

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

FUNCTIONAL RATING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Gulnaz K. Tleuzhanova, Saule A. Shunkeyeva, Sholpan K. Tuleubayeva, Galiya B. Sarzhanova, Rauana B. Mazhenova, Gulbanu T. Aubakirova. Functional Rating Of The English Language In Multilingual Education In Kazakhstan-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(10), 1806-1824. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Language Policy, Language Situation, Multilingual Education, Trilingualism, High School Student, English

ABSTRACT

The implementation of multilingualism in modern Kazakhstan is characterized by the spread of the English language along with the native (Kazakh) and Russian. Trilingualism policy promotes the prestige of the English language. The present study aimed to determine the functional rating and status of the English language in the conditions of Kazakhstan trilingualism on the example of high school students. The research monitored the spread of

English in schools along with methods of collecting, processing, and evaluating the reliability of data, statistical analysis, questionnaire, percentages and rankings. Monitoring was carried out in Grades 10-11. The functional rating of the English language in the micro social group of high school students is due to the individual-personal motivation and age characteristics of the respondents. High school students demonstrate a high degree of adaptation to the English language in their linguistic-communicative environment – 62.15%. The level of language proficiency varies from A2 to C2 according to the CEFR scale, the prevailing level being B2: A1 is 12.95%, A2 is 22.5%, B1 is 24.2%, B2 is 21.3%, C1 is 11.55%, and C2 is 5.15%. The linguistic policy of trilingualism in the republic is supported by the overwhelming majority of respondents of the student microsociety – 83.6%. Language policy in Kazakhstan is supported by the schoolchildren learning English and typically possessing level B1. Further spread of the English language both in school and outside of school is projected. In everyday communication, English does not yet have the role of lingua franca due to the language situation in Kazakhstan: English cannot compete with the dominant languages traditionally spoken in Kazakhstan. Respondents recognized the relevance of learning English as a factor of personal and future professional growth.

INTRODUCTION

Modern Kazakhstan society has a new refreshing perspective due to globalization and internationalization, which is characterized by a strengthening of the status of the state language (Kazakh) along with underlying the importance of the Russian and English languages. Increasing the prestige of the latter greatly contributes to the official policy of societal trilingualism (Kazakh-Russian-English). The ‘three language policy’ focuses on the essential role of the English language in inter-state commerce, communication, interdisciplinary research and career making. Language proficiency has a positive effect on employment probabilities in the labor market [1]. By 2020, 20 percent of Kazakhstan populations are expected to be English speakers [2]. The English language in Kazakhstan is assigned the status of a language of successful integration into the global economy and of means of international communication; in addition, it serves as a means of building general professional competencies [3] and has a high meta-subject potential [4]. The evolving nature of English in different fields of science in the context of globalization, and the determining role of two communicative powerful languages (Kazakh and Russian) stipulate to the current language situation [5].

Historically, the linguistic situation in Kazakhstan is specified by the shift from sustainable bilingualism (Russian-Kazakh/Kazakh-Russian/national-Russian/national-Kazakh) to the multilingualism. In this regard, to reveal the nature of the current linguistic situation, it is necessary to analyze its specific features that reflect the history of the country. Multilingualism is ‘the use of two or more languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers, each of which is chosen in accordance with a specific intercultural communication’ [6]. Natural social phenomenon in the country is expected to be the Kazakhstan multilingualism, or to be precise, trilingualism: using three languages (Kazakh, Russian and English).

Therefore, the study of modern culture-bound items of communication and functional rating of the English language within the ‘three language policy’ is

relevant, firstly, in educational environment as an objective factor in transforming the linguistic situation and its dynamics.

The analysis of the issue reveals that implementing multilingualism and its effect in terms of distributing and usage of certain languages (in our case, English) is a longitudinal, complex, individualized process (in relation to the experience of other countries) which requires a thorough study. Thus, the present research aimed to determine the language acquisition and functional rating and status of the English language in Kazakhstan three-language policy amid high school students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Norbert Dittmar, a German philologist and linguist, refers to 'an integrated theory of sociolinguistic description whose scope should incorporate primarily the function and secondarily the structure of language: Who speaks? What does one speak about? and How does one speak? To who and what language, under what social circumstances, with what kind of intentions and consequences? [7]. H. Bussmann distinguishes another three research areas of sociolinguistics: 1) socially-oriented (Who speaks, when do they speak and what is the purpose of a conversation? what language do they speak and who to?); 2) linguistically-oriented description and explanation of heterogeneity and variability of language systems; 3) ethnomethodologically oriented description of language interaction to display and explain social reality [8].

Based on the authors' objectives, three research questions were formulated 1) to what extent did the target-social group master the English language? 2) What communicative functions does English perform in the given small community? 3) What is the role and place of English in the top-down hierarchy of interacting languages of communicants? Moreover, the authors of the present research focused on the first of H. Bussmann's areas.

As a part of the study, the English language spreading at senior high schools and its functional rating in the educational environment of Kazakhstan were monitored.

Data collection and processing, evaluation of the data reliability, questionnaire (empirical method of knowledge of pedagogical and sociological research), and interpretative research were used during the study. Questionnaires are most widely used tools in social science and linguistic research; the main objective is to obtain relevant information in most reliable and valid manner. Therefore, validating questionnaires is a key aspect of research methodology and the validity of the outcomes. The authors found it effective to use rating-scale questions at the stage of determining the functional rating of the English language in the small social group of high school students. The guiding principles were those of anonymity, voluntary participation, scientific objectivity, and topic ranging. Open questions and mixed type questions served as a part of questionnaire design; the questionnaires consisted of 4 sections: motivation for learning English; the English language proficiency level; the perspectives of the three language policy development, and information about the respondents.

The questionnaires were filled in both ‘paper-and-pencil’ and online (<https://goo.gl/forms/H0U7IN357AANUPpu1> (the Russian language version) and <https://goo.gl/forms/PFMI067xAvSelqhz2> (the Kazakh language version). Interpretive research was used to analyze the questionnaire results, i.e. the actual data obtained from the senior high students. Obviously, quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, and numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires. The focus was on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon.

The authors calculated the arithmetic mean for analyzing open questions, namely setting up gender rating, educational institutions, grades, types of senior high schools, and regions. The level of education and qualifications of the respondents were out of the agenda. Meanwhile, to calculate the percentage of responses to yes-no questions, the percentage of date and rank distribution was applied.

The study took a sample of senior high school students as the most reliable indicator of the true social linguistic situation and their future perspectives in making careers. Educational institutions (schools, universities) have a great impact, serving as platforms for implementing the national language policy. Based on this provision, students of a small social group (senior high, aged 15-17) were chosen as object of the study. This group is characterized by age uniformity, which guarantees common interests, and relative psychological compatibility; in other words, these are socially oriented young people with one learning goal. At the same time, senior high students are characterized by the need for self-determination – their learning is focused on good result; their educational activity is subject to future professional activity; students are acutely aware how important the English language is for obtaining information and for their future career in general [9].

A small-scale study was conducted from February to June 2018, in which 426 respondents from 13 senior-high schools (linguistic gymnasiums, multilingual schools, traditional schools) from different regions of Kazakhstan (Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Temirtau, Semey, Shymkent, Ust-Kamenogorsk) participated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To reveal the linguistic situation in Kazakhstan (the peculiarities of the English language functioning in Kazakhstan multilingualism), the authors analyzed the works of Kazakh scientists on English functioning in the given ethno-linguistic environment [10]. Thus, from the standpoint of socio-cultural competence, teaching three languages, including English, should be based on the principles of co-learning language and culture [11]. At the same time, it is of a paramount importance to take into account the linguistic and didactic features of teaching foreign languages in the conditions of Kazakhstan trilingualism [12, 13, 14, 15].

Many foreign scholars considered the issues relating to bilingual, multilingual, multicultural education from different angles and perspectives. The conceptual

basis of multilingual education is sufficiently developed by D. Coyle [16]. Outlining the problems in multilingual education, the authors of the present study were also inspired by the scientific works of foreign researchers on the foundations of bilingualism, multilingualism and translanguaging in the 21st century, and on strategies of bilingual education, revealing the concepts of language and cultural awareness [17, 18, 19, 20].

The following works were of great interest – studies on personifying multicultural linguistic education in Russia (multi-paradigmatic, reflexive, strategic, spiritual and moral, learner-oriented and subjective components included) [21]; multilingualism in the educational environment and bilingual education as a model of transcultural learning in German-speaking countries [22, 23, 24]; multilingual and bilingual educational experience in the context of the linguistic situation in Kyrgyzstan [25]; the role of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge concept (TPACK) of primary school FL teachers in Taiwan [26, 27], etc.

The Bologna Declaration is a key document that marked a turning point in the development of higher education in non-English-speaking countries and resulted in the rise of English language programs for foreign students. According to the Institute of International Education, the number of master's programs taught in English increased from 560 in 2008 to 3701 in 2015 [28]. Although foreign researchers Krashen (2005) argue that multilingual education does not work effectively, research proved otherwise – students in bilingual programs are usually equal to or ahead of their peers in academic performance. Teaching English is a growing trend in countries where it is not native; bilingualism is another source of knowledge for students in the learning process [29].

RESULTS

The statistical results of Section 1 ‘the English learning motivation’ are as follows – the overwhelming majority of respondents demonstrate a strong motivation in learning English (91.6%). Only a small number of students (8.4%) learn the language reluctantly; these are mostly male students more interested in natural sciences and engineering and lacking natural predisposition to languages.



Figure 1 Students who enjoy and do not enjoy learning English (%)

The students expressed their personal attitudes towards the methodologies for their English classes. For collecting accurate statistical data, the leading questions were designed as multiple choices (positive, neutral or negative responses); moreover, an opportunity of adding own opinions was given (see

Figure 2). The statistical data reveals that the respondents generally have a positive attitude both to their English classes and to the language itself. A greater number of respondents (70.9%) show a certain interest in learning English. 225 students (53.2%) underline the benefits of English classes in improving cognitive skills by learning new and interesting things in the process. 204 students (48.2%) showed a positive attitude to their teacher of English, noting high level of language proficiency and adequate methodology; this demonstrates the ability of the government to provide learners with well-trained and qualified English tutors. Another important factor in learning English for students is both external and internal motivation: 192 students (45.4%) get internal satisfaction when they accomplish the task well in the classroom; the other 129 students (30.5%) enjoy receiving good grades; 105 respondents (24.8%) admit that they like it when the English teacher praises their achievements.

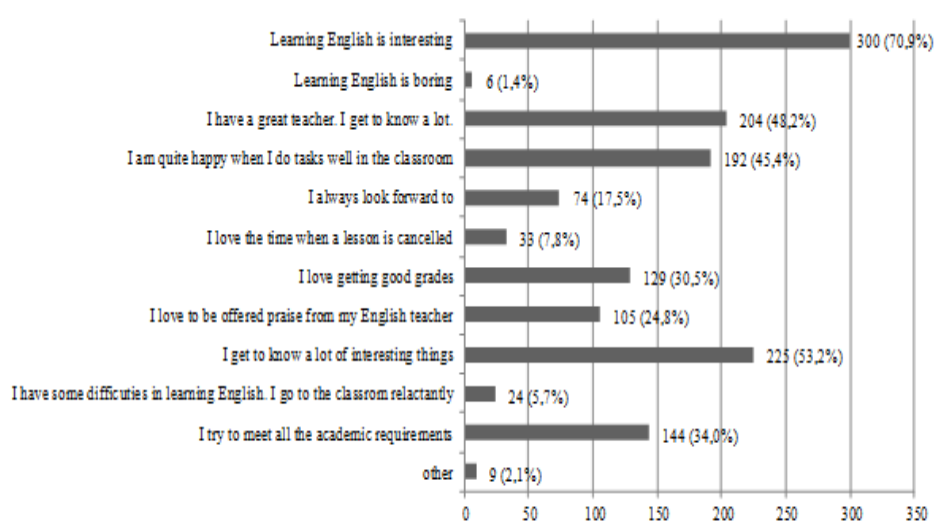


Figure 2 Students' attitude towards their English classes

Notably, most students are looking forward to their English classes (17.5%), yet not everyone is so enthusiastic. 33 students (7.8%) are happy when a lesson is cancelled for some reason; 24 students (5.7%) admit that English is difficult for them, so they attend classes reluctantly; 6 students (1.4%) find their lessons boring. When the respondents expressed their personal attitude, they mainly exhibited a positive outlook, such as 'I love English' and 'I like everything'; statements like 'English gives us a lot of opportunities' demonstrate students' critical language awareness.

The diagram below illustrates a wide range of reasons to learn English (see Figure 3).

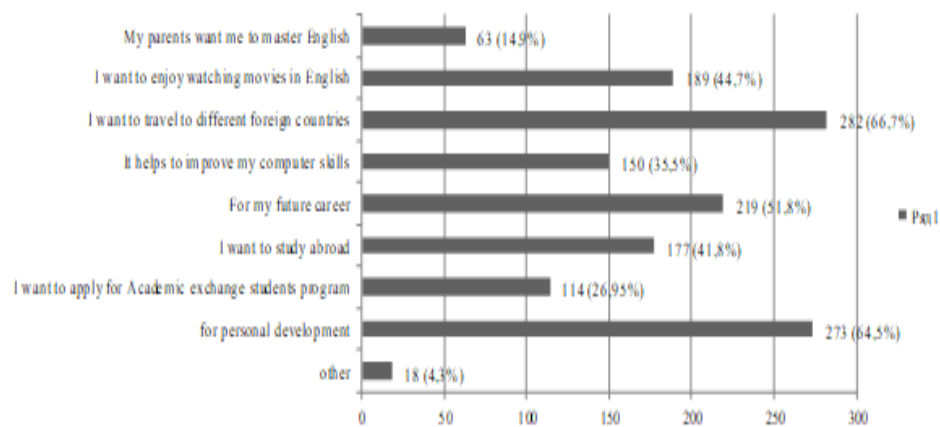


Figure 3 Students' reasons to learn English

The majority of students choose English for personal and pragmatic purposes and less so for academic or vocational purposes due to their age characteristics and personal motivations. A greater number of students are motivated by desire to travel (282 students, 66.7%). Under two-thirds of respondents study English for personal development (64.5%). For 189 students (44.7%), the language acquisition is the key to the opportunity of watching films in the original; above two-fifths of the students (150 students, 35.5 %) find the language helpful for Internet surfing. The majority of students indicate that the English proficiency will help them in making a successful career; this is one of the common reasons to learn the language (219 students, 51.8 %). For 177 students (41.8%), English is associated with studying abroad at tertiary level, and almost one-fourth of students (144 students, 26.95%) mention the opportunity to participate in international student exchange programs. However, there is a share of students (63 students, 14.9%) who learn English to meet their parent's demands.

The authors offered another list of reasons to learn the language, such as the ability to read books and play computer games in English. The statistical data show a positive outlook – students are happy to learn the language, are willing to attend classes, are aware of the need to learn English, and set certain goals in acquiring it. However, a contrast is clearly seen in students' responses to Question 4 – whether they study English outside the classroom.

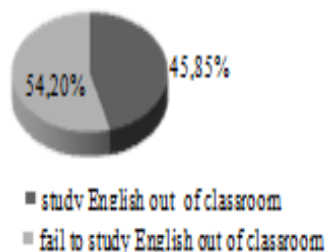


Figure 4 Students who study and do not study English outside the classroom (%)

The bigger half of respondents answered positively to this question, and the lesser half (54.2%) gave a negative response. A possible reason is that all the necessary language material is given to students during the classes, and the

quality of teaching is at a high methodological and linguistic level, thus the students do not need additional studying. However, the financial factor cannot be excluded here, since extracurricular lessons are not affordable for all families (see Figure 4).

The next question was addressed to those students who indicated they were studying English outside the classroom. The authors conducted a poll on what language clubs and other similar establishments these students joined and on which additional sources they used to improve their language skills. The survey showed that for a greater number of respondents (46.4%), the most effective and affordable extracurricular studies were autonomous work at home; joining English clubs is relevant to 81 respondents (41.75%); 54 respondents prefer to study with a personal tutor (27.8%); 21 students (10.8%) follow on-line courses; the smallest number (9 students, 4.6%) have extracurricular activities at school. Some students learn English with the help of films in the original and with assistance from their foreign friends.

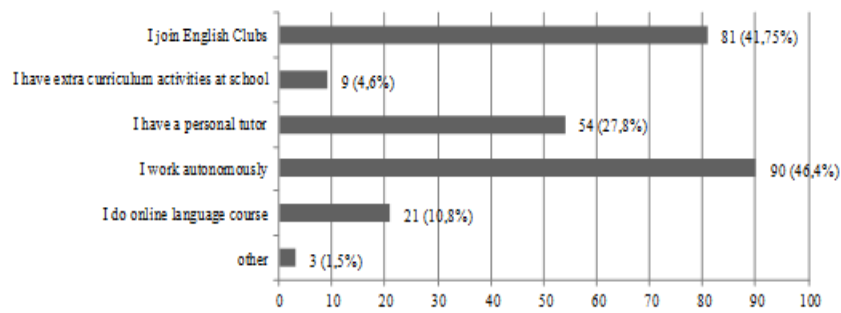


Figure 5 Ways to study English outside the classroom

The last question from the section relates to students’ personal learning motivations and to whether they find it necessary to master the language for future use.

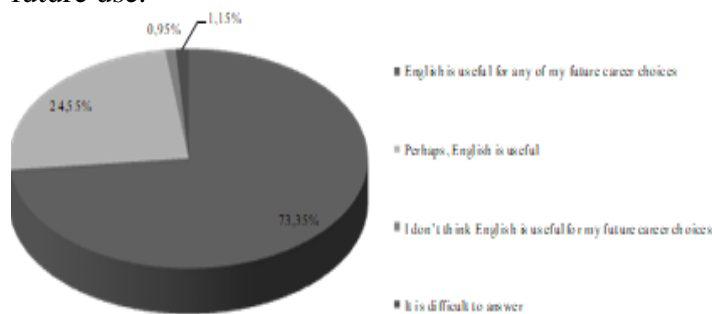


Figure 6 Students’ opinion on how English is useful (%)

The analysis of the answers showed that the majority of students (73.35%) associate English with a successful career and bright future; some students (24.55%) believe English will be useful for them someday in life. The smallest number of students (0.95 %) does not believe English will ever be of use for them, and 1.15% of students found it difficult to answer this question (see Figure 6).

The results of the survey on the Section ‘English Learning motivations’ demonstrate a high degree of interest among students, which is directly related

to their awareness of the role and importance of the English language both for personal development and for future career.

The statistical data of the survey on Section 2 ‘Level of English language proficiency’ showed that students assessed their level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). As a result, the following data was collected.

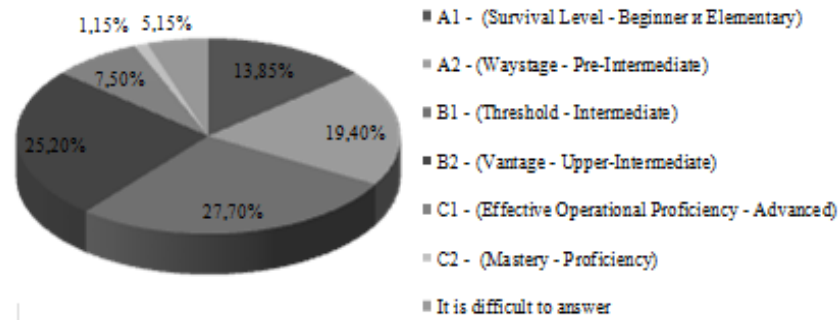


Figure 7. Students’ levels of the English language proficiency (%)

The respondents demonstrate a high level of English. A large group (27.7%) of students speaks English at B1 and another group at B2 (25.2%). 19.4% of students are at A2; 13.85% are absolute beginners. 7.5% of students speak English on a professional level, and only 1.15% of them are fluent in English. 15% could not determine their level of English proficiency according to the proposed level system, not being fully familiar with the Common European Framework of Reference as a way of standardizing the levels of language exams in different regions. Notably, more than half of the students (61.55%, B1) successfully accomplished the English program. One of the objectives of foreign language teaching is to ensure pre-professional threshold level of language proficiency (a speaker can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered at work, school, leisure, etc.; can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken; can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest; can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans [30].

The highest rates are demonstrated by students of specialized schools, namely regional specialized N. Nurmakov boarding school for gifted children, Karaganda; Gymnasium No. 93, Karaganda; Lyceum No. 20, Temirtau; Nazarbayev Intellectual School of physics and mathematics, Semey; and Gymnasium No. 37, Semey.

The respondents were also to determine their language skills. Thus, the authors planned to identify the level of English proficiency, expressed in descriptors by the acquisition of practical skills, as well as to identify the degree of English use in real communication. As a result, the following data were obtained (see Figure 8):

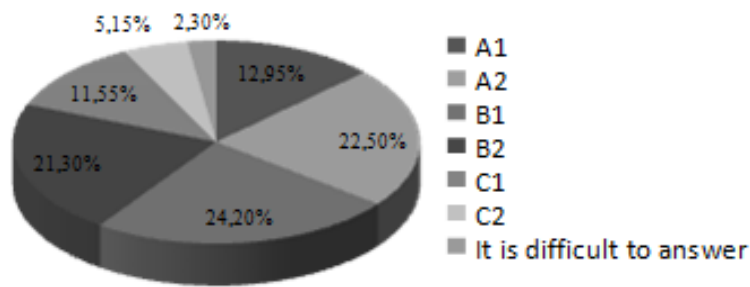


Figure 8 Students' level of English proficiency determined according to descriptors (%)

Despite the fact that most students already have a good level of English proficiency, the overwhelming majority indicated that they would like to improve their language skills (see Figure 9).

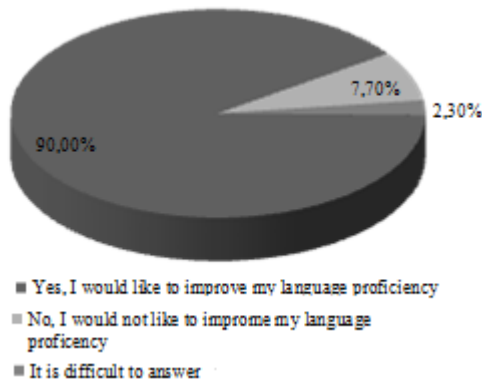


Figure 9 Students' opinion on the necessity to improve their English language proficiency (%)

The diagram illustrates a small number of students who does not want to improve their language proficiency; besides, 2.3% of students found it difficult to answer. The authors make an educated guess that either those students' language level corresponds to C1 (Advanced) and C2 (Proficiency) or they are not willing to learn English because they fail to associate their future with it. As for the last question of Section 2, the students demonstrated how they develop their English language skills outside the classroom. At the same time, they were offered a list of ready-made answers, as well as the opportunity to give answers of their own (see Figure 10).

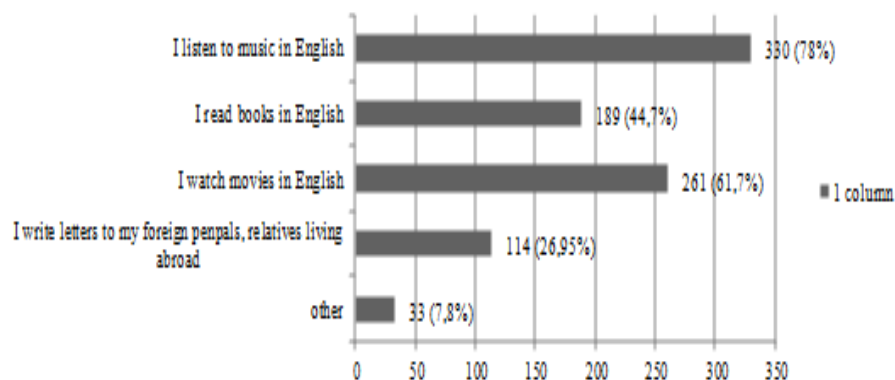


Figure 10. Students' use of English in everyday life

Therefore, the most common way to develop language skills and knowledge for 330 students is listening to English songs, and the second best way is through watching English movies (261 respondents are in favor of that approach). One of the distinctive qualities of the younger generation is that they read a lot, including in English, which greatly helps master the language. 26.95% of respondents develop their language skills by writing letters to their friends and relatives from other countries in English, or communicate with them via Skype and other similar means. Writing and speaking as productive types of speech activity contribute most to the developing and improving language skills, providing great results.

33 students offered their own answer to this question – they emphasized the role of computer games in developing their language skills; the role of being an active member of English-speaking groups via the Internet in different social language communities; participation in international conferences; joining summer English courses, including abroad; going to language clubs; translating different discourses, learning words, etc. Some students improve their skills in quite a creative way – for instance, a female student from Temirtau has her own blog on Youtube, and another student from the same city writes stories in English and publishes them in her blog on the Internet. Summarizing the results of the survey on Section 2, the authors can conclude that students of Kazakhstan schools demonstrate a high level of English and can apply their skills in practice.

The survey on Section 3 'The perspectives of the three-language policy development' reports the attitude of students to the national policy of trilingualism. Students were asked to express their attitude to the 10 statements on a scale ranging from 'strongly agree', 'somewhat agree', 'uncertain' to 'somewhat disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The analysis of the responses showed that 69.1% of the students fully recognize the necessity of learning English and agree that English language skills contribute to the development of general vision and intellect, and 22.3% of the respondents somewhat agree with the competitiveness of the specialist on the labor market (64.0% and 27.1%).

Traveling also broadens students' horizons and enriches their knowledge of the English language to 'feel comfortable anywhere in the world' – 73.4% of students fully agree with this judgment, and 17.4% somewhat agree. Students also recognize that knowledge of English is necessary for educational and professional purposes, so 64.2% fully agree and 24.5% somewhat agree that knowledge of English enables one to join the global academic community and helps in finding the necessary information on English sites (66.7% and 19.1%, respectively); and helps acquire language material better (53.2% and 23.4%).

The survey showed that the majority supports the policy of promoting English in Kazakhstan and agrees that the citizens should know English along with the Kazakh and Russian languages. 54.9% of students fully agree, 28.7% somewhat agree, in total it accounts for 83.6% of all respondents. The same number of students (83.6%) expressed their support for the policy of trilingualism in the country, saying that they want to be fluent in three languages and to become multilingual specialists (62.7% of students fully agree, 20.9% somewhat agree), which, in turn, contributes to the prestige of the individual and the formation of self-confidence (53.7% and 28.2%). Knowledge of English helps students communicate with foreigners whose number increased in recent years in Kazakhstan (63.1% and 19.1%). A small number of the respondents exhibit negative outlook towards the language policy. Some students reject the fact that knowledge of English contributes to better knowledge acquisition. They account for 7.8% of students (5.7% and 2.1%, relatively); 5.0% rather disagree with the fact that knowledge of English helps in finding information on English sites. Most likely, these are students who are reluctant to learn English or find it difficult.

In general, the results of the survey clearly show a tendency of students to support the policy of trilingualism, which determines the relevance of English in the educational environment. The authors also aimed to find what languages students speak in fact, and how their views materialized within the language policy. The survey reports that senior high students speak a variety of languages – the most common are Kazakh and Russian, then come English, German, French, Spanish, Polish, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Turkish, and Hebrew, and also the languages of ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan – German, Korean, Turkish, Chechen, and Uzbek. It also demonstrates the number of students who speak one language, two languages and more. Interestingly, a number of students speaking Russian represent the monolingualism; this is typical not only for representatives of the Russian nationality but also for ethnic groups, including the titular ethnic group of the Republic – Kazakhs.

Moreover, the study of a foreign language (namely English) by bilingual students has its own specific characteristics. In the process of the third foreign language acquisition, the three-language systems come into interaction. According to the statistical data, there are no Kazakhs which represent monolingualists. The sociolinguistic monitoring was conducted mainly in Central, Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan, in one senior high school in Almaty (southern Kazakhstan) which is dominantly characterized by Russian speaking population. Russian-Kazakh and Russian-English bilingualism are

represented in proportion to the knowledge of two languages. There is only one sample for a Russian-German language set presented in the survey. Almost half of all the students (43.3%) who took part in the survey are trilingual. Trilinguism is represented by a number of students speaking Kazakh, Russian and English languages, Russian or Kazakh being their first depending on the nationality of the students. In addition, there are other variations of languages.

The survey showed that only few students can speak multiple languages. Most common combinations of languages the respondents speak are: Russian – Kazakh– English – German; Kazakh – Russian – English – Korean; Russian – Kazakh –English –French, etc. A small number (2,1%) of students speak more than four languages and demonstrate a unique variety of languages such as Russian – Kazakh – English – Chinese – Arabic, Russian – Kazakh – Japanese – English – Hebrew, Russian – Kazakh – English – Korean (see Figure 11).

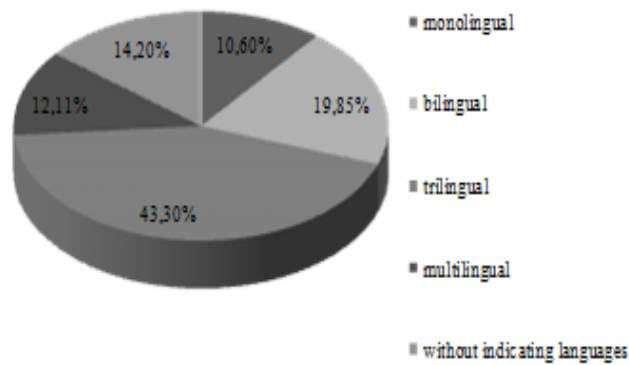


Figure 11. Language proficiency (%)

In addition to the data presented in the diagram, 14.2% of students did not specify the languages they speak. The authors believe this was done intentionally, as they answered other questions in the questionnaire, and can only speculate on the possible reasons. Perhaps, they speak only one foreign language or their level of language proficiency is low, which predetermined their choice to conceal the information. The authors believe the majority of students indicated the all languages they learn at school or outside the classroom in spite of being only at the preliminary or basic level, yet the authors counted all the results because determining the exact level of language proficiency was not an objective of the present research.

The next series of questions were to reveal students’ attitudes towards polyglots. The results of the survey are shown the diagram below (see Figure 12).

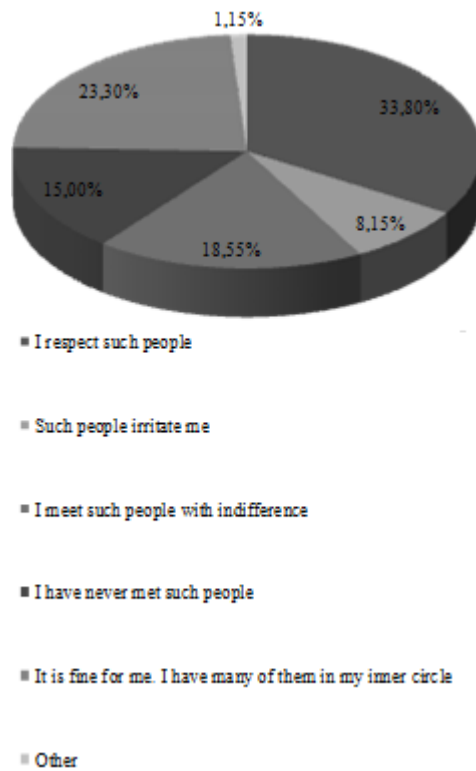


Figure 12. Students' attitude towards a multilingual personality (%)

The diagram clearly demonstrates that a greater number (33.8%) of students show respect to polyglots; 23.3% find the company of polyglots enjoyable as there are a lot of such people in their inner circles. 18.55% of students are indifferent to polylingual personalities; a small number (15.0%) of students have not met such people, and 8.15% of students feel jealousy. Overall, the students are neutral towards polylingual personalities – there is almost an equal distribution of both positive and moderately negative attitudes. Some respondents had a different outlook – for instance, six female students admitted they consider themselves polyglots, and others stated that the ability to speak several languages simultaneously, shifting from one to another, indicates a high level of intelligence.

Generally, the results of the survey on Section 3 are as follows: older students greatly support the three-language policy that is aimed at promoting the acquisition and practice of languages by adding a wide palette of them, including the languages of ethnic groups of Kazakhstan (Fig. 13).

Section 4 'Information about the respondents' included questions about places the student lives, their senior high school, grades and nationality. The authors previously mentioned that only senior high school students participated in the study. The questionnaire shows the ethnic diversity of schools and the population of Kazakhstan in general. Thus, 8 ethnic groups' representatives took part in the survey. The majority of respondents were from the titular ethnic group – Kazakhs (61.7%); the rest of the respondents were Russians, Germans, Koreans, Turks, Ukrainians, Jews, and Uighurs.

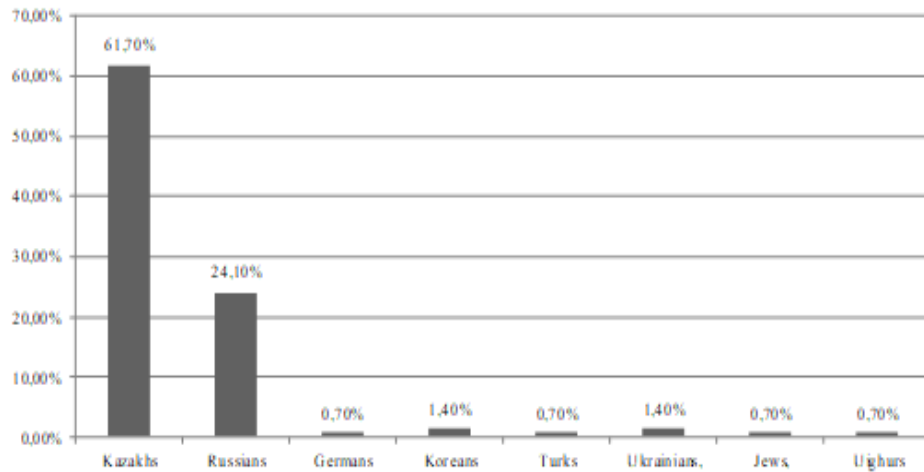


Figure 13. Ethnic composition of senior high schools (%)

In sum, the ethnolinguistic students' environment is created and specified by the usage of different language codes.

CONCLUSION

The present research showed the high level of the English language proficiency of the respondents, their attitude towards the national three-language policy and the positive attitude towards the English language, the level of language proficiency (B1 on the CEFR scale), the functioning of languages in small social groups, and the social characteristics of the respondents. When analyzing the linguistic situation in Kazakhstan, the authors took into account such sociolinguistic components as ethno-demographic parameters of the social base of languages, the language purpose, and the social conditions of its functioning. This kind of research was carried out for the first time in the conditions of Kazakhstan three-language policy. Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- the national language policy regarding the status of the English language and the ways the it is taught in the country is rather effective and finds support among the majority of senior high students. The language policy primarily facilitated the spread of the English language in Kazakhstan;
- English is actively penetrating into the communicative-linguistic environment of senior high schoolchildren. It is widely used for practical purposes: to establish relations in everyday life and to acquire other knowledge for educational needs. Students continue to graduate with adequate language proficiency and are ready to start a tertiary level study which varies from A2 to C2, the predominant level being B1. One may predict a further increase in the language acquisition both for educational/vocational purposes and for daily use as well;
- in the hierarchy of interacting languages in everyday communication of senior high school students in general educational institutions, English has greater vitality as a language with a smaller number of users on a daily basis and mostly preferred as a global lingua franca. The linguistic situation in

Kazakhstan is characterized by co-functioning of the Kazakh and Russian languages in a single communicative environment, in the targeted small social group in particular; in this regard, the English language cannot yet compete with the two dominant languages;

- the overwhelming majority of students in a small social community recognize the relevance of learning English and assume it as an integral part of their personal and future professional growth, which indicates a high functional rating of English in the educational environment and explains its rapid spread in the linguistic and communicative environment at senior high school. Moreover, English is serving as a means of communication in the small social group and is realized mainly in the classroom, less often in everyday life;

- the language policy pursued at the state level, in particular, the policy of multilingualism, which is primarily implemented in the education system, has its positive results. The analysis of the linguistic situation among senior high school students is a proof;

- supporting the views of most experts in multilingualism about the complexity and heterogeneity of this process, the authors of the present study also note the uniqueness of the process of implementing multilingual education in Kazakhstan (the three-language policy) due to the historical, social and political characteristics of the country.

The results obtained allow identifying the scientific relevance of the study ensured by the analysis of the dynamics of the contemporary linguistic situation in Kazakhstan during the implementation of the national language education at senior high schools at the state level, and by monitoring local sociolinguistic situation in accordance with the priorities and guidelines of language policy. The results of the study are of practical value both for educational and vocational purposes – for instance, making recommendations on establishing the language policy in the Republic regarding a global language, fostering tolerance in developing interethnic friendship and shaping public opinion on this issue. The toolkit of the designed questionnaire is helpful for determining the functional rating of the English language in the context of various small social groups of Kazakhstan community.

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