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**IMPACT OF LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION ON PROGRESS IN
KAZAKHSTAN**

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of the impact of Language of Instruction on student progress in Kazakhstan. The hypothesis of this article is that the choice of Language of Instruction and Success of students has a strong correlation to higher education in the context of present day Language Policy in Kazakhstan. The purpose of this study is to identify the choice of instructional language made in order to pass the UNT (Unified national Testing). In this article, we conduct the quantitative and qualitative analysis of statistics of Kazakhstani UNT (Unified national Testing) results for 2013-2016 years. Students with mother tongue language of Instruction - Kazakh show better results in comparison with Russian language of instruction. Moreover, Kazakh-medium students leaving schools have a high percentage of scholarships to be promoted in Kazakhstani professional spheres. Our analysis showed which language of instruction was more effective for passing the UNT in order to get a scholarship to enter a university.

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1. Introduction

In Kazakhstan, at the beginning of the 21st century, two important educational reforms were realized – a standardized national assessment – the Unified National Test (UNT) – and the development of a trilingual policy.

During the Soviet period, each University or Institute had its own admissions policy that was specific for every higher educational institution. The combination of school exams and university exams created tension within the system. As higher education was generally state-funded, many post-independent governments sought to exchange admission practices which were open to corruption. In Kazakhstan, the Center of National Standards in Education and Testing was founded to develop a coordinated admission policy and to report directly to the Ministry of Education and Science. In 1999, the first versions of the Unified National Test were ready for approbation. After trials, a final compulsory national version was adopted in 2004, which served as a school-leaving certificate as well as a means to enroll to a university.

- For a better understanding of this issue, we should go back to the status of each language in the country. The Kazakh language is the “state” language, which means that it is superior when compared with the Russian language. However, in real life, Russian language is more prevalent. “Russian remains the most widely spoken language, with 94.4% of the nation’s population indicating, during the 2009 census, that they understood spoken Russian, and 84.8% indicating that can read and write the language. This contrasts with 74% reporting that they understood spoken Kazakh and with 62% reporting that they could read and write Kazakh”.

- Moreover, and according to a survey in 17 cities, In terms of the primary language used by a percentage of the population through: media consumption, communication at work, and friends or in the home, there appears to be a preference for Russian language (Page 9 Association of Sociologists and Political Analysts of Kazakhstan 2007 as referred to Animov et al. 2010, 2).

- We should definitely note that this data could vary if we considered the different geographical areas of Kazakhstan, northern Kazakhstan is more Russian-speaking whereas Southern Kazakhstan is more Kazakh-speaking. This is presented to contribute to a better understanding of the governmental policy of developing the state language.

Moreover, in Kazakhstan secondary education is provided in Kazakh, Russian, Uigur, Uzbek and Tajik languages of instruction. The number of Kazakh schools increased to 46% and the number of schools with Russian language of instruction decreased to 26% (UNESCO-IBE 2007). Over the last decade, the English language has been playing an important role as a skill, so that in October 2006, President Nazarbayev proposed what became called the Trinity of Languages. This development of tri-lingualism is an important factor in a multi-cultural Kazakhstan. It not only contributes to the maintenance of intercultural harmony, but also serves as the means to success in the modern world. By implementing tri-lingual education, our education aims to optimize the development of Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the means of inter-ethnic communication and English as a tool for integration into the global economic and business world. In the words of the President of Kazakhstan, the Leader of the Nation, Nursultan Nazarbayev: “Kazakh language is our spiritual pivot. We should develop a modern Kazakh language as a legacy heritage for our descendants,.....through Russian language in centuries the

Kazakhstan citizens have gained additional knowledge, increased their perspective and communications both domestically and abroad.....learning the English language....will reveal new and unlimited opportunities for each citizen of our country. This three language policy should be encouraged on a State level”.

The aim of education in Kazakhstan is to form not only knowledge, but also the key competencies that contribute to the socialization of the young generation in the context of an increasingly globalized world. It is necessary to create a new model of tri-lingual education, which focuses on the skills-based approach and the development of the individual characteristics of our students. Tri-lingual education will also contribute to academic and professional mobility.

2. Problem Statement

The Tri-lingual Education Policy defines the principles and objectives of tri-lingual education in higher education in Kazakhstan, and regulates their implementation. The policy supports the learning of Kazakh, Russian and English languages as separate subjects, and the use of the three languages to facilitate learning in the different subjects of the university curriculum.

The aim of the policy is the formation of tri-lingual citizens, who:

- use these three languages;
- are able to communicate successfully in different subjects using the appropriate language;
- value their own culture;
- understand and show respect for other cultures.

The main activities specified by the language policy are: 1) to implement the curriculum in secondary and higher education using the model of tri-lingual education; 2) to organize a system of continuing professional development to train teachers for effective work in a tri-lingual environment; 3) to deliver a range of extracurricular activities which promote tri-lingualism; 4) to create a language-rich environment in educational institutions and network levels which promotes the acquisition of tri-lingual skills by staff and students.

However, the teaching of English language should not be put at the same level as Kazakh and Russian, as this language is considered as an instructional language; it is a foreign language, with limited use. Furthermore, the quality of existing learning resources, and the lack of age, and grade, appropriate learning resources for the teaching of content subjects through English were frequently cited as major concerns. Planning for trilingual education is taking place with insufficient knowledge about the investment and practices required to achieve high degrees of trilingualism within a society”. Thus, further investment appears to be required into the leadership and management of trilingual education.

The analyzed period showed evidence of the growing importance of knowledge of the Kazakh language among students, both at secondary and post-secondary levels of education due to the language policy and the prestige of the state language. The Kazakh language became the "official language" on September 22, 1989 after the Law on Languages in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was adopted, and the Russian language received the status of "language of interethnic communication." Later, as

amendments in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan were made, the Russian language began to be used officially "on par with the state language."

Thus, recently, the significance of the Kazakh language has been defined by: the "Law of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (15 July, 1997), by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan "State Program of Functioning and Development of Languages for 2001-2010", "The Concept of Language policy in Kazakhstan", and the "Trinity of Languages" program. These documents are considered in Nysanbayeva A. work about the issues in Kazakhstani education (2002, 86). The period that was studied within 2013-2016, it was an evident tendency of knowledge improvement of graduates of schools with the Kazakh language of instruction in accordance with the results of the Unified National Testing - assessment of knowledge of graduates (the system used in the Republic of Kazakhstan).

3. Research Questions

What Language of Instruction should the student choose to be successful in upcoming UNT? What is the percentage of scholarships given by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan according to the Language of Instruction to be enrolled to the university? To what extent is the influence of tri-lingual policy implemented in Kazakhstan on the choice of Language of Instruction?

4. Purpose of the Study

The hypothesis of this work is that the choice of Language of Instruction has a direct correlation with the progress in Kazakhstani society and the results of UNT can serve as a material for qualitative and quantitative analysis.

5. Research Methods

The results of UNT are recognized by all organizations of secondary education for final state certification, and for colleges and universities as a part of entrance exams. Depending upon the number of points received by a pupil at the UNT, the School Graduation Certificate is awarded, as well as the possibility of admission to universities in Kazakhstan (on the payment base or for a grant.) So, 95,455 graduates in the country participated (68.6% of total number of students,) which is below the number of graduates in 2012 for 21,878 people than it was during the UNT-2013.

In 2013, the average score of UNT schools with Kazakh as the language of instruction was lower by 4.2 points than in schools with Russian as the language of instruction, even though the largest share of the test participants were just high school graduates with Kazakh as the language of instruction- at 70.0% (66,660 people,) and with Russian as the language of instruction only 30.0% (28,795 people.) However, compared with the 2012 test results, for the participants in the national language, scores improved by 5 points. Thus, the existing gap means score values for language training decreased 2 times (2012: 68.19 points - the Kazakh language of instruction, the Russian language of instruction - 77.95).

6. Findings

The results of the UNT in 2014, as well as in 2013, schools with Kazakh as the language of instruction showed a lower percentage of performance in comparison with schools with Russian as the language of instruction by 6.8 points (2013 - 4.22). Here, the dynamics of the average score on the language of study shows a significant increase in high school graduates with the results of Russian-language schools (4.26 points) and a slight increase in the values of parameters of the test in the Kazakh language (1.64). These statistics is taken from Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

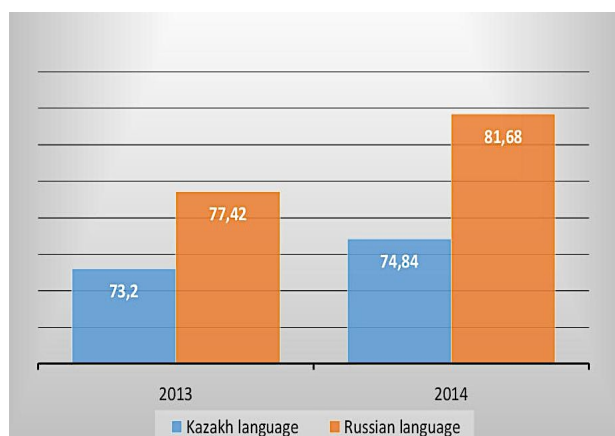


Figure 01. UNT results 2013 and 2014

In 2015, 66.9% of the total number of graduates of schools of the Republic (124 382 people,) took the UNT, which is lower than the number of students in 2014 (-2%). Graduates with the state language of instruction accounted for the majority of test participants - 72.2%, while the Russian language - only 27.8% of graduates.

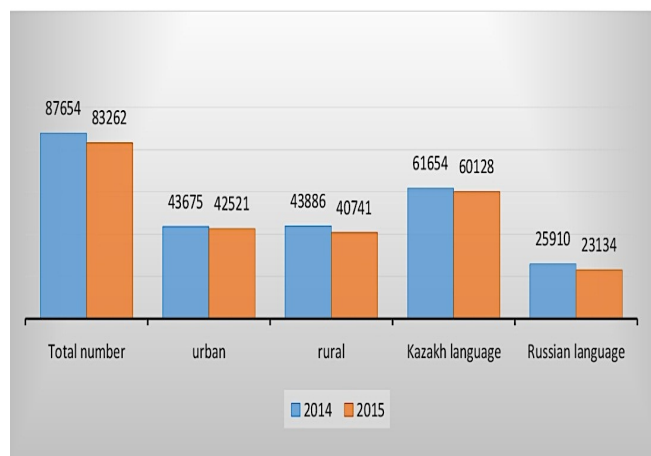


Figure 02. Number of UNT participants in 2014 and 2015

Based on the results of UNT- 2015, in the context of the language of instruction, there was a significant increase in the average score in the schools with the state language of instruction, whereby the

gap between graduates of schools with the Kazakh and Russian languages of instruction fell to 1.2 points in comparison with 2014 – 6.84 points. At the same time, in comparison with the year 2014, students tested in Russian showed worse results (-1.38 points).

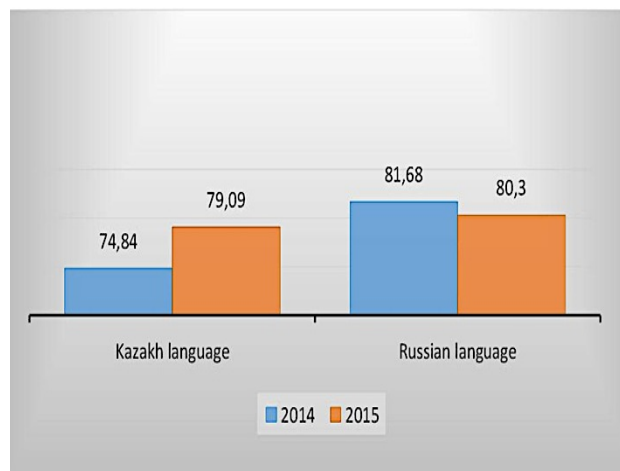


Figure 03. UNT results 2014 and 2015 Language of Instruction in %

In this period of investigation, the increase is evident in the number of students in the Kazakh language in secondary, specialized secondary, and higher education. According to the Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy, in the academic year 2012/2013 the proportion of young people who received technical and vocational education was 54.8% in the Kazakh language, and in 2013/2014 - 56.3%; in 2015 this number rose to 57.5. In secondary education during the transition to trilingual education, 45% of pupils called it a privilege to study Kazakh, Russian and English - 26% and Chinese - 1%. Kazakh language is considered the most prestigious, according to half of the parents who participated in the survey. Russian was considered a prestigious language by more than 31% of parents, mainly in the Russian-speaking northern and eastern areas, and only 16% mentioned a foreign language. In the field of higher education in Kazakhstan, some steps were also made in the direction of reforming the language of instruction. During the Soviet Union period, and at the beginning of the independence of the Republic, it was difficult to be enrolled in higher education if you used the Kazakh language, especially for the rural population; because to be admitted to the universities you needed to have a good knowledge of the Russian language. Now all universities and specialized and vocational schools offer the languages of instruction in Russian and Kazakh. In addition, applicants from rural areas get a discount in the number of admission points to the university for the state grant, which amounts to 30% (in rural areas primarily live only Kazakh people). In 2015, 67,377 people took part in the competition for educational scholarships, including 53,162 graduates with the Kazakh language of instruction, and 14,215 - with the Russian language of instruction.

The Ministry of Education and Science has been allocated 32,168 grants; 2,500 seats, which are distributed among the preparatory departments of universities, and 29,668 grants which are intended for admission to the 1st year. Branches with the Russian language of instruction are in almost all Kazakhstani universities. In 2015, these departments were invested with 25% of grants from the state budget. Among the participants of the competition to get the scholarship were:

- 2116 holders of the badge "Altyn Belgi";
- 1255 graduates of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools;
- 163 winners of international and national competitions in general subjects;
- 930 winners of international and republican scientific competitions in general subjects;
- 816 winners of national and international sporting events;
- 6 winners of the Presidential Olympiad.

They have a pre-emptive right in awarding educational grants, and concerning the ratio of students with the Kazakh and Russian languages of instruction, according to the data for March 2015, to the latest data of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic, at the universities of Kazakhstan there were 474,841 students, including 288,479 in the Kazakh language and 186,362 in Russian. Comparatively, it is interesting to note that the secondary special educational institutions have a younger student population; at the same period, the total number of students at Kazakhstani colleges of specialized and vocational education was 31,453 and 103,688 in the Kazakh language, and 30599 in Russian. It is an obvious advantage in favor of the Kazakh language, and that is due not only to policy, but also due to the objective changes in Kazakhstani society. It is clearly shown in Chaikovskaya N.(N.) and Osenmuk, L. (P.) research (2009, 155), that it may indicate an increased percentage of Kazakh citizens in the younger generation; however, referring to specialized and vocational schools, it is necessary to take into account a purely social factor: in college, immigrants dominate from rural areas, and parents sometimes do not have the financial opportunity to provide children with higher education. For example, when comparing two national universities in the country, this tendency is visible in Tazhibaeva, S. (ZH.) and Kozyrev, T. (A.) work (2015, 125). For example, on March 2015 the number of students at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (Astana) was 16,239. At L.N. Gumilyov ENU, that time 11,107 people were taught the Kazakh language. Taking into consideration the context of Bachelor's degree and Master's degree students with the Kazakh language of instruction, the number of Kazakh speaking students dominated: 8,683 taught in the Kazakh language, and 5,118 in Russian. For Master's Programs, the enrollment was 1,319 people with the Kazakh language, and 884 in Russian. For comparison, the number of students enrolled in the Kazakh National University Al-Farabi (Almaty,) the total number of students who received education at the KNU was 17,070, and with the Kazakh language of instruction it was 11,605 people. Among the students at the undergraduate level, clear dominance was with the Kazakh language (9,941 enrolled in the Kazakh language, and 4,079 in Russian - here we see the predominance of the Kazakh language by more than two times;) but, for Master's Programs with the Kazakh language, there were 1,664 people enrolled, and 1,025 in Russian - (the gap is much smaller).

7. Conclusion

It is worth noting that, in general, at the beginning of the 2015/2016 academic year in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the total number of students was 459,369 people; the proportion of students enrolled in the Kazakh language was 62.7%, in Russian - 34.3% and in English - 30%. Overall, the country is in the process of the development of mass bilingualism and extension functions of the state language. In addition, today strong support from the state is dedicated to the development of the Kazakh language. So, during the years of independence, more than 1,000 schools were built with the

Kazakh language of instruction. According to Fierman W. (2006, 124), as a result, the number of pupils in schools with the state language increased from a little over 900 thousand (in the first years of independence,) to 1.7 million. Over 70% of government agencies are now conducting business in Kazakh [Ibid]. Multilingualism is a progressive factor in the development of polycultural Kazakhstan, which not only contributes to maintenance of intercultural harmony, but also serves as the key to success in modern world.

On the base of the results of the comparative analysis from the diachronic approach (2013- 2016) it is proved that at this moment of implementation of educational reforms it is studied to what extent the factor of the choice of language of instruction influences the progress and achievement of students in comparison with other languages of instruction. Hence, extra and intra educational factors of language instruction choice influence must be taken into consideration in the improvement of educational policy i.e. language policy has its own impact on the presentation of country image on the world arena based on the educational reforms.

Thereby the quantitative method and statistical description of impact of language of instruction on progress in Kazakhstan demonstrates differentiation in modern educational approach on the base of explicit and implicit means of internationalization expression as linguistic factor that is the data for description of young people success in the context of Kazakhstan. Therefore, dominant features of language choice is reflected in educational discourses. The results of a comparative analysis, depending upon the differentiation in linguistics aspects, let us claim that the intensification of progress differentiation of Kazakhstani students can be explained by the improvement of teaching and methodological resources as well as training the teachers in the state language due to the Tri-lingual Policy. Thus, the hypothesis of this work is confirmed that the choice of the Kazakh language of instruction has a direct correlation with the progress in Kazakhstani society and the results of this research can serve as a means of improvement for the internationalization process in education and in general for the process of localization.

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