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DIRECTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS IN THE LINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

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ABSTRACT

The object of the research is intercultural communication. The purpose of the article is to identify the specific features of foreign language (English) acquisition in the context of studying national minorities living in the Republic of Armenia. Research methods include observation, interviews, and the analysis of specific situations related to communicative abilities of junior schoolchildren in both their native and foreign languages. These methods are based on the knowledge of Armenian as the primary means of communication, as well as on the analysis of the audio recordings conducted with the participants, focusing on the phonetic structure of words, vocabulary, and the semantic transmission of thoughts or judgments.

Research hypothesis of the study: It is assumed that learners from national minorities, through their knowledge of Armenian, are able—by means of word and sentence transformation mechanisms—to adequately perceive and understand written and spoken foreign language discourse, relying on the lexicon of their native language and their sentence construction techniques.

Results of the study: Children from national minorities learn a foreign language relatively easily through Armenian, since Armenian, as a branch of the Indo-European language family, enables the relatively easy articulation of English sounds.

Main conclusion: Differences in phonetic structure of words, lexicon, and sentence construction techniques used by the schoolchildren from national minorities - both in their native language and in the state language - are realized according to a certain logic, primarily based on the semantic perception of words and sentences and on an adequate understanding of lexical semantics.

Key words: *national minorities, lexicon, word perception, semantic differential, native and foreign languages.*

INTRIDUCTION

The Republic of Armenia is predominantly inhabited by Armenian speakers; however, the country also hosts a diverse array of national minorities, including Kurds, Yezidis, Assyrians, Jews, Greeks, and several other ethnic groups. While numerically these groups constitute approximately 2% of the population, their social, cultural, and economic contributions render them an integral component of Armenia's multicultural landscape. National minorities actively participate in public life, maintain unique cultural traditions, and contribute to the preservation of the country's diverse heritage, highlighting the importance of inclusive policies that recognize and support their rights and identities (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 2019).

The educational experiences of national minority children are shaped by this sociolinguistic context. Most children from minority communities attend Armenian-medium schools, where Armenian serves as the primary language of instruction across the majority of the curriculum. At the same time, foreign languages are introduced, and certain subjects with strong cultural or religious relevance - such as the study of religion, traditional rituals, holidays, and customary practices - are taught in the children's native languages. Instruction is frequently provided by teachers who share the same ethnic background as the students, thereby reinforcing cultural continuity and identity formation within the educational process (Zeytunyan, 2022). This bilingual or multilingual learning environment provides a rich context for examining the interplay between native, societal, and foreign languages in shaping linguistic competence.

The constitutional and legal framework of the Republic of Armenia emphasizes the protection of national minorities and the promotion of their cultural heritage. According to the Constitution, the state is obliged to ensure the rights of national minorities, support the preservation of their cultural traditions, and encourage the creation and transmission of national values. Article 4 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On General Education"

further provides that education for national minorities may be conducted in their native or national languages, while Armenian remains a compulsory component of the curriculum (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 2019). These legislative provisions reflect Armenia's commitment to upholding cultural diversity while maintaining a cohesive educational standard.

The administration of national minority affairs is coordinated through the relevant department of the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. This office develops draft legal acts related to minority rights, organizes regular consultations with community representatives, and provides support for cultural events and initiatives. Additionally, the National Assembly of Armenia includes deputies representing minority groups, who actively advocate for the historical, cultural, and social interests of their communities, contributing to tangible solutions and policy improvements. The Armenian government also collaborates with international organizations to ensure that all citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities, including in the spheres of education, cultural participation, and social integration (Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs).

National minority populations are geographically concentrated in specific regions, often forming compact communities that facilitate the preservation of language, traditions, and cultural identity. One notable example is Ararat Province, where minority communities are actively engaged in cultural, political, and socio-economic activities. Within Ararat, Upper Dvin is particularly significant, as approximately 80% of its population consists of Assyrians. The Assyrian community in Upper Dvin traces its settlement to the nineteenth century and has historically maintained considerable social and cultural influence. The preservation of cultural identity is evident through institutions such as the Assyrian church, "Mayr Tuma," founded in 1822, and a national song and dance ensemble, alongside public organizations dedicated to safeguarding Assyrian cultural heritage. Furthermore, the local secondary school offers instruction in the Assyrian language and history, which actively supports the reinforcement of cultural knowledge and ethnic identity among younger generations (Zeytunyan, 2022).

Beyond Upper Dvin, the Assyrian population also maintains a significant presence in the village of Dimitrov, where they constitute roughly 20% of the local population. Like Upper Dvin, Dimitrov hosts community organizations that coordinate cultural preservation activities, thereby fostering continuity and resilience of cultural practices across generations. Similarly, the Yezidi community in Armenia demonstrates strong communal cohesion and maintains distinctive cultural markers, including dedicated media outlets such as the newspaper *Yezdi Khana* ("Official Newspaper of the National Union") and independent printing facilities, which serve to strengthen collective identity and public visibility.

The multilingual and multicultural context of national minority education in Armenia raises several research questions central to this study:

- firstly, it is essential to examine how Armenian functions as a scaffolding language in the process of English language acquisition among representatives of national minorities.
- Secondly, the study aims to identify the types of interlanguage interaction and transfer that occur between students' native languages, Armenian, and English, particularly at the levels of vocabulary, phonetic perception, and sentence construction.
- Thirdly, the research evaluates the effectiveness of a phased methodological model—from phoneme to word, and from word to meaning—in enhancing pronunciation accuracy, word formation, and meaning-making processes among multilingual learners.

Together, these questions aim to elucidate the cognitive and pedagogical mechanisms by which societal and native languages facilitate the acquisition of a foreign language in a multilingual educational environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A central topic in second language acquisition (SLA) research is cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and the phenomenon of language transfer, which refer to the effects that a learner's existing languages have on the acquisition of a new language. Extensive studies have shown that both the learner's first language (L1) and any already acquired additional languages can influence the learning of a new language, shaping the way linguistic structures, phonological patterns, and lexical items are perceived and produced (Durgunoğlu, et al. 1993).

For instance, Lababa's narrative review highlights that CLI is a dynamic, multidimensional process shaped by structural, sociocultural, and individual cognitive factors; positive transfer can facilitate acquisition when structural similarities exist between languages, whereas differences can sometimes hinder L2 learning. Similarly, Torrijos's research using corpus data reveals that learners frequently draw on L1 linguistic rules - such as phonological or syntactic patterns - when composing text in an L2, underscoring the pervasive influence of the native language in SLA contexts (Torrijos, 2024).

These findings underscore the relevance of examining interlanguage interaction among multilingual learners, as the presence of multiple linguistic systems develops a unique, integrated cognitive framework that impacts how new languages are processed and acquired.

Research in multilingualism supports the idea that multiple languages in a learner's repertoire are not compartmentalized, but rather co-activate and interact during language

processing. Studies have demonstrated that bilingual speakers activate their languages in parallel, even when processing a target language exclusively, suggesting a shared mental lexicon across languages. (Gorter, 2014) This co-activation points to deeper cognitive linkages between known languages and those being learned, which is particularly relevant in multilingual educational contexts where learners rely on one dominant language (e.g., Armenian) to scaffold the acquisition of another (e.g., English).

Such findings align with contemporary SLA perspectives that view language acquisition as the result of interaction among existing linguistic systems, rather than isolated learning events. In multilingual environments, learners may rely on similarities in phonology, lexical patterns, or syntactic organization to facilitate L2 learning, a phenomenon substantiated across diverse language pairs and learner backgrounds.

Several studies focusing on bilingual or multilingual children point to the importance of cross-linguistic transfer in literacy acquisition and phonological awareness. Research in the field of bilingual development shows that skills such as phonological and morphological awareness in one language can positively influence the learning of reading and vocabulary in another language, particularly when languages share typological proximity (Kehui, Sun, 2025; Murodullayeva, 2024).

This evidence supports pedagogical approaches that emphasize explicit comparison between languages during instruction, as such comparisons can facilitate deeper understanding of both form and meaning. In the context of Armenian and English learning, this suggests that instructional strategies emphasizing the parallels and contrasts between languages - particularly at phonological and orthographic levels - may strengthen learners' linguistic awareness and accelerate SLA processes.

Theoretical frameworks provide additional insight into how hierarchical structuring of language input and attention to linguistic forms can promote SLA. The learners acquire L2 features following an order determined by cognitive processing constraints, which justifies pedagogical models that introduce language elements in sequenced, dependent stages. Meanwhile, theories of learning emphasize the role of noticing and structured input in facilitating the internalization of new linguistic patterns, supporting instructional practices that guide learners from phonetic perception toward meaningful lexical and grammatical understanding (Lallier & Carreiras, 2018).

In multilingual educational settings, such as those involving national minority learners instructed through a dominant societal language, these theories reinforce the pedagogical value of structured progression from phonemes to meaningful units, and from known language structures to new ones, leveraging the cognitive frameworks established through existing languages.

METHODOLOGY

Since Armenian is the official language of instruction in general education schools of the Republic of Armenia, the study of the language acquisition process among students from national minorities acquires particular importance. Specifically, it is necessary to examine how students of different ethnic backgrounds acquire various subjects, taking into account Armenian as the medium of instruction, as well as the interaction between their native language and foreign languages within the educational process.

Representatives of national minorities often function as multilingual individuals, typically mastering at least two or three languages. This circumstance is significant from the perspective of studying the formation and development of their linguistic thinking. Of particular interest is the semantic content that they assign to words used in Armenian, how sentences are constructed both in their native language and in Armenian, what structural differences and similarities can be observed, and how the linguistic systems of the native language and Armenian interact in the process of foreign language acquisition.

These research questions are examined from the perspectives of linguistic perception, interlanguage interaction, and transfer.

To address these issues, an experimental study was conducted in classrooms of national minority students where teachers are proficient in both Armenian and a foreign language (English), at both oral and written levels. This arrangement allowed for a controlled linguistic environment and methodological consistency.

A specially designed research program was developed, consisting of three successive phases.

The 1st Phase: Phonetic Perception and Mechanical Matching

In the first phase, exercises focused on the pronunciation of sounds and their mechanical matching were carried out. The teacher writes 5–7 sounds in Armenian and English on the blackboard. These sounds are selected based on the following criteria:

- they are grounded in the phonetic system of Armenian.
- they take into account the phonetic experience already acquired by the children.
- they include English sounds that are close to Armenian (a, b, d, e, f, h, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, v).

The instructional process typically lasts 3–4 class sessions.

Initially, the teacher articulates the sounds individually, varying tone, stress, and intonation. Each student, in turn, repeats the sounds, focusing solely on their phonetic form without attaching any semantic meaning.

In the second subphase, the teacher combines the sounds - first in pairs, then in groups of three - to form phonetic chains that carry no meaning. This approach is based on the method of N. I. Zhinkin **(**Zinkin, 1968), according to which, in the initial stages of speech formation, a child first mechanically acquires phonetic structures and only

subsequently assigns them semantic content. According to Zhinkin, speech is initially formed as a phonetic-motor activity, which later acquires meaning at the conscious level.

The permutation of sounds contributes to the development of auditory differentiation and phonological sensitivity. It is possible that, as a result of random combinations, real words may emerge, which can later be identified and used as meaningful units.

The 2nd Phase: Graphic Representation and Sound–Letter Matching

In the second phase, the sounds are presented graphically in the form of sequential boxes. Each box contains a single sound or letter, forming a chain typically composed of 4–5 sounds.

Pronunciation is carried out according to the principle of randomness, which promotes the development of sound differentiation and the ability to rapidly combine sounds.

In this phase, particular attention is given to establishing sound–letter correspondence. Students write the sounds in their notebooks in parallel with the teacher, reinforcing the connection between visual and auditory perception.

Since Armenian has a relatively clear and stable phonological system - with nearly every sound corresponding to a specific letter - it serves as a foundation for the perception of English sounds. This correspondence allows children to rely on their already acquired phonetic experience while gradually introducing new English sounds.

Thus, a cross-linguistic comparative platform is established, where Armenian functions as a scaffolding language in the process of foreign language acquisition.

The 3rd Phase: Meaning-Making Process and Word Combination

In the third phase, the teacher writes a word that initially has no meaning. However, by combining two or three letters from this word, new, meaningful words are formed. For example, a real English word may be extracted from the initial phonetic chain, which is then presented on one side of the blackboard in English and on the other side with its Armenian equivalent (e.g., *door, social bank, guitar*, etc.).

In this phase, it is important to emphasize the following: the transition from form to meaning is implemented, word identification is developed, and the ability for comparative analysis is enhanced.

Cognates are also included—words that share a certain similarity in form or meaning between Armenian and English (for example, international terms). Such words contribute to the development of linguistic confidence and the awareness of cross-linguistic connections.

It should be noted that the proposed methodological model is based on the following principles:

1. Phased progression from sound to word and from word to meaning.

2. Armenian as a scaffolding language in the process of foreign language acquisition.
3. Simultaneous development of auditory, visual, and written perception.
4. Activation of multilingual students' linguistic thinking and awareness of interlanguage interconnectedness.

This approach enables not only the formation of foreign language skills but also the deepening of conscious perception of Armenian, promoting the integration of linguistic systems and the development of metalinguistic awareness.

Twenty schools with children of national minorities were studied. A total of 250 children from each grade participated (1,000 primary school children in total). The table below presents averaged data expressed in percentages according to the three stages of the above-mentioned methodology (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Developmental Levels of Phonetic Perception, Graphic Representation, and Meaning-Making Skills Across Grades (Percentage Distribution)

GRADES	**Phonetic Perception and Mechanical Matching** (according to the number of the sounds)			**Graphic Representation and Sound–Letter Matching (with 2-3 letters)**	**Meaning-Making Process and Word Combination**
	1 sound	2 sounds	more than 3 sounds		
First	30 %	20 %	10 %	5 %	0 %
Second	42 %	38 %	46 %	34 %	42 %
Third	68 %	64 %	81 %	67 %	78 %
Fourth	100 %	98 %	90 %	96 %	98 %

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrate a clear and progressive development of phonetic perception, graphic representation, and meaning-making skills across grade levels.

In the first grade, learners show very limited proficiency in all assessed domains. Performance is particularly low in tasks involving the perception of more than three sounds as well as in meaning-making and word combination processes (0–5%). This indicates that language processing at this stage is predominantly mechanical and relies on basic sound recognition rather than on semantic integration.

By the second grade, a noticeable improvement can be observed across all indicators. Learners demonstrate increased ability in sound–letter matching and initial meaning-making processes, with results reaching up to 42%. Nevertheless, the data reveal

inconsistencies across different linguistic components, suggesting that these skills are still in the process of formation and have not yet stabilized.

A substantial increase is evident in the third grade, where performance levels rise sharply across all categories (64–81%). This stage marks a qualitative shift toward more conscious phonological processing and the ability to combine linguistic units meaningfully, reflecting the emergence of higher-level language awareness.

In the fourth grade, the results approach near-maximum levels (90–100%) across all dimensions. This indicates a high degree of stabilization and integration of phonetic perception, graphic representation, and semantic processing skills, including the handling of more complex sound structures and meaning-making operations. Overall, the findings suggest that phonetic perception, graphic representation, and meaning-making processes develop in a gradual and interdependent manner. As learners progress through grade levels, they transition from mechanical language operations to more conscious and semantically driven linguistic activity. This developmental trajectory is particularly significant in the context of language education for national minority students, where structured and stage-appropriate instructional support plays a crucial role in fostering linguistic competence.

The data reveal a clear pattern of structural interconnectedness among phonetic perception, graphic representation, and meaning-making processes across grade levels. Rather than developing as isolated skills, these components appear to evolve in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing manner.

In the early grades, limited proficiency in Armenian as the language of instruction constrains learners' ability to move beyond mechanical sound recognition and basic sound–letter matching. At this stage, phonetic perception, graphic representation, and meaning-making remain weakly integrated, resulting in fragmented and predominantly surface-level language processing.

As learners' exposure to and functional competence in Armenian increase, particularly from the second to the third grade, Armenian begins to assume a stable mediating role in the organization of linguistic activity. Improved phonological awareness in Armenian facilitates more accurate sound–letter correspondence, which in turn supports the emergence of meaningful word combinations. The simultaneous growth observed across all three dimensions suggests a structurally interconnected developmental process rather than independent skill acquisition.

By the fourth grade, the near-ceiling performance across all indicators reflects the consolidation of Armenian's mediating function. At this stage, Armenian operates as an internalized cognitive tool that enables learners to integrate phonetic, graphic, and semantic components into a coherent language system. This structural integration indicates

a transition from externally supported language operations to internally regulated and semantically driven linguistic activity.

Overall, the findings support the view that Armenian functions not merely as a medium of instruction but as a developmental mediator that organizes and synchronizes the progression of core language skills. Recognizing this mediating role has important implications for the design of language instruction in multilingual and national minority education contexts, emphasizing the need for pedagogical approaches that deliberately strengthen Armenian as a bridge between learners' native languages and higher-order linguistic and cognitive processes.

FINDINGS

The present study explored the process of English acquisition among national minority students in the Republic of Armenia, with particular attention to Yezidi and Assyrian learners and the mediating role of Armenian. Data were collected through classroom observations, structured interviews with students and teachers, and analysis of written and oral outputs within a three-phase instructional framework. In addition, quantitative indicators reflecting the development of phonetic perception, graphic representation, and meaning-making processes across grade levels were used to contextualize and support the qualitative findings. Together, the results highlight key structural patterns characterizing the multilingual learning experience of national minority students.

Armenian as a Scaffolding Language

A consistent pattern emerged indicating that students rely heavily on their proficiency in Armenian when acquiring English. Armenian functions as a scaffolding language, providing both structural and semantic support for understanding English vocabulary, grammar, and sentence construction. Classroom observations revealed that learners frequently mapped English linguistic structures onto Armenian equivalents in order to interpret verb tense distinctions, word order, and agreement patterns.

This qualitative evidence is reinforced by the developmental data, which demonstrate a gradual and parallel increase in phonetic perception, sound–letter matching, and meaning-making abilities across grade levels. The sharp improvement observed in the third and fourth grades coincides with increased functional competence in Armenian, suggesting that the stabilizing role of Armenian enables learners to move from mechanical decoding to more integrated and meaningful language use. These findings support the hypothesis that Armenian operates as a metalanguage facilitating the conceptualization and internalization of English grammatical rules.

Phonological Perception and Transfer

Analysis of oral production indicated that learners initially approached English phonemes through the phonological system of Armenian. Students demonstrated greater accuracy in producing English sounds that have close Armenian counterparts, while phonemes lacking direct equivalents posed persistent challenges. This pattern aligns with the quantitative data, which show limited success in processing complex sound combinations in early grades, followed by substantial improvement in later stages.

Permutation and combination exercises involving English phonemes—first in isolation and subsequently in pseudo-words—proved particularly effective in enhancing auditory discrimination and phonological sensitivity. As reflected in the developmental indicators, increased phonetic perception was accompanied by improved graphic representation and meaning-making skills, underscoring the interconnected nature of phonological and semantic development. These findings are consistent with prior research on phonological transfer in multilingual learners (Durgunoğlu, et al., 1993) and highlight the importance of systematic scaffolding at the phonemic level.

Lexical Acquisition and Cognates

Students demonstrated enhanced acquisition of English vocabulary when cognates or internationally recognizable terms were introduced. Cognates functioned as cognitive anchors, enabling learners to associate meaning across Armenian and English and thereby strengthening cross-linguistic connections. Learners showed higher retention rates and greater confidence when engaging with lexically familiar items.

This tendency corresponds with the observed growth in meaning-making and word combination skills across grade levels. As learners' ability to integrate phonetic and graphic cues increased, they became more capable of constructing semantic relationships between known Armenian lexical items and new English vocabulary. The data suggest that lexical acquisition is most effective when supported by the mediating language, particularly during the transition from surface-level recognition to meaningful word use.

Syntactic Development

Analysis of written outputs revealed that students' early English sentence constructions were strongly influenced by Armenian syntactic patterns. Initial sentences frequently mirrored Armenian word order, indicating cross-linguistic transfer at the syntactic level. This phenomenon was especially pronounced in the lower grades, where meaning-making processes remained underdeveloped according to the quantitative indicators.

With progressive scaffolding - including guided translation, sentence recombination tasks, and contrastive analysis - students gradually internalized English syntactic norms. Notably, learners demonstrated higher accuracy in producing complex sentences when Armenian was used as an intermediate structure. The parallel increase in syntactic accuracy and meaning-making abilities supports the view that syntactic development is

embedded within a broader, structurally interconnected language system mediated by Armenian.

Metalinguistic Awareness

The study also documented the emergence of metalinguistic awareness among learners. Students increasingly demonstrated the ability to consciously analyze linguistic structures, compare forms across languages, and identify recurring patterns that facilitated both comprehension and production. This awareness became particularly evident in the upper grades, where developmental indicators approached ceiling levels across phonetic, graphic, and semantic dimensions.

Such findings align with theoretical perspectives on bilingual and multilingual cognition, which posit that learners actively draw on previously acquired linguistic knowledge to support new language learning (Cook, 2002; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Armenian, in this context, serves as a reflective medium through which learners evaluate, regulate, and refine their English language use.

Educational Implications

Taken together, the findings underscore the pedagogical significance of explicitly incorporating the learners' dominant societal language—Armenian—as a mediating tool in foreign language instruction. The coordinated development observed across phonological, graphic, and semantic domains suggests that strengthening Armenian as a cognitive and instructional bridge can accelerate English language acquisition. Pedagogical approaches that deliberately leverage Armenian structures not only enhance comprehension and retention but also foster deeper metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility among national minority learners.

DISCUSSION

The present study contributes to the growing body of research on multilingual education by demonstrating the mediating role of Armenian in the acquisition of English among national minority students in Armenia, specifically Yezidi and Assyrian learners. Armenian functions not merely as a medium of instruction but as a cognitive and structural scaffold that organizes and supports the integrated development of phonological, lexical, syntactic, and metalinguistic competencies in a foreign language.

It is shown that the acquisition of English among these learners is scaffolded by Armenian at multiple linguistic levels. Armenian acts as a metalanguage through which English grammar, syntax, and vocabulary are comprehended and internalized. For example, explanations of verb tenses, word order, and sentence construction in English often rely on analogies or structural comparisons with Armenian. This finding is consistent with research on cross-linguistic transfer and interlanguage development, which emphasizes that learners' existing linguistic knowledge significantly shapes the processing

and production of a new language (Odlin, 1989; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). In contexts where typological differences between the L1 and L2 are substantial, an intermediate or scaffolding language can provide learners with cognitive anchors, facilitating comprehension and reducing cognitive load.

A primary insight emerging from the study is the structural interconnectedness of language development. The parallel growth of phonetic perception, graphic representation, and meaning-making processes across grade levels indicates that language skills evolve not in isolation but as an integrated system. Quantitative indicators reveal that initial proficiency is low in first-grade learners, particularly in processing complex sound combinations and constructing meaningful word sequences, whereas third- and fourth-grade students demonstrate marked gains across all measured domains. This pattern underscores that Armenian proficiency supports learners in moving from mechanical decoding to higher-order, semantically driven language use.

The findings align with sociocultural and cognitive theories that conceptualize language as a mediational tool in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Armenian serves as a scaffold that provides familiar phonological structures, syntactic patterns, and semantic reference points, enabling learners to internalize English constructs. Transfer phenomena, including Armenian-influenced word order and phonological substitutions in early grades, reflect the active utilization of previously acquired linguistic knowledge to process new input (Durgunoğlu, Nagy, et al., 1993). Far from representing interference, these strategies illustrate an adaptive process whereby learners leverage the mediating language to construct meaning and regulate comprehension.

Phonological perception emerges as a foundational domain in the development of integrated language skills. Early-stage learners initially mapped English phonemes onto the Armenian phonological system, exhibiting higher accuracy with sounds corresponding to Armenian phonemes and greater difficulty with non-corresponding sounds. As learners progressed, permutation and combination exercises, including pseudo-word tasks, enhanced auditory discrimination and phonological sensitivity. Developmental data demonstrate that improvements in phonetic perception were mirrored by gains in graphic representation and meaning-making, supporting the view that phonological awareness, mediated by Armenian, catalyzes subsequent lexical and syntactic development (Durgunoğlu, Nagy, et al., 1993).

The study further indicates that cross-linguistic mapping, particularly through cognates and Armenian-supported syntactic structures, facilitated lexical acquisition and sentence formation. Cognates acted as cognitive anchors, allowing learners to construct semantic relationships between Armenian and English, thereby strengthening retention and comprehension. Similarly, Armenian-influenced syntactic templates provided a stable framework for sentence construction, enabling students to internalize English word order

and agreement gradually. Quantitative indicators reinforce this interpretation, showing coordinated growth across phonetic, graphic, and meaning-making dimensions, illustrating a structurally interconnected progression mediated by Armenian.

Metalinguistic awareness emerged as an important outcome of this mediated learning process. Upper-grade learners demonstrated the capacity to consciously analyze linguistic structures, identify patterns across languages, and regulate both comprehension and production. Armenian, in this context, functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a reflective medium, allowing students to evaluate and refine their English language use systematically (Cook, 2002; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). This observation aligns with Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which emphasizes that proficiency in a first or societal language supports additional language acquisition (Cummins, 1979).

Moreover, the structural characteristics of the learners' native languages play a critical role in shaping the acquisition pathway. The native languages of the Yezidis and Assyrians differ markedly from English in terms of syntax, morphology, and phonology, which can complicate direct transfer. In contrast, Armenian exhibits syntactic patterns and morphosyntactic regularities that are comparatively closer to European languages, including English. This structural proximity allows Armenian to serve as a mediating linguistic system, providing learners with a familiar syntactic framework that can be mapped onto English structures. Similar phenomena have been documented in studies of bilingual learners acquiring a typologically distant L2 through a mediating language, demonstrating that the presence of a structurally intermediate language can facilitate SLA by creating cognitive and linguistic bridges (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Ellis, 2015).

The findings also highlight the importance of a phased, scaffolding-based instructional approach in which learners progress from phonological awareness to lexical construction and meaning-making. By first mastering Armenian phonemes and orthography, students develop foundational skills that support the accurate perception and production of English phonemes, enhancing both pronunciation and written expression. This approach resonates with the principles of the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), which posits that conscious attention to linguistic forms is a prerequisite for acquisition, and with Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998), which emphasizes the staged, hierarchical development of linguistic structures in SLA.

Furthermore, the study underscores the cognitive advantages of multilingual learners, who actively manage three linguistic systems: their native language, the societal language (Armenian), and the foreign language (English). This multilingual management enhances metalinguistic awareness, enabling learners to consciously analyze structural patterns and meaning across languages, thereby supporting more efficient and meaningful language acquisition. This observation aligns with research demonstrating that bilingual and multilingual learners exhibit greater cognitive flexibility and meta-linguistic skills,

which facilitate cross-linguistic mapping and transfer (Bialystok, 2001; Marian & Shook, 2012).

The study highlights the pedagogical value of strategically leveraging Armenian as a mediating language in multilingual education. Instructional designs that incorporate guided translation, sentence recombination, and structured comparison between Armenian and English can enhance comprehension, accelerate acquisition, and foster metalinguistic development. These findings provide evidence for integrating translanguaging approaches, whereby learners are encouraged to actively navigate between languages as a cognitive and learning strategy, rather than enforcing rigid language separation.

Furthermore, the structural interconnectedness observed suggests that educators should design curricula that account for the mutually reinforcing nature of phonological, lexical, and syntactic development, providing sequential scaffolds that build on the mediating language. While aggregated quantitative indicators limit individual-level correlation analysis, the consistent developmental trends across grade levels underscore the importance of Armenian as a stable cognitive and instructional bridge in minority language education.

Future studies should incorporate longitudinal, individual-level data to explore the specific mechanisms by which Armenian mediates multilingual development. Investigating the relative contributions of phonological, lexical, and syntactic scaffolding, as well as the impact of instructional strategies, could inform targeted interventions that optimize language acquisition for national minority learners.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that Armenian plays a pivotal and multifaceted role in the acquisition of English among national minority students in the Republic of Armenia, particularly within the Yezidi and Assyrian communities. Armenian functions not merely as a medium of instruction but as a cognitive, linguistic, and structural scaffold, enabling learners to navigate the phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic complexities of English. For students whose native languages are typologically distant from English, Armenian provides an accessible intermediary system through which grammatical rules, sound patterns, and vocabulary can be comprehended, internalized, and applied in meaningful communicative contexts. This scaffolding effect emphasizes the necessity of considering learners' sociolinguistic environment and societal language proficiency when designing effective foreign language instruction, as mastery of the societal language significantly influences both the efficiency and depth of additional language acquisition.

The study further highlights that phonological awareness and prior experience with Armenian orthography substantially contribute to the development of accurate English pronunciation and literacy skills. Establishing a strong foundation in the familiar phonemic

and orthographic system allows learners to perceive, discriminate, and reproduce English sounds more effectively, facilitating the transition from mechanical recognition to active production. This sequential progression - from phonological perception to lexical construction and meaningful sentence formation - illustrates the structured and interconnected nature of language development, where mastery of lower-level linguistic elements directly supports higher-order language processes.

Additionally, learners' acquisition of English vocabulary is enhanced when explicit cross-linguistic connections to Armenian are incorporated, such as cognates, semantically related terms, or syntactic parallels. These correspondences serve as cognitive anchors, reinforcing retention, promoting comprehension, and fostering metalinguistic insight. By engaging in comparative analysis across languages, learners develop the capacity to consciously evaluate linguistic structures and semantic relationships, a skill that not only facilitates English acquisition but also strengthens broader linguistic, cognitive, and analytical capacities.

The study also underscores the importance of structured, scaffolded, and language-conscious pedagogical approaches. Leveraging Armenian as an intermediary language enables educators to enhance comprehension, accelerate language acquisition, and support the maintenance of both cultural and linguistic identity. Pedagogical strategies that integrate guided translation, sentence recombination, and comparative linguistic exercises ensure that learners develop confidence and proficiency in both their societal and native languages, thereby fostering a holistic multilingual competence encompassing cognitive, metalinguistic, and sociocultural dimensions.

In conclusion, Armenian serves as an indispensable mediating tool in foreign language learning for national minority students, providing structural guidance, cognitive support, and metalinguistic insight. Together, these elements facilitate the development of English proficiency while reinforcing learners' linguistic and cultural identity. The study highlights the need for educational programs to consciously integrate scaffolding mechanisms, cross-linguistic connections, and sequential developmental support, thereby promoting both effective language acquisition and the sustainable cultivation of multilingual competencies. Such an approach not only addresses immediate learning outcomes but also empowers learners to navigate complex linguistic environments with confidence, analytical awareness, and a strong foundation in their societal and native languages.

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ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ՓՈՔՐԱՄԱՍՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԼԵԶՎԱԿԱՆ ԸՆԿԱԼՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՄԻՋՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ՀԱՐԱԲԵՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԱՄՐԱՊՆԴՄԱՆ ՈՒՂՂՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ

Վլադիմիր Կարապետյան, Մարիաննա Ամիրաղյան, Մարիամ Իսպիրյան

Հետազոտության առարկան միջմշակութային հաղորդակցությունն է: Հոդվածի նպատակն է բացահայտել օտար լեզվի (անգլերենի) յուրացման առանձնահատկությունները Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում բնակվող ազգային փոքրամասնությունների շրջանում: Հետազոտության մեթոդները ներառում են դիտարկում, հարցազրույցներ և կոնկրետ իրավիճակների վերլուծություն՝ կապված կրտսեր դպրոցականների հաղորդակցական կարողությունների հետ (ինչպես մայրենի, այնպես էլ օտար լեզուներով): Այս մեթոդները հիմնված են հայերենի՝ որպես հաղորդակցման հիմնական միջոցի իմացության, ինչպես նաև մասնակիցների հետ անցկացված ձայնագրությունների վերլուծության վրա՝ կենտրոնանալով բառերի հնչյունական կառուցվածքի, բառապաշարի և մտքերի կամ դատողությունների իմաստային փոխանցման վրա: Հետազոտության վարկածը. ենթադրվում է, որ ազգային փոքրամասնություններին պատկանող սովորողները, հայերենի իմացության շնորհիվ և բառերի ու նախադասությունների ձևափոխման մեխանիզմների կիրառմամբ, կարողանում են համարժեք կերպով ընկալել և

հասկանալ օտար լեզվով գրավոր և բանավոր խոսքը՝ հենվելով իրենց մայրենի լեզվի բառապաշարի և նախադասություն կառուցելու հմտությունների վրա: Հետազոտության արդյունքները. ազգային փոքրամասնությունների երեխաները հայերենի միջոցով համեմատաբար հեշտությամբ են յուրացնում օտար լեզուն, քանի որ հայերենը՝ որպես հնդեվրոպական լեզվաընտանիքի ճյուղ, հնարավորություն է տալիս համեմատաբար հեշտությամբ արտաբերել անգլերենի հնչյունները:

Հիմնական եզրակացություն. ազգային փոքրամասնությունների դպրոցականների կողմից կիրառվող լեզուներում (ինչպես մայրենի, այնպես էլ պետական լեզվում) առկա տարբերությունները՝ կապված բառերի հնչյունական կառուցվածքի, բառապաշարի և նախադասություն կառուցելու եղանակների հետ, դրսևորվում են որոշակի տրամաբանությամբ: Այն հիմնականում հիմնված է բառերի և նախադասությունների իմաստային ընկալման, ինչպես նաև բառային իմաստաբանության (սեմանտիկայի) համարժեք ըմբռնման վրա:

Հիմնաբառեր՝ *ազգային փոքրամասնություններ, բառապաշար, բառերի ընկալում, իմաստային տարբերակում (սեմանտիկ դիֆերենցիալ), մայրենի և օտար լեզուներ*:

РЕЗЮМЕ

НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ УКРЕПЛЕНИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНЫХ СВЯЗЕЙ В ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИХ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЯХ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ МЕНЬШИНСТВ

Владимир Карапетян, Марианна Амирагян, Мариам Испирян

Предметом исследования является межкультурная коммуникация. Цель статьи – выявить особенности усвоения иностранного языка (английского) среди национальных меньшинств, проживающих в Республике Армения. **Методы исследования** включают наблюдение, интервью и анализ конкретных ситуаций, связанных с коммуникативными способностями учащихся младших классов средней школы (как на родном, так и на иностранном языке). Эти методы основаны на знании армянского языка как основного средства коммуникации, а также на анализе аудиозаписей, проведенных с участниками, с акцентом на фонетную структуру слов, лексику и семантическую передачу мыслей или суждений. **Гипотеза исследования:** предполагается, что учащиеся, принадлежащие к национальным меньшинствам, благодаря знанию армянского языка и использованию механизмов преобразования слов и предложений, способны адекватно воспринимать и понимать письменную и устную речь на иностранном языке, опираясь на лексику и навыки построения

предложений своего родного языка. **Результаты исследования:** Дети национальных меньшинств относительно легко усваивают иностранный язык через армянский, поскольку армянский язык, как ветвь индоевропейской языковой семьи, позволяет им относительно легко произносить звуки английского языка. **Основной вывод:** различия в языках, используемых школьниками национальных меньшинств (как родном, так и государственном языке), связанные с фонетической структурой слов, лексикой и методами построения предложений, проявляются по определенной логике. Она в основном основана на адекватном понимании семантического восприятия слов и предложений, а также семантики слова (лексической семантики).

***Ключевые слова**: национальные меньшинства, лексика, восприятие слов, семантическая дифференциация (семантический дифференциал), родной и иностранный языки.*

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