Year 12 school students' understandings of an effective English lesson in Nur-Sultan

Saltanat Syzdykova

Submitted in partial of the requirements for the degree of

Master in Science

in Educational Leadership

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

June, 2020

Word count: 16585

AUTHOR AGREEMENT

By signing and submitting this license, I Saltanat Syzdykova (the author or copyright owner) grant to Nazarbayev University (NU) the non-exclusive right to reproduce, convert (as defined below), and/or distribute my submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video.

I agree that NU may, without changing the content, convert the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation.

I also agree that NU may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, back-up and preservation.

I confirm that the submission is my original work, and that I have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. I also confirm that my submission does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright.

If the submission contains material for which I do not hold copyright, I confirm that I have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant NU the rights required by this license, and that such third-party owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission.

IF THE SUBMISSION IS BASED UPON WORK THAT HAS BEEN SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED BY AN AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN NU, I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE FULFILLED ANY RIGHT OF REVIEW OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED BY SUCH CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT. NU will clearly identify my name(s) as the author(s) or owner(s) of the submission, and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

I hereby accept the terms of the above Author Agreement.

Author's signature:

_____

Date: 26.06.2020

Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been submitted for the award of any other course or degree at Nazarbayev University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in this thesis. This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the viewers expressed here are my own.

Signed:

Date: 26.06.2020

Ethics Approval

Nazarbayev University

Graduate School of Education

www.nu.edu.kz

53 Kabanbay Batyr Ave.

010000 Astana,

Republic of Kazakhstan

20 November 2019

Dear Saltanat Syzdykova

This letter now confirms that your research project entitled: '**Year 12 school students' understandings of an effective English lesson in Nur-Sultan'** has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely

Prof Naureen Durrani

On behalf of Elaine Sharplin
Chair of the GSE Research Committee
Professor

Graduate School of Education

Nazarbayev University
Block C3, Room 5006

Office: +7 (7172) 70 9371

Mobile: +7 777 1929961

email: elaine.sharplin@nu.edu.kz

CITI training certificate

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I express my deep and sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Naureen Durrani for expertly guiding me in my thesis journey, the detailed and always on due course feedback. Her democratized approach to deadlines ensured self-accountability for writing in a comfortable, yet responsible mode for me.

I am extremely grateful to all GSE: School Education professors for an amazing spirit of learning created in and out of the university. I express my heartfelt gratitude to my awesome group-mates for making these beautiful two years full of joy.

My huge appreciation also extends to my English instructor, Mr. Barclay Mullins for helping me polish my writings.

Special thanks to my beloved and supportive husband, Daniyar, for encouraging me in the completion of my thesis. My deep appreciation also goes to my wonderful parents, Bolat and Sara and sisters, Mika and Altyn for believing in me and who were always by my side when I needed it most. Finally, thanks to my friends for understanding those busy days of their student-friend.

Year 12 school students' understandings of an effective English lesson in Nur-Sultan

Abstract

Policymakers, schools and teachers in Kazakhstan, like elsewhere, are keen to make school lessons effective to promote students' learning. The standards and principles of pedagogic practice, in most cases, are developed either by policymakers or researchers and then shared with teachers to enhance classroom teaching. However, the main actors of learning, students, can be left aside in the discussions and debates surrounding effective pedagogy. In the current conditions of a modern and globalizing society, it is crucial to understand learners' needs and challenges in classroom learning. Therefore, this study attempts to give learners a "voice" and seeks to reveal greater understanding of their perspectives on the effectiveness of English lessons. The study aims to investigate 12-grade school students' understandings of effective English lessons and the pedagogical theories that underpin their understandings. A qualitative research design was deemed appropriate to collect data via focus-group discussions. A total of 15 participants studying in one of the schools in Nur-Sultan were purposefully selected to share their views on the topic in three focus group discussions. The participants' narratives of the effectiveness of English language lessons highlighted two major themes. The first included preferred teaching practices in relation to group work and active ways of learning in class, equal emphasis on all language skills, authentic learning and feedback to teachers. Second, the students attributed effective English teachers the characteristics that were mostly tied to maintaining the balance between being an authoritarian adult and a friend with a good sense of humor. By and large, the participants' understandings were underpinned by social-constructivist views of pedagogy which stems from learner-centered education (Alexander, 2008; Schweisfurth, 2013). However, the participants also expressed a preference to be controlled over in terms of teachers'

instructional practices, teaching styles and the curriculum. Therefore, the liberal learning environment often seen central in a learner-centered approach can be questioned, that in turn, can reflect the current political premises of the country. The findings of the study can help school teachers in improving the quality of their classroom practices. As one of the first studies of its kind in Kazakhstan, the findings can also be beneficial for school teachers, educators in various sectors, policy makers, parents and students.

Key words: effective teaching, effective teachers, learner-centered education, effective pedagogy, learners' understanding, teachers' practice.

Нұр-Сұлтан каласындағы бір мектептің 12-сынып оқушыларының ағылшын тілі сабағының тиімділігі жайлы түсініктері

Аңдатпа

Қазақстан, кез-келген басқа елді мекен сияқты, мектеп сабақтарының сапасын арттыруды ведомстволық бағынышты ұйымдар және мұғалімдермен бірлесіп көздейді. Педагогикадағы үздік тәжірибе үлгілері мен қағидалары, көп жағдайда, білім беру жүйесіндегі министрлік пен зерттеушілердің көмегімен жетілдіреді, кейін, мектеп мұғалімдеріне жіберіледі. Бірақ, білім берудің негізгі қолданушылары, оқушылар, білім беру жүйесіндегі мектеп сабақтарының сапасын арттырудағы пікірталас пен талқылаудан алшақ қалады. Бүгінгі күнгі болып жатқан заманауи жаһандану қоғамында, мектеп оқушыларының қажеттіліктері мен қиндықтарын түсіну білім беру жүйесінің негізгі міндеттеріне айналған. Демек, бұл зерттеу аталып өткен себепті көздей отырып, оқушылардың тиімді ағылшын тілі сабақтары жайлы түсініктерін анықтау арқылы, мектеп оқушыларына "сөз береді". Бұл зерртеу 12-сынып оқушылардың түсініктерін анықтаумен қатар, олардың ойларының қандай педагогикалық теориялармен нығайтылғандары жайлы білуді нысандайды. Оқушылардың ойын жинау мақсатында сапалы зерттеу дизайны мен фокус-тобындағы талқылау ең тиімді құрал ретінде таңдалды. Зерттеуде Нұр-Сұлтан қаласындағы бір мекепте білім алатын барлығы 15 қатысушы өз ойларымен бөлісуде ат салысты. Ағылшын тілі сабақтарының тиімділігін талқылау барысында оқышылардың баяндаулары екі негізгі тақырыпқа бөлінді. Бірінші тақырып мұғалімдердің сыныптағы әрекеттеріне, яғни ұстаздың топтық жұмыс саясаттары жайлы, белсенді білім алу әдістері, ағылшын тіліндегі барлық тілдік дағдыларға бірдей көңіл бөлу, тілдік шынайы материалдар мен сабақ кеңістігін құру жайлы және мұғалімге арналған кері байланысты

құрады. Екіншісі, оқушылардың тиімді мұғалімдерге арттырған сипаттамалары мен сапаларын құрады. Бұл сапалардың басым көпшілігі ұстаздардың сабақ беру стиліндегі теңгерімін талап етті, яғни авторитарлық стильмен қатар әзіл сезімді достық стильдің бірге жүруін қалады. Жалпы, қатысушы оқушылардың түсінімдері педагогикадағы әлеуметтік-конструктивтік теориямен анықталды, ал бұл теория, өз кезегінзе, тұлғалық-бағдарлы білім берумен ұштасады (Александр, 2008; Швайцвурт, 2013). Дегенмен, қатысушы оқушылар топтық жұмыстағы мұғалімнің рөлі, мұғалімдердің білім беру стилі және мектеп бағдарламасының тек бір тарапты шешілуін қалаған, яғни, мұғалімдер мен білім сапасын арттыруға бағытталған ұйымдарға толығымен сенетіндерін білдірген. Демек, толығымен либералды білім беру ортаның бар екендігіне күмән келтіруге болады, бұл, өз кезегінде, мемелекеттің политикалық алғышарттарын дарыптай алады. Зерттеу жұмасының мәліметтерін талдау арқылы жасалған қорытындыларын ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің сабақ сапасын арттыруда қолдануда тиімді болуые мүмкін. Сонымен қатар, Қазақстандағы оқушылар түсініктерін зерттеуге тырысқан жалғыз жұмыстарының бірі болуының арқасында, зерттеу жұмысының нәтиелері білім беру жүйесінің сапасын арттыруға ат салысатын ұйымдарға, кез-келген пәннің мектеп мұғалімдеріне, оқушылар мен ата-аналарға пайдалы болуы мүмкін.

Кілт сөздер: тиімді білім беру, тиімді мұғалім, тұлғалық-бағдарлы білім беру, тиміді педагогика, оқушылардың түсінімдері, мұғалімдердің қызметтік іс-әрекеттері.

Понимание эффективности урока английского языка учащимися 12-класса в одной из школ в городе Нур-Султан

Аннотация

Лица, определяющие ход развития образования, учителя в школах, также, как и в любой стране, всегда стремятся повысить качество деятельности учителей в целях улучшения обучения. Стандарты и принципы педагогики, в большинстве случаев, разрабатываются либо подведомственными государственными организациями, либо исследователями, затем распределяются среди учителей для улучшения преподавания. Однако, самые главные участники процесса, учащиеся, остаются в стороне от дискуссии и дебатов, определяющих эффективность преподавания. В современных условиях глобализированного общества, вопрос понимания потребностей и вызовов учеников школ является ключевым. Преследуя вышеуказанную причину, данное исследование попытается "услышать голос учащихся" для более глубокого понимания их взглядов касательно эффективных уроков английского языка. Более того, это исследование ставит целью выявить какие педагогические теории подкрепляют понимание учащихся. Дизайн качественного исследования был определен наиболее подходящим для сбора данных через обсуждения в фокус-группах. В общей сложности 15 учащихся, которые обучаются в 12-классе, были целенаправленно выбраны для участия в фокус-группах. Повествования учащихся об эффективности уроков английского языка выявило две основные темы. Первая тема включает в себя предпочтения учащихся по отношению учительской деятельности, а именно, по организации групповых работ, активных методов обучения в классе, равное внимание каждому языковому навыку, аутентичность материала и окружения в классе, а также обратную связь учителю. Вторая тема охватывает качества и

характеристики учителей, которые учащиеся понимают, как качества, которыми обладают эффективные учителя. Выявленные качества в основном были связаны с предпочтениями учеников баланса в стиле преподавания учителей, которые могут обеспечить одновременно авторитарный подход и дружелюбности учителя, с хорошим чувством юмора. В целом, понимание учащихся были подкреплены социально-конструктивным подходом в педагогике, которая берет основы из личностно-ориентированной педагогики (Александр, 2008; Швайцфурт, 2013). Несмотря на это, участники исследования уверены, что учебная деятельность, в частности инструкции учителя для групповой работы, стиль учителя и учебная программа должна определятся односторонне, то есть только учителем или организациями, которые контролируют качество образования. Следовательно, либеральная среда обучения, которая является центральной в личностно-ориентированной педагогике, вызывает сомнение, в свою очередь отражая и политическую среду в стране. Выводы, полученные на основе анализа данных, могут помочь учителям повысить качества преподавания английского языка в школах Казахстана. Являясь одним из единственных исследований в стране, который изучает понимание учащихся, данная исследовательская работа может также быть полезной школьным учителям различных предметов, педагогам в разных секторах, подведомственным организациям, родителям и ученикам.

Ключевые слова: эффективное преподавание, эффективность учителя, личностно-ориентированное образование, эффективная педагогика, понимание учащихся, деятельность учителей.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Pursuing teaching and learning excellence, teaching practices in school have always been an overriding ambition for all educational actors. A large number of multidisciplinary researchers have been investigating the nature of best pedagogy for decades. Along the way as cited by Tavakoli and Baniasad-Azad (2017), various terms have been used to describe best teaching practices such as 'effective' (Gordon, 1974), 'excellent teaching' (Elton, 1998), 'good teaching' (Kember & Kwan, 2000), 'highly accomplished' (Serafini, 2002), 'better teaching' (Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig, 2004). However, the nature of best school teaching still remains to be "a blurred picture" and elusive because of its diversity from one context to another (Tajeddin & Alemi, 2019, p. 2). This raises even more demand for research on the issue in particular in Kazakhstan. By and large, there are a plethora of studies where a good teaching is restricted to what effective teachers' do in class.

To define what constitutes the practice of an effective teacher, multiple models and frameworks have been offered from different perspectives that focus on teachers' basic knowledge, competence and expertise, characteristics and attitudes. For this reason, the term effective teacher is understood differently by scholars. One way of assessing teacher effectiveness is the extent to which teachers' classroom strategies are in agreement with curriculum goals (Brown & Atkins, 1988). An early conceptualization is given by Doyle (1986) that posits an effective teacher as someone who is well-prepared for the class, sets clear learning expectations for students, installs classroom rules and is highly responsible towards learners' achievements. Whereas the more recent ones stress a more social-constructivist approach, building a positive rapport, well-built professional skills and an ability to choose engaging

activities for learners (Thompson, 2008). Building a positive relationship with learners is vital for effective learning, specifically for language teachers.

Effective teachers may share basic characteristics and teaching principles, however some scholars claim that the nature of teaching particular subjects can impact on the effectiveness of teaching strategies of other subjects (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007). Language teachers' beliefs and understandings of an effective language learning may shape their teaching practices and expectations towards students' learning (Chacón, 2005). An effective language teacher is characterised in various studies as a person with profound language competence and generally positive attitude towards learners who possess sensitivity and tolerance (Vadillio, 1999). In terms of content, it was found that teaching a language is assumed to be a more complex process due to languages' on-going nature of development and plasticity that in turn impacts on language teaching methodology requiring it to be more varied and updated constantly (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007). As a result, English teachers are expected to be more progressive operating with a wider range of teaching methods. The complexity of teaching English, particularly in non-English speaking contexts, as well as the contextual nature of effective English lessons, place a need for English teachers in Kazakhstan to continuously reflect on their effectiveness, first of all, with the help of their learners, the recipients of their teaching. This understanding by teachers may ultimately raise the quality of their teaching practices and consequently will result in better learning.

According to the state program and government language policies in Kazakhstan, English language should be taught from first grade at least three times a week in secondary schools (MoES, 2011). Being a competent user of English language has become one of the central priorities in newly emerging multilingual countries such as Kazakhstan. Therefore, studying and

defining effective teaching strategies for learning English in school including the methods to motivate students is of great significance as such a study can illuminate insights needed for improving the quality of English lessons and learning and also contribute towards the achievement of the goals of Kazakhstan's language policy.

How students learn in school is understood in the literature as a product of cognitive psychology, political orientations that shape a country's education and teachers' practices within contextual realities (Schweisfurth, 2013). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2005), the ultimate goal of effective teaching practice is to develop a student's learning process that also incorporates the development of their creative, emotional and social formation. One of those travelling educational policies, that is moved and adopted in the context of globalization in various countries, is called learner-centered education (LCE). LCE is a complex phenomenon that prioritizes more democratized learning, and learning that is constructed by students (Alexander, 2008). However, there are contextual issues where LCE is imposed as a policy and misinterpreted as a practice due to cross-contextual influences, especially in developing countries (Schweisfurth, 2013). There is a lack of research in Kazakhstan that would shed light on whether local teaching practices in schools are built on a teacher-centered or learner-centered approach (Akimenko, 2016), although secondary education in Kazakhstan is transforming from content-based learning to skills-based (OECD, 2018) implementing a new curriculum and assessment system which are informed by some variations of LCE. Given the above, the demand for more empirical evidence and different-scale research to gauge teaching effectiveness that would lead to students' cognitive and affective development is acute in Kazakhstan.

Globally, there is a concern with the quality of student learning which in turn puts a spotlight on teaching practices and classroom atmosphere, as well as the extent to which the curriculum meets learners' cognitive needs or is related to their real lives (Schweisfurth, 2013). On a large scale, international monitoring organizations are using surveys such as PIPLS, PISA to assess learners' cognitive abilities as indicators of learning outcomes (Westbrook, Durrani, Brown, Orr, Pryor, Boddy & Salvi, 2013). In this regard, Kazakhstani 15-year old students performed significantly low on PISA-2018 resulting in 53rd place on mathematics, 69th -place on reading, 68th place on science (OECD, 2018). Furthermore, Kazakhstan scored lower on learners' well-being than the OECD average (OECD, 2018). These figures demonstrate that investigating the quality of school teaching in Kazakhstan is much needed.

Problem statement

When talking about effective teaching, a great variety of theoretical and practical perspectives of teachers, policy makers and educationalists (those who are part of school administration or developers of methodology and curriculum (Schweisfurth, 2013)) are offered as guidelines in the field. However, studies devoted to discovering students' understanding, in particular of effective English lessons, as a reflective tool towards the improvement of teaching and learning, are significantly under-represented. This gap in research might consequently lead to the irrelevance of pedagogy in school to address learners' needs in contemporary times.

Pedagogy in school teaching should be transformative which requires changes in teacher-student relationships, teaching and learning methods, assessment of learning and skills of the 21st century (Dole, Bloom & Kowalske, 2016). Moreover, the understanding whether students are actually learning, how they are learning, what challenges they are facing and whether the curriculum is meeting their expectations should be gauged through learners' feedback at best.

Reshaping school teaching to meet learners' needs requires a dialogue between students and teachers. This epistemology stems from social-constructivist theory that implies learning constructed by students. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to learn what understandings students hold of effective teaching or lessons. Moreover, the lack of research on students' viewpoints towards teaching effectiveness may raise the gap between the expectations of educational stakeholders and what learners are actually experiencing in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate students' understandings of what constitutes an effective English lesson at school. The study also seeks to explore what pedagogical or learning theories underpin students' understandings of an effective teaching lesson.

Research Questions

Aiming to address the study's purpose, the following research questions were posited:

1. What are twelve-grade students' understandings of an effective English lesson in one of the schools in Kazakhstan?

2. What learning and pedagogical approaches underpin students' understandings of an effective English lesson?

Significance of the Study

The study's primary significance lies in the novelty of the perspectives being researched on the issue. Background studies predominantly focus on teachers' perspectives towards school teaching effectiveness, whereas this study investigated learners' understanding. Effective teaching principles understood by teachers are mainly served as a benchmark towards effective learning and teaching while students' voices on the issue remain mostly unheard. The narrative

of the student participants may contribute to further development of effective teaching concepts and reflect the challenges and success of the new curriculum and assessment reforms in Kazakhstan. Moreover, learning practices of school students in Kazakhstan have not been considered and paid sufficient attention towards setting teaching principles. Therefore, my study may contribute to the understanding of effective teaching practices from learners' viewpoint that can guide teachers in achieving teaching excellence and effective use of the new curriculum.

School administrators and teachers of various subjects, in the school studied and beyond, can benefit from the findings of the study. This study identifies worthwhile and practical teaching methods and activities identified by students as effective. The participants' negative and positive classroom experiences can be a guide for the schools' or English department policies to tailor best pedagogy to meet their students' needs to the fullest extent possible. Moreover, educational quality control bodies such as policymakers and curriculum developers in Kazakhstan may benefit from the study as well in terms of reviewing teaching strategies and teacher rapport suggested in the new curriculum. Hence, this study might offer teachers an opportunity to reflect on their practices and identify spaces for further development. These reflective practices of teachers may raise the quality of teaching and their collaborative culture.

In addition, my study may be valuable not only for the participant students, but also for any school student to understand the importance of building a dialogue between them and their teachers. This, in turn, may contribute to constructing a positive teacher-student rapport and bring about better learning outcomes. Even though qualitative findings cannot be generalized to a larger population, yet, the participants' stories may reflect, to some extent, students' understanding in other schools for gifted learners in Kazakhstan. The implications generated may also depict a broader picture of English teachers' practice in the framework of the new

educational reforms. Furthermore, this research is an exploratory journey for my own professional growth, as a teacher of English language. Finally, my study may contribute to the gaps in literature in relation to students' understandings of effective English language teaching in the Kazakhstani context and the contexts where English is taught as a foreign language.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study is concerned with secondary students' understandings of effective English lessons in Kazakhstan. Perspectives of effective lessons are linked to ideas about effective teaching, pedagogy and learning. Effective teaching is a complex notion within pedagogy that educational research continues to explore within and across countries. The evolution of pedagogy and development of effective teaching is beyond the scope of this study. In order for the reader to have a better view around the research that is conducted on the topic, this chapter is divided into seven sections: definition of effective teaching, teachers' and students' perspectives on effective teaching, context-relevant pedagogy, learner-centered education, how to measure teaching effectiveness, effective learning and effective pedagogy in Kazakhstan.

Definition of effective teaching

This section attempts to underscore key concepts on how to define effective teaching and what have been found as effective teaching practices by research in the field. Defining teaching effectiveness is itself a challenging, complex and controversial topic. First of all, it evokes strong links with what constitutes the notion of teaching expertise and high-stake accountability of educational systems (Ko, Sammons & Bakkum, 2013). It may also consist of teachers' beliefs towards effective teaching practices that vary across different students' age groups, times, contexts and cultures (Ko et. al, 2013). Moreover, effective teaching can happen anywhere without being constrained by physical means of classrooms (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton &

Yamauchi, 2000). In the book titled "Teaching Transformed", the authors define four major goals that an ideal modern class should strive for such as excellence, fairness, inclusion and harmony (Tharp et al., 2000). Moreover, Pennington and Richards (2016) and Weinstein (1989) stress that effective teaching should be conducted, at first place, prioritizing students' emotional well-being.

A comprehensive starting definition of pedagogy is offered by Alexander (2008) who defines it as an act of teaching and the discourses underpinning conceptions of education, teaching, learning, teachers and learners. Various researchers have attempted to conceptualize the notion of effective pedagogy. Ko, Sammons & Bakkum (2013) produced a review of best teaching practices based on international experience and research. In the review the authors feature shared key characteristics of good teaching in England: 1) good subject knowledge; 2) well-structured lesson organization; 3) the skillful use of questions to engage and challenge students; 4) assessment for learning. However, the authors conclude that consequently teaching effectiveness may be shaped even by teachers' work experience showing more commitment to teaching in their mid-career and some decline in those who had been teaching for longer periods. Teaching effectiveness and teacher effectiveness have been utilized as interchangeable concepts in many studies.

Vadillio (1990) believes that being an effective teacher is not only knowing the content of a subject professionally, but also having such personal characteristics as the ability to tolerate learners' mistakes and being sensitive and warm towards them. In contrast, Ko et al. (2013) summarise research findings of ineffective teaching practices in primary schools in England and secondary schools in the United States. They constituted misalignment of teaching methods to the curriculum; irrelevant expectations for lower ability and disadvantaged learners; poor

teacher-student interactions; low level of students' engagement in class activities; student perception of teachers as unfriendly and not caring; and frequent cases of criticism and negative feedback from teachers. In addition, except for the challenge to define the generic characteristics of effective teachers, the analysis of international studies has shown that the more varied teaching styles, skills and behavior of a teacher were, the more effective performances a teacher could handle (Ko et al. 2013). Therefore, we should not view effectiveness of teaching as isolated characteristics in relation to teachers' or students' performance.

When it comes to specifically teaching English language effectively, the studies in the field claim that language teaching differs with its subject complexity and requires teachers' better commitment as a person in the learning process. Kariminia and Salehizadeh (2007) state that language teachers have to be always aware of available innovations in methods due to the flexibility and on-going language development characteristics, therefore, teachers of English in particular may have a larger arsenal of teaching methods than teachers of other subjects.

Effective English teachers are characterized in relation to their abilities to create a learning atmosphere of care, fairness and trust (Faranda & Clarke, 2004). This may define the nature of teaching a language to teachers' personal attributes such as friendliness, well-developed communication skills and even a sense of humor (Tajeddin & Alemi, 2019). Moreover, language teachers should be able to build an environment where participants can actively utilize the foreign language. The opportunities for students to use only the language being studied in class is called 'authenticity' by McDonald (2005). He claims that language learning cannot succeed in the absence of authentic material, especially those that would develop learners' listening skills. However, Chavez (1998) argues that an authentic language learning can happen only in a language native environment, therefore, any language extracted from its

original context cannot be counted as authentic. Park and Lee (2006) highlights language competency as the key attribute of English teachers, while Goldenberg (2008) states that the success in teaching English language lies in teachers' ability to develop learners' English language skills depending on their grade levels and offering relevant and engaging tasks to accomplish it.

Teachers' and Students' Perspectives of Effective Teaching

Given the preceding discussion on teaching effectiveness, it is important to explore how teachers' and students' understanding in a range of contexts vary towards effective teaching. The researchers who have recently studied teachers' views about effective teaching include Arikan (2010), Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) in the context of Turkey and Sandholtz (2011) in the United States. English teachers' perceptions of effective teaching is not only the result of professional background but also can be an experience a teacher had as a student (Richardson, 1996). A teacher in a multicultural classroom from Greenland who participated in a case study believed that the effectiveness of lessons depends on the contextualization of learning material to students' real lives and on the consideration of learners' cultural features so that they can relate abstract ideas and concepts to their own experiences (Wyatt, Yamauchi & DeSousa, 2012). According to Thompson (2008), effective teachers possess well-developed skills (an ability to choose relevant and interesting activities), can be ready with convenient answers to students' unexpected questions, and are personally pleasant. Earlier, Walberg (1986), in the context of Switzerland, mentioned the abilities to be able to present new information, communicate with learners and scaffolding skills as attributes that every effective teacher should develop and possess.

Students' feedback on effective teaching is seen beneficial in the promotion of teachers' effectiveness. However, there are cases when students' views of effective teaching mismatch teachers' expectations (Williams & Burden, 1997). Moreover, this mismatch can be a reason for students' questioning of either the teacher's professionalism or their instructional approaches (Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016).

One of the studies which aimed to identify if there is a match between teachers' and students' understandings is that of Alimorad & Tajgozari (2016), which analyzed how Iranian high-achieving and low-achieving high school students' perceptions about effective teaching vary with those of high school English teachers. Overall, 202 high school students and 75 teachers participated in that research. The authors developed a questionnaire with 50 main questions about teacher effectiveness and participants were presented with a range of options from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The authors considered the low level of English proficiency of the learners and translated the survey questions into Persian (the participants' native language), as well as avoided theoretical terms and teaching terminology to make the questions more comprehensible for the learners (Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016), which adds to the advantages of the study. The authors found some interesting findings: although teachers believed that one of the students' needs in classes was friendliness and attention from teachers, the students valued teachers' strict regulative behavior and administrative roles. Additionally, while the views of high and low achievers did not differ substantially, both groups of learners expressed views that were significantly different to those of the teachers' (Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016). Nevertheless, despite these differences between the perceptions of teachers and learners, students' final language achievements were not found to be affected by this mismatch. This is in contrast to Brown's (2009), William & Burden's (1997) findings that suggest adverse effects on

students' grades in cases where mismatch of perspectives exists. The limitation of the study might be the research tool (structured questionnaire) which might not have fully captured the participants' understanding in contrast to individual interviews or focus group discussions.

Another mixed methods study was conducted by Yağcıoğlu (2016) in order to identify undergraduate students' and teachers' perceptions towards effective English language teachers. The author used a questionnaire together with interviews to obtain in-depth information from the participants. The quantitative data showed that the students valued professional qualities such as abilities to teach reading, writing, speaking, pronunciation, grammar and listening skills more than personal qualities of teachers. It also revealed that teachers' creativeness and providing clear instructions are important for students (Yağcıoğlu, 2016). The author stated that although the students valued professional skills of teachers more to personal qualities, teachers rated all types of qualities equally important. Despite the difference between teachers and students' views on effective teaching, it is worth pointing out that both high school and undergraduate students value teachers' professionalism as most important to effective teaching.

Context-relevant pedagogy

As stated earlier, it is impossible and inappropriate to identify an ideal model of effective teaching that would be applicable for every country due to contextual and system wise differences. However, research in education can suggest principles and standards that can improve teaching and learning outcomes depending on educational and contextual goals. As Schweisfurth (2014) states, pedagogies can travel in the form of "contextualized pedagogies that are responsive to local cultures and resource realities" (p. 79). The latter implies that any assessment of pedagogy brings into question the values, goals and visions of the society it presents (James & Pollard, 2011). James & Pollard (2011) introduces three major concerns from

philosophical and political perspectives that educational standards are based on. The first is linked to the needs of the labor market, the second refers to social cohesion and the inclusion of groups that indicates equality and diversity of the society, and the last one concerns development and personal wellbeing.

Due to the contextual differences across countries, it is almost impossible to quantitatively gauge and analyze the indicators of the effectiveness of teaching that would work for every educational system (James & Pollard, 2011). However, researchers of different countries offer their views concerning the effectiveness of teaching which enables stakeholders to examine current practices, the gaps between state expectations and local implementation, and rated specific methods or innovations (James & Pollard, 2011). James & Pollard (2011) introduce ten principles for effective pedagogy developed by the Teaching and Learning Research Program (TLRP) which comprises a ten-year evidence-based research project across the UK representing primary, secondary and higher education sectors.

James and Pollard's (2011) publication of TLRP's ten principles for effective pedagogy in the UK raises heated debates among educationalists of other countries. Below is an overview of available responses from Germany and Japan. According to Gogolin (2011), TLRP's ten principles seem to lack one of the core principles which is a personal approach to learners, since the pedagogy presented by TLRP in a broader sense entails a learning environment and policies, as well as cultural and structural settings. At the same time, in Japan there is no such an issue as defining an effective or universal pedagogy because the country does not use such general term as pedagogy for all educational sectors, instead, the term pedagogy is assumed to be a combination of comparative education, philosophy of education, sociology and management of education (Abiko, 2011). Moreover, Abiko (2011) states that James and Pollards' (2011) quote

that views learners as human species who have commonalities is quite similar than in contrast in Japan where educationalists also focus on what learners have in common rather than learners' individualities. Teaching and learning in different countries prioritize questioning, structuring or modeling depending on the cultural patterns of those countries (Tharp & Dalton, 2007). Therefore, these responses of German and Japanese researchers might be further evidence that the focus of pedagogy and definition of its effectiveness varies among countries and contexts. Bernstein (2000) calls pedagogy a *cultural relay*. Reforms in education can be "regarded as the outcome of the struggle to produce and institutionalize a particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 65).

Guthrie (2018) in his book *Classroom Change in Developing Countries: From Progressive Cage to Formalistic Frame* argues that it is inappropriate and causes difficulties for at least 32 developing countries including "Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, etc." (p. 20) in implementing progressive teaching styles due to sustained prevalence of contextual formalism in the named counties. Schweisfurth (2013) also states that the political regimes of the countries predominantly nurture the teaching and learning behaviors in a classroom. Teaching in authoritarian governments is implied to be more teacher-dominated and as having an authoritative role, while democratic political regimes require their population to be active civil participants in the countries' life, which can also be reflected in more egalitarian and collaborative citizens in a classroom space (Schweisfurth, 2013).

Learner-centered education

Learner-centered education "is not simple to define, not least because of the plethora of associated terms including, for example, progressive education, problem-based or enquiry-based learning, constructivism and child-centered learning" (Schweisfurth, 2013, p. 9). However,

Schweisfurth (2013) asserted that LCE is neither definitely teacher-dominated nor content-based learning where the teacher is supposed to "pour knowledge" into the empty minds of the learners (p. 10). Early researchers of constructivist theory were Vygotsky (1978) who offered the term 'zone of proximal development' (ZDP) and Bruner (1966) who explained the 'scaffolding'. These terms deal with a learning concept that is built with the help of a more knowledgeable person and takes into account learners' current knowledge and abilities.

Bernstein (2000) also contributed to the understanding of LCE by offering his widely cited concept of 'framing'. This represents the principle of "competence" in pedagogy which emphasizes evaluative criteria of the presence of knowledge rather than its absence. In the competence model learners might have control over the time they spend on activities, classroom resources and the space which rely on their self-regulative skills and positions teachers as facilitators (Sriprakash, 2011). LCE finds its place in Bernstein's weak pedagogical discourse framing that gives the child greater freedom and control over learning and interactions (Sriprakash, 2011).

Sriprakash conducted her research in 2005 in the rural government primary schools in the state called Karnataka (India) on implementing child-centered reform to address a standardized syllabus at school and fixed assessment criteria; teacher-centeredness and school system of instruction-based context memorization led by a text-book. Child-centered pedagogy was expected to bring classroom study into a space where learning is constructed by students' needs, available media, community, school resources and teachers themselves (Sriprakash, 2011). In the framework of this reform, it was suggested to teachers to weaken hierarchies between students and pay more attention to their needs to make learning more pleasurable, yet requiring teachers to have more effective communicative abilities, detailed planning of time and resources

(Sripraksh, 2011). This learner-centered model is labeled as expensive pedagogy or therapeutic by Bernstein (2000) due to teachers' commitment in terms of preparation time and opportunities to draw teaching resources. However, Sriprakash (2011) argues that child-centered pedagogy is a natural choice in pedagogical reforms and poses questions regarding the measurements of effective communications in that child-friendly and liberal pedagogy, constraints of the reforms, and social and material resources necessary to sustain it. Moreover, Sriprakash (2011) states that easily visible teaching tools such as markers, flipcharts, group activities, and the presence of media resources are often accounted for as child-centered education. Similarly, Alexander (2008) notes that the '5-scale' grading becomes a dubious assurance of quality level, or that the use of TLMs' (teaching-learning materials) might only be an attempt at child-centered pedagogy in classroom practice.

In a literature review written by Westbrook et al. (2013), LCE is also argued as one of the misinterpreted approaches in education since students' active involvement in a lesson is usually understood as constructivism. Westbrook et al. (2013) state that child-centered practice might be misinterpreted as child self-discovery that can lead to laissez-faire policy of teachers and create cognitive overburden that is later time-consuming to correct. Moreover, active pedagogy within the constraints of LCE implies that learners work predominantly in groups (Westbrook et al., 2013). A study conducted by Nannyonjo (2007) found that students who worked in a pair or group had higher indicators of learning achievement than those who did not. However, Westbrook et al. (2013) further argue that group work may not only be ineffective in some learning conditions, but it can also bring difficulties for large class sizes, leading to the increase of noise levels and teachers' preparation time as well as cause material issues for the teacher due to the scarcity of learning resources. In addition, Schweisfurth (2013) offers a motivation

continuum for students' group work. Learners' intrinsic motivation is considered in the study as one of the facilitators of students' active involvement in group activities. This means that the effectiveness of students' collaboration may also depend on whether students are personally interested to gain benefits from the process. However, the types of collaboration and choice of learning strategies in LCE predominantly depend on teachers' teaching styles.

Guthrie (2011) developed a continuum of teaching styles that views teachers' roles in relation to LCE in five paradigms: authoritarian, formalistic, flexible, liberal, and democratic. Introducing variables such as "students' role (passive to active), content approach (teaching to learning) and teachers' reinforcement (negative to positive)" (p. 205), he created a model that helps to examine whether the classroom learning is democratized offering learner-centeredness with students' active involvement in decision-making or teacher-dominance that view the teacher in a hierarchical role. The flexible teaching model is placed in the middle between authoritarian to democratic within the three variables describing the model where the teachers' dictations are observed enabling some shared and delegated responsibility with learners.

How to measure teaching effectiveness?

Although there is an array of literature suggesting the standards and principles for effective pedagogy (Tharp et al., 2000), there are only a few studies that discuss measures to gauge the effectiveness of instructions given in a classroom (Doherty et al, 2002). Meanwhile, Doherty et al. (2002) developed and validated standards performance continuum (SPC) to assess teachers' performance on a lesson based on Tharp's five standards of effective pedagogy. The SPC consists of five dimensions: joint productive activity (JPA), language and literacy development, contextualization, challenging activities and instructional conversations. The dimensions' values ranged from 0 (not observed), when none of the standards were observed, to

4 (integrating), when at least three standards were implemented (Doherty et al., 2002). The long-term research which contained three studies with 15-42 elementary school teachers from California, New Mexico and Florida revealed a positive relationship between the teachers' standards' use and the students' results on standardized tests at the end of the school year. This suggests that Tharp's standards for effective pedagogy can be effective in the enhancement of students' academic outcomes.

Another indicator of assessing the effectiveness of instructors is students' feedback (Hoyt & Pallet, 1999). The given feedback helps departments and instructors to improve their teaching methodologies and practices (Ory, 2001). There was an attempt made by Sastry, Rao, Rao and Clee (2016) to measure students' preferences about teaching methods that are used by their instructors. The interview with 200 students from four departments showed that the students rated the lecturing method as the best teaching method since they feel more comfortable about the knowledge they gain (Sastry et al., 2016). As the authors state, the participants were informed that the most rated method would be dominantly used in their teaching, nevertheless, the lecture method was topping the students' rating to poster presentation method. The sample of participants that are not school students but university students can be considered as the limitation of the study to the current research, as well as the absence of explanation of the rationale for the authors' choice of methods. Therefore, it can be stated that learners' feedback can be one of the assessment indicators of teaching effectiveness, which, sometimes, paradoxically does not reflect educationalists' expectations about what learners would prefer as effective teaching.

Effective Learning

A cognitive process of learning has been widely researched from both neuroscientific and educational perspectives. Several recent studies on learning were attempted by Lee (2010), Ekin and Damar (2013), and Kourieos and Evripidou (2013). According to cognitive psychology, learning occurs if new information resonates with prior knowledge (Baddeley, 1990; Dansereau, 1988; Wittrock, 1986). In the past 20 years the notion of the "learner as a sponge" has changed into the notion of "learning as active constructor of meaning" (Wilson & Peterson, 2006, p. 2). This might mean that the model in which teachers talk and students merely absorb the information has failed to prove its effectiveness (Cuban, 1993). Learning can occur if teachers provide clear instructions and students pay attention to, are motivated by and care about the process (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). Therefore, more effective learning is expected as a process in which students are mentally present in learning and teaching is provided with the inclusion of social-constructivist approaches.

In their working paper Wilson & Peterson (2006) discuss the constructivist approach to learning underscoring the role of interpretation while constructing new knowledge which means that what learners absorb can be interpreted through the prism of their prior experience, values, knowledge, and the degree of attention paid to the learning process. Therefore, the authors state that teachers can create opportunities to learn; however, students' interpretations will be left beyond teacher's control. Learning will happen effectively if there is an opportunity to learn something new and students are enthusiastic about it (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). Furthermore, students being quiet does not mean that learning is not happening. Likewise, students' active performances might not necessarily mean that learning is taking place (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). It is important to have a balance between all of these conditions. Finally, the authors

concluded that teachers should have a pedagogical repertoire of various teaching methods that would ensure sustaining the interest of students who prefer multiple ways of learning.

Ginnis (2002) sets arguments in relation to the understanding of learning in a learner-centered approach. Based on neuroscientific literature (Butterworth, 1999; Goleman, 1998), he offered four cognitive principles that can enhance the learning of school students. These principles helped create a manual with teaching strategies that introduce step-by-step guidelines for teachers with a suggested great variety of activities. Ginnis (2002) claims that all the activities (eg. back to back, card racing, distillation, guess who, hierarchies and many others) have been tested throughout years of his teaching experiences to provide a balance between cognitive principles of learning and teaching excellence.

Effective pedagogy in Kazakhstan

Within the context of Kazakhstan, there appears a visible lack of studies that investigate students' perceptions about effective teaching, and almost no research is conducted to investigate their views on effective English lessons.

The ways to measure lesson effectiveness might vary across contexts, levels of education, and curriculum subjects. For some countries, it might be providing quality knowledge which is, in turn, different in Kazakhstan. The notion of quality of education in Kazakhstan comprises an alignment of governmental requirements and state standards for mainstream schools that are not specified as characteristics of lessons or desired outcomes, but mainly outcome-based that focus on the result seeking to obtain a particular percentage of students' average progress in relation to the minimum required state standard (MoES, 2007).

The focus to assess the effectiveness of a lesson should be placed not only on the final result but also on the learning process itself since it "shapes students well-being and happiness"

(Gibbons & Silva, 2011, p. 9). System wise, the focus of education in Kazakhstan is placed on the students' final progress, rather than the learning process; this strategy is also called *'backward design'* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). By this design the author means that the teacher focuses on the evidence that would demonstrate whether a student achieved lesson outcomes. Regarding assessment, Kazakhstani education is experiencing great changes moving from the traditional "1-5" grading system to criteria-based assessment.

Kazakhstan has updated the state compulsory curriculum as well as assessment. The transition was piloted in 153 mainstream schools of every region prior to the reform and based on the experience of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) for gifted learners that serve as an experimental platform and a benchmark for secondary education (MoES, 2017). Switching from an "excessively theoretical, wide and superficial curriculum" (OECD, 2018, p. 12) to a competency-based pedagogy was expected to help maintain both social and high-order thinking skills rather than a prior fundamentally subject-based approach. OECD (2018) study also noted that the methods which were effective for gifted learners in NIS may not equally be effective for all learners in mainstream schools.

The reform comprised the steps of transition covering several grades each year. The teachers were provided with professional development courses organized by the pedagogical excellence organization in Kazakhstan (MoES, 2017). However, teachers were initially resistant to the reform. The issue of transforming teachers' practices raised various concerns on the application of both the new curriculum and the assessment as well as on the lack of resources. Additionally, the new curriculum placed a greater emphasis on teaching English language as a language of instruction for subjects of science and technology oriented (OECD, 2018). The teachers, including those who teach English language, have faced a great challenge moving from

the rote and content-oriented approach to teaching skills. This transition may be a starting point to switch the focus from an outcome-based approach to a process-oriented approach in school education.

Summary

Based on the analyzed literature, it is apparent that pedagogy and teaching approaches depend on the country's political, contextual orientations and cultures, which means that there is no universal teaching method that can be deemed effective for all contexts. However, some researchers, such as Ko, Sammons & Bakkum (2013) or Tharp et al. (2000) have studied and developed basic principles of effective pedagogy. Furthermore, some studies attempted to define the measurements of teaching effectiveness, although the continuum cannot also be applied to every country.

Teachers view their effectiveness as a combination of scaffolding, communicative skills and abilities that enable them to relate complex concepts to learners' real lives. Also, teachers' teaching approaches and tactics sometimes depend on their own initial learning or educational training backgrounds. Learners, in turn, may value their teachers' professional skills more than their friendliness or other personal attitudes. Teaching has been changing from rote learning to learner-centered throughout the last decade; however, the notion of LCE is still challenging to define and apply, especially in developing countries, due to time and resource constraints.

Teachers in Kazakhstani schools used to measure their effectiveness by the learners' outcomes at the end of the academic year in percentage figures. However, the educational system has been changing from content-oriented to skills-based which may be a trigger for raising lesson quality for the learners in contemporary society that would ensure more engagement and better learning.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

This research focuses on secondary school students' understandings regarding effective English lessons. The study employs a qualitative research approach since it offers two main opportunities to achieve the purpose of the study. First, the research questions imply the collection of learners' short stories and narration of what an effective English language lesson constitutes for them. Qualitative research helps to delve into the views of individuals or "explore a problem and develop a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). In this regard, qualitative research design allows maintaining participants' in-depth interpretations about school English lessons and teachers' practice that they deemed effective. Second, qualitative research is distinct with its inductive feature that triggers the formation of particular concepts on the basis of obtained data (Yin, 2011). This feature of qualitative design allows the formulation of theoretical principles that shape the participants' understandings and, therefore, allows the second research question to be addressed.

The theory formation process out of the obtained data can be the most central to the concept of constructivist grounded theory. The grounded theory suits the research paradigm not only because of its aspects that enable the conceptualization of theoretical categories and generate preliminary explanations about a phenomenon (Charmaz, 2011), particularly of an effective English lesson but also due to its properties to evaluate the theories' usefulness in data analysis (Cooper, 2012). In addition, to gain relevant and fit theories in pedagogy and teaching, the data being collected should be grounded (Charmaz, 2011) which means in the field, that would allow the researcher to go back to the theories multiple times to better understand the phenomenon.

Since I am investigating the learners' understanding of effective English lessons, I believe that the nature of reality is constructed as others experience it. Moreover, I believe that the constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2012) allows us to understand more intangible realities of peoples' experiences. The reality can be limited to contexts, in this study specifically to the learners' experiences and assumptions surrounded by their own school, country and cultural natures. This study asserts that the truth is subjective because it depends on humans' experiences and ways of thinking. Therefore, the study attempts to gather learners' stories and claims connecting them to theoretical underpinnings to build a legitimate knowledge on the research topic.

Research Site

The research site is one of the prestigious and autonomous schools in Kazakhstan for gifted students that enrolls learners via a highly competitive selection process along with teachers who must undergo an examination to be employed. Therefore, it aims to teach its students high-order skills and apply teaching methods that would work for gifted learners. The school has more than 1000 students and employs about 130 teachers. Every student at this school is funded by the government at three times the unit cost of students in mainstream schools (OECD, 2018). Additionally, the school designs and utilizes its own curricula different to the mainstream schools, including its own teacher training programs (OECD, 2018), professional development and attestation processes to serve the students' needs.

The preference for conducting the research in this school was due to several reasons. The main reason was my professional background as an English teacher in one of the schools with the same organizational and functional requirements. I was aware that such schools offer their teachers some autonomy in terms of teaching strategies and work excellence, as well as create

and encourage teachers' collaborative culture. Additionally, since the school specializes in teaching the gifted, I attempted to understand whether the needs of learners with special abilities are met. Therefore, it was extremely important for me as a researcher to explore how learners at schools for gifted students understand the effectiveness of English language lessons.

Participants

All grades in the selected school are taught in English; however, there was a reason why only 12-grade students were invited to participate in the study. First of all, the school enrolls only middle or higher school students with some learning experiences in mainstream or other schools that they can compare and contrast to their current one. Moreover, twelfth graders are in their final academic year in school, so they presumably had the maximum variety of English lessons given by various English teachers, therefore, were not limited by lack of experience. The participants were assumed to provide open and more analytical contemplations by reflecting on their experiences in the current and previous grades. Hence, purposeful sampling was used to select respondents who could provide rich data to address the research questions. Additionally, this qualitative inquiry used purposeful sampling since it does not pursue the generalization of its findings to a population, but the understanding of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012).

As to the number of participants, fifteen students from 12th grade participated in the study. The invitation letters were sent to the selected cohort by their curators in advance to invite the volunteers who intended to participate in the study. In total, fifteen learners were chosen from three different classes. Their views were accessed via three focus group discussions (FGDs), each FGD comprising five students. Due to the voluntary participation, the variation based on gender and competency level of English emerged naturally within the sample resulting in three female and twelve male students. Thus, the selected participants were expected to

provide rich and in-depth information in relation to their understanding of English language lesson effectiveness.

Data Collection

The data was conducted by semi-structured focus group interviews. The main strength of the focus group discussions is "the ability to produce a concentrated amount of data on precisely the topic" (Morgan, 1997, p. 13). Besides being one of the quick and easy tools of qualitative studies that enables the participants to produce rich data, FGDs can also create an environment for sharing valuable insights for the research that would be hard to obtain in one-to-one interviews (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Its contributive and less controlled nature may result in particular issues being raised in relation to the topic being researched that may be left aside from the researcher's eyes. FGDs are beneficial especially in gaining data from school students since they increase the willingness of participants to cooperate and contribute to the discussion (Creswell, 2012). Also, due to the fact that the participants outnumber the researcher, the focus group discussion can reduce the perceived power of the researcher who might be seen as an authoritative adult, and participants, who in this case are lower in age and social hierarchy in relation to the researcher. This can help make students comfortable, resulting in better engagement of students in the discussion.

All three FGDs were organized in the selected school for the participants' convenience. Each FGD lasted from 45 to 70 minutes. The introduction of the aim of the study along with the consent forms were given prior to the discussions. The discussions were audiotaped with the permission of the participants. The participants were asked questions regarding their experiences of effective and ineffective (good or bad) lessons. It took 5-10 minutes for the discussions to

create an active and open flow of opinion of the speakers. The discussions themselves brought up some interesting findings that are discussed in the next chapter.

Data Analysis

As I was analyzing multiple-page, manually-written transcripts of each FGD, I also tried to focus on the participants' nonverbal communication, behavioral responses that cannot be defined in the transcripts, since "they do not reflect the entire character of the discussion (Steward, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007, p. 3). Additionally, during the coding process, in addition to keeping in mind the research questions, I tried to recall how the group members collaborated and achieved consensus or tried to build shared meaning around the central topic.

First, I divided the transcript into common topics in relation to the research question. As most recurring replies emerged, I combined them into codes that later were gathered into larger themes. Thus, I have had "context units" (Krippendorf, 2013, p. 97) of the participants' understandings that stand out as an independent account or had some relation to each other such as "teachers' characteristics" or "teachers' behavior". Moreover, my first outline of codes significantly differs from the last one, since I was constantly changing the themes as they emerged throughout the process. As a result, I had to go back to my literature review to provide an overview for the findings in the studies and make my research more accurate. I have also tried not to judge the participants' replies as right or wrong avoiding the issue of interest but examined each answer of the respondents providing interpretations for myself.

Ethical Considerations

"Ethical issues should be of primary consideration of the study and any research should respect the sites by protecting their rights and are minimally interruptive in nature" (Creswell, 2012, p. 23). I have ensured that all the precautions written in the guidelines of the Nazarbayev

University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE) Research Committee are in place. After the permission of the gatekeeper (the principal of the school), the participants were recruited and provided with the consent form to be signed (see Appendix A). I explained the voluntary nature of the study as well as their rights and withdrawal from the research according to their free will.

The participants also were informed that they will be given pseudonyms to guarantee anonymity (other than for myself) and confidentiality that is within my influence. In case of the publication the research will not use the personal information of participants as well as the schools' name for any purposes that would make the participants identifiable. The data was stored in my personal laptop and protected by a password so that only I have access to the participants' real names.

The interview avoided sensitive questions or questions that would put the participants in an uncomfortable position or traumatize them. I tried my best to create an emotionally convenient mode and an informal and laid-back atmosphere. First, I asked about how students were feeling and if they have already come up with the university choice and shared with them my teaching background to refer to the personal importance of the research topic. The students were reminded that they need to discuss lessons or practices without naming particular teachers. The participants were assured that their answers will be reported with no distortion and that they can read the research findings later. Finally, they were given the contact information of the researcher or the supervisor to address any questions or concerns they might have.

Limitations

Despite the rich data discovered, the research has some limitations. First of all, the findings are limited to a school type that can represent only 1% of school students in Kazakhstan (OECD, 2018). Another restriction would be the tool of the study. Although the control the

researcher has over the flow of the discussions can lead them to the right focus, it can also be disadvantageous since the researcher can never be sure how natural the interactions are (Morgan, 1997). The findings can also be limited, as in any interviews, by self-reported data. Additionally, one of the classic constraints of FGDs is the quality of the data that depends on how the interaction in a group develops (Janis, 1982). This means that group discussion itself may influence other participants' opinions. However, in my FGDs, I have not noticed the interruption of students' ideas by other learners and tried to pay attention to every students' reply. These limitations may be addressed in the future studies of English language lesson effectiveness by ensuring a larger number of FGDs and selecting one of the mainstream schools that would represent a bigger percentage of Kazakhstani school students.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

The study aims to examine twelfth grade school students' understandings of effective English lessons through three focus group discussions. More specifically, the study explored how students understood an effective English lesson in terms of teaching and learning approaches and what particular pedagogical and learning theories underpinned students' understanding of what constitutes an effective English lesson for them. The analysis is presented under three main themes. The first theme, Effective teaching practices represents students' understandings of an effective lesson. The second theme, Teachers' disposition and skills discusses the kind of disposition and skills that students associate with being an effective English teacher. The third theme, Pedagogical approaches underpinning students understanding seeks to deconstruct students' understanding of effective English lessons and teachers in terms of their underpinning theoretical orientations.

Effective Teaching Practices

Students' narratives of an effective English lesson could be broadly categorized under four sub-themes. First of all, effective teaching was understood as comprising a particular type of collaboration in class that would support students' learning. The sub-theme "group work" presents specific acts of teaching that the participants' found most effective for them. Second, participating students articulated an effective English lesson in terms of the opportunities it offered them to learn English language in an authentic way in the classroom. The third sub-theme, depicts the participants' understanding of the importance of paying equal attention to all language skills. Fourth, students identified differentiation and individual approaches as fostering their learning, including the completion of their home assignments for English lessons. Fifth, I present the participants' stories in terms of the feedback they provided to their teachers as an instrument to ensure the effectiveness of English lessons.

Group work. Students' narratives strongly indicated that they prefer diversity both in teaching methods and forms of collaboration, language skills, and class activities and tasks. Once our discussions had started in all three groups, the responses such as 'when we worked in a group' (Kairat, FGD-1; Saniya, FGD-2; Sultan, FGD-3) frequently emerged. The majority of the participants preferred interactive and participative forms of collaboration that would engage all students in learning. Nurzhan (FGD-1) specifically emphasized the importance of peer engagement for better learning. This means that the feeling of being in collaboration with others was valued by the participants as leading to an effective learning process. More importantly, the students highlighted equal participation of group members as a significant condition for effective group work. As Daniyar (FGD-1) said, "I think the lesson was effective if each student was equally engaged in the process, when during group work every student participated." Similarly, Amir (FGD-3) pointed out, "Group projects are very effective, but everyone should participate.

All of them should work equally and together to achieve the goal. I think students should be able to delegate responsibility within the group."

Classroom activities that involved group work such as debates, peer teaching, group presentations, and reading competitions appeared as the students' common answers in relation to their understanding of an effective English lesson. Table 1 indicates how many times the participants across the three FGDs mentioned a specific teaching method as the most preferable for them in English classes.

Table 1. Effective teaching methods mentioned by the students

Type of activity	Time(s) mentioned
Book Discussion/ Reading Ratings/ Alternative Interpretation of Books	9
Watching Films	7
Competitions/ games	7
Debates	4
Singing songs	3
Group/ individual presentations	3
Peer teaching	1

However, in each FGD, a minority of students favored individual work as the most productive approach for them and disapproved of group work. Participants from each FGD stated that lessons providing sufficient opportunities for individualized work may also be effective.

My participants viewed the issues of unequal participation in group work as a shared responsibility between teacher and peers. They deemed that high-quality teachers' instruction and learner's leadership skills may ensure effective group work. Altyn (FGD-2):

Sometimes in group work, there are people who do not contribute to group work at all. I think everyone should be engaged and contribute equally which would make the lesson effective. It depends on maybe students' leadership skills. However, it is also important when the teacher gives us clear instructions on our roles in a group.

For the students, effective teaching methods in English language lessons should be engaging and involve every student equally in various collaborative activities and sometimes also provide opportunities to work individually, as discussed later in section 1.4. Teachers' well-organized instructions as well as learners' proactivity were both seen pivotal for group work to be effective and supportive of learning.

Authentic learning opportunities. Among their responses about effective classroom learning, watching meaningful films in English emerged in second place as the most frequent answers for all three FGDs. To the question as to whether they prefer watching films at home, they expressed their willingness to discuss those films afterwards with their peers and teachers in the class. As one of the participants articulated: "I also agree that watching films in English is interesting and useful. We not only did improve our English, but also discussed the moral of the films that could guide us sometimes in life" (Kaidar, FGD-2).

Watching films was seen to support their language learning, as well as providing them with useful knowledge about life. When asked how frequently they would prefer watching films in English lessons, the consensus was one lesson weekly. However, one of the students added: "I visited a school in Germany two years ago. And their teachers showed students different films

for about twice a week. So, they just sat and watched movies, and I also liked it" (Mansur, FGD-2).

The participants viewed their English teachers as another authentic provider of the language. Hence, they asserted that it is essential for them if their teachers would speak only English in the class. Additionally, the participants highlighted the importance of stimuli such as bonuses or "candies" in motivating students to use only English in class. One of the participants articulated:

I wish English lessons to be entirely in English language. It takes you to the environment where you should find words by yourself to express your thoughts. We had this practice earlier. We even had penalties for saying non-English words. We really liked this game (FGD-1, Kairat).

Therefore, the participants understood that in order to learn effectively they need to be provided authentic sources of English language such as watching original movies and a teacher providing an immersive language environment by speaking only English in the lessons. It was also important for them to be able to discuss the films, presumably, to exchange diverse opinions on a particular phenomenon or topic.

Emphasis on all language skills. Following this, the discussions shifted to the participants' preferences for practicing different language skills in every lesson. Participants of all three groups put an equal focus on all skills to improving their competence in English. For example:

I think when you study a topic you should not practice only one skill, such as reading, for example. But you should also practice listening, speaking and writing on this topic. If you practice only one skill, it is not interesting (Altyn, FGD-2).

More importantly, most participants valued practicing speaking skills more than writing or grammar practice in English. Some students even emphasized that speaking activities help them become more confident: "Usually I am shy, but after that presentation, I started to speak better in front of the class" (Kaidar, FGD-1).

Nurzhan (FGD-1), in turn, preferred written grammar practice including writing essays at home rather than in class time. Similarly, Daniyar (FGD-1) articulated:

I didn't like the lesson when we had a writing task for two lessons in turn, and at the end of which we were asked to give written feedback for the lesson. I felt really exhausted after that lesson. I think it is better to do the writing stuff at home (Daniyar, (FGD-1).

However, Sultan (FGD-3) acknowledged that effective learning means a lot of practice in the lessons and related it to reading practice specifically: "... effective language learning is when you take the material and practice, practice until you recognize all the words".

Given this, the participants expressed their need and the importance of opportunities given by their teachers for practicing diverse language skills in English lessons; however, some of them marked practicing writing essays and grammar as a home time activity.

Differentiation. Most students preferred differentiated home assignments according to their learning abilities. Although the participants understood the importance of homework, some of them expressed that "it sometimes felt like a waste of time" (Zhangir, FDG 1). Therefore, they saw differentiated assignments based on their abilities as more useful in learning English. For instance, Kairat (FGD-1) claimed:

There occurs a difference between students' knowledge, that is why we need an individual approach for us. I think homework should be given only for those students who asked for it or had trouble in understanding the new material. But others who did not

opt for homework should be able to "prove" their knowledge in the lesson or formative assessment.

In addition, students preferred to have individual feedback in terms of their incomplete homework. I discuss this issue further in section 2.2.

Some students were aware of their individualized and diversified needs towards language use and learning; however, they mentioned the lack of their teachers' equal attention to them. They claimed that teachers paid more attention to students of higher abilities rather than supporting those who were struggling to complete given tasks.

Sometimes students are short of attention from the teacher. As I said, everybody is different, and a teacher should be a professional who has an individual approach to every student. But teachers usually pay attention mostly to those who do faster and better in the lesson, or who completed the tasks easily (Tamsan, FGD-3).

The students used the concepts of differentiated homework and individual approach in the lessons as desired pedagogical practices used by their teachers.

Feedback to a teacher. Along with differentiated approaches, my participants touched upon the importance of providing timely feedback to teachers that would ensure the effectiveness of the lesson. Students from FGD-3 expressed that their teachers were accessible to both anonymous and open feedback from them that would lead to appropriate changes in teacher's practice.

Feedback is useful when we write an important exam, we are usually asked to write about the parts we mostly struggled with. We write truthfully about our challenges, but if it is about the lessons, we are usually too lazy to write the texts, so we can just tell our opinion to a teacher directly (Amir, FGD-3).

The significance of students' feedback to teachers largely hinged on students' perceptions of what teachers do with the feedback. Students were more likely to offer teachers specific feedback if they felt teachers would change their teaching or lessons in response: "When students understand that the feedback would not result in any actions from the teacher, they would prefer to describe the lesson using general words just as a routine and repetitive action" (Altyn, FGD-2).

Another participant from the first FGD claimed that it depends on teachers' personality whether they ignore or respond to the feedback. "If a teacher is ready to change, I think one can detect those demotivated students, and do something about them" (Mansur, FGD-2). This was concurred by another student: "We usually do not give feedback as we understand that it would not lead to a change. Usually, we are given stickers only after open lessons and they are just a formality" (Altyn, FGD-2).

In sum, the participants appeared to recognize the importance of providing feedback to their teachers to improve instruction; however, it was considered less meaningful if they believed that feedback was just a tick box exercise with no genuine intention on the part of teachers to use it to change their practice.

Teachers' Disposition & Skills

An effective English lesson was described not only in terms of methods, activities and skills, but also with regards to teacher dispositions and characteristics, as discussed below. The theme reveals teachers' rapport as an integral part of an effective teaching process. It incorporates 12th graders' experiences of a positive and negative classroom environment that their teachers could create, teachers' response to students' incomplete homework along with the characteristics an effective English teacher should possess.

Positive classroom environment. Without any exceptions, all the participants were unanimous that an effective English lesson can happen only in an emotionally comfortable environment, with the teacher being pivotal to the creation of such an environment. Students used emotive language that illustrated the pivotal role of emotions in learning effectively in an English lesson. Students used positive emotional states such as "relax and peace," "liveliness and engagement," "excitement," "friendly atmosphere," "freedom to express your opinion," "confidence while speaking" when they were sharing their experiences of effective lessons, whereas "boring," "wanting to sleep," "emotional pressure," "negative atmosphere," "when teacher's sad" were emotional states when experiences of an ineffective lesson were narrated. As an example, Askar (FGD-1) stated:

> ...when teachers just give a task for you to do the entire lesson. They do not try to do a discussion; neither explain the topic. You just sit and do written tasks. And there appears a heavy atmosphere in the class … I am not saying that teachers have to always entertain us… but make lessons more comfortable maybe…

In contrast to the above-mentioned negative emotions emerging from a lesson perceived as ineffective, when asked what gives the participants a sense of comfort, the participants mostly referred to the opportunities and sense of freedom given by their teachers to openly share their thoughts and ideas in the lesson. This could also support students' speaking skills which they highly valued, as discussed in section 1.2. Moreover, the students valued it most when their teachers did not direct them to the right answer, but instead let them know that their ideas were heard and appreciated them even when incorrect. For instance, Kaidar (FGD-2) expressed: "I like English lessons because you have freedom of opinion. We can think freely … and express our opinion freely. Absence of formal atmosphere…."

This resonates with what Kairat (FGD-1) said:

> I do not like when teachers try to deliver their own opinion to students and prove that
> they are right, it would be better if teachers would allow students to express their own
> opinion, and not label different opinions as right or wrong... and engage them to speak
> more.

Teachers' response to incomplete assignments. Much of the emotional stress experienced by the participants was related to how teachers dealt with cases of non-compliance, particularly when some students failed to complete the assigned homework. When teachers strongly admonished students for incomplete homework tasks, it caused considerable emotional negativity and set a negative condition for learning. My participants felt a tense atmosphere of mistrust when they saw such non-compliant students being lectured by a teacher. For those who had completed their homework and were ready for the lesson, this wasted their time. One of those students was Kamila (FGD-2):

> I remember when students hadn't done their homework, and the teacher got really
> angry … then the whole lesson went wrong into a somewhat negative tone. And other
> students may lose their time because of it, then it is hard to concentrate on the lesson
> itself. And the teachers themselves became aggressive the whole lesson. I think
> teachers should take these kinds of situations easy.

The above comment highlights that the personal disposition of teachers in terms of responding to potentially upsetting situations, such as when some students have not done their homework, is central to creating an emotional atmosphere that is supportive of learning and learners. Students felt particularly negative when teachers spent a lot of time to make non-

compliant students feel ashamed for failing to complete their homework task, as recounted by another student from FGD-3:

> When a teacher informs us that a particular student is facing troubles, it is ok. But this shouldn't be 30-40 minutes long and make others suffer too. In the end, the feeling of shame disappears, but you start to dislike the situation (Zhangir, FGD-3).

The participants felt that it would be to the emotional benefit of both the non-compliant students, as well as those who have fulfilled their obligations, that teachers offered "individual feedback" to those students (Amir, FGD-3).

My participants, thus, preferred to have individual feedback to ensure a comfortable learning environment. Moreover, sometimes they could question teachers' sincerity in tracking the completion of their assignment. They believed that public admonishing and mistrust aroused negative feelings amongst the participants, impacting on students' behavior and their engagement in lessons.

Teacher-student rapport. As the preceding discussion has highlighted, how teachers deal with cases of non-compliance influences learners' feelings and consequently might affect their engagement and learning in the lesson. By contrast, when students see teachers as commanding authority or as a friendly figure, it leads to positive attitudes, impacting positively on students' engagement in the lesson. When students were asked what kind of teachers they would wish to teach them English and why or what kind of communication strategies they find most effective, students' responses indicated that teachers who were seen as friendly, or teachers who were viewed as a leader or someone commanding authority were seen as the teacher in whose class they could learn in a positively charged atmosphere. Although, most of the participants favored teachers who could provide a balance between maintaining discipline in the

lesson by being strict and demonstrate care that could be expressed by humor or sharing personal stories.

> If a teacher is too strict to a student, he or she will make them kind of enemies. So, it is hard when the teacher is not friendly to you. But, at the same time, being too kind and open can be destructive for students and they might become impudent. So, there should be a balance (Saniya, FGD-2).

Teachers' sense of humor was believed to diffuse teachers' expectations of compliance with classroom rules, as expressed by Kairat (FGD-1): "I remember Miss A and Miss D. They were strict, but at the same time, they had a great sense of humor. I like this balance between discipline and a comfortable atmosphere".

The significance of teachers' sense of humor was seen central to fostering students' learning, as well as developing a good relationship between students and teachers:

> For example, we had a foreign teacher who tried to teach us only knowledge or give more lectures without any reaction to our feelings. I think that lessons were not that effective. But this year, we had a different teacher with a great sense of humor. He made jokes about English and we loved it as well as studying the subject. And these jokes really make you remember the topic for a long time (Zhangir, FGD-3).

While this balance between discipline and a friendly and comfortable atmosphere was seen as important to fostering a positive learning environment, students insisted that it was teachers who could make lessons interesting that could win their respect rather than those who arouse fear amongst the students. Kamila (FGD-2) said: "What some teachers might think is that if students are afraid of them, they have students' respect. But in fact, students respect teachers only if their lessons are interesting".

It was also equally important for the participants to feel that their teachers could relate to them. As one of the participants stated: "A teacher is first of all a human being. Teachers should make an impression of a good and leading person. I think a teacher should be like an older sister or brother. Personal relationships are important" (Nurzhan, FGD-1).

Similarly, most of the students in FGD-3 opted for a balance between these two classroom management strategies, maintaining academic discipline and friendly behavior. As one of the participants replied:

> Teachers should let students know at the beginning that they are not our parents or peers, but teachers who require discipline and other educational stuff. They can be a friend to us too, but also, they should show the limits of personal relationships which students cannot cross. Everybody in the class does not have to love the teacher, but definitely respect him or her in the lessons (Aspan, FGD-3).

My participants saw effective teaching as linked to their learning and effective teachers as those who could propel their learning. Friendly and sociable relationships between them and their teacher was seen vital to their learning.

> Miss D.… We had very good relationships with her. She always organized small informal talks with us, every Friday we would read books in English, also we could have tea parties at times with her… we ordered cakes, pizzas. We loved to help her clean after those parties, we had kind of family ties and she was very kind to us (Kaidar, FGD-2).

The significance of the relationship between the teacher and students emerged again when I asked participants how they would teach if they were an English teacher. While they mentioned that they would practice active ways of learning, they emphasized that they would

build comfortable relationships with their prospective students. Such a relationship would then offer a springboard for their students' learning: "I would try to be friends with my students first. To show that I am also a human-being with similar problems, or to share my personal stories with them … to show that I have commonalities with them" (Amir, FGD-3).

Pedagogical approaches underpinning students' understandings

Students' understanding of effective teaching and teachers, as discussed above, are underpinned by their understandings of learning and pedagogy. This theme deconstructs the theories of learning and pedagogy that shaped the participants' understandings of an effective English lesson.

Teaching Styles: Flexible Teaching. Theories of learning can be seen in two major trajectories: teacher-centered or teacher-dominated (Alexander, 2008), which implies traditional rote learning and utilizing a didactic, 'chalk and talk' teaching style; and LCE which requires learners to take some control over what and how they learn (Schweisfurth, 2013). Despite the definitions given, in practice, teaching styles can be ambiguous to distinguish clearly due to the contextual, political, social, and material backgrounds of practitioners (Lattimer, 2015). Therefore, to see how the participants understand effective English lessons in terms of teaching styles, their replies will be analyzed through Guthrie's (2011) classroom teaching style model.

Vygotsky (1978), the "Russian scholar and father of constructivism" (Schweisfurth, 2013, p. 22) stressed the importance of students' social interaction and active involvement in building their learning. Group work and active learning methods (for example, debates, reading games, and peer teaching) were among the most common replies of the participants towards a good English lesson. This means that most of my participants strived for collaboration and active involvement which aligns well with notions of learning within social constructivism and is a

feature of LCE practice. However, since the participants stressed equal participation, their leadership skills, and teachers' clear instructions (Altyn, FGD-2) as necessary conditions for effective group work, the teaching style they preferred would not be fully aligned with the democratized environment of LCE. If this is applied to Guthrie's model towards student roles (passive to active), the flexible teaching style would suit the participants' replies as it allows learners' active roles within limits set by the teacher.

Similarly, in terms of the teacher's role (authoritarian to democratic) in Guthrie's model, the majority of my participants valued a balance between teacher' strictness and kindness, as they believed that being too strict will place the teacher against students just as being too kind might lead to students' impudent behavior (Saniya, FGD-2). This position of my participants confirms the flexible style of a teacher that implies the use of some relaxation in classroom control but is still dominant.

Issues of Control. The pedagogic relationship or 'framing' in Bernstein's (2000) terminology, between teachers and students, can be weak or strong depending on the power distribution between educational actors (Alexander, 2008). Following this, the findings revealed that the majority of the participants wished their learning to be supported with consideration of their emotional, social, and intellectual needs, which position learner-centeredness as a primary focus in their learning as mentioned in 3.1.

My participants' views on who should have a say in the selection of the lesson topics or subject units of an English language curriculum indicate a preference for strong framing. More specifically, regarding their views concerning the English language curriculum, the students preferred that content or topic be selected by a more qualified person. A couple of participants doubted whether they should be given the opportunity for selecting subject units: "Maybe, we

think we have to study particular topics only because we are supposed to study them" (Aspan, FGD-2). The majority of participants agreed that curriculum topics should be selected and approved by appropriate bodies of educational quality control. As one of the participants stated:

> We might lose the interest to go to lessons at all if we choose the topics to study ourselves. Most students would choose the easiest topics to study in English, maybe because they do not understand the importance of particular topics. I think people who created our curriculum must understand better if they were allowed to choose the themes for us. Students should just follow it, however, at the same time we should be able to provide feedback on the curriculum as well…. which topics are difficult, which one was the easiest, etc. (Askar, FGD-1).

Notions of learning. As I discussed in the literature review, Ginnis (2002) had developed a handbook of effective teaching strategies based on his own experience. He also accessibly summarizes the four basic principles of cognitive psychology in regard to LCE in his book *The Teacher's Toolkit*. My analysis of the participants' learning processes will be done on the basis of these principles.

The first principle deals with pattern formation of students by themselves, which adds on to "scaffolding" (Bruner, 1966) that encourages students to build connections between their new and prior knowledge, as well as not providing ready-made answers by the teacher, but relevant feedback and appropriate time for processing new information. The first principle was partly found in my participants' answers in terms of pinpointing new knowledge formation and building it to their existing knowledge (Alyn, FGD-2; Askar, FGD-1). However, accounts that emphasized teachers' roles in offering feedback or time allowance was not mentioned.

The participants' replies regarding the variety of lesson activities and desire to practice various language skills as well as experiencing unusual stimulus to learning (including candy bonuses and humor that teachers use for students to remember materials (Zhangir, FGD-3) fully meet the second principle of learning psychology of Ginnis (2002). This principle emphasizes multisensory learning experiences and suggests a variety of lessons along with experiencing stimulating moments that may be far more memorable than in 'chalk and talk' learning.

The third principle is about a safe and secure learning environment and students feeling free from various types of fear including the fear of failure, punishment, bullying, and authoritarian teachers. My participants highlighted the importance of an emotionally comfortable lesson atmosphere where teachers do not provide negative feedback on incomplete homework in front of others (Amir, FGD-3). They referred to the positive rapport between them and their teachers as one of the conditions of effective learning.

The last principle refers to learners' better engagement when they have some control over their own learning. Specifically, it suggests that learning can happen if a learner has individual merits of wanting to learn or if the information passes learners' filters of personal goals. As Nurzhan (FGD-1) and Tamsan (FGD-3) pointed out that if they were English teachers, they would make students more aware of the importance of the material so that they would become more interested and conscious towards learning something new.

Furthermore, my participants in all three FGDs expressed their needs in relation to differentiated homework and wished their teachers paid attention to all students equally, and not only to those who are more able in the lesson (Tamsan, FGD-3). This echoes Vygotsky's (1978) ZDP that focuses on building the bridge between students' individual needs and learning objectives and is more about problem-solving than rote learning.

Given this, the perception of my participants finds its basis in pedagogical theories such as Vygotsky's ZPD, Alexander's LCE, and Bruner's scaffolding. The prism of Guthrie's flexible teaching model was found applicable to determine the level of learner-centeredness as well as Bernstein's Framing in analyzing the students' control over the curriculum. The participants' replies were also underpinned by Ginnis' (2002) four principles of cognitive theories.

Summary of the findings

This analysis presented 12-grade school students' understanding of an effective English lesson under three main themes: effective teaching practices, teacher's dispositions and skills and the pedagogical and learning orientations that shaped students' ideas of effective English teaching and teachers of English. The first theme revealed that the students' expectations of an effective lesson were tied to group work that constituted equal engagement and whole-class involvement in activities offered by their teachers. The learners also emphasized their need for access to authentic learning opportunities in lessons in the form of watching meaningful movies in the original language and their teachers using only English in lessons. There were also accounts from each of the FGDs who preferred to have differentiated homework and an opportunity for an individual pace of learning during lessons as boosters of language learning effectiveness. Moreover, the students highlighted the importance of providing timely feedback to their teachers; however, they were ready to share their feelings on the lessons truthfully only in cases where they felt their teachers' had a genuine interest in using their feedback to improve their instruction.

In terms of teacher' dispositions, the participants asserted that effective learning takes place in an emotionally comfortable environment created by their teachers' positive attitudes towards them, given opportunities to express their opinions irrespective of their answers'

correctness. The participants also preferred to avoid negativity and emotional tension in relation to teachers' public admonishing on tracking students' non-completed homework. They believed that a more individualized feedback for those cases would be beneficial towards lesson improvement. Moreover, one of the predominant replies in regard to teacher-student relationship included the balance between teachers' authority and a friendly teaching style. The participants assumed that this balance can maintain both the discipline in class and ease occurring tension ensuring more relaxed, but focused mode for better learning.

Students' ideas about effective teaching and teachers were shaped by pedagogical and learning theories. Those included fundamental pedagogic theories such as Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD and Bruner's (1966) scaffolding that incorporates the consideration of learner individual needs allowing students to achieve the maximum towards their abilities with the help of the teacher or peers, but not in relation to their peers. It was also found that the learners' replies resonated well with Alexander's learner-centered or "non-traditional" focus on teaching. This revealed that the participants preferred a more constructivist learning approach. Guthrie's flexible teaching model helped to define the flexibility of teacher-dominance which means that although the participants are on the side of democratized learning, they still needed some control and dominance in terms of teacher instruction. Bernstein's 'framing' was applicable to gauge the power relations of students towards their learning in terms of their influence on the English language curriculum. Finally, Ginnis' (2002) four principles of cognitive theories in LCE endorsed to describe the learners' cognitive processes. Despite the relevance of the model to students' replies, the first principle was found partially where the importance of teachers' feedback and questioning strategies in class were not mentioned.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

This research has investigated how 12-grade school students in one of the schools for gifted students in Nur-Sultan understand an effective English lesson and what their expectations are towards effective teaching strategies used by their English teachers. It has also attempted to discover what pedagogical and learning theories support the participants' understanding. This chapter further discusses the results of the study relating them to the available literature in order to answer the research questions. The chapter includes the implication as well, to clarify to the reader where the inference come from, what evidence they are based on and how they are aligned with the issues being discussed.

The chapter outlines six subsections. First, LCE discusses the participants' understanding of group and individual work and how they are aligned with principles of constructivist learning theory. Second, context-related pedagogy analyses teaching motives and policies in relation to communication methods in class, teaching styles and issues of control. Third, authentic learning and diversity of skills is discussed in relation to the literature. Fourth, as well as the fifth, I discuss the relationship between the students' preferences of effective learning and the studies in the field. Finally, the section notions of learning analyzes cognitive principles of effective learning based on the narrative of the participants and provides some implications in relation to school teaching and learning in Kazakhstan.

Learner-centered education: learning in groups

Students' recall of 'a good' English lesson included necessarily group activities that would be notably interesting and quite engaging. The assumption around students' understanding of group work effectiveness contributes to the constructivist pedagogy that implies effective group work activities supported by teacher's skillful instructions (Westbrook, et. al, 2013).

Nannyonjo's (2007) study also found that students who worked in groups or pairs showed higher scores than those who were not involved in group learning. Mutual construction of knowledge and communicative skills coincide with Vygotsky's (1978) ZDP that offers overcoming learning challenges with the teacher or more knowledgeable peers. Constructivism in teaching involves the diversity of the notions of pedagogical approaches such as active learning, problem or project-based learning, learning by doing; however, one of the widely-discussed ones is LCE.

The effectiveness of learner-centeredness is still debated overall, though, the positive findings supporting its effectiveness outnumber the studies reporting negative findings (Westbrook, et. al, 2013). Learner-centeredness connotes with progressive education offering some egalitarianism that can be viewed as a modern alternative to 'chalk and talk' or teacher-dominated learning (Schweisfurth, 2013). The participants' preferences to have active and engaging ways of learning such as debates, competitions, peer teaching, and group presentations shape their learning effectiveness based on LCE which can be challenging to reach in a rigid and rote learning environment.

At the same time, some participants complaining about unequal participation valued independent accomplishments more to group work activities. Their demand to work independently with the request to consider their personal needs is also one of the priorities of learner-centered pedagogy. Bruner's (1966) 'Scaffolding' metaphor describes recognizing learners' individual needs and starting levels for teacher's intervention to reach individual learning potential. The participants' needs in consideration of their abilities in terms of both classroom learning paces and home assignments confirm one of Tharp's, et. al (2000) pedagogical standard that prioritize learners' individual needs and differentiated approach as a vital condition for effective learning. Moreover, Westbrook et al., (2013) contribute to this

stating that during group work, usually the needs of individual students are ignored, especially the needs of the gifted and disabled. Educational policies that centralize either group work learning or more individualized approach would benefit from considering contextual factors which are described below.

Context-relevant pedagogy

Educational differences that focus on either commonalities or individualities of the learners depend on the contextual policies of countries. Thus, in Japan, for example, learners are assumed to be grouped in relation to their commonalities (Abiko, 2011), unlike Germany which builds learning principles prioritizing the learners' individual abilities (Gogolin, 2011) that might depend on the countries' political regimes. This is discussed in Tharp & Dalton (2007) study which claims that learning can reflect countries' political and cultural patterns. In addition, Schweisfurth (2013), Guthrie (2018) contributes to this concept stating that the political regimes where authoritarianism is dominated and the population tend to be passive citizens may also shape the learning environment to be more teacher-dominated. Likewise, in contrast to democratized societies with populations' strong civic positions, teaching and learning can be egalitarian and more collaborative. Although Kazakhstan establishes itself as a secular democratized republic constitutionally, the data gathered has shown that the learners still prefer some extent of teachers' authoritarianism in relation to group instructions and teaching styles. Therefore, it may depict the current political patterns in Kazakhstan. However, it is worth stating that with the implementation of the new curriculum and criteria-based assessment, the learning focus is being shifted from teaching rigid knowledge to skills in ways that implies a greater attention to learner-centeredness. Moreover, striving for a more democratized learning environment may cause a dissonance for learners in the country that would not be ready to offer

more egalitarian principles of political dispositions. Nevertheless, further research is needed to better understand whether students' individual needs are considered during group work activities and how the political regimes are reflected in teaching styles. Therefore, the literature suggests that there are other factors that affect forms of communication in class including some patterns of countries' political regimes.

The participants' belief in the effectiveness of group work was reliant on the extent to which the group task could engage all students, learners' leadership skills to delegate equal contribution and teachers' direction or timely instructions. The engagement in a group work activity that gathers students to work independently without constant interventions from the teachers' side ensures a more democratized learning process. In contrast, relying on authoritarian punitive regimes or encouragements that require extrinsic motivations and their teachers' instructional beliefs shape the learning to be more authoritarian. Lack of resources or too large group sizes as well in developing countries' classrooms can be a barrier towards effective group work. This issue also can be found even in developed countries in case teachers are not provided with special training to understand interactive practices including the modelling of talk for students to work in a group (Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2004).

Schweisfurth (2013) discusses learners' inner motivation in her learner motivation continuum that entails group work effectiveness depending on learners' personal interest in the task. However, teachers' instructional beliefs are usually shaped by the difficulty of 'letting go' for students to study autonomously due to cultural learning principles and their view of independent study as a barrier caused by deficit of control, especially in developing countries (Westbrook, et. al, 2013). This can be supported by my participants' view of an effective English teacher as someone whose instructional policies affect the effectiveness of group work. Guthrie's

(2011) calls this teaching style as flexible. The flexibility of teachers' style in the model from authoritarian to democratic is seen not only in relation to group activities but also in the participants' understanding of effective teachers' personality that seeks for having neither 'too friendly or strict', but a balance within teachers' authority that I further discuss in 5.4. Regarding the issues of control, using Bernstein's (2000) framing, my study showed a strong relationship in power distribution towards English curriculum topics which means that the students totally relied on the external choice of the curriculum topics and reported that their expectations towards English language curriculum topics were met. Therefore, the participants' position towards group work policies, teachers' authority and curriculum preferences may also reflect the current political patterns in Kazakhstan.

Authentic learning and emphasis on all language skills

The participants preferred access to authentic learning sources such as watching films in original English language as well as their teachers' articulations only expressed in English language for all naturally emerging situations in a lesson. The study of McDonald (2005) echoes this stating that by providing an authenticity to students, teachers can also track learners' skills progress in multiple dimensions. This means that by providing an opportunity to listen to an authentic material, a teacher can activate speaking, writing or other skills based on the previously practiced one. By contrast, Chavez (1998) argues that any material that is extracted from its original context and audience cannot be counted as authentic. The participants' need for the opportunity to practice diverse language skills in English lessons confirms Goldenberg and Claude's (2008) findings that effective language teachers maintain the diversity of skills for learners to practice and are able to provide relevant and engaging activities.

Importance of feedback to teachers

The data gathered has also demonstrated the importance of opportunities for the participants to provide open and accessible feedback to their English teachers. The feedback of students is assumed to promote teaching excellence and may help assess lesson effectiveness (Hoyt & Pallet, 1999). The participants highlighted that the feedback given by them can contribute to lesson effectiveness only if done not for the sake of formality, but as a sign of the teacher's genuine interest towards taking it on board to improve the instruction. The teachers' availability to obtain students' feedback is underscored in Tajeddin & Alemi's (2019) study of pre-service and in-service teachers as one of the significant practices of effective teachers. Further research is needed to investigate the process and quality of obtaining feedback from school students in Kazakhstan. When students perceive a lack of teachers' genuine interest in obtaining their feedback and acting upon it to improve their teaching, students are reluctant to offer honest feedback which in turn may hinder the improvement in teaching effectiveness; moreover, students' challenges or worries about the learning process can be put at risk of being unheard, therefore.

Teacher-student rapport

My study indicates that besides the professional arsenal of effective English teachers, my participants' consideration of 'a real great teacher of English' was largely based on teachers' personal characteristics. One of those attributes was teachers' ability to create a friendly learning environment in a class that in particular fosters the sense of confidence and offers opportunities for openly sharing their opinion without being strictly judged or corrected. This contrasts with an authoritarian classroom discussed by Alexander (2008). The finding resonates with Weinstein's (1989) characteristics and Pennington and Richards' (2016) one of the personality dimensions of an effective teacher which identify them to express care and consciousness towards learners'

emotional well-being. Moreover, the ability of teachers to build a comfortable learning climate free of emotional stress is one of the crucial aspects of language teachers that supports students to overcome their barriers of speaking in a foreign language (Kalebic, 2005). It also coincides with one of the Tharp's, et. al (2000) standard of effective pedagogy as building a conversational dialogue between the teacher and students to achieve learning objectives.

This dimension is also confirmed by the participants' preference to see their teachers as a "normal" human-being who can express a positive attitude towards the learners, share personal stories in class and have a "great sense of humor". Stronge's (2007) and Tajeddin and Alemi's (2019) study support this finding by offering the term "teacher as a person" (p. 3) that included teachers' attributes such as the maintenance of enough responsibility, love and care to students. However, Tajeddin and Alemi (2019) found that the personal qualities such as patience, kindness, friendliness, strictness" (p. 16) that were named by both pre-service and in-service teachers were not included in Stronge's framework of effective teachers' qualities. Therefore, they called for the need of research to further develop the dimensions of effective teachers' personality. My participants have also valued a balance between teachers' friendliness and strictness which is seen among Tajeddin and Alemi's (2019) list, except for the teachers' quality such as patience. This might mean that the cases of teachers losing their emotional control in a lesson or students' provocative behavior were quite rare to them, presumably due to the type of school where students were interested to be diligent because of students' expulsion policies, which are not usually considered in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the finding does not confirm the mismatch between students' and teachers' beliefs in the context of Greenland where the teachers' pointed out the friendliness and positive attitude at the same level with professional skills topping their list of effective teachers' qualities, while the students

valued teachers' teaching skills at first place (Williams & Burden, 1997). In this regard, my participants supported the teachers' belief in Greenland stressing both teachers' personality traits and professional skills as important to study effectively.

Additionally, teachers' ability to relate lesson content and new marital to students' real lives was also seen as effective teachers' qualities. These findings support Wyatt's, et.al. (2012) study that points out the contextualization and relating abstract ideas to learners' real-life experiences as a great contribution to lessons' effectiveness, especially in multicultural classrooms.

Notions of learning

Four learning principles were extracted from the participants' narratives. The suggested principles of effective learning in the framework of LCE in Ginnis' (2002) book was sufficiently inclusive enough to embody the participants' learning styles. The first principle pays attention to having continuity in learning that my participants expressed as having a link of new information to their prior learning. Meanwhile, the other components of the principle such as being led to correct answers by the teacher as well as providing enough time to think for students before requesting the answer were not among the participants' stories. Hence, to reach this principle to the fullest English teachers should not only provide opportunities for students to be able to integrate their previous knowledge and skills to their new experiences, but also allow enough time for learners to think and promote independent thinking.

The second principle of the framework deals with encouraging multisensory learning that requires the activation of various learning experiences that can result in better learning. The participants' multiple replies stressed the importance of attractive 'learning tricks' starting from teachers' jokes to offering competitions, demonstrated the learners' need more engaging

techniques that would keep their attention and as a result, benefit in better learning and comprehension. This principle, therefore, demands English teachers to use diverse learning stimuli to sustain and foster students' engagement and high attention levels for a longer period of time.

The third attribute of effective learning on Ginnis' (2002) model is about creating an emotionally safe and comfortable environment that the participants reflected as having positive rapport with the teacher. Since there were accounts describing teachers' public emotional negativity, namely regarding non-compliant students, the communication skills of teachers in dealing with non-compliant students should also be considered towards pursuing learning effectiveness.

Finally, the last principle involves teaching strategies that let students understand the importance of the material and have some control over new experiences. This principle coincides with Schweisfurth' (2013) intrinsic motivation mentioned in 5.2. The majority of the students, in turn, pinpointed that it was important for teachers to bring home to their students the importance of the learning material before actually teaching it. The principle encourages English teachers to pay more attention to connecting the learning content to students' real lives to contribute to the learners' intrinsic motivation.

The learning principles held by the participants in the selected school were aligned with effective learning principles given by Ginnis (2002), however, they also demonstrated that English teachers should pay more attention to encouraging students' learning independence, use of diverse learning stimuli, establishment of effective communication towards students, and apply a well-developed planning towards linking their lessons to learners' real lives.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine 12-grade school students' understanding of an effective English lesson in one of the schools for gifted learners in Nur-Sultan. It also aimed at examining what pedagogical strategies and theories supported learners' understanding. This chapter presents a brief overview of the research findings and implications. The study has attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are twelve-grade students' understandings of an effective English lesson in one of the schools in Kazakhstan?

2. What are learning and pedagogical approaches underpinning the students' understandings?

The participants' understanding of an effective English lesson revealed two major categories: teachers' practices and their dispositions. The first category included students' narration in relation to forms of communication in the lesson that constituted predominantly group work activities and active ways of learning. At the same time, the participants articulated their need in having a more individualized approach, including differentiated homework. Learning in and with the group as well as the focus on students' individual needs mostly characterize the students' preferences of a constructivist approach to learning that stems from LCE. This informs us that teaching approaches in teachers' every-day practices should correspondingly transform from 'chalk-and-talk' methods to more progressive ones that would meet learners' individual needs and abilities. As another form of effective learning the participants highlighted the authenticity of both lesson materials and the learning environment through 'language dip' provided by teachers and peers speaking only English in lessons. Moreover, the importance of studying all four language skills equally was also in the picture of

students' understanding of effective teaching. These findings should remind English teachers once again about the need in the mastering of both their methodological and language competencies.

Second category of the students' understanding included teachers' attitudes and characteristics that could create either a positive or negative learning environment, as a result affecting the learning process. The participants positioned teachers' personal attributes as an integral component of English teachers' professionalism. Moreover, the students' discussions revealed the significance of the feedback and dialogue between teachers and students towards the improvement of both learning process and outcomes. Therefore, it suggests that teachers should consider students' voices as a reliable instrument to assess their teaching effectiveness and plan the improvement of the lessons accordingly.

Regarding the second research question, pedagogical and learning theories were extracted from the students' replies including fundamental social-constructivist theories. However, learner-centeredness was not defined as fully democratized as it showed the flexibility of teaching models that incorporates some variations of the authoritarian teaching as well, though, the cognitive principles of learning were fully relevant to one of the LCE theories. Hence, further research is needed to better understand to what extent secondary education in Kazakhstan operates with LCE principles.

References

Abiko, T. (2011). A response from Japan to TLRP's ten principles for effective pedagogy.

Research Papers in Education, *26*(3), 357-365, doi: 10.1080/02671522.2011.595547

Akimenko, O. (2016). Teaching approaches: Theory and practice. *NUGSE Research in*

Education, 1(2), 2-8. Retrieved from nugserie.nu.edu.kz

Alexander, R. J. (2008). *Towards dialogic teaching: rethinking classroom talk.* York: Dialogos.

Alimorad, Z., & Tajgozari, M. (2016). A comparison of Iranian High School Teachers' and

Students' Perceptions of Effective English Teachers. *SAGE Open, 1*(10). Retrieved from

http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/

Arikan, A. (2010). Effective English language teacher from the perspectives of prospective and

in-service teachers in Turkey. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, *9*(31), 209-223.

Baddeley, A. D. (1990). *Human memory: Theory and practice.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control, and identity: Theory, research, cri-*

Brown, A. V. (2009). Students' and teachers' perceptions of effective foreign language teaching:

A comparison of ideals. *The Modern Language Journal*, *93*, 46-60.

Brown, G., & Atkins, M. (1988). *Effective teachers in higher education.* London: Routledge

Bruner, J. S. (1966). *Toward a Theory of Instruction.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Butterworth, B. (1999). *The Mathematical Brain.* London: MacMillan

Chacón, C. T. (2005). Teachers' perceived efficacy among English as a foreign language

teachers in middle schools in Venezuela. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*(3), 257–

272.

Charmaz, K. (2011). A constructivist grounded theory analysis of losing and regaining a valued

self. In F. J. Wertz, K. Charmaz, L. M. McMullen, R. Josselson, R. Anderson, & E.

McSpadden (Eds.), *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry,* (165-204). New York, NY: Guilford.

Chaves, M. (1998). Learners' perspectives on authenticity. *IRAL, 36*(4), 277-306.

Cooper, R., Chenail, R. J., & Fleming, S. (2012). A grounded theory of inductive qualitative research education: Results of a meta-data-analysis. The Qualitative Report, 17(8), 1-26. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/cooper52.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.).* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Cuban, L. 1993. *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms*, 1890–1990. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dansereau, D. F. (1988). *Cooperative learning strategies.* In C. E. Weinstein, E. T. Goetz, & P. A. Alexander (Eds.), Learning and study strategies: Issues in assessment, instruction, and evaluation (103–120). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Demiroz, H., & Yesilyurt, S. (2015). Effective foreign language teaching: Perceptions of prospective English language teachers. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *3,* 862-870.

Doherty, W., R., Hilberg, R., S., Epaloose, G., Tharp, G., R. (2002). Standards Performance Continuum: Development and Validation of a Measure of Effective Pedagogy. *Educational Research, 96*(2), 79-89.

Dole, S., Bloom, L., & Kowalske, K. (2016). Transforming pedagogy: changing perspectives from teacher centered to learner-centered. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning, 10*(1). doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1538

Doyle, W. (1986). *Classroom organization and management.* In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook

of research on teaching, (392-431). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Ekin, M. T. Y., & Damar, E. A. (2013). Voices from the young learner classrooms: If I were . . .

Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences, 93, 602-606.

Elton, L. (1998). Dimensions of excellence in university teaching. *International Journal for

Academic Development, 3,* 3–11.

Faranda, W. T., & Clarke, I. (2004). Student observations of outstanding teaching: Implications

for marketing educators. *Journal of Marketing Education, 26(3)*, 271-281.

Gibbons, S. & Silva, O. (2009). School quality, child wellbeing and parents' satisfaction.

Economics of Education Review, 30(2), doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.11.001

Ginnis, P. (2002). *The teachers' toolkit.* Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.

Gogolin, I. (2011). Commonalities and differences: some 'German' observations on TLRP's ten

principles for effective pedagogy, *Research Papers in Education*, *26*(3), 337-344, doi:

10.1080/02671522.2011.595543

Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: What the research does-and does

not-say. *ESED, 5234,* Master List. 27. Retrieved from

https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/esed5234-master

Goleman, D. (1998). Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. London.

Bloomsbury

Gordon, Th. (1974). *Teacher effectiveness training.* New York, NY: Peter Wyden.

Gore, J., Griffiths, T., & Ladwig, J. (2004). Towards better teaching: Productive pedagogy as a

framework for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20,* 375–387.

Guthrie, G. (2011). *The progressive fallacy in developing countries: In favor of formalism.* New York: Springer.

Guthrie, G. (2018). *Classroom change in developing countries: From progressive cage to formalistic frame.* London, Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781351130479

Hoyt, M. P., & Pallett, W. H. (1999). Appraising teaching effectiveness: Beyond student ratings. *IDEA, 36.* Retrieved from http://www.idea.ksu.edu/products/Papers.html

James, M., & Pollard, A. (2011). TLRP's ten principles for effective pedagogy: rationale, development, evidence, argument and impact. *Research Papers in Education*, *26*(3), 275-328, doi: 10.1080/02671522.2011.590007

Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink (2nd ed.).* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Kalebic, C. S. (2005). Toward the development of standards in foreign language teacher preparation. In 30th Annual Conference ATEE.

Kariminia, A., & Salehizadeh, S. (2007). Communication strategies: English language departments in Iran. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies, 1*(4), 287-300.

Kember, D., & Kwan, K. (2000). Lecturers' approaches to teaching and their relationship to conceptions of good teaching. *Instructional Science, 28,* 469–490.

Ko, J., Sammons, P., & Bakkum, L. (2013). Effective teaching: A review of research and evidence. *Hong Kong Institute of Education; Berkshire: CfBT Education Trust.*

Kourieos, S., & Evripidou, D. (2013). Students' perceptions of effective EFL teachers in university settings in Cyprus. *English Language Teaching*, *6*(11), 1-16.

Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content Analysis. An introduction to its methodology. (3rd ed.).* Los Angeles et. al: SAGE.

Lattimer, H. (2015). Translating theory into practice: Making meaning of learner-centered

education frameworks for classroom-based practitioners. *International Journal of

Education and Development, 45*(1), 65-76.

Lee, J. J. (2010). The uniqueness of EFL teachers: Perceptions of Japanese learners. *TESOL

Journal, 1,* 23-48.

London, IOE: Consortium for Research on Education Access, Transitions and Equity.

McDonald, M. (2005). Authenticity, culture and language learning. *Language and International

Communication, 6*(3-4), 250-261. doi.org/10.2167/laic252.0

MoES (Ministry of Education and Science) of Kazakhstan, (2007). Law on Education, Akorda.

MoES (Ministry of Education and Science). (2011). State Programme of Education Development

for 2017–2021. Astana.

MoES (Ministry of Education and Science). (2017), National Report on the State and

Development of Education System in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Over the Years of

Independence) - concise version, JSC "Information-analytic center", Astana.

Morgan, D. L., & Krueger, R. A. (1993). *When to use focus groups and why.* In D. L. Morgan

(Ed.), *Sage focus editions, 156. Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art*

(3–19). Sage Publications, Inc. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483349008.n1

Morgan, L. D. (1997). *Focus group as qualitative research. (2nd ed.)* SAGE: Qualitative

Research Methods. doi: 10.4135/9781412984287

Nannyonjo, H. (2007). Education inputs in Uganda: An analysis of factors influencing learning

achievement in grade six. World Bank working paper, 98. Washington, DC: World Bank.

OECD. (2018). Education Policy outlook: Kazakhstan. OECD, Paris.

Ory, J. C. (2001). Faculty thoughts and concerns about student ratings. In K. G. Lewis (Ed.), Techniques and strategies for interpreting student evaluations. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 87. (315). San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass.

Park, G., & Lee, H. (2006). The characteristics of effective english teachers as perceived by high school teachers and students in Korea. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 7,* 236-248.

Pennington, M., & Richards, J., C. (2016). Teacher identity in language teaching: integrating personal, contextual, and professional factors. *RELC Journal 47*(1), 5-24.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education,* (102-119). New York, NY: Macmillan Library Reference.

Rojas-Drummond, S. & Mercer, N. (2004). Scaffolding the development of effective collaboration and learning. *International Journal of Educational Research, 39,* 99-111.

Sandholtz, J. H. (2011). Pre-service teachers' conceptions of effective and ineffective teaching practices. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *38*(3), 27-47

Sastry, L., V., N, Rao, N., V., Rao, K., S., & Clee, P., P. (2016). Effective and Active Learning in Classroom Teaching through Various Methods. *Innovation and Technology in Education*, *4,* 105-110. DOI 10.1109/MITE.2016.29

Schweisfurth, M. (2013). *Learner-centered education in international perspective: Whose pedagogy for whose development?* (1 ed.). London and New York, Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

Schweisfurth, M. (2013). *Learner-centered education in international perspective: Whose pedagogy for whose development?* London and New York: Routledge.

Serafini, F. (2002). Possibilities and challenges: The national board for professional teaching

    standards. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53,* 316–327.

Sriprakash, A. (2011). The contribution of Bernstein's sociology to education development

    research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 32*(4), 521-539, doi:

    10.1080/01425692.2011.578436

Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P. N., & Rook, D. W. (2007). *Applied social research methods*

    series (20). Focus groups: Theory and practice (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

    https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412991841

Stronge, J. H. (2007). *Qualities of effective teachers.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tajeddin, Z., & Alemi, M. (2019). Effective language teachers as persons: Exploring pre-service

    and in-service teachers' beliefs. *TESL-EJ, 22*(4). Retrieved from

    https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1204608.pdf

Tavakoli, M., & Baniasad-Azad, S. (2017). Teachers' conceptions of effective teaching and their

    teaching practices: a mixed-method approach. *Teachers and Teaching, 23*(6), 674-688.

    doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1218326

Tharp, R. G., & Dalton, S. S. (2007). Orthodoxy, cultural compatibility, and universals in

    education. *Comparative Education*, *43,* 53–70.

Tharp, R. G., Estrada, P., Dalton, S. S., & Yamauchi, L. (2000). *Teaching transformed:*

    Achieving excellence, fairness, inclusion, and harmony. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Tharp, R. G., Estrada, P., Dalton, S. S., & Yamauchi, L. (2000). *Teaching transformed:*

    Achieving excellence, fairness, inclusion, and harmony. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Thompson, S. (2008). Defining a "good teacher". Simply! Have you got what it takes? *Modern*

    English Teacher, 17(1), 5-25.

tique. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). (2005) Education

 for All global monitoring report: The quality imperative. Paris: UNESCO.

Vadillio, R. S. M. (1999). Research on the good language teacher. *EPOS, 15,* 347-361.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*.

 London: Harvard University Press.

Walberg, H. J. (1986). Synthesis of research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of*

 research on teaching, (214-229). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Weinstein, C. S. (1989). Teacher education students' preconceptions of teaching. *Journal of*

 Teacher Education, 40(2), 53-60.

Westbrook, J., Durrani, N., Brown, R., Orr, D., Pryor, J., Boddy, J., & Salvi, F. (2013).

 Pedagogy, curriculum, teaching practices and teacher education in developing countries.

 Final report. *Education Rigorous Literature Review. Department for International*

 Development. Retrieved from http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design (2nd ed.)*. Alexandria, VA:

 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ASCD. doi:

 10.14483/calj.v19n1.11490

Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist*

 approach. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, M. S., & Peterson, L. P. (2006). *Theories of learning and teaching: What do they mean*

 for educators? National Education Association, Washington, DC, 20036-3290.

Wittrock, M. C. (1986). *Handbook of research on teaching* (214-229). New York, NY:

 Macmillan.

Wyatt, R., T., Yamauchi, A., L., & DeSousa, C., B. (2012). Using the CREDE Standards for

Effective Pedagogy in a Greenlandic Settlement School. *National Association for Multicultural Education*, *14*(2), 65-72. DOI: 10.1080/15210960.2012.673304.

Yağcıoğlu, S. (2016). *Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of an Effective English Language Teacher (Master's thesis).* Gazimağusa, North Cyprus.

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish.* New York: Guilford Press, (8-94).

Appendices

Appendix A: Informed consent form for students

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the study:

Year 12 students' understandings of an effective English lesson in Nur-Sultan.

INTRODUCTION: You are invited to participate in a research entitled "Year 12 school students' understandings of an effective English lesson in Nur-Sultan". You have been chosen to participate in the study because you are 18-year-old a secondary school twelve grade student with the experience of learning English in classroom. This form is part of a process known as informed consent and allows you to understand this study before deciding whether or not to take part.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: You will be asked to participate in a discussion with 4-5 other students from your class. This will take approximately one hour. The discussions will be audio recorded, with your consent. The discussion will cover topics such as how confident you are about your English, what do you like an English lesson and what would you like in a good English lesson.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The main risk is your time you spend in the discussion. You will not be asked any personally sensitive questions.

This project has several potential benefits to you, teachers, school leaders and education policy makers. First, it is great opportunity for you to express the needs and challenges students or you face in English lessons. Second, because of self-reflection you will understand how you learn in English lessons. This will help you to improve your learning. The finding will also help teachers understand how to make their lessons more effective for students.

CONFIDENTIALY & PRIVACY: Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent possible. However confidentially cannot be guaranteed fully because focus group discussion requires the participation of other participants. All participating students will be advised not to identify fellow students and disclose the contents of discussion. All the participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and only the researcher will have access to the records and collected data. The personal computer of the researcher will be protected with a password. The data collected will not be used to evaluate student performance or as a system assessment. The results of this research study will be published as a Master's Degree Thesis work and may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals, but your name and the name of your school will not be associated with the research findings in any way.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your **participation is voluntary** and you have the **right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled**. **The alternative is not to participate.** You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Independent Contact: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact my Thesis Supervisor (Name of Supervisor and email). For general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Statement of Consent.

I,_____,

Give my voluntary consent to participate in this study.

The researcher clearly explained to me the background information and objectives of the study and

what my participation in this study involves.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I can at any time and without giving any

reasons withdraw my consent, and this will not have any negative consequences for myself.

I understand that the information collected during this study will be treated confidentially.

•   With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher:

Signed_____ Date_____

Appendix B: Invitation letter for students in English

Invitation letter

Dear students of 12 grade! You are invited to participate in a research entitled "12-year School Students' Understandings of an Effective English Lesson in a Secondary School in Nur Sultan". You were chosen to participate in the study because you are secondary school eleventh grade students with the experience of learning English in classroom.

This project has several potential benefits for you, teachers, school leaders and education policy makers. First, it is great opportunity for you to express the needs and challenges students or you face in English lessons. Second, because of self-reflection you will understand how you learn in English lessons. This will help you to improve your learning. The finding will also help teachers understand how to make their lessons more effective for students. Additionally, school leaders can use the study findings to better support the teaching and learning of English in schools.

Please, understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals. The anonymity of your participation will be guaranteed.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The Researcher _____

Nazarbayev University Research Centre +7 7172709359 or gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Appendix C: Invitation letter for students in Kazakh

<p align="center">**Ақпараттық хат**</p>

Құрметті 12- сынып оқушылары! Сіздерді «Нұр-Сұлтандағы орта мектепте ағылшын тілін тиімді оқыту туралы жоғарғы сынып оқуышылардың көз-қарастары» атты зерттеуге қатысуға шақырамыз. Сіздің бұл шақыруды алу себебіңіз сіздің орта мектептің он бірінші сынып оқушысы және мектепте ағылшын тілін үйренуде тәжірибеңіз бар болғандыдығы.

Бұл жобаның сізге, мұғалімдерге, мектеп басшыларына және білім беру саласындағы саясаткерлерге бірнеше пайдасы бар. Біріншіден, бұл сізге, оқушыларға немесе ағылшын тілі сабақтарында кездесетін қажеттіліктер мен қиындықтар туралы айтуға тамаша мүмкіндік. Екіншіден, сұрақтарға жауа беру арқылы сіз ағылшын тіліндегі сабақтарда қалай оқитыныңызды түсінесіз. Бұл сізге оқуды жақсартуға көмектеседі. Бұл нәтиже мұғалімдерге оқушыларға сабақтарды қалай тиімді ету керектігін түсінуге көмектеседі. Сонымен қатар, мектеп басшылары зерттеу нәтижелерін мектептерде ағылшын тілін оқытуды жақсарту үшін қолдана алады.

Сіздің қатысуыңыз ерікті екенін және сіздің келісіміңізді кері қайтарып алуға немесе қатысуды кез келген уақытта еш зарапсыз тоқтатуға құқылы екеніңізді түсінуіңізді өтінеміз. Қатысудан бас тарту – сіздің таңдауыңыз. Сіз нақты сұрақтарға жауап беруден бас тартуға құқығыңыз бар. Осы зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері ғылыми немесе кәсіби жиналыстарда ұсынылуы немесе ғылыми журналдарда жариялануы мүмкін. Сіздің қатысуыңыздың жасырын болуына кепілдік беріледі.

БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:

Зерттеуші _____

Назарбаев Университетінің ғылыми-зерттеу орталығы +7 7172709359 немесе gse_researchcommitet@nu.edu.kz

Appendix D: Invitation letter for students in Russian

Информационное письмо для студентов

Уважаемые учащиеся 12 классов! Вам предлагается принять участие в исследовании под названием «Понимание учащихся старших классов эффективного урока английского языка в средней школе в Нур-Султане». Вы были выбраны для участия в исследовании, потому что вы ученики 12-го класса средней школы с опытом изучения английского языка в общеобразовательной школе.

Этот проект имеет несколько потенциальных преимуществ для вас, учителей, руководителей школ и политиков в области образования. Во-первых, это отличная возможность для вас выразить потребности и проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются учащиеся или учащиеся на уроках английского языка. Во-вторых, благодаря саморефлексии вы поймете, как вы учитесь на уроках английского. Это поможет вам улучшить ваше обучение. Результаты также помогут учителям понять, как сделать их уроки более эффективными для учащихся. Кроме того, руководители школ могут использовать результаты исследования, чтобы лучше поддерживать преподавание и изучение английского языка в школах.

Ваше участие является добровольным, и вы имеете право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время без каких-либо последствий. Альтернатива - не участвовать. Вы имеете право отказаться отвечать на конкретные вопросы. Результаты этого исследования могут быть представлены на научных или профессиональных совещаниях или опубликованы в научных журналах. Анонимность вашего участия будет гарантирована.

КОНТАКТЫ:

Исследователь _____

Исследовательский центр Назарбаев Университета +7 7172709359 или gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz