

**Gaps in EFL Achievement, Proficiency and Classroom Behavior among students with
Kazakh versus Russian Language of Instruction:**

Evidence from rural public school in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The study is devoted to how English is studied by students whose language of instruction is Kazakh or Russian. I use administrative data from a rural school to explore differences in English achievement, proficiency, and classroom behavior of students who study in Kazakh and in Russian. My findings show that there are small gaps in these three aspects. While Kazakh-language students tend to have higher achievement grades, their proficiency is not much higher than that of Russian language students. Classroom behavior-wise, Kazakh language students talk less during class compared to their Russian language counterparts.

Key words: *Kazakh-speaking EFL students, Russian-speaking EFL students, learning English, achievement gaps, English proficiency, classroom behavior.*

Қазақ және орыс тілінде оқитын оқушылардың ағылшын тілі үлгерімі, меңгеру деңгейлері және сыныптағы мінез-құлықтарының оқылықтары: Қазақстандағы ауылдық мектеп деректерінің негізінде өткізілген зерттеу

Аңдатпа

Ағымдағы зерттеу оқыту тілі қазақ немесе орыс тілі болып табылатын оқушылардың ағылшын тілін үйренудегі өзекті тақырыбына арналады. Мен ауыл мектебінің әкімшілік деректерін қолдана отырып, қазақ және орыс тілдерінде оқитын оқушылардың үлгеріміндегі, ағылшын тілін меңгеру деңгейіндегі және сыныптағы мінез-құлқындағы айырмашылықтарына зерттеу жүргіздім. Менің тұжырымдамаларым осы үш аспектіде кішігірім оқылықтар бар екенін көрсетеді. Қазақ тілінде білім алатын оқушылардың үлгерім деңгейі жоғары болғанымен, олардың тілді меңгеру деңгейі орыс тілінде білім алушы оқушыларымен салыстырғанда жоғары көрсеткішті көрсетпейді. Сыныптағы мінез-құлыққа келетін болсақ, қазақ тілінде білім алушы оқушылар, сабақ барысында орыс тілді құрдастарымен салыстырғанда аз мөлшерде сөйлетіндігі анықталды.

Кілт сөздер: *шет тілі ретінде ағылшын тілін меңгеретін қазақ тілді оқушылар, шет тілі ретінде ағылшын тілін меңгеретін орыс тілді оқушылар, ағылшын тілін үйрену, үлгерімдегі оқылықтар, ағылшын тілін меңгеру деңгейі, сыныптағы мінез-құлық.*

Пробелы в успеваемости, уровне владения английским языком и поведении в классе учеников классов с казахскими и русским языком обучения: исследование на материале сельской государственной школы в Казахстане

Аннотация

Данное исследование посвящено актуальной теме, изучения английского языка учащимися, чьим языком обучения является казахский или русский языки. Я использую административные данные сельской школы, чтобы изучить различия в успеваемости, уровне владения английским языком и поведении в классе учащихся, которые учатся на казахском и русском языках. Мои обнаружения показывают, что в этих трех аспектах есть небольшие пробелы. В то время как казахоязычные ученики имеют более высокие оценки успеваемости, их уровень владения языком не сильно превосходят русскоязычных учеников. Что касается поведения в классе, то учащиеся в казахском классе, меньше разговаривают во время занятий по сравнению со своими русскоязычными сверстниками.

Ключевые слова: *казахоязычные учащиеся изучающие английский как иностранный язык, русскоязычные учащиеся изучающие английский как иностранный язык, пробелы в успеваемости, уровень владения английским языком, поведение в классе.*

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

English is a global language in our time. This language is spoken in many countries of the world. In modern schools, English is taught as a compulsory subject. Mastering this language is the key to many doors of success in this modern world. Therefore, Kazakhstan, like many other countries, is making every effort to have this key. On this basis, our first president Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, referring to the fact that trilingualism will give our people the opportunity to become communicatively adapted to any environment, implemented a pilot project "Roadmap for the development of trilingual education". That is, the study of three languages has been introduced in all schools of Kazakhstan. These are Kazakh, Russian and English languages. Kazakh is a state language while Russian language is an official language in this country. Thus, these two are widely used languages by the residents of Kazakhstan, and they can easily learn about them just by living in the country, while English is a foreign language studied by both groups of students whose language of instruction is Kazakh or Russian as a foreign language. Therefore, the current study will shed light on the study of English by these two groups of people, in particular those school students whose language of instruction is Kazakh and Russian.

Kazakhstani society would like to see a young generation confident in their knowledge, able to communicate freely with a rich vocabulary, confident in English, ready to express their point of view with a high culture of the language. Therefore, it is necessary to accept this fact and interact with it and find out what is happening in his country now, what are the similarities

and differences between the culture of his native language and the linguistic culture of the English language (Bekbayeva,2021).

The topicality of the research is determined by the fact that Kazakhstani society has long had a unique language situation, which is due to the multinational population, where the topic of language learning has always been relevant. In this regard, learning English becomes a priority for all cultures who live in this society, which is divided mainly into Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking people. Therefore, Kazakhstan's educational system is constantly being improved, striving to cover these two groups, which in turn helps to increase the competitiveness of students and the growth of their potential. Referring to this fact, it is necessary to conduct an investigation to identify the gaps between these groups in achieving fluency in English, since for Kazakhstan it is necessary to raise a young generation who will be able to gain international experience in the future. This study provides information about the gaps in EFL achievement, proficiency and classroom behavior between these two main groups, in particular, Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students. The literature on this topic demonstrates the emerging causes of differences in English language learning and the background of local conditions in which the combination of contacting languages and cultures is different. This document would be important for the creation of scientific and methodological research that aims to create a system of multilingual education. After identifying the gaps, the researcher explains the possible reasons for the appearance of such differences between the two groups of students and develops the pedagogical view in dealing with these differences. The results of the study can be applied for the further studies on creating the strategies in the teaching process.

Speaking about earlier studies that were conducted, the Kazakhstani education system was very little studied as a multicultural environment. In particular, the interest in the topic of the practice of behavior and communication in the multicultural environment, which is more regarded as a general theory, was investigated and expressed. However, the current study is more focused on the gaps in the study of English by specific groups of people in a given social environment, that is, students whose native language is - Kazakh and Russian. According to Semenova (n.d), the modern education system should ensure timely and adequate preparation of people for the future, that is, not only to improve the country's educational system, but also a new intelligence, a new outlook and a new way of thinking that is adapted to the rapidly changing economic, technological, social and informational realities of the surrounding world.

The aim of this study is to determine the gaps in achievement, proficiency and classroom behavior between two groups of students: Kazakh speaking and Russian speaking EFL students.

Research questions:

- 1) How does English language academic achievement differ for students whose mother tongue is Kazakh from students whose mother tongue is Russian?
- 2) How does English language proficiency differ for students whose mother tongue is Kazakh from students whose mother tongue is Russian?
- 3) How does classroom behavior in EFL classes differ for students whose mother tongue is Kazakh from students whose mother tongue is Russian?

The scientific thesis consists of introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Background of Kazakhstan Language Situation

Kazakhstan is the largest country located in Central Asia. In terms of its area, it ranks 9th in the world. Kazakhstan has the most diverse multicultural society, including more than 139 nationalities, and its population is 19,000,000 people who live in peace and harmony under one blue sky. In this country, different languages are spoken, but the main ones are Kazakh and Russian. Kazakh is the state language, while Russian is the official language. However, this was not always the case, because before the period when this country was part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union in the 18th and 19th centuries, the language spoken on the Kazakh land was only Kazakh, whose family language comes from the Turkic language.

As we can see, after the colonization of the Russian Empire, people started to speak Russian, and historically, Russia has become one of the main countries that has influenced the "cultural," "political," and "linguistic" aspects of this country (Arapova, 2017). Returning to the topic of language, Kazakhs were never forced to speak Russian and they were never forced to stop speaking their native language. By that time, Russian simply had the role of an official language. The explanation for this "russification" of people may be the fact that the people who were somehow part of the Soviet Union had no other choice but to speak this language, since this language was used in all aspects of their lives. For example, in the government, in educational institutions, in the army, e.t.c. Speaking in their native language was normal, but in the "Soviet era," a person could feel ashamed that he could not speak Russian. Consequently, such a "Soviet policy" brought such results as people mastered both languages: Kazakh and Russian.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the English language began to gain increasing importance, but it was mainly used by people belonging to the highest "elite" of society. According to Cole (1967), English, German, and French were taught there as foreign languages, but 80% of Soviet children studied English. Despite the fact that English was the world language, at that time, the Soviet government wanted people to learn this language in order to know the language of the "enemy and competitor" (Arapova, 2017). Thus, due to the hostile attitude of the Soviet government, English was not considered as a language that could bring a bright future in terms of survival, high quality of life, communication, and well-paid work. Ernenwein (1977) noted that children in specialized language schools studied English for 3-6 hours a week. In these lessons, they mainly practiced oral skills with the help of American literature.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakh society gradually began to change, and the language situation in the country also began to change because the government is making every effort to ensure that people speak Kazakh. As a result, Russian is being pushed into the background as a result and, conversely, currently speaks only Russian, making people feel ashamed. Another change that started to gain momentum quickly is an interest in the English language. The reason for this is to eliminate the ideology of the Soviet Union for so many years. Therefore, Kazakhstan places great emphasis on learning English.

Nevertheless, people in Kazakhstan can feel full-fledged by knowing only Kazakh and Russian, since many of them do not feel the need to study or live in a foreign country (Arapova, 2017). As for the reason for this tendency, some researchers note the fact that Kazakhs have a different mentality, where the main emphasis is on the traditional way of life. For the Kazakh people, this means building their own family and working for the prosperity of their own

country. But on the contrary, the Russian population of the country, which makes up about 24% of the population of Kazakhstan, is more open to the opportunities provided by the government.

2.2 Language situation in education system of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has a unique linguistic situation with a multicultural population, that has persisted for a long period of time. Indeed, the population of Kazakhstan in 2022 is 19,164,312 people. Ethnic groups that live here: Kazakhs-63.1%, Russians-23.7%, Ukrainians-2.1%, Uzbeks-2.8%, Belarusians, Uighurs-1.4%, Germans(1.1%), Azerbaijanis, Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, Koreans, Chechens, Meskhetian Turks. Accordingly, language education has always been an urgent topic, and it is also becoming a priority for educational institutions. Using this way, it is possible to build a dialogue between different cultures, which will lead to tolerance and intercultural communication. The multinational population of Kazakhstan determines a multicultural and multinational educational environment.

Therefore, Kazakhstan's education system has always been improved. The main goal of reforming education is to increase the competence of its people and increase the export potential from the point of view of the education section (Bayniyeva et al., 2013). Therefore, the Government of Kazakhstan intends to gradually switch to 12-year education in schools using Latin graphics from 2023.

The creation of a unified system of multilingual education requires a number of scientific and methodological studies taking into account international experience. Unfortunately, there is no ideal trilingual model. Linguistic education, which was received in Soviet times, is not recognized, it is still even denied, because in fact national languages were ignored. The dominant language was Russian. In addition, according to Bayniyeva et al. (2013), none of such models can be adapted in multinational regions without adapting it firstly to local conditions. The

language and culture of the contact will be different. Today, for Kazakhstan, the most suitable and significant combination is such a combination of languages: Kazakh, Russian and English. This type of trilingualism is dictated by economic and socio-political necessity. The formation of such a trilingualism requires extensive training in terms of qualified teaching staff, educational materials and the availability of technological means for training.

If we want to contribute to the development of our country, we must speak these three languages and fully approve of people who know more languages, because for a person who knows, who can speak several languages, there is always and everywhere a green road. The role of the state language is to unite the society of Kazakhstan, while Russian plays the role of the language of intercultural communication, and English serves to enter the world economy and world society (Kadirova, 2021).

In Kazakhstan the majority of people, based on the language that they communicate with, could be divided into two groups: Kazakh and Russian speaking people. We have mentioned above that Kazakh language is the state language whereas Russian is an official language. Therefore, the education is given in both languages and as a result we have mixed Kazakh-Russian schools. Over the past decades the number of schools with Kazakh language instruction as a main language increased, whereas the number of schools with Russian language instruction decreased substantially (see table 1).

Table 1. Number of schools by language of instruction

Year	Russian	Kazakh	Mixed
1999-2000	2514	3474	2107
2005-2006	2100	3723	2125
2013-2014	1395	3817	2156

Source: National Statistical Agency of Kazakhstan

Aldashev and Danzer (2015) claimed that schools with teaching in Russian are superior in quality of education to schools with teaching in Kazakh. Silova (2002) explains this by a wide range of subjects, the availability of textbooks in Russian language. In addition, Fierman (2006) notes that, despite the fact that lectures are held in Kazakh, many textbooks are written in Russian, especially on technical subjects. The problem of textbooks and teaching materials was serious. Kazakh schools were less equipped with materials and qualified teachers, despite the fact that Kazakh classes were smaller. Until 2010, there were no significant changes in this number, but after that the shortage of necessary books became even more noticeable. By that time, the only shift in Kazakh schools occurred in oral instructions, but it still needed to modernize resources. Moreover, in 2010 Kazakh schools needed a large number of highly qualified teachers. A large number of teachers were required, who could teach in Kazakh schools. Consequently, when the Kazakh school expanded, there were reduced requirements for teachers' education (Silova,2002).

Due to the different mentalities, language structures and history we assume that in studying English as a foreign language for these two groups also varies. If we dig deeper into the history of Kazakhstan and in particular in the very teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language, you can see the root of all these differences.

The root may lie far away. It should be noted that Kazakhstan was part of the Russian Empire for a quarter of a century, that is, 260 years. What language was English taught to children who studied in Kazakh schools during the Soviet Union? In Russian. The essence of the difference between these two groups is that for many years in Kazakhstan, English was taught not in Kazakh, but in Russian. English was not taught in any Kazakh school, regardless of its location in the countryside or in the city. Russian was the first language that the student learned,

and he began to learn English in Russian. Teaching a foreign language in the native language, that is, in Kazakh, was a rare phenomenon. For example, in the practice of our country there was only one English textbook in the Kazakh language (eng. Kaliev, V. S. Maltsev, Z. N. Ochakovskaya, Mektep Publishing House, 1981). The same thing happened not only in schools, but also in higher educational institutions. But in the 80-90s of the XX century, the situation began to change. Kazakh schools began mass opening, and the number of schools in the Kazakh language increased, especially in the regions and large cities. Due to the increase in the number of students in the Kazakh school, English is now taught not through Russian, but through the native language- Kazakh .

Today, in the Kazakhstan education system, students begin to learn English from primary school and continue to study it at universities. In order for graduates and undergraduate students to have the opportunity to study abroad, improve their knowledge and gain experience, the Government of Kazakhstan is making efforts to establish close relations with English-speaking countries and provides various exchange programs for its citizens. According to Frank et al. (2009), the economic situation in Kazakhstan has improved and this has led to teachers from all over the world have come to this country and teach. Moreover, Kazakhstan increasingly needs people in the workplace and in various aspects of work who know and can speak English (Nurshatayeva, 2011, 2017).

School improvement

According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2018), by 2017 there were a total of 7,047 schools in Kazakhstan with primary, junior and senior classes, in which 2 972 319 students were studying . The reports of students and school leaders in PISA recognize that Kazakhstan mainly benefits

from a favorable learning environment. This is when the learning process is provided with a short break time and as a result, little time is spent on student behavior or “teacher absenteeism.” However, the situation in schools in urban and rural areas differs. The problem in urban schools is that there is a shortage of places for students, so teachers work in several shifts, and the problem in schools in rural areas is small-class schools, since in these areas there is a low population density and policies that promote universal access (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). These small-class schools face specific challenges, such as improving infrastructure, a lack of addressing staff, and improving the education system, which is mostly lower compared to other schools. Therefore, good school leaders are required to improve the learning environment and the quality of teaching. Some other efforts that Kazakhstan would make to help these schools are mapping schools that will answer questions about where resource centers are needed, where it would be advisable to consolidate, and where it would be beneficial to keep small classes. In addition, in order to help schools with support, counseling, or "mutual cooperation" between teachers and school leaders with resource centers.

2.3 Kazakhstan's efforts to transition to the widespread introduction of the English language

After being colonized under the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan gained its Independence in 1991 and the situation has historically altered. The government changed the official state language (from Russian to Kazakh) in 1997, and the Kazakh language has grown in importance in many areas of life since then. According to the "Law on Languages of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (1997), every citizen should be able to communicate in Kazakh. Nevertheless, beyond the area of interethnic dialogue in the media, the Russian language remains vital in

Kazakhstani society. Therefore, we can claim that Kazakhstan is a place that gathers students who have different cultural backgrounds and linguistic backgrounds. Learning a foreign language in such a multicultural context has adverse effects because it is a long and complex process (Nurshatayeva & Page, 2020, Weidman & Nurshatayeva, 2018). However, this fact does not stop the process of massive studying of English by numerous EFL students from different countries in the world (Nurshatayeva, 2020). And as a result, this need for the ability to communicate in English causes the need for massive request for teaching English all around the world (Richards, 2006)

To achieve this objective, Kazakhstan government started to support the English language in all educational institutions and has undertaken a number of reforms where greater emphasis was placed on English language. In addition to the first president's decree about implementing a pilot project "Roadmap for the development of trilingual education", English has become the language of instruction in many subjects related to science, technology and engineering. According to Education policy outlook (2018), subjects such as physics, chemistry, biology and ICT began to be taught in 153 schools for 10th and 11th grades. Accordingly, various courses were arranged for teachers to develop teachers' qualifications. Beginning from 2016, as a foreign language English the pre-primary education for children over 5-years-old has also implemented it as compulsory subject.

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan is a very young country and it's taking great steps in achieving its goals. Kazakhstan gained its independence 30 years ago, however it does not stop trying to enter the list of the best developed countries. Therefore it's making big decisions and moving forward. The education aspect is the one which is always in the spotlight. As education provides big challenges in people's life and glorifies the country in the world arena. Learning English as a

foreign language is one of the decisions that our country made as it gives our young generation to go out into a foreign world and discover new opportunities not only in the field of education, but also in all other various ones. These normative documents serve as proof of this decision(gov.kz,n.d):

- The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Education";
- State Program of Education development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025;
- Roadmap for the development of trilingual education for 2015-2020;
- Order on amendments to the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 6, 2014 No. 455 "On the pilot implementation of the updated content of education";- Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 3, 2017 No. 315;- State Program for the Development and functioning of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020;- Instructional and methodological letter "On the peculiarities of the organization of the educational process in secondary schools of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the 2020-2021 academic year";
- Instructional and methodological letter "On the organization of the activities of schools to support the updating of the content of secondary education" dated 11.10. 2018;- Methodological guidance on the application of the unified language standard for teaching three languages in the educational process of schools in Kazakhstan;- Methodological recommendations for the implementation of STEM education;

In sum, there is an impressive effort and policy initiative to support the language policy changes in Kazakhstan. However, little evidence exists to attest to the effectiveness of these efforts. Education research highlighting how these efforts affect students and teachers are needed.

Therefore, there is no doubt that English will play the role of a second language as much as Kazakh or Russian languages for the residents of Kazakhstan, in which they will easily communicate and to open up opportunities for yourself to enter the world stage.

With a wide range of governmental documents, Kazakhstan took part in an international study which was influenced by the necessary and objective requirements of the modern world (Mailybayeva et al., 2018). The Government and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan were guided by the following objectives when deciding on Kazakhstan's participation in the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) in the field of functional literacy for 15-year-olds: Understanding the significance of research in determining the parameters of the development of Kazakhstani schools; awareness of the importance of the problem of functional literacy of students, implying their willingness to apply the knowledge and skills acquired at school in real life situations. Due to the characteristics of the educational process in local schools, as well as the established practice of assessing students' educational achievements competency, Kazakhstani participants in the worldwide study recognized that they may attain low results.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conducts PISA (OECD, 2014). According to the project materials, the purpose of the study is to determine if students who have completed a general obligatory education have the knowledge and abilities required for full participation in society. Along with evaluating educational achievements, the study looked at the impact of numerous factors, such as students and their families, school, and educational opportunities outside of school, on these outcomes. Students' educational achievements are evaluated in the PISA study in three main areas: "literacy of reading," "mathematical literacy," and "natural-science literacy," as well as additional areas of "financial

literacy" and "problem solving," with special attention paid to assessing students' mastery of general and intellectual skills. At the age of 15, teenagers complete the basic education level and begin preparing for adulthood. The study's goal is to discover the information, skills, and abilities that 15-year-old pupils will require in their independent lives.

The choice of these pupils can be explained by the fact that obligatory schooling in many nations ends at this age, and training programs in different countries have a lot in common. It is critical at this stage of school to assess students' ability to freely acquire the knowledge required for successful adaptation in the modern world, as well as to determine the state of knowledge and abilities that will be valuable to them in the future (Mailybayeva et al., 2018).

The PISA study is conducted in three-year cycles. In each cycle, the focus (two-thirds of the testing time) is given to one of the three directions mentioned above. On the other two, a generalized characterization of students' literacy in this field is obtained. In 2009, the main focus of the study was "literacy of reading." In 2012, "mathematical literacy", and in 2015, "natural science literacy". The next cycle, in 2018, the main direction is "readers' literacy."

Speaking about the highlights of Kazakhstan's participation in PISA:

Our country's participation in PISA-2009 yielded unsatisfactory results: out of 65 nations, Kazakhstani pupils ranked 59th in reading literacy, 58th in natural science literacy, and 53rd in mathematics literacy.

The PISA-2012 research included 200 schools from 16 regions of Kazakhstan, out of 7338 general secondary education organizations in the country. This project also included 18 technical and vocational education institutions. There are 288 people with a Kazakh education and 139 people with a Russian education among them. Kazakhstan pupils pass the PISA-2012

international test in natural science at a rate of 40% on average. This indicator is one percent lower than the math results. PISA-2012 exam assignments accounted for 38% of the total.

In comparison to their Kazakh counterparts, Kazakhstan participants who studied in Russian performed better on the PISA test. In terms of educational language, there was a 50-point disparity. A difference of 30 points on the worldwide PISA scale equals one year of study, according to the new OECD methodology. As a result, there is a more than one-and-a-half-year gap in the functional competencies of participants in educational organizations with Kazakh and Russian languages. The results of education organizations in urban (3,026 people) and rural (2,754 people) areas varied significantly.

The major direction of the PISA-2015 results shows that Kazakhstani 15-year-old children have a poor level of skills. Students in high school and university have a hard time demonstrating scientific knowledge, conducting experiments and justifying their choices, and interpreting complicated natural occurrences and processes (Ibid).

As a result of the research, the authors determined that in 2009, for the first time, an international study of this scope, type, and breadth was undertaken in our country. At the same time, 15-year-old Kazakhstani school pupils were unfamiliar with exam activities requiring strictness of thought and precision of thought, such as suggesting the correct answer from a list of options. Given that our pupils are overburdened with schoolwork, completing the assignment, which consisted of 50- 60 questions in 2 hours, necessitated great effort, and our students were unmotivated to take the assessments (Mailybayeva et al., 2018).

According to Mailybayeva et al, (2018),the participation of Kazakhstan in all three cycles of PISA has revealed the following issues:

- Kazakhstani students struggle to read sporadic texts with graphs and tables, and they are unable to correctly interpret the tasks " (World Bank specialists in the scope of the Programme for International Student Assessment) (PISA).
- Kazakhstani pupils' reading difficulties are related to their outstanding comprehension of solid, traditional texts, whereas they have difficulty understanding intermittent texts with graphs and tables." Students do a good job of remembering and describing material, but they struggle with generalizing it and controlling strategic readings. This issue can be addressed by creating new curricula and standards.
- According to the PISA-2012 data, pupils are able to formulate an issue, but they are unable to accurately comprehend it. Simultaneously, nine out of ten OECD countries are moving in the opposite direction."
- Teachers at the republic's general schools impart excellent academic knowledge, but they do not teach how to apply it in real-life situations. "
- Kazakhstan, along with nations like Qatar and Malaysia, has improved its scores, although it still falls short of the OECD average.

As a result, this study emphasizes the relevance of PISA in Kazakhstan's educational modernization, and it calls for the active engagement of the entire public in the reform's execution. If these measures are not taken, Kazakhstan's educational competitiveness will suffer significantly (Mailybayeva et al., 2018).

2.4 EFL Learner's Environment and Other Factors in Language Learning

The modern Kazakhstani labor market requires more and more young people who speak foreign languages. And Kazakhstan creates exactly such a multilingual environment that

provides them with the opportunity to expand their linguistic horizons, since they study the state language, which is Kazakh, and the official language, which is Russian, and foreign languages, which makes them competitive and people with high professional qualities (Tuksaitova, 2012).

Despite the fact that the country is providing all possible ways for its people to acquire the language, most experts suggest that we cannot ignore the perspective of the “learning environment” of EFL learners. This term includes not only “school learning spaces” but also “home learning spaces” and “community learning spaces” (Amiri & Karfa ,2021). A study was conducted in which these factors were analyzed for how they could affect the academic achievements of EFL learners. According to Amiri and Karfa (2021), the results obtained from this study confirmed that these factors do not have a big impact on EFL students. Nevertheless, they noted that the more complex the social environment is, the more it will help EFL learners in their progress towards EFL academic achievement. In addition, the authors found that the greater the similarity between the student's culture and the L2 culture, the more it contributes to the learning process. As for EFL proficiency, the authors have revealed that it is the "product of contextual factors' influence".

The results of this study show that “multilingualism” and such a context have a positive impact on EFL students, since diversity and different “local and foreign languages” create good conditions for contributing to the improvement of the academic achievements of EFL students. As proof, the author cites the words of one of the respondents that staying in such an environment helps EFL students "to become a bilingual person who can develop various skills, such as "logic and rationality," the ability to multitask, better decision-making skills, and awareness of their environment." In addition, the researchers claim that the majority of

respondents do not take the multilingual factor as one that can affect students' academic performance; rather, it is a question of motivation and self-esteem of the student himself.

Numerous researchers have contributed to this field by providing their own models to explain how these variables can affect EFL students' language achievement. And one of them is the social context model of Clement (1980). In his model, he mentions two variables that affect EFL learners when learning L2. These are "integrativity" and "fear of assimilation". The first term means a positive attitude towards culture and language as such, while the second term means the fear of losing one's own culture or native language. All these terms serve to explain the "first primary motivational process". As for the "second motivational process," it assumes the student's confidence in using L2.

In short, if a student has a "pleasant contact" with L2, he/she has a better chance of learning it and gaining self-confidence. Therefore, Clement ignores the role of "school context" and "classroom environment" in learning L2.

Summing up all of the above, Amiri and Karfa (2021) admit that the fact that students are from different "cultural backgrounds" and they have different beliefs, norms, and values, as well as the fact that they do not know about social behavior and L2 learning in another environment complicates the task of learning L2, but this is the "most influential" factor that affects EFL students' achievement. Consequently, there is a need for "intercultural learning" that will help students understand their own values, as well as other subcultures of EFL students who live in a multicultural context.

Many theories about L2 learning point mainly to individual factors rather than the social context. As an example of this, we can cite the theory of Krashen (1981), which is called the "affective filter hypothesis," in which motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence are explained by

the attitude towards an individual student, as well as other aspects such as relationships, identity, dependence on the field, and interest (Piri et al.,2018). On the contrary, Seidhofer (2003) strongly recommends not ignoring the individual social construction of the student, which also affects learning. He argued that many scientists, paying great attention to individual personality traits, forget about the factors that develop in society over time and about some different power relations. Similarly, Pierce (1995) pointed out the need to rethink the concepts of motivation and identity in order to explain the desire of students to study L2. To emphasize the role of the social context that helps shape the identity of students, Pierce introduced the "concept of investment." She stated that affective variables "often undergo changes depending on "social power relations". Referring to Bourdieu's concept of capital (1986), she explained that power relations in society motivate EFL students to learn languages, in order to "gain and increase cultural capital and symbolic resources such as prestige, valuable social identity, and knowledge."

Also, the main reason for the individual differences of students is that these differences are related to their previous experience, which was acquired in their past due to their earlier living and learning in a certain environment or "habitus" (Piri et al.,2018). Certain dispositions of learners' developed by different habitus (Bourdieu,1984) and environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

According to the concept of habitus by Bourdieu (1984), there are social capital, cultural capital, and emotional capital that affect the motivation of a student to achieve learning goals. They can influence many learning variables, such as motivation, attention, strategies, attitudes, and interpersonal learning skills (Oliveira et al., 2013).

One of the first scientists to study the motivation of EFL students to learn English depending on their "previously developed dispositions " was Bourdieu (1984). He explained that

the early socialization of individuals through various habits causes them to develop certain dispositions. In turn, other concepts are affected, such as "mental set, biases, cause-and-effect relationships, motives, interests, manners, attitudes, and behavior". Bourdieu stated that the "dispositions acquired by students" from previous experience formed their ability to behave and react in a certain way. Consequently, due to the different backgrounds of students, factors such as teacher strategies and teaching materials can affect them in different ways.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

3.1 Data

To meet the objectives of this study, descriptive statistics and classroom observations were conducted. The study used administrative data, IELTS-format listening and reading test scores and classroom observation notes.

First, administrative data was collected, which should help to identify differences and gaps in the academic achievements of Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students. This data was taken from Kundelik.kz which is an electronic diary that makes it possible to monitor the progress of students. This electronic diary has student grades and other administrative data such as teachers' reports and is a source of reliable microdata on student achievement (Nastenka & Guseva, 2014). The English language grades for the last 3 years were taken and compared across language of instruction.

Second, the results of IELTS tests in the format of listening and reading were taken from Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students. In this study the IELTS test format was selected because it gives the valid and accurate assessment of students' skills (Hashemi & Daneshfar, 2018). Additionally, both listening and reading can be easily assessed in the IELTS format using publicly available practice tests with answer keys. For this reason, in this study the listening and reading skills will be examined.

The IELTS listening part consists of 4 sections with 10 questions in every section. These questions are of different types such as multiple choice, matching, plan/map, diagram labeling, form completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, summary completion, sentence completion and short-answer questions.

The participants in this study had only one opportunity to listen to the recording, as do the candidates who usually take this test. They answered questions as they listened and transferred their answers to the answer sheet. At the end participants were given 10 minutes to transfer their answers to the answer sheet.

The IELTS reading part consists of 3 sections with 40 questions total. The question types include multiple choice, identifying information (True/False/Not Given), identifying the writer's views/claims(Yes/No/Not Given), matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, diagram label completion and short-answer questions. Students were given 1 hour to complete the reading test. Finally, in order to find out the differences in classroom behavior of the two groups of students, observations were conducted. Video recordings of regular English classes were conducted. Teachers were informed in advance and were asked not to make any changes to their lesson, as this may interfere with obtaining the necessary data. The strengths of using this tool are that it allows the researcher to observe the learning process in real conditions, to obtain more accurate and detailed information compared to other data sources, activates changes and confirms that changes have occurred (Education Encyclopedia, n.d). While many potential measures of classroom behavior were considered at the planning stage of this study, the researcher ended up focusing only on classroom talking time due to time and resource constraints.

3.2 Participants

This study was conducted among 9th grade students whose language of instruction is Kazakh and Russian. These students study at the rural school in the Almaty region in Kazakhstan

There are two academic tracks in the school, the regular track (students who study in these classes have average or low academic performance) and the advanced track (students have good or higher academic performance). Speaking of the classes that were selected for the study, they are both advanced track classes and have good academic performance. The respondents' age ranged from 14-15 years. About 60% of participants were female and 40% were male.

3.3 Validity and reliability

The research process maintained strict anonymity and confidentiality. All respondents participated voluntarily. The participants had every right to refuse to participate starting from the beginning and at any moment of this study.

All participants and teachers were informed about the research work and participated voluntarily. The consent letter (Appendix C) was signed by all participants.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter deals with the description of the data analysis or findings and discussion.

4.1 Administrative Data Analysis:

The administrative data of Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students who study in the 9th grade was obtained from Kundelik.kz. The English grades for the last 3 academic years (2019-2020/2020-2021/2021-2022 academic years) were compared across the language of instruction.

The results of English grades of Kazakh and Russian classes for the last 3 years are described below.

The result of average % of 2019- 2020 academic years in English for Kazakh and Russian classes is described below.

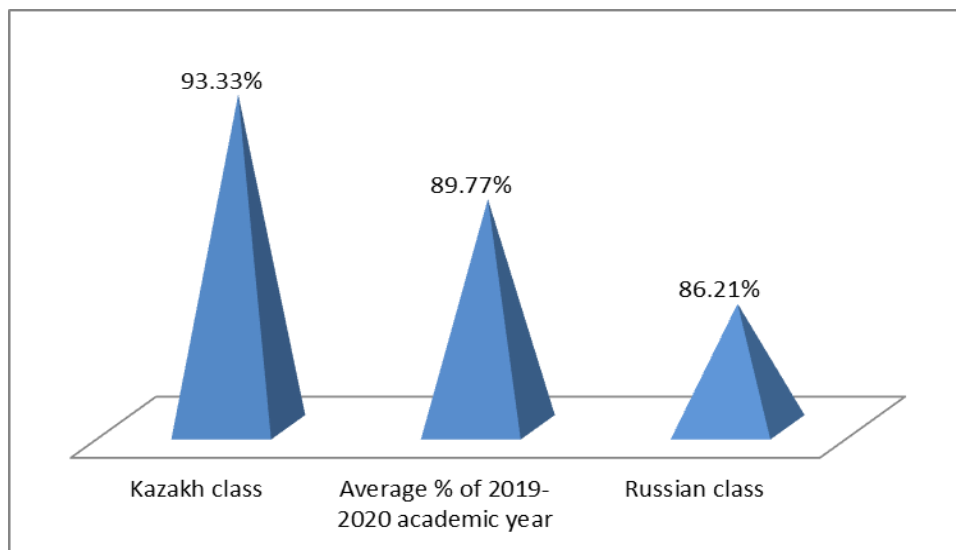


Figure 1. The average % of 2019-2020 academic years

The chart above illustrates the average percent of English for the 2019-2020 academic years, which is 89,77%. As it is illustrated in the chart above, it can be seen that EFL students who

study in the Kazakh class exceed this average indicator, while the EFL students who study in the Russian class have a lower indicator.

The result of average % of 2020 - 2021 academic years in English for Kazakh and Russian classes is described below.

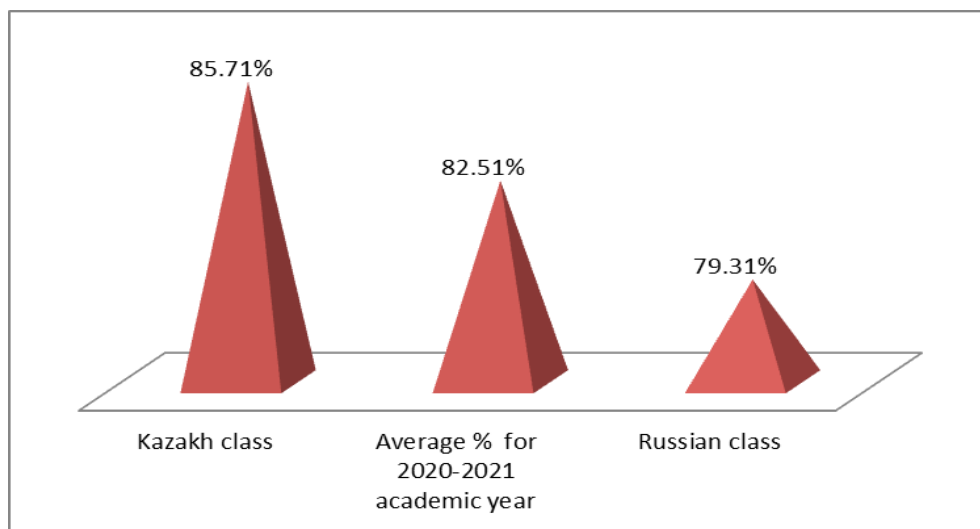


Figure 2. The average % of 2020-2021 academic years

The chart shows the average percentage of English for the 2020–2021 academic years for Kazakh and Russian classes, which is 82,51%. This indicator is exceeded by the performance of the Kazakh class, which shows 85,71%, while the Russian class shows 79.31% and has a lower indicator.

. The result of an average of 2021–2022 academic years in English for Kazakh and Russian classes is described below.

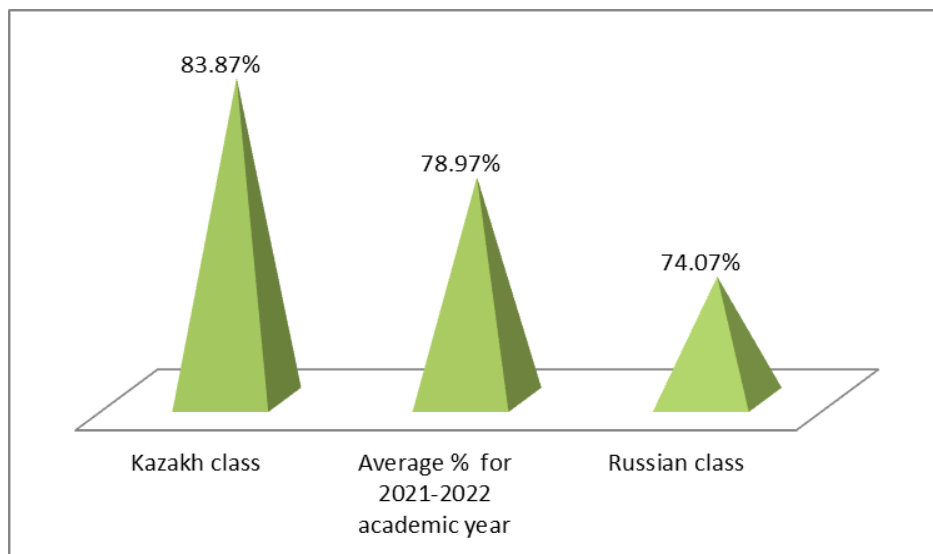


Figure 3. The average % of 2021-2022 academic years

The last chart above illustrates the average percent of English for the 2021–2022 academic years for Kazakh and Russian classes, which is 78.97%. This indicator is exceeded by the performance of the Kazakh class, which shows 83,87%, while the Russian class shows 74.07%, which is lower than the average indicator.

4.2 IELTS – format Listening and Reading Test Scores

The IELTS-format listening and reading test scores of Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students were collected and checked. After obtaining the results, the average of each section was calculated. The results are presented below.

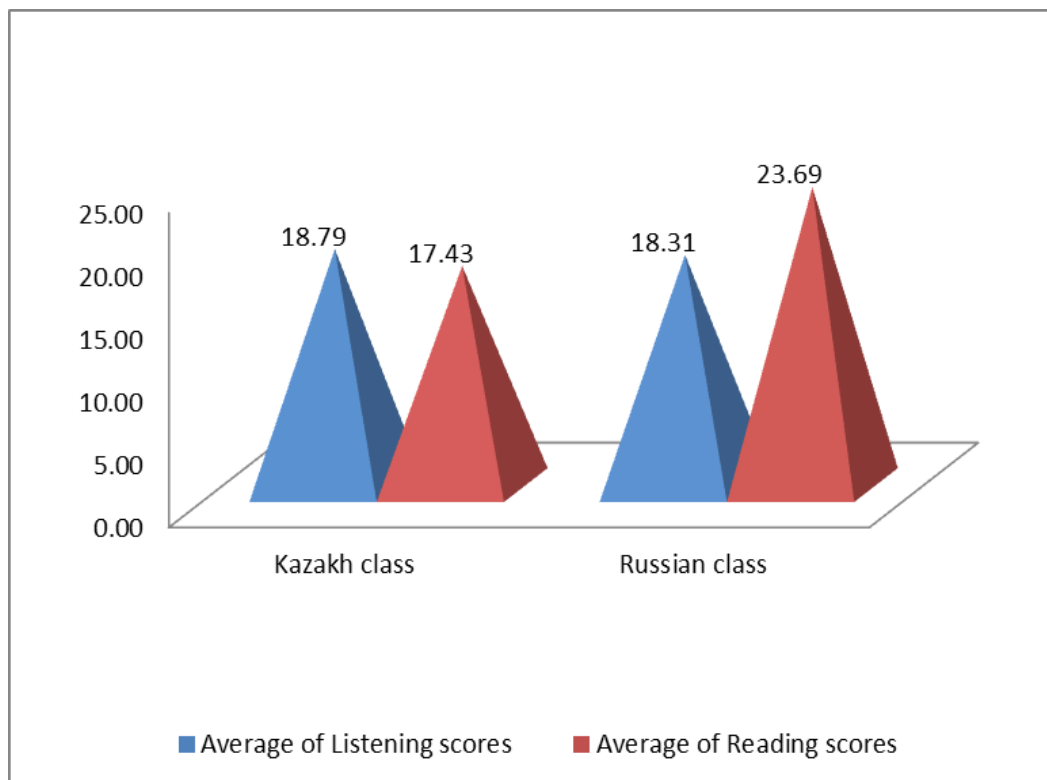


Figure 4. Results of IELTS-format Listening and Reading scores

The chart above illustrates the average of listening and reading scores for the Kazakh and Russian classes. As it was mentioned before, each section consisted of a total of 40 items, which means in order to show high proficiency in English, students need to obtain 40 points from each section. From the results presented above, it is clear that the average performance of both groups of students is quite similar. In the listening section, it can be seen that the gap between the two groups is not high. The Kazakh class's average is 18.79 while for the Russian class it is 18.31. Thus, the Kazakh class exceeds by its scores the Russian class in this section. Speaking of listening scores in general, according to the IELTS test format, if students score 0-18 points, it is recommended to spend a lot of time improving their English language skills, since these results are unlikely to allow them to get acceptable scores in the exam conditions.

In the reading section, the average results show the opposite, where the Russian class shows superiority. The average reading score for the Russian class is 23.69, while the Kazakh class shows 17.43. Thus, the Russian class has higher English proficiency than the Kazakh class in this section. Speaking of reading scores, according to the IELTS test format, if students score 0-23 points, it is also recommended to spend a lot of time improving their English language skills, since these results are unlikely to allow them to get acceptable scores in the exam conditions.

The results of total average of Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students is described below:

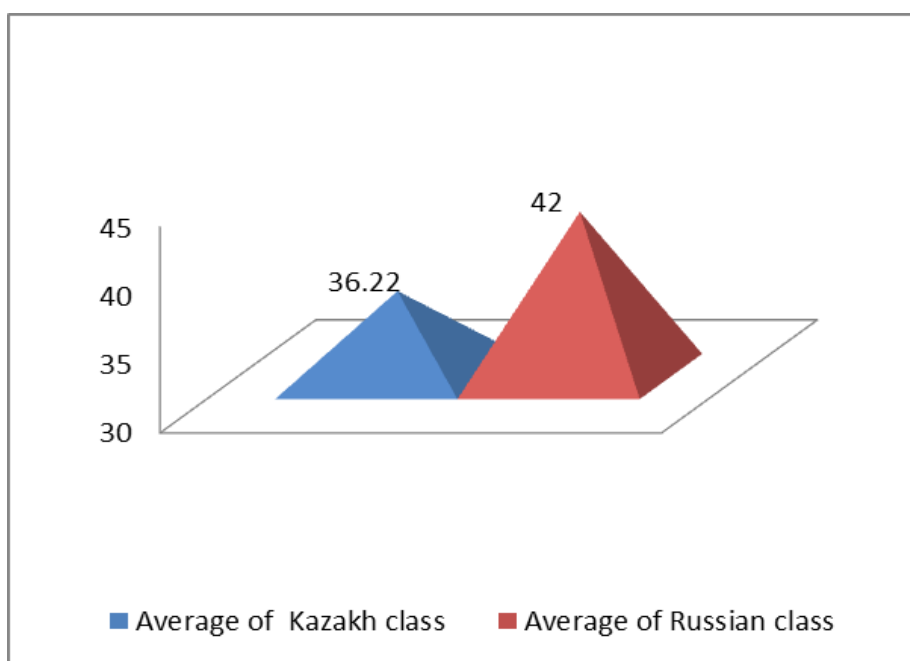


Figure 5. Average performance of Kazakh and Russian class

The results in the chart above show the average indicator of each class in total. From the chart, it can be seen that in total, students who study in the Russian class have higher performance and show higher proficiency in English compared with those in the Kazakh class.

The total average of the Russian class in the IELTS-format Listening and Reading tests is 42, while the Kazakh class is 36.22.

4.3 Classroom Observation

The classroom observation was conducted in EFL classroom of 9th grade students. The observation involved English teachers as well. Due to time and resource constraints, it was decided to use TTT (teacher talking time) and STT (students talking time) as the measurement for this section of the study. The lessons were video recorded. There were 4 lessons recorded, 2 of which were Kazakh class, and the remaining 2 were Russian class. In order to calculate the percentage of talking time in both classes the following arithmetical formula was applied:

$$PTTT = (TTT \div LLT) \times 100$$

Where:

PTTT = % of Teacher Talking Time

TTT = Teacher Talking Time

LLT = Length of the lesson taught (TTT+STT)

(Hitotuzi, 2005)

The results of the classroom observation where TTT (teacher talking time) and STT (student talking time) were calculated in minutes are given in the table below.

Table 2. Results of TTT and STT

Lesson №	TTT	STT	Class
1	18 minutes	15 minutes	Russian class
2	25 minutes	17 minutes	Kazakh class
3	15 minutes	20 minutes	Russian class
4	15 minutes	23 minutes	Kazakh class

The table above indicates the teacher talking time and student talking time counted in minutes for observed 4 lessons in both groups of students who study in Kazakh and Russian classes. Afterwards, these time measurements were calculated into an average percentage.

Table 3. Average percentage of TTT and STT

Class	Average % of TTT	Average % of STT
Kazakh class	49,50%	50,50%
Russian class	49,00%	51,00%
Grand total	49,25%	50,75%

For more details, the following chart is given.

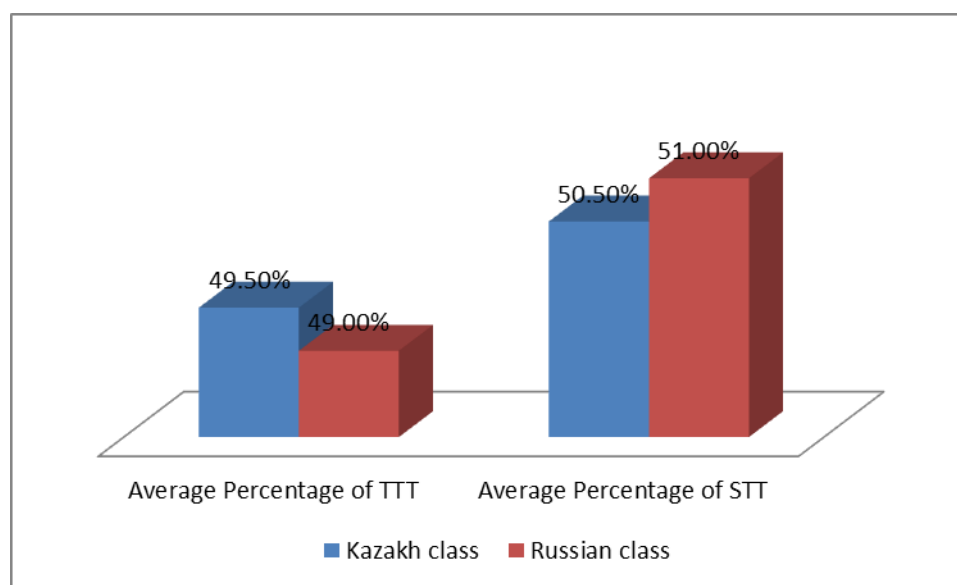


Figure 7. Average percentage of TTT and STT in Kazakh and Russian classes

Based on the chart given above, the average percentage of TTT (teacher talking time) in the Kazakh class was 49.50% while in the Russian class it was 49.00%, which means that there is no big gap between them. However, the most significant factor in this section of the study is STT (Students' Talking Time). The results of STT indicate a very slight difference in performance in favor of the Russian class, which showed 51.00%, while the Kazakh class

students' performance was 50.50%. The result of observation shows that the percentage of STT (talking time) in both classes dominates TTT (teacher talking time).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the gaps in achievement, proficiency and classroom behavior between two groups of students: Kazakh speaking and Russian speaking EFL students. First, in analyzing the academic achievement of Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students, the Kazakh class has definitely dominated by its percentage for all last 3 academic years. Consequently, at the next stage of the study, when the level of students' proficiency was checked using an IELTS listening and reading test, it was supposed to show that Kazakh-speaking EFL students had a higher level of English proficiency. However, the results obtained from the test have shown that Russian-speaking EFL students in total had a higher proficiency compared with Kazakh-speaking EFL students. Nevertheless, Kazakh-speaking EFL students in the listening section of the test showed higher performance.

In the last stage of the study when the classroom observations were conducted in both classes, it was illustrated that the students who study in Russian class has slightly higher performance indicators but the gap was not significantly large. If Russian-speaking students' talking time showed 51% , then the Kazakh speaking EFL students' indicator was 50.50%.

Nevertheless, those gaps in all stages of the study between these two groups were not significantly large.

In the light of the study results and the ensuing discussion, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the gaps in EFL achievement, EFL proficiency and classroom behavior between Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students is not significantly large. This shows that the reforms adopted for the dissemination and study of the English language are bearing its fruit. Since earlier we assumed that due to history, different family language and a

complex multinational context, a Kazakh-speaking group of students may lag behind in their knowledge of English, now we can assure that the situation is changing and these gaps begin to be minimized over time, as this study showed. But despite this, the study led to the next interesting question that could not fail to appear .This is how much students' grades in schools correspond to their knowledge. After all, the study showed that despite the fact that students in Russian classes had good performance indicators in English language proficiency and behavior in the classroom, their academic performance was lower. Doesn't such an erroneous assessment of knowledge lead to incorrect statistics, which in turn may interfere with the identification of these gaps and work on them?!

Finally, yet importantly, this study showed that Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students with minor gaps have quite similar results. And these results should be increased in each group, despite the fact that Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking people have different mentalities, history, culture and different factors can influence their language learning, it is proposed not to dwell on these results, but rather to increase each group separately, taking into account the peculiarities that these groups have and focusing on the strengths of both groups.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed consent form

Gaps in EFL Achievement, Proficiency and Classroom Behavior among students with Kazakh
versus Russian Language of Instruction:
Evidence from rural public school in Kazakhstan

Date _____

Dear _____

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research, in order to find out the gaps between Kazakh-speaking EFL students and Russian-speaking EFL students.

Time involvement: It will take approximately 4-5 weeks.

Risks and benefits:

Possible risks that students may face:

- the participants may feel mild discomfort or insecurity when they will be tested for English language proficiency, where they will have to perform IELTS testing tasks;
- the participants may worry for the results of testing;
- the participants may feel embarrassed or show shyness while they will be observed for their behavior in class of English lessons;

As for benefits you will receive an authentic level of your knowledge of the English language, since the school may give the grades that do not coincide with the real grades.

Participant's rights: Your participation is voluntary. Therefore, you have rights to refuse to take part in this research, withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without giving any reasons. The results of this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings.

Contact: If you have any questions, complaints, concerns about this research or your rights as a participant, you can contact me, Aigerim Sadykbekova +7 775 323 58 45 (mobile phone) or aigerim.sadykbekova@gmail.com

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign this consent form.

- I carefully read all the information.
- I was aware of the purpose and procedure of the study.
- I have informed that confidential information will not be used publicly. The collected data will have access only to the researcher and her scientific advisor.
- I have the right to leave the study at any time without giving reasons.
- Knowing all the above, I agree to participate in the study voluntarily.

Signature: _____

Date: _____