkish at a university in Kazakhstan. The study examines how students use their native language (Kazakh) during Turkish language learning and how this use affects linguistic structures, particularly vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Content analysis is employed to analyze the qualitative data. The results show that students perceive their native language as a supportive tool that promotes comprehension, especially at the beginner level, and that similarities between Kazakh and Turkish often assist the acquisition process. However, negative transfer examples were also outlined in areas as pronunciation and syntax. Overall, the results indicate that strategic use of the native language can deepen learning, provided that linguistic similarities and differences are considered. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations, including integrating contrastive analysis and translanguaging approaches to enhance positive learning outcomes in the classroom.

Keywords: native language, language transfer, Kazakh students, teaching Turkish as a foreign language, contrastive analysis.

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Түрік тілін оқытуда ана тілін қолдану: салыстырмалы талдауға негізделген тілдік трансфер бойынша сапалық зерттеу

Аңдатпа. Шетел тілін оқыту үдерісінде білім алушылардың тілдік репертуарын барынша пайдалану – пост-әдістемелік кезеңнің маңызды қағидаларының бірі. Осыған байланысты шетел тілін меңгерту барысында білім алушылардың ана тілін шектеу емес, оны оқу үдерісінде көмекші ресурс ретінде стратегиялық тұрғыда қолдану өзекті мәселеге айналып отыр. Бұл сапалық зерттеу түрік тілін шетел тілі ретінде оқытуда ана тілін қолданудың рөлі мен оның тілдік трансферге ықпалын зерттейді. Деректер Қазақстандағы университетте түрік тілін шетел тілі ретінде оқып жатқан қазақ студенттерімен жүргізілген жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттар арқылы жинақталды. Зерттеу барысында студенттердің ана тілін (қазақ тілін) оқу үдерісінде қалай пайдаланатыны және оның лексика, грамматика және синтаксис сияқты тілдік құрылымдарға әсері талданды. Деректер контент талдау әдісі арқылы өңделді. Нәтижелер студенттердің ана тілін, әсіресе бастапқы кезеңде, түсінуді жеңілдететін қолдау құралы ретінде қабылдайтынын көрсетті. Қазақ және түрік тілдері арасындағы құрылымдық және сөздік ұқсастықтар оң трансферді күшейтетіні анықталды. Дегенмен, айтылым мен синтаксиске қатысты теріс трансфер мысалдары да байқалды. Жалпы алғанда, ана тілін стратегиялық және шектеулі қолдану оқу нәтижелерін жақсартатыны, ал шамадан тыс аударуға сүйену меңгеруді баяулататыны анықталды. Зерттеу соңында тілдік ұқсастықтар мен айырмашылықтарды ескеруге мүмкіндік беретін салыстырмалы және транслингвистикалық тәсілдерді кіріктіруге бағытталған педагогикалық ұсыныстар берілді.

Кілт сөздер: ана тілі, тілдік трансфер, қазақ студенттері, шетел тілі ретінде түрік тілін оқыту, салыстырмалы талдау.

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Использование родного языка в обучении турецкому: качественное исследование языкового трансфера на основе контрастивного анализа

Аннотация. В процессе обучения иностранному языку максимально полное использование языкового репертуара обучающихся является одним из ключевых принципов постметодического этапа. В этой связи при обучении иностранному языку актуализируется необходимость не ограничения родного языка обучающихся, а его стратегического использования в качестве вспомогательного ресурса в образовательном процессе. Данное качественное исследование рассматривает роль использования родного языка в обучении турецкому как иностранному и его влияние на языковой перенос. Данные были получены с помощью полуструктурированных интервью с казахскими студентами, изучающими турецкий язык в одном из университетов Казахстана. Исследование анализирует, каким образом студенты используют родной язык (казахский) в процессе обучения и как это отражается на усвоении лексики, грамматики и синтаксиса турецкого языка. Для обработки данных применялся контент-анализ. Результаты показывают, что студенты воспринимают родной язык как вспомогательный инструмент, облегчающий понимание, особенно на

начальном этапе обучения. Структурные и лексические сходства между казахским и турецким языками усиливают положительный перенос. Однако были выявлены и отрицательные примеры переноса, особенно связанные с произношением и синтаксисом. В целом установлено, что стратегическое и ограниченное использование родного языка способствует углублению обучения, тогда как чрезмерная опора на перевод может замедлять развитие коммуникативных навыков. В завершение представлены педагогические рекомендации, включая интеграцию контрастивного и транслингвистического подходов для повышения качества обучения.

Ключевые слова: родной язык, языковой перенос, казахские студенты, преподавание турецкого языка как иностранного, контрастивный анализ.

Introduction

The ineffectiveness of teaching a foreign language in a single language is growing more evident in the age of intercultural communication and technological development. The communicative approach has limitations, even though its goal is to encourage the real-world application of a foreign language in real communication contexts. This is because teaching a foreign language involves linguistic, affective, physical, technological, and psychological elements. Therefore, it is important to use all the possibilities, especially linguistic ones, in teaching foreign languages, taking into account these factors.

One of the factors from the linguistic point of view is that the native language plays a decisive role in the process of language acquisition. The native language is the first source for the student to understand the nature of other languages [1, p.123]. In general, the foreign language learning process is a process based on previous knowledge [2, p.1]. As a primary linguistic source, the native language thus shapes the learner's linguistic worldview and serves as the basis for the formation of their second or foreign language personality. Larsen and Freeman [3, p.102] emphasized that the native language can be utilized in the classroom to increase the safety of learners in the learning environment and to create a bridge between the two languages. Accordingly, the native language is inevitable in the foreign language learning process and provides some convenience to teachers in the language teaching process.

Translanguaging has gained attention recently as a pedagogical framework that goes beyond basic native language use [4]. Translanguaging sees languages as interconnected resources that can be strategically mobilized within a learner's repertoire rather than as separate systems [5, p.1]. Translanguaging involves the purposeful and dynamic use of all linguistic resources to scaffold comprehension, strengthen metalinguistic awareness, and deepen learning outcomes, as opposed to sporadically depending on the native language for clarification.

However, the native language is frequently left out of traditional instruction, which hinders learning and causes language transfer. Language transfer is a reflection of the learners' linguistic development stage and arises from the connection between languages. The term "language transfer" describes how knowledge and skills in one language affect one's use of another [6, p.1]. Transfer, which is based on the theory of contrastive analysis, can be either positive (facilitating learning when languages have similar structures) or negative (causing mistakes when differences impede acquisition). Depending on how language structures interact, language transfers can take place in phonology, grammar, semantics, or syntax, and can be either performance or learning-oriented [7, p.143; 6, p.6].

When the aforementioned information is considered in the context of teaching Turkish as a foreign language to Turkic learners, particularly Kazakh learners, it becomes evident that both positive and negative transfers frequently occur due to the similarities and differences between the

native and target languages. Ogur and Baştürk [8, p. 5] found that Kazakh learners, while learning Turkish at the A1-A2 level, benefit from features of the Kazakh language such as phonological harmony, noun inflectional suffixes, the structure of noun and adjective phrases, verb selection and usage, as well as syntactic patterns. Similarly, Daurenbek and Açık [9, p. 227] found that Kazakh learners, like other Turkic learners, tend to make errors in the phonetics, morphology, vocabulary, and syntax of the target language while learning Turkish. These errors are derived from linguistic similarities and differences between languages. As a consequence, they face some challenges in speaking and writing. Therefore, these data show that the Turkish linguistic proficiency of Kazakh learners is not at the desired level, mainly due to inter-linguistic features.

Many scholars have focused their research on mixed groups with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, rather than targeting a specific ancestry group [10, p. 156]. Although these studies investigate different aspects of language transfer, they rarely examine how learners themselves view and use their native language while learning Turkish. In particular, little attention has been paid to a homogeneous group of Kazakh learners, despite the structural similarities between Kazakh and Turkish.

Furthermore, learners' subjective perceptions and strategic language practices have received little attention in previous studies, which have tended to approach native language use mainly from an error-analysis or teacher-centered perspective. To address this gap, the current study adopts a learner-centered qualitative approach and investigates native language use through both translanguaging and contrastive analysis. A deeper understanding of how Kazakh learners actively navigate differences and similarities while learning Turkish is achieved through this integration.

Building on this gap, the current study examines how university students view and use their native language during Turkish language instruction, and how both positive and negative transfers occur throughout the learning process. Based on this purpose, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do students perceive the role of their native language while learning Turkish?
2. How does native language use help or hinder their understanding of Turkish linguistic structures such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax?
3. What examples of positive and negative language transfer do students encounter?
4. To what extent do students believe that native language use supports their speaking and writing skills in Turkish?

This study provides context-specific insights into how translanguaging tendencies and contrastive linguistic awareness shape Turkish acquisition by focusing on B2-level Kazakh university students. Although generalizability is limited by the qualitative design and small sample size, the results offer pedagogically significant implications for teaching Turkish and deepen our understanding of native language use in closely related language contexts.

Research methods and materials

A qualitative research method was used in this study. The content analysis technique was used in a way that could serve qualitative research. Finding concepts and their relationships is the primary goal of content analysis. The primary process in this technique is to bring together similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes, and to interpret them by organizing them in a way that the reader can understand [11, p.227].

The population of the study consists of only Kazakh students from various universities within Kazakhstan studying Turkish as a foreign language. For the study, the sample includes twelve B2-level Kazakh students, who learn Turkish as a second foreign language at Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University within the 2024-2025 academic year.

To ensure that the selection of participants was in line with the goals of the study, purposeful sampling principles were applied. The criteria for inclusion were as follows: (a) participants' first language was Kazakh; (b) they were enrolled as full-time undergraduate students; (c) they had achieved B2-level proficiency in Turkish, as indicated by institutional placement records; and (d) Turkish was learned primarily in an academic setting. To reduce uncontrolled exposure effects, students who had lived in Turkiye for a long time or were immersed in Turkish-speaking environments outside of the classroom were excluded. Before the study, all participants had studied Turkish for at least two academic years. They reported using the language sparingly outside of formal instruction, mostly for course-related materials and occasional media consumption.

The sample size for a qualitative study is determined by the research design, population homogeneity, study focus, and type of data analysis. Twelve semi-structured interviews were sufficient to reach thematic saturation in this study, meaning that no additional codes or concepts surfaced after the last interviews. This aligns with the suggestions of Yıldırım and Şimşek [11], who point out that in homogeneous groups, saturation is frequently reached in 6–8 interviews. For phenomenological and interview-based qualitative designs, Creswell [12] recommends a range of 5–25 participants. The sample offered enough depth to find recurrent patterns in native language use and language transfer because the study's participants had similar linguistic backgrounds, learning experiences, and proficiency levels. Table 1 shows the demographic details of the twelve B2-level Kazakh students. As a result, the sample size is considered methodologically sufficient and suitable for accomplishing the objectives of this study.

Table 1 – Demographic information of participants

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	8	67
	Male	4	33
Education level	Bachelor	12	12
	Master	—	0
Proficiency level	B2	12	100
Native language	Kazakh	12	100
	Other languages	—	0

As seen in Table 1, the sample includes 8 females (67%) and 4 males (33%) participants, all of whom are bachelor's degree students (100 %). All participants were at the B2-level (100%), and their native language was Kazakh (100%). The data indicate that purposeful sampling was utilized to ensure alignment with the study's aim.

All ethical procedures were carefully followed throughout the research process. Before data collection, participants were made aware of the study's purpose, that participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could leave at any moment without facing consequences. All participants provided written informed consent. Only the researchers had access to the transcripts, which were safely stored. The pseudonyms ("S1," "S2," etc.) were used for data presentation, and personal identifiers were removed from transcripts to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The study was classified as minimal-risk research because it used non-invasive interviews with adult university students. Institutional permission for conducting the study was obtained from the relevant university authorities.

Data Tool and Its Validity

The study used a semi-structured interview form. The interview questions consist of six questions, such as: *"How do you utilize your native language (Kazak) when learning Turkish in the*

classroom?"/ "In which areas (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.) does your native language help or interfere with your Turkish learning?" / "Can you provide an instance where using your native language improved your comprehension of Turkish?"/ "Have the differences between Kazakh and Turkish ever caused you to feel confused or challenged?"/ "Do you believe that using your native language helps or hinders your ability to learn Turkish? Why?"/ "What advice would you give educators about using Kazakh in Turkish language instruction?"

During the development of interview questions, three experts reviewed the interview form to ensure content validity. The experts assessed the questions in terms of clarity, alignment with the research questions, and appropriateness to the sample. Based on the feedback of the experts, revisions were made. In line with the nature of the qualitative study, a semi-structured interview form was then administered to the participants.

Both contrastive analysis (CA) and translanguaging principles were explicitly included in the methodological design. To systematically identify positive and negative transfer patterns in accordance with CA, the semi-structured interview protocol included prompts requiring learners to compare grammatical, lexical, and syntactic features between Kazakh and Turkish. Translanguaging-oriented codes (e.g., L1-based scaffolding, cross-linguistic reasoning, meaning reconstruction) were used during the coding stage to classify segments in which students used Kazakh to explain, interpret, monitor, or negotiate Turkish meaning. The study was able to look at both the structural similarities and differences between the languages, as well as the dynamic ways in which learners used their entire linguistic repertoires to process Turkish input due to this dual analytical lens. In this way, both the data collection procedure and the analysis that followed directly incorporated the theoretical novelty of integrating CA with translanguaging practices.

The data analysis used content analysis. Twelve participants' answers were recorded on audio and then transcribed. "Code, category, and theme" were the terms used to analyze the data. To find the significant units in the data, open coding was used. The codes were grouped into themes or categories. The MaxQDA 24.4.0 program was used to analyze the data.

Twenty percent of the data were independently coded by a second researcher to guarantee reliability. The reliability formula developed by Miles and Huberman [13] was used to analyze the items. The result of the analysis shows 86%, which means the study is reliable. Because the result above 70% is considered reliable [13, p.278]. The data was carefully encoded using designations such as "S1," "S2," and similar labels throughout the data presentation.

Example of the Coding Process

Here is a brief instance of how raw data were coded and arranged into themes to improve the qualitative analysis's transparency and credibility. Open coding, subcode classification, and the subsequent creation of overarching themes were the steps in the coding process. For instance, the segment *"I compare the grammatical structures first, then translate them into Kazakh, and then use Turkish." (S8)* was initially coded as *"comparison."* This code was categorized under the subcode *"comparison strategy,"* which contributes to the broader theme *"Understanding the native language use,"* as shown in Table 2. A positive perception of L1 use is seen in the excerpt *"I often use Kazakh to explain Turkish words to others." (S7),* which was coded as *"supportive role."* This code was placed under the subcode *"supportive role with understanding,"* contributing to the overarching theme *"Understanding the native language use."* These examples show how individual statements were methodically converted into codes, subcodes, and themes, which served as the foundation for the Results' thematic structure.

Results and discussion

Findings for research question 1: How do students perceive the role of their native language while learning Turkish?

To identify the general role of native language in instruction, the participants' answers were analyzed. In this case, two questions from a semi-structured interview form were asked. The results of the analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2 – Students' perspectives on their awareness of native language use

Theme	Questions	Code	Number of code	Participant
Understand the native language use (n = 12)	"How do you utilize your native language (Kazak) when learning Turkish in the classroom?" (n = 12)	supportive role	6	S3, S4, S6, S7, S10, S11
		awareness	2	S1, S5
		comparision	3	S2, S8
		rarely use	1	S9
	"Do you believe that using your native language helps or hinders your ability to learn Turkish? Why?" (n = 12)	support with writing	2	S5, S11
		support with speaking	2	S10, S12
		supportive role with understanding	4	S1, S2, S7, S8
		slow progress	3	S3, S6, S9
		depend on context	1	S4

As shown in Table 2, students shared their perspectives on whether the native language has a negative or positive role in learning Turkish. The majority of students (n=6) thought that speaking, writing, and understanding in their native language was beneficial. For instance, *S7: "I often use the Kazakh to explain Turkish words to others." / S11: "Kazakh supports my Turkish learning."* They also (n=3) mentioned that they use their native language to compare the target language structure to understand the structures or words. For example, *S8: "I compare the grammatical structures first, then translate them into Kazakh, and then use Turkish."* But some students (n=3) think that the native language hinders progress in the acquisition process. For example, S6: *"Kazakh slows my progress when I overtranslate."* Overall, most students viewed the use of their native language as supportive and expressed generally positive attitudes toward it.

These results are consistent with translanguaging research, which emphasizes how learners inherently use their dominant language as a cognitive and meaning-making tool [4]. Similarly, studies with Turkic learners [14, p. 117] show that students often interpret foreign linguistic forms using their L1, particularly when there are structural similarities between the target and native languages. Odlin's theory [15] of language transfer as a dual process is reflected in the current study's coexistence of beneficial and detrimental effects: similarities aid comprehension, while differences or an excessive dependence on L1 can obstruct L2 restructuring.

When considered all together, the findings show that Kazakh is crucial for promoting understanding and early retention of Turkish structures, especially in the initial stages of learning, as has also been observed by earlier studies [16, p.571]. The students' comments indicate that L1 use works best when used intentionally, mainly to compare linguistic patterns or clarify difficult concepts. On the other hand, over-reliance may limit opportunities to use Turkish more independently. As a result, the learners' perceptions indicate a balanced perspective that views Kazakh as a strategic tool rather than a continuous teaching medium.

Findings for research question 2: How does native language use help or hinder their understanding of Turkish linguistic structures such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax?

To determine the impact of native language on the Turkish linguistic structure acquisition process, the following question was asked: *"In which areas (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.) does your native language help or interfere with our Turkish learning?".* The students' responses were analyzed in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. The results of the subcodes statistics are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 — Students' insights into L1 use in learning structures

Theme	Codes	frequency	%
Effects on linguistic structures (n = 12)	grammar	6	27,3
	pronunciation	4	18,2
	syntax	4	18,2
	vocabulary	4	18,2
	all linguistic structures	2	9,1
	speaking and writing	2	9,1
		22	100

Students' opinions about how their native language affects their acquisition of Turkish grammar, vocabulary, and syntax are shown in Table 3. Most of the students mentioned the role of the native language in learning grammar (f=6), followed by its influence on pronunciation (f=4), syntax (f = 4), and vocabulary (f=4). Some students also reported that the native language affects all language structures (f=2), including productive skills. The detailed hierarchical codes-subcodes model is demonstrated in Picture 1.
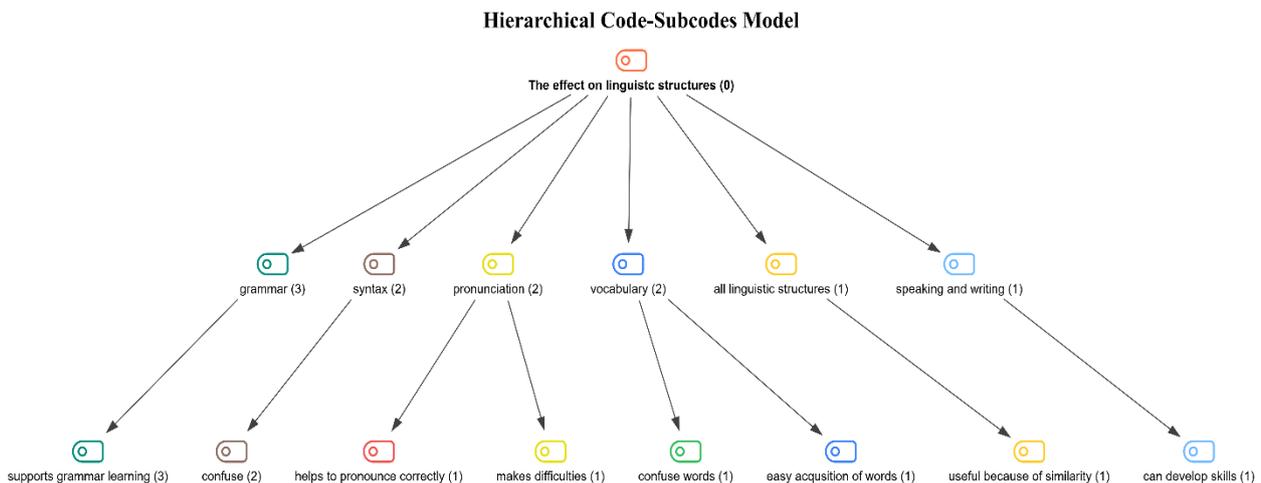
Picture 1 – Hierarchical codes-subcodes model regarding the effect of L1 on linguistic structures

As shown in Picture 1, the native language has both positive and negative effects on learning Turkish linguistic structures. However, positive effects outweigh the negative ones in terms of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and the development of productive skills. The following are some examples of student answers: *S1: "There are a lot of similarities in grammar and vocabulary,*

so it helps me a lot.” / S5: “Vocabulary is easy to learn because most words are similar.” In terms of negative impact, *S9: “Syntax is different, which is why I am often confused”.* From these points of view, it can be concluded that the similarities and differences play a crucial role in the acquisition of Turkish linguistic structure.

These patterns are consistent with contrastive analysis predictions, which suggest that structural similarity promotes positive transfer while mismatches, particularly in syntax, cause interference [17]. The typological connection of Turkish and Kazakh, two agglutinative Turkic languages, is reflected in students' emphasis on grammatical and lexical similarity; prior research has found that this connection facilitates morphosyntactic learning. On the other hand, their stated difficulties with sentence structure and word order point to areas where typological overlap is weaker, which is in line with cross-Turanic comparative studies.

The results also align with previous studies [20; 21], which demonstrate that instructional materials for learners, particularly for Turkic learners [18; 19; 22], frequently include contrasts between the two languages to enhance comprehension. Comments from students support this idea: while unfamiliar syntactic patterns required more explanation, similarities in vocabulary and suffixation sped up understanding.

Overall, the findings show that structural connection is the main factor influencing L1 influence on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax. When learners encountered deeper structural divergence, negative transfer emerged, whereas positive transfer was strongest when Kazakh and Turkish shared transparent form-function mappings. This interpretation supports the idea that contrastive explanations should be incorporated into Turkish instruction for Kazakh learners because they appear to help students comprehend new structures and lessen confusion brought on by linguistic differences.

Findings for research question 3: What examples of positive and negative language transfer do students encounter?

Students' responses highlight the role of the native language in learning Turkish through examples of both positive and negative transfer. The results of the analysis related to the research question are given in the form of codes, subcodes, and frequencies. Table 4 presents the results below:

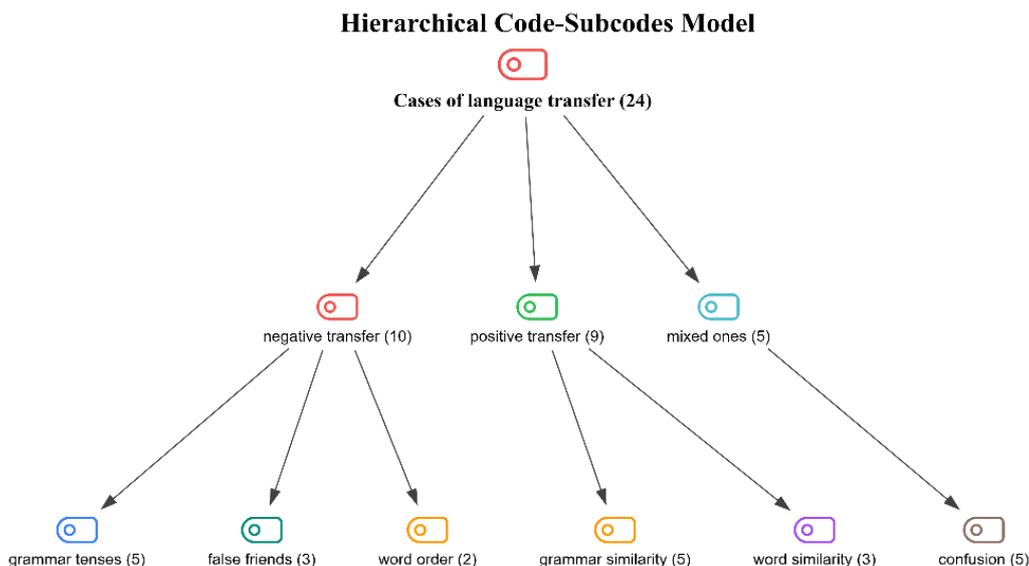**Table 4 – Subcodes statistics related to the language transfer**

Theme	Questions	Code	Number of code	Participant
Examples of language transfer (n = 12)	“Can you provide an instance where using your native language improved your comprehension of Turkish?” (n = 12)	Positive transfer	7	S1, S2, S3, S9, S10, S11, S12
		Negative transfer	2	S4, S5,
		Mixed impact	3	S6, S7, S8
	“Have the differences between Kazakh and Turkish ever caused you to feel confused or challenged?” (n = 12)	Positive transfer	2	S5, S8
		Negative transfer	8	S1, S2, S3,S7, S9, S10, S11, S12
		Mixed impact	2	S1, S6

As seen in Table 4, students experienced both positive and negative language transfers. They also faced with mixed impact of cross-language interference while learning Turkish. When students were asked to give examples of how Kazakh supported their understanding of Turkish, the vast majority (n = 7) emphasized positive transfer. The students (S1, S2, S3, S9, S10, S11, S12)

mentioned that similarities between the native and target language in terms of vocabulary and grammar foster the language learning process. For example, S1: "*Learning past simple was easier because Kazakh has the same suffixes and structure*". This implies that similarities between languages provide an opportunity for better comprehension and the acquisition process of Turkish. A minority of students (n=2) highlight the negative transfer due to the difficulties of linguistic structures between the languages. They mentioned that reliance on Kazakh leads to incorrect use of Turkish in real-life situations.

The co-occurrence of positive, negative, and mixed transfer resonates with current perspectives that transfer is dynamic and context-dependent [6]. Students' reports of ease with suffixation and tense markers correspond with typological parallels, while confusion with tense usage and syntax reflects areas where deep structural equivalence is lower. These findings reaffirm the applicability of CA in L2 Turkish instruction for Kazakh learners and support translanguaging perspectives, emphasizing that learners selectively draw on the L1 resources depending on task demands.

In response to the second question, the majority of the participants (n=8) reported that negative transfer and confusion occurred in the grammar and pronunciation aspects of language. For example, S10: *"Turkish order is a bit different, that is why I make mistakes"*. Only two students mentioned differences as a positive impact, and the other two students reported that they were confused. For instance, S4: *"I get confused with verb tenses because they are different."* The whole picture of students' perspectives regarding these questions is given in Picture 2.

Hierarchical Code-Subcodes Model

Cases of language transfer (24)

negative transfer (10)   positive transfer (9)   mixed ones (5)

grammar tenses (5)   false friends (3)   word order (2)   grammar similarity (5)   word similarity (3)   confusion (5)

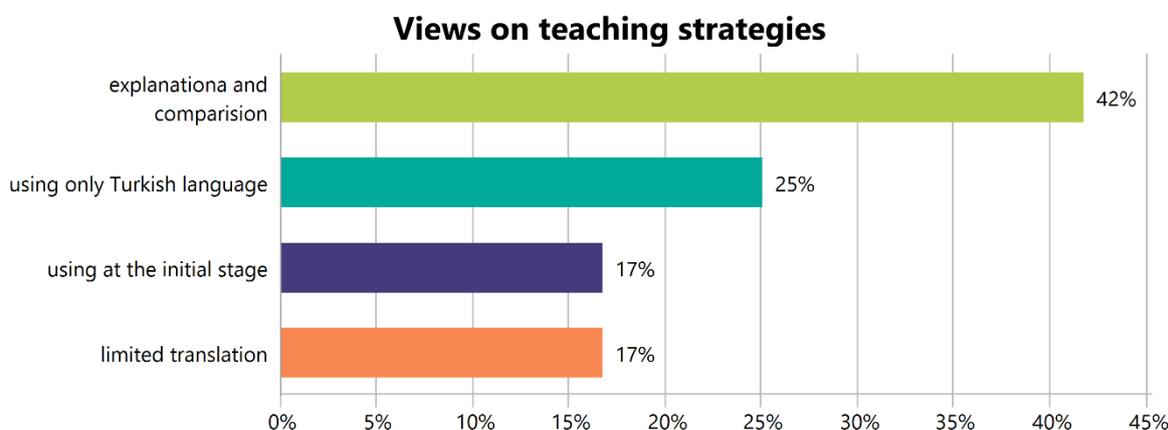**Picture 2 – Hierarchical codes-subcodes model regarding the examples of language transfer**

The codes, subcodes, and frequencies above demonstrate that positive transfer commonly occurs when students face structural and lexical similarities. Negative transfer is more frequently mentioned when students encounter linguistic differences that result in incorrect usage of Turkish. The mixed interferences also show the complex nature of language transfer in foreign language learning. These results also prove the theories around language transfer and strengthen the contrastive analysis hypothesis [23, p.1; 24, p.5].

The complexity of cross-linguistic interaction is highlighted by the existence of mixed, negative, and positive transfer. While negative transfer is observed in areas where Kazakh and

Turkish differ, such as word order and tense-aspect usage, positive transfer happens when learners come across familiar morphosyntactic or lexical patterns. The patterns in their examples show that linguistic similarity and the clarity or difficulty of the structures encountered are the primary factors influencing transfer outcomes, even though participants did not specifically mention more general motivational or pedagogical factors. This aligns with existing research indicating that positive transfer is supported by structural overlap, whereas negative transfer occurs when learners rely on L1 patterns in unsuitable contexts. Therefore, the results reinforce that both facilitation and interference depend on how learners process and interpret linguistic contrasts during instruction.

Findings for research question 4: To what extent do students believe that native language use supports their speaking and writing skills in Turkish?

Students were asked the following question to analyze the research question: *"What advice would you give educators about using Kazakh in Turkish language instruction?"*. The response of students was analyzed under the theme "Views on teaching strategies". The data was analyzed in terms of code, subcode, and percentage. The result of the analysis is shown in Picture 3.

Views on teaching strategies

Category	Percentage
explanationa and comparision	42%
using only Turkish language	25%
using at the initial stage	17%
limited translation	17%

Picture 3 – Students' opinions on instructional strategies

As shown in Picture 3, students offered various practical suggestions for how to utilize Kazakh in the Turkish language classroom. A majority of students, 42%, recommended that Turkish grammatical structures at the beginning level should be explained in Kazakh with comparison. For example, S10: *"Teachers can emphasize similar grammar in both languages."* / S8: *"Use only Kazakh for the explanation."* Some students, 25%, emphasize that only Turkish should be used in the classroom, S3: *"Avoid using too much Kazakh because it leads to misunderstandings."* According to 17 % of students, Kazakh should be used at the beginning level with few comparisons or translations. S2: *"Teachers should allow Kazakh at the beginner level,"* for instance. / *"Translate only essential parts, not all of them,"* states S7.

These results indicate that Kazakh should be used at the initial stages to support acquisition, serving as an effective teaching strategy. This aligns with the findings of previous studies [16, p.575; 25, p. 302; 26, p. 225], which suggest that the native language can be a useful tool when used appropriately. In addition, students demonstrated the ability to connect new vocabulary with their existing linguistic knowledge, and such strategies appear to play an important role in their language learning process [27, p. 305].

Students' comments show that they prefer to use L1 strategically and selectively, particularly in the early stages of learning. While learners who preferred less L1 use correlated with excessive reliance on Kazakh with less exposure to Turkish, learners who preferred greater use of Kazakh

emphasized its clarifying function when encountering unfamiliar grammatical structures. Participants' comments consistently highlighted the need for striking a balance between comparison-based explanation and immersion in the target language, even though they did not specifically address more general motivational or pedagogical factors.

This balance aligns with translanguaging pedagogy and scaffolding theory, both of which encourage deliberate, controlled L1 use for conceptual clarification [4]. However, immersion-based research, which emphasizes that a heavy reliance on L1 may limit opportunities for meaningful exposure to the target language, reinforces the concerns about misunderstandings when too much Kazakh is used. Students' suggestions often relied on comparisons between Kazakh and Turkish to make sense of grammatical structures, which aligns with the principles of contrastive analysis.

Overall, the results demonstrate that a balanced, comparison-informed teaching strategy may provide the best cognitive support for closely related languages like Turkish and Kazakh while preserving enough exposure to Turkish for ongoing skill development.

Conclusion

The qualitative study aims to investigate how Kazakh students utilize their native language in learning Turkish as a foreign language, with a focus on language transfer. The analysis of the semi-structured interview data shows that the native language plays a crucial role in the initial stage of learning. The findings indicate that Kazakh serves as an effective tool for acquiring vocabulary and grammar structures. This is because of language similarities. However, some students reported that relying on translation sometimes leads to a misunderstanding of the structures of Turkish, resulting in difficulties with pronunciation and syntax. This case indicates that both positive and negative transfer should be carefully considered in the process of teaching Turkish.

Students proposed that the learning process can be aided by the strategic use of the native language, particularly when clarifying difficult subjects, unfamiliar terms, or ideas. They did point out, though, that using the native language excessively can limit the chance to enhance communicative skills.

In a nutshell, this study demonstrates the importance of integrating translanguaging and contrastive analysis approaches in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. These approaches, which address similarities and differences between languages, can minimize negative impacts on students by promoting a deeper understanding of the target language. Conscious and pedagogically based use of the native language helps students have inclusive, more permanent, and meaningful learning experiences. Integrating contrastive analysis with translanguaging strategies enables instructors to support comprehension while gradually fostering independent use of Turkish, optimizing both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence.

The findings concurrently provide some very practical pedagogical guidance: contrastive analysis exercises, such as comparative grammar tasks, vocabulary mapping, and parallel texts, can be used by teachers to bring learners' attention to similarities and differences between Kazakh and Turkish. Effectively using the native language can enhance understanding of complex concepts or unfamiliar terms, while progressively increasing Turkish-only practice improves communicative competence. The teachers can also employ differential use of the native language depending on the proficiency of the learners, interactive and gamified activities that provide reinforcement, and structured feedback on both positive and negative transfer. Creating contrastive dictionaries or grammar tables, implementing exercises focused on pronunciation, encouraging metalinguistic reflection, and utilizing digital tools for vocabulary and translation practice can enhance learning outcomes even further. Moreover, the training programs for teachers themselves might be centered around translanguaging strategies that balance supportive native language use with immersive exposure to Turkish for more effective and deeper learning.

Overall, the results indicate that contrastive analysis is effective in a Turkic language context and can inform curriculum development, instructional materials, and teacher training, helping instructors implement translanguaging strategies while maintaining immersive Turkish practice.

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