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# THE OPTIMAL AGE FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CHILDREN: A PUBLIC SURVEY IN UZBEKISTAN

**Abstract.** Early second language learning has become an increasingly important topic in contemporary education, particularly as multilingual competence is associated with academic development, professional opportunities, and intercultural communication. However, public perceptions of the most appropriate age and conditions for introducing an additional language to children remain diverse. This study investigates public attitudes towards early second language learning in Uzbekistan, focusing on parents, teachers, and representatives of other professional groups. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected through a 25-item online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The study involved 58 respondents from different regions of Uzbekistan. The questionnaire explored perceptions of bilingual children's cognitive abilities, the most appropriate age for beginning an additional language, the role of the mother tongue, the usefulness of digital learning platforms, and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of early language education. The findings indicate that 93% of respondents consider early language learning beneficial, while 81% associate bilingualism with higher intellectual abilities. Approximately 69% identify the age range of 3–15 as the most suitable period for beginning additional language learning. Furthermore, 53% believe that children should develop their Uzbek language skills before focusing on foreign languages. YouTube, Duolingo, and artificial intelligence-based tools were among the most frequently selected digital resources. Nevertheless, concerns about possible weakening of the mother tongue and excessive academic pressure were also identified. The study highlights the importance of balancing foreign language instruction with first-language development, providing age-appropriate learning experiences, and ensuring meaningful parental and teacher involvement. Although the findings cannot be generalised to the entire population due to the limited and non-random sample, they provide useful insights into current public attitudes towards early multilingual education in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** early second language learning, bilingualism, multilingual education, public perceptions, language acquisition, mother tongue, digital learning platforms, Uzbekistan.

# BOLALARDA IKKINCHI TILNI O‘RGANISHNING ENG MAQBUL YOSHI: O‘ZBEKISTON JAMOATCHILIGI O‘RTASIDA O‘TKAZILGAN SO‘ROVNOMA

**Annotatsiya.** Zamonaviy ta’lim sharoitida ikkinchi tilni erta yoshdan o‘rganish masalasi tobora dolzarb ahamiyat kasb etmoqda. Ko‘p tillilikning akademik rivojlanish, kasbiy imkoniyatlar va madaniyatlararo muloqotdagi ahamiyati ortib borayotgan bo‘lsa-

da, bolalarga qo‘shimcha tilni qaysi yoshdan va qanday sharoitda o‘rgatish maqsadga muvofiqligi yuzasidan jamoatchilik fikrlari turlicha. Mazkur tadqiqotda O‘zbekistonda bolalarning ikkinchi tilni erta o‘rganishiga nisbatan ota-onalar, pedagoglar va boshqa kasb vakillarining munosabatlari o‘rganilgan. Tadqiqot miqdoriy yondashuv va kesimiy so‘rovnoma dizayni asosida tashkil etilib, ma’lumotlar Google Forms platformasida tayyorlangan 25 ta savoldan iborat onlayn anketa orqali to‘plangan. Tadqiqotda O‘zbekistonning turli hududlaridan 58 nafar respondent ishtirok etgan. So‘rovnoma ikki tilli bolalarning kognitiv imkoniyatlari, qo‘shimcha tilni o‘rganishni boshlash uchun eng maqbul yosh, ona tilining ustuvorligi, raqamli ta’lim platformalarining samaradorligi hamda erta til o‘rganishning afzalliklari va ehtimoliy salbiy jihatlarini qamrab olgan. Natijalarga ko‘ra, respondentlarning 93 foizi erta yoshda til o‘rganishni foydali deb hisoblaydi, 81 foizi esa ikki tillilikni yuqori intellektual imkoniyatlar bilan bog‘laydi. Ishtirokchilarning qariyb 69 foizi 3–15 yosh oralig‘ini qo‘shimcha tilni o‘rganish uchun maqbul davr deb baholagan. Respondentlarning 53 foizi bolalar avvalo o‘zbek tilini puxta egallashi lozimligini ta’kidlagan. YouTube, Duolingo va sun’iy intellektga asoslangan vositalar eng ko‘p tanlangan raqamli resurslar qatoridan joy olgan. Shu bilan birga, ona tilining yetarlicha rivojlanmasligi va bolalarga ortiqcha ta’limiy bosim o‘tkazilishi bilan bog‘liq xavotirlar ham aniqlangan. Tadqiqot natijalari xorijiy til ta’limini ona tilining rivojlanishi bilan uyg‘unlashtirish, yosh xususiyatlariga mos ta’lim muhitini yaratish hamda ota-onalar va pedagoglarning faol ishtirokini ta’minlash zarurligini ko‘rsatadi. Tanlanmaning cheklanganligi va tasodifiy shakllantirilmaganligi sababli natijalarni butun aholiga umumlashtirish mumkin bo‘lmasa-da, ular O‘zbekistonda erta yoshdagi ko‘p tilli ta’limga nisbatan mavjud jamoatchilik qarashlarini tushunishda muhim ahamiyatga ega.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** ikkinchi tilni erta o‘rganish, ikki tillilik, ko‘p tilli ta’lim, jamoatchilik qarashlari, tilni o‘zlashtirish, ona tili, raqamli ta’lim platformalari, O‘zbekiston.

## ОПТИМАЛЬНЫЙ ВОЗРАСТ ДЛЯ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ВТОРОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЕТЬМИ: ОПРОС ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО МНЕНИЯ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

**Аннотация.** В условиях современной системы образования изучение второго языка в раннем возрасте приобретает всё большую актуальность. Несмотря на возрастающее значение многоязычия для академического развития, профессиональных перспектив и межкультурной коммуникации, общественные представления об оптимальном возрасте и условиях начала изучения дополнительного языка детьми остаются неоднозначными. В данном исследовании изучаются общественные взгляды на раннее изучение второго языка детьми в Узбекистане, в частности мнения родителей, педагогов и представителей других профессиональных сфер. Исследование проведено с использованием количественного подхода и поперечного дизайна. Данные были собраны посредством онлайн-анкеты, состоящей из 25 вопросов и размещённой на платформе Google Forms. В исследовании приняли участие 58 респондентов из различных регионов Узбекистана. Анкета охватывала представления о когнитивных способностях двуязычных детей, наиболее подходящем возрасте для начала изучения дополнительного языка, роли родного языка, эффективности цифровых образовательных платформ, а также преимуществах и возможных недостатках раннего языкового обучения. Согласно результатам, 93% респондентов считают раннее изучение языка полезным, а 81% связывают двуязычие с более высокими интеллектуальными способностями. Около 69% участ-

ников считают возрастной период от 3 до 15 лет наиболее подходящим для начала изучения дополнительного языка. При этом 53% респондентов полагают, что дети должны прежде всего овладеть узбекским языком. Среди наиболее популярных цифровых ресурсов выделены YouTube, Duolingo и инструменты на основе искусственного интеллекта. Вместе с тем выявлены опасения, связанные с возможным недостаточным развитием родного языка и чрезмерной учебной нагрузкой на детей. Результаты исследования подчёркивают необходимость гармоничного сочетания обучения иностранным языкам с развитием родного языка, организации образовательного процесса с учётом возрастных особенностей детей и активного участия родителей и педагогов. Несмотря на ограничения, обусловленные небольшим объёмом и нерепрезентативностью выборки, полученные результаты позволяют лучше понять современные общественные представления о раннем многоязычном образовании в Узбекистане.

**Ключевые слова:** раннее изучение второго языка, билингвизм, многоязычное образование, общественное мнение, усвоение языка, родной язык, цифровые образовательные платформы, Узбекистан.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalisation, international mobility, and rapid technological development, foreign language proficiency has become an increasingly important component of personal, academic, and professional development. Knowledge of additional languages enables individuals to access international educational resources, communicate across cultural boundaries, and participate more actively in the global labour market. As a result, parents and educational institutions are increasingly interested in introducing foreign languages during childhood, sometimes even before children enter formal schooling.

Early second language learning has attracted considerable attention from researchers, educators, and policymakers. Childhood is generally recognised as an important period for language development because children gradually acquire linguistic, communicative, and cognitive skills through interaction with their social environment. Nevertheless, the question of when children should begin learning an additional language remains complex. Although early exposure may provide certain advantages, the effectiveness of language learning depends not only on chronological age but also on the quality of instruction, frequency of exposure, family involvement, children's motivation, and the linguistic environment.

In Uzbekistan, the importance of foreign language education has been reinforced through national educational reforms. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 established measures to raise the promotion of foreign language learning to a qualitatively new level. The resolution emphasises improving the quality of foreign language instruction, attracting qualified specialists, and increasing public interest in language education (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

Furthermore, Resolution No. 312 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on 19 May 2021, outlines practical measures for organising

and promoting foreign language learning. Particular attention is given to preschool education, the preparation of teaching materials, methodological support for educators, and the development of digital educational resources (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

These policy developments demonstrate that early foreign language education is becoming an increasingly significant component of Uzbekistan's educational priorities. However, the successful implementation of educational reforms also depends on how parents, teachers, and society perceive the process of introducing additional languages during childhood.

Public attitudes are particularly important because parental expectations and teachers' beliefs can influence children's educational experiences. For example, some parents believe that bilingual children develop stronger intellectual abilities, better memory, and greater academic potential. Others express concerns that learning a foreign language at an early age may interfere with the development of the mother tongue or create unnecessary psychological pressure.

Another important issue concerns the appropriate starting age. Some people consider the preschool period particularly suitable for language learning, whereas others believe that children should first develop sufficient literacy and communication skills in their native language. In addition, the growing popularity of digital technologies has introduced new opportunities and challenges. Platforms such as YouTube, Telegram, Duolingo, and artificial intelligence-based applications provide access to foreign language materials, but their educational effectiveness largely depends on the way they are used.

Despite the increasing importance of multilingual education in Uzbekistan, relatively little attention has been paid to the views of ordinary parents, teachers, and representatives of other professional groups concerning early second language learning.

Therefore, the present study investigates public perceptions of early second language learning among children in Uzbekistan.

The main objective of the research is to identify public attitudes towards the optimal age, perceived cognitive benefits, language priorities, digital learning resources, and potential challenges associated with early additional language education.

To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following research questions:

Do respondents believe that bilingual children possess higher intellectual abilities than monolingual children?

At what age do respondents consider it most appropriate for children to begin learning an additional language?

Which digital platforms and technological resources are perceived as the most useful for children's language learning?

Should children prioritise their mother tongue before beginning intensive foreign language education?

What advantages and potential disadvantages do respondents associate with early second language learning?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of public expectations and concerns regarding multilingual education in Uzbekistan.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Language Acquisition and the Role of Age. The relationship between age and language acquisition has been widely discussed in linguistics, psychology, and education. Early childhood is often considered a favourable period for language learning. However, recent research suggests that successful second language acquisition depends not only on age but also on individual development, the learning environment, and the quality of language exposure.

Chapman (2000) explains children's language development through an interactionist perspective, emphasising the relationship between individual characteristics and the surrounding linguistic environment. Similarly, Butler (2025) argues that early language learning is influenced by children's language backgrounds, teaching methods, and educational conditions. Roth (1984) found that children aged three to four could improve their understanding and use of sentence structures through appropriate instruction. Although this study focused on first-language development, it demonstrates the importance of organised learning activities at an early age.

McLaughlin (1977) also questioned several common assumptions about children's second language learning, including the idea that younger learners are always more successful. These studies suggest that there is no universally optimal age for learning an additional language, as outcomes depend on a combination of developmental, educational, and environmental factors.

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development. The relationship between bilingualism and cognitive development remains an important topic in educational research. Bilingualism is frequently associated with better memory, attention, problem-solving skills, and cognitive flexibility. Nevertheless, these potential benefits should not be interpreted as evidence that bilingual children are automatically more intelligent than monolingual children.

McLaughlin (1977) emphasised that claims about the intellectual superiority of bilingual children were not sufficiently supported by the research available at that time. Chapman's (2000) interactionist perspective also highlights the importance of children's experiences, social interaction, and learning opportunities in their overall development. Therefore, the cognitive benefits of bilingualism should be considered in relation to language proficiency, learning conditions, and the quality of exposure to both languages.

The Importance of the Mother Tongue in Multilingual Education. The mother tongue plays an essential role in children's communication, cultural identity, and early literacy development. A strong foundation in the first language can also support the acquisition of additional languages. Therefore, introducing a foreign language should not mean replacing or weakening the child's native language.

Hofslundsengen et al. (2026), in their study of Norwegian early childhood education, emphasise the importance of recognising and supporting children's home languages in educational settings. This issue is particularly relevant in Uzbekistan, where children may grow up in multilingual families and communities using Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, Karakalpak, and other languages. Consequently, educational approaches should take into account each child's actual linguistic background and provide opportunities to develop both the mother tongue and additional languages.

Digital Technologies and Early Language Learning. Digital technologies have created new opportunities for children's language education. Online videos, interactive applications, educational games, and artificial intelligence-based tools provide access to different language materials and opportunities for independent practice.

Butler (2025) highlights the potential of digital technologies in supporting children's additional language learning. Similarly, McCauley and Christiansen (2019) emphasise the importance of language exposure and meaningful language use in the learning process. Digital platforms can therefore support vocabulary development, pronunciation, listening skills, and repeated practice.

However, the effectiveness of these resources depends on the quality of the materials, their suitability for children's ages, and the involvement of parents and teachers. Digital tools should complement real communication and organised educational activities rather than replace them.

Research Gap and Conceptual Framework. The reviewed literature shows that early second language learning is influenced by several interconnected factors, including age, individual development, family environment, language exposure, teaching approaches, and digital resources. Although these issues have been widely discussed in international research, public perceptions of early second language learning in Uzbekistan remain relatively underexplored.

In particular, further attention is needed to public beliefs about bilingual children's cognitive abilities, the most appropriate starting age, the role of the mother tongue, and the usefulness of digital learning platforms.

To address this gap, the present study examines public attitudes towards early second language learning in Uzbekistan through an online questionnaire. The research focuses on five interconnected dimensions: perceived cognitive benefits of bilingualism, beliefs about the appropriate age for language learning, attitudes towards mother tongue preservation, the usefulness of digital platforms, and expectations regarding children's educational and future development. These dimensions

provide the basis for analysing respondents' opinions and identifying practical implications for parents and educators.

## METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to explore public perceptions of early second language learning among children in Uzbekistan. A descriptive approach was chosen to identify general attitudes and opinions regarding the appropriate starting age, bilingualism, mother tongue development, and the use of digital learning resources. The study focused on adults' beliefs and expectations rather than measuring children's actual language proficiency or establishing causal relationships.

Participants and Sampling. A total of 58 respondents participated in the survey, including parents, teachers, and representatives of other professional groups from different regions of Uzbekistan. Participants belonged to three age categories: 20–25, 26–35, and 36–50 years. Both male and female respondents were included, with educational backgrounds ranging from specialised secondary to higher education.

The questionnaire was distributed through Telegram, and participation was voluntary. Convenience sampling was used, meaning that respondents were selected according to their availability and willingness to participate. Although this method was suitable for an exploratory study, it limits the representativeness of the sample and the generalisability of the findings.

Research Instrument. Data were collected using a 25-item questionnaire developed by the authors through Google Forms. The questionnaire included closed-ended, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions covering five main areas: perceptions of bilingualism and cognitive development, the most appropriate age for beginning an additional language, the priority of mother tongue or foreign language learning, the usefulness of digital platforms, and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of early language education.

Respondents were also asked to identify useful technological resources, including YouTube, Duolingo, Telegram, and artificial intelligence-based applications. The questionnaire was intended to examine public attitudes rather than evaluate the actual effectiveness of particular learning platforms or teaching methods.

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations. The survey link was shared online through Telegram. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. No personal names or contact details were collected, and respondents were free to withdraw at any stage. All collected information was used exclusively for research purposes.

Data Analysis. The responses were processed using Google Forms, which provided frequency distributions and percentage calculations. The findings were analysed descriptively and grouped according to the main research questions. For

multiple-choice questions allowing several answers, respondents could select more than one option; therefore, the total percentages in these categories may exceed 100%.

Claude, an artificial intelligence assistant developed by Anthropic, was used as an auxiliary tool to organise and check the survey statistics. All results were subsequently reviewed by the authors, who remained responsible for their interpretation and presentation. No inferential statistical tests were conducted, as the research primarily aimed to identify general tendencies in public opinion.

Research Limitations. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. The relatively small sample of 58 respondents and the use of convenience sampling restrict the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the questionnaire measured self-reported opinions rather than actual teaching practices or children's language development. Since the instrument was developed specifically for this study and was not a standardised validated scale, the findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The descriptive nature of the research also does not allow causal conclusions or reliable statistical comparisons between different professional groups.

Despite these limitations, the study provides an exploratory overview of public attitudes towards early second language learning in Uzbekistan and offers a basis for further research involving larger and more diverse groups of respondents.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed several tendencies in public attitudes towards early second language learning in Uzbekistan. The findings reflect respondents' opinions about bilingualism, the appropriate age for language acquisition, the role of the mother tongue, digital learning resources, and the perceived benefits and challenges of multilingual education.

Public Perceptions of Bilingual Children's Intellectual Abilities. One of the survey questions examined whether respondents considered bilingual children more intellectually capable than monolingual children. The results showed that 81% of participants agreed with this statement, while approximately 14% were uncertain and only 5% disagreed.

These findings indicate that most respondents associate bilingualism with improved intellectual abilities. Such perceptions may be related to the growing social importance of multilingual competence and its connection with educational achievement and future professional opportunities. However, these responses represent public beliefs rather than scientifically established evidence of greater intelligence among bilingual children.

Attitudes Towards Early Second Language Learning. The respondents demonstrated a strongly positive attitude towards introducing additional languages during childhood. Approximately 93% considered early language learning benefi-

cial, while nearly 95% stated that they would support their own children in starting language education at an early age.

This high level of support suggests that early foreign language learning is widely accepted among the surveyed participants. It may also reflect increasing awareness of international educational opportunities and the importance of language skills in contemporary society.

The Most Appropriate Age for Beginning Language Learning. Although respondents generally supported early language education, their opinions about the most appropriate starting age varied. Approximately 35% selected the age range of 3–10 years, and a similar proportion preferred 10–15 years. Meanwhile, 22% considered 15–25 years appropriate, while only 9% selected the period between 1 and 3 years. No respondents chose the 25–30 age category.

Overall, approximately 69% identified the period between 3 and 15 years as the most suitable time to begin learning an additional language. These results suggest that respondents generally recognise childhood and adolescence as favourable periods for language education, although there is no clear consensus on a specific starting age.

The Priority of the Mother Tongue and Foreign Languages. The questionnaire also explored which language respondents believed children should learn first. More than half of the participants (53%) selected Uzbek, while 31% preferred English. Russian received 12% of responses, and Arabic was selected by approximately 3%.

The findings indicate that respondents place considerable importance on developing Uzbek language competence alongside foreign language education. This preference may be associated with national identity, cultural continuity, and the role of the state language in everyday communication and education.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that Uzbek is not necessarily the first or home language of every child in Uzbekistan. Therefore, multilingual education should take into account individual family backgrounds and children's existing language experiences.

Perceived Usefulness of Digital Language Learning Platforms. Respondents were asked to identify digital platforms and technological resources they considered useful for children's language development. Multiple answers were permitted. YouTube was the most frequently selected platform (74%), followed by Duolingo (45%), artificial intelligence-based tools (33%), and Telegram (28%). Other platforms received 22% of responses, whereas Facebook and Instagram were selected by only 3% and 2%, respectively.

The popularity of YouTube may be explained by its wide selection of educational videos, songs, animations, and pronunciation materials. The relatively high preference for Duolingo suggests an interest in structured exercises and game-based learning. Meanwhile, the responses concerning artificial intelligence indicate growing awareness of technology-supported language education.

However, these results reflect respondents' perceptions of usefulness rather than the objectively measured effectiveness of the platforms.

Perceived Benefits of Early Second Language Learning. The survey identified several advantages that respondents associated with early language education. The most frequently mentioned benefit was improved future career opportunities, selected by 60% of participants. Approximately 50% believed that early language learning could improve memory, while 48% highlighted better pronunciation. Broader academic opportunities were identified by 45%, and 16% selected other benefits.

These findings demonstrate that respondents associate early language learning with both children's development and their future educational and professional prospects. The emphasis on career opportunities is particularly noteworthy, as it suggests that public support for multilingual education is influenced not only by developmental considerations but also by expectations concerning future employment and social mobility.

Perceived Disadvantages and Concerns. Despite the generally positive attitudes, participants also identified several potential disadvantages of early second language learning. The most common concern was the possible weakening or loss of the mother tongue, mentioned by 52% of respondents. Another 45% expressed concern about excessive educational pressure on children. The financial cost of language courses was identified by 19%, while 12% considered additional language learning unnecessary at a very young age.

These findings demonstrate that positive attitudes towards multilingual education coexist with concerns about children's linguistic development, emotional well-being, and equal access to educational opportunities.

In particular, the concern about mother tongue preservation highlights the importance of balanced educational approaches. Foreign language instruction should be organised in a way that supports additional language development without neglecting children's first language, cultural identity, and individual learning needs.

## DISCUSSION

The findings provide an overview of public attitudes towards early second language learning in Uzbekistan. Overall, respondents demonstrated strong support for introducing additional languages during childhood. However, their opinions differed regarding the optimal starting age, the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, and the importance of the mother tongue.

The fact that 93% of respondents considered early language learning beneficial and 81% associated bilingualism with greater intellectual abilities indicates a generally positive perception of multilingualism. Nevertheless, McLaughlin (1977) notes that the assumption that bilingual children are automatically more intelligent has not been conclusively supported by research. Therefore, the benefits of bilingualism should be considered primarily in terms of communication, educational

opportunities, and intercultural competence rather than guaranteed improvements in general intelligence.

Opinions about the optimal starting age were relatively divided, with the 3–10 and 10–15 age groups receiving similar levels of support. This finding corresponds with Butler's (2025) argument that successful additional language learning depends not only on age but also on individual characteristics, instructional quality, and the language environment. Chapman's (2000) interactionist perspective also emphasises the importance of interaction between children's developmental abilities and their social environment. Thus, age-appropriate teaching methods and meaningful language exposure are essential at every stage.

Another important finding concerns the role of the mother tongue. While 53% of respondents preferred Uzbek as the first language, 52% expressed concern about the possible weakening of children's native language. Hofslundsengen et al. (2026) similarly emphasise the importance of recognising and supporting children's home languages in multilingual educational environments. In Uzbekistan, where children may grow up speaking different languages, educational approaches should consider individual linguistic backgrounds and ensure that foreign language instruction complements rather than replaces the mother tongue.

The popularity of YouTube (74%), Duolingo (45%), and artificial intelligence-based tools (33%) demonstrates growing interest in digital language learning. McCauley and Christiansen (2019) highlight the importance of meaningful language exposure and repeated interaction in language development. However, digital resources are most useful when combined with communication, parental involvement, and teacher guidance. Their effectiveness also depends on content quality and age appropriateness.

The survey also revealed concerns about educational pressure (45%) and the possible loss of the mother tongue (52%). These findings highlight the need to organise early language education in a supportive and child-centred environment. As Butler (2025) and Hofslundsengen et al. (2026) emphasise, emotional well-being and appropriate educational support are important conditions for successful language development.

From a practical perspective, parents and teachers should provide children with opportunities to learn through games, storytelling, songs, reading, and everyday communication. Digital platforms can serve as supplementary resources, while the development of the mother tongue should remain an important educational priority. Language programmes should also consider children's individual abilities, interests, and learning pace.

Overall, the findings support a balanced approach to early multilingual education that combines foreign language development, mother-tongue preservation, digital resources, and children's emotional well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The present study investigated public perceptions of early second language learning among children in Uzbekistan through an online questionnaire completed by 58 respondents.

The findings indicate that early additional language education is widely supported among the surveyed participants. Approximately 93% consider early language learning beneficial, while 95% express willingness to introduce an additional language to their own children at an early age.

At the same time, opinions concerning the most appropriate starting age are relatively diverse. The age groups of 3–10 and 10–15 years received approximately equal support, indicating that respondents do not necessarily consider the preschool period the only suitable stage for beginning additional language education.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between the mother tongue and foreign language learning. More than half of the respondents believe that children should prioritise Uzbek, while a similar proportion express concern about the possible weakening of the native language. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to multilingual development.

The results also demonstrate the growing popularity of digital educational resources. YouTube, Duolingo, and artificial intelligence-based applications were identified as particularly useful platforms. Nevertheless, digital resources should be regarded as supplementary tools rather than substitutes for meaningful communication and teacher-guided instruction.

The study further identifies concerns regarding excessive educational pressure and the financial accessibility of language courses. These issues suggest that successful early language education should be affordable, emotionally supportive, and appropriate to children's developmental characteristics.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed:

**For parents:** provide regular and enjoyable opportunities for language exposure through everyday communication, storytelling, songs, and age-appropriate educational materials.

**For teachers:** introduce interactive and play-based teaching approaches that correspond to children's cognitive and emotional development.

**For educational institutions:** develop multilingual programmes that support the mother tongue alongside additional language acquisition.

**For policymakers:** expand access to affordable and high-quality early language education, particularly in public preschool and school institutions.

**For digital learning:** encourage the responsible use of educational platforms and artificial intelligence tools under appropriate adult guidance.

**For future research:** conduct larger-scale studies involving more diverse respondents, including parents, teachers, preschool specialists, and children from different linguistic backgrounds.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The relatively small convenience sample, self-reported responses, and descriptive nature of the analysis restrict the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the study examines public perceptions rather than the actual language proficiency or cognitive development of bilingual children.

Future research could address these limitations through larger representative samples, interviews, longitudinal studies, and comparisons between different age groups and educational environments.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that public attitudes in Uzbekistan are generally favourable towards early second language learning. However, the successful development of multilingual competence requires more than introducing foreign languages at an early age. It depends on a balanced educational environment that values the mother tongue, provides meaningful linguistic interaction, uses digital technologies appropriately, and protects children's emotional well-being.

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