

**Understanding Kazakhstani Students' Challenges in Speaking English and Their
Strategy Use: A Phenomenographic Study**

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Dear Azhar Batyrova

This letter now confirms that your research project entitled: *Understanding Kazakhstani Students' Challenges in Speaking English and Their Strategy Use: A Phenomenographic Study* 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

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CITI Training Certificate

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Abstract**Understanding Kazakhstani Students' Challenges in Speaking English and Their Strategy Use: A Phenomenographic Study**

This thesis reports on a phenomenographic inquiry into the English speaking challenges and language learning strategies (LLSs) of eight rural Grade 11 students. According to the Diagnostic Report (2014), Kazakhstan's 2050 strategy includes the goal of having Kazakhstani youth with sound English, Russian and Kazakh speaking proficiencies by 2025. Nevertheless, many rural secondary school students still encounter diverse challenges in their English speaking performance. Hence, this qualitative study investigated the English speaking difficulties that secondary school students encounter and the LLSs they employ to deal with them through the lens of A. N. Leontiev's (1981) activity theory, a sub-theory of sociocultural theory, and Hajar's (2019) distinction between compulsory strategies and voluntary strategies. The following research questions guided the study: (1) What are the primary challenges that rural Grade 11 students encounter in speaking the English language? (2) Why are they facing these challenges? (3) How do they deal with these challenges (i.e. their LLSs)?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the data were collected online, using two qualitative research tools: narrative writing and online individual interviews. Braun and Clarke's (2013) systematic guidelines for conducting thematic analyses were adopted to identify and interpret the resultant themes. The study revealed that the participants' English-speaking difficulties were mainly ascribed to their psychological and linguistic unpreparedness; they mainly employed compulsory/exam-oriented strategies mediated by their teachers, though the LLSs taught by their English tutors were more highly valued. This study suggests that more LLS instruction be introduced in English textbooks and by

language teachers as most participants noted that their textbooks are designed to cater solely to the development of writing skills. Ongoing research could be conducted from multiple perspectives and various schools to contrast rural and urban students' English speaking challenges and strategies used to enlighten policy makers in Kazakhstan.

Key words: Kazakhstani students; strategy use; speaking English; phenomenography

Анната**Қазақстанның оқушылардың ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу кезіндегі
қындықтарын түсіну және олардың стратегиялары: Феноменографиялық
зерттеу**

Бұл феноменографиялық зерттеу жұмысы ауылдық 11-сынып оқушыларының ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу кезіндегі қындықтары мен тілді үйрену барысындағы қолданған стратегиялары туралы баяндайды. 2014 жылғы диагностикалық есеп бойынша, Қазақстан 2050 стратегиясына сәйкес 2025 жылға дейін мемлекеттегі жастардың ағылшын, орыс және қазақ тілдерін жетік менгеруі мақсат етілген. Соған қарамастан, көптеген мектеп оқушылары ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу қабілетіне байланысты түрлі қындықтарға кезігеді. Осылан орай, бұл зерттеу жұмысы мектеп оқушыларының ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу қындықтарын және олармен күресу үшін пайдаланған стратегияларын А.Н.Леонтьевтің (1981) белсенділік теориясы және А. Хаджардың (2019) міндетті және ерікті стратегиялар айырмашылығы арқылы зерттеді. Зерттеу барысында келесі зерттеу сұрақтары басшылыққа алынды: (1) 11-сынып оқушыларының ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу кезінде кездесетін негізгі қындықтары қандай? (2) Олар мұндай қындықтарға неліктен кезігуде? (3) Олар бұл қындықтарды қалай шешуде? (яғни, олардың қолданған стратегиялары)

КОВИД-19 пандемиясының әсерінен деректер әссе және жеке сұхбат құралдары көмегімен онлайн түрде жиналды. Нәтижелік тақырыптарды анықтау және түсіндіру үшін Браун мен Кларктың (2013) тақырыптық талдаулар жүргізуге арналған жүйелі нұсқаулықтары қолданылды. Қатысуышылардың ағылшын тілінде сөйлеудегі қындықтарын зерттеу барысында олардың көбіне психологиялық және лингвистикалық проблемаларға кезігетіндігі анықталды. Сонымен қатар,

қатысушылардың ағылшын тілі мұғалімдері таныстырған міндетті (емтихан тапсыруға бағдарланған) стратегияларын көбірек қолданғанмен, ақылы репетитор жүргізетін стратегияларды жоғары бағалайтындықтары анықталды. Бұл зерттеу ағылшын тіліндегі оқулықтарға және тіл мұғалімдеріне тіл үйренудегі стратегиялық нұсқаулықтарды көбірек енгізуді ұсынады, өйткені қатысушылардың көпшілігі оқулықтардың тек жазу дағдыларын дамытуға арналғандығын атап өтті. Алдағы уақытта, Қазақстандағы саясаткерлерді көбірек ақпарттандыру үшін ауылдық және қалалық оқушылардың ағылшын тілінде сөйлеудегі қыындықтары мен стратегияларын салыстыру зерттеу жұмыстарын жүргізу ұсынылады.

Тірек сөздер: Қазақстандағы оқушылар; стратегия қолдану; ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу; феноменография

Аннотация

Понимание проблем разговорного английского языка среди казахстанских учеников и их стратегии: феноменографическое исследование

Эта феноменографическое представляет исследование проблем использования английского языка и их стратегии восьми сельских учащихся 11-х классов. Согласно Диагностическому отчету (2014), стратегия Казахстана 2050 года включает в себя цель к 2025 году обеспечить молодежь Казахстана хорошим знанием английского, русского и казахского языков. Тем не менее, многие учащиеся средних школ по-прежнему сталкиваются с разнообразными проблемами в своем владении английским языком. Таким образом, в этом исследовании изучались трудности устной речи на английском языке с которыми сталкиваются учащиеся средней школы, и стратегии которые они использовали для их решения через призму теории деятельности А.Н. Леонтьева (1981) и различия между принудительными стратегиями и добровольными стратегиями Хаджара (2019). В основе исследования лежали следующие вопросы: (1) С какими основными проблемами сталкиваются учащиеся 11 классов в сельской местности при общении на английском языке? (2) Почему они сталкиваются с этими проблемами? (3) Как они справляются с этими проблемами? (т.е. их стратегии)

В связи с пандемией КОВИД-19 данные были собраны онлайн с использованием двух инструментов исследования: эссе и индивидуальный онлайн интервью. По проведению тематического анализа были приняты систематические рекомендации Брауна и Кларка (2013) для выявления и интерпретации результирующих тем. Исследование показало, что трудности участников с устной речью в основном объяснялись их психологической и лингвистической

неподготовленностью; они в основном использовали обязательные (ориентированные на экзамены) стратегии при посредничестве своих учителей английского языка, хотя стратегии предавляемые их репетитора английского языка ценились более высоко учениками. Это исследование предлагает ввести больше инструкций по использованию эффективных стратегий в учебники английского языка и преподавателями, поскольку большинство участников отметили, что их учебники предназначены в основном для развития навыков письма. В будущем рекомендуется проводить исследовании в разных школах, чтобы сопоставить проблемы изучений английского языка с которыми сталкиваются не только сельские, но и городские учащиеся.

Ключевые слова: Казахстанские ученики; использование стратегии; разговорный английский; феноменография

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Introduction

The present chapter provides some background information about the linguistic profile of Kazakhstan and the researcher's personal perspective towards the difficulties that secondary school students encounter in speaking the English language in the rural areas of Kazakhstan. It also describes the research problem and purpose, the research questions, and the significance of the study. The chapter ends by providing an outline for the current study.

Background Information

Educating a nation represents one of the most important investments in the development of a country's economic status. Kazakhstan became an independent nation after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Ahn & Smagulova, 2021). Henceforth, the language policy of Kazakhstan has aimed to ensure a balance between the development of three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English. Bahry et al. (2017) point out that Kazakh is a state language in Kazakhstan; however, its mastery among Russian-dominant urban Kazakhs should be enhanced, while Russian proficiency ought to be promoted to enable all citizens to communicate in the country's multicultural society. Concerning the status of Russian in Kazakhstan, Goodman et al. (2021) indicate that "Russian continues to be an official language, an interethnic language, and language of wider communication" (p. 143). As regards the English language, the former president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, explained its importance, indicating that "We should work to breakthrough in learning the English language. Having this "lingua franca" of the modern world will reveal new and unlimited opportunities for each citizen of our country" (as cited in Address by the President, 2012). In this sense, Reagan (2019) suggests that Kazakhstan's growing

focus on English reflects “the neoliberal agenda of the government as it seeks to become a player in the global economic community” (p. 488).

Since 2007 Kazakhstan has been prioritizing trilingual education and showing considerable interest in the English language by introducing it within the whole educational system. Furthermore, increasing the number of English speaking people by 20% in 2020 was one of the main action plans outlined in Kazakhstan’s State Program of Languages Development and Functioning for 2011-2020 (Goodman et al., 2021). Related to this, acquiring the English language by the younger generation is viewed as a way forward towards the future development of the country by the Kazakhstani government (MoES, 2011). Moreover, the 2050 Kazakhstan strategy includes the policy goal that by 2025, Kazakhstani youth will speak English as equally well as the Russian and Kazakh languages. The word “equally” means a high level of proficiency in these languages (NUGSE, 2014).

As an important means of accomplishing the trilingual educational policy in Kazakhstan, 20 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) for gifted children have been established around the country since 2008, as well as Nazarbayev University, located in Nur-Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan by the former president of Kazakhstan (Karabassova, 2021). Also, Physics, Biology, Chemistry and Computer Science teachers have been trained to educate high school students in English, as was indicated in the State Programme of Education and Science Development (SPESD) 2016-2019 (2016) (Karabassova, 2021). Additionally, new educational standards in Kazakhstan were introduced in 2013 by, for example, incorporating English as a regular subject in the primary curriculum and teaching the English language from Grade 1 (Strategic plan, 2011-2015). It implies that Kazakhstan’s government, with its increasing focus on teaching the

English language in all Kazakhstani educational institutions, has been putting strenuous effort into producing multilingual citizens; however, the support given to public schools, especially, in rural areas may be still lacking (Agaidarova, 2019). With the above in mind, it can be concluded that it is essential to provide additional English language support for Kazakhstani students, including in rural areas, in order to help them to use English effectively, especially since speaking skills are pivotal for communicating in today's global world. In this regard, Mansfield and Poppi (2012) stress that English currently functions as a tool for international communication, which implies that language teachers should ensure that they are developing not only their students' linguistic knowledge of this foreign language, but also equipping them with the abilities to be competent English speakers. In turn, Fallah (2014) points out that English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the study of the language by non-native speakers where English is not an official language, thus, the learners' achievement in English can be mainly seen based on their oral proficiency in this language. It implies that speaking competence in English as a foreign language has been increasingly recognized as an important skill that should be mastered because it is one of the major signs indicating the language proficiency of an individual. Therefore, teaching English as a foreign language should prioritize the development of a learner's communicative skills.

However, despite their sound grammatical knowledge, some language learners can face several challenges such as language anxiety, low motivation and poor communicative skills while learning a foreign language (MacIntyre, 2007). This may indicate the fact that although many language learners strive to study a language properly by learning the grammar and developing their language skills, they still encounter difficulties in speaking the English language.

Aldarasi (2020) points out that the challenges that students encounter in using English orally may be ascribed to different factors which can be either related to the individual such as their age, gender, motivation, self-confidence, language learning strategy (LLS), or to the context in which the learning is taking place. Examples of these external factors are teachers' practices, parents' involvement, the availability of language resources and assessment methods. By the same token, Benson and Gao (2008) suggest that the factors that can affect students' language learning outcomes can be either innate (i.e. gender, age, personality, learning style) or acquired attributes (i.e. motivation, beliefs, and strategy use). In this sense, the present study, as will be explained in the coming sections, aimed to uncover a group of secondary school students' English speaking experiences and their associated LLS uses while speaking English at one of the mainstream schools in a rural area of Kazakhstan.

Statement of the Problem

From my personal observation as an English teacher in educational centers in the cities of Shymkent and Nur-Sultan of Kazakhstan, it seems that even after learning English for several years at school, many students are not able to speak English fluently. Additionally, in 2020 Kazakhstan showed very low English proficiency results taking 92th place out of 100 countries (EF English Proficiency Index, 2020). Moreover, in the document Action Plan on Development of Functional Literacy of School Students for 2012-2016 in Kazakhstan, it was stated that public school teachers can convey their knowledge of a subject to students, but they do not teach them how to apply it (OECD, 2015). Therefore, there is a specific necessity to educate learners on how to apply received knowledge through practice (MoES, 2011). In this sense, it is important to enable students to gain not only grammatical knowledge but also mediate some effective language learning

strategies (LLSs) to them in order to allow them to use English across different settings and achieve their desired goals.

Although Kazakhstan's government aims to increase the number of English speakers in the coming years, Sarsenbayeva & Avasi (2019) underline that English is spoken fluently by only 2% of its citizens, and it was asserted in OECD (2015) that only 15.4% of the Kazakhstani population can understand English. More importantly, any formal review of the challenges or successes of the application of the English language in the Kazakhstani context has not yet been found (Sarsenbayeva & Avasi, 2019). As it was reported in the State Program of Kazakhstan (2016-2019), in the academic years 2021-2022, English will be the language of instruction for STEM subjects at schools for high school students. However, obtaining knowledge in a language that one may find difficult to express one's thoughts in, or to be afraid of using it may result in poor subject comprehension. Therefore, it seems pivotal to explore not only the difficulties that students in a foreign context face while using English in their communication across different settings, but also the reasons behind such difficulties, in addition to the strategies that can be employed to overcome these challenges. To clarify, LLSs are "actions that are consciously deployed by language learners to help them to learn or use a language more effectively" (Rose, 2015, p. 421-422).

There are a few empirical studies that have attempted to explore Kazakhstani students' challenges in speaking the English language in Kazakhstan. However, almost all these studies (e.g., Akshalova 2019; Sarsenbayeva & Avasi 2019; Zhetpisbayeva et al. 2016) were conducted from the perspectives of teachers and policy makers. In this sense, the voices of Kazakhstani school students, especially those from rural areas, in terms of their challenges of using English in communication, the reasons behind these challenges

and how they address them seems to be missing. As a result, the present phenomenographic qualitative study has aimed to bridge this existing research gap.

Research Purpose

Guided by sociocultural perspectives on language learning, this study sought to investigate the difficulties that secondary school students encounter in speaking the English language at one of the Kazakh-medium rural schools located in South Kazakhstan. The current study also aims to explore the reasons that have caused the sampled participants' challenges in their oral English language proficiency, and the LLSs they employed to deal with these challenges. According to Irsaliyev et al. (2017) from overall 7,667 schools in Kazakhstan 5,768 (75%) are located in rural areas. Moreover, according to the NUGSE (2014) "the quality of teaching in rural schools remains a serious issue in both Russian medium and, especially, in Kazakh-medium schools" (p 34). Hence, it seems pivotal to conduct empirical research studies in rural areas because despite the many reforms in education, pupils attending rural schools remain at a significant disadvantage compared to urban school children.

Significance

As regards the significance of this study, it represents one of the very few empirical studies - if not the only one - conducted in a rural region of Kazakhstan that uncovers a group of students' challenges while speaking or using English. It also uncovers the factors that lead to these difficulties and how they address them (i.e. the LLSs used in this regard). Although some participants may not have deployed many LLSs to deal with their challenges of using English orally or may not even have been clearly familiar with the notion of LLSs, this research attempts to encourage them to start thinking of certain

effective strategies that they can take up in the future or even to activate some previous LLSs they have used. Additionally, the conducted research may benefit language teachers in Kazakhstan by making them aware of the linguistic difficulties of the students. Teachers' understanding of factors that influence their students' ability to speak may improve their teaching practices, which can result in students' acquiring better communication skills in the English language. It is hoped that being aware of English language issues from the perspective of students might help teachers to establish supportive relationships with them and to teach all students to have sound speaking abilities not only in the English classroom, but also in real life situations. The findings of this study may also help other secondary school students in Kazakhstan to gain a wider perspective on how their peers manage the different challenges they are confronted with and how this impacts their current strategy use and future visions. Likewise, this study is informative to policymakers in Kazakhstan regarding the difficulties of implementing trilingualism in formal settings, especially in rural areas, and how this can be achieved. It is worth noting that while most previous studies in the field of LLSs have adopted the cognitive perspective by limiting their focus on the success in learning a language on the part of the individual, this phenomenographic study adopts a qualitative methodology and is underpinned by the sociocultural outlook to capture students' challenges in using English and their actual and situated strategies, underlying the mediating role of different contextual factors (e.g. social actors inside and outside the classroom and assessment modes).

Research questions

To accomplish the purpose of the research, the following research questions needed to be addressed:

Q1 What are the primary challenges that rural Grade 11 students encounter in speaking the English language?

Q2 Why are they facing these challenges?

Q3 How do they deal with these challenges? (i.e., their strategy use)

Outline of the Study

Overall, the current study includes six chapters, along with references and appendices. This chapter presented the background information, statement of the problem and research purpose, which was followed by the significance of the study and the research questions. The next chapter, the literature review, provides several sections dealing with speaking competence, the EFL environment, and factors affecting the use of the English language. The last section of the literature review discusses the definition and classification of LLSs and ends by explaining the theoretical framework that guides the current research. The third is the methodology chapter that illustrates the research design, the research site, sampling and data collection instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures. Also, ethical issues are included in the chapter. Chapter 4 describes the major findings of this study collected from the participants' biography and individual semi-structured interviews. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature on the topic and the theoretical framework of the study. The final chapter concludes the study with implications, strengths and limitations of the methodology used and provide recommendations for further research.

Literature Review

The previous chapter described the linguistic profile of Kazakhstan and the researcher's personal view regarding the phenomenon under study which is English speaking difficulties encountered by Kazakhstani language learners. It also explained the research problem, significance and purpose of the study, and finally stated the research questions that guide this study. The present chapter provides a review of the literature regarding the importance of speaking competence and communicative language teaching (CLT), the English as a foreign language (EFL) environment, and factors affecting the use of the English language. Furthermore, as this study aims to investigate not only secondary students' challenges with using English but also how they deal with them, the current chapter provides the definition and classification of language learning strategies (LLSs), along with a description of some relevant studies. The chapter ends by explaining the theoretical framework that guides the current research.

Speaking Competence and Its Significance

Speaking competence is a vital skill as it contributes to effective interactions between individuals. According to Chaney and Burk (1998), speaking is the process of sharing meaning in a variety of contexts using both verbal (sharing of information between individuals using words), and non-verbal (involving body language and gestures) communication. People's language competence is largely judged more by their speaking ability than their other language skills; therefore, teaching speaking is an essential aspect of developing students' sociolinguistic competence in a foreign language at any level. Moreover, with the development of globalization, English has become the most widespread language in the world, since it is the language used for education, international affairs and international commerce. In this sense, there is strong necessity for individuals

in non-English speaking countries to learn and use English for different purposes like education, business, and recreation (Graddol, 2010). In Kazakhstan, the context of the present study, the use of English is highly promoted by the former president N. Nazarbayev who introduced “a global competitive” discourse that considers English as the language of integration into the global economy (Goodman et al., 2021; for more elaboration see Chapter 1).

Communicating and sharing ideas can be considered as essential parts of language learning as they provide an opportunity to use the language and develop learners’ speaking skills. In this regard, Davies and Pearse (2000) claim that helping students to use the target language effectively can be considered as a primary responsibility of language teachers. However, McDonough and Shaw (2012) point out that as one of the language skills speaking “has sometimes been undervalued or, in some circles, taken for granted” in most EFL contexts (p. 156). That is, the focus is often given to other language skills, in particular grammar and reading skills. To clarify this point, Yufrizal’s (2017) empirical study with Indonesian students and teachers of junior and high schools in Bandar Lampung explored these students’ and teachers’ perceptions of communicative competence, using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical analysis. The author found that almost all his participants agreed that acquiring speaking skills represented their main aim of learning the English language in a foreign language context; however, they indicated that they lacked confidence in using it both inside and outside the classroom for different reasons, which include traditional language teaching methods employed by their teachers and insufficient support received from immediate family members. The findings of Yufrizal’s (2017) study, similarly to many other studies in EFL contexts, revealed a mismatch between the objectives of teaching and learning English. The causes of such

speaking difficulties are the practices adopted by many EFL teachers that are based on teaching grammar and using less interesting activities that are irrelevant to students' needs or lives outside the classroom. It is worth noting that the language skills work together. Rifkin (2006), for instance, points out that writing and reading skills can be improved by using the target language orally, and this, in turn, can play a focal role in target language learning and development. Moreover, Savignon (2018) claims that one of the primary goals in teaching English in the 21st century is to develop language learners' speaking skills inside the English language classroom and link it to their lives. The prominence given to the skill of speaking in EFL contexts, especially in rural areas, is still under-researched. In other words, most EFL teachers adopt a traditional approach, which makes English classes monotonous, unchallenging, and teacher-centered. They also focus intensively on grammar instruction over other language skills. As a result, most students are unable to sufficiently improve their speaking skills.

Communicative Language Teaching

Finding the best method for teaching English in foreign language contexts is a vital topic in the educational environment. A wide range of language learners aspire to acquire and develop their English speaking proficiency due to the impact of globalization or career opportunities. For this reason, CLT can be an effective approach in the EFL classroom. Brumfit and Johnson (1979) pointed out that CLT can be described as "a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures; it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication" (p. 3). In addition, McDonough and Shaw (2012) posit that the mastery of grammar and the structure of the target language have been the key focus of language teaching in most foreign language teaching contexts. As a result, many language teachers in EFL contexts have provided little room for communicative practices that are connected

to life outside of the classroom. As a consequence, many students in EFL contexts tend to be competent in linguistic structure but less capable of expressing their ideas fluently in this language. Karimova et al.'s (2018) quantitative study with 105 Kazakhstani EFL teachers revealed that most language teachers were still using traditional methods in their English classrooms and practiced activities such as "repeating after the teacher, reading out loud, gap-fills, grammar exercises, and memorization of words or phrases" (p. 667). Moreover, almost 50 % percent of the teachers reported that they seldom or never use any other creative techniques due to their being too time consuming. In addition, many Kazakhstani students do not take an active role in their language learning process and mostly learn via such teacher-centered approaches. Although teachers may consider CLT to be an approach that requires much effort and time, most CLT activities are student centered and thus facilitate students' independent learning. According to Dos Santos (2020), CLT involves various activities such as discussions, group sharing, problem-based learning (PBL), role-play learning and any other techniques that help develop students' speaking skills in English. The importance of such activities was described by Savignon (2018), who suggests that CLT activities can be considered as a helpful method to increase learners' motivation to study a language and maximize their talking time inside the language classroom.

From what has been said, it could be concluded that CLT is not just bits of grammar; it also involves language functions. Related to this, if students receive sufficient exposure to the target language and opportunities for its use, in addition to motivating them to practice it across different settings, language learning will take care of itself (Savignon, 2002).

ESL Environments vs. EFL Environments

Language is subconsciously acquired in children's earliest years. Hughes (2011) indicates that the oral skill in a first language is developed before the child learns to read and write. Nonetheless, the process of acquiring a second or foreign language in adulthood seems to be different (Doughty, 2003). The reason for this is that second or foreign language learning requires intentional effort, and there are also a host of individual and contextual factors that can influence the success or failure of one's language learning. Examples of these factors are an individual's motivation and their deployment of language learning strategies (LLSs), along with the mediating role of language teachers and family members across different settings

Strevens's (1992) clearly differentiates between learning English in the EFL and English as a second language (ESL) contexts, stating that EFL is where English is not dominant and does not have special status in a country, while English in ESL has particular standing and is commonly used in major fields such as administration, law, education and mass media. Also, Su (2012) indicates that in EFL environments, language learners often have insufficient opportunities to use English with competent or native speakers of English outside the classroom. This implies that the target language is acquired more conveniently when English is taught in an ESL environment than in an EFL environment (Gass & Selinker, 2008). This is mainly due to the fact that EFL is associated with learning English where it is not used by the community of a learner. Although English competence is valued by Kazakhstani citizens and included in the language policies of Kazakhstan, this language does not function as the country's official language (Ahn & Smagulova, 2021). According to CIA (2020), 22.3 % of Kazakhstani citizens have English competence; however they do not see English as a means of communication within the country. In addition, Ahn and Smagulova's (2021) quantitative study on English language choices in Kazakhstan with

2954 participants from 29 Almaty schools revealed that “English remains substantively accessible to a relatively small group of affluent middle class which has wider access to linguistic resources in English while remaining out of reach to the majority of the population” (p. 12). Moreover, despite the government of Kazakhstan’s investing substantial efforts in the development of the English language, in the global ranking of English proficiency, Kazakhstan is at the lowest point of the list (Education First, 2020). Therefore, English language learning in Kazakhstani schools can be considered as learning in an EFL environment because English is still insufficiently used for communicative purposes outside formal settings.

Factors Affecting English Speaking Challenges in EFL Contexts

Speaking needs to be considered as the core of foreign language learning; therefore, it is crucial to explore issues regarding learners’ speaking difficulties that prevent English language learners from communicating (Ali Al-mashy, 2011). There are a number of empirical studies (e.g. Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014; Ariyanti, 2016; Khan, et al., 2018; Vo et al., 2018) that have explored EFL learners’ speaking difficulties and the factors contributing to their issues. The major findings of these studies have highlighted obstacles to oral communication with regard to students’ insufficient vocabulary, use of ineffective speaking strategies, teachers’ practices, classroom environment and psychological barriers such as language anxiety, the fear of making mistakes and shyness. Keong and Hameed (2015) also investigated the main English speaking difficulties that Iraqi EFL undergraduate students face. They found that out of 36 students, 75% of them faced challenges regarding speaking that were attributable to different reasons such as the fear of making mistakes, low motivation, anxiety and their teachers’ overuse of the mother tongue in English lessons. Similarly, Kittitaro (2018) posits that language learners’ obstacles to using English orally depend on their attitudes, language learning experiences, motivations

and self-confidence. The author further argues that psychological aspects related to anxiety, the fear of making mistakes, and instructional aspects such as teachers' heavy focus on grammar can also prevent students from speaking the English language fluently. Likewise, Manurung and Izar (2019) quantitatively investigated the factors affecting learners' English speaking practice. They found that the challenges faced by the participants in their speaking practice are related to internal and external factors. Internal factors include age, cognitive skills, psychology and the intelligence of an individual (Aldarasi, 2020). As regards the external factors, they include language teachers' practices, assessment modes and the role of informal social agents (e.g. parents and friends).

Internal Factors

Internal factors are factors that language learners bring with them to the language learning situation, which can have a significant impact on a student's language learning achievement (Benson & Gao, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

Language anxiety is considered to be one of the most common psychological variables that can affect an individual's success in using a target language. Horwitz (2001) defines foreign language anxiety (FLA) as students' negative emotional reactions to language learning. Tokoz-Göktepe's (2014) quantitative study explored the English speaking problems of Turkish school students. The author found that 41.6% of the students in the study responded that they faced challenges regarding their English speaking, ascribing these challenges to their fear of making mistakes, anxiety, a lack of motivation and a lack of vocabulary. Krashen (1981) argues that if students experience anxiety while learning or using a foreign language, their learning outcomes will not be successful. This notion of anxiety can be relevant to the Kazakhstani context because the few empirical studies conducted in Kazakhstan with students and teachers (e.g. Akshalova, 2019, Suleimenova, 2013) revealed that speaking anxiety is a common issue among students

learning English as a foreign language. For example, Suleimenova's (2013) mixed method study based on semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire used with Kazakhstani undergraduate students at one of the universities in the city of Almaty in Kazakhstan investigated the level of these students' foreign language anxiety and found that the students had experienced language anxiety and had negative experiences with their English speaking skills. Indeed, the major reasons for the students' anxiety and difficulty in using English in their communication was attributed to their low English speaking proficiency, a fear of speaking in front of their peers and low self-confidence. As Suleimenova (2013) points out, most participants tended to "express feelings of stress, nervousness or anxiety while learning to speak the target language and claim to have 'mental block' against learning" (p. 1860). Some researchers (e.g. Macayan et al., 2018) have indicated that FLA may have a positive impact on students' academic performance. For example, Macayan et al.'s, (2018) study which explored the influence of language learning anxiety on students' speaking and writing skills demonstrated that students with higher anxiety levels showed better results in writing tasks. However, Suleimenova (2019) believes that language learning anxiety has a negative effect on the process of language learning and use and can hinder students from speaking in the target language for different reasons such as feelings related to stress, worry and low self-confidence. Zainurrahman and Sangaji (2019) claim that the psychological state of learners is one of the most important factors that can affect their success in foreign language acquisition. In this sense, Dewaele and Pavelescu's (2021) empirical study with high school students in Romania investigated the relationship between learners' emotions and their communicative skills in English as a foreign language. Their qualitative study revealed that students' ability to speak in the foreign language can be boosted when they have a correct combination of feelings. Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021) conclude their study by suggesting that "learners' experiences inside and

outside the English classroom shaped their emotions which had direct and indirect repercussions on their motivation to speak" (p. 66). Hashemi (2011) conducted a qualitative research study using semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions with Iranian undergraduate students in order to identify the causes of English language anxiety among them. The author reported that most participants in his study, due to psychological barriers, tended to have feelings related to a fear of making mistakes, anxiety and nervousness while speaking English. Hence, it seems that learners' FLA plays a significant role in English language acquisition. Considering this, language teachers can be viewed as a crucial agency in foreign language pedagogy, thus it is important for them to be aware of such internal factors that affect speaking performance and help learners to cope with them.

External Factors

External factors are also essential in mediating the success of individuals in using the target language. These factors include language teachers' practices, the language learning environment, the teacher-student relationship, language learning materials, assessment modes and the involvement of immediate family members' (Aldarasi, 2020; Hajar, 2019).

Teachers' Practices. Teachers as one of the formal agents of learners can be considered as primary stakeholders in the acquisition of a foreign language. Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021) highlight the role of teachers in this context and suggest that language teachers could play a significant role in helping their students overcome speaking difficulties in a foreign language by providing a relaxed and friendly environment in a classroom where all students can receive their support. In fact, language teachers can either help or hinder students from developing their speaking skills depending on their teaching methods and

personality. Souriyavongsa et al. (2013), in a quantitative study, explored the factors and causes of 30 second-year students' unwillingness to speak in English at the National University of Lao. The participants of this study mentioned a number of internal and external factors to explain this. One of these factors was related to their having English teachers who were not well-qualified and used boring activities that inhibited their English language learning motivations. In addition, the majority of these participants felt a lack of confidence, feared making mistakes and were shy to speak in English.

Souriyavongsa et al. (2013) conclude their study by stating that "the overall picture of the factors that affecting students' learning English language is discouraged and is indicative of the need to change the methods in which English language is taught to Lao learners" (p. 187). Similarly, Zhunussova et al.'s (2021) qualitative study that explored Kazakhstani undergraduate students' attitudes towards the English language found that some of the participants were unwilling to learn English and most of them learned English for professional purposes; however, some held negative attitudes towards English as they reported that this language will not be required for their future career and "their method of learning English was to simply memorize exam material and after the exam, they forgot the material because they had no other reason to learn English" (p. 7).

In addition, Ismail et al.'s (2018) study with 18 Kazakhstani undergraduate students conducted via e-mail and follow-up telephone interviews revealed that students encountered difficulties in using the English language because their school teachers largely emphasized grammar and lexis in isolation which made hard to apply the language in real life situations as they lacked experience with communicative practice in their English language classroom. One of the participants reported that "We learn grammar all the time, but they do not teach us how to use language in real situations when you have to think and speak fast". (Ismail et., al, 2018, p. 119).

Dil (2009) argues that, based on his quantitative study with 139 first-year undergraduate Turkish students, too much focus on grammar rules does not result in the improved speaking skills of learners. Although the participants of his study were willing to speak English in their classroom, they had to mainly focus on learning English grammar rules which had a negative impact on their English communication skills. Related to this, Fallaj (1998) pointed out that ineffective teaching practices are not a new obstacle in EFL acquisition. In his qualitative study with ten Arab college students, he found that most of these students tended to deploy less effective language learning strategies such as rote memorization, repetition and working on exam samples that focused on grammar exercises. Ultimately, they were less willing to use English both inside and outside the classroom and viewed English only as a subject rather than as an important tool to help them accomplish their future goals and desired identities. The results of the studies discussed above explain that the practices of teachers are one of the major external factors that impacts their learners' language learning experiences. Despite teachers' explanation of grammar being an essential part of language learning, they should also teach students how to apply the received knowledge in real life situations.

Definition of the Construct of “Language Learning Strategy”

In the field of foreign language learning, students may achieve different results, and it has been observed by language learning researchers and educators that some language learners are more successful than their peers. It has been argued that successful language learners tend to use more effective language learning strategies (LLSs) than their less successful counterparts (Hajar, 2019; Oxford, 2017; Rose, 2015). Hajar (2019) defines LLSs as “an individual’s active engagement in the learning process within a particular situated setting to accomplish their learning goals” (p. 33). Accordingly, a number of researchers (e.g. Cohen, 2011; Gao, 2010; Griffiths, 2018; Oxford, 2017) have emphasized

the salience of the LLSs that language learners can employ to confront the various linguistic and academic challenges they are facing.

“Strategy” is not a new term because in ancient Greece people used the notion of strategy to explain their plans to win a war (Trendak, 2015). However, the construct of strategy does not only have a military connotation since it is used in many other fields such as education and business (Griffiths, 2018; Wray & Hajar, 2015). In the field of language learning, the term strategy has been defined by a number of scholars (e.g. Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 2017; Rose, 2015; Rubin, 1975). For example, Rose (2015) defined LLS as “processes and actions that are consciously deployed by language learners in order to help them to learn or use a language more effectively” (p. 421). Similarly, Oxford et al. (2014) described this term as “the learner’s consciously chosen tools for active, self-regulated improvement of language learning” (p. 30). Rubin (1975) in turn described LLSs as particular methods or tools that are used by language learners in order to acquire a target language. These techniques can be any activity that can help to enhance learners' language skills such as watching English movies, reading books, singing English songs or seeking opportunities to communicate with native speakers.

Overall, a foreign language learning strategy can be explained as a complex process which involves the efforts of language learners to acquire a target language and the effectiveness of these strategies depend on the learners' individual and contextual factors.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)

Research on LLSs started in 1975 with a seminal paper written by Joan Rubin. Rubin (1995) attempted to study the effective strategies used for “good language learning”, on the grounds that these strategies can be taught to less successful learners. Following this, a number of LLS researchers (e.g. Cohen, 2011; Dörnyei, 2005; Hajar, 2019; Oxford,

1990; Rubin, 1981) presented their own classification of LLSs in order to implement it in their empirical studies. For instance, Rubin (1981) categorized LLSs into direct and indirect strategies. Rubin refers to the direct strategies to learn a language as memorization, verification or clarification, monitoring, deductive logic and practice. On the other hand, the second category deals with LLSs that are not directly related to foreign language learning and which involve a process whereby opportunities for language learning practices are established (as cited in Takeuchi, 2019). Other classifications of LLSs were suggested by Chamot and O’Malley (1990), Dörnyei (2005) and Oxford (1990). These researchers classified LLSs into cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective strategies. The category of cognitive strategies includes techniques used to make language learning more effective by using one’s mental abilities. These strategies help to enhance the retention and comprehension of language learning materials. Chamot and O’Malley (1990) claim that cognitive strategies “operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning” (p. 44). This category of strategies represents auditory and imagery techniques, such as illustration, which can help one to remember a sound or a sequence of sounds within the mind and visual images or flashcards that can be used to understand a topic, remember content and make inferences.

Chamot and O’Malley (1990) indicate that metacognitive strategies are “higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity” (p. 45). Examples of these strategies are selective attention where language learners pay attention to particular aspects of the input of language, and self-management, which helps to create appropriate conditions for learning (Hajar, 2019). Therefore, metacognitive strategies are mostly used by language learners to manage their learning performance. Socioaffective strategies include interacting with others and taking control of feelings that are related to learning a language. This category in Chamot and

O'Malley's (1990) taxonomy includes three major items such as questioning for clarification, cooperation and self-talk. Although all of these categories contain important and diverse strategies like questioning for clarification, self-management, and self-reward, the social strategies are the ones that can be considered as crucial for language learners. This is because when language learners' efforts are mediated by significant actors (e.g. language teachers and parents) with certain effective social strategies to help them to speak the target language, they can produce this language across different settings and overcome the linguistic and psychological barriers that may hinder them from using the language.

Individuals always learn and use a foreign language to achieve specific goals which can be "proximal goals (i.e. to learn language for immediate gains) or/and ultimate ones (i.e. master language for academic/professional/national advancement)" (Hajar, 2019, p. 33). In this sense, Griffiths (2018) points out that LLSs are goal-oriented because language learners tend to use different LLSs to achieve their personal, social, academic, vocational and/or national purposes. However, some scholars (e.g. Chamot 2004; Griffiths, 2018) argue that language learners' goals of learning a language have been poorly considered by LLS researchers when they described their suggested classification of LLSs. Bearing this in mind, Hajar (2019), based on the findings of his empirical study of a group of international students in the UK, suggested two categories of LLSs that corresponded to his participants' learning goals. His classification of LLSs as compulsory and voluntary clearly describes the goals of language learners. Compulsory/other-imposed strategies, as Hajar (2019) describes them, refers to the strategies "employed by language learners in response to the direct involvement or coercion imposed upon them by some influential agents, principally teachers and parents" (p. 54). Examples of compulsory strategies include the repetition of information, the taking of notes and memorization, which are mainly used for grade achievement. Conversely, voluntary strategies are used by language

learners because of their own language learning interests and personal ambitions as regards mastering the English language (Hajar, 2019). Examples of these strategies include composing poetry in the English language, learning geographical places and customs of English speaking countries and participating in competitions related to the language can be examples of voluntary strategies (Hajar, 2019, 2020). This classification has been adopted in this thesis because the current study considers difficulties in speaking English and strategies to counteract these from sociocultural perspectives. In other words, the participants of this study may be learning to speak in English not only to get a good mark in a course, but they can also have a voluntary motivation to acquire it because they understand the importance of this language. According to Hajar (2019), this classification refers to different language learning approaches that highlight the salience of political, social and cultural processes which are connected to learners' cognitive and metacognitive processes. Moreover, the participants' responses regarding LLS may be related to these two categories; therefore, it has helped to elucidate my findings from the collected data.

Response to the Criticisms Directed towards LLS Research

As regards the major criticism directed towards the field of LLSs, Gao (2010) points out that most LLS studies rely on the cognitive perspective, which focuses only on an individual's cognitive aspects, using mainly Oxford's (1990) strategy inventory language learning (SILL). Moreover, Gao (2014) suggests that questionnaires that focus on strategies may fail to cover all essential points and could thus deprive researchers of the deep insights which could be beneficial to language teachers for suggesting effective LLSs to their students who are struggling to acquire the English language. As a consequence, a number of socially-oriented researchers (Coyle, 2007; Gao, 2010; Hajar 2020; Palfreyman, 2006; Rose, 2015) support the idea that using sociocultural approaches in LLS research can help to transform the perception of LLSs as being solely linked to learners' cognitive

aspects for acknowledging the role of mediating social processes which involve practices, relationships, and the interactions of people. In addition, Griffiths and Oxford (2014) view sociocultural perspectives on LLS as “a sound theoretical base”, stating that despite the fact that questionnaire surveys created the “‘backbone’ of strategy research”, rich data of LLS use can be collected by applying a more qualitative approach (p. 3). Although particular research methods have been established such as questionnaire surveys and classroom observations which were focused on learners’ cognitive abilities, the findings gained from using quantitative research methods tended to only reveal language learners’ LLS preferences rather than their actual and situated deployment of LLSs (Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Moreover, another disadvantage of research that considers only the cognitive side of learners is that “many language learners tend to be viewed as cognitive beings, acting upon target language input and producing output than as sociohistorically, socioculturally, and sociopolitically situated individuals with multiple subjectivities and identities” (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p. 97). As a consequence, many sociocultural LLS researchers (e.g. Coyle 2019; Gu 2019; Hajar 2018) have identified the necessity for conducting more qualitative research to provide a holistic view and depict the dynamic and contextualised picture of learners’ strategy use. In this sense, the present phenomenographic study has adopted a sociocultural perspective on language learning and deployed two qualitative research methods (narrative writing and semi-structured interviews) to capture the situated use of LLSs employed by my participants. More details about the research methodology used in this research will be explained in the coming chapter.

Conceptual Framework

Activity theory (AT) proposed by Leontiev (1981) serves as the conceptual framework for this qualitative study. This theory emphasizes the relationship between

object and mediated community and explains that “socially-organized and goal-directed actions play a central role in human development” (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009, p. 460). Also, this theory views language as occurring through “people... who actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their learning” (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, p. 146). In other words, this theory helps to recognize the social and cultural context of people in order to understand their activity and behavior. Moreover, AT is a “clarifying and descriptive tool rather than a strongly predictive theory” (Nardi, 1996, p. 7). Therefore, it can be appropriate for the analysis and explanation of human behavior done in this research. Donato and McCormick (1994) suggest that AT enables researchers to better capture the nature of LLSs by stressing that they are not stable and do not operate alone. Rather, LLSs are “motivated by specific objectives and... instrumental to fulfilling specific goals” (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 455). Accordingly, AT seems to fit the goals of the present study that aimed to unearth the dynamic and situated nature of LLS underlying the pivotal impact of different contextual realities, which include teachers, private tutors, parents and modes of assessment.

The study aimed to explore learners’ English speaking difficulties, LLSs and actions to learn the English language not only in the classroom, but also in particular sociocultural communities. In this regard, this theory views the behavior of people that results from the combination of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation (Lantolf, 2000). Furthermore, Lantolf (2000) explains that AT “is not merely doing something, it is doing something that is motivated either by a biological need, such as hunger, or a culturally constructed need”, and then that “needs become motives once they become directed at a specific object” (p. 8). Similarly, Gao (2006) argues that the development of the process of language learning by the learner involves ”a socialization process”, manifested not only by the efforts of language teachers in the classroom but also

by “various social agents in contexts where language learning occurs” (p. 287). Basically, AT explains the interaction between a subject (a student), and an object (different contextual factors and social agents). In this context, family members, people in a particular community, the work environment and school may have an impact on learners acquiring a language. Also, in a qualitative study by Gillette (1994), the implications of AT on the development of LLS among participants who were enrolled in a French course was investigated. As a result of interviews conducted with learners, their class notes and diaries, Gillette (1994) concluded that the participants’ purposes and aims for studying a foreign language were highly depend on their personal histories (e.g. to learn the language or to fulfill the language requirement), which also had an impact on the types of strategies that they applied in order to learn a language. In the same way, meaning of learning to speak English may be differently identified; accordingly, this theoretical framework can highlight the sociocultural history of learning the English language and the learning experience of participants.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the literature about the importance of speaking competence together with CLT and the EFL environment. It also described the factors affecting the use of the English language. Moreover, the current chapter illustrated the definition and classification of LLSs and presented the theoretical framework that has guided the current research. The next chapter will explain the methodology that was selected for the study, and the research site and sample. It also includes a description of the data collection and data analysis process and presents the ethical considerations of the study.

Methodology

The previous chapter illustrated the literature related to speaking competence and major factors affecting language learners' oral proficiency in English in EFL contexts. As the present qualitative study sought to uncover not only the participants' challenges in speaking English but also the language learning strategies (LLSs) used by them, Chapter 2 described the different definitions and classifications of LLSs, in addition to explaining how a sociocultural perspective has been advanced as a useful lens through which to consider LLS use and development. Further, the theoretical framework guided by activity theory was also illustrated in Chapter 2. The current chapter sets out the methodological approach used in this study, namely phenomenography, as a qualitative methodological framework. It is used to answer the following research questions, presented in Chapter 1:

Q1 What are the primary challenges that rural Grade 11 students encounter in speaking the English language?

Q2 Why are they facing these challenges?

Q3 How do they deal with these challenges? (i.e. their strategy use)

In this chapter, the research design of the study will be described and the selection of the participants and setting explained. In addition, the chapter deals with the methods deployed to gather the data for the research. This phenomenographic qualitative research used two main research methods; namely, semi-structured online interviews and narrative writing, so that rich data could be obtained to unearth the eight participants' difficulties in using English in their oral communication, and also how they address these difficulties. The last part of this chapter discusses the ethical issues related to the current study. Notably, the data of this study were collected online during the year of Covid-19.

Research Design

The methodological approach that guided the present study is phenomenography. Originally, the term “phenomenography” is a combination of two Greek words “phainomenon” and “graphein”, which mean “appearance” and “description” (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997, p. 192). Accordingly, phenomenography as a combined term represents a description of appearances, suggesting that it is concerned with the descriptions of things as they appear to us. This term was first introduced by Marton (1981) who defined phenomenography as a research approach which aims to distinguish different ways of experience or of thinking about a particular phenomenon and answering various questions about learning. Hence, phenomenography, as Hajar (2020) describes, is “an empirical and qualitative approach used to determine the different ways in which people experience and understand aspects of their environment” (p. 2). In other words, the main purpose of phenomenographic research is to discern different ways of understanding a given phenomenon. In this regard, phenomenography resonates with the goals of the current research, which attempts to recognize the varying ways of understanding the phenomenon of students’ challenges with using English in oral communication in a rural region of Kazakhstan. Note that within the phenomenographic literature, the terms “experiences”, “conceptions”, “perceptions” and “understandings” are used interchangeably (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 114).

This study has attempted to explore rural school students’ English speaking experiences. Beaulieu (2017) underlines the fact that the use of the phenomenographic approach in empirical studies can enable a researcher to identify the different ways in which individuals experience, conceptualize, perceive and understand concepts. Moreover, in this qualitative study, the participants would share their experiences in speaking the English language across different settings, along with articulating their challenges

differently. Although all participants have come from a rural region and were studying in the same school, their experiences in relation to using English orally were likely to be different due to the influence of an array of contextual conditions such as the practices of their teachers, English private tutors, their parents' involvement and the availability of resources outside the classroom. Therefore, it is believed that phenomenography as a qualitative methodological framework would enable the researcher of this empirical study to explore the sampled eight participants' challenges in speaking English and their associated LLSSs together with identifying the different factors that affected their English speaking experiences.

Notably, phenomenography adopts a non-dualistic, relational position by emphasizing that "the internal (thinking) and the external (the world out there)" are internally related through the individual's awareness of the world (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999, p. 13). In other words, phenomenography does not aim to present one interpretation or reality of the phenomenon under study "because the reality of one individual is likely to be different from that of another and is not fixed in time and place" (Pherali, 2011, p. 17). It implies that individuals can perceive a specific phenomenon in different ways and their perception of a phenomenon can alter over time (Hajar, 2020). Pherali (2011) points out that "phenomenography has become a common research strategy in education research since students' learning does not only depend on their cognitive process but also on the context within which their learning occurs. In this case, phenomenographic studies have valuable potential for educational improvement, by developing respect for learners' perspectives in pedagogy" (Pherali, 2011, p. 15). In the same way, Lamb et al., (2011) argue that in phenomenographic research, the individuals' understandings of a phenomenon are not "genetically inherited by individuals" but are "socially constructed

and reconstructed through the person's ongoing experiences and relationships with their world" (p. 676). Therefore, this non-dualistic stance is compatible with the sociocultural outlook underpinned in this study, suggesting that language learning takes place not only in individual learners' minds but also in their constant interactions with a multitude of situated contextual realities such as the practices of teachers and availability of resources. In other words, the study does not only attempt to capture participants' cognitive and individual experiences in speaking English but also explores different ways in which they can use it. The next two sections will discuss the research site and present general information about the research participants in this study.

Research Site

The research was conducted with participants who study at a public school located in one of the villages in the south part of Kazakhstan. The educational institution was established in 1976, and the medium of instruction used in this school is Kazakh. At the time the research was conducted, there were 685 pupils who studied at this school and two Grade 11 classes. Due to the global outbreak of COVID-19, the process of data collection and real face- to- face interaction with participants within the school was impossible because the entire school population moved to distance learning when the pandemic started in the country. This issue in terms of the possibility of collecting data was discussed with the principal of the target school, who decided that according to school regulations the best way to approach the participants and collect data for this research was to do so online. Therefore, all participants used WhatsApp for sending their narrative essays, and all semi-structured interviews with them were conducted using Zoom, which provided online face-to-face interaction with the participants. The participants were familiar with these apps because they had been adopted by their mainstream teachers at school.

Sampling

Boon et al. (2007) point out that the sample used in a phenomenographic study should be purposive in that participants are supposed to be specifically sought out as having experienced the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the sample which was used in the present study was purposive in that the participants were specifically selected and had a shared experience of the given phenomenon. According to Collier-Reed (2006), purposeful sampling can “give the best data to contribute to the constitution of the full extent of the various ways of experiencing the phenomenon” (p. 47). Moreover, purposive sampling has been argued to provide optimum data to ascertain how exactly a phenomenon is experienced (Creswell, 2014). In this study the participants were eight Grade 11 students who were studying at one of the public schools in a rural area of South Kazakhstan. It was expected that Grade 11 students, who are generally 18 years old, would be capable of articulating their challenges and associated strategies in using English in a clear way since, at that age, they would be mature enough to do so. That is, this criterion in choosing the participants was important on the grounds that it enabled the focus to be on the participants’ challenges in using English in their communication and that their speaking strategy use would be better understood. Further, all the participants were ethnic Kazakhs and were studying at one of the public schools in a rural area of Kazakhstan. In addition, none of the participants were known to the researcher prior to the data collection stage. Both male and female students were involved in this research because their views and understanding can differ from each other’s. More importantly, the participants were chosen based on criteria related to their English language learning experience, particularly, those who have difficulties in communicating orally in this language.

Table 1

Information about the Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Family background	Interview duration
1 Bek	18	Male	Shymkent	Father is a teacher of history and mother is a biology teacher at school	30:25
2 Zhanna	18	Female	Kazygurt	Father is a retired police officer and mother is a Kazakh language teacher at a public school	31:15
3 Arman	18	Male	Kazygurt	Father is a Physical education teacher and mother is a Kazakh language teacher	45:59
4 Dauren	18	Male	Turkistan	Father is a police man and mother is a nurse	34:37
5 Asem	18	Female	Shymkent	Both of parents are teachers at school	36:54
6 Bota	18	Female	Shymkent	Father is a neurosurgeon and mother is a pharmacist	46:34
7 Sultan	18	Male	Kazygurt	Father is an entrepreneur and mother is a preschool teacher	32:21
8 Ainur	18	Female	Uzbekistan	Mother is a seamstress	52:39

The upcoming section will describe the two major qualitative methods which were employed in this study; namely, narrative writing and semi-structured individual interviews.

Data Collection Instruments

Individual semi-structured interviews were used as the main data collection tool (as is customary in phenomenographic research), whereas the other research method (i.e., narrative writing) was deployed to enable the researcher to construct the interview questions and supplement the validity and reliability of the research study. It is worth noting that for the sake of the safety of the participants and the researcher of this study during the Covid-19 pandemic, the data were collected online using the WhatsApp and Zoom online platforms. Further details about the process of data collection will be provided later.

Narrative Writing

In the present study, the data were collected online between 20 October and 5 December 2020. As previously stated, two qualitative research methods, namely, narrative writing and individual semi-structured online interviews were employed to answer the research questions of this study illustrated in Chapter 1 and at the beginning of this chapter.

Narrative writing was used to construct appropriate and individualized interview questions and collect the background information of the participants. Pavlenko (2007) points out that one of the main advantages of asking learners to write an account about their learning experiences is to “gain insights into their ‘private worlds, inaccessible to experimental methodologies, and thus provide the insider’s view of the processes of language learning, attrition, and use” (pp. 164–165). Our participants were given the set of questions below to help them write their essays:

1. Could you please write some general information about your background (e.g, your name, family members, parents’ job, your city/village).

2. When and how did you start learning English?
3. What is your perspective about learning English at that time?
4. When did you actually recognize the importance of English in your life?
5. What sort of problems did you usually have in learning English?
6. What are the reasons behind these challenges?
7. Are you satisfied with your oral English proficiency? If yes/no, why?
8. What strategies do you use to improve your oral English proficiency?
9. Is there any person who helps you to learn or use English?

The language used by the participants in writing their essays was Kazakh in order to enable them to express their own perceptions freely. As the data were collected online, the researcher sent these questions to each participant individually by using WhatsApp and asked them to submit their essays within a week. The participants used the same app to send their essays to the researcher; most of them took pictures of their essays which were written on paper and a few sent in the form of a message.

Semi-structured Interviews

The second and main research method that was used in this study was semi-structured individual online interviews. Seidman (2006) points out that qualitative interviewing is one of the most effective ways of gathering information due to the fact that it allows a researcher to collect more detailed information from participants, and they can share their feelings, stories or experiences in a more open way. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) describe semi-structured interviews as “attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects’ own perspectives” (p. 27). In turn, Beaulieu (2017) suggests that important aspects of successful interviewing are the questions that are asked

and the way they are asked. Therefore, this study adopted the semi-structured interview format, which is considered as the most common method of collecting data in phenomenographic research. Cohen and Scott (1996) posit that semi-structured interviews have the advantage of “allowing the researcher and learners to pursue topics of interest which may not have been foreseen when the questions were originally drawn up” (p. 91). Moreover, Datko (2015) holds the view that semi-structured interviews can be a valuable data collection method, which is applicable in qualitative research, especially in language pedagogy research. Additionally, Marton (1986) recommends beginning an interview with open-ended questions, and then using follow-up questions that can provide further clarification and rich data on the topic. In order to enhance the process of conducting semi-structured interviews in the present phenomenographic study, the researcher took into account Ash-worth and Lucas’s (2000) recommendations during their interviews with participants:

- make minimal use of questions prepared in advance;
- use open-ended questions;
- listen empathetically to hear meanings, interpretations and understandings;
- consciously silence his or her concerns, preoccupations and judgments;
- use prompts to pursue/clarify the participant’s own string of reflections
- allow the participant to elaborate, offer incidents, clarifications and, maybe, ‘to discuss events at length (Ash-worth & Lucas’s, 2000, pp. 302–303).

Following these recommendations, the present study used semi-structured interviews that enabled the researcher to enter into the worlds of the participants through their own expositions (see Appendix A for interview questions). Each interview lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. All of the interviews were conducted in the Kazakh language in order to help the participants express their ideas confidently. The next two sections will provide more information about the data collection and data analysis procedures.

Data Collection Procedures

When the researcher received a letter of approval from her ethics application to collect data for the study, a conversation with the principal of the target school was done via a telephone call. After gaining the principal's initial agreement on the phone, the researcher sent an email to that principal describing the nature and goals of the study, the target participants and their rights, the duration of this research and the research methods used in the study (see Appendix C for the invitation letter). After a few days, the principal responded to the researcher's email and included a list of 18 students who might be interested in this research. A group chat with the research and the target participants was created on WhatsApp, where the researcher sent a file including the detailed description of the research and its benefits along with students' rights (see Appendix C for students' consent form). Ten students expressed their willingness to participate in this study; however, two of them later decided to withdraw from the study, and the researcher respected their decision. As a result, the data were collected from eight students. The researcher sent each participant the essay questions presented above, and they were asked to write an essay about themselves and their English learning experiences. Following this, all online individual interviews were held at the time most convenient to the participants. The interviews were conducted in Kazakh as it was the most familiar language to all

participants. Finally, the participants were reminded that all personal information will be confidential, as will be further discussed in the section related to ethical considerations. The conducted interviews were recorded with the assent of the participants and later transcribed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

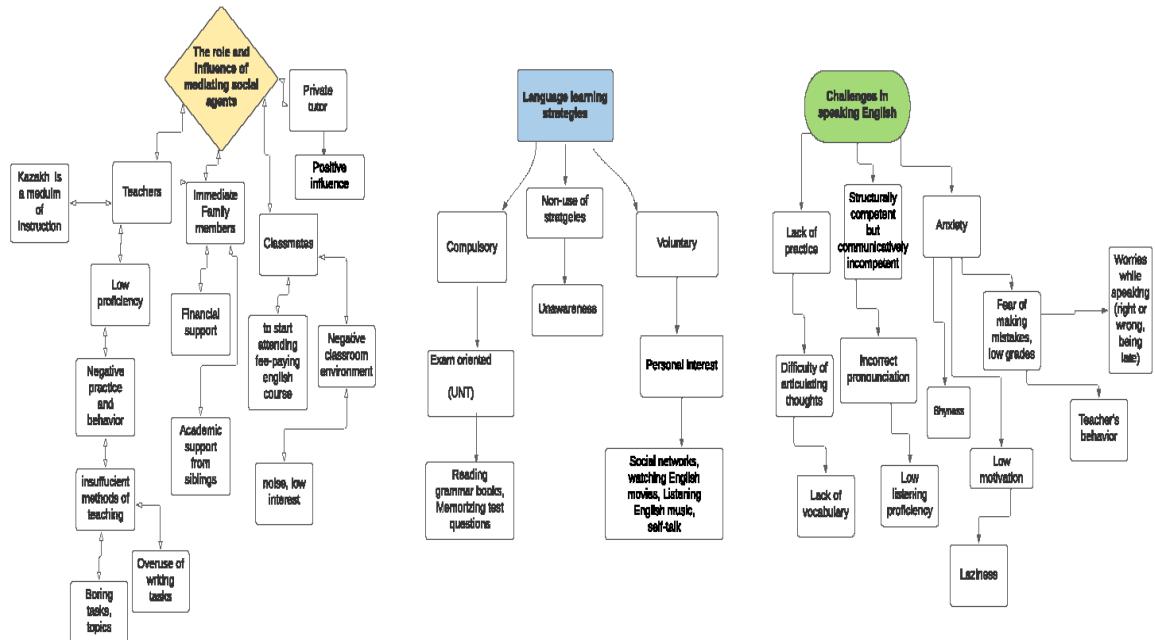
As soon as all the data were collected, the researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews of the eight participants' verbatim (see Appendix D for a sample of the interview transcript). Then, the participants' narrative essays and semi-structured interview transcripts were analyzed by using Braun and Clarke's (2013) six steps of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can be defined as "a method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) across qualitative data" in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 218). Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) six steps of thematic analysis are the following:

- Familiarization with data
- Initial coding generation
- Search for themes based on the initial coding
- Report writing
- Themes identification labeling
- Review of the themes (p. 336).

First, all interview transcripts were read several times "actively, analytically, and critically" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 205). Following a familiarization and examination of the narrative essays and semi-structured interviews, open codes were created by the researcher in response to the research questions. That is, a selected reading approach was used; as the researcher read the transcripts, she highlighted the statements that captured the participants' English speaking experiences (see Appendix E for examples of "initial

codes”). The formed open codes were categorized into the themes that emerged from the narrative essays and interviews. For example, several participants indicated that they were afraid of making mistakes while speaking English; therefore this point was highlighted and added to the category of “Individual factors affecting students’ oral communication”. Also all participants referred to the benefits of having additional private tutoring in English. Hence, this idea was labeled as “The impact of English private tutors (EPT)”. According to the data results, four major themes with sub-themes were created in order to respond to the research questions of this study. These themes are “Individual factors affecting students’ oral communication”, “The influence of mediating social agents”, “The impact of private English tutors’ practices”, “The participants’ language learning strategies”. Figure 1 is a thematic map of the resultant themes and sub-themes. These themes and the extracts of each level of the data analysis will be presented in the coming chapters.

Figure 1: Thematic map



Source: compiled by the author

Ethical Considerations

Following ethical principles, the data collection process started only after obtaining the ethical approval from the researcher's university. After that, the researcher obtained the approval from the school's principal and target participants as described in the previous section. Anonymity is considered a basic ethical principle because data collected from the participants may include private information of their lives (Cresswel, 2014). Therefore, in order to guarantee confidentiality and to minimize the risks of the study, pseudonyms were given to the participants, and their real names were not used. The name of the school was also not disclosed. The researcher informed the participants about their rights and received permission from the participants to have their speech recorded at the beginning of the interview. The recorded audio of the interviews and the transcriptions of the interviews would be accessible only to the researcher and her thesis supervisor. Before conducting the interviews online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all participants were informed about the aim of the study and their rights, so any participant who did not want to continue participating could stop at any time without incurring any negative consequences. Any information obtained during the interviews was kept confidential and all data obtained from the participants will be destroyed by the researcher after two years subsequent to the data collection process. This is because a researcher may publish a paper based on her thesis in the future. The interview questions contained no disrespectful or offending questions. Also, any cultural, religious, gender, or other differences of the participants were respected by the researcher and the subjects' confidentiality were protected by the anonymity of their personal information.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a detailed description of the methodology applied in this study by justifying the research site, design, data collection, sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis together with the ethical considerations adopted by the researcher. Particularly, the present phenomenographic study employed a qualitative method using narrative writing and individual semi-structured interviews conducted with eight Grade 11 participants in the same public school in a specific rural region. It was concluded with ethical consideration, where participants' rights and other ethical considerations were discussed beforehand. The next chapter will present information on the major findings of the study.

Findings

This chapter provides the findings of the current phenomenographic study which investigated eight rural Grade 11 students' English speaking challenges and their associated strategy uses at one rural mainstream school in South Kazakhstan. The previous chapter described the selection of the participants, the setting and the research design. It also explained the methods used to obtain the data for this research. Two research methods were used; namely, narrative writing and semi-structured individual interviews. Additionally, Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) guidelines for conducting a thematic analysis and the ethical considerations connected to the study were explained in Chapter 3. This chapter presents the findings of this study, which was collected from the participants and was guided by the following research questions:

Q1: What are the primary challenges that rural Grade 11 students encounter in speaking the English language?

Q2: Why are they facing these challenges?

Q3: How do they deal with these challenges (i.e. their strategy uses)?

This chapter starts by presenting the vignettes of each participant's biography. Following that, the primary themes related to the participants' English speaking challenges, the factors that contributed to enhancing or limiting their English speaking proficiency and their strategy uses will be explained. These themes are: "individual factors affecting students' oral communication", "the influence of mediating social agents", "the impact of private English tutors' practices", and "the participants' language learning strategies (LLSs)".

Biographical Vignettes of the Participants in This Research

As described in Chapter 3, the present study involved eight participants, four males and four females. All of them started learning English formally in Grade 5, lived in the same small village in the South of Kazakhstan and attended a fee-charging English private tutoring (EPT) class with the same tutor. The following is a brief biographical vignette of each participant, constructed from their written accounts of their English language learning experiences.

Zhanna

Zhanna grew up with three sisters and one brother in a middle class family. Zhanna's father was a retired police officer and her mother was a Kazakh language teacher at a public school. Zhanna was very interested in speaking and writing in English. In Grade 6, she informed her parents about her desire to enroll in a fee-charging English course. Her mother supported this suggestion and said, "The more languages you know, the more human you are; mastering English is essential for your future". Since Grade 6, she had been studying English with a private English tutor. She described the benefits of having EPT such as increasing her interest in learning English and seeing it as a means to achieve her future goals. However, she had some difficulties while using English in oral communication in particular. Her main language difficulties were due to her pronunciation. Also, she was hesitant to use English inside the classroom as she wanted to avoid making mistakes and losing face. In order to overcome her challenges, she practiced self-talk and saying the difficult words in front of the mirror. She believed that most rural students are not interested in learning English because their language teachers at school do not teach it in an interesting way.

Sholpan

Sholpan came from a middle-class family and grew up with one brother and two sisters. Her mother was a seamstress. Sholpan recognized the importance of English in Grade 9 when she was 16 years old and has been receiving EPT since Grade 9. Although she found the English language interesting, she was not satisfied with the English teacher's practice at school because she tended to overuse Kazakh and assigned uninteresting activities. Sholpan faced several difficulties regarding her English-speaking ability, which included her lack of English vocabulary, her shyness and limited opportunities to practice English in her village. Nevertheless, she believed that her English improved because of the support she received from her private English tutor. She also used some effective strategies including installing some English language apps on her mobile phone, reading English fairy tales, listening to music and watching films in English.

Dauren

Dauren came from a middle-class family. His father was a policeman and his mother was a nurse. He grew up with three siblings. He had a positive attitude towards learning English, seeing it as a necessity for a better future. Dauren started to learn English with the private English tutor when he was 17. He believed that in order to learn something a person should have a passion for that thing, and the same idea could be applied to learning English. He indicated that he sometimes faced difficulties in expressing his thoughts in English due to a lack of vocabulary, the incorrect pronunciation of some words and his shyness. In order to overcome these difficulties, Dauren tended to ask for help from his older siblings, but he mainly relied on the support he was receiving from his private English tutor. Sometimes he used social networks such as TikTok and Instagram in order to learn new words in English.

Asem

Asem grew up with her elder sister in a middle class family. Her parents were both teachers at school. She started to learn English with EPT sessions when she was 16, in Grade 9, because she realized that the English knowledge she had received at school was inadequate. Moreover, because of completing boring tasks, limited oral practice in English and the heavy use of Kazakh inside the English classes, she developed negative feelings towards English classes at school. Asem was also afraid of making mistakes when she spoke English because of her English teacher's strict behavior. Nevertheless, she had a positive attitude towards the English language, and believed that her English could be improved with additional effort. Asem indicated that she enjoyed attending EPT sessions because the tutor incorporated interesting English language activities and had a friendly relationship with all tutees.

Sultan

Sultan grew up with his elder brother and two little sisters. His father worked as an individual entrepreneur, and his mother was a preschool teacher. Sultan had a positive attitude towards learning English and other foreign languages as well, but he found English classes at school passive and boring. Therefore, he, like other participants, attended EPT sessions. He also noted that his teacher at school was less supportive and less competent than his English tutor. Sultan articulated several difficulties with using and speaking English, including his fear of making mistakes, a lack of English vocabulary and limited English practice. Sometimes he learned English by using social networks such as Instagram and YouTube in order to watch free English lessons.

Bota

Bota came from a middle class family and was living with her grandmother, parents, two brothers and one sister. Her father worked as a neurosurgeon and her mother worked in a pharmaceutical factory. Bota had not paid much attention to learning English effectively before Grade 11 because she thought that she was good at English compared to her classmates. However, during this academic year, Bota intended to take the Unified National Test (UNT), which is a high-stakes examination, and English represents the core subject in this test. Bota was preparing herself for this test by working on samples from it. She considered speaking in English challenging, mainly due to her lack of vocabulary. Accordingly, she sometimes read English books to increase her active vocabulary and to help her prepare for the UNT.

Arman

Arman came from a middle class family where his grandmother, his parents, three little brothers and one little sister were living together. His parents were both schoolteachers. Arman considered English to be one of his favorite subjects at school because of his personal interest in this language. He had been learning English with the English tutor since he was in Grade 6, but a few months ago, he had to stop attending his classes because of family circumstances. However, he enjoyed learning English and still aspired to improve his English language knowledge. But Arman also shared some difficulties that he had while speaking and reading in English. He indicated that although he was good at English grammar, many people did not understand him when he spoke English because of his incorrect pronunciation of some words. He believed that his English tutor helped him to learn English because the tutor gave him their individual attention and opportunities to practice English without being afraid of making mistakes. He indicated

that almost all English classes at school were the same and boring, except for some open classes with visitors. He believed that if he had opportunities to practice English with competent speakers outside the classroom, his English speaking skill would have improved.

Bek

Bek had seven people in his family: his grandmother, parents, two sisters and one brother. His parents were both schoolteachers. He decided to receive English lessons from the private English tutor in the 9th grade because he was not satisfied with the knowledge he was gaining at school. He learnt English in his school, too, but the lessons there were not interesting because of the teacher's poor teaching practices. Bek had a positive attitude towards learning English as well as other foreign languages, but he thought it would be more useful to acquire the English language first. Bek mentioned one major problem with communicating in English which was a lack of vocabulary. He believed that practice would be very helpful to improve his speaking skill; however he did not have sufficient opportunities for practicing English in his village.

Interpreting the Participants' Oral English Language Learning Experiences

While the previous section has provided a brief biographical vignette of each participant, this section aims to give more in-depth information about the participants' varying factors that contributed to enhancing or inhibiting their speaking English proficiency and their choice and use of strategies. As shown in the thematic map in Figure 1, page 123, the first theme that emerged from the qualitative data was "individual factors affecting students' oral communication"; it comprises "shyness", "the fear of making mistakes" and "insufficient vocabulary". The analysis of the data revealed that most

participants considered these individual factors as one of the major challenges that inhibited them from improving their English speaking abilities.

Individual Factors Affecting Students' English Speaking Proficiency

Although students' speaking difficulties can be largely affected by their environment and some other external factors (e.g. parents' involvement, English teachers' practices and the availability of enabling English language resources), the participants of this study indicated that their feeling of shyness, fear or making mistakes, in addition to their inadequate repertoire of effective LLSSs contributed to the limitation of their oral communication in English. The following subsections will illustrate these individual factors.

Shyness.

In this study, five participants (Bota, Dauren, Sholpan, Sultan, Zhanna) pointed out that shyness was their predominant obstacle in speaking English. For example, one participant, Dauren, reported that he tended to feel hesitant and shy whenever he spoke in English because he was concerned about the mistakes that he could make while speaking in this language. In addressing this point, Dauren stated:

Extract 1:

There are many cases when I want to say a sentence in English, but I find it difficult to translate the Kazakh version into English. Therefore, I feel anxious about committing mistakes when I communicate with my teacher in English (Dauren, October 28, 2020).

In a similar vein, Bota reported that her difficulty in speaking English was largely due to her shyness. She noted that this was somehow because of the influence of the Kazakh mentality and her negative thoughts, as shown in the following interview extract:

Extract 2:

There are many cases when I feel shy because of my negative thoughts that I can make mistakes while speaking. There is one trait I don't like in Kazakh people. If you say a word incorrectly many of them may laugh at you instead of supporting you. Also, I feel shy speaking English in front of my teacher thinking that her English level is higher than mine. (Bota, October 24, 2020).

Likewise, Sholpan reported that sometimes her English speaking challenges were caused by her shyness:

Extract 3:

I feel shy speaking in English. Sometimes it seems as if I may not know something about English grammar and I will make a mistake. This makes me feel anxious and shy to speak. (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

As is evident from the above extract, Sholpan's words tend to align with Baker and Westrup's (2003) argument that many foreign language learners struggle to speak in a foreign language, on the grounds that they do not have enough knowledge about correct grammar usage and vocabulary. Overall, these extracts revealed that shyness was a common issue that can affect students' oral performance; therefore, it might be considered as one source of the English speaking difficulties students face (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021).

Fear of making mistakes.

The data analysis of the participant' experiential accounts showed that most were afraid of making mistakes while using English and this feeling made them less willing to speak English. The following extracts taken from the interviews of Zhanna and Sholpan exemplify this idea:

Extract 4:

If I make a mistake while speaking in English I am afraid that other people will laugh at me (Zhanna, October 27, 2020).

Extract 5:

I am afraid of making mistakes, mostly in front of my English teacher at school.

When I speak I start worrying whether it's correct or not. I am more focused on my thoughts about the mistakes than on my speech. The reason is my inner fear (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

The present study also found that two participants (Bek, Sultan) reported that they were anxious about receiving negative feedback from their schoolteacher when using English. As a result, they preferred the private tutoring environment, given that the tutor was patient with them about their mistakes and encouraged them to use English:

Extract 6:

I had a big language barrier and fear of speaking, but my English tutor helped me to overcome this feeling by encouraging and saying kind words that enhanced my self-confidence. However, at school I still feel afraid because if I make a mistake it might negatively affect my grade (Bek, December 4, 2020).

These extracts indicate that the fear of making mistakes is one of the major challenges that prevent students from speaking confidently. It is also important to mention here that all participants, excluding Bota, stated that they did not feel peer pressure or fear of talking in front of their classmates because they believed that their classmates' level of English knowledge was low.

Insufficient vocabulary.

Another major reason for the participants' challenges in speaking was related to their lack of English vocabulary. All participants reported that they encountered difficulties

in expressing their thoughts orally because of their inadequate repertoire of English vocabulary. The following extract aptly explains this point:

Extract 7:

I find it difficult to express my thoughts because of my insufficient vocabulary. I avoid speaking, thinking that I may not know the English translation of some words. (Bota, October 24, 2020).

Moreover, four participants (Arman, Asem, Sholpan, Dauren) mentioned that despite their good knowledge of grammar they had difficulties speaking. They highlighted the importance of having a good repertoire of English language vocabulary, as elucidated in the following interview extract:

Extract 8:

I think in order to speak English knowing vocabulary is more important than knowledge of grammar. Grammar is also necessary, but sometimes I cannot speak even though I know the structure; it is due to my lack of English vocabulary. (Arman, October 29, 2020).

The analysis of the participants' interviews data also revealed that two participants (Dauren, Sultan) indicated that their poor vocabulary was due to their low motivation, while other participants (Bek, Asem, Bota and Zhanna) articulated that it might be because they did not have a good amount of effective LLSs to learn and restore new words. The next section will discuss the influence of mediating social agents on the participants' English learning experiences.

The Influence of Mediating Social Agents

The influence of mediating social agents is the second main theme that appeared from the data analysis and consists of "family members", "classmates", "main teacher" and "English private tutor". This section describes the influence of various social agents

that played essential roles in shaping participants' attitude towards English and their LLS use.

Family members.

Surprisingly, perhaps, when the participants were first asked about their English learning experiences, almost all of them described their EPT experiences rather than their experiences at their mainstream school. In terms of the mediation of their immediate family members, some participants reported that their parents' involvement in their English language learning took the form of their supporting them financially by sending them to EPT, while other participants indicated that they were motivated to attend EPT because of the positive influence of their siblings. For example, Sholpan and Asem decided to attend EPT due to their elder sisters' positive experiences. When their sisters studied at school, they also received lessons from the same tutor and produced good results. Consequently, this increased their interest in learning and speaking English. Although English was not practiced in the participants' families and most of their parents did not know the English language, they had always supported them financially to attend the EPT's sessions. The following extracts exemplify this idea.

Extract 9:

My sister had studied in that fee-paying English course. I heard a lot about the English course from her and also wanted to study there because she was always satisfied with the lessons and told me many amazing things about the English tutor's practices. (Asem, December 3, 2020).

Extract 10:

My elder sister had also learned English from the same English tutor. Her learning achievements motivated me to learn this language. My parents do not know this language. They just pay for me to attend this fee-paying English course, so at home we do not practice English (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

All participants reported that their parents had poor English knowledge and provided only moral and financial support in relation to their English language studies. For example, Dauren's parents encouraged him to learn and master English by explaining the importance and benefits of this language. Similarly, the parents of Bek and Bota did not speak English, but they financially supported their children's language learning experiences. The following extracts describe how parents influenced the participants to learn English:

Extract 11:

I can't say that my family has a great impact on my English learning. However, one day, my father told me that we have a fee-paying English course in our village and asked if I would like to attend it, and I agreed. I am the only person who is learning English in my family. Maybe he heard about this course from his colleagues at school as he also works there. But I think that he wanted to send me there hoping that his son will know what he doesn't know. (Arman, October 29, 2020).

Extract 12:

Thanks to my parents, I am attending a fee-paying English course. They do not know the English language, in fact, only I know English in our family. My parents tried to explain the importance of English by saying that I should learn this language because it will benefit my future and will be necessary for me. (Sultan, October 21, 2020).

Moreover, the data analysis reveals that four participants (Asem, Dauren, Bota, Sholan) had received academic support from their siblings in relation to their English language studies. The following extract can illustrate this idea:

Extract 13:

In our family my elder brother and sister know English at a good level. We do not speak English to each other, but sometimes when something is not clear for me while doing my English homework I can ask them for help (Dauren, October 28, 2020).

The above interview extracts can indicate that the participants' family members had a positive effect on the development of their English learning. Although the parents were not directly involved in the process of their learning English, they hired a private tutor for their children and explained the merits that the knowledge of English may bring them in their future (i.e., financial and moral support).

Although most of the participants indicated that their English speaking difficulties were largely caused by individual factors, almost all participants mentioned that the non-English speaking environment in their village was also the main cause of the poor performance of their oral communication in English. This point was clearly articulated by Bek:

Extract 14:

My vocabulary is low because I don't use English in real life. Everything is in the Kazakh language. Nobody speaks English. As I don't practice it, I start to forget words I even know or learned. If I talked in this language more often, my vocabulary would be rich. Unfortunately, I don't have sufficient opportunities to use English in my village. No one is competent in English here (Bek, December 4, 2020).

Also, another participant, namely Zhanna, reported on the lack of opportunities to practice English in her village:

Extract 15:

I can't use English neither at home nor at school. There is no English practice in my village. I wish we could practice this language with someone who is competent at

least one time per week. However, we don't have such opportunities here".

(Zhanna, October 27, 2020)

The influence of peers.

In addition to the influence of family members, classmates were also mentioned by many participants as important stakeholders who had an impact on their English speaking proficiency. For instance, Asem stated that she sometimes used to practice English with her classmates. She believed that such conversations positively impacted her communicative skills in English. Moreover, two participants (Sholpan and Dauren) described how their peers increased their interest in learning and using English, along with having EPT:

Extract 16:

I started to pay attention to the importance of learning and using English when I was studying in the fifth grade. I think the main reason for that is my classmates' influence because at that time, many peers started attending the fee-paying English course. I heard many positive comments about the English tutors' lessons from them, and I also decided to study there. We also sometimes play who can guess the meaning of some new English words with each other (Dauren, October 28, 2020).

Extract 17:

First my classmates started attending his classes. I was also so interested and wanted to see his lessons, however I couldn't afford that due to my family circumstances. But I think that my interest for English increased mainly because of my classmates. (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

The data analysis also reported that some classmates made a neutral or a negative influence on the participants' English speaking performance. For example, Sultan mentioned that his classmates did not have any influence on his English language study because they used only Kazakh in their communication with each other, while four participants (Zhanna, Bek,

Sholpan, Bota) reported that their classmates had a negative impact on their English learning. This idea was clearly articulated by Sholpan, who stated that:

Extract 18:

You know the rural schools, students are very noisy, they do not listen to the teacher and the teacher's time is wasted by arguing with them instead of teaching us English. It does not look like an English class". (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

The participants explained the students' negative behavior in their English class by saying "it's a result of the teacher's boring classes"; "I don't like the teacher's activities in lessons"; "I think that the teacher's knowledge is low". The participants indicated that their low interest in learning English in school is directly affected by their English teacher at their school. This point is relevant to the English teachers' practices and will be further explained in the next section.

Teacher's practices.

The data analysis revealed that all participants had a negative attitude towards their English teacher's practices at school. They described their English classes as being unchallenging and boring, and being predominantly focused on writing tasks and grammar. Extracts 19 and 20 clearly explain the reasons for the participants' having a low interest in learning English and hence practicing it orally with the English teacher at school:

Extract 19:

I don't like the way she teaches because her lessons are so boring. I think most students are not interested in studying English at school for this reason, including me. It seems like in a school program nothing is interesting because we hear and do the same things. Every time our lessons are taught in the same way. (Bek, December 4, 2020).

Extract 20:

What we do at school is the tasks from the English textbooks, studying grammar rules. But I couldn't learn to speak there. We don't use oral English a lot in our lessons. I can even say that we don't have English speaking practice at all. Yes, of course there can be some cases when we speak, but it happens extremely rarely (Asem, December 3, 2020).

In fact, all participants pointed out that their English private tutor was much more competent than their English teacher at school (see Table 2 on Page 56 for the comparison between participants' perceptions between their English teacher and EPT). Moreover, one participant, Bota, considered this issue as a result of inadequate teacher selection processes:

Extract 21:

I think that the rural school principals do not hire English teachers by testing or checking their knowledge. The English language can help our country to develop; therefore I don't want this subject to be taught in the way it is (Bota, October 24, 2020).

Additionally, the participants mentioned that their teacher's overuse of L1 during the English class was another aspect which negatively affected their English speaking acquisition. Despite that, the participants' English classroom could be the single place where they can use this language; all participants reported that their English teachers at school tended to use almost only Kazakh as a medium of instruction. This point was exemplified by the following extracts:

Extract 22:

In our village I don't know any person who is competent in English, that is why there are no opportunities to practice it. Even my English teacher uses mostly the Kazakh language during the English lessons (Bek, December 4, 2020).

Extract 23:

My English teacher greets us in the English language, but after that the rest of the lesson will be in Kazakh. (Dauren, October 28, 2020).)

Extract 24:

The Kazakh language takes place for 80 % in our English lessons; she uses 20 % English when she reads the tasks (Sultan, October 21, 2020).

While the dominance of the Kazakh language was one reason for the negative attitude of the participants towards English lessons at school, the assessment modes used by their English teachers was another issue articulated by all six participants (Dauren,Sultan,Bek, Asem, Bota, Sholpan). According to their responses, they believed that the assigned tasks they completed in their English language classroom were not designed to enhance their speaking ability as their teachers mostly set writing exercises. Extract 25 can illustrate this idea:

Extract 25:

I don't think that the tasks we do can somehow affect our English speaking progress because we work only with writing tasks in the textbooks. When we encounter new words, the teacher says to memorize them, but nobody does it, and the teacher also does not ask about those new words (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

Likewise, Arman noted in Extract 26 that their English class was mostly devoted to writing tasks:

Extract 26:

Usually, we write the tasks in our notebooks. At the end of the lesson the teacher collects all of them and puts a mark. However, I don't believe that such tasks can improve my English speaking. Even after doing the writing exercises, we don't receive any feedback, and we don't work on the mistakes we made. We just move to a new topic (Arman, October 29, 2020).

Although the participants' responses were similar regarding the assessment modes, two of them, Arman and Bek, reported that sometimes their English teacher at school created effective assessment modes which made their English learning enjoyable. However, this would occur only on special days such as open classes with visitors. They commented on this as follows:

Extract 27:

Generally, our English classes are boring. But sometimes we work in groups and do oral activities. It does not happen in every English class, only when we have open classes. I like such days because during open classes we become more engaged and lessons are very interesting. (Arman, October 29, 2020).

Bek also shared his thoughts about the assessment modes, saying:

Extract 28:

I can't say that the tasks we do in class can enhance our speaking skills. Because they are only grammar activities and writing tasks. I know that some people can be weak at grammar but can speak well and vice versa, so there should be a combination of different tasks. We do oral activities, but not often, only when we have open classes with visitors. We work with posters, stickers. Lessons are interesting on such days (Bek, December 4, 2020).

The above extracts indicate that the English teacher's assessment scheme was mainly based on the production of written works. This type of assessment was unfavorable for almost all participants as it did not encourage them to practice their English with their teacher or with their peers, and hence, it inhibited their English speaking progress. Moreover, it can be seen from the participants' experiential accounts that assessment modes were directly connected to learners' language learning motivation and performance. The teacher is one of the main social actors in regard to students' English performance.

Therefore, it is essential to be aware of students' opinions of assessment modes and set up effective types that can improve students' learning outcomes.

Student-teacher relationship.

The interview results demonstrated that almost all participants indicated that they did not have a positive relationship with their English teacher. They described the differences between their relationship with the teacher and their private English tutor. For example, Dauren reflected on this point, stating that his negative relationship with the teacher negatively influenced his success in English learning:

Extract 29:

I don't feel comfortable asking when something is unclear for me. I have a kind of barrier; our relationship with my English teacher is not good. We may not understand something, but we leave the class with this feeling of uncertainty. If we compare it to the additional English course, my tutor explains everything very clearly and I feel free to ask any questions. (Dauren, October 28, 2020.)

Moreover, three participants (Bota, Bek, Sultan) also shared their opinions about the differences between their relationship with their teacher and the tutor as follows:

Extract 30:

The difference between my relationship with my English teacher and the EPT is like night and day. The EPT treats us in a very good way, as a friend. We can ask anything which is not clear to us. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same thing about my English teacher at school (Bek, December 4, 2020).

In the same vein, Bota indicated that:

Extract 31:

Their relationship to us is absolutely different. I don't like the way my teacher treats us. I wish all teachers at school were like our private tutor. (Bota, October 24, 2020).

These extracts can demonstrate that the participants' English teacher could not create a safe learning environment and positive relationship with the students. All participants, excluding Zhanna, responded negatively about their English teacher, while they all reported that they have a supportive and positive relationship with their EPT which enhances their academic achievement and increases their English learning motivation.

More detailed information about the EPT will be discussed in the next section.

The Private English Tutor

As previously stated, all participants received EPT while studying at school. They reported that they had attended their English tutoring sessions in the form of a small group with the same tutor in their village. The data analysis of the present study revealed that the participants felt that they needed to take additional English lessons outside the classroom, attributable, mainly, to their mainstream English teacher's negative practices at school. The following extracts exemplify this idea:

Extract 32:

We have an English language subject at school, but I can't say that I am learning a lot there. After several years of studying, I still couldn't speak; I couldn't understand the rules of sentence construction. My teacher gives tasks only from the textbook. We learn a few new words, and we rarely use English inside the classroom. I can even say that we have no English practice at all. Sometimes we retell texts from the textbook, but it is very rare. Therefore, I decided to receive private tutoring in English. (Asem, December 3, 2020).

Extract 33:

The students in my class who study with the English tutor can speak, but those who study English only at school can't even read properly. I do not feel that my teachers have a passion to teach. They do not teach beyond my name is, your name is and so on (Sultan, October 21, 2020).

Extract 34:

Every English class at school is the same. The teacher explains a topic and gives some exercises. That is all. But at the additional English course we are given different activities that enhance our speaking skill. Our English tutor tells jokes, and his classes are very interesting. We learn and have fun at the same time. At school English is so boring because we have particularly active students who study well, but less successful students are always passive and ignored (Arman, October 29, 2020).

The picture that emerges from the above extracts indicates that almost all participants found English lessons at school boring, since they were confined to text-based reading, grammar and vocabulary exercises, with little room given for communicative practice or to cater to the needs of less successful students. As Smith et al. (2018) remark, language teaching methodology in most developing countries “remains largely traditional, with teacher-centered, textbook-based lessons aimed at the staged learning of grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension, while oral practice is limited to rote repetition of textbook dialogues and teacher-pupil question and answer routines” (p.13). Interestingly, when the participants were asked about their own perceptions of their English teacher’s practices, all of them made a comparison between the practices of their English teacher and those of their EPT. Therefore, Table 2 illustrates the participants’ perceptions between what they received at school and in English private tutoring sessions.

Table 2***English Teaching Practice with Main Teacher and with EPT***

Teaching practice at school

Teaching practice with EPT

Negative classroom environment

Some students concentrate but most of them surf the internet and play games during the lesson. They don't realize the importance of English (Bota)

Students are noisy; they do not listen to the teacher. In my group only three to four students like English, whereas others do nothing in the class because they are not interested in English. They don't know and understand what we are learning and even do not want to know. Our time devoted to English learning is often spent in students' arguing with each other (Sholpan)

Generally, when we have English lessons our class is divided into two groups with two different teachers; however, there are also some cases when a whole class sits together with only one English teacher. The class becomes more noisy and hard to manage. I think teachers do that because it's a public school in a village. (Sultan)

Positive classroom environment

When I study English with my English private tutor, my interest and motivation to learn increases. The learning materials are interesting... you are surrounded only with students who may know better than you. It seems like a competition, and this encourages you start to study hard (Bek)

I have realized the importance of the English language with my English tutor. Also there are interesting lessons and people who are consciously learning this language. We study by competing with each other. (Dauren)

I feel comfortable during English lessons with my English tutor, because he always says kind words and explains in a clear way. I learned more with him than my teacher at school (Arman)

EPT is well-competent

Main teacher is less competent

My English teacher at school does not pronounce English words correctly. I think that our school principal does not select English teachers properly by checking their knowledge. (Bota)

We cannot learn to speak English at school, probably because I don't like the teacher.
(Dauren)

Kazakh is often used as a medium of instruction

One reason why I don't like English at school is because it is mostly in the Kazakh language.(Zhanna)

She only greets us in English but the rest of the lesson will be in Kazakh (Dauren).

For 80 % of our English lesson, the teacher uses only the Kazakh language, whereas only 20 % is in English used for greetings and reading the task (Sultan).

Only writing practice

It seems that the teacher is not interested in teaching English. She just gives writing tasks

I think my English tutor's knowledge is better than my teacher's at school because at school I learned just a few words, but at the English course I often understand everything. (Asem)

I have realized that there is a big difference between the two teachers. My English private tutor's knowledge is better than my English teacher at school by 200%. (Sultan)

There is a balance between the use of Kazakh and English

I like that the private tutor often uses English during the tutoring session and he speaks in a very clear way. He only translates the difficult words or concepts in Kazakh... we always try to imitate him. We want to be educated like him and speak excellent English like him (Bek).

At the English private course the tutor speaks and explains almost everything in English. (Zhanna)

The use of activities and materials that enhance students' speaking ability

and gives grades, that's all we do. (Sholpan)

We do not speak while doing tasks, because they are only writing activities. I don't think that such tasks improve our speaking.

(Asem)

A negative student-teacher relationship

At school we don't receive the same support as we receive from our EPT. The teacher doesn't care if we understood or not. She gives a task and can just sit waiting until we finish it. We don't understand many things, but I don't feel comfortable going and asking something from her because we have a kind of distance. Our relationship is not good.

(Sultan).

I don't like the school teachers' relationship at all. (Bota)

We learn new words at each lesson in an interesting way. He motivates us to speak English by giving gifts sometimes. We also watch movies in English. (Bek)

He gives many tasks to enhance our oral communication. Sometimes we play games to learn easily like "hot seat". So the private tutoring lessons are very interesting. (Arman).

A positive relationship between the private tutor and students

Our relationships with the two teachers are very different. I like the way my English private tutor treats us. Sometimes he catches our attention and interest by making nice jokes. He never scolds us if we make a mistake, but my teacher at school sometimes does that. (Asem)

When we are at an English private course we can freely ask questions and express our opinions, to clarify things in a very open way. I had a speaking barrier before this tutor helped me to overcome this, and he has always

supported and spoken kind words to me. We can ask anything which is not clear to us; he is very friendly to us. (Bek)

As can be seen from Table 2, most participants' motives for taking private tutoring was that they consider their EPT to be more competent than their English teacher, and perceive that the tutor can establish a positive learning environment for his learners. Moreover, the participants' comparison of pedagogic styles revealed that their school teacher used Kazakh language as a medium of instruction and mainly set only writing tasks without guiding the students to use any other strategies to learn English. In contrast, their EPT practiced English oral communication with his students and introduced different strategies such as playing games and watching English movies for them to learn English. The next section contains more information about the strategies used by the participants.

Describing the Participants' Language Learning Strategies

This section presents a general picture of the strategies the participants used to overcome the English speaking challenges they experienced. The participants' LLSs were classified into two main categories; namely, "voluntary strategies" and "compulsory strategies" (Hajar, 2019). The voluntary strategies are those used by the language learners due to their self-motivation or personal interest in enhancing their English skills. That is, they are less imposed by certain influential social agents such as teachers and parents. Conversely, compulsory strategies are largely associated with formal education and regulated by influential figures such as parents or teachers (Hajar, 2019). These strategies are more likely to be deployed for exam preparation (i.e. exam-oriented strategies). The

following extracts taken from the interviews of Bota and Sholpan exemplify the difference between compulsory and voluntary strategies:

Extract 35:

These days, I am preparing for the UNT and attending the EPT classes because my parents want me to attend it. Also, I am working with the book of Kuanysh AIdar. This book has grammar rules and examples. First I read in English, and on the next page it has the same information in Kazakh. I read and memorize them. (Bota, October 24, 2020).

Extract 36:

Before I used apps such as Puzzle English, Duolingo. Now I use a social network called VKontakte to listen to English music; I sing my favorite songs along with it, and I have learned some of them by heart. This helped me to improve my listening and pronunciation. I also enjoy watching YouTube cartoons and short films with English subtitles. I watch it in order to improve my English accent. When I watch films with excellent English speakers, this motivates me to speak like them (Sholpan, October 24, 2020).

In the first extract, Bota explains that she is using certain strategies such as reading grammar rules and memorization in order to pass the UNT and meet the expectations of her parents. The second extract, however, depicts how Sholpan used a number of voluntary language strategies (e.g. listening to her favorite English songs and watching English cartoons on YouTube) because she exercised a higher degree of choice in relation to the use of strategies to improve her English (i.e. essentially internalized within the self).

Additionally, the data analysis of the present study displays the mediating role that technology tools played in enhancing some participants' English language learning and use. More precisely, four participants (Sultan, Sholpan, Asem, Bota) reported that they used some language learning apps, social networks and Google translator as one of the

effective strategies to improve their English. This is elucidated in the following interview extract:

Extract 37:

I use Instagram and YouTube sometimes. Now there are numerous free online English lessons in these programs. You can learn everything starting from an alphabet to advanced levels. (Sultan, October 21, 2020).

Nevertheless, one participant, Bota, indicated that the role of technology is not always positive since it can consume much time, distract from real learning and is not overly effective for improving speaking. This can be explained by the fact that she did not receive proper instruction on using these technology tools to improve her oral skills. Also, Extract 38 can show that there was a lack of explicit instruction on LLSSs by her teacher at school:

Extract 38:

I use Google translator to translate some new words into Kazakh, but I do not remember most of them. We use our smartphones too much and do not read books. It negatively impacts our memorization. Although there are a number of e-books, films, and English lessons on YouTube, they cannot enhance our speaking skills a lot, or maybe because I do not know how they can be used for improving my speaking skills. The teacher at school mostly teaches grammar. I know the English grammar well, up to 80 or 90 %, but I still struggle to speak. I think we need more real interaction than all this technology (Bota, 24 October, 2020).

The present study also revealed that three participants (Zhanna, Arman, Sultan), who used rote memorization strategies, indicated that such strategies were ineffective to them because they forgot words they had learned quickly due to the lack of practice inside and outside the classroom. This idea was aptly echoed by Arman when he said the following:

Extract 39:

I always try to learn English words. First I read the new words several times and memorize them. However, I forgot most of them because I do not use them while speaking (Arman, 29 October, 2020).

Surprisingly, the data analysis of participants' interviews shows that three participants (Dauren , Asem, Bek) barely used any strategies. This might be attributed to the fact that their family members and teachers did not explicitly introduce them to any effective LLSs that they can employ to learn and use English. Extracts 40to 42 demonstrate this point.

Extract 40:

I don't use many strategies. Frankly speaking, I don't even know any strategies. The reason is that at this moment I don't feel I need to speak in this language. I will learn it later when it will be necessary (Dauren, October 28, 2020).

Extract 41:

I don't know what strategies can be used to learn English; I have never been introduced to this by my English teachers at school. But with the private tutor, we learn new words each lesson in an interesting way. He motivates us to speak English by giving us gifts sometimes. We also watch movies in English and play games (Bek, December 4, 2020).

Extract 42:

I haven't tried to find any strategies to overcome my challenges in English. To my surprise, I have never thought about it. I might need to start doing that. (Asem, December 3, 2020).

The above extracts can depict that although the participants' LLSs were mainly divided into two strategies termed as compulsory and voluntary strategies, some of them were not quite aware of the notion of LLSs, and hence, there seemed to be a scarcity in the LLSs they employed while learning or using English across different settings.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has illustrated the major findings related to the challenges that rural Grade 11 students encountered while speaking English, their strategy uses and the different factors that have affected their oral English language experiences. First, the chapter provided a short biographical vignette of each participant based on their written narrative essays, and this was followed by an interpretation of the four main themes that emerged from the interview data: 1)individual factors affecting students' oral communication; 2)the influence of mediating social agents; 3)the private English tutor; 4)strategies used by participants". With reference to the research questions of this study, the findings revealed several English speaking challenges faced by participants and their associated strategy uses. The study showed that the participants encountered several challenges due to both internal and external factors (e.g., anxiety, teachers' and private tutors' teaching practices and the availability of language learning resources). As described in this chapter, technology tools have played a pivotal role regarding the participants' English language learning and use. Moreover, the process of using LLS can be influenced by a number of social agents such as their family members, peers and private tutors.

Discussion

The previous chapter presented the major findings obtained from eight rural 11th grade students' narrative essays and individual semi-structured interviews at one mainstream school in Kazakhstan. The current chapter presents the discussion of the described findings in relation to the existing literature on the topic. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this qualitative research represents the first study in the field of language learning strategies (LLSs) that adopted Leontiev's (1981) activity theory as a conceptual framework in the context of a rural region of Kazakhstan. This study sought to explore the participants' English speaking challenges, the underlying factors that influenced these difficulties and their strategic language learning efforts. Consequently, the current chapter discusses the following research questions in light of the theoretical framework adopted in this study and previous related empirical studies:

Q1: What are the primary English speaking challenges that rural Grade 11 students encounter?

Q2: Why are they facing these challenges?

Q3: How do they deal with these challenges (i.e. their strategy uses)?

Q: What are the Primary Challenges that Rural Grade 11 Students Encounter in Speaking the English Language?

As explained in the previous chapter, all participants reported that they had encountered diverse difficulties while using English in their communication with others. These challenges were mainly related to the participants' shyness and their fear of making mistakes and were attributable to a lack of English vocabulary and the mispronunciation of certain words. These challenges, in turn, affected their English language fluency. The qualitative data obtained from the participants of the current research showed that

psychological unpreparedness was one of the key aspects that complicated their English speaking processes. This finding echoed that of Tokkulova (2019), who found that most Kazakhstani EFL teachers at mainstream schools tend to adopt old-fashioned Soviet pedagogy, which emphasizes perfection in learning as exemplified by the expectation of students speaking without committing any mistakes or mispronouncing any vocabulary words, along with their memorizing grammar rules. As a result, many EFL learners, including those in Kazakhstan, may have a low interest and difficulties in mastering the English language, due to a feeling of insecurity generated by the practices of some English language teachers.

Similarly, Karabay (2017) conducted an empirical study to explore the academic challenges ten students encountered while studying through the medium of English through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups in an international university in Kazakhstan. Karabay (2017) reported that although writing was the most challenging activity for the majority of her participants, speaking was also articulated as being difficult by some participants. More precisely, many of the participants of Karabay's (2017) study mentioned that they had experienced difficulties in their English communication, mostly because of their Russian-dominant environment. Moreover, some participants, as Karabay (2017) describes, revealed that even after four years of exposure to English at that EMI university, they remained afraid and nervous when they used English in their communication with international professors working at that EMI university. One participant in that study said that she had the fear "to sound awkward and [that she] may not be able to express her ideas accurately in English" (p. 40). This finding may depict the notion that oral communication challenges in English can be experienced not only by Kazakhstani rural school students but also by those who study at an international university with EMI programs.

The participants' perceptions were reminiscent of a number of empirical studies in other contexts that examined EFL students' disengagement and their English speaking challenges in particular (e.g. Henry, 2014; Keong et al. 2015; Malcolm, 2013; Marcellino, 2008; Taylor, 2013). Taylor (2013), in her large-scale study of Romanian secondary school students, for example, found that many participants were reticent to articulate their ideas in English in their English language classes, mainly due to the teaching practices of their English language teachers who tended to place much emphasis on grammar and assessment marks with little room for communicative practice or authentic activities. Likewise, Keong et al. (2015) investigated the major English speaking challenges faced by Iraqi EFL undergraduate students. The data of that study were obtained from both quantitative (a questionnaire with 36 students) and qualitative (individual interviews with eight students) resources. As the findings showed in Keong et al.'s (2015) study, 75% participants encountered challenges regarding speaking that were attributable to different factors such as the fear of making mistakes, low motivation, a lack of English vocabulary, and English language teachers' overuse of the mother tongue during English lessons. In the same way, the majority of the participants of the current study talked about their English speaking challenges such as their psychological unpreparedness to speak and their low vocabulary repertoire. They attributed these difficulties to a number of reasons, including their English teachers' ineffective LLS instruction and insufficient opportunities to practice English in their Kazakh-dominant environment.

As the literature shows, English language learners may have similar difficulties on a global level. However, the participants of the current study explained that despite their English speaking challenges, they were capable of recognizing the importance of the English language in their lives and for their future. Indeed, as Kittitaro (2018) posits, the success of language learners in utilizing English orally depends on their language

learning experiences, attitudes, learning motivations and self-confidence. Hence, this can indicate that EFL teachers, as significant figures the academic lives of their students, should be aware of their linguistic difficulties and attempt to implement some useful LLSs, as will be explained in the coming sections.

Q2: Why are they facing these challenges?

As described in Chapter 4, the current research is guided by a sociocultural language learning perspective which stresses that both in-and-out-of-class learning settings are equally important in shaping individuals' LLS use and development, and their future vision. As Hajar (2019a) fittingly remarks, "individuals' strategic language learning efforts do not take place in a sociocultural vacuum; they are likely to be influenced by mediated and situated processes, through participation in a range of institutional contexts such as schooling, and non-academic ones" (p. 65) such as the household and workplace. In the present study, the practices employed by English language teachers emerged as one of the primary social factors affecting the participants' English speaking performance because their teachers played an essential role in forming these students' attitudes towards English and their LLS deployment, along with either their willingness or reluctance to invest further in learning and using English in out-of-school settings. According to the data obtained from the participants, it was revealed that none of the participants were satisfied with the instruction they were receiving from their English teacher at the mainstream school they attended. Their English classes were described as monotonous, unchallenging, and as being mainly concentrated on completing grammar and writing assignments with the overuse of the mother tongue. Three participants (i.e., Arman, Bek, Ainur), for instance, reported that at school they were not introduced to any LLSs except that of rote memorization and repetition (i.e. exam-oriented strategies). This finding largely aligns with the argument suggested by Lamb and Budiyanto (2013) that English in most

EFL contexts tends to be taught and learnt as “a value-free body of knowledge conveyed via official textbooks” and the students are principally oriented towards practicing for local and national exams (p. 26). The same finding also recalls the sociocultural underpinning that “human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8).

Furthermore, almost all participants in the current research predominantly used memorization strategies in their English language classrooms as this type of LLS was introduced and forced upon them by their English language teachers, which ultimately negatively affected their learning motivation. This finding concurs with Mercer and Ryan’s (2010) argument that some English teaching practices develop “a fixed mindset” rather than “a growth mindset”, the former of which considers the mental capacities of learners as immovable and responsible for the success or failure in learning a language (p. 437) (for more elaboration about the differences between fixed and growth language mindsets, see Lou & Noels, 2019). In this sense, although the participants of this study did not feel that their LLS use was ineffective, most of them mainly deployed memorization strategies during their English learning experience at school because these strategies were part of their English language classrooms.

In addition to the unproductive practices of teachers, the few LLSs introduced by a teacher seem to be ineffective in improving students’ oral language proficiency, and hence, the teachers’ teaching practices can be considered as one of the essential factors that has led to most participants encountering English speaking difficulties. For example, their English language teacher’s assessment mode was another reason for their English speaking difficulties because most English classroom activities were solely focused on the development of their grammar and writing skills. However, the participants reported that knowledge of grammar cannot guarantee speaking excellence because there were many

instances where they could not express their thoughts despite their sound grammar knowledge. This kind of assessment adopted by the participants' English language teachers seems to have "a short-term effect, without providing the sustained commitment that the successful mastery of an L2 requires" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 103). Therefore, almost all participants focused primarily on the format aspect of exams as the sole standard measure of their success in English.

A sociocultural perspective of language learning underlines the mediating role of informal actors (i.e. parents, siblings or neighbors) in learners' language learning experiences and their LLS use. The findings of this study on parental involvement demonstrated that most parents had an indirect but positive involvement in their children's English language development. Also, the data analysis confirmed that the participants' parents and other family members such as their siblings tended to be indirectly involved in their English language learning and strategy use. For example, two participants' (Asem and Sholpan) interest in learning English was fostered by their sisters' achievements through English private tutoring (EPT), while Arman's and Sultan's parents' explanation about the importance and benefits of English knowledge to their future improved their learning motivation. Bartram (2006) argues that as a result of parental support and involvement, children succeed not only in their first language but also in learning foreign languages.

In this regard, the sociocultural language learning perspective emphasizes that "language learning and language learner development is a socialization process mediated by various social agents in contexts where language learning occurs" (Gao, 2006, p. 287). In other words, as Watson-Gegeo (2004) explains, language learning processes occur not only in the classroom, but also at home within families or communities.

Q3: How do they deal with these challenges (i.e. their strategy uses)?

The findings of this study have illustrated that some participants used certain types of strategies to overcome their English speaking challenges. However, the data also revealed that there were some participants who mentioned that they did not use any LLSs to overcome their English speaking difficulties. Generally, LLSs are defined as language learners' behaviors, actions or techniques used to enhance their language learning outcomes (Oxford et al., 2014). The LLSs deployed by the participants of this study align with Hajar's (2019a) classification of LLSs according to language learners' learning goals in EFL contexts. That is, compulsory strategies are largely regulated by cultural beliefs and other important factors such as teachers and parents, whereas voluntary strategies are essentially internalized within the self and less dependent on others. As a result, the following compulsory strategies emerged in the obtained interview data:

- Analyzing Unified National Test (UNT) test questions
- Reading and memorizing grammar rules
- Translating words from English to Kazakh using Google translator
- Reading English textbooks
- Memorizing and repeating vocabulary
- Using an English-Kazakh dictionary

As shown in Chapter 4, one participant, Bota, mostly used compulsory strategies due to her exam-oriented motives, along with the teaching practices of her English language teachers. She mostly analyzed and memorized test questions and their correct answers as she frequently encountered difficulties in determining the use of appropriate tenses. The memorization of vocabulary was also a common practice for four participants (Arman, Asem, Sultan, Bota). These participants' followed the same steps, all of which involved reading new words approximately 10 times, translating them from a dictionary

and memorizing them by repetition. Although they believed that learning new words is important, they also indicated that this strategy cannot be considered effective because, as a result of using this technique, they forgot many of the words they had learned. Yet, they still continue using this strategy due to their being unaware of other effective strategies, since their English teacher did not use to scaffold effective LLSs to improve their oral English language proficiency.

As described in Chapter 2 and replicated in Chapter 4, the participants who employed compulsory strategies were largely influenced by formal education, and hence their LLSs were principally regulated by significant figures such as their parents and teachers. Conversely, the participants who used voluntary strategies were less directed by their influential social agents such as their teachers or parents. They also deployed these strategies to enhance their English speaking ability based on their self-motivation or personal interest. The voluntary strategies used by the participants were as follows:

- Reading English fairy-tales
- Using language learning apps (Duolingo, Puzzle English)
- Using social networks to learn new vocabulary and chatting (WhatsApp, TikTok, VKontakte, Instagram)
- Listening to music with lyrics
- Watching English movies with subtitles to learn the correct pronunciation
- Watching YouTube videos (free, online lessons, cartoons, short dialogues)
- Practicing spoken English with a friend
- Self-talk

Although most of the participants used technology as an instrument for helping their English speaking success, there was one participant (Bota) who had not been

introduced to ways of using technology as an effective strategy. Hence, she viewed technology as an obstacle that distracts her from learning. Surprisingly, two participants (Dauren, Bek) barely knew or were even unaware of the strategies that could be used to enhance their knowledge of English. It is equally important to note that there were participants who used some strategies, but these were ineffective because they did not practice putting the language in context. Likewise, the quantitative study of Mupa and Chinooneka (2015) with 20 pupils investigated the reasons for ineffective learning outcomes in a school in South Africa. The study showed that the teachers used only monotonous teaching methods and did not introduce any effective LLSs to their learners. Moreover, it was revealed that their teachers did not apply any media tools in their teaching process. Although this study is not based on English teachers' experiences, the participants of the current study also pointed out those English lessons were tedious and ineffective. Although most of the participants considered technology as a useful tool for improving their English, none of them mentioned the teachers' use of technology in their English language classroom at school. Moreover, the participants of the current study believed that their English language teachers did not explicitly explain and introduce LLSs. Rather, they practiced only writing assessments which ultimately had a negative impact on their English oral communication.

As revealed by the findings of this study, EPT was considered as one of the main and most common strategies used by all participants to overcome their challenges in learning and using English. They ascribed their attendance at a private English course to their dissatisfaction with the English knowledge they received from their English teacher at school. Particularly, the participants were not content with the classroom environment, teaching quality, medium of instruction, assessment mode and their teacher's attitude

towards them (for more details about the differences between classroom settings and EPT sessions as described by participants see Table 2 in Chapter 4, Page 62).

These findings related to EPT align with Hajar's (2019b) qualitative study which explored 14 Year 6 pupils' attitude towards private tutoring through their drawings and semi-structured focus group interviews in England. In his study, most students' motives for receiving PT were to learn more about the taught subject and enhance their confidence through their individual PTs' teaching practices. In the same way, the participants of the current study, namely Dauren, mentioned that his English practices with the English private tutor helped him to elevate his self-esteem and to be more confident in using English (i.e. affective and social strategies). Ainur, in turn, reported that one of her major goals regarding receiving EPT was to enhance her English knowledge. Also, other participants (Bota, Sultan, Bek, Arman, Asem) indicated that their EPT always made English learning more enjoyable and effective than their English teacher. The participants reported that their EPT did this by introducing various LLSs such as watching movies and playing various games in English. Although Hajar's (2019b) study focused on PT in general and this study mainly discussed EPT, there are a number of similarities between the two studies (for further information about the phenomenon of PT, see Bray 2021). It could be argued that most participants articulated the substantial benefits of EPT in terms of confidence, attitudes to English and measurable learning outcomes. Consequently, EPT played a mediating role in not only addressing the learners' English speaking challenges but also their emotional needs and effective strategy use.

It is worth noting that EPT is mainly viewed as beneficial by parents and students, but it also has some drawbacks. For instance, Guill and Lintorf (2019) argue that PT can create social inequalities because it can become a financial burden for low income families. For this reason, these families can afford only a few lessons with a PT or, alternately, they

can employ less competent tutors for their children. Likewise, two participants of this study, Ainur and Arman, reported that due to family circumstances, they had to stop receiving EPT sessions, despite their willingness to attend these sessions.

Application of the Theoretical Framework in this Study

This section discusses the relatedness of the theoretical framework to the findings of this study. In order to answer the research question with reference to the findings of the current study, the activity theory (AT) was adopted as the theoretical framework. This theory guided the study in order to provide a holistic picture of the participants' LLSs and their dynamic and contextualized features in response to their English speaking difficulties. The obtained data suggest that the participants' use of LLSs, employed to overcome their English speaking challenges, were connected to the mediation of different social agents such as their teachers, family members, and peers, who influenced their strategic learning efforts. This study explored the participants' actual strategy uses according to Leontiev's (1981) version of the AT. As Kim (2010) explains, this theory views "the human world as an open system, which can be modified in relation to both contextual changes and learners' or (agents') recognition of them" (p. 9). In other words, one of the major strengths of the AT is that it stresses the interconnection between individual and external factors, in this case, the English learner and mediating social agencies. Moreover, according to Gao (2007), AT not only offers a framework for examining human behavior in social contexts, but also sheds light on the fact that the strategic behaviors of learners are transformed and the same activity can engender different meanings as the learners follow their different goals. As a result, the findings of this study were relevantly interpreted with Leontiev's (1981) version of AT guided by a sociocultural perspective, which considers

the nature of LLSSs as “far from stable and unitary” (Ushioda, 2013, p. 3), since they do not function only by themselves and are “motivated by specific objectives and instrumental to fulfilling specific goals” (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 455).

It has been illustrated that most participants recognized the importance of English and considered this language as being more than a subject on the school curriculum. Sultan was sent to learn English with an EPT through the influence of his parents, while other participants (i.e., Zhanna, Ainur, Arman) deployed several voluntary LLSSs (i.e. basically self made activities to acquire English) that occurred beyond formal contexts. Examples of these strategies are using language learning apps (Duolingo, Puzzle English) to learn English vocabulary in an entertaining way, using social networks to chat in English (WhatsApp, TikTok, Vkontakte, Instagram), listening to music with lyrics to develop listening skills and watching English movies with subtitles to learn correct pronunciation. In examples such as these, the participants learned and practiced English for their own personal reasons and enjoyed the process.

Although parents were not directly involved in the participants English learning processes, they were not negative about these as they supported their children by providing them with the financial means to receive additional English sessions. With this in mind, attending EPT classes can be considered as one of the strategies used by the participants, which seemed to play a substantial role in enhancing their English knowledge and providing them with “intangible benefits” (Hajar, 2018, p. 522) such as self confidence and enthusiasm towards learning. It can be argued that memorization and repetition were only two among other strategies that were introduced by the teacher at school. However, some participants who used these strategies reported that they were ineffective, while other participants indicated that they barely knew some strategies, and some of them were

completely unaware of effective strategy uses, which shows that their teachers did not provide any explicit explanations of LLS use.

Conversely, it might be also argued that most participants' English learning experiences with EPTs helped them to "build a positive linguistic self-concept" in the UK and to overcome most of their English speaking challenges such as the fear to speak or the lack of vocabulary through the EPT practicing a number of strategies with their learners (Benson et al., 2013, p.151). In short, the EPT created a friendly atmosphere where students were comfortable asking questions and practicing their English. Moreover, the EPT also played games (e.g "hot seats") and showed interesting films and cartoons for their English learners. This depicts that EPTs played an influential role in the participants' strategic language learning efforts. Consequently, the findings of this study were largely aligned with the underpinning framework of AT which defines human agency as "the human ability to act through mediation, with awareness of one's actions, and to understand their significance and relevance" (Lantolf, 2013, p. 19).

Building on the above discussion, it can be seen that language learners do not tend to easily learn what they are taught without the use of effective strategies. For this reason, educators in public schools, especially in rural areas, need to elevate their students' motivation to learn English by explaining the importance of this language and giving them enough opportunities to build their own agency and use more effective strategies.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the major findings of the study in relation to the three research questions and the relevant literature, together with the theoretical framework of Leontiev's (1981) version of the AT guided by a sociocultural perspective on language learning. As a result, this findings of this study were discussed in relations to the previous

studies conducted by researchers on the topic of English speaking difficulties and the deployment of LLSSs . The next chapter is the final one where the summary, research implications, its strengths and limitations as well as recommendations for further studies will be explained.

Conclusion

Whilst the previous chapter discussed the major findings, this chapter recapitulates the findings of this phenomenographic study, which was aimed at investigating Grade 11 rural students' English speaking challenges and their LLS uses. The chapter comprises three parts. The first part provides a summary of the main findings of this study. The second presents the strengths and limitations of the study in terms of the methodology used, and the last part discusses the implications of this study, and presents a number of recommendations to the mainstream teachers and policymakers in Kazakhstan based on the data that emerged from the interviews and narrative writing. Finally, some areas for future research are also discussed.

Summary of the Main Findings of this Study

As previously stated, the current study is the first qualitative research that has attempted to investigate a number of rural students' English speaking difficulties and their use of LLSs from a sociocultural standpoint, which enables language learning researchers to move away from the "encapsulated view" of LLSs (i.e. relating learners' LLS use merely to their cognitive abilities or personality traits) towards underlying meditational processes of certain learning communities, including a variety of different societal learning discourses, social agents and cultural or material artefacts (Gao, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Thomas & Rose, 2018). This qualitative study found that the participants experienced a myriad of English speaking difficulties attributable to their psychological unpreparedness, a lack of their English vocabulary and environmental factors (e.g. the lack of competent English teachers and users of English outside the classroom and the limited support received from immediate family members) that did not sufficiently allow them to practice and communicate in English across different settings. Moreover, these difficulties

could be an outcome of their ineffective or sometimes limited use of LLSs, which might be ascribed to the fact that their English teachers themselves did not tend to incorporate useful LLSs inside the classroom. As indicated by the findings of this research, the participants' LLSs were shaped from the dynamic interactions between the students themselves and a host of contextual factors (e.g. English language teachers, parents, peers, technological tools and assessment modes). It is worth noting that the participants' learning goals played a pivotal role in influencing their LLS uses, which underline two concepts associated with the activity theory embraced in this research. These two concepts are "participants' strategic interaction with contexts", and goal-orientation (i.e. LLSs are always used to accomplish a specific learning goal) (for more elaboration on the activity theory, see Chapters 2 on Page 24 and 5 on Page 80).

Hence, the findings of this study have identified that the participants' LLS use was directly linked to the accomplishment of their learning goals, which revealed two primary classifications of strategies categorized as "compulsory" and "voluntary". Particularly, the participants tended to employ compulsory strategies to accomplish learning goals associated with passing their formal examinations (i.e. exam-oriented strategies). Examples of these strategies used by the participants were rote memorization and the repetition of the samples of test questions along with the correct answers. Conversely, voluntary strategies were used by some participants who had the motivation and willingness to improve their English knowledge and expand their English vocabulary repertoire, due to their personal interests, which were largely mediated by their private English tutors. Examples of the voluntary strategies deployed by these participants were watching movies with subtitles, and using language learning apps and social networks.

Also, the participants' LLSs use (or non-use) were essentially influenced by the mediation of some influential social agents, particularly by their English language teachers,

English private tutors and parents. Indeed, one of the surprising findings from this study was that memorization and repetition were the strategies that were heavily relied on by many participants to enhance their English knowledge, while others were either barely or not at all aware of any effective LLSs that can be deployed to improve their oral English efficiency. Additionally, it has been noted from the findings that technology-mediated language resources and private English sessions also affected the participants' LLS use and development on the grounds that most participants articulated that the knowledge they received from their English language teachers at their mainstream school would not have been sufficient for them to practice English or even to get high scores in the exams. As a result, many participants were more satisfied with the support they received from their private English tutors than that from their schoolteachers (for more details, see Table 2 in Chapter 4). More precisely, some participants revealed that their private English tutors did not only train them for completing the exam questions, but also contributed to fostering their self-esteem and enthusiasm for English language learning and use by introducing more interesting activities. The next section discusses the strength and limitations of this study in terms of methodology.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study in Terms of Methodology

As discussed in Chapter 3, most quantitative methods using questionnaires or surveys can merely reveal students' LLSs preferences and the stable nature of LLSs rather than their actual and situated uses. In contrast, this study adopted a qualitative approach from a sociocultural perspective that allowed for the identification of the participants' specific English speaking challenges and captured their dynamic and contextualized LLS use, underlying the mediating impact of a myriad of contextual realities, including formal and informal social actors and technological tools. Also, the individual semi-structured interviews that were used as the main method for collecting data helped the researcher to

find in depth information about students' English language attitudes, speaking challenges and LLS efforts.

In addition, for its research design, this study adopted phenomenography which adopts a second-order perspective (i.e., how the participant conceives their world) rather than a first-order perspective, as used in phenomenology, which endeavors to discover the single nature of a particular phenomenon, "what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). However, in this case, phenomenography is a realistic approach that aligns well with sociocultural underpinnings, since it strives to produce a range of diverse ways of experiencing and understanding a certain phenomenon rather than seeking a single perception of that phenomenon (Cossingham, 2017).

However, carrying out this qualitative research during the COVID-19 outbreak provided a few limitations from the researcher's perspective. To clarify further, there were a couple of participants who would possibly have been more open and comfortable if they had been interviewed face-to-face. Although all the ethical considerations and participants' rights were explicitly explained to them both at the beginning and throughout the process of data collection, it was challenging to earn the full trust of some participants online because they might have been slightly concerned about confidentiality. Moreover, using an online platform for conducting semi-structured interviews caused other issues related to unstable internet access for a couple of participants, given that this study was conducted with students from a rural region in Kazakhstan, where there is some difficulty in having a good internet speed. Further research implication, limitations and recommendations for relevant stakeholders are provided in the next sections.

Implications

As was discussed in Chapter 4, students were dissatisfied with their teachers' practices at school, and most students' LLSSs were confined to exam-oriented strategies such as rote memorization and repetition. Moreover, the participants did not consider these strategies to be effective as they did not result in them achieving their learning goals. Thus, it is important for language teachers to be aware of the diversity of LLSSs and introduce them to their students and teach them to apply them not only in their classroom but also in their extra-curricular activities. As noted in the previous section, some participants were not aware of any strategies that can be used to overcome their English speaking challenges. This indicates that proper strategy instruction needs to be provided by language teachers in their EFL classrooms. In this regard, organizing appropriate and sufficient training sessions for teachers of English in Kazakhstan delivered by experts seems to be essential for enhancing their perceptions of the importance and benefits of integrating LLSSs explicitly in their classes and providing them with greater knowledge of the appropriate models for introducing effective LLSSs (e.g. those related to technologies in their English classes and materials and linking them to their students' daily lives inside and outside the classroom).

Based on the findings of the current research "shadow education" or private tutoring in English was one of the primary social factors that formed the participants' LLSS in a positive way. As indicated in Chapter 4, almost all participants considered English private tutoring (EPT) as an effective strategy that helped them to increase their speaking proficiency and self-esteem. However, as this concept was not intended to be explored in this particular research, and due to the limited number of participants, it is difficult to argue about the impact of EPT on the learning goals and strategy use of English language learners. Moreover, this notion emerged only after the data analysis. Therefore, further

work needs to be done to investigate the role of private tutoring in LLS because “empirical research on shadow education is still in its infancy” (Zhang & Bray, 2013, p.78), and “English as a subject in the shadow education system has received comparatively less attention in the research literature” Coniam (2014, p. 105).

Recommendations and Limitations of this Study

As regards recommendations for policy makers in Kazakhstan, it can be suggested that they produce textbooks that can help learners to utilize LLS and enhance their speaking skills because most of the participants noted that their English textbooks are designed to cater mostly to their writing ability rather than on other skills. Moreover, it can be argued that strategy instruction should be also introduced in language learning textbooks in line with establishing interactions between LLS researchers and policymakers in the field of materials design. Consequently, explicit strategy instruction in English textbooks can provide various opportunities for language learners to create their own LLS use.

As noted in Chapter 2, the efficacy of quantitative LLS research has been questioned as it generates non dynamic results from the use of questionnaires and survey tools (Dörnyei, 2005; LoCastro, 1994). Despite the fact that such quantitative tools can depict only a decontextualized and non dynamic picture of learners’ LLS, a number of LLS researchers (Gao et al, 2013; Griffiths & Oxford, 2014) believe that the combination of qualitative and quantitative tools can be useful for investigating language learners’ strategy use and their metacognitive beliefs about LLS. In this sense, the use of not merely a semi-structured interview but its combination with a survey or a questionnaire could enable the obtention of richer data on LLS research as it would then be underpinned by socio-cultural perspectives. The limited number of participants and the fact that the research was

conducted from only the students' perspective and from one school only can be considered as the primary limitations of this study. Therefore, further research could be conducted from different schools and from multiple perspectives (e.g. teachers, private tutors, parents and students). Also, a comparison between the students' oral challenges and strategy use in rural areas and cities might provide further insights to policy makers in Kazakhstan.

Generally, the findings of the current study add substantially to our understanding of learners' English learning experiences and their LLS use. As a result, by presenting learners' existing English speaking challenges, this study could also foster improvements in introducing LLS in language learning classrooms. Moreover, this study can be beneficial for language learners by making them aware of English speaking challenges and the LLSs of other learners and hence encourage them to study English by using more effective techniques. By examining this topic, it is hoped that this study will increase LLS awareness and ultimately benefit our knowledge in this field because as it has been noted, even the notion of LLS is not well known among some language learners.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Researcher: Azhar Batyrova

Participant:

1. What do you think learning English is for?
2. Can you describe your typical English language lesson in a classroom?
3. Do you like attending English classes? If yes\no why?
4. Do you think that the classroom activities help you to develop your speaking ability? If yes, how? If not, why?
5. What language does your English teacher speak during the lesson?
6. Are you afraid of making mistakes while speaking in English?
7. How do you feel while speaking using the English language?
8. How do your English language teachers often correct your students' mistake while speaking?
9. How do you recognize the importance of the English language?

10. Do you face challenges while speaking English?
11. What reasons have made you face these challenges?
12. Have you tried to find out solutions for your challenges while using English orally? If yes what are they? if no, why?
13. Have you ever attended private tuition in English? If yes, is it useful? Why?
14. How can your English language classroom be more effective to help students improve their speaking ability?
15. Did you receive sufficient support from your family members in terms of improving your English oral proficiency? If yes, how? If no, why?
16. Do you have enough opportunities to practice English outside the classroom? If not, why not?
17. Have you found sufficient chances to communicate with competent speakers of English? If yes, how? If not, why not?
18. What about the role of your peers in facilitating your oral English learning proficiency?
19. What about the role of technology in your life? Do you use it to improve your speaking skills in English? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Сұхбат протоколы

Сұхбат уақыты:

Күні:

Зерттеуші: Azhar Batyrova

Оқушы:

1. Ағылшын тілін не үшін үйрену керек деп ойлайсыз?
2. Сыныптағы әдептегі ағылшын тілі сабағын сипаттай аласыз ба?
3. Сізге ағылшын сабағы тілі ұнайды ма? Егер Иә\Жоқ болса, неге?
4. Сыныптағы жаттығулар сіздің сөйлеу қабілеттеріңізді дамытуға көмектеседі деп ойлайсыз ба? Олай болса, қалай? Егер жоқ болса, неге?

5. Ағылшын тілі мұғалімі сабак барысында қай тілде сөйлейді?
6. Сіз ағылшын тілінде қате айтуда қорқасыз ба?
7. Ағылшын тілінде сөйлегенде өзіңізді қалай сезінесіз?
8. Ағылшын тілі мұғалімдері сөйлесу кезінде оқушылардың қателіктерін қаншалықты жиі түзетеді?
9. Ағылшын тілінің маңыздылығын қалай түсінесіз?
10. Сіз ағылшын тілінде сөйлеуде қыындықтарға кезігесіз бе?
11. Бұл қыындықтарға қандай себептерді айта аласыз?
12. Ағылшын тілін ауызша қолданағанда кезігетін қыындықтардың шешімін табуга тырыстыңыз ба? Егер " иә " болса, - бұл не? егер жоқ болса, неге?
13. Сіз ақылы ағылшын тілі сабактарына қатысасыз ба? Олай болса, бұл пайдалы ма? Неліктен?
14. Сіздің сыныптастарыңыз ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу қабілетінізді жақсартуға өз әсерін тигізе алады ма?
15. Ағылшын тілін ауызша менгеруді жақсарту тұрғысынан өзіңіздің отбасы мүшелерінізден жеткілікті қолдау алдыңыз ба? Ия, қалай? жоқ болса, неге?
16. Ағылшын тілін сабактан тыс уақытта қолдануға жеткілікті мүмкіндігініз бар ма? Егер жоқ болса, неге?
17. Сіз ағылшын спикерлерімен сөйлесуге жеткілікті мүмкіндік таптыңыз ба? Ия болса, қалай? жоқ болса, неге?
18. Ағылшын тілін ауызша менгеруді жеңілдетудегі сыныптастардың рөлі туралы не айтуда болады?
19. Ал технологияның сіздің өмірінізде рөлі қандай? Сіз оны ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу дағдыларын жетілдіру үшін қолданасыз ба? Ия болса, қалай? жоқ болса, неге?

Appendix B: Consent forms

School invitation

Title of the study: Understanding Kazakhstani Students' Challenges in Speaking English and Their Strategy Use: A Phenomenographic Study

Dear XXXX

My name is Azhar Batyrova and I am a Master student in the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University.

I am researching the English speaking difficulties and learning strategies of Grade 11 students. Therefore I will be very grateful if you might give me permission to conduct this research in your school. The data will be collected through essay writing and individual interviews with students. This is summarized in the table below:

Time	Data collection tool	Duration
Autumn Term	Essay writing	15 minutes
	Individual interviews	30 minutes

Participation is entirely voluntary and all participants have the right to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. They 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.

If you are agreeable to this, I wonder whether I could arrange a meeting with you as appropriate to discuss the details of the research. My contact details are as follows: My mobile number (+77783766836) Email address: (azhar.batyrova@nu.edu.kz). Any other questions or concerns may be addressed to the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee, resethics@nu.edu.kz.

I look forward to hearing from you and thanks for your time.

Yours sincerely,
 Azhar Batyrova azhar.batyrova@nu.edu.kz
 Master student, Nazarbayev University

Signature:

Date:

Мектепке шақыру

Зерттеу атавы: Қазақстандағы оқушылардың ағылшын тілінде сөйлеудегі мәселелерін түсіну және олардың қолдану стратегиясы: Феноменографиялық зерттеу

Құрметті XXXX

Менің атым Ажар Батырова, мен Назарбаев Университетінің Жоғары білім беру мектебінің магистрантымын.

Мен 11-сынып оқушыларының ағылшын тілінде сөйлеуге қатысты қындықтары мен олардың тілді уйренудегі стратегияларын зерделеймін. Осы зерттеуді сіздің мектебіңізде жүргізуге рұқсат беруіңізді сұраймын. Мәліметтер эссе және оқушылармен жеке сұхбат арқылы жиналатын болады. Барлық деректер кестеде берілген:

Уақыты	Деректерді жинау құралдары	Ұзақтығы
Күзгі семестр	Эссе	15 минут
	Оқушылармен жеке сұхбат	30минут

Қатысу толық ерікті болып табылады және барлық қатысушылар өз келісімін кері қайтарып алуға немесе кез келген уақытта зерттеуге қатысады тоқтатуға құқылы.

Сондай ақ олар белгілі бір сұрақтарға жауап беруден де бастартуға құқығы бар. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері ғылыми, кәсіби кездесулерде немесе ғылыми журналдарда жариялануы мүмкін.

Егер келісім берсеңіз, зерттеу мәліметтерін талқылау үшін сізben кездесу туралы мүмкіндік беруіңізді сұраймын. Менің байланыс деректерім: ұялы телефон нөмірім (+77783766836), электрондық пошта: (azhar.batyrova@nu.edu.kz). Кез келген басқа мәселелер немесе проблемалар жайлы Назарбаев Университетінің Институционалдық зерттеулер этикасы жөніндегі комитетіне, resethics@nu.edu.kz хабарасуыңызға болады.

Сізден асыға жауап күтем және уақыт бөлгениңіз үшін алғыс білдіремін.

Құрметпен,

Ажар Батырова azhar.batyrova@nu.edu.kz

Магистрант, Назарбаев Университеті

Қолы:

Күні:

Consent Form for Students

Consent form for students:

Title of the study:

Understanding Kazakhstani Students' Challenges in Speaking English and Their Strategy

Use: A Phenomenographic Study

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by a master student Azhar Batyrova in the Graduate School of Education at the Nazarbayev University (NU). You were selected as a possible participant in this study because it focuses on the English speaking challenges and strategy use of Grade 11 students. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents say “yes” you can still decide not to do this.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Time	Data collection tool	Duration
Autumn Term	Essay	15 minutes
	interviews	30 minutes

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. In order to make the interviewing easier, a tape recorder will be used. 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 data collected from you will be used only for research purposes, not for assessment purposes, and there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, or ‘good’ or ‘bad’ answers. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact *Azhar Batyrova* in the Graduate School of Education at the Nazarbayev University (NU) at +77783766836 and azhar.batyrova@nu.edu.kz.

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please write an email to IREC at resethics@nu.edu.kz.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date**SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING ASSENT**

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly agreeing to participate in this research study.

Name of Person Obtaining Assent

Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please write an email to IREC at resethics@nu.edu.kz.

Студенттерге арналған келісім формасы:

Зерттеу атавы:

Қазақстандағы оқушылардың ағылшын тілінде сөйлеудегі мәселелерін түсіну және олардың қолдану стратегиясы: Феноменографиялық зерттеу

Сізді Назарбаев Университетінің Жоғары білім беру мектебінің (НУ) магистранты Ажар Батырова зерттеуге қатысады сұрайды. Сіз осы зерттеудің қатысушысы ретінде тандалдыңыз, өйткені бұл зерттеу жұмысы 11-сынып оқушыларының ағылшын тілінде сөйлеуге қатысты қындықтары мен олардың тілді уйренудегі стратегияларын зерттеуге бағытталған. Сіздің бұл зерттеуге қатысуыңыз ерікті шешім болып табылады. Яғни, зерттеуге қатысу туралы шешім қабылдағанда ата-анаңызben ақылдасыңыз. Біз ата-аналардан сіздің осы зерттеуге қатысуға рұқсат беруін сұраймыз, бірақ сіздің ата-аналарыңыз "ИӘ" деп рұқсат берген жағдайда да, сіз осы зерттеуге қатыспауға құқығыңыз бар.

Егер сіз зерттеуге өз еркінізбен қатыссаныз, сізден келесілерді сұраланады:

Уақыты	Деректерді жинау құралдары	Ұзақтығы
Күзді семестр	Эссе	15 минут
	Жеке сұхбат	30 минут

Осы зерттеуге байланысты алынған және сіздің жеке басыңызды анықтауға мүмкіндік беретін кез келген ақпарат құпия болып қалады. Ақпарат тек сіздің рұқсатыңызбен немесе заң талаптарына сәйкес ашылады. Әңгімелесуді жөнілдету үшін диктофон қолданылады. Сіздің келісіміңізді кері қайтарып алуға немесе кез

келген уақытта қатысуды тоқтатуға құқығының бар. Одан бөлек, белгілі бір сұрақтарға жауап беруден бас тартуға да құқылысыз. Сізден жиналған деректер бағалау мақсаттары үшін емес, зерттеу мақсаттары үшін ғана пайдаланылады және "дұрыс емес", "дұрыс емес", "жақсы" немесе "жаман" жауаптар жоқ. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері ғылыми немесе кәсіби кездесулерде немесе ғылыми журналдарда жариялануы мүмкін.

Егер сіз зерттеу туралы қандай да бір сұрақтар, пікірлер немесе алаңдаушылық пайда болса, зерттеушімен тікелей сөйлесе аласыз.

Телефон+77783766836 Назарбаев Университетінің Жоғары білім беру мектебінің магистранты Ажар Батырова немесе электронды пошта azhar.batyrova@nu.edu.kz

Егер сіз зерттеуге қатысушы ретінде өз құқықтарыз туралы сұрақтар қойғының келсе немесе зерттеуге байланысты туындауы мүмкін қандай да бір проблемалар немесе мазасыздықтар айтқының келсе, Назарбаев Университетінің Институционалдық зерттеулер этикасы жөніндегі комитетіне электрондық хат жолдағызы resethics@nu.edu

ЗЕРТТЕУГЕ ҚАТЫСУШЫНЫҢ ҚОЛЫ

Мен жоғарыдасипатталған рәсімдерді түсінемін. Менің сұрақтарымда қанағаттанарлық жауап беріп, осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісемін.

Қатысушының аты

Қатысушының қолы

Күні

КЕЛІСІМ НЫСАНЫН ҚАБЫЛДАҒАН АДАМНЫҢ ҚОЛЫ

Қатысушы осы зерттеуге қатысуға ерікті және саналы келіседі

Келісім нысанын қабылдаған адамның аты

Телефон нөмірі

Келісім нысанын қабылдаған адамның қолы

Күні

Егер сіз зерттеуге қатысушы ретінде өз құқықтарыңыз туралы сұрақтар қойғыныңыз
келсе, немесе зерттеуге байланысты туындауы мүмкін қандай да бір мәселелерді
айтқыныңыз келсе IREC-ке электронды хат жолданыңыз: resethics@nu.edu.kz

Appendix C: Sample of Initial Codes

Interview transcripts	Codes
<p>Интервьюер: Ағылшын тілі сабағын сиппатап бере аласыз ба?</p> <p>Катысушы: Сыныпқа кіреміз, барлығымыз жиналадыз, кейін тақтаны сүртеміз, жаңа тақырып өтетін болсақ сабактың тақырыбын айтып түсіндіріп өтеді. Кейін жазбаша жұмыстар, жаттығулар береді көбінесе. Бірақ күшті қылыш, қызықты қылыш өтпейді сабактарды.</p> <p>Апайдың бар назары шуылдақ балдарды тыныштандыруға кетеді.</p>	Assessment modes Overuse of writing tasks Lack of speaking practice Classroom environment

Интервьюер: Жақсы. Ағылшын тілін үйренуге керек деп ақылы сабакқа қатыстыстым дедіңіз, не үшін осы тілді үйрену керек деп ойлайсыз?	
Қатысушы: Сыныптастарым қатысып жүргендіктен, солардың әсерінен және өзімнің үлкен әпкем қатысқан сол мұғалімге кейін менің де қызығушылым артып кетті сыныптастарым қатысқаннан кейін. Үйдегілерден рұқсат сұрап, мен де қатыса бастадым. Сол ақылы сабактарға қатысу барысында ағылшын тілі өзімे ұнай бастады. Курстағы мұғаліміміз айтады егер ағылшын тіліндегі еркін сөйлесең рахат сезімде боласың, өз-өзіңе сенімді боласың деп. Қазіршे үйреніп жатырмын.	Benefits of fee-paying English course The role of peers to receive private tutoring The role of family members (siblings) Students' motives for taking private tutoring

<p>Меніңше, ол оқулықтағы жаттығулар ағылшынша сөйлеуді дамытпайтын сияқты. Өйткені, қалай айтсам болады..мектепте тапсырма береді, тексереді дұрыс болса бағасын қойып береді, ал қосымша курста сабак өте қызық өтеді және басынан бастап, нөлден бастап үйретеді. Мектепте де басынан бастап өтсе де, балалар шуылдақ және, мұғалімдер де сабакты үйретуге қызығушылықтары жоқ сияқты.</p>	<p>Insufficient learning materials Boring activities Negative class environment Effective teaching practice of EPT</p>
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Appendix D: The interview transcript

Interviewer: Hello, Sholpan! Thank you for your agreement to participant in this interview. I have read your essay, you did very well. You wrote that you started learning English two years ago, in the 9th grade. What made you decide to learn English at that time?

Sholpan: So, one English private tutor(EPT) who lives in a city, came to our village and launched his English course for students. It was when I studying at 5th or 6th grade. First, my classmates went to take his classes. I was also curious and had interest to go there, but I couldn't due to some family circumstances. Only in Grade 9 I started to receive his classes. Since that time I have been studying English at his fee paying English course. However to due this pandemic we had to take a break.

Interviewer: Well, what do you think about the importance of knowing English and speaking in this language?

Sholpan: English speaking ability is very important. Now in Kazakhstan, we have trilingualism, digitization, our country is developing, and so we need to know English. Even if your profession is not related to English, you need to know because the modern world requires it.

Interviewer: Let's talk about the English subject at school, when did you formally started to study English there?

Sholpan: since Grade 5. But at that time none of us were familiar with this language. It was a new language for us. I don't know maybe I didn't have enough interest or the teacher couldn't explain well...no I had an interest, but you know the rural schools, students are noisy, they do not listen to the teacher, and the teacher's time is spent arguing with those students.

Interviewer: Can you briefly describe your English lesson at school?

Sholpan: We go into the classroom, clean the blackboard. If we have a new topic, the teacher explains it. After that, we do writing tasks. But the teacher does not teach in an interesting way. As the class is noisy, the main purpose of our English lessons becomes to teach us good manners.

Interviewer: Interesting. You wrote that you are interested to learn English, do you have the same interest towards English lessons at school?

Sholpan: I have been attending the fee paid English course since Grade 9. Before going there, I haven't understand anything, we were just sitting in the class. But I realized that if you receive lessons from the EPT, you start to understand the language. Moreover, you will be able do the tasks given by the teacher at school, because you understand what you are asked to do. I also noticed that my interest to learn English at school started only after the EPT's classes. But I can't say that English at school is good.

Interviewer: You said that at school you do exercises, tasks. Do you think that those tasks, or exercises develop your ability to speak in English?

Sholpan: I think no. Because they are mostly writing task. But at the English course, the lessons are very interesting, he also considers your level of English. At school, it seems that even the teachers are not interested in teaching this language.

Interviewer: Well, what language does the English teacher use during the classes?

Sholpan: In the beginning, she says the topic and the task in English. Then she explains in Kazakh. If some words do not have Kazakh meaning, she also use Russian language. But mostly she uses Kazakh language during the English class.

Interviewer: Good. Are you afraid of making mistakes while answering to your teacher's questions?

Sholpan: We often do only written tasks at school. We don't do oral practice a lot. Therefore, we do not give verbal responses very often. But with EPT we have both, oral and written practice. When I make a mistake the EPT notes and corrects the mistakes. But at school we often do written works, and the teacher collects our notebooks and checks it by herself. But we don't often use spoken English at school. Just sometimes.

Interviewer: You mentioned the difficulties associated with your speaking in English such as the lack of vocabulary, the insufficient use grammar, and the lack of practice. What are the reasons for these difficulties?

Sholpan: I know English grammar, but when I speak I still have difficulties. The reason is may be not knowing grammar properly. I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you think that grammar is important for learning to speak English?

Sholpan: It's important, but I think it's not enough just to know the grammar, you also need to have a practice. I think that the most important thing for learning to speak is a practice. The more practice you have, the more your tongue is trained to speak.

Interviewer: Are there any other reasons for the difficulties you mentioned?

Sholpan: Maybe I have low motivation, when you are motivated you can learn anything. I also have laziness, low motivation. In addition, lack of practice.

Interviewer: Despite all these difficulties, you still were receiving EPT's classes, is it important to receive additional lessons?

Sholpan: I think it's important because at school you can't learn to speak English but with EPT you can see good results.

Interviewer: What are the major differences between the EPT and the English teacher?

Sholpan: The EPT pays attention to all students and often speaks English. It makes us to have more practice and learn. The EPT asks various and interesting questions, it motivates us to speak. At school the teacher does not speak English much. She only gives writing tasks and does not ask many questions. We work only with the textbook. There are list of new vocabulary in our English textbook and she says to learn and memorize them, but not

all students do this because she does not ask it in the next lessons. Most students are not interested in learning English. They just sit and do nothing during the lesson.

Interviewer: In your opinion why those students have low interest?

Sholpan: I think that a good teacher with an interesting teaching way can attract at least 80 percent of the class's attention and they would be learning a subject with interest . However, in our school the English lessons are boring. The teacher gives a writing task and that's it. It seems to me that the teacher's insufficient practice have a negative impact on students' motivation to learn .

Interviewer: What about your family members? Do they have any impact on your English language performance?

Sholpan: My parents pay for my sessions with EPT, but we don't practice English in our family.

Interviewer: Do you have any opportunities to practice your English with a person who is competent in English?

Sholpan: There is no such opportunities in my village.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's talk more about the English speaking difficulties that you have, anything we missed?

Sholpan: Sometimes I feel shy to talk. Shyness is my personality trait. Also there are some cases, when I feel afraid to make mistakes while speaking.

Interviewer: You mentioned that sometimes you use language learning apps, read books, listen to music to learn English. Could you tell more about this?

Sholpan: There are many language learning apps, I use Puzzle English and Duolingo.

Also, I listen to English songs in Vkontakte to improve my listening, and I use Youtube for watching cartoons, short dialogues, and movies in English.

Interviewer: Very good. And do you think that these techniques help you to develop your English?

Sholpan: I think yes. For example, I watch English videos with subtitles, so I learn how to pronounce the words and also learn them by looking at translation.

Interviewer: Are there any important things we have missed during the conversation?

Sholpan: Hmm..we have some teachers at school, they just assign the tasks. They even don't know their subject well, they have low knowledge. I am not satisfied with the teaching practice of such teachers, including English.

Interviewer: So in your opinion, how this situation could be changed and improved?

Sholpan: It would be great to have English teachers who promote students' interest. I wish I had English teachers with better teaching methods, an English classroom that presents more English speech and listening, because we often do only writing tasks at school. For example, it would be also great if sometimes a whole lesson will be devoted to practice English speaking. I also don't like topics in the textbook, there are so many interesting topics for teenagers. I think that due to such issues many of my peers do not do their tasks and do not have interest to learn English. Interviewer: Great, Thank you so much for your responses!

Сұхбат транскрипциясы

Интервьюер: Сәлеметсізбе, Шолпан! Сұхбаттасуға келісім бергеніңізге үлкен рахмет. Жалпы зерттеу туралы, оның мақсаты мен тақырыбы туралы сізге жіберілген келісім хатта таныстыңыз деп ойлаймын.

Шолпан: Сәлеметсізбе, иа, танысып шықтым.

Интервьюер: Сұхбатты бастамас бұрын есінізге салып өтейін, сіздің жеке басыңызға байланысты кез-келген ақпарат құпия болып қалады, тек сіздің ой-пікіріңіз маңызды. Сіздің эссеңізді оқып шықтым, өте тамаша жазғансыз. Сондагы байқаған бір ақпарат, ағылшын тілін үйренуді екі жыл бұрын, 9-шы сыныпта бастадым депсіз. Сол кезде ағылшын тілін үйренемін деп шешім қабылдауға не себеп болды?

Шолпан: Ол кезде, бір ағай, өзі қалада тұрады, бірақ біздің ауылға келіп, қатынап бізге ағылшын тілін үйрете бастады. Сол кезде 5-ші, 6-шы сыныптардың шамасы болу керек. Ол кезде мен емес, бірақ менің сыныптастарым сол мұғалімге барып жүрді. Мен де баруым керек деп, мен де басында қызығушылық танытқанмын, бірақ үй жағдайларымен, енді..сәті болмады. Сөйтіп 9-шы сынып кезінде бәрібір ағылшын тілін білу керек, мен де қатысайыншы деп қатысқанмын. Сөйтіп 9-шы сыныптың қыркүйектің 1-ші күнінмен бастап тоқтамай сол ақылы сабактарға қатыстым, казір карантин болып кеткеннен кейін біраз тоқтап қалды, үзілістер боп қалды.

Интервьюер: Жақсы, ал ағылшын тілін білудің, және осы тілде сөйлеудің маңыздылығы неде деп ойлайсыз?

Шолпан: Ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу өте маңызды. Үштілділік деп жатыр, Цифрлық Қазақстан деп жатыр, мемлекетіміз даму үстінде, сол үшін ағылшын тілін білу керек. Тіпті, сенің мамандығың ағылшын тіліне байланысты болмаса да, себебі бұл қазіргі заман талабы. Және қанша тіл білсең сонша адамсың деген мақал бар ғой.

Интервьюер: Жақсы жауап, ал мектептегі ағылшын тілі пәніне тоқталайық, мектепте қай сыныптан бастап ағылшын тілін оқып келесіз?

Шолпан: 5-ші сыныптан бастап, бірақ ол кезде ешкім ештеңе түсінбейтін, таныс емес тіл еді ол кезде. Білмеймін, онша қызығушылық болмады ма әлде мұғалім дұрыс түсіндірмеді ма...қызығушылық болатын, бірақ ауылдық мектептерді білесіз ғой, оқушылар шуылдайды, мұғалімді тыңдамайды, мұғалімнің уақыты сол оқушылармен ұрысып отыруға кетіп қалады.

Интервьюер: Түсінікі. Жалпы ағылшын тілі сабағы мектепте қалай өтеді, қысқаша сипаттап бере аласыз ба?

Шолпан: Сыныпқа кіреміз, тақтаны сұртеміз, жаңа тақырып өтетін болсақ сабактың тақырыбын айтып түсіндіріп өтеді. Кейін жазбаша жұмыстар, жаттығулар береді. Бірақ күшті қылып, қызықты қылып өтпейді сабактарды. Апайдың бар назары шуылдақ балдарды тыныштандыруға кетеді. Көбіне сабағымыз тәрбие үйретуге арналып кетеді. Балдар бұзық.

Интервьюер: Өте қызық жауап. Сіз эссе де ағылшын тіліне қызығушылығым бар депсіз ал мектептегі ағылшын тілі сабағына ше қызығушылық бар ма?

Шолпан: Осы 9-шы сыныптан ақылы сабактарға қатысып жүрмін ғой, ақылы сабактарға барғанға дейін ештеңе түсінбейтінмін, жәй жүретінбіз, бірақ ақылы сабактарға барсаң тілді түсіне бастайды екенсің. Мұғалім берген тапсырмасын орындастың, түсінесің. Кейде мектепте отқанда мына тақырыпты кеше курста өтіп едік қой деп қуанып қаласың. Сол үшін, ақылы курсқа барғаннан кейін мектептегі ағылшын тіліне қызығушылық арта бастайтынын байқадым. Тапсырмаларды да сәл де болсын қызығушылықпен орындастың, себебі түсінесің. Мектептегі ағылшын сабактары жақсы деп айта алмаймын.

Интервьюер: Түсінікті. Мектепте жаттығулар, тапсырмалар орындаімыз дейсіз, сол жаттығулар ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу қабілетіңізді дамытады деп ойлайсыз ба?

Шолпан: Меніңше, ол оқулықтағы жаттығулар ағылшынша сөйлеуді дамытпайтын сияқты. Өйткені, мектепте жазбаша тапсырма береді, тексереді, дұрыс болса бағасын қойып береді, болды. Ал қосымша курста сабактар өте қызықты өтеді және деңгейінде қарап үйретеді. Мектепте тіпті мұғалімдердің сабакты үйретуге қызығушылықтары жоқ сияқты.

Интервьюер: Жақсы. Мектепте ағылшын тілі мұғалімі сабак барысында қай тілді қолданады?

Шолпан: Басында ағылшын тілінде тақырыпты, тапсырманы айтып шығады. Кейін казақша түсіндіреді. Кейбір сөздердің казақща мағынасы болмай қалса орыс тілінде айтады. Бірақ негізі көбіне қазақ тілінде сөйлейді. Қазақ тілі басым.

Интервьюер: Жақсы. Ал мұғалім сізге сұрақтар қойғанда жауап берген кезде қате айтып қалуға қорқасыз ба?

Шолпан: Мектепте көбінесе жазбаша жұмыс жасаймыз. Ауызша онша көп болмайды. Ал ақылы сабактарда ауызша да, жазбаша да жаттығулар жасаймыз. Ақылы курста сөйлеген кезде қатенді түзетіп отырады, ал мектепте көбінесе жазбаша жұмыстар, мұғалім даптерлерді жинап алып өзі тексерді. Қателерді сыйып көрсетеді. Бірақ мектепте ауызша ағылшын көбінесе қолданбаймыз. Кейде ғана.

Интервьюер: Эссеңізде ағылшын тілінде сөйлеуге байланысты қыындықтардан сөздік қордың аздығынан, грамматиканы білсе тұра қолдана алмау және практиканың аздығын айтып өтіпсіз. Осы қыындықтардың себебі неде деп ойлайсыз?

Шолпан: Грамматиканы біліп тұрамын, бірақ сөйлеген кезде қиналадының себебі мүмкін грамматиканы толық білмеу шығар. Білмеймін.

Интервьюер: Ағылшын тілінде сөйлеп үйрену үшін грамматика маңызды деп ойлайсыз ба?

Шолпан: Маңызды, бірақ, тек грамматиканы білу жеткіліксіз деп ойлаймын, практика да болу керек. Сөйлеп үйрену үшін ең бастысы практика деп ойлаймын. Көп практика болған сайын тілің жаттығады.

Интервьюер: Осы сіз айтып өткен қындықтарға басқа да себептер бар ма?

Шолпан: Бар ынтамызды салып оқымағаннан шығар, негізі ынта салып оқысаң кез-келген нәрсені үйреніп кетесің. Жалқаулық бар, ынта болмайтын кездер болады. Одан бөлек практика да жетіспейді.

Интервьюер: Бірақ сіз осы қындықтарға қарамастан, әлі құнге дейін ақылы сабактарға барып жүрсіз, ақылы қурстарға бару маңызды ма? Не үшін маңызды?

Шолпан: Негізі, бару маңызды деп ойлаймын. Мектептегі сабактардан қаншалықты оқысаң да сөйлеп үйреніп кете алмайсың. Ал ақылы қурстарда жақсы нәтиже көруге болады. Сол үшін маңызды деп ойлаймын.

Интервьюер: Ал ақылы қурстағы мұғалім сізге мектептегі мұғалім бере алмаған қандай нәрселерді толықтырады?

Шолпан: Курста барлық оқушыларға назар аударылады, практика бар, ағай ағылшынша сөйлейді, құлағымыз үйрене бастайды, ал мектепте ағылшынша көп сөйлемейді. Қазақша сөйлеп кетеді, мүмкін соның әсерінен ба тыңдалымымыз әлсіз. Ақылы қурста мұғалім қунде әртүрлі сұрақтар қояды, ағылшынша сөйлеуге талпындырады. Ал мектепте, тек жазуға тапсырма береді, ондай сұрақтар қоймайды. Тек окулықпен жұмыс істейміз. Әр тақырыптың ішінде жаңа сөздер кездеседі. Сол жаңа сөздерді жаттандар деп айтады, бірақ барлық оқушы жаттамайды, кейін ол

жатталған сөздерді келесі сабакта сұрамайды, қайтalamаймыз. Көбісі сабакқа қызықпайды, құр босқа отыратын оқушылар да бар.

Интервьюер: Не себепті ол оқушылар үйренгісі келмейді деп ойлайсыз?

Шолпан: Негізі, ағылшын тілі пәнінен беретін мұғалім қызықтырып, өзіне қарат алатын болса, сыныптың ең болмаса 80 пайызының қызығушылығын арттыруға болады деп ойлаймын. Мектептегі апайлар онша қызық өтпейді сабакты, тапсырма беріп қояды. Өзінің жұмыстарын жасап отса әрине ешкімнің ағылшын тілін үйренуге қызығушылығы болмайды. Мұғалімнің сабакты қызықтырып өте алмауы балалардың солай сабакты оқығысы келмеуіне әсер ететін сияқты.

Интервьюер: Отбасы мүшелеріңіз ше? Сіздің ағылшын тілінде сөйлеуінізге қандай да бір әсерін тигізіп жатыр ма?

Шолпан: Ата-анам сол ақылы сабактардың ақшасын төлейді. Бірақ отбасымызда ағылшын тілін практика жасамаймыз.

Интервьюер: Қындықтарға қайта оралсақ, біз айтпай кеткен тағы қандай қындықтар бар?

Шолпан: Кейду ұялу болды. Менің мінезім ұялшақ. Кейде грамматика жағынан білмей қалам ба, қате сөйлеп қоям ба деп қорқам.

Интервьюер: Ағылшын тілін жетік білетін адаммен сөйлесуге мүмкіндік бар ма?

Шолпан: Жоқ, ауылда ондай мүмкіндік жоқ.

Интервьюер: Эссеңізде жасыпсыз, ағылшын тілін үйренуге кейде телефондағы программаларды қолданамын, кітаптар оқимын, музика тындаимын. Осы жайлыштылығырақ айтып кетсеңіз, мысалы қандай программалар қолданасыз?

Шолпан: Тіл үйренуге байланысты қосымшалар көп, соларды қолданамын.

Мысалы, Puzzle English, Dualinguo,. Вконтакте желісінен ағылшын тілінде әндер тыңдаймын тыңдалымды жақсарту үшін, ал Youtubeta мұльтфильмдер, қысқа метражды диалогтар, әр деңгейге арналған фильмдер бар, соларды көремін.

Интервьюер: Өте жақсы. Осы нәрселер сіздің ағылшын тілінде сөйлеу қабілетінізді дамытуға көмектеседі деп ойлайсыз ба?

Шолпан: Ия көмектеседі деп ойлаймын. Мысалы видеоларды субтитрмен көремін, сол арқылы сөздерді қалай айту керегін үйреніп, аудармасын да біліп аламын.

Интервьюер: Әңгіме барысында біз айтпай кеткен маңызды нәрселер бар ма?

Шолпан: Мектепте кейбір мұғалімдер бар бізде, тапсырмасын беріп қояды, пәнді өзі де жақсы білмейді, оқуды сырттай бітірген. Сондай мұғалімдерге көңілім толмайды. Ағылшын мұғалімдерін қоса айтқанда.

Интервьюер: Осындай жағдайларды өзгерту үшін, ауылдық мектептердегі ағылшын тілін жақсарту үшін не істеу керек деп ойлайсыз?

Шолпан: Барлық балаларды қызықтыра алатын ағылшын тілі пәні мұғалімдері болса дер дедім. Мұғалім сабақ беру тәсілін жақсартса, оқулықтарға сөйлеу, тыңдалым жағынан көбірек тапсырмалар енгізсе, себебі мектепте көбінесе жазбаша жұмыстар жасаймыз. Мысалы толық бір сабакты ағылшынша сөйлеуге арнаса, кітаптағы тақырыптар емес, оқушыларға қызықты, ұнайтын тақырыптар болса. Мысалы, қазір жасөспірімдеге қызық тақырыптар қозғалса оқушылар да тілді үйренуге қызығады деп ойлаймын, назар аударап еді. Себебі балдар тапсырма орында майтхематды, сабакқа еш көңіл бөлмейді.

Интервьюер: Тамаша, сізден өте жақсы жауаптар алдым. Үлкен рахмет, сау болыңыз!

