

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE: THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** Nowadays multilingualism in education is a requirement of modern society while it a pedagogical challenge. The tri-lingual policy is popular among youth of Kazakhstan (Akenova et al, 2014) and supported by government (Akshulova, Ismailova, 2013). The implementation of English-medium instruction in Higher Education of Kazakhstan is in line with the government policy on the use of languages in education from 2011 - 2020.

The gap between traditional principles of bilingual education and the new policies creates challenges in terms of designing curricula, pedagogical approaches and strategies for implementation English as a-medium of instruction (EMI). The importance of EMI implementation has been studied by (Agai-Lochi 2015; Tamtam et al 2012). The first aim of the project reported in this paper is to examine this phenomenon which reflects the specifics of international and national level of education. Secondly, the paper presents an analysis of the challenges of this unique way of teaching. The problems faced during EMI connected with lack of handouts and methodology to teach in the second language. The author tries to provide some recommendations on using innovative strategies to improve EMI in the higher education of Kazakhstan.

**Key words:** English-medium instruction, second-language teaching, trilingual learning, language skills, proficiency, challenges, implementation, academic content.

**Introduction.** “Although the shift to teaching in English has often been welcomed by teachers and students, the research community is only beginning to understand the dynamics of these changes within the learning environment” (Airey & Linder, 2008, p.146).

English-medium instruction (EMI) in higher education is in its early stages in Kazakhstan. Teaching subject matter through English-medium signals wide dissemination of programs in higher education. (Coleman, 2006; Chang, 2010; Dearden, 2015; Crystal, 2003; Gundermann, 2014). At the same time, in Kazakhstan, there are not many teachers who are capable of teaching through English as medium at the appropriate level and students who are able to learn their subjects in English-medium. Currently, Kazakhstan the training in three languages is carried out in 117 schools. This is less than 2% of all schools. The program of EMI teaching is implemented in 33 experimental schools for well-rounded and talented kids. Policy makers in education aspire to extend this experience in all ordinary schools in the next academic year.

As for the higher education of the country's 125 universities training through English is carried out in 42 institutions of higher education that is about 1/3.

**Materials and Methods.** Results of the 2009 year National Population Census show that among the population aged 15 and above the Kazakh language is possessed by 8.988.500 people (74,0%), Russian Language know 11.437.400 people (94,4 %) and English proficiency have 1.874.600 people (15,4%). (Kaz2009, Analytical Report, 2009, p.23). In accordance to Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan Degree of Language Skills (aged 15 and above) of English proficiency is as follows: 1.874.600 people (15,4%) understand the spoken language, 1.242.900 people (10,2%) read well and 931,400 people (7,7%) write well. (Kaz2009, Analytical Report, p.22-23).

At present time, Kazakhstan is a bilingual country and it is the only former Soviet republic that has adopted a state program on trilingualism (the National Tri-Unity of Languages project) (is any reference available?). Hence, the main objective of the project is to develop trilingualism and the mastery and application of the three major languages as a bi-lingual. According to this program, Kazakh is declared the “state” language that develops and strengthens national identity. Russian is the most wide spread language. The majority of people use this language in everyday communication. English language is an international language which supports to enter in the global area. Recently, the country has a government program for the development and functioning of languages in Kazakhstan for 9 years i.e. from 2011-2020 (State Language program, 2011). This is aimed at ensuring learning and mastering the three languages at equal levels. For instance, Zagidullin & Zagidullina (2013,) observe that “Trilingualism is considered to be an objective response to the existing geopolitical situation Kazakhstan is facing today and a key to success for both society and individuals in future”. This means that trilingualism is currently taking lead in educational system in Kazakhstan.

Table 1 below provides some indicators of English language proficiency and trilingualism by Kazakhstan.

Table 1 - Target indicators mastering trilingual

Percentage of the population with language fluency	2014 year	2017 year	2020 year
English (%)	10	15	20
Trilingualism (Kazakh, Russian, English) (%)	10	12	15

Source: State Language program (<http://medialawca.org/document/-11224>)

As Table 1 shows, it is expected that one fifth of the Kazakhstani population would be able to read, write, speak and listen in English within the next five years. The 2011-2020 State Program does not require 100 per cent trilingualism in Kazakh-

stani community by 2020, only every fifth Kazakhstani is to know English by the end of the program (Zagidullin & Zagidullina, 2013). Overall, it is expected that by 2020 100% Kazakhstani would be fluent in Kazakh language, 95 % in Russian and 20 % in English. These targets will be reached in Kazakhstan by focusing in the trilingual education. Firstly, by introducing mandatory English-medium curricula into primary and secondary schools, secondly, by creating foreign language study centers and thirdly, by attracting English-speaking alumni of Bolashak program for teaching in educational institution. In accordance with Road Map for the development of trilingual education for 2015 – 2020 they will have offered to teach without departing from the main place of work no less two hours per week. (Road Map, 2015).

**Research Methodology.** The methodological approaches used to be described as survey and case study to compare Zhetysu University named after I.Zhansugurov in Kazakhstan and the University of Leicester in the UK with regards to the EMI approaches used in these two universities. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, observations and review of literature. Research Questions were putting as following :

1. What encourages teachers and learners to teach and to learn in a second language?
2. What are challenges faced by the community in the country to teach/learn via English-medium?
3. How to integrate language learning with content subject?

To address these questions two questionnaires were structured for Kazakh teachers and for non-native teachers at the University of Leicester. Purposive sampling was used because the research was in a case study format. (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Flick, 2015; Crowther, Lancaster, 2005, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al, 2008, 2009, 2010.) They observed that purposive sampling can be used when the researcher is conducting a case study. The Internet was used as a medium of getting information because it was considered faster to acquire information from colleagues who were geographically far. Fricker & Schonlau (2002, p.76) and Elliott et al (2002) note that ‘...Internet-based surveys can be conducted more quickly, effectively, cheaply and/or easily than surveys conducted via conventional modes’. However, they noted that Web and e-mail surveys may have some notable disadvantages. Web-survey is often said to be complicated for applicants and not all respondents are able to cope with the technical knowledge. Fricker & Schonlau (2002) also observe that ‘Survey designers need to specify many issues related to the technical control of Web surveys (e.g., how to move back and forth between questions, input validation, passwords, and for which questions are answers not optional) that are simpler or not required with conventional survey modes’(ibid, p.364).

The survey was based on questionnaire to get information about challenges and problems which teachers face teaching medium English in the Zhetysu University. There was a mixture of open and closed questions, but each question was an option that allowed the participants to respond. We could not foresee all the options and enabled the subjects to respond to avoid losing data. Ten both closed-ended questions and one open-ended question were prepared for Kazakh teachers selected from De-

partments of Economic, Physics and Math. They completed the questionnaire developed for this convenience sample. The teacher participants were two male and two female teachers who taught English-medium. These participants have been chosen because they have some experience in teaching through English. None of the four respondents had English as their First Language (L1).

Qualitative methods were used to collect data from semi-structured questionnaires and interviews of teachers from Zhetysu University and Leicester University to investigate barriers and suitable methods of teaching in context of English medium courses. The survey considers the experience of the European countries of EMI courses and conducts some parallel in teaching abroad and in Kazakhstan.

The survey also provides some recommendations which will be suitable to support beginning teachers in Kazakhstan who have a little experience in this activity.

Among the questions which were highlighted, there were some a special importance for the survey.

The main interview questions were:

1. Which of the following challenges/difficulties have you experienced in your teaching?
2. Do you switch from English to Kazakh/Russian in your teaching?
3. What kind of the technological tools do you use in your teaching?
4. What innovative methods/strategies do you use in your teaching?

**Results and Discussion.** To gain an understanding of reasons and motivations by above stated research questions we conducted semi-structured interviews with a small number of lecturers in the University of Leicester. During in the author's traineeship in the UK, face-to-face interviews and the interview protocol had been designed in advance. Please describe whether the questions were different from those administered to Kazakh teachers at ZHGU and if they were, explain why.

As shown from the data collected from questionnaire (question 7) the beginning teachers try to avoid code switching, while more experienced teachers prefer to switch from English to mother tongue in the classroom. This way helps to achieve goals for communication and to cut time for explanation complex tasks and terms. Many teachers intuitively adopted many strategies (slow delivery, use of synonyms and periphrasis, repetition) which have been codified (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2012). If usage of trilingual will promote successful comprehensive subject content by students, this is perfect. At the same time, in the academic content delivery their application as English language training is usually not part of the syllabus in EMI programs.

On the open question on pedagogical advices to other teachers about English-medium the respondents gave the following answers:

- First, teachers must motivate well, and train in a light playful way;
- Teachers need to prepare thoroughly for teaching of the English and try to attend lectures or professors of English;
- Improve linguistic didactic material and linguistic methodological apparatus;
- To extend methodological terminology and glossary of academic disciplines.

The teachers who have taken part in the semi-structured interview were the instructors from the University of Leicester and British Institution of Resource Development. This group of participants had more experience in English-medium teaching than Kazakh colleagues and all of them teach students of Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate (PG) and PhD students. 3 out of 4 teachers taught in all forms of education: campus-based, distance learning of UG and PG students. 1 of 4 had taught practitioners teachers, researchers. They have marked no difficulties in teaching in a second language, just one teacher had some difficulties with “pronunciation of specific words”, and another had challenges with “English competency of students”. On the question 3 about technology teaching, 100 % of teachers replied they use such technical tools like YouTube video from on-line resources, PowerPoint and desktop or laptop computer.

Of particular interest is the use of innovative methods and learning strategies. Teachers from Leicester University use case studies, work in small groups in pairs and discussion. But no one call these methods like innovative. Teacher from British Institution of Resource Development mentioned that: “I try to combine a communicative teaching with student centered approach in which students learn from each other and teacher just assists them encouraging students to study independently by working at home by themselves and looking for other sources of learning, not just from lesson”.

On the last question, all teachers have offered good advices for teachers especially for beginners which can summarize as following:

- Suggested useful websites: [www.lingvee.com](http://www.lingvee.com); [www.howjsay.com](http://www.howjsay.com);
- Make good learning design appropriate use of learning technologies;
- EMI needs much more time and attention in the preparation of the content. You need to be very familiar with the terminology and how to explain in a simple way;

- Try to be prepared to the lesson as much as possible; it will help you to develop good teaching habits. Experiment and try different things in your teaching. It is often the case that each group reacts differently to the same activity, so you have to check what works well with your students. Don't get easily discouraged by lessons which were bad in your opinion, keep on researching and improving yourself.

Hence, in this passage we have to reflect the findings in terms of the research questions. The significant findings were around two questions. They were connected with identifying the main strategies in EMI teaching and the main challenges or difficulties that teachers face in their teaching activity. For all questions we have received detailed answers. We found that Kazakh teachers have a problem of shortage guidelines and adapted handbooks. Foreign textbooks do not meet the requirements of our high school. In addition, they are not designed to study in English as a second language, as do not contain a system of methodological tools, create the conditions for formation of communicative speech skills and language skills, for example, on the material of physics, dubbed ‘Lingvomethodological machine’. Currently important to investigate pedagogical methods such as debates for effectively teaching toward to majority of students ‘who are not advanced language competency and crit-

ical thinking.’ (Lustigova, 2015). These approaches will help both teachers and students to enrich speaking skills and improve all elements of English.

**Conclusion.** With the emergence of Kazakhstan in the international educational forum there is increased need to develop Kazakh higher education to international standard and academic levels. EMI in Kazakhstan is limited now by number of schools and instructors. Cooperation between policy makers, teachers in the pre-school, ordinary and high education will promote to realize the policy of trilingualism and integrate in the lingua franca milieu.

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## **ҚАЛАЛЫҚ ЖОЛАУШЫЛАР КӨЛПІ ҚОЗҒАЛЫСЫН КЕШЕНДІ БАСҚАРУДЫҢ НЕГІЗГІ ПРИНЦИПТЕРІ**

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**Аңдатпа.** Халықаралық тасымалдарда Көлік қызметтерінің сапасын арттыру, ең алдымен, Қазақстан Республикасының Көлік-коммуникация кешенінің (ТКК) әлемдік көлік жүйесіне толыққанды және бәсекеге қабілетті кіру саясатын қолдауды білдіреді. Қазіргі уақытта кез келген мемлекеттің экономикалық даму деңгейі оның ақпараттық инфрақұрылымының қуатымен айқындала бастаған кезде, бәсекеге қабілеттіліктің басты шарты және көліктік қызметтер сапасының негізгі өлшемі ақпараттық технологияларды дамыту және оларға барабар телекоммуникациялық қамтамасыз ету болып табылады.

**Кілт сөздер:** халықаралық, автомобиль, диспетчерлік, автобус, технология, көлік-коммуникация.

**Зерттеу әдістері.** Жолаушылар автомобиль тасымалын басқарудың басқа түрлерімен салыстырғанда диспетчерлік басқарудың принципті ерекшелігі қызметті нақты уақыт ауқымында жүзеге асыру болып табылады. Бұл диспетчерлік шешімдерді қабылдау және орындау сапасы мен уақтылығына қойылатын талаптарды арттырады. Басқарудың стратегиялық және тактикалық деңгейлерінде жіберілген қателер түзетілуі мүмкін, ал басқарушылық