



**OUT-OF-SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT IN KAZAKHSTANI HIGH SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe the influence of out-of-school English language learning on academic achievement in Kazakhstani high schools. English language acquisition plays a pivotal role in Kazakhstan, as English is not only an international communication language, but also the foreign language for obligatory study in state schools and higher education. Approximately 130 representatives of various ethnic groups populate Kazakhstan, thus it is considered as the multi religious and multiethnic state. Currently, the society development is altering Kazakhstan from bilingual to multilingual , integrating Kazakh, Russian and English languages into the educational system embedding policy of multilingualism at state schools all over the country. However, second language learners tend to demonstrate poor performance and low average points in foreign language examinations. Factors affecting low performance in school and entrance exams, the trend among students preferring private and extracurricular foreign language teaching for various educational purposes will be considered in this paper. Study is going to dissect the relationship between extracurricular foreign language learning and poor performance at state schools. Flaws in the educational system and methods of teaching in public schools and the benefits and positive impact of private education will be discussed in a future paper. This article is the systematic review of the scientific literature related to poor performance in EFL at schools and influence of out-of-school learning to academic performance of high school students.

Keywords: academic achievement, out-of-school learning, poor academic performance in EFL.

Introduction

English as an international language, is spoken in mostly all the countries all over the world, both as a native and as a foreign language. Nowadays, nearly a quarter of the world's population speaks in English, using it in science, education, politics, world trade, media and commerce. As Kachru and Smith (2008) states, in the time of globalization, all the countries need to qualify citizens' performance in the English language in order to be competitive, so they will be able to function well in means of international communication, trade and areas of science and education. The English language has a decisive role not only as a means of international communication but also as the second language of learning in state schools. Educational system of Kazakhstan is making an effort to ensure that all school students achieve literacy in their second



language. However, the majority of public schools have been posting dismal results in the examinations. According to Stefanson (2012) excluding more complicated, subject-specific programs until excellence of the English language has been reached and fixing any mistakes made by the students are some of the reasons restricting the progress of foreign language learners resulting in low results in examinations. The reasons limiting the progress may be related to the teachers, students or schools. Qualification, teaching methods, evaluation methods, approach and encouragement of instructors might be related to limitations. Students' involvement in learning, classroom and home environment, age and cognitive abilities are related to restriction. Access to learning resources and policy of schools in language teaching, and learning are school related factors.

Nowadays, the majority of high school students tend to prefer extracurricular English language learning, in pursuance of advancing academic performance. The option of high school students is influenced by several factors regarding out-of-school education. Convenience, teaching method, quality and approach to learning lead to enhanced results for university admissions within the country and abroad. However little research has been done to measure the impact of out-of-school foreign language learning on the academic achievement of high school pupils. As a result, it is challenging for high school students to make decisions concerning their preparation for tertiary education.

The factors that lead to poor performance in English as a second language are many, such as school language policy, the availability of instructional resources, the method and approach to teaching a second language. Moreover, a second language learning at schools has a significant impact on academic achievement in tertiary education. This paper focuses on the effect of out-of-school English language learning in academic achievement and identifies major issues of poor performance in foreign language learning in state schools. In the middle of the 20th century, many scholars investigated the formal and informal foreign language learning environments by comparing them (Krashen, 1981). Oates and Hawley (1983) proposed engaging native speakers of the target language in extracurricular learning, meetings, interviews, thematic weekends and role playing. The role of out-of-school learning tightly depends on the approach or method integrated in language teaching. This study will measure the reasons leading to issues related to poor academic performance in high schools and influence of out-of-school learning to academic achievement.



Literature review

Integrating multilingualism in Kazakhstan: EFL in the educational system of Kazakhstan.

Pilot mode of teaching Kazakh, Russian and English languages was integrated into the educational system in the 2013-2014 academic year and included 35 schools. English language acquisition was planned for preschool education and elementary school students. Moreover, natural sciences were planned to be taught in the English language. In order to achieve goals, Kazakhstan altered its academic policy towards the execution of modern technologies in the teaching way for development of foreign language skills (Kubeev et al., 2008).

English language teaching in Kazakhstan

Secondary school students and undergraduates English language proficiency on an average was advanced as a result of new system integration. However, according to the studies of Yeskeldiyeva, B. Y., and Tazhibayeva, S. Z. (2015), there were approximately 8,2 % unsatisfied students, their English language proficiency was not advanced and the system seemed not beneficial for students. Moreover, according to the studies there were several reasons causing poor academic performance in foreign language learning. Major reasons by school students was defined as “undeveloped material technical base (27,0%), weak motivation of students (37,5%), weak qualification of teachers and weak level of teaching (10,5%), old methods of teaching (18,5%), lack of reliable material (47,5%)”, in sociolinguistic research (Yeskeldiyeva, B. Y., and Tazhibayeva, S. Z., 2015).

Poor academic performance in EFL

Foreign language learning and acquisition is the process of learning language which differs from native language. Foreign language acquisition consists of several stages and a long process (Nordquist, 2018). Swarts (2002) defines that efficiency of learning and teaching is restricted by the fact that exposure to English in the community is low for learners and instructors. Simasiku (2006) claims that the acquisition of communication skills needs an engagement of students to study listening, speaking, and writing not only in the English lessons but also out-of-school activities. Learning English in typical classrooms is mostly instructed by teachers, students are told what and how to learn. Therefore, school policy plays a crucial role, and exposure to English is poor because of limits to students.

Textbooks, exercise books, slides, films, and electronic media are facilities which play a significant role in implementation of the academic purposes and objectives by responding



cognitive and psychological needs of the learners. “Textbooks as resource materials being the basic tools that enable effective teaching and learning, their absence or inadequacy make the teacher handle subjects in an abstract manner thus portraying it as dry and non-exciting” (Moore, 2008)

ocus of learning should be on ideas and content rather than on linguistic abilities, as they should be encouraged to take part in collaborative work with speaking and other skills. Lewis-Moreno (2007) claims that instructors should avoid providing feedback too much by fixing every error students do, due to the negative effect of this to students' learning progress.

Academic achievement

Reeves (2008) determines students' achievement as a degree in which students obtain moderate and achievable educational aims according to activities the students took part in. Students academic performance is measured by grade point averages, standardized tests and their active participation in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities do not directly affect the average scores of students, as it is “external to the core curriculum” (Shulruf, 2010). As Gardener (2010) states, extracurricular activities are academic and nonacademic activities which are held at schools but conducted outside of normal classroom time and are not included in syllabus of course. According to the studies of Melnick, Sabo, and Vanfossen (1992), high school athletic involvement and being evolved in youth groups, was not essentially related to test scores and grades of students. Thus, findings of study on African-American and Hispanic boys and girls haven't shown results of participation.

However, although involvement in out-of-school activities, which might be sport clubs or educational courses were not assessed in curriculum, other studies have defined the positive influence on the increasing of students' grade point averages. Scholars have measured how involvement in such activities is advantageous for students. More studies have defined that involvement in sports and youth groups is associated with the development of students' encouragement, regular participation in the classroom, academic performance, social skills and self-confidence of the students ((Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; McCarthy, 2000; Silliker & Quirk, 1997).

Out-of-school learning

According to Hymes (1971), the significance of out-of-school learning in foreign language teaching was strengthened by the demands of communicative competence, which consists of grammatical, strategic and sociolinguistic competence. Majority of school students lack the ability



to communicate, express themselves naturally in target language, even if their foreign language proficiency is in (B-C) levels in high school. Reasons for their failure in communication and language usage might be studying environment, cultural background and individual psychological characteristics. School policy, which in some cases might fit all students into the frame and traditional teacher-centered learning approach negatively affect students' second language acquisition, mostly creating an inconvenient learning environment for the students. As advancing communication in second language learning was the main purpose, the one way for communicating and acquiring cultural experience in depth was out of school (Andreeva,1958). Unrestricted learning environment, without limitations of evaluation and open space for sharing and creating ideas is considered to be the appropriate learning space for school students, and out-of-school learning tends to be that space for them.

Out of school learning underlined similarities and differences between the second language and native language, emphasizing connections with different aspects such as literature, science, arts or economics. All students with different backgrounds in higher education with a wide range of topics showed their involvement (Slastenin, 1997). Extracurricular learning might be identified as free space to share, experience and challenge students' foreign language learning, where they are able to integrate the language learning process to creative works, demonstrating their own methods of delivering knowledge, without hesitation and fear evaluation of their work, thus preferable environment without restricting rules and with flexible study curriculum.

Extracurricular English language learning. Extracurricular activities in learning foreign languages have a pivotal role in reaching educational purposes. These activities develop awareness of students to understand the natural aspects of target language and to define local and global environmental issues, and to integrate the school curriculum in an applied, scientific way to reach the objectives of the contemporary education system. Language clubs, as they were called, in Soviet schools consisted of different language-oriented extra - curriculums organized and well-developed in schools.

One of the most significant features of ECA is the integration of different areas, such as art or science to language learning. Similarities and differences between source and target languages are underlined in ECA and connected with literature, science, arts, economics. Mostly, in higher education, there are a wide range of topics, because students of various professions and educational backgrounds might be involved (Slastenin, 1997). The aim of language learning ECA were



reinforcing the knowledge of foreign language class, widening the horizons of students in aspects of culture and communication competency, increasing students encouragement to study second language, personal and social development of students. Unfortunately, extracurriculars for language learning at Kazakhstani schools did not have success and were not beneficial for students and teachers. Mostly, teaching material and methods, approach to teaching foreign language needed to be modernized and updated. In the beginning of 2000s, extracurricular English language learning, language centers, educational courses appeared in the Kazakhstani educational system and have quickly become popular innovation among the language learners.

As extracurricular activities can be organized any time in convenience for students, the freedom of choice was an excellent opportunity for students, to help them to discover their talents and abilities (Slastenin, 1997). Moreover, Tyabina (2011), suggested that the chance to choose topics for discussion and their variety, videos and books to learn helped students to establish their knowledge of culture of foreign languages and develop their organizational and management skills.

Conclusion

The importance of English language learning in the educational system has started from pilot mode integration in the beginning of 2000s and has become one of the major challenges in academic policy of schools and tertiary education systems. Findings of sociolinguistic research was the evidence of implementation and dissatisfaction of foreign language learning at schools. Systematic review of the literature has shown the main flaws causing poor performance which in result influence the academic achievement of the students. Role of out of school language learning in developing foreign language proficiency is remarkable. Moreover, beneficial impacts to the students' average points and academic performance was emphasized.

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